

The Effect of Select Value Practices as a Strategic Factor of Students Satisfaction in the Management of Higher Institutions of Learning: A Case of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

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Abstract: *The current study sought to investigate the influence of select value practices on student satisfaction as a strategic factor in the management of higher institutions of learning focusing on JKUAT. The study was guided by the following general objectives: to determine the effect of innovation, dynamism, transparency, and service quality on student satisfaction in JKUAT. The study targeted students at JKUAT cutting across first to final years studying in JKUAT main campus. The study targeted 19,079 students and used stratified random sampling to arrive at 191 respondents. Questionnaires were the main source of primary data and data were analyzed through SPSS, the social science statistical tool. Regression analysis was run to show the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Findings revealed that service quality, transparency, innovation and dynamism had a significant relationship on student satisfaction in JKUAT. The study concluded that transparency had the most significant relationship with customer satisfaction among the four value practices that were under study. The study recommended that JKUAT increase resources for facility development, improve its channels and tools of getting information, develop mechanisms for improving interaction between the administration and students, offer timely, appropriate feedback and improve channels of offering feedback. The study also recommended that JKUAT strengthens its relationship with the students and be more consultative during the change process.*

Keywords: value practices, strategic factor, students satisfaction, management, higher institutions, learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is generally seen by the public as fundamental to an informed citizenry, as well as the basis for economic wellbeing through both a productive workforce and new goods and services (Leveille, 2006). In Kenya, the education sector is one of the most important sectors of economy. This is because today, organizations are facing new challenges set by the stakeholders and the competitive business environment due to globalization. Organizations requires highly skilled, knowledgeable and experienced managers that are able to deal with these issues and finding the best suitable ways to accelerate their organizations both at local as well as at international level.

According to Reid (2008) one of the ways to ensure that public institutions maintain a competitive advantage is through enhancement of customer satisfaction. Student satisfaction is of compelling interest to universities as they seek to continually improve the learning environment for students, meet the expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies, and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Unlike service industries, which hold satisfaction as a goal in and of itself, universities typically perceive satisfaction as a means to an end. Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts, and fundraising (Adkins, 2013).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies indicate that core value practices such as transparency, dynamism, innovation and service quality have a significant effect on student satisfaction in higher institutions of learning. To ensure survival and sustainability in the market place, the public universities need to utilize its core values as a strategy to satisfy its main customers who are the students (Archambault, 2008; Siew, 2012; Adkins, 2013). Public universities following competitive strategies may realize a performance advantage over competitors that pursue other generic strategy type or those that are stuck in the middle. The competitive strategies in the context of this study included value practices such as dynamism, innovation, service quality and transparency (Mandiba, 2012).

In public universities in Kenya graduate students come from different countries/counties with different cultural backgrounds (Ombati, 2010). Thus, their expectation and perception of satisfaction may differ. Universities in Kenya are not only competing with the local universities but also many other universities in Kenya and also the world. Considering the whole world as a single market and every university as a competitor, one can say there is an intense competition. Student satisfaction plays a crucial role for the success of a university.

Review of literature has established that majority of the studies (Otembo, 2012; Mandiba, 2012) carried out have

focused on effects of the core value service quality in Kenyan organizations which did not include higher institutions of learning. Globally, major studies have looked at service quality (Muhammad et al., 2011; Suleiman, 2013). Similarly, while Ntabathia (2013) looked at service quality in private universities in Kenya, this is only one value practice while the current study seeks to look at dynamism, transparency and innovation.

The current study seek bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the effect of the four major core values on student satisfaction in higher institutions of learning with the major focus being Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture Technology (JKUAT), one of the leading public universities in Kenya. Despite its status in the country, Kariuki (2008) reported that students from this university engaged police in running battles and paralyzed transport on the busy Thika Road. The students' told of a number of grievances including limited accommodation in the hostels, lack of recent books in the library and succession battles in the university administration. Strike being an indicator of student dissatisfaction, the current study seeks to find out the relationship between the core values of JKUAT and student satisfaction.

