

Influence of Leadership Practices on Service Quality Delivery in Private Higher Education Institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana

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Abstract: *Enrolment levels among private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis have been on a steady decline for the past three years. Investigations were conducted to establish the nature of leadership practices among these private institutions, analyze the perspective of students and employees on service quality and establish the relationship between leadership practices and service quality. The study was quantitative with descriptive cross-sectional design. Three private higher education institutions were sampled with 367 students, 53 lecturers and 58 administrative staff. A questionnaire which considered leadership practices by Kouzes and Posner and service quality under the SERVQUAL was designed for the study. Descriptive statistics, gap analysis and SPSS software were deployed for the analysis. The results on the leadership practices revealed that Model the way dimension saw a mean and standard deviation of (M=3.83, SD= 1.01), Inspired a shared vision (M=3.89, SD= 1.00), Challenge the process (M=3.91, SD=0.99), Encourage the Heart (M=3.83, SD=1.0) and Enable others to Act (M=3.78, SD= 1.04). On the service quality delivery, Tangibility dimension had a mean difference from perception and expectation to be 0.05, Reliability -0.01, Responsibility 0.04, Assurance 0.07 and Empathy dimension 0.01. On the relationship between leadership practices and service quality delivery, the Pearson Product moment of correlation coefficient was 0.64 and coefficient of determination 41%. It emerged from the study that Private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis exhibit exemplary leadership, deliver quality services and Leadership practices had a strong positive correlation with service quality.*

Keywords: Leadership practices, Service quality, Higher education

1. Introduction

Leadership of private higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to demonstrate that, services rendered by their institutions are student-focused and that continuous performance improvement is being adhered to (Bryman, 2007). Given the perception about the low quality standards associated with private higher education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa as compared to the public higher education institutions and the rapid extent to which private higher education institutions are springing up, with little recourse to quality measures, it is expedient for an attention to be extended into their operations, especially in the area of service quality delivery (Altbach, 1999). A study by Teferra and Altbachl (2004) also revealed how low service quality and infrastructural inadequacies has engulfed higher educational institutions in Africa and the challenge it possess to quality education. More so, a research work by Banya and Elu (2001) on whether private universities are the solution to the challenges confronting higher education in Africa, highlighted poor quality in terms of service delivery, absence of qualified personnel, instructional deficiencies and technological inadequacies as some of the problems facing private universities. Hasan et al, (2009) argues that, there is a strong public perception on how the public higher education institutions are believed to offer quality education compared to the private higher education institutions and the private higher education institutions are the last resort or alternative for students who fail to gain entry into the public higher education institutions. There is a serious competition among private higher

education institutions in attracting students according to the report of Ivy, (2001).

One of the measures according to Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) for a higher education institution to attain a competitive advantage is to deliver quality services. Nitecki and Hermon (2000) reported from a study on educational leadership and concluded strongly that there is an excessive lack of educational leadership in Africa. The argument churn out by Prybutok et al, (2008) directed that, it will take an effective leadership strategy to ensure services delivered are of quality. Ham and Hayduk (2003) are also of the strong view that, the failure of an educational institution to offer strong service quality, portrays serious leadership crisis. A study by Zame et al, (2008) on Ghana educational reform and its leadership challenges revealed that, there is a lack of educational leadership. MacBeath et al, (2010) also saw the Ghanaian educational system as facing many leadership challenges. This study has managerial, policy and theoretical benefits. The quality and leadership issues discussed will empower and inform stakeholders of the three selected private higher education institutions, regulatory bodies entrusted with the oversight responsibilities of higher education institutions and the government as a whole to come up with policies which will promote and foster service quality delivery and effective leadership at the higher education level.

A study to establish the state of leadership among higher education institutions in Africa revealed the absence of effective leadership practices (Teferra and Altbach, 2004).

Oduro and Macbeath (2003), conducted a research which saw that leaders of Ghanaian higher education institutions are not exemplary in their practices due to the influence of tradition and tension from cultural difference. A study on the state of Malaysian private higher education institutions revealed how students perceive quality service delivery by their various institutions (Hasan et al, 2009). Quality service delivery measured on Australian Universities revealed how students saw their Universities delivering quality services (Soutar and McNeil, 1995). Service quality delivery by New Zealand higher education institution was found to be of low quality (Joseph and Joseph, 1997). Ugboro and Obeng (2009) revealed from a study on leadership practices among service institutions found that top management leadership practices correlate positively with customer satisfaction and service delivery in Nigeria. Kaynak (2003) asserted from a study on organizational service performance revealed that quality management practices improves with an improvement in leadership practices.

