Quality of administrative services in a South African higher education institution. Stakeholder perceptions

Nandipha Mfecane
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa, email:
mfecanen@cput.ac.za

Chux Gervase Iwu
University of the Western Cape, South Africa, email: cgiwu@uwc.ac.za

Faeda Mohsam
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa, email:
mohsamf@cput.ac.za

Abstract: Student administration in a higher education institution encompasses admissions and registration, accommodation, health services, assessments, and several aspects of a student's life from the first contact with the institution until graduation. We set out to determine how students felt about these services at a South African university. The need to understand how students perceive these services is becoming increasingly important, especially in higher education, because it impacts not only student recruitment but the overall image of the university. Findings from this study can lead to much needed improvement of service quality. Data was collected from students using an open-ended questionnaire while interviews and focus groups were used for administrative staff. We realised a mix of feedback in terms of how students and administrative staff felt about the quality of service at the university. In part, the findings suggest the need to sufficiently cater for staff and students for them to experience enriched job experiences and better teaching and learning services from the university respectively. This study not only contributes to the literature on administrative competency of higher education staff, but it also offers a new way of looking at stakeholders to understand the various skills, i.e., functional skills, essential skills, and emerging skills, required for optimal effectiveness of administrative professionals in the new world of work.

Keywords: customer service, customer satisfaction, service quality, higher education, administrative staff, students.

Introduction

The South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) established the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) in 2001 with the mandate to perform institutional audits, programme accreditation and quality promotion. That being said, institutions have a responsibility to ensure that they offer high-quality services to their stakeholders. However, as the HEQC declares, institutions of higher learning seem to focus mainly on teaching, research and community engagement, thus, very little attention is given to administrative functions especially those that directly concern students. These include admissions and registration, academic and financial support, accommodation, health services and assessments management.

Since 2015, South African students have called for free higher education. What this will translate to is that universities and colleges will have many more students accessing higher education. While colleges and universities are currently grappling with large numbers of students wanting to enrol, an important question that warrants an answer is: are higher education institutions administratively capable to maintain quality services in all spheres of their operations, especially during applications, admissions, and registration periods? How do students rate the work of administrative staff and how do administrative staff themselves perceive their role? These questions are necessary given the fact that administrative offices are presumably the first point of contact in any higher education institution. Therefore, the administrator plays a critical role in the way service is offered in higher education (Owusu & Owusu, 2014).

It is almost inconceivable for any higher education facility to properly function without administrators; there would be no applications and admissions processed, therefore, no students would be enroled; no faculty office would exist, thus no academic structure and no classes would be scheduled; no accounts and assessments offices, thus, no fees processed, and no results published (Fish, 2003). This description of how things can unarguably go wrong if a fully functional administrative office is non-existent, somewhat relates to the view of Soutar and McNeil (1996), who pointed out that an institution of higher learning is not simply about addressing academic issues but also delivering administrative services in a quality manner because such is

fundamental to students' overall satisfaction. As internal customers Finney and Finney (2010) and Maguad (2007) argue that students deserve to be treated well. The expectation of quality service is even more enhanced with a potential student who visits an institution of higher learning hoping to be assisted. That initial interaction may be the basis of the relationship with the institution going forward. Institutions of higher learning are even more pressured given that with information communication technology (ICT), both internal and external customers are aware of their options, therefore customer service expectations are more challenging (Zackal, 2016). How customers determine whether a service provided was exceptional, depends on their perceptions. So, it becomes increasingly important for organisations to understand how their customers perceive them, and this could bring much needed improvement of service quality (Gibson-Odgers, 2008).

Berndt and Tait (2014) view service quality as the capability of an institution to establish customer expectations appropriately and to provide quality service at a level corresponding to customer expectations. Arshad and Ameen (2010) also believe that service quality can be ascertained by evaluating the divergence between perceptions and expectations and can be better defined by those who acquire the service than by those who provide it. Given the foregoing, this study was carried out to determine the perceptions and experiences of staff and students of a South African higher education institution regarding the quality of administrative services in a faculty.

Literature Review

Stakeholder relations in Higher Education

A stakeholder can be described as any party or group that can influence or be influenced by the organisation and its activities (Berndt & Tait, 2014).

