

# Contextual Student Services of Eastern Visayas State University System

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**Abstract:** *This study was aimed to assess and describe the performance level of EVSU Students Services. Studies showed that student services contribute to the learners' experience, progress and academic success. The data were gathered with instruments answered by a sample of 500 students. The quantitative data were analysed by using Mean and SD while the qualitative collected narratives were processed by coding and subsequent grouping according to conventional categories. The findings suggest that among the 5 Campus Units, EVSU Tanauan got the highest Mean of 3.459, while the lowest Mean is earned by EVSU Main with 2.92, with SD of 0.2282 and 0.17507. The Overall Mean of EVSU Ormoc is 3.46; SD of 0.22793. The Overall Mean of the Student Services of EVSU System is 3.24; SD of 0.25575. The performance level of the Student Services is generally concluded as Very Satisfactory. However, some deviants, as suggested by SD, are found which analysed and interpreted as multiple standards and or different treatments of the students practiced by the personnel as well as in the material, space and physical resources among campus units.*

**Keywords:** student services, student support, student involvement, academic success

## 1. Introduction

In order to achieve quality education and realize students' success, the university needs to have strong and reliable student services departments that give support to the students' academic and non-academic needs.

The function and organization pattern of student services vary from country to country. These services are part of university management. The staff working in this field is usually accredited through certifications in relation to the position held. *Training* is provided through various courses and specific programs but is not mandatory. The more the universities are able to deliver their services the better they will be able to meet the needs of student development, learning, managing, among other things (Ciobanu, 2013).

Student support services comprise a cluster of facilities and activities that are intended to make the learning process easier and more interesting to the learners (Rashid, 1998). However, academic support and extracurricular offering were the major factors of students' perseverance and a variety of non-academic environment factors were the reasons that students leave school prior to graduating. The more academic and non-academic activities the students engage in, the more wholesome their experiences will be. This results to students' better management of stress, scholastic problems, time and studies (Cadosales and Ejercito, n.d.)

Students support and service contribute to the quality of learning experience and their academic success. Studies show that the most important factors in education quality assurance are: quality of teaching/learning *and service system and support for students* (Hill, et al, 2013).

Therefore, the importance of support activities for the students is obvious but also presents the management of services with difficulties due to the increasing number of students and their needs. Thus, this study was aimed to

evaluate and contextualise an effective way of delivery of the student-centered university student services.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The framework of the study is focused on Astin's (1984) Theory of Involvement based on student *involvement* which is the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. It is what the individual does, how he or she behaves, that defines and identifies involvement. At this stage in its development, the involvement theory has five basic postulates: (1) Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects or the student's experience; (2) involvement occurs along a continuum; that is, different students manifest different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times; (3) involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features; (4) The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that object; and (5) the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that object ---policy or practice to increase student involvement.

The *theory of student involvement* is more concerned with the *behavioral mechanisms or processes* that facilitate student development (the *how* of student development). The processes are the environment which includes the Student Services and Relationship.

The most important application of the student involvement theory to teaching (and non teaching personnel) is that it encourages the instructor (and staff) to focus less (balance) on content and teaching techniques (delivery of services) and more on (balance with) content and what students are actually doing (not what teachers are doing)—how motivated the students are and how much time and energy they are devoting to the learning process. They have to focus

more on what the student is actually doing within the *environment* (E) which should be enabled by the educators--teachers and administrators, for the achievement of expected outcome which is defined and part of the environment--the vision, mission, culture and goals of the organization that requires students' involvement.

Astin's I-E-O Model diagrammed the Student Involvement Theory which is grouped into three elements as the input-environment-output (I-E-O) (see figure 1). The model is designed for organizational change aiding the faculty and administrators. It suggests that the learning outcome (Output) of the students is the function of historical and present background of the students (Input) and the

mechanism which includes the student services and relationship (Environment).

The theory of involvement is a useful theory to help administrators and faculty design more effective learning environments and is more concerned with the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development (the *how* of student development). (Astin, 1999; 1984).

