

Enhancing Chinese Students' Needs Satisfaction and Loyalty: The Importance of Service Quality

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Abstract:- Nowadays, students' psychological needs satisfaction at college is receiving increasing attention. The article analyzes the influencing factors of student psychological needs satisfaction in vocational education in Jiangsu, China. The purpose of this paper is to examine the associations between the five major factors of service quality, including assurance, empathy, reliability, responsibility and tangibles, and students' psychological needs satisfaction, as well as their loyalty to college. Recommendations to improve students' psychological needs satisfaction include strengthening the service function of government, promoting institutional research and the specialization of student affairs, in order to help students develop self-efficacy and other positive attitudes.

Keywords:- service quality; students' psychological needs satisfaction; students' loyalty; higher vocational education

1. Introduction

As an important part of higher education, higher vocational education has developed by leaps and bounds since it came into being. Under the impetus of the central government's proposal to vigorously develop higher vocational education, under the encouragement of a series of policies and measures of the Ministry of Education, higher vocational education has developed rapidly and its important status has gradually manifested. On February 26, 2021, the Ministry of Education held a press conference to introduce the development of education in 2020. Fan Hailin, deputy director of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, said that China had built the largest higher education system in the world. In 2018, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in China reached 48.1%, which is about to enter the stage of popularization of higher education. Higher vocational education, as an important part of higher education, accounts for half of higher education. According to the list of national universities published by the Ministry of Education in 2022, as of June 15, 2022, there were 2956 institutions of higher learning in China, of which 1423 were higher vocational colleges.

At this stage, the higher education service quality has been paid attention by the society, government management departments and teaching units. However, the evaluation of higher education service quality has produced different evaluation results due to the difference of executing subjects. For example, in 2021, a survey on higher education satisfaction conducted by the third-party institute of education and scientific research and Sohu website, showed that the overall average score of satisfaction was only 40.96, which was between unsatisfactory and unsatisfactory. 68.9% of the public are not happy with the overall education status, and the satisfaction score of college students is only 37.50%. Among them, the public believes that the most prominent problem in higher education is the decline in the university education quality, which reflects the public's concern and dissatisfaction with the enrollment expansion in universities as well as the training quality degradation in recent years. In 2022, the Ministry of Education organized a group of experts to evaluate the undergraduate teaching level of 198 universities such as Peking University and Tsinghua University. The evaluation results show that 160 schools are excellent, 38 schools are good, 80.8% of them are excellent, and none of them are qualified or unqualified. The huge difference between the two is not mentioned at the moment, which makes the author feel sorry for the lack of the students who are enrolled in the colleges. How can the validity of the service quality evaluation be guaranteed if the students are excluded? In this case, there is a need to establish an evaluation system to assess the higher education service quality.

In this study, the researcher starts with the status quo of students' psychological needs satisfaction and loyalty to the service quality of Higher Vocational Education from the perspective of students, and tries to identify the main factors that influence students' psychological needs satisfaction and loyalty aiming. The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between service quality dimension and students' psychological needs satisfaction and loyalty in Jiangsu's higher vocational education.

2. Dimensional Definition of Higher Education Service Quality

According to current research, although the empirical studies on the measurement of university service quality by SERVQUAL scale has not been unanimously affirmed, it is still the most recognized measurement tool in the research area. For example, Zhang et al. (2022) conducted a study to assess patient perceived quality of Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) care in community health services via a cross-sectional questionnaire survey. Respondents were asked to rate their experiences on a Likert scale about tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy of the TCM services they received. And it is found that lower perceived tangibility and assurance was associated with rural residency. Therefore, the dimensions of higher education service quality in this study are based on the five dimensions of the service quality scale, according to Parasuraman et al. (1990). These include assurance, empathy, tangibles, reliability and responsiveness. The specific items that involved are deleted and amended according to the characteristics of higher education services.

2.1 Tangibility

PZB (1998) regards tangibles as the essential characteristic of customer perception of service quality. It refers to the entity part that can be perceived by customers in the service process, including tangible tools, equipment, personnel and written materials. All of these carriers are intuitive references for customers to evaluate service

quality. Shen Yong's survey in 2007 found that education has hidden and lagging characteristics, so it is difficult to evaluate it effectively. In this context, a key element in measuring the educational service quality is the tangible dimension. The tangibility of the service quality refers to the physical places provided by universities, the equipment for providing services and the instruments of staff and staff (Shi Guicheng, 2012). Tangibility is defined as the modern equipment of the school. The school staff dress neatly and appropriately. The school office looks professional(Ding Li, 2017). The research considers that tangibility is the essential information of doctoral education service presented by universities through visible carriers(Hao Hongrun, 2018).

