

Tuning Service Quality in Higher Education through Technology

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Abstract:

Right technology at the right pace at the right proportion with education will ensure the right service quality, which is the mantra for business success. Today's Indian education industry is facing a high demand for the technology, from the student generation as well as from the corporate. Colleges and universities grapple daily with the challenges of building their institutions' "Digital nervous systems", ensuring students and faculty access to the highest quality learning resources, training faculty members to use technology in instruction and funding technology procurements so that they can help their students to accomplish the technological skills which are highly needed from the technology driven work force. The rapid technological changes have made these new workplace competencies as important and greater knowledge of education as so critical. It also provides new and effective tools to help raise the knowledge and skills of teachers and the achievement of students. The implementation of technology at the right consideration of its breadth, assertiveness, relevancy and logic will augment service quality in higher education.

Keywords:

Higher Education, Technology, SERVQUAL, ARCS Model

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Introduction

Today, technology can be seen in almost every aspect of higher education, whether it is student services and human resources software, course management systems for on-site and distance courses, the increase in communication with students via e-mail, laptops in classrooms, hybrid classes, faculty in one part of the world teaching for institutions in another via distance, or faster and greater access to research materials via the Internet.

Technology helps the educational institutions in improving efficiency and achieving service excellence to the students' community. Service excellence is the mantra for surviving and also for succeeding in the competitive market by focusing on customer needs. Service excellence in higher education is possible through the introduction of reliable processes and procedures with the help of students' driven technology.

Customers' requirements are ever changing with the changes in the environmental

factors like economic, social and market. The changing preferences and the opportunities available are the major challenging areas, in which every industry as to take almost care to gain customer satisfaction.

In the case of educational industry, the student generation is a heterogeneous group with different academic backgrounds, career goals and personal ambitions, but they all have one thing in common: They must develop strong information technology skills to survive in a technology-driven workforce and in a world increasingly populated with computers. Colleges and universities grapple daily with the challenges of building their institutions' "digital nervous systems," ensuring students and faculty access to the highest-quality learning resources, training faculty members to use technology in instruction, and funding technology procurements so that they can help their students to accomplish critical technology skills.

Technology offers the opportunity to change the roles that teachers and students have traditionally played. With technology,

providing information, teachers are complimented to coach and facilitate students learning. With technology monitoring learning, students can turn into active learners and can effectively acquire new skills. If the goal of creating high-performance learning organizations is to be realized, the reinvention of education has to incorporate these new tools.

Driving factors for integrating technology with higher education

● *Corporate Expectations*

"Our students are entering a world in which 60 percent of the jobs will require technological competency, a world in which they must continue to update their occupational and technological skills in order to be successful," - *James L. Morrison*, Microsoft Scholar and professor of educational leadership at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In present scenario, simply the subject knowledge through books alone will not equip the students to face their corporate life. There comes the need for technological know-how to acquire more knowledge and skills to compete in a global environment.

● *Innovation*

The higher education community must continue to find innovative ways to empower educators to use technology to enhance learning and prepare students for careers and a lifetime of learning. Since innovation is the only solution for continuous improvement, it alone can confirm the business life of the educational institutions in the market.

● *Growing demands of the students*

As the students are facing a tough competition in the job market, their expectations of the educational institutions are also growing, from the simple basic knowledge to multi intelligence level. Inculcating multi intelligence is possible, only by the integration of technology and education. Training is important to students, who must master an impressive array of technology skills, ranging from understanding productivity and communication software tools to information-seeking and management skills, to excel in today's work force.

● *Global competition*

The Indian Education industry is filled with lots of public and private players and that too in global level. The global players in education are providing their service in India either through online or offline.

Benchmarking is the result of this hiked competition and hence competing with global players is demanding the utilization of technology in education.

Implementation of technology in higher education

Despite the move toward implementing technology in higher education is driven by an increasing number of competitors as well as student demand, there is still considerable resistance to embrace it. Adoption of technology requires more than simply installing a product. Any change will get a reaction of resistance and it is not an exemption to the technological changes in education.

Barriers: A set of barriers is to be acknowledged first, since any implementation will be a successful one when the barriers are overtaken in an effective manner.

Individual level barriers for adoption of technology

- Comfort with the traditional teaching methodologies.
- Lack of technological literacy or competency of the faculty members.

- Fear of the faculty members that students may prioritize the technology than them.
- Trusting the conventional teaching method as more effective.
- Lack of time commitment to learn the new technology with their other demands such as advising, research and service.
- Threat to academic freedom and autonomy.

Organizational level barriers for adoption of technology

- Lack of leadership support for the transformation.
- A deep rooted culture which recognizes the traditional delivery formats such as lecture.
- Mediocre regard for teaching and learning process in comparison with research and grants.
- Lack of recognition or interest among the peer group members.
- Lack of willingness to share the best practices.
- Lack of incentive to adopt or become proficient with new technology.