The aim of this study is to assess the influence of leadership practices on service quality delivery in private higher educational institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis. The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate the nature of leadership practices in selected private higher education institutions in Kumasi Metropolis.
2. To analyze students and employees perspective of service quality delivery of selected private higher education institutions in Kumasi Metropolis.
3. To establish the relationship between leadership practices and service quality delivery of private higher education institutions in Kumasi Metropolis.

2. Method

Participants

A total of 478 participants comprising of 367 students, 53 lecturers and 58 administrative staff were recruited for the study.

Materials

A five page questionnaire was designed for the study, which was in three sections. Section A was made up of biodata of the respondents, section B contained questions on the leadership practices and section C contains

questions on the service quality. A questionnaire which sought to capture the quality gap was designed to cover the five dimensions of quality which are reliability, responsiveness, tangibility, assurance and empathy for both expectation and perception. The respondents were made to evaluate service quality on the Likert scale from 1 to 5. On the leadership practices, the leadership practice model by Kouzes and Posner (Kouzes and Posner, 2003) covering practices such as model the way, Inspire a shared vision, challenging the process, Enable others to act and encourage the heart also on the Likert Scale from 1 to 5 was adapted. The questionnaire was made up of both close-ended questions, and rating questions designed to find out what was upper-most in the respondent's mind, to provide convenience to respondent while obtaining the appropriate data, and their relative importance to the respondents.

Procedure

The three selected private higher education institutions were visited. For the students, the researcher stood at a vantage point where the students can be easily accessed and the questionnaires administered to them, for the administrative staff, the researcher moved to the administrative block and administered the questionnaires to the participants and for the lecturers, the researcher reached them at the lecturers common room. With regards to the vice presidents, an appointment was booked with them and the researcher explained the context of the questionnaire and those who are able to answer immediately it was collected and the others who could not it was collected at a later agreed date. The researcher used a set of self-administered questionnaires directed towards the respondents. To ensure consistency and standardization in the study, a delivery and collection questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was personally administered and answered in the presence of the researcher.

3. Results

The results on the leadership practices revealed that Model the way dimension saw a mean and standard deviation to be (M=3.83, SD= 1.01), Inspired a shared vision (M=3.89, SD= 1.00), Challenge the process (M=3.91, SD=0.99), Encourage the Heart (M=3.83,SD=1.0) and Enable others to Act (M=3.78, SD= 1.04).

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Leadership Practices Constructs

Constructs on Leadership Practices	Mean	Std. Deviation	Group mean	Remarks
Model the Way				
Persons in leadership are an example unto others	4.11	1.023	3.83	Agree
Leadership ensures principles and standards are adhered to	4.04	0.886		Agree
Leadership fulfills promises made	3.43	1.157		Neutral
Feedbacks from performances are asked by leadership	3.75	0.967		Agree
Inspires a shared vision				
Leadership is visionary about the work output of the University	3.92	1.019	3.89	Agree
Leadership appeals to others to share in the vision of the University	3.90	0.978		Agree
Leadership paints a better image of what the University aspires to do	4.07	0.971		Agree
Leadership is fair about the responsibilities of each worker of the University	3.67	1.033		Agree
Challenge the Process				
Leadership takes up challenges to test the abilities of the University	3.76	1.013	3.91	Agree
Leadership of this University challenges people to be innovative when working	3.92	0.989		Agree
Leadership takes risk even when there is a chance of failure	3.75	1.059		Agree
Leadership ensures that the University sets achievable goals	4.22	0.902		Agree
Encourage the Heart				
Leadership praises people for a job well done	3.94	1.033	3.83	Agree
Leadership ensures people are rewarded for their contributions to the success of the University	3.95	1.006		Agree
Leadership publicly recognizes the contributions of all persons in relation to shared values	3.68	0.972		Agree
Leadership celebrates accomplishment	3.74	0.978		Agree
Enables others to Act				
Leadership listens to diverse points of views	3.81	1.011	3.78	Agree
Leadership treats all persons with dignity and respect	3.84	1.072		Agree
Leadership supports the decision people make on their own	3.51	1.055		Agree
Leadership ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves	3.97	1.007		Agree

Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

On the service quality delivery, with respect to the Tangibility dimension, the perception saw a mean rating and standard deviation to be (M=3.81, SD=1.07) with expectation results of (M=3.76, SD=1.08) and a mean difference of (0.05).