2.2 Reliability

The ability to fulfill service commitments reliably and accurately is the most important dimension of consumer service (Parasuraman et al. 1990). Reliability dimension, according to Zhu et al. (2002), positively and directly influence customer satisfaction. Reliability emphasizes that universities can provide a variety of educational service products for doctoral students in a standardized and accurate manner, which makes doctoral students feel that it is trustworthy and dependable to choose to receive doctoral education in this university (Hao Hong Run, 2018). Some scholars have looked into the correlation between education service quality and students' psychological needs satisfaction, and concluded that reliability has a direct impact on satisfaction (Raposo HAM., 2007 Lampley, 1999; Luo Changfu, 2006; Hu Zixiang, 2006; Jihui, 2012). Al Alak and Alaser (2012) studied the relationship between service quality and students' psychological needs satisfaction, and argued that guaranteeing and reliability are two dimensions of service quality that need to be improved most urgently. Universities can reliably and accurately provide services promised to students (Shi Guicheng, 2012).

2.3 Responsibility

Responsiveness stands for the willingness of a corporation to respond to customers' requirements and follow up with prompt services when required (Parasuraman et al, 1988; Wolfinbarger and Gilly 2003; C. Jayawardhena, 2004). PZB (1998) believes that responsiveness mainly refers to responsiveness, i.e. readiness to provide customers with fast and effective services at all times. Responsibility emphasizes the timeliness and effectiveness of services. (Shi Guicheng, 2012) defines responsiveness as the degree to which universities can respond quickly to students'demands and are willing to provide real-time services. Selim Ahmed and M uhammad. M. M. (2014) found that academic responsiveness has a strong directly impact satisfaction.

2.4 Assurance

Some scholars believe that assurance is an employee's knowledge and courtesy, as well as his/her ability to instill trust and confidence (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003; Parasuraman et al. 1988; C. Jayawardhena, 2004). Assurance emphasizes the competence of personnel providing doctoral education services. Such as the level of professional knowledge, academic level and scientific research ability of tutors; professional knowledge and teaching level of teachers; professional knowledge level of management, psychology, pedagogy and other professional knowledge of administrative staff, ability to deal with daily affairs; related skills of logistics personnel (Hao Hongrun, 2018). Shah. FT (1996)Studied the quality of customer service in Pakistan's higher education sector. The results show

that reliability and assurance are closely related to customer satisfaction. Al Alak and Alaser (2012) explored the relationship between overall service quality and students' psychological needs satisfaction at the University of Jordan Business School, and found that assurance is the most urgent dimension of service quality to be improved.

2.5 Empathy

Empathy refers to expressing individual attention to the needs of the customer (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Jayawadhna & Co., 2004). Zhengwei Ma (2012) indicated that empathy has little effect on customers' satisfaction. Investigations revealed that there was no one there. Empathy has a significant and positive relationship with customers' satisfaction (Shankar Chelliah et al., 2010). Abu Hasan, Abd Rahman and Abd Razak (2008) carried out a study on service quality in private higher education institutions and revealed that students' psychological needs satisfaction and empathy had the greatest correlation. (Ding Li, 2017) argued that empathy is defined as the concern and understanding of students' demands by school staff; when students come, school staff receive students in their respective posts, etc.

3. Students' psychological needs satisfaction

In the 1960s, the concept of "Students' psychological needs satisfaction" was first put forward in USA, and was put forward by American universities to learn from the concept of Customer Satisfaction for business research. The results are directly applied to the field of higher education. Elliot & Healy (2001) believes that students' psychological needs satisfaction is the short-term attitude of students after they evaluate the perceived educational services. Oliver et al. (1989) considered that students' satisfaction was "their subjective experience during college and their perception of the value of educational experience". Bryant (2001) holds that students' psychological needs satisfaction is the feeling of satisfaction with their college career once their expectations are met or exceeded.

According to the academic definition, students' psychological needs satisfaction stands for a kind of psychological feeling that students get after receiving education service process and compare with their expectations.

