

**An Exploratory Study of Students of English and other Departments
at Saudi Arabian Universities with a View to Improving
the Quality of Student Services**

This thesis is submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy at The University of Newcastle, Australia

Hamood Ibrheem Albatti

B. Soc. Sc. (English), Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University (Qassim)
M. App. Ling (TESL, TEFOL), University of Newcastle

April 2015

Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Hamood Albatti

Acknowledgements

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

First of all I thank Allah, my God, for helping me to accomplish this project.

I would then like to express my sincere gratitude to my principal supervisor, Professor David Gamage, for his generous patience and encouragement. Without his support this research would not have come to fruition. Additionally, I am deeply appreciative of his expert guidance which enriched the substance and credibility of the project.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor, Associate Professor Ian Dempsey, for his expertise, advice and kind assistance, and whose positive criticism and comments helped guide the development of my thesis. My appreciation also goes to Mr Greg Preston who provided support and suggestions during the first two years of this project.

I am also grateful to the study participants, the instructors and the male and female students at the four universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who gave so generously of their valuable time.

My thanks also go to the University of Newcastle for the opportunity to complete my study and their support extended to me during the pursuit of my doctorate.

My deep appreciation goes also to Majmaah University and The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in Australia for providing the opportunity to pursue my research and for their financial support of my studies.

My thanks go to my great family for their love and endless support. Your prayers always help me through any challenges that life can bring. To my Mum, Monira AlFozan,

thank you for teaching me what books could not and for your boundless care, support and prayers through my studies, including my PhD. To my beloved wife, Fatimah Alswuail who is a PhD student at the same university, you are always the one on whom I can rely when life gets tough. To my three daughters, Monira, Sara and Shahla, thank you for your patience and understanding.

Table of Contents

Title Page.....	i
Statement of Originality.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Appendices.....	xii
Abstract.....	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	15
1.1 Chapter Overview	15
1.2 Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	16
1.3 Quality Assurance and Education	17
1.4 Background to the Study	18
1.5 Identification of the Research Problem.....	19
1.6 Purpose and Objectives of the Study	20
1.7 The Research Questions.....	20
1.8 Research Methodology.....	21
1.9 The Theoretical Framework of the Study	22
1.10 Definitions of Key Terms.....	24
1.11 Relevance of the Study.....	25
1.12 Limitations of the Study.....	26
1.13 Scheme of the Study.....	27
Chapter 2: A Review of Literature	29
2.1 Chapter Overview	29

2.2	Fundamental Theories on Quality	29
2.3	An Historical Overview of the Development of Quality Management Concepts	31
2.4	The System of Scientific Management	32
2.5	The Quality Era in the 21 st Century	37
2.5.1	Quality: the Wide Meaning	37
2.5.2	Definition of Quality	39
2.5.3	Philosophies of Quality Gurus	43
2.5.4	TQM Definitions.....	50
2.5.5	ISO 9000 as a Comparative Quality Assurance Model	52
2.5.6	Quality as Defined in Islamic Teachings	55
2.5.7	Higher Education Systems that Impacted on the Saudi Arabian System.....	57
2.5.8	Quality in Higher Education	76
2.5.9	Quality Measurement Approaches in Higher Education	82
2.5.10	Background to Quality Assurance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Current Practice	91
2.6	Conclusion	98
Chapter 3:	Research Design and Methodology	101
3.1	Chapter Overview	101
3.2	Research Questions	101
3.3	Conceptual Framework	103
3.4	Research Design and Rationale.....	104
3.5	Participants	106
3.5.1	Sampling Design and Sample Size	109
3.6	Instruments	111
3.6.1	Questionnaire Design.....	111
3.6.2	Developing the Rigor and Reliability of the Questionnaire.....	116
3.6.3	Interview Design	116

3.7	Procedure.....	118
3.7.1	Data Collection Procedure	118
3.7.2	Interview Phase	122
3.8	Statistical Analysis	123
3.8.1	Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Data Analysis	123
3.8.2	Factor Analysis and Factor Definitions.....	124
3.8.3	Hypothesis Testing Using T-tests and ANOVA	124
3.8.4	Exploratory Factor Analysis for Overall Satisfaction with University Items	125
3.8.5	Multiple Linear Regression - Relationship between Total Satisfaction with University Service Quality Dimensions	127
3.8.6	Inferential Statistics for the Quantitative Data Analysis	127
3.8.7	Final Data Analysis	128
3.9	Human Ethics Clearance	129
3.10	Conclusion	129
Chapter 4:	Quantitative Results.....	130
4.1	Chapter Overview	130
4.2	Pre-testing and Piloting of the Questionnaire	131
4.2.1	The Pre-test	131
4.2.2	The Pilot Study	132
4.3	Final Questionnaire Results	132
4.3.1	Validity of the Scale.....	133
4.3.2	Exploratory Factor Analysis	134
4.3.3	Reliability.....	141
4.3.4	Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Data Analysis	143
4.3.5	Distribution of the Student Satisfaction Scores	146
4.3.6	Relationship between Student Demographics and Student Satisfaction Scores	147
4.3.7	Exploratory Factor Analysis for Overall Satisfaction with University Items	157
4.3.8	Multiple Linear Regression of Total Satisfaction	158
4.4	Summary	160