1.3 General Objective

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of select value practices on student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

The study was be guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To determine how innovation as a core value adopted by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology affects students satisfaction.
- 2) To critically examine how dynamism as a core value adopted by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology affects student satisfaction
- 3) To find out the effect of transparency as a core value adopted by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology on student satisfaction.
- 4) To analyze the effect of service quality as a core value adopted by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology on student satisfaction.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was be guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How does innovation affect student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology?
- 2) How does dynamism affect student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology?
- 3) What is the effect of transparency on student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology?
- 4) What is the effect of service quality on student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

This study relied on Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory to justify the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction. This theory was advanced by Oliver (1977) consists of four components namely expectations, perceived performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction. Expectations define the customer's anticipations about performance of products and services. First, the customer has an initial expectation based on their previous experience with using specific product or service. The study sought to find out the effect of these demographics on expectancy disconfirmation in various dimensions of service quality namely, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Results indicated that there a significant impact of customer satisfaction after a merger had taken place.

2.1.2 Theory of Involvement

This study relied on the involvement theory to justify the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction. The theory of involvement was proposed by Astin (1999) and is based on the tenet that the amount of learning and personal growth associated with any education program is directly proportionate to the quality and quantity of student involvement. According to Astin (1999) the effectiveness of any education policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. Harper and Quaye (2009) observed that this theory is useful in helping administrators and faculty design more effective learning environments.

2.1.3 Complexity Theory

This study relied on complexity theory to justify the influence of dynamism on customer satisfaction. Complexity theory of school leadership as advanced by Morrison (2002) has been used in the fields of strategic management and organizational studies. The study found that complexity theory can be used to explain dynamism in higher institutions of learning including online learning, staff development, and curriculum change and innovation. Dynamism in the context of this study referred to the process that the university is taking to ensure that they embrace the changes and keep up with the emerging trends, especially from the private institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

2.1.4 Change Theory

Change theory was used to explain the relevance of innovation in ensuring student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture Technology. The theory of change is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation that is used by government sectors to promote change (Calrk and Taplin, 2010). Theory of change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions. Theory of change explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, for example shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes. The innovation of theory of Change lies in making the distinction between desired and actual outcomes, and in requiring stakeholders to model their

desired outcomes before they decide on forms of intervention to achieve those outcomes (Brest, 2010).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explained about the research methodology. It included the research design method used, target population, sample size and sampling design, data collection tools, pilot testing and data analysis procedures. Data analysis included regression analysis. These research methods would be explained and detailed and their relationship to the expected findings of the study would be brought out.

3.2 Research Design

A research design refers to a structure that gives direction and systemizes research to any scientific work Oskar (2008). The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the core values of Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology and the overall student satisfaction. Descriptive survey research was used to describe the characteristics of the population because it can enable the researcher to generalize the findings to a larger population. The researcher used quantitative survey as the major method to find out the relationship among service quality, transparency, innovation and dynamism and overall student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture Technology.

3.3 Target Population

According to Keller (2009) a population is the group of all items of interest to a statistics practitioner. McDaniel (2001) defines target population a total group of people from whom the researcher may obtain information to meet the research objectives. The research aimed at evaluating the overall student satisfaction towards four major core values of JKUAT. So, the target population was to be the undergraduate students attending the university 19,079 as per JKUAT annual report (2013/2014).

3.4 Sample Size and sampling technique

A sample is a set drawn from the population (Keller, 2009). As it is not practical to collect data from the entire target population, the researcher uses a sample instead (Field, 2005). A minimum sample size of 100 to 200 is often recommended (Niles, 2006). The recommendation for a minimum sample size of 100 to 200 observations is probably based on the argument that a correlation coefficient becomes an adequate estimator of the population correlation coefficient when sample sizes reach this level.

As it was impossible to study all the university students in JKUAT this study involved 191 students. The study sampled 1% of the population selected from the total population of an estimated 19,079 students. This was considered appropriate for the research purposes according to Nwana and Lanai (2009).

