

STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH POST GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMMES OFFERED BY DIFFERENT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SRI LANKA**Nagalingam Nagendrakumar**

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses about the students satisfaction of the key activities of post graduate degree programmes offered by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Sri Lanka. It could be argued, that students satisfaction is the determining factor of competitive advantage of HEIs. Teaching methods, Course administration, Teaching staff, Enrollment, Infrastructure, Satisfaction, Loyalty are the key activities analyzed. Two HEIs were selected for the study and the data was collected based on snow balling method since of high sensitivity problem regarding the research topic. Objectives of the study are to evaluate the relationship between the students' satisfaction and their loyalty to the program and how to improve the postgraduate degree programmes in HEIs in Sri Lanka. Overall analysis of this study reveals that the students' satisfaction about postgraduate degree programmes is satisfied. The study suggests that there is significant scope for improving the quality of the postgraduate degree programmes in HEIs.

Key Words: *Teaching methods, Course administration, Teaching staff, Enrollment, Infrastructure, Satisfaction, Loyalty*

Introduction

UN Global Compact is the largest corporate citizenship initiative in the world. As of May 2007 more than 3,000 companies from 100 countries, as well as over 700 hundred civil societies, international labor organizations and academic institutions are engaged in the initiative of management development. All are working to promote responsible corporate citizenship, ensuring that business is part of the solution to the challenges of globalization. In this way, the

private sector – in partnership with other social actors – can help realize a more sustainable and inclusive global economy.

In a churning global marketplace, understanding the fundamental connections between business, the environment, and society has become essential. The roles and responsibilities of business as a global force are becoming more urgent and complex, and concepts related to societal responsibility and sustainability are gaining recognition as essential elements in business management.

Increasing complexity and interdependence require new approaches. Companies need integrative management tools that help embed environmental, social, and governance concerns into their strategic thinking and daily operations. They need support as they internalize and integrate these issues into the core of businesses, engage in dialogue with stakeholders, and report their conduct. They require talented and ethical leaders who can not only advance organizational goals and fulfill legal and fiduciary obligations to shareholders, but who are also prepared to deal with the broader impact and potential of business as a positive global force in society.

Any meaningful and lasting change in the conduct of corporations toward societal responsibility and sustainability must involve the institutions that most directly act as drivers of business behavior, especially academia. Academic institutions help shape the attitudes and behavior of business leaders through business education, research, management development programs, training, and other pervasive, but less tangible, activities, such as the spread and advocacy of new values and ideas. Through these means, academic institutions have the potential to generate a wave of positive change, thereby helping to ensure a world where both enterprises and societies can flourish.

Quality in higher education is a multi dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, faculties, equipments, services to the community and the academic environment. Achieving quality in education involves two steps. The first step is for institutions to set objectives that embody what is expected and required by the stakeholders, in addition to responding to broader issues, such as the demands arising from the characterizes nature of academic activity and the rapid development of knowledge. The second step is for the institution to ensure that it attains its objectives.

Objectives of the study

Objectives of the study are to evaluate the relationship between the students' satisfaction and their loyalty to the program and how to improve the postgraduate degree programmes in HEIs.

Methodology

It includes the sampling process, data analysis and data evaluation respectively. The reliability and creditability of this research is depending on data collection. The data was collected from the students based on snow balling method since of high sensitivity of research topic. This research used the primary data collection method. Students were issued five scaled questionnaire to collect the data. The scale was as follows: Very positive (5); Positive (4); Moderate (3); Negative (2); and Very negative (1). The data was descriptively analyzed by using Excel package. Based on the descriptive analysis consisting of mean and standard deviation data was analyzed.

If $X_i < 3$ then the variable denotes less satisfaction.

If $X_i = 3$ then the variable denotes moderately satisfaction.

If $X_i > 3$ then the variable denotes high satisfaction.

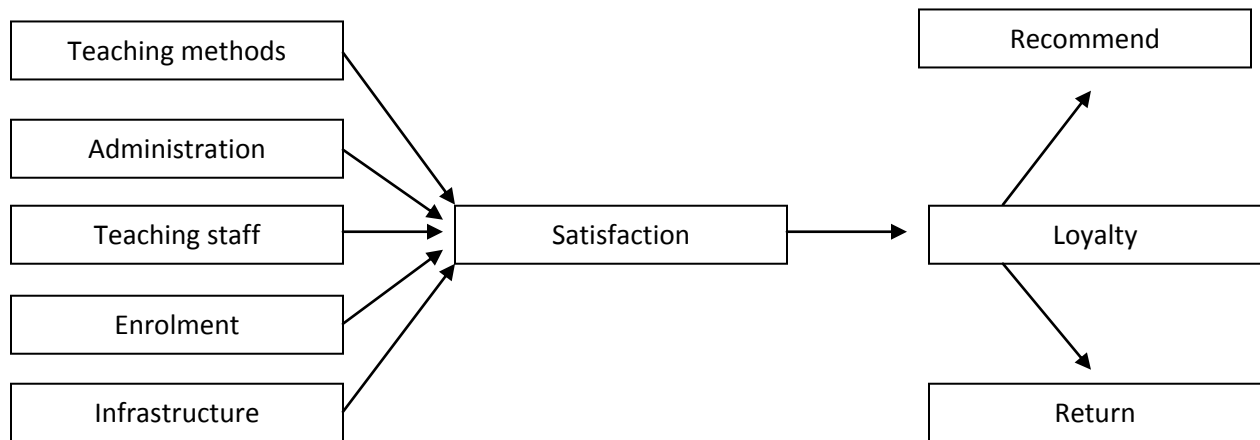
The range for $X_i < 3$ is $1.5 < X_i \leq 2.5$

$X_i = 3$ is $2.5 < X_i \leq 3.5$

$X_i > 3$ is $3.5 < X_i \leq 5.0$

The mean value of them (X_i where $I = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5$) are taken into consideration in order to evaluate the key activities of the research topic.