A common thread that runs through stakeholder theory suggests the need to understand how value is created, managing ethics, and generally helping managers consider targeted management approaches (Parmar et al., 2010). In this regard, stakeholders can be described as strategically significant to the organisation, because they can influence the functioning and the ultimate survival of the organisation (Berndt &

Tait, 2014). In short, the consequence of not sufficiently performing and having highly ethical relationships with stakeholders is one that Jones et al. (2018) caution against because it can lead to low levels of trust, lack of cooperation, and poor information sharing. Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a range of stakeholders, including students, staff, potential employers, sponsors and more. While all their needs must be met, the student is considered the stakeholder with the most influence (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006), whose actions can negatively affect the institution (Berndt & Tait, 2014).

The literature reveals that stakeholders have competing interests, and their influence affects different areas of the organisation. Therefore, organisations are constantly challenged to meet and satisfy their demands (George, 2003). The most essential initial step is for organizations to identify and categorize their stakeholders, understand, and prioritize their needs and have methods in place to anticipate their actions (Burrows, 1999).

Ferrero-Ferrero et al. (2018) suggest that the mission, the core values, and the institutional strategy of higher learning institutions should commit to hands-on stakeholder engagement. Collaboration with stakeholders by promoting open discussion, deliberation and participation should be a component of the collective mission and culture of every institution.

Stakeholders are believed to have the power to influence, or be influenced by the organisation's objective because they are part of a more well-informed and perceptive public than in the past. Building and maintaining good relationships as well as meeting their diverse needs and expectations is critical. For some stakeholders to be satisfied, they need to know that the needs of other stakeholders are also considered. For example, lecturers need to feel that not only is management satisfying their needs, but students' needs as well (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004).

HEIs should therefore encourage stakeholder engagement by introducing educational programmes that bear significant social, learning, and organisational benefit and utilising administrative and support staff to stabilise their varying interests (Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2018).

Perceptions of Stakeholders

Customers perceive service quality differently; therefore, the level of satisfaction can be influenced by different factors (Brink & Berndt, 2005). Factors such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, or tangibles may play a major role in customer perception of service quality. Customer expectations and perceptions are the major elements of quality definition, allowing for gaps to be identified and managed. However, if perceptions do not meet expectations, poor quality service will exist (Arshad & Ameen, 2010). HEIs need to realise that a customer will form perceptions of the value derived based on how they build relationships with their stakeholders. Sponsors and investors may hesitate to support a university that is known for neglecting its employees and student needs or social responsibilities. Customer-focused organisations are successful because they have a unified focus on strong commitment to fulfil or even anticipate the needs of the customer (Lewis & Smith, 1994), thus suggesting that it is critical for HEIs to recognise whom they serve in order to tailor the appropriate services to them.

Customers in higher education may form expectations from various sources, such as advertisements or word of mouth (Ghobehei, Sadeghvaziri, Ebrahimi, & Afshar K. (2019). This suggests that they perceive the service they receive based on how it measures up to their expectations (Koskina, 2013). Ideally, customers' perceptions should be higher than their expectations of the services, in order for the services to be regarded as high quality (Akdere, Top, & Tekingündüz, (2020). Hence, managing student expectations is important to ensure proper service quality in higher education (Latif, Latif, Farooq Sahibzada, & Ullah, 2019).

Similarly, organisations should realise that to successfully satisfy external stakeholder's needs, internal customers' needs must be satisfied (Balta, 2018). Regarding HEIs, the expectations of their students are essential as they are their stakeholders and main customers at the same time (Khan & Matlay, 2009). Therefore, this suggests that for institutions of higher education to successfully compete in their target market, they should offer exceptional service that caters for all of their stakeholders. A sound organisational culture that respects internal stakeholders can make it possible to build driven

manpower, commitment, high efficiency, invention, and a unique competitive advantage (Al-Ababneh, Masadeh, Al-Shakhsheer, & Ma'moun, 2018; Zainal Abidin, & Roslin, 2019; Suomi, Saraniemi, Vähätalo, Kallio, & Tevameri, 2021).

Methodology

With the objective to determine the impact of the quality of the administrative services offered as well as stakeholder perceptions and experiences, we collected qualitative and quantitative data.

The population comprised administrative staff and students within the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences across the different campuses. The administrative staff component included those involved in registration and results (assessment and graduation), while the student participants were in second, third, fourth and postgraduate levels from six academic departments within the faculty. The departments were Nursing, Medical Imaging and Therapeutic Sciences (previously Radiography), Biomedical Sciences, Dental Sciences, Ophthalmic Sciences and Wellness Sciences. Following the methodological style of Sibanda et al. (2015), first-year students were excluded from the study because we considered that they had not fully assimilated into the university system.