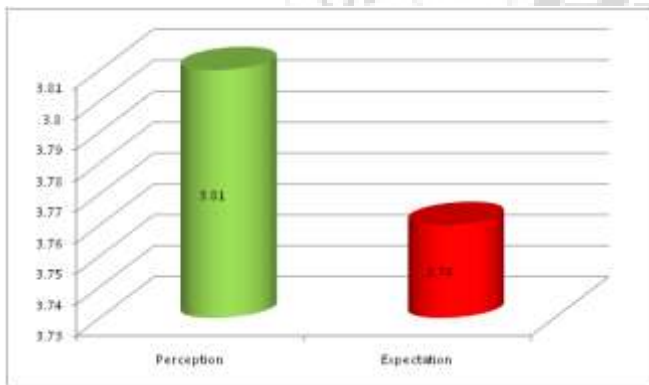


Figure 1: Difference in Tangibility dimension
 Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017

The reliability dimension saw a perception with mean and standard deviation of (M=3.80, SD=1.37) with expectation results of (M=3.81, SD=1.51) and a mean difference of (-0.01).

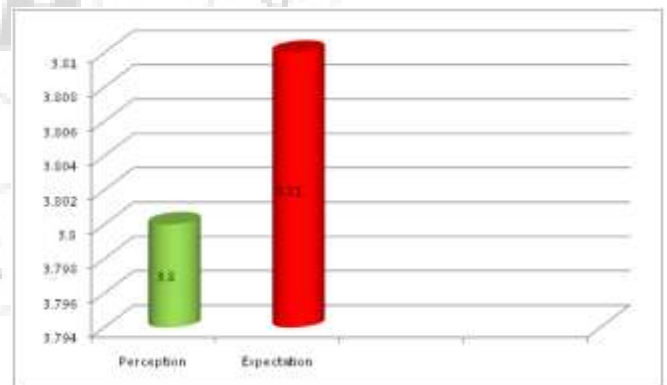


Figure 2: Difference in Reliability Dimension
 Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

The responsiveness dimension saw a perception with mean and standard deviation to be (M=3.82, SD=1.08) and a mean difference of (0.04).

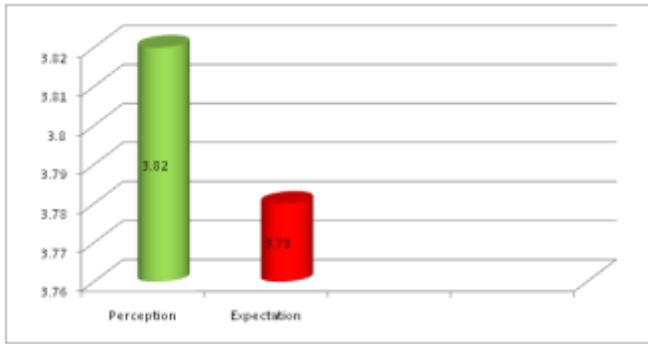


Figure 3: Difference in Responsiveness Dimension
 Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

The assurance dimension saw a mean and standard deviation of perception to be (M=3.99, SD=1.00) with expectation results of (M=3.92, SD=1.07) and a mean difference of (0.07).

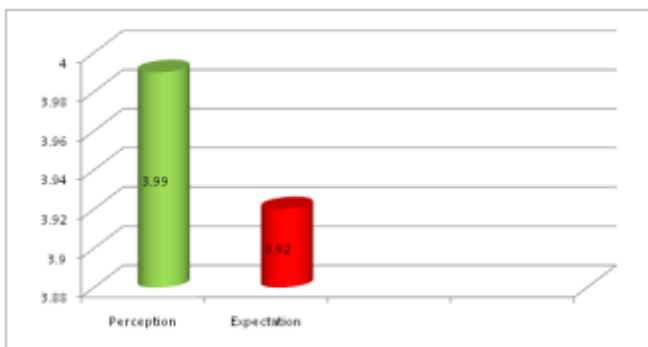


Figure 4: Difference in Assurance Dimension
 Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

The empathy dimension saw a mean and standard deviation for perception to be (M=3.91, SD= 1.07) with

expectation results of (M=3.90, SD=1.45) and a mean difference of (0.01).