3.5 Data Collection Tools

The study used questionnaires as the primary data collection instrument. A five-point Likert scale will be applied to statement responses in a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained two sections. Section A covered the background of the respondents. Section contained statements regarding the effect of transparency, service quality, dynamism and innovation on student satisfaction in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture Technology.

3.6 Pilot Testing

According to Zikmund (2003) the researcher should conduct the pre-testing to ensure the questionnaire's reliability and to make sure that measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent result.

i) Validity

To ascertain validity, the questionnaire will be administered to five high-quality professionals in the field. Their comments will be considered when finalizing the questionnaire.

ii) Reliability

According to George and Mallery (2003) reliability is the degree to which measure are free from error and therefore yield consistent results. All the constructs will be tested for the consistency reliability of the items within the constructs by using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis. Cronbach's Alpha values in respect of each variable will be given. A result of .70 will be considered appropriate.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Primary data was collected through questionnaire survey to achieve specific objectives. The study will collect data by distributing hard copy questionnaire. The study was conducted within duration of one week. Secondary data are existing data but that can be used in the current project. The study used the external secondary data such as books, journals, online database via internet, past research and the like.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The statistical package SPSS (version 20.0) was used for data analysis. Two steps of detailed statistical analysis of data were involved. At the first stage, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to extract the mean and standard deviation of underlying study variables core competence, government policy, organizational resources and customer focus. At the second stage, multiple regression analysis was performed to understand the relationship among these variables.

3.8.1 Logistic Regression Analysis

Logistic regression model was used here to describe the relationship between dichotomous dependent variables and independent variables. Logistic regression Analysis was carried out for service quality, transparency, and innovation and dynamism sub-variables against customer satisfaction sub-variables in JKUAT.

The model envisaged here took the form;

$$\text{logit}(p) = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + \dots + b_kX_k$$

Whereby:

$\text{Logit}(p)$ = Student satisfaction (Loyalty and Retention)

X_1 = Assurance

X_2 = Responsiveness

X_3 = Consultation

X_4 = Feedback

X_5 = Programs diversification

X_6 = Change implementation

X_7 = Adoption of e-learning methods

X_8 = Facilities development

$\beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4$ = Coefficients of regression equation

β_0 = A constant which defines the factors influencing strategy implementation in state corporations without the inclusion of predictor variables. It is the minimum change in Y when the rest of the variables are held at a constant zero

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1.1 Service Quality

The study findings indicated that teaching services were rated among the best with regard to student satisfaction. The respondents also indicated that catering services and the school's library services to be satisfying. Services that were rated lowly were accommodation, medical services and fee payment services within JKUAT.

Further findings indicated that the respondents were of the opinion that change implementation was generally not satisfying in JKUAT. Respondents rated class reps as the best in terms of the channels JKUAT used to deal with students student issues while other channels that were satisfying to them included, notice boards, dean of students and university website. The poorest channel that were being used by JKUAT included suggestion boxes and social media respectively.

On the level of appropriateness JKUAT had in dealing with student issues, findings indicated that the respondents were of the opinion that it was not satisfying in regards to student satisfaction. On the availability of several resources in dealing with student issues, findings indicated that notice boards were the most available resources followed by class reps and lastly lecturers. Finances were rated as the most unavailable resource to deal with student issues overall.

JKUAT flexibility in dealing with students' issues was also not satisfying to the respondents with them indicating that the school is has not focused on customer service being provided to its students and this has caused a lot of students to transfer to private universities.

4.1.2 Transparency

Findings indicated that majority of the respondents rated JKUSO's effectiveness as not satisfying when it came to handling student issues. Only a minimal percent were of the opinion that JKUSO was excellent. Other findings indicated that majority said that the level of interaction between JKUAT students and its staff was also not satisfying to the respondents.

On the tools of data collection used by JKUAT to collect information from students which included interviews, questionnaires and suggestion boxes; findings indicated that most of the tools were not satisfying to promote student satisfaction and only a few rated them as excellent tools of data collection. Feedback provided by JKUAT to the students was not satisfying to promote student satisfaction since they mentioned that feedback was not simple and easy to understand.