Two separate data sets – quantitative and qualitative - were collected in 2020 for this study. The quantitative data was obtained from students using an open-ended questionnaire drawing on previous studies (Latif, et al. 2019; Teeroovengadum, et al. 2019; Yeo, 2008). The questionnaire was designed to allow the students to respond freely to the questions as we believed that the students may not feel comfortable expressing themselves in focus group discussions, necessitating an open-ended questionnaire to voice their experiences and perceptions of quality-of-service delivery in administrative processes (Killen, 1994; Frazer & Lawley, 2000).

For the qualitative data, interviews – both one on one and focus group discussions - were conducted (by two members of the research team) with staff members involved in student services, specifically admissions, registration, accounts, and results – assessment and graduation - to understand their views and perceptions of quality of services offered to stakeholders. The interviews were digitally

recorded. During the interviews and focus group meetings, participants were questioned about various aspects relating to the administrative services offered. The focus group discussion and interview entailed a brief introduction to the study followed by obtaining informed consent. We made it clear to the participants that we were committed to the integrity of the data we wanted, and as such, would ensure the confidentiality of the data we would collect.

A total of 187 students and seven staff members participated in this study.

Reliability and Validity

Validity is focused on the integrity of the findings elicited from a study, whereas reliability refers to the extent to which the study generates consistent results (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A pilot test was conducted to ensure that the questions were fully understood – basically to test the functionality of the chosen instrument. The sample instrument was distributed to 11 students from other departments not associated with the faculty in question, while three academic staff members and four non-academic staff members were also invited to participate in the pilot. This assisted us in making some necessary adjustments to the questions.

Analysis of Results

We analysed the quantitative data we received using 'R Statistical Computing', a free-access software that is used by statisticians and other data miners worldwide (Chambers, 2008). The target population for this study included students registered in the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences as well as administrative staff members from various departments involved with registration and results. Table 1 shows the categories that were analysed to determine the views of students on the quality of administrative services offered to them.
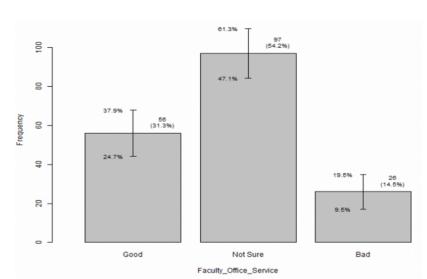
Table 1. Categories that were analysed

#1	Level of service from the faculty office
#2	Level of service during registration
#3	Assistance with results and accounts
#4	Awareness of available services
#5	Effects on studies

Table 2 shows the profile of student participants.

Table 2. Students Profile

Distribution	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
16-20	35	19%
21-25	84	46%
25-30	28	15%
30-35	14	8%
35-40	15	8%
40+	7	4%
Gender		
Male	50	27%
Female	136	73%
Level of study		
Year 2	79	44%
Year 3	38	21%
Year 4	37	20%
Postgraduate	27	15%
Campus		
Bellville	122	65%
Cape Town	38	20%
Tygerberg	27	14%

Of the 187 students who completed the questionnaire, 73 percent were female. This is highlighted to express the fact that most of the students in the faculty are female. Second year level of study was represented amongst 6 departments with 44 percent. The age range of participants was between 16 and over 40 years, while most of the participants were between the ages 21 and 25, representing 46 percent.

Category 1: Level of service from the faculty office

Figure 1. Level of service in the faculty office

Most students considered themselves "not sure" about how they rated the service they received in the faculty office. However, the number of students that rated the service "good" was more than the number of students that rated it "bad."

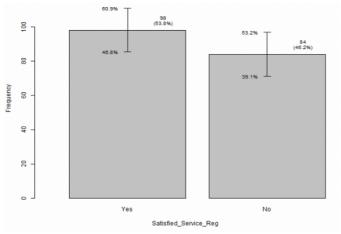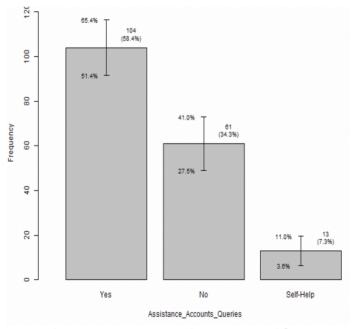*Category 2: Level of service during registration*

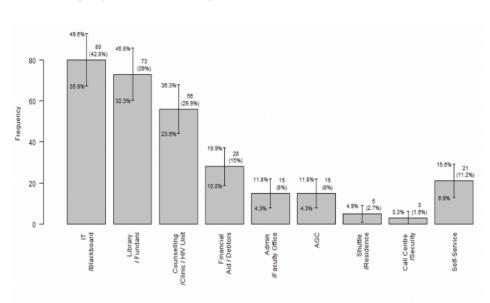**Figure 2.** Level of service during registration

A slight majority of respondents (54%) indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of service offered during registration.