The processes include the place of residence or campus residence, honor programs, academic involvement, faculty-student interaction, athletic involvement, and involvement in student government.

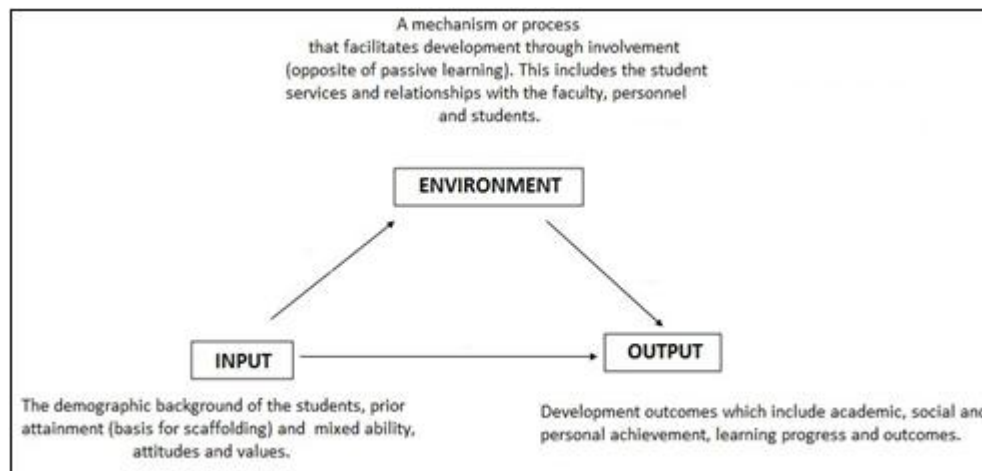


Figure 1: Astin's I-E-O Model

### 3. Review of Evidences

The student services, originated in Athenian education and universities, generally recognized as an American phenomenon, is used to describe the divisions or departments which provide services and student support in higher education. Its purpose is to ensure the students growth and development during the academic experience (Ciobanu, 2013; NASPA, 2012).

Student Services are critical to Student involvement. Student involvement has been identified as a critical factor linked to multiple positive college outcomes. Four structural dimensions of student involvement were identified. These were identified as (1) Faculty and Staff Involvement (FSI), (2) Proximity (PROX), (3) Structured Organization Involvement (SOI), and (4) Social Connections (SOC). Three of these, Faculty and Staff Involvement, Proximity, and Social Connections were found to be significantly related to measures of student development (D' Arcy, 2014).

Effective student services can be traced to staff and employees beliefs and values by the manner in which the policies are elaborated, by the content of curriculum and services, and by the degree of knowledge regarding the development of the students and the way in which the *environment* outlines their behaviour (Ciobanu, 2013).

The culture of an organization is a powerful influence in the development of the *environment*. The culture is a body of solutions to problems that has consistently works for the

group and guides the members how to perceive, think about, feel and act in relation to the problems at hand (Owens, 1991). Supporting and enhancing the student experience (academic, social, welfare and support) from first contact through to becoming alumni is critical to success in higher education today for both the student and the institution (op cit).

The student services have evolved additional support services that have contributed to the academic and personal development of students, including academic skills development programs and specific support to students who have difficulty learning or adapting to university life. Student services contribute to the quality of the academic experience and help students to achieve learning potential and success (Ciobanu, 2013; Hill, et al, (2003).

The function and organization pattern of student services is part of university management which varies from country to country (integrated into a student services department). Student support and services contribute to the quality of their learning experience and their academic success. Studies show that the most important factors in education quality assurance are: quality of teaching/learning and *service systems and support for students* (ibid.).

Therefore, the importance of support activities for the students is obvious but also presents the management of services with difficulties due to the increasing number of students and their needs. They help decrease *the university dropout rate* and *increase the diversity of students*

*experience* (Tinto, 1993). Without effective student services, students who do not have an academic, emotional and social connection with the institution at *cultural level* are more likely to give up their studies. An important role of student services is *to prepare students for active participation in society*. Along with teachers and non-governmental organizations they contribute to increased learning opportunities and community involvement by organizing or promoting internships, experiential units or short-term experiences, integrated into the curricula (UNESCO, 2002).