Measurement of Students' psychological needs satisfaction. The development of students' psychological needs satisfaction research begins with a thorough study on customer satisfaction. Most of the current studies are the measurement of customer satisfaction. There are two main measuring angles for customer satisfaction measurement in foreign academia. One is the specific content of measuring customer satisfaction. This method is mainly aimed at the customer's emotional reaction towards a particular purchase behavior, and the other is to measure the satisfaction as a whole, which is the overall evaluation of various products and service experience provided by customers. Many scholars believe that there remains a causal relationship between customer satisfaction and customer perceived service quality. Therefore, they advocate the measurement of customer satisfaction as a whole. This study also regards students' psychological needs satisfaction as the overall response of students to their perception of educational quality.

4. Students' loyalty

To sum up, foreign scholars mainly take loyalty as the result variable of satisfaction and discuss how to evaluate it. Their main viewpoints are divided into three kinds: one is to evaluate from the perspective of customer behavior, the other is to evaluate from the perspective of customer attitude, and the last one is to evaluate from the perspective of customer attitude. One is the comprehensive evaluation of customers' behavior and attitude. Most domestic scholars classify students' loyalty from the perspective of comprehensive evaluation, which not only measures students' acceptance of school education, but also measures whether students have the behavior of recommending others and subsidizing their alma mater. This study will use the research results of the above literature for reference, introduce students' loyalty as a result variable affecting satisfaction into the conceptual model, and evaluate students' loyalty from the perspective of comprehensive evaluation.

5. Conclusion and Managerial Implications

The University is a not-for-profit institution, and it connects with various stakeholders. The essence of university management is a collaborative mechanism of "college stakeholders". As customers who consume higher education services, students are the core stakeholders. They have "ownership relationship", "market relationship" and "bystander interest relationship" with colleges at the same time. Its "economic power" can influence universities through market decision-making, or use "political power", that is, organize to "complain" or politicize market relations. At present, China is at the critical moment of the popularization, marketization and internationalization of higher education. We must realize the market dominant position of students as consumers and constantly enhance the service quality to satisfy the demands of consumers.

4.1 The service function of government is one of the countermeasures to enhance college students' satisfaction

With the purpose of improving students' satisfaction and protect the legitimate rights and interests of students as customers, the concept should be improved. Change is the forerunner. Developing and discarding the concept of higher education product quality and establishing the concept of higher education service quality are the inevitable demands of the healthy development of China's higher education, which requires the transformation of macro government functions into guarantee. Whether legislating, evaluating, constructing the national college students' satisfaction index system, or establishing the National Education Quality Award, the purpose is to change the government's "control" function into "service" function and running schools into education. It is committed to formulating macro education policies and creating a competitive environment in the education market, so as to enhance the service quality and students' satisfaction.

Specifically, the rights of students as customers can be guaranteed through legislation. First, include students as customers in the consumer rights and interests protection law, ensure that students enjoy the right to know, to choose, to fair trade and to claim, and establish the dominant position of scholars in the market; Second, under the guidance of the service concept, revise the regulations on the management of students in colleges and the code of conduct, change the concept of student work, and transform from "managing students" to "serving students", so

that universities can have orders to follow when focusing on providing services for the development of students; Third, provide sufficient information to ensure that students enjoy the freedom to drop out and transfer. For truly helping students, the government shall provide the public with true and sufficient information on the higher education market, and supervise the information provided by universities and colleges on specialty setting, curriculum arrangement, syllabus, strength of teachers, employment prospects, tuition payment, students' extracurricular activities and campus life, financial aid (scholarship, loan, work) that universities can provide students, accommodation and expenses in schools, etc. Put an end to false publicity in enrollment by legislation to ensure that students can get true and credible information about universities. In the meanwhile, we should expand the freedom of entering and transferring schools, eliminate various barriers in the source market of higher education students, and form a competition mechanism between schools and majors.

Improve the current higher education evaluation. Students' satisfaction index can be added to the existing evaluation index system of colleges held by the Ministry of Education, or students' satisfaction can be measured by intermediary organizations and universities themselves. Evaluating the higher education service quality from the perspective of students' satisfaction can not only avoid the singleness of the index system, but also make the index system in a dynamic and open state. It can also avoid the persistent disease of emphasizing scientific research over teaching, hardware over software and results over process, and urge universities to pay attention to connotation construction; It can also promote universities to truly realize the concept of "student-oriented" and avoid the "virtual acceptance" of the concept of "students are customers" (that is, the coping mechanism of oral change but no change in essence). The evaluation of service quality and students' satisfaction can be regarded as an important part of quality assurance to guarantee the legitimate rights and interests of students.