Category 3: Assistance with results of accounts

Figure 3. Assistance with accounts and fees

Most respondents indicated that they did get assistance with their accounts and fees queries. A small minority indicated that they used self-help, but over one-third of respondents indicated that they did not get assistance.

Category 4: Awareness of available services

Figure 4. Awareness of available services

The services named by students most often were IT/Blackboard (43%) and Library/Fundani (39%), followed by Counselling/Clinic/HIV Unit services (30%), Financial Aid/Debtors (15%) and Self-service (11%). Administrative and Faculty Office services were mentioned by only 8% of respondents, so these services do not seem to be very well known among students.
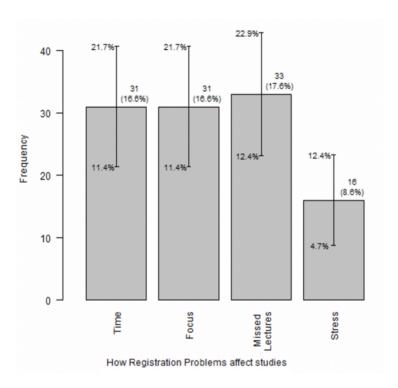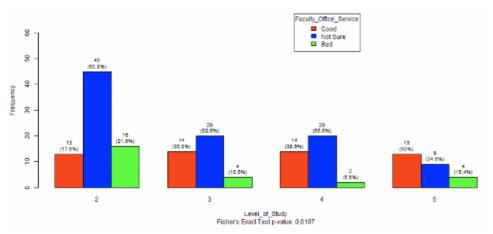
Category 5: Effects on studies

Figure 5. Effects on studies

Students reported that owing to registration delays, they were late for, or missed lectures (18%), which affected their ability to catch up or focus on their studies (17%). Going back and forth the administration offices to rectify registration and other matters was time consuming (17%) and stressful (9%).
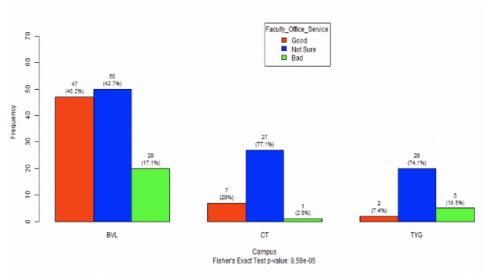
Two-Way Frequency Analysis

Various two-way frequency analyses were run to look for relationships between certain demographic variables with other study variables. This included faculty office services and level of study, satisfaction with service during registration and level of study, assistance with account queries and gender as well as service quality (satisfaction) within campuses. Various graphical methods (two-way bar graphs) were combined with a statistical hypothesis test called Fisher's Exact Test. Exact p-values that were calculated yielded a statistically significant relationship at 0.1 significance level.

The results suggest a significant relationship among level, age and perceptions with older students, indicating that they were happier with the service received during registration than 2nd year students. Students between 16 and 25 years of age were less satisfied with the service during registration than those above 25 years. Interestingly, more students from a satellite campus believed the quality of service was lower than their expectations.
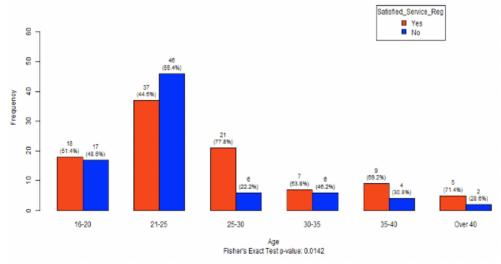

Figure 6. Faculty office service and level of study

Figure 6 above represents a comparison between a student's level of study and how students rate the service in the Faculty Office. It appears that students at higher levels tend to rate the service of the Faculty Office higher than Level 2 students, most of whom were 'Not Sure' about this service.

Figure 7. Faculty office service and campus

This comparison is between campuses and how students rate the quality of service at the Faculty Office. Most students on the Cape Town Campus and Tygerberg Campus indicated that they were not sure about the quality of service, while those in Bellville were more evenly distributed across 'Good', 'Not Sure', and 'Bad'. Tygerberg-based students more frequently described the Faculty Office service as 'Bad' (19%).