These services take a major role in encouraging and establishing open methods of making decisions and rationally resolving conflicts. The manner in which the policies are created, with which the decisions are made and controversial topics—e.g. *academic, personal development and emotional needs* are addressed, is as important as the results. The institution *gives students a series of values by the way of addressing policies, decisions and problems* (McInnis, 2004).

While student services differ from one institution to another, certain expectations and responsibilities are common to most universities. Some address the institution as a whole; others are specific to students' needs and interests (UNESCO, 2009). The main responsibilities for both types of relations are: *student services-academic institution* and *student services-students*.

Students throughout the world find ways to spend their time outside of class in activities that complement the formal academic curriculum as well as the mission and goals of the university. Student unions, associations, clubs, and organizations have a long history of providing some outlet for the student need to socialize, organize, recreate, volunteer, and sometimes worship together. Students reside in residence halls and off-campus apartments, dine at campus restaurants, attend plays and concerts, and plan and administer a myriad of activities both formally and informally. European tradition offers a philosophy that co-curricular activities are merely ancillary to the mission of the university, which is research, classroom teaching, and academic learning. Adopting a more intentional approach to educating outside the classroom is an appropriate solution to one of the major challenges mentioned in the mission of the case study institution which indicates that the university is not only for classroom teaching and research, but also educating for life and making students grow as human beings. (Herdlein and Zurner, 2015).

In neoliberal perspective, higher education is considered as a commodity. A literature on quality of service in higher education contends that quality of service serves as a competitive advantage for HEIs to attract and retain students. HEIs are aggressive in promoting their offers and brands through quality of service (Tan, 2017).

The student services and facilities vary depending on campus size, student numbers and funding from student contributions (and government funding). Large university campuses usually offer all of the services and facilities including dormitories, clubs and associations, Study skills unit, Peer support and tutoring programs, Disability liaison

office, Financial Assistance, Career Services, Indigenous Support unit, prayer and worship places, child care center (for student-moms), libraries, sporting and other recreation centres, while smaller private institutions offer services and facilities more tailored to their student cohort (Good Universities Guide).

Harvard Graduate School of Education's Office of Student Affairs (OSA) is committed to providing a welcoming environment for its diverse community and seek to promote and celebrate the various identities, thoughts and experiences that our students bring to campus. It encourages and supports student success by providing a variety of support services, programs, and activities to enhance the student experience and to assist students in meeting the many demands of their personal and academic life. Diversity and inclusion encompass the intersectionality of the human experience and includes qualities such as race, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, nationality, age, religion, sexual orientation, first generation status in higher education, economic status, and veteran status. These and other important socially and historically marginalized attributes reflect the complexity of our increasingly diverse student body, local community, and worldwide population.

#### 4. Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive – evaluative design of research to describe the performance level of Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU) Student Services. The evaluation of the Student Services program based on the gathered data provided information and scientific descriptions to the university for the purpose of finding answers to the research questions and recommendation for the improvement of Student Services of five (5) campus units of EVSU with one hundred (100) Student-respondents per Campus unit, a total of five hundred (500) samples.

The primary tool utilized in this study was the evaluation instrument secured from the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACUP) and used the 5-point Scale Likert Type questionnaire (1 as *poor* to 5 as *highly satisfactory*). The instrument consists of the different services that the Student Services offered namely: Guidance Services, Health Services, Sports, Student Publications Office, Canteen Services, Library Services, Registrar, Co-Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities (Student Affairs) and Security Services.