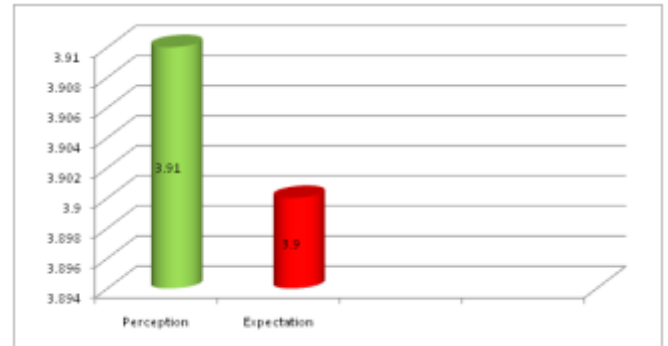


Figure 5: Difference in Empathy Dimension
 Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

On the correlation relationship between leadership practices and service quality delivery, the leadership practices for the three selected campuses revealed that campus A had a mean rating and standard deviation as (M=3.94, SD=0.63), campus B (M=3.90, SD=0.52) and campus C (M=3.72, SD=0.66). On the service quality delivery, the mean and standard deviation of expectation for the various campuses were A (M=3.92, SD=0.66), B (M=3.90, SD=0.68) and C (M=3.71, SD=0.76). With regard to the perception, the results for the various campuses were A (M=3.97, SD=0.62), B (M=3.91, SD=0.65) and C (M=3.72, SD=0.76). The mean difference for the three campuses were A=0.05, B=0.01 and C=0.01. The paired sample correlation between leadership practices and service quality delivery saw a correlation coefficient of $r=0.640$ at 0.01 level (1-tailed) significant and a coefficient of determination $R=41\%$.

Table 2: Comparing Leadership Practices of the various Higher Education Institutions

University	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance
A	3.94	0.63	0.40
B	3.90	0.52	0.27
C	3.72	0.66	0.43

Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

Table 3: Comparing the Perception and Expectation of the various Higher Education Institutions

University	Perception Mean	Expectation Mean	Difference
A	3.97	3.92	0.05
B	3.91	3.90	0.01
C	3.72	3.71	0.01

Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

Table 4: Paired Sample Correlations between Leadership Practices and Service Quality Delivery

		LEADERSHIP_MEAN	SERVICE_GAP
LEADERSHIP_MEAN	Pearson Correlation	1	.640
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.279
	N	3	3
SERVICE_GAP	Pearson Correlation	.640	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.279	
	N	3	3

Source: Researcher's Construct from Field Report, 2017.

Hypothesis Testing

If $p \leq 0.05$, then reject the null hypothesis
 If $p > 0.05$, then retain the null hypothesis

H0: There is no significant correlation between leadership practices and service quality delivery in private higher education institutions in the Kumasi metropolis

H1: There is significant correlation between leadership practices and service quality delivery in private higher education in the Kumasi metropolis.

Table 5: Overall Mean Leadership Practices and Overall Mean Gap

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Mean_LeadershipPractices	3.853	458	.60699	.02931
	OverallMeanGap	0.023	458	.77937	.03763

Source: Researcher’s Construct from Field Report, 2017.

The overall mean value for the leadership practices and the mean quality gap from table. 4.30 showed a mean of 3.853 and a standard deviation of 0.60699 for the leadership

practices and a mean of 0.023, with a standard deviation of 0.77937 for the quality gap.

Table 6: Pair Correlation between Leadership Practices and Quality Gap

Pair 1	Mean_Leadership Practices & Overall MeanGap	N	Correlation	Sig.
		458	.640	.279

Source: Researcher’s Construct from Field Report, 2017.

From table 6, it shows a correlation of 0.640 and a p-value of 0.279 for the significant correlation between the leadership practices and service quality delivery in private higher education institution in the Kumasi Metropolis. Since the p-value 0.279 is greater than 0.05 on 2 tailed test. This shows that there is no significant correlation between the variables leadership practices and service quality delivery. The null hypothesis is therefore failed to be rejected.

demonstrated by private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis is a positive and an acceptable one.

4. Discussion

The first research question which seeks to determine the nature of leadership practices exhibited by private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis, it emerged that with a mean rating above 3.5 intuitively chosen to mean an agreement, a mean rating between 3.0 and 3.49 neutral and mean rating below 3.0 a disagreement. All the constructs recorded a mean rating above 3.5, depicting an agreement to the statement except one which recorded a mean rating of 3.43, depicting neutral. Moreover, all the group means of each of the dimensions was above 3.5 also depicting an agreement to the statements under the constructs. This implies that students and employees of private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis agree to the fact that these practices of leadership which are model the way, enable others to act, challenging the process, encourage the heart and having a shared vision are exhibited in the various higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis. Kouzes and Posner (2003) asserted that, the exhibition of these leadership practices portrays good and exemplary leadership. Fullan and Scott (2009) also posited that good leadership is the one which promotes positive institutional climate and can be attested and affirmed by both internal and external customers. From the assertion of Kouzes and Posner (2003) it can be said that the three selected private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis exhibited good and positive leadership practices, therefore the nature of the leadership practices