Figure 8. Satisfied with the service during registration and age

The level of satisfaction with registration services varies somewhat with age. The 16-20 and 21-25 age groups are the least likely to answer 'Yes' they are satisfied, while the 26-30 age group is the most likely to say 'Yes'.

Analysis of Interviews and Focus Group Meetings

This study primarily aimed to understand the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders on quality of service as well as the effects thereof. The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews and focus group meetings was done descriptively in the form of narratives, often leading to verbatim presentations of the views of the participants.

The sessions with the staff dealt with (1) delineating the customer, (2) understanding their perception of the service they delivered, and (3) whether they felt that students were aware of the services they offered.

Delineation of a customer

During interviews and focus group meetings with administrative staff, we determined their understanding of who constitutes a customer in the university. The administrative staff recognised students as their primary customers followed by academics, whom they referred to as secondary customers. Further classification of customers in terms of priority according to the administrative staff are as follows:

> Key external customers are those who are applying to study at the university; primary internal customers are registered students; and secondary internal customers are service units and faculties whom we serve, such as colleagues and academic staff.

It is clear from the responses above that the primary internal customers of HEIs are the students. This finding is consistent with those of Maguad (2007) and Finney and Finney (2010).

Perceptions of service

On perceptions of service, administrative staff members stated that they understood the importance of offering high-quality service to the customers they serve; however, they themselves do not believe it is of an acceptable standard. Their view was that staff do not go the extra mile and are not willing to make an effort to do their jobs. It was also their view that the high level of non-compliance to policies and lack of cooperation among departments and units was the reason for the crippling service. Some of the responses included:

> In terms of service quality, we are lacking when it comes to customer service, we are not responding in time, our turnaround times are very bad, our handling of telephone queries is not the best. We do need tools, or rather systems, to assist us in that regard.

> No, I wouldn't say we provide good-quality service, because we get a lot of complaints. For instance, someone calls the switchboard, and they are referred to the wrong faculty. I think that is the face of the university, the call centre, so once people call that number, they expect to be directed to the right section.

> It starts there and [the] admissions department directs people somewhere else. I would say it needs a lot [of] improvement.

The call for tools and systems by a staff participant may be an indication that they need customer service training. There is abundant evidence in the literature (for example Clark, Browne, Boardman, Hewitt, & Light, 2016; Holzweiss, & Walker, 2018; Sadeghi, & Fekjær, 2019; Smidt, 2020) that continuous training of frontline staff advances the goal of an organisation. However, it must be noted that "training is of little use to organisations if the knowledge and skills learned are not transferred to job performance" (Burke, & Hutchins, 2007). After all, the organisation's goal should be to strive consciously to increase the level of service provided to customers (Lucas, 2011).

Awareness of services available

Regarding the question of the awareness of the services available, staff members who offer the services do not believe that stakeholders are aware of what is available to assist them. Administrative staff are also of the view that poor service has the potential to dent the image and reputation of the institution and risk its chances of attracting good students. These views are typified in the expressions of participants, thus:

> Not always, especially students; we find that during orientation, available services are not fully explained, where to go for what; they sometimes are really clueless.

> If someone wishes to enrol at this university, the person may go elsewhere because of what is said about the way we do things here.

> We do receive queries that are not supposed to be attended to by us, particularly if they were not correctly attended to by the call centre.

Pitman (2000) believes that appropriately defining a customer and sufficiently attending to his or her needs is crucial.

Discussion

This study was undertaken to determine the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of the quality of administrative services in a South African higher education institution. The results provide some important insights into how the participants perceived the services they receive (students) and the services they (administrative staff) offer respectively. Despite considering themselves as important customers of the university, and slightly satisfied with the quality of service during registration, there is a high number of students who believe that the process is slow, difficult to comprehend, especially with persistent systemic problems such as the internet not working properly, blocked account without any reasonable explanation, frequent timetable changes and more. Stress and missed classes are among the registration problems that have been found to have undesirable effects on studies. Students were also asked if lecturers understood the problems they face during registration and the results show that, about 3 in 10

students do not think so. Most students appear to be satisfied with the service they receive in accounts and fees department, and that they often get the assistance they need even though some of them seldom have queries.

Students still prefer online registration as opposed to manual registration, although some students would like assistance with certain aspects of the registration process. However, they are still confronted by countless administrative activities that often require them to follow a considerable number of steps and time spent standing in long queues at different departments.

