

QUALITY OF ACADEMIC FACILITIES IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA: ARE STUDENTS' NEEDS MET?

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Abstract

The quality of facilities in educational institutions has been on the increase globally and is receiving much attention in educational research. This is necessitated by the fact that higher educational institutions worldwide are facing commercial competition imposed by economic forces resulting from the development of global education markets. In view of this, this study assessed students' perception of the quality of academic facilities in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. This is with a view to improving the quality of university facilities in order to provide a conducive learning environment for students which will aid in good academic performance. 954 questionnaires were randomly administered to students in five private universities in the study area and a response rate of 71% was achieved. Using descriptive statistics, the results revealed that their needs were fairly met with the majority of the facilities sampled in the library, ICT laboratory and classrooms. The study recommended that facility providers should take note of the facilities whose quality students perceive as not meeting their needs, so as to be able to respond appropriately. This will entail ensuring that provision is made for such facilities in terms of budgeting for upgrading or replacement.

Keywords: Quality, Academic, Facilities, Students, Needs.

1 INTRODUCTION

Quality should not be based on an internal organisational understanding, it should rather be based on how satisfied the customers are with the quality of the service they receive [1]. Quality in education can be determined by the extent to which users' needs and expectations can be satisfied. It is the extent to which users' needs and expectations can be satisfied. Quality is constantly judged according to perceived satisfaction. Perceived quality is however determined by the gap between expected quality and experienced quality, that is, it is the difference between client perceptions and expectations [2, 3]. Several attempts to define quality in higher education have resulted in a variety of labels being attached to the concept, yet similar explanations of the concept are evident. That is, quality in higher education is about efficiency, high standards, excellence, value for money, fitness of purpose and/or customer-focus [4].

In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) plays a major role in ensuring that facilities in universities meet some minimum standards as prescribed in the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) documents against which facilities are assessed. It appears that efforts aimed at improving the quality of facilities in universities, particularly public universities, have not yielded tangible results. As [5] rightly observed, public higher institutions in Nigeria are still confronted with obsolete and decaying facilities. This trend should not be allowed to creep into private universities. The current emphasis on the quantity of facilities appears to be over shadowing the need to provide quality facilities that meet the needs and expectations of both staff and students in institutions of higher learning [6]. It is against this background that this study assessed students' perception of the quality of academic facilities in five private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

University facilities constitute the major components of both direct and indirect action elements in the environment of learning. Several studies have shown that a close relationship exists between the physical environment and the academic performance of students. Thus, the quality of the products of a university bears a direct relationship with the quality of the facilities deployed in the process of the production. Hence, the quality of education that students receive bears direct relevance to the availability or lack of physical facilities and the overall atmosphere in which learning takes place [7, 8, 9].

Facilities in educational institutions play a pivotal role in the actualization of the educational goals and objectives of the students by satisfying their physical and emotional needs. [10] emphasized that the physical needs are met through provision of safe structures, adequate sanitary facilities, a balanced visual environment, appropriate thermal environment, and sufficient shelter space for work and play while emotional needs are met by creating pleasant surroundings, a friendly atmosphere, and an inspiring environment.

Considering the need to ensure the quality of academic facilities across the globe, several research efforts have been made. The study of [11] evaluated users' satisfaction with available resources; service quality and facilities in the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine Branch Library at Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. The survey from the sample of 120 users revealed that most of the respondents were least satisfied with space and ventilation, study areas and the noisy environment. Another study by [12] in Germany measured students' satisfaction at an institutional level. The results of 374 questionnaires analysed showed that students' were particularly satisfied with the school placements and the atmosphere among students but mostly dissatisfied with the university buildings and the quality of the lecture theatres. In Turkey, [13] conducted a research on 343 students to determine their perception of the academic and institutional service quality at the Faculty of Agriculture at Suleyman Demirel University. Analysis indicated that the main factors affecting students' perceptions of academic and institutional service quality were the academic skills of staff, the social and physical facilities of the faculty, the physical facilities of the department amongst others. The authors recommended that library and laboratory facilities should be increased. The work of [14] examined the quality of services at Iran's Central Library of Management and Planning Organization (MPO) from the viewpoint of its users. Two hundred and seventy questionnaires were distributed randomly to the respondents. The authors concluded that it is a good idea to have a library with attractive decoration and furniture, but quality of services provided by librarians is the most important factor affecting users' judgement of quality. In Nigeria, [15] examined students' perception of the quality of their library facilities and services. Five hundred and eighteen students were randomly administered with a modified SERVPERF questionnaire and analysed with SERVPERF dimensions (tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy). Findings revealed that students' general perception of their library facilities like parking space and escape routes is very low.