Findings also indicated that majority of the respondents said that regular follow ups after feedback was not satisfying to them. Other factors such as the timeliness of feedback, extent of benefits of feedback and the appropriateness of feedback were not satisfying to promote student satisfaction to the respondents.

4.1.3 Innovation

From the findings the study concluded that e-learning equipment such as desktops, wi-fi were inadequately provided while equipment such as laptops and tablets were limited. Moreover training on e-learning and availability of e-learning services was averagely provided to the students. The study also concluded that hospitals, classrooms, hostels, laboratories, workshops and library were in inadequate.

It was also evident that the level of development of JKUAT facilities to cater for the growing population, innovation in facility development and safety maintenance of JKUAT buildings was poor done. The time taken to undertake facility development was also inadequate. Facilities like the TV room, swimming pool and cafeteria were available but not to the students satisfaction.

According to the change theory (Clark and Taplin, 2010), in JKUAT, innovation has been carried but not to the levels of satisfying the students. Brest (2010) observes that change lies in making the distinction between desired and actual outcomes, and in requiring stakeholders to model their desired outcomes before they decide on forms of intervention to achieve those outcomes.

4.1.4 Dynamism

From the findings the study concluded that change implementation was not effectively carried out in JKUAT. The level of communication, level of commitment and JKUAT culture and its support were poor. Students did not find change implementation beneficial and their involvement was low. However, students said the level of growth of its campuses and faculties offering of new courses was also good. The development of new curriculum and students' involvement in exchange program was also provided but inadequate. The study concluded that involvement of JKUAT in helping students get jobs was low.

This is in tandem with Morrison (2006) in complex theory which explains dynamism in higher institutions of learning including online activities, staff development, curriculum change and innovation. According to Foo (2014) it is possible to achieve student satisfaction through well planned dynamic undertaking in JKUAT. For example, student are satisfied with level if campuses and provision of new

courses. However, the level of involving students and communication between students and administration is very low and therefore dynamic initiatives have to be carried out to ensure student satisfaction.

4.1.5 Customer Satisfaction

From the findings the study concluded that the relationship between JKUAT and its students was poor and the students were not attached to the university and this could be the reason why their involvement in alumni activities was also poor. However the level of transfer was low and the student population was quite good. The enrollment rate was also good and these conclusions could be explained by the fact that JKUAT is a public university which is relatively cheaper than other private universities in the country.

4.2 Recommendations

From the study findings it is evident that JKUAT's value practices are known to the students and have a significant effect on student satisfaction. However, the mode of execution of these value practices has not yielded satisfactory results in terms of customer satisfaction. From the findings, JKUAT offers diverse services to the students including medical services, accommodation, catering, library, teaching and payment of fees. However, these services are not adequately offered and the study recommends that JKUAT channels more resources towards the improvement of these services.

Moreover, JKUAT should improve its responsiveness towards student issues by making sure the responses are timely, appropriate and flexible. Moreover, JKUAT should strengthen its channels used to deal with student issues. Apart from class reps and notice boards, student unions, suggestion boxes, social media, website and dean of students need to be developed in such a way that the students feel their issues are being responded to.

On transparency, the study recommends that JKUAT be more consultative, give student leadership its independence and improve on feedback mechanisms. They should give regular feedback to student issues and conduct regular follow ups on the same.

On innovation, the school should avail more resources to enhance e-learning. Resources should be set aside to ensure facilities such as classrooms, workshops, classrooms, library, hospital, hostels, student cafeteria and center are upgraded, adequate and available.

On dynamism, the university should develop mechanisms for involving students during the change process. The study also recommends that student be consulted on matters related to change in courses and curriculum.

4.3 Recommendations for Further Study

Arising from the study findings, the researcher proposes the following areas for further study:

- 1) This study was focused on the effect of value practices on student satisfaction in a public university, there is need to carry out a comparative study on value practices

and their effect on student satisfaction in both public and private universities.

- 2) The study also recommends that a study be carried out on other factors that contribute to student satisfaction in higher institutions of learning and how they interact with value practices to influence student satisfaction.

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