Chapter 5:	Qualitative Phase of the Study.....	162
5.1	Chapter Overview	162
5.2	The Interviews.....	162
5.3	Quality Dimensions.....	165
5.3.1	Academic Dimension.....	165
5.3.2	Non-academic Dimension.....	180
5.3.3	Facilities Dimension	198
5.4	Results of the Qualitative Phase of the Study	222
5.4.1	Academic Dimension.....	223
5.4.2	Non-academic Dimension.....	224
5.4.3	Facilities Dimension	225
5.5	Conclusion	226
Chapter 6:	Discussion and Conclusion Chapter	229
6.1	Chapter Overview	229
6.2	Key Findings and Implications in the Context of Research Questions.....	229
6.2.1	Research Question 1:	230
6.2.2	Research Question 2:	235
6.2.3	Research Question 3:	237
6.2.4	Research Question 4:	239
6.3	Discussion of Findings.....	246
6.4	Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research	255
6.5	Implications for Current Practice in Quality Assurance for Universities in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	256
6.6	Conclusion	258
	References	261

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Philosophers of Quality.....	43
Table 3.1 Stages in Research Design	106
Table 3.2 Universities' World Rankings'	107
Table 4.1 Eigenvalues, Percentage of Variance Explained and Cumulative Variance for the first 10 Components of the 30 items of Student Satisfaction scale ($N=755$)	136
Table 4.2 Factor Loadings for the Service Quality Scale	139
Table 4.3 Cronbach Alpha of the Service Quality Scale	143
Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics for the Factor Scores ($N = 755$)	146
Table 4.5 Comparison of Quality Services Means by Gender of Students ($N=755$)	147
Table 4.6 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to Age ($N = 755$).....	148
Table 4.7 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to the Year of Study ($N=755$) .	149
Table 4.8 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to the Field of Study ($N=755$).	149
Table 4.9 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to the University Enrolled at ($N=755$)	150
Table 4.10 Comparison of Factor Scores in Respect to the Location of the Secondary School ($N = 755$).....	151
Table 4.11 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to Hours Spent at University ($N = 755$)	152

Table 4.12 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to GPA ($N = 755$)	153
Table 4.13 Comparison of Factor Scores in Respect to Presence of a Learning Disability ($N = 755$)	154
Table 4.14 Comparison of Median Factor Scores with Respect to Presence of Poverty and Lack of Basic Educational Resources ($N = 755$).....	154
Table 4.15 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to Monthly Income ($N=755$)..	155
Table 4.16 Comparison of Factor Scores with Respect to Withdrawals from Universities ($N = 755$)	156
Table 4.17 Factor loadings of the Overall Satisfaction with University Items Extracted Using Principal Component Analysis	157
Table 4.18 Multiple Linear Regressions with Total Satisfaction (Stepwise Method) ..	159
Table 4.19 Excluded Variables from Total Satisfaction Regression	160
Table 5.1 Categories sub-divided within each of the dimensions.....	164
Table 5.2 Students' perceptions of universities' Academic Dimension	223
Table 5.3 Students' perceptions of universities' Non-academic Dimension	224
Table 5.4 Students' perceptions of universities' Facilities Dimension.....	226

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Quality Categories	42
Figure 2.2 Service Quality (SERVQUAL)	42
Figure 2.3 Deming's Cycle for Quality Improvements	45
Figure 2.4 TQM, QC, QA and QM.....	54
Figure 3.1 The theoretical model of the study	103
Figure 4.1 Scree plot of Student Satisfaction Questionnaire	138
Figure 5.1 Distribution of the number of students selected for interviews from the four universities	163

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire with Interview Invitation Letter (English Version)	281
Appendix B: Questionnaire with Interview Invitation Letter (Arabic Version)	291
Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Schedule (English version)	298
Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Schedule (Arabic version)	301
Appendix E: Invitation Letter to Universities' Rectors (English Version)	303
Appendix F: Invitation Letter to Universities' Rectors (Arabic Version)	305
Appendix G: Questionnaire Information Statement and Consent (English Version)	306
Appendix H: Questionnaire Information Statement and Consent (Arabic Version) .	308
Appendix I: Interview Information Statement (English Version)	310
Appendix J: Interview Information Statement (Arabic Version)	312
Appendix K: Letter of Consent for Interview (English Version)	314
Appendix L: Letter of Consent for Interview (Arabic Version)	316
Appendix M: Approval Letter of the Human Research Ethics Committee	318
Appendix N: Approval Letter from university A	320
Appendix O: Approval Letter from university B	321
Appendix P: Approval Letter from university C	324
Appendix Q: Approval Letter from university D	325
Appendix R: Multilinearity Regression SPSS Outputs	327
Appendix S: T-Test and One-way Anova SPSS Outputs	332

ABSTRACT

The current business orientation of higher educational systems, continuing global reforms and an increasing number of accreditation bodies in higher education have highlighted the necessity to review quality assurance mechanisms in ascertaining whether the current approaches are adequate. Within this global context, the higher education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has undergone a series of reforms during the last few years, adding many new universities and scholarship programs, and establishing the National Commission for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (NCAAA). The importance of quality assurance that ensures the provision of high quality services and facilities to students as customers is clear. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to ascertain the current problems and issues and identify an appropriate criterion for quality assurance for the delivery of academic and non-academic services and the provision of facilities at the KSA universities, taking into account the students' expectations and perspectives.

A mixed methodology approach was adopted in order to meet the research objectives adequately. To develop comprehensive responses to the research questions, quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed combining empirical data with qualitative interview data. Student perspectives on the three theoretically developed quality dimensions of academic and non-academic services and facilities were sought. These perspectives were then inductively and deductively explored using quantitative (SPSS) and qualitative (NVivo) software.

The results revealed evidence of mixed perceptions in relation to academic and non-academic services across the KSA universities and campuses