Based on the above reviews, it is obvious that several studies have looked into students' perception of the quality of academic facilities especially outside Nigeria. Although, these studies served as basis for the present one, most of the studies focused on library facilities at the expense of other academic facilities. Hence, this study is set to bridge this gap by extending the body of knowledge in Nigeria particularly in Ogun State.

3 METHODOLOGY

The data used in this study were based on a survey of 954 students in five private universities [namely Babcock (BU); Covenant (CU); Bells (Bells); Crescent (CRE) and Crawford (CRA)] in Ogun State, Nigeria. To collect the data, questionnaires were randomly administered to the students in order to obtain information concerning their perception of the quality of the selected academic facilities - library, ICT laboratory and classrooms - in their universities. Research assistants in each of the private university assisted in the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires. Data were coded using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS), descriptive statistics was then used to analyse the data. Specifically, weighted mean was adopted for the analysis. The mean was measured using a five-point Likert of 5 – Extremely Met, 4 - Fairly Met, 3 - Just Met, 2 - Hardly Met and 1 - Not Met at all. The mean score was then used to rank the variables on the quality of library, ICT and classroom facilities. The outcome of the findings is interpreted using the decision rule of [16] which ascribes “Positive Feelings” 4 to 5 scores, “Neutral Feelings” to 3 score and “Negative Feelings” to 1 to 2 scores. Twelve variables were used to measure the quality of the selected facilities in the private universities.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Quality of Academic Facilities in Selected Private Universities

The students were asked to ascertain if their expectations were met or not with respect to the quality of facilities made available in their library, ICT laboratory and classroom. The analysis is as shown in Tables 1 to 3.

4.1.1 Quality of Library Facilities

In order to ascertain the quality of library facilities, 12 library facilities were sampled by the students and the mean was calculated. The finding is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Quality of Library Facilities (Students' Perception).

Facilities	BU	CU	Bells	CRE	CRA	Mean	Ranking	
Furniture (e.g tables and chairs, book shelves)	4.21	4.72	3.61	3.92	4.30	4.15	1 st	
Quality of landscaping	4.11	4.80	3.61	2.05	3.10	3.53	12 th	
Quality of the library finishing	Wall finishing	4.20	4.81	3.63	2.92	4.32	2 nd	
	Floor finishing	4.45	2.94	3.59	3.06	4.40	11 th	
	Ceiling finishing	4.37	4.02	4.18	3.32	4.11	2 nd	
Windows/doors	4.32	4.12	3.47	3.67	3.47	3.81	9 th	
Toilet facilities	4.35	4.74	2.96	3.55	3.88	3.90	7 th	
Electricity supply	4.29	4.12	3.95	3.31	4.21	3.98	5 th	
Internet facilities	4.15	4.05	3.97	3.27	3.77	3.84	8 th	
Quality of library photocopy	4.25	3.57	3.84	3.45	3.76	3.77	10 th	
Quality of cooling system	Air conditioner	3.93	4.80	4.01	2.96	4.26	3.99	4 th
	Fan	4.19	4.78	3.65	3.12	4.18	3.98	5 th

Table 1 showed the extent to which the quality of the library facilities met students' needs in the selected private universities. General consensus among the students indicated that their needs were met with furniture, ceiling finishing, wall finishing, air conditioner, electricity and fan to mention a few. Considering the decision rule of [16], students' needs were met with more than 90% of the selected facilities. However, the quality of landscaping did not meet their needs. This finding is particularly obvious in CRE university (with a mean score of 2.05) more than the other universities.

4.1.2 Quality of Facilities in the ICT Laboratory

ICT facilities are very important and necessary in higher education for academic excellence (Mai, 2005), hence there is a need to determine if students' needs are met with ICT facilities in their institutions. Students were asked to state whether their needs were met with the quality of ICT laboratory facilities using 12 facilities in the laboratory. The finding is as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Quality of ICT Facilities (Students' Perception).