In addition to this, the researcher included questions open-ended questions that elicited responses about the encountered experiences (*poor to highly satisfactory and narratives*) of the students from different campus services. Guide questions for interview were used for further validation of the responses of the target groups. The researcher sought the informed consent of the student-respondents by visiting the different Campus Units of EVSU. An interface interview has been administered. When the entire survey questionnaires were retrieved, data gathered were tallied and their scores were processed to percentage scores, mean, standard deviation and variance

with Microsoft Excel and Social Sciences Statistics Calculator.

Data analysis was conducted with quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The variables are tabulated and presented using Statistical tools--- Frequency Distribution, Frequency Percentage, Assumed Mean-Unit Deviation Method, Variance and SD. The processing of data includes preliminary coding and subsequent grouping according to conventional categories.

5. Findings

Figure 2 and show the Age and Sex Distribution of the Respondents. Out of five hundred (500) Respondents, four hundred fifty five (455) are 25 years old and below respondents, thirty seven (37) are 25 years old above and eight (8) preferred not to answer.

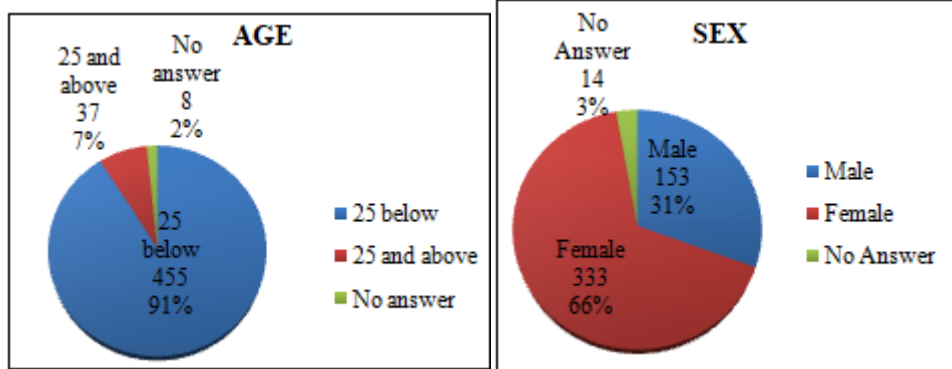


Figure 2: Age and Sex Distribution of the Student-respondents

The survey was participated by one hundred (100) student-respondents per campus unit. It is dominated by 25 and Below respondents. Each campus unit---Main, Ormoc, Buraen, Tanauan and Carigara, survey was participated by *young adults*.

*Sex of the Respondents.* Out of five hundred participants, three hundred thirty three (333) respondents are Female (66%); one hundred fifty three (153) are Male Respondents (31%) while fourteen (14) respondents (3%) have No

Answer. All campus units are dominated by Female Respondents.

The results of the gathered data following the socio-demographic profiling were analysed and interpreted based on the Codes, Mean Ranges Value, and Variance and Standard Deviation descriptive tools. They are illustrated in Figure 3 and Table 1.