Service providers should ensure that service recipients experience good service, as they will share unpleasant experiences with others (Watjatrakul, 2014). On the question of awareness of services available, it is a concern that most respondents are not aware of the administrative and faculty offices' services. Clearly, available services are not well known among students and many of them do not know which department to go to for assistance. When students were asked which section they believe should be improved to better their university lives, they generally believe all sections involved with registration need improvement.

According to the administrative staff members, who participated in the study, the quality of services offered is not of a good standard in all areas and requires a great deal of improvement. They believe that low quality of the services offered has an impact on the administration of policies and systems in place as well as on the image of the university. To view a student as a customer entails a broad insight into service quality, and focusing not only on teaching and learning standards, but also in ensuring that the student enjoys university life; student administrative services have a responsibility in this respect (Pitman, 2000). Furthermore, seeing students as customers gives HEIs the upper hand over competitors and improves their capacity to attract and keep them.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study sought to understand how stakeholders perceive the quality of administrative services offered in higher education. From the results discussed above, students and staff believe that the major

stakeholders of the university are students. Registration is one of the most eventful periods in higher education that involves all stakeholders of the university, especially students. With administration playing a major role in this process, it is important for the university to constantly strive to improve the quality of the service. Administrative staff should be fully equipped and well managed to perform efficiently. This may eliminate problems often faced by students during registration and the effects thereof.

If customer care is central to growing a successful operation, it is crucial to curtail shortcomings to prevent customers defecting to a competitor (Helms & Mayo, 2008). Regular student feedback surveys and suggestions may play a role in improving service quality and providing a better service to stakeholders.

Students mentioned that they neither read nor receive the registration information. It is recommended that the university does more to raise awareness of the services available and communicate information effectively to aid the students in their university life. Administrative services should be part of a marketing strategy such as open day and orientation. This would go a long way in providing students with an in-depth understanding of available services and the processes to follow.

As part of the quality of value-added service, the faculty student administration should be service focused, and client centred to be able to communicate effectively with students (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004).

Monitoring performance and controlling function from line managers would achieve higher levels of efficiency. It is vital that all staff deliver quality service, especially frontline staff who deal directly with the public. Faculty student administration should acknowledge that HEIs are part of a market in which stakeholders who pay a fee for a service expect more (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004). As global education competitiveness is increasing, continuous evaluation of service quality from a comprehensive approach is critical. To keep improving support services and utilise facilities effectively, non-teaching staff should be service focused and not simply operationally effective (Yeo, 2008).

Administrative staff should understand their roles and responsibilities to properly address the needs of stakeholders, in order to change their perceptions and better their experiences. Yeo (2008) expounds that staff roles and responsibilities should be clear, with

emphasis on what should be the expected level of service. Lack of these may easily cripple productivity, which in turn may affect customer service. Encouraging the commitment of all staff in applying a student-centred approach as opposed to focusing on getting the job done can contribute to high service quality in higher education and improve the experience of students. After all, administrators are regarded as change agents. The traditional skills of administrative professionals have become obsolete, necessitating more advanced skills (Venter et al., 2019). One can argue that the administrators in the surveyed university were not particularly changing lives. Therefore, this study recommends that administrative staff are trained in what Burton and Shelton (2010), Davies et al. (2013) and the World Economic Forum (2016) regard as key drivers of change for the administrative professional. These include training in lifelong learning skills, future work skills, and workforce strategy for the 4th Industrial Revolution (see Figure 9).

LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS

- **BASIC WORKPLACE SKILLS**
- Technology
- Operation of systems
- Manage information
- Locate and use resources
- **BASIC WORKPLACE KNOWLEDGE SKILLS**
- Thinking skills
- Reading skills
- Writing skills
- Mathematical operations
- Listening skills
- Speaking skills
- **PERSONAL QUALITIES**
- Be responsible
- Be dependable
- Be a self-starter
- Positive self-esteem
- Social adaptability
- Exhibit self-management
- Display integrity/honesty
- Project a pleasant personality
- Show your human side
- Project a professional image
- **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**
- Teamwork
- Recognise individual differences
- Work with difficult people
- Understand conflict resolution
- Teach others
- Offer exceptional customer service
- Exercise leadership
- Effective negotiation
- Embrace constructive criticism
- Respect diversity
- Recognise office politics
- A keeper of confidences
- Cope with change
- Cope with stress
- Display good manners