4.2 Institutional research is the second countermeasure to improve college students' satisfaction

In addition to the transformation of government functions from "management" to "service" in the macro field, we can also do something in the micro field of colleges. The institutional research of European and American universities is a kind of institutional management consulting with students, mainly targeting student affairs and satisfaction. At present, the popularization of higher education in China has led to a sharp increase in the scale of higher education; Marketization makes the allocation of higher education resources more dependent on market means, and the accountability of students and other stakeholders to universities is becoming more frequent; Internationalization makes the competition of higher education surpass national boundaries. Leaving aside the emergence of the student buyer's market caused by the marketization and internationalization of higher education, the scale expansion caused by popularization will lead to the overall tension of campus resources, and the resulting quality problems will inevitably lead to students' dissatisfaction and deviant behavior. As China's higher education is still a scarce resource, the student union will tolerate the poor service quality provided by universities as much as possible, but when the problems accumulate to a certain extent, it is bound to cause student unrest. According to Trow's analysis, one of the reasons for the student riots in Europe and American in the 1960s is the popularization and the rapid expansion of higher education scale. If we do not take the initiative to reform the management mode of colleges and pay no attention to the research of college student affairs, China is unlikely to

avoid such tragedies. These problems should be studied and solved immediately.

Institutional research institutionalization must include training institutional researchers, promoting the establishment of institutional research database, carrying out institutional research work and academic exchanges, and promoting the establishment of institutional research institutions. Now, the research of Chinese colleges can take the institute of higher education as the base to carry out the research of various student affairs. Among them, the investigation of students' satisfaction should become the primary task, timely understand the problems of students' dissatisfaction with education service, and improve the management practice of the University, which can not only become an outlet for students' emotions and improve students' satisfaction, but also timely understand the operation status of colleges in China, which is of far-reaching significance to help China's higher education tide over the period of popularization.

4.3 The specialization of student affairs is the third countermeasure to enhance college students' satisfaction

With the purpose of improving the higher education service quality and students' satisfaction, we must carry out students' expectation management, enhance students' perception of service quality, narrow the gap between students, and promote the balance between perception and expectation of education service quality provided by universities. At the institutional level, students exist as individuals. By bridging the gap between students and improving students' satisfaction, the goal of student affairs is to take students as individuals, understand students' needs, serve students and promote students' development.

To improve students' satisfaction, the primary task of student affairs specialization is to establish the concept of student affairs of service and development, and provide students with a set of comprehensive student services and projects outside the classroom. The mission of student affairs is complementary to the mission of academic education, which aims to promote students' learning and development. Secondly, we must broaden the content of college student affairs. Learning from the contents of foreign student work and combined with the urgent tasks of college student work in China, we should clearly include the guidance and services for students' academic guidance, economic problems, emotional problems, communication problems, emotional problems, psychological problems, health problems and job selection into the scope of student work; emphasize on the research on the demographic characteristics of students, and launch various services to support students' development and provide individualized services for different students' needs. At this stage, projects such as psychological counseling, employment guidance and financial assistance should be developed and improved first, and corresponding institutions and personnel should be added to undertake these tasks, rather than just understanding student work as ideological and political work.

Third, we must optimize the organizational structure of the student affairs department. The reform of college student work management system in China can adopt the working mechanism of "overall specialization", "multi center in the system" and "article based and one-level management". From the leadership system of student work, we can adopt "overall specialization". The institution setting and authority distribution of Student Affairs Management in Colleges should be conducted at the school level. A student affairs office should be set up at the

school level to report directly to the vice president in charge and directly to the students and student associations. From the perspective of internal organizational structure, "multi center within the system" should be adopted. Taking the student affairs office as a specialized agency, all student affairs in charge of the current part-time department are classified here, forming a new organization with specific functions, and establishing multiple centers and offices led by the vice president. From the perspective of management mechanism, the operation mode of "one-level management and rule-based" should be changed from the current combination of sections and blocks at the school and department levels.

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