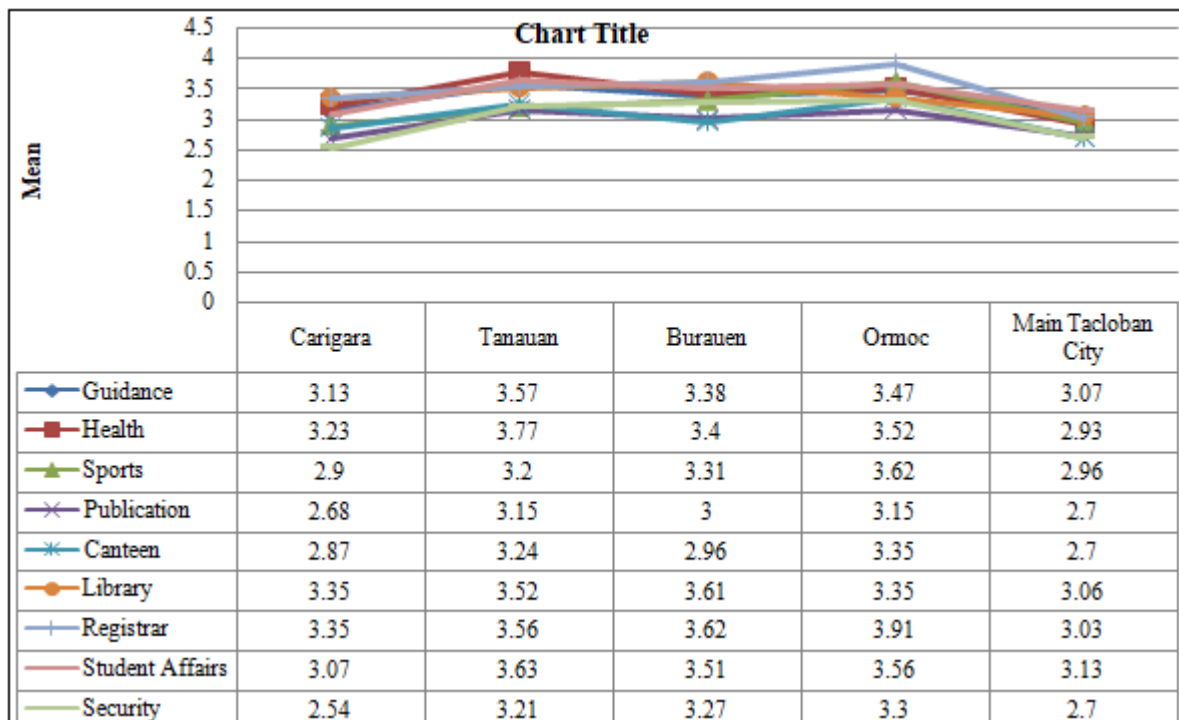


Figure 3

The findings suggest that among the 5 Campus Units, Tanauan Campus got the highest Mean of 3.459, interpreted

as *Very Satisfactory* while the lowest Mean is earned by Main Campus with 2.92, *Satisfactory*, both have *High SD* of

0.2282 and 0.17507. The Overall Mean of the Student Services of EVSU Ormoc is 3.46; SD of 0.22793 and Variance of 0.05195. The Overall rates are interpreted as *Very Satisfactory, High SD and High Variance*, respectively. The Overall Mean of the Student Services of EVSU Burauen is 3.34; SD of 0.23749 and Variance of 0.0564. The Overall rates are interpreted as *Very Satisfactory, High SD and High Variance*, respectively. The Overall Mean of the Student Services of EVSU Carigara is 3.01; SD of 0.08238 and Variance of 0.28701. The Overall rates are interpreted as *Very Satisfactory, High SD and High Variance*, respectively.

Table 1 shows the EVSU System Overall Assessment Results of Student Services rated by the Student-Respondents. The Overall Mean of the Student Services of EVSU System is 3.24; SD of 0.25575 and Variance of 0.06541. The Overall rates are interpreted as *Very Satisfactory, High SD and High Variance*, respectively. The Mean of 3.24 or *Very Satisfactory* is not complete and reliable information about the performances of the Student Services of EVSU System. Additional descriptive statistical tools are used to give more scientific analysis and meaning to the data results.

**Table 1:** Summary of Descriptive Statistical Results

	EVSU System	Main	Ormoc	Burauen	Tanauan	Carigara
Mean	3.24	2.92	3.46	3.34	3.459	3.01
SD	0.25575	0.17507	0.22793	0.23749	0.2282	0.08238
Var.	0.06541	0.03065	0.05195	0.0564	0.05208	0.28701

The SD of 0.25575 is interpreted as High SD in reference to SD limit of  $\leq 0.02$ . It is greater than  $\leq 0.02$  suggests that the ratings of the Student-respondents are spread widely or scattered. EVSU System students experienced the Student Services with different levels of performance. It suggests that EVSU System generally practices or applies different treatments or multiple standards among different and particular students. Particularism, e.g. "Padrino" (friend), "Pet," or "Favouritism" is most likely happening within the Student Services of EVSU System.