FUTURE WORK SKILLS 2020

- **DRIVERS: DISRUPTIVE SHIFTS RESHAPING THE WORKFORCE LANDSCAPE**
- Extreme longevity
- Computational world
- Superstructed organisations
- Rise of smart machines and systems
- New media ecology
- Globally-connected world
- **KEY SKILLS NEEDED IN THE FUTURE WORKFORCE**
- Sense-making
- Novel and adaptive thinking
- Social intelligence
- Computational thinking
- Transdisciplinary
- New media literacy
- Cognitive load management
- Design mindset
- Virtual collaboration
- Cross-cultural competency

WORKFORCE STRATEGY FOR THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

- **DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS**
- Changing nature of work, flexible work
- Middle class in emerging markets
- Climate change; natural resources
- Geopolitical volatility
- Consumer ethics; privacy issues
- Longevity; ageing societies
- Young demographics in emerging markets
- Women's economic power, aspirations
- Rapid urbanisation
- **TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS**
- Mobile Internet; cloud technology
- Processing power; big data
- New energy supplies and technologies
- Internet of Things
- Sharing economy; crowdsourcing
- Robotics; autonomous transport
- Artificial intelligence
- Advance manufacturing; 3D printing
- Advance materials; biotechnology

(Adapted from Burton & Shelton, 2014, pp. 41-70; Davies et al., 2011, p.13; World Economic Forum, 2016, pp. 6-7)
Figure 9. A guide for the key drivers of change

Recommendations for future research

Considering the limitation of the study in terms of the limited coverage – one faculty – future research extended to other faculties and campuses is needed to explore their views on administrative services across the university community. Involving (an)other higher education institution(s) may aid in comparing the processes in the interest of benchmarking.

References

Akdere, M., Top, M., & Tekingündüz, S. (2020). Examining patient perceptions of service quality in Turkish hospitals: The SERVPERF model. *Total quality management & business excellence*, 31(3-4), 342-352.

Al-Ababneh, M. M., Masadeh, M. A., Al-Shakhsheer, F. J., & Ma'moun, A. H. (2018). The impact of internal service quality on job satisfaction in the hotel industry. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 8(1), 55-62.

Altbach, G. P. (2010, August 12). Competition's impact on higher education. *Forbes.* Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/2010/08/01/higher-education-competition-opinions-best-colleges-10-altbach.html.

Arshad, A., & Ameen, K. (2010). Service quality of the University of the Punjab's libraries: an exploration of users' perceptions. *Performance Management and Metrics,* 11(3), 313-325. https://doi.org/10.1108/14678041011098578

Balta, S. (2018). The influence of internal marketing on employee satisfaction in the service industry. *Business Management Dynamics*, 8(1), 12.

Berndt, A., & Tait M. (Eds.). (2014). *Relationship marketing and customer relationship management.* Juta.

Brink, A., & Berndt A. (2005). *Customer relationship management and customer service.* Juta Academic.

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business research methods.* Oxford University Press.

Burke, L., & Hutchins, H. (2007). Training Transfer: An Integrative Literature Review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6, 263-296. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484307303035.

Burrows, J. (1999). Going beyond labels: a framework for profiling institutional stakeholders. *Contemporary Education*, 70(4), 5-10.

Burton, S., & Shelton, N. (2010) *Office procedures for the 21st century.* Pearson Education.

Chambers, M. J. (2008). *Software for data analysis: programming with R.* Springer.

Clark, A., Browne, S., Boardman, L., Hewitt, L., & Light, S. (2016). Implementing UK Autism policy & national institute for health

and care excellence guidance–assessing the impact of Autism training for frontline staff in community learning disabilities teams. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 44(2), 103-110.

Davies, A., Fidler, D., & Gorbis, M. (2013, September 13). *Future Work Skills 2020*. Palo Alto, CA: Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute. Retrieved from http://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A_UPRI_future_work_skills_sm.pdf

Ferrero-Ferrero, I., Fernández-Izquierdo, A. M., Muňoz-Torres, M., & Bellés-Colomer, L. (2018). Stakeholder engagement in sustainability reporting in higher education: an analysis of key internal stakeholders' expectations. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 19(2), 313-336.

Finney, T. G., & Finney, R. Z. (2010). Are students their universities' customers? An exploratory study. *Education + Training*, 52(4), 276-291. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911011050954

Fish, S. (2003). First, kill all the administrators [why administrators are needed]. *ProQuest*, 50(6).

Frazer, L., & Lawley, M. (2000). *Questionnaire design & administration*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

George, B. (2003). Managing stakeholders vs. responding to shareholders. *Strategy and Leadership,* 31(6), 36-40. https://doi.org/10.1108/10878570310505587

Ghobehei, M., Sadeghvaziri, F., Ebrahimi, E., & Afshar Bakeshloo, K. (2019). The effects of perceived brand orientation and perceived service quality in the higher education sector. *Eurasian Business Review*, 9(3), 347-365.