- Institutional policies which limit experimentation with alternative approaches to teaching.
- Excessively bureaucratic processes for obtaining approval, support, or resources.
- Quality assessment procedures which encourage conformity and inhibit risk taking.
- Lack of faculty involvement in the selection and implementation process.
- Lack of adequate infrastructure to support the technology.

Warnings for technological implementation:

While applying technology, institutions and implementers should ensure that:

- New technology makes sense educationally, truly advancing student learning.
- Investments in technology make sense in a realistic cost-benefit analysis.
- Students and faculty have full access to new technology and related training.
- Faculty and staff rights, including their intellectual property rights, are protected.

ARCS model (Surry & Land, 2008), which stands for Awareness, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction can be used as a way to increase acceptance and adoption of the new technology. Augment the *awareness* about modern technologies and its application in education process. Reveal the *relevance* of technology in higher education, Build *confidence* level of the users through support and mentoring activities, and increase *satisfaction* via motivational tools like rewards and incentives.

Impact of Technology on service quality

Service quality cannot be separated from the concept of customer satisfaction. The nature or characteristics of the service has been found to influence the relative importance of the drivers of customer satisfaction.

In higher education, every learner is having his own set of expectations towards service quality and they compare the actual experience with their expectations, which is resulting in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service.

The foundations of service quality may be viewed from two widely accepted perspectives, the SERVQUAL model and

the Technical/Functional Quality Framework. SERVQUAL offers five main dimensions of service quality to be evaluated in any service environment. Those are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. While reliability is basically concerned with the output of the service, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are more concerned with the service process. It is true that technology is playing a vital role in the delivering the service process and also in bringing the service outputs.

Another perspective on service quality is the Technical/Functional Quality perspective. Technical quality means the quality of what is provided while functional quality means the quality of how it is provided. Technical quality involves the actual competence of the provider and the technical outcome of the product. Functional quality refers to the delivery of the service. Its elements include items such as courtesy, confidence and attentiveness. These form the basis of the customer's evaluation of the service provided and provider. Due to the right implementation of technology in higher education, the service providers can enhance both the technical quality and functional quality.

Features of Technology that promotes Service quality of Higher Education

- **Access:** With technology, the world is considered as one global village. The learners are facilitated to acquire knowledge from any piece of the world by having superior access to technology with its connectivity.
- **Operability:** To undertake the current challenges prevailing in the corporate world, the learners have to update them continuously. This is extremely sustained by the technology principally because of its interoperability and transparency.
- **Resource location and direction:** Global learners are supported by technology to identify and share the knowledge based resources. The global resources are circulated and planned for collaborative projects for the benefit of the learners.
- **Capacity for engagement:** Today's learners are more heterogeneous in nature and hence a standardized service will not fulfill all their expectations. Service Customization is the only solution to achieve customer satisfaction and it is possible only by

the technology. It provides access to authentic and challenging tasks, interesting and useful databases or information sets and powerful relationships.

- **Ease of use:** Technology makes the learning process as more interesting and interacting one with its effective help, user friendliness, speed of processing and operations, user control, training and support.
- **Functionality:** Prepare learners for the Tech-Savvy work environment of the digital era, by developing multiple intelligences like Verbal/Linguistic intelligence, Logical/mathematical intelligence, Visual/spatial intelligence, Bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, Interpersonal intelligence and Intrapersonal intelligence.

The impact of using technology in higher education

Effects of Technology on Teaching and Learning

- Introduction of technology will tend to support teachers in becoming facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge.

- Technology usage increases teachers' sense of professionalism and achievement.
- Parents have access to classes, libraries, homework hotlines, school bulletin boards and other resources to assist them in helping their children succeed in academics.

Effects of technology on students

- Technology facilitates students to explore and represent information dynamically and in many forms.
- Assures social awareness and more confidence.
- Enhances their communication skill.
- Converts conventional students into independent learners and self-starters.
- Provides a platform to know about their areas of expertise and to share that expertise spontaneously.
- Develops a positive orientation to the future.

Conclusion

Right technology at the right pace facilitates in tune service quality in order to achieve the service excellence, which is the mantra for business success.

When deciding upon new technologies, one must assess the constraints and supports for adoption within their own institution and consider them as crucial to the process. One needs to consider the breadth, aggressiveness, differentiation, logic and orchestration of the technology that they are going to implement for achieving service excellence.

Fortunately, the rapid technological changes that have made these new workplace competencies so important and greater knowledge of education so critical also provide new and effective tools to help raise the knowledge and skills of teachers and the achievement of students.

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