Further evidences are discussed in categorised narratives of the respondents which are gathered, grouped and categorised for analysis. Among the 5 Campus Units, Tanauan Campus got the highest Mean of 3.459 while the lowest Mean is earned by Main Campus with 2.92, both with *High SD* of 0.2282 and 0.17507, are interpreted as *Very Satisfactory* and *Satisfactory*, respectively.

From different EVSU Campus units, the students expressed their different and contrasting experiences and perceptions about the Student Services performances in dealing the students' concerns and transactions; with personnel side while others are similar and same experiences particularly with the space and physical resources which are all vital and critical to their progress, academic development and learning outcomes.

### Narratives of the Students

Based on the questionnaires answers validate through focus group discussion with the students of EVSU from different campuses, the following narratives are grouped, categorised

based on Student Services and variables; and themed based on the Theory of Involvement.

The students expressed their different experiences and perceptions about the Student Services implementation in dealing the students' concerns and transactions though the open-ended questions provided in the questionnaires. Some experiences and perceptions are contrasting most especially with human resources side while others are similar and same experiences particularly with the space and physical resources which are all vital and critical to their progress, academic development and learning outcomes.

*Group 1 Category:* All Student Services, Relationship, Standard Practices, D & R

*Theme :* Input and Process/Environment

The contrasting narratives include "I am satisfied,"; "they get irritated when they are asked"; "...unsatisfactory..."; "...they are approachable..."; "...personnel must be approachable..."; "staff must be polite..." and "they must be fair to all not just to those who they know..." They appeared not once but same and similar accounts have several modes from students from different campuses.

*Group 2 Category:* Registrar, Relationship, Standard Practices, D & R

*Theme:* Input and Process/Environment

Complaints and demands of the students from different campuses are expressed with deep sigh "long waiting lines, exhaustive processing...", "...provide student lounges." "late posting of announcements...", "lack of updated information..." and "update information." They appeared not once but same and similar accounts have several modes from students from different campuses.

*Group 3 Category:* Sports, Library, Relationship, Standard Practices, D & R

*Theme:* Input and Process/Environment

Prior attainment is critical for students' progress and excellent performance. In educators' perspective, their sentiments are not for better grades but preparation for their next subjects. "[L]ack of books, computers and internet." "lack of books, and lab and sports equipment..." and "lack of library internet..." appeared not once but same and similar accounts have several modes from students from different campuses.

*Group 4 Category:* Students Affairs, Relationship, Policy

*Theme:* Input and Process

Low SES background of the students always predicts academic excellence and success. Initiative from Educational Management is required to attend to the students clamour for "...scholarship for all deserving students," "...equitable scholarship," and "we need [relevant] trainings..." They appeared not once but same and similar accounts have several modes from students from different campuses.

Group 5 Category: Canteen Services, Policy

Theme: Input and Process/Environment

Food safety management is crucial for students' learning development. They expressed their perception about canteen with "canteen must be improved" and "...improve food services..." They appeared not once but same and similar accounts have several modes from students from different campuses.

Group 6 Category: General Services, Students Affairs, Health Sports, Relationship, Strategic Plan, Policy

Theme: Input and Process/Environment

Despite of Very Satisfactory level of implementation, Physical environment are likewise demanded by the students "make CR's comfortable..."; I suggest "more water and clean restrooms...", "lack of facilities and laboratories...", "additional classrooms..." and "...more facilities and electric fans." They appeared not once but same and similar accounts have several modes from students from different campuses.

The High SD's presented earlier are analysed based on the contextual interpretation of the data and these accounted narratives are the confirmation of the interpretation and analysis SD and Var. The contexts of the different experiences and perceptions of the students are based on the different practices and multiple standards of human resources within their respective campus units; and the different qualities and quantities of materials, space and physical resources specific and available to their respective campuses.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of the study include the performance levels of the Student Services and the different experiences and perceptions of the students of EVSU campus units and EVSU System in general. The performances of the Student Services generally rated as *Very Satisfactory*. However some deviants are found, as some students' sentiments are expressly narrated, which include the multiple standards and or different treatments of the students practiced by the personnel. Deviants are also found in the material, space and physical resources among campus units. The deviants are not the result of contextual delivery of Student services but as a result of lack of uniform standards and cultural framework among campus units.