Gibson-Odgers, P. (2008). *The world of customer service*. Thomson/South-Western.

Helms, M., & Mayo, D. (2008). Assessing poor quality service: perceptions of customer service representatives. *Managing Service Quality* 18(6), 610-622.

Holzweiss, P., & Walker, D. (2018). Higher education crises: Training new professionals for crisis management. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 36(1), 124-135.

Jones, M. T., Harrison, S. J., & Felps, W. (2018). How applying instrumental stakeholder theory can provide sustainable

competitive advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(3), 371-391.

Khan, H, & Matlay, H. (2009). Implementing service excellence in higher education. *Education +Training*, 51(8), 769-780.

Killen, R. (1994). Differences between students' and lecturers' perceptions of factors influencing students' academic success at university. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 13(2), 199-212.

Koskina, A. (2013). What does the student psychological contract mean? Evidence from a UK business school. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(7), 1020-1036.

Latif, K.F., Latif, I., Sahibzada, U. F., & Ullah, M. (2019) In search of quality: measuring Higher Education Service Quality. T*otal Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 30(7-8), 768-791. DOI: 10.1080/14783363.2017.1338133

Lewis, G. R., & Smith, H. D. (1994). *Total quality in higher education*. St Lucie Press.

Lucas, W. R. (2011). *Please every customer: delivering stellar customer service across cultures*. McGraw-Hill.

Maguad, A. B. (2007). Identifying the needs of customers in higher education. *Education*, 127(3), 332-343.

Owusu, A. A., & Owusu A. G. (2014). Impact of administrators' work and the physical plant on learning: perspective of lecturers and students in the University of Cape Coast. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), 215-222.

Parmar, L. B., Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J., Wicks, A., Purnell, L., & De Colle, S. (2010). Stakeholder theory: The state of the art. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 4(1), 403-445.

Pitman, T. (2000). Perceptions of academics and students as customers: a survey of administrative staff in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 22(2), 165-175.

Sadeghi, T., & Fekjær, S. B. (2019). Frontline workers' competency in activation work. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 28(1), 77-88.

Seeman, E., & O'Hara, M. (2006). Customer relationship management in higher education. *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, 23 (1), 24-34.

Shanahan, P., & Gerber, R. (2004). Quality in university student administration: stakeholder conceptions. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 12 (4), 166-174.

Sibanda, L., Iwu, G. C., & Benedict, O. (2015). Factors influencing academic performance of university students. *Demography and Social Economy*, 2(24), 103-115.

Smidt, A. (2020). Commentary on "Perceptions of frontline staff to training and communication tools to support adults with intellectual disabilities to report abuse and neglect:'something to work with'"(Johnson & Yee, 2020). *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 7(1), 87-92.

Soutar, G., & McNeil, M. (1996). Measuring service quality in a tertiary institution. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 34(1), 72-82.

Suomi, K., Saraniemi, S., Vähätalo, M., Kallio, T. J., & Tevameri, T. (2021). Employee engagement and internal branding: two sides of the same coin? *Corporate Reputation Review*, 24(1), 48-63.

Teeroovengadum, V., Nunkoo, R., Gronroos, C., Kamalanabhan, T. J., & Seebaluck, A. K. (2019). Higher education service quality, student satisfaction and loyalty: Validating the HESQUAL scale and testing an improved structural model. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 27(4), 427-445.

Venter, A., Herbst, T., & Iwu, G. C. (2019). What will it take to make a successful administrative professional in the fourth industrial revolution? *SA Journal of Human Resources Management*, 17(2), 2-14.

Watjatrakul, B. (2014). Factors affecting students' intentions to study at universities adopting the "student-as-customer" concept. *International journal of Educational Management*, 28(6), 676-693.

World Economic Forum. (2016, January). The future of jobs: Employment, skills and workforce strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf

Yeo, K. R. (2008). Servicing service quality in higher education: quest for excellence. *On the Horizon*, 16(3), 152-161.

Zackal, J. (2016, January 29) Changing the Culture of Customer Service in Higher Education. *HigherEdJobs.* Retrieved from https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=814

Zainal Abidin, H. A., & Roslin, R. M. (2019). The mediating effect of employee delight on the relationship between internal marketing and employee performance. *International Journal of Business & Society*, 20(3).