The second research question which seeks to evaluate the perspective of students and employees on service quality delivery of private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis turned out that, the Tangibility dimension saw a positive mean difference between perception and expectation, the Reliability dimension recorded a positive mean difference, Responsiveness dimension saw a positive mean difference and Empathy dimension recorded a positive mean difference. The overall mean difference between the perception and expectation was also positive. According to Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1993), the presence of a positive mean difference between perception and expectation depicts quality service delivery, which is also supported by the findings of Nitecki (1996). Since the overall mean difference between expectation and perception is positive, it can be concluded that, the perspective of the students and employee of private higher education institutions in the Kumasi metropolis saw quality services been delivered by these private higher education institutions. This findings supports that of Malaysia private higher education institutions of which the students also saw that, their institutions deliver quality services (Hasan et al, 2009), Also when the service quality delivery by Australian Universities were measured, it emerged that they also deliver quality services (Soutar and McNeil, 1995). Post graduate part-time students in the United Kingdom also saw that their respective institutions offer quality services.

On the research question three, which seeks to find the correlation relationship between leadership practices and service quality delivery, the study recorded a value of 0.64 as a correlation coefficient with Pearson Product Moment, which according to Salkind (2009) is a strong positive correlation between leadership practices and service quality delivery. This agrees with the findings of the positive correlation between transformational leadership

and service quality delivery by hospitals in the United Arab Emirates. There was also a positive correlation between leadership practices of Coaches and service quality delivery of intercollegiate athletics in Texas (Sagas et al, 2007). Ugboro and Obeng (2000) also found out that top management leadership practices correlate positively with customer satisfaction and service delivery in Nigeria.

5. Limitations

The study had the following limitations. Firstly, the duration of the study was limited which did not allow for an ample time to be more diligent and do a very detailed work to bring out a more quality work. Secondly, the sample size was not significantly large, to help to ascertain the bigger picture of the respondents, making the quality in generalization limited. Thirdly, the study was limited to three private higher education institutions which were all faith based institutions, which did not allow for divergent views from non- faith based institutions, therefore the outcomes from the study is narrowed in its findings to only the faith based institutions and lastly, most of the respondents did not understand the questionnaire and the effect gave many erroneous answers making editing so difficult and in some instances not possible.

6. Recommendations

Quality service delivery should not be limited to only external customers but internal customers must be reached. Also, managers of private higher education institutions must look beyond the provision of quality services and exemplary leadership to achieve competitive advantage with regard to enrolment.

Based on how the study was limited to only private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis with relatively small sample size, it is recommended that further research must cover the whole region and implore a bigger sample size to make it more representative. Moreover a future study can also be replicated in public higher education institutions to ascertain the same independent variable on service quality delivery. Furthermore, further study can be undertaken to establish the factors accounting for the reduction in the enrolment levels of private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis despite the exhibition of best leadership practices and quality service delivery by these private institutions.

7. Conclusions and Implications

The study concludes that private higher education institutions in Kumasi Metropolis exhibit good and exemplary leadership practices and deliver quality services to students and employees. All dimensions under the SERVQUAL contributed significantly to the overall service quality delivery of private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis and leadership practices had a strong positive correlation with service quality delivery.

Decline in enrolment levels with regard to private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis, was the problem gap which informed the study with a research design to ascertain how exemplary leadership and service quality delivery will give private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis a competitive advantage with respect to enrolment levels, but the findings pointed contrary. The factors accounting to the decrease in enrolment levels in these higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis, despite the provision of exemplary leadership and service quality may be due to the high tuition fees charged as compared to their public counterparts of which Hemelt and Marcotte (2011), alluded to in their study on the factors which results in decline in enrolment levels at the higher education institution level. Imenda et al (2004), asserted that, financial aid, quality staff, image of a University, efficiency in management and resources for students are some of the factors which influence enrolment at the higher education level. Levy (2013), saw an unfavourable government policy and the competitive partial privatization within public higher education institutions as some of the factors which is causing decrease in enrolment levels in the private higher education institutions. Currently, in Ghana most public higher education institutions are innovatively privatizing their activities such as the running of distance education and part-time instructional services, which is seriously helping to gain competitive advantage with respect to students' enrolment.

The implication of the study can be seen in this light. Firstly, this study has provided empirical research knowledge to increase understanding about the nature of leadership practices among private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis. Secondly, the study further affirmed that, private higher education institutions in the Kumasi Metropolis provide quality services to students and employees. Meaning private higher education institutions deliver quality services, which is supported by the study of Hasan et al (2009). Thirdly, the study has proven that leadership practices have a strong positive correlation with service quality delivery, implying that the improvement in leadership practices will result in better service quality delivery. This also agrees with the findings of Kuei et al (2001).

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Authors' Profile



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