Variables	BU	CU	Bells	CRE	CRA	Mean	Ranking
Furniture (e.g tables and chairs e.t.c)	3.91	4.82	3.47	3.67	4.18	4.01	2 nd
Equipment (e.g printer, computer, photocopier)	4.29	4.01	3.84	3.62	4.15	3.98	4 th
Quality of workstations	4.18	4.27	3.91	3.35	4.14	3.97	7 th
Internet facilities	3.91	4.27	3.83	3.60	4.18	3.96	8 th
Quality of the ICT/IT lab finishing	Wall finishing	4.29	4.22	4.03	3.33	4.10	3 rd
	Floor finishing	4.23	4.25	3.80	3.37	4.27	4 th
	Ceiling finishing	4.05	4.25	4.03	3.35	4.21	4 th
Windows/doors	4.13	3.01	3.99	3.27	4.10	3.70	12 th
Toilet facilities	4.36	4.06	3.97	3.07	3.88	3.87	10 th
Electricity supply	4.37	4.90	4.14	4.00	4.12	4.31	1 st
Quality of cooling system	Air conditioner	3.92	4.31	3.76	3.06	4.29	10 th
	Fan	3.95	4.16	3.81	3.40	4.28	9 th

The results presented in Table 2 revealed that students' needs were fairly met with all the facilities with the mean score across the universities varying between 3.70 and 4.31 which when rounded up is between 4 to 5 score and ascribed "Positive Feelings" by the decision rule of [16]. The results of the analysis when ranked across the universities indicated that students' needs were met with the electricity (1st), furniture (2nd), wall finishing (3rd), floor finishing (4th), equipment (4th) and ceiling finishing (4th). However, they expected more from their universities in terms of the quality of air conditioner (10th), toilet facilities (10th) and the windows and doors (12th) in their ICT laboratory.

4.1.3 Quality of Classroom Facilities

The classroom is a key area for educating students, therefore it is extremely important for the quality of the facilities in it to be conducive for learning. Thirteen facilities in the classroom were identified and presented to students of the selected universities to state the extent to which the facilities meet their needs. Their responses is as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Quality of Classroom Facilities (Students' Perception).

Variables	BU	CU	Bells	CRE	CRA	Mean	Ranking
Furniture (e.g tables and chairs, book shelves)	3.06	4.89	4.02	3.60	3.71	3.86	6 th
Quality of the classroom finishing							
Wall finishing	4.36	3.57	4.05	3.43	3.99	3.88	5 th
Floor finishing	4.34	3.57	3.87	3.31	3.91	3.80	7 th
Ceiling finishing	3.99	3.57	3.84	3.33	3.84	3.71	9 th
Windows/doors	4.19	4.60	3.90	3.39	3.97	4.01	2 nd
Toilet facilities	4.25	3.45	3.06	3.73	3.64	3.63	10 th
Electricity supply	4.26	4.83	3.68	3.29	3.92	4.00	3 rd
Quality of cooling system							
Air conditioner	4.36	1.00	1.91	2.95	1.88	2.42	12 th
Fan	4.33	4.08	3.86	3.28	3.94	3.90	4 th
Quality of projectors	4.40	4.06	3.12	3.49	3.53	3.72	8 th
Internet facilities	3.82	2.80	3.20	3.17	3.60	3.32	11 th
Whiteboards	4.12	4.66	3.97	3.46	3.97	4.04	1 st

From Table 3, students in the selected universities rated the quality of whiteboards (mean score = 4.04), windows/doors (mean score = 4.01), electricity (mean score = 4.00), fan (mean score = 3.90) and wall finishing (mean score = 3.88) as meeting their needs when interpreted using [16] decision rule. It is also observed from the analysis that students' needs were not met with the quality of air-conditioner and internet facilities. Nevertheless, at Babcock University (with a mean score of 4.38) students' needs were met with quality of air-conditioner.

Judging from the analyses presented in Tables 1 to 3, students rated the quality of electricity and wall finishing in their library, ICT laboratory and classroom as meeting their needs; however, their needs were not met with the internet facilities.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assessed students' perception of the quality of academic facilities in five private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the facility providers should take note of the facilities which students perceive the quality as not meeting their needs so as to be able to respond appropriately. This will entail ensuring that provisions are made for such facilities in terms of upgrading or replacement of the facilities. Also, the National Universities Commission should inspect some of the academic facilities of universities through unscheduled visits before accreditation. This is expected to put the universities on their toes in providing quality facilities that meet and satisfy the needs of the students.

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