### 6.1. Grounded Theory

The study was limited to students' experiences and perceptions and they are not sufficient to draw a final conclusion that will suggest knowledge and truth about the real *Performance Level of Student Services of EVSU*.

The *University Culture* is vital and critical to success of EVSU to reach its Vision, Mission and Goals. It requires clear communication policy, D&R for membership in departments, sections, groups and teams (avoid general D &

R applicable to all), and the professional will to implement a system (disciplinary action and rewards) that encourages desirable behaviours and discourages undesirable behaviours among personnel and rules for acquiring, maintaining, and losing power and status for the heads, supervisors, chiefs, managers, etc. if they failed to lead their personnel towards the expected outcome (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2011).

EVSU human resources' performances, based on the findings of the study, reflect their shared values shaped by lack of relevant trainings for organizational behavior and development (OB/OD). This is mainly due to lack of clearly defined and expressed University Culture. *Professional Culture* leads to success while lack of professional culture, particularism and or politicking which is barbarism leads to ignorance, biases and discrimination that result to failures. The culture plays an important role to quality learning experiences and academic success of the students.

Poor training begets poor human resources. Quality and relevant training begets quality human resources.

According to Astin's theory, in education, teachers and administrators often concentrate on their own techniques or processes and thus ignore or overlook what is going on with the student (in and outside the classroom). Astin believes that the involvement approach has the advantage of encouraging educators to focus more on *what the student is actually doing* within the environment. The environment should be enabled by the educators--teachers and administrators, for the achievement of expected outcome which is defined and part of the environment--the vision, mission and goals of the organization that requires and encourages active students' involvement.

Poor Environment (student involvement, Student Services, relationship) begets poor learning outcome. Quality Environment (students' involvement, Student Services, relationship) begets Quality learning outcomes.

Training (hard and soft skills, standards and cultural conditioning) is the predictor of excellent human capital while Student Services manned by personnel with human capital is a predictor of learning outcomes.

### 6.2. Conceptual Model of the Grounded Theory

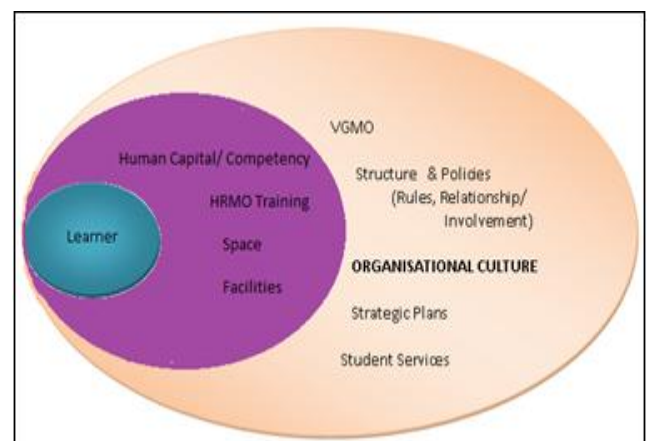


Figure 4: Conceptual Diagram of the Grounded Theory

The review of literature and evidences, Ciobanu (2013) suggests that effective student services can be traced to staff and employees beliefs and values by the manner in which the policies are elaborated, by the content of curriculum and services, and by the degree of knowledge regarding the development of the students and the way in which the *environment* outlines their behaviour. The ***culture of an organization*** is a powerful influence in the development of the *environment*. The culture is a body of solutions to problems that has consistently works for the group and guides the members how to perceive, think about, feel and act in relation to the problems at hand. Supporting and enhancing the student experience (academic, social, welfare and support) from first contact through academic life to graduation is critical to success in higher education today for both the student and the institution (Owens, 1991).

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