Conceptualization



Source: Mercedes Marzo Navarro et al.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Findings

The following indicators were selected to be studied and analyzed. Accordingly following table is produced.

Table 1: Indicators

Indicators	HEI-A		HEI-B		HEI-A	HEI-B
Theory and practice	3.8	1.2	3.5	0.7	S	MS
Reference and documentation	3.5	1.0	3.6	0.9	MS	S
Teaching methods	3.8	1.0	3.7	0.9	S	S
Depth of discussion	3.7	1.1	3.7	0.9	S	S
Extent of subject matter	4.0	0.9	3.6	0.8	S	S
Planning and scheduling	3.9	0.9	3.5	0.6	S	MS
Administration	3.6	0.6	3.6	0.7	S	S
Course organization	3.8	0.8	3.7	1.1	S	S
Coordination among facilitators	3.6	0.8	3.8	0.7	S	S
Attitude of teaching staff	3.9	0.9	4.1	0.9	S	S
Quality of teaching staff	3.9	0.7	4.1	0.9	S	S
Enrollment process	4.1	1.2	3.6	0.9	S	S
Form of payment	3.9	0.9	3.6	0.8	S	S
Time taken for enrollment	4.0	1.0	3.9	0.7	S	S
Infrastructure	3.8	0.7	3.2	0.8	S	MS

Source: Research data

S= Satisfied, MS = moderately satisfied and NS = Not satisfied.

All indicators show the satisfaction except theory and practice (HEI-B), reference and documentation (HEI-A), Planning and scheduling (HEI-B) and infrastructure (HEI-B) which are moderately satisfied.

Activities

The following variables are analysed. Accordingly all variables are satisfied except teaching methods (HEI-A) and infrastructure (HEI-B) are moderately satisfied. However, the overall results reveal that students are satisfied with the variables.

Table 2: Activities

Research Information	HEI-A		HEI-B		HEI-A	HEI-B
Teaching methods	3.0	1.0	3.6	0.8	MS	S
Course Administration	3.8	0.8	3.6	0.8	S	S
Teaching staff	3.8	0.8	4.0	0.9	S	S
Enrolment	4.0	1.0	3.7	0.8	S	S
Infrastructure	3.8	0.7	3.2	0.8	S	MS
Over all	3.7	0.9	3.7	0.8	S	S

Source: Research data

S= Satisfied, MS = moderately satisfied and NS = Not satisfied.

Satisfaction

The results of the data regarding the variable satisfaction is given below. The results are given in percentage. This indicates that students are satisfied with the postgraduate degree program they follow.

Table 3: Satisfaction

Research Information	HEI-A		HEI-B	
	S	NS	S	NS
Satisfaction	84%	16%	86%	14%

Source: Research data

S= Satisfied and NS=Not satisfied.

Loyalty

This variable is measured as average of the indicators of recommendation and Return. The final results shows students are loyal to the program they follow. However, the loyalty of HEI-A is lesser than the loyalty of HEI-B. The main reason for this is that most of the students at HEI-A will not return for courses in future.

Table 4: Loyalty

Research Information	HEI-A		HEI-B	
	S	NS	S	NS
Loyalty	66%	34%	84%	16%
Recommend	84%	16%	86%	14%
Return	47%	53%	82%	18%

Source: Research data

S=Satisfied and NS=Not satisfied.

Sex

Those who follow the program are not gender balanced. This is high in HEI-A where 84 percentages is male and 16 percentage is female.

Table 5: Sex

Research Information	HEI-A		HEI-B	
	M	F	M	F
Sex	84%	16%	61%	39%

Source: Research data

M=Male and F=Female

Age

The average between the two HEIs are 37 and 28. Those who follow programme at HEI-B seems to have exposure to postgraduate degree programme at their early age.

Table 6: Age

Research Information	HEI-A	HEI-B
Average age	37	28

Source: Research data

Civil Status

Results of the analysis shows that most of the students are married in HEI-A and in HEI-B most of them are not married.

Table 7: Civil Status

Research Information	HEI-A		HEI-B	
	M	UM	M	UM
Civil Status	84%	15%	25%	75%

Source: Research data

M=Married and UM=Unmarried.

Employment

Results of the analysis shows that most of the students are employed in government sector in HEI-A and in HEI-B most of them are employed in both government and private sectors.

Table 8: Employment

Research Information	HEI-A			HEI-B		
	P	G	N	P	G	N
Employment	10%	74%	16%	54%	43%	3%

Source: Research data

P=Private, G=Government and N=NGO

Experience

The average age of students at HEI-A is more than ten years and exactly six in HEI-B.

Table 9: Average experience

Research Information	HEI-A	HEI-B
Average experience	10.4	6

Source: Research data

Conclusions and Recommendations

The relationship between the students’ satisfaction and their loyalty to the program is positive in both institutions. The overall results about satisfaction are equal in both institutions. Even though the results show the level of satisfaction positive it is marginal. That is 0.2 (score) higher than moderate satisfaction. Therefore HEIs should focus further improvement. The satisfaction score between the HEIs is positively correlated (nearly equal to 1). However, the correlation of male, age, civil status, employment and experience between the HEIs are negatively correlated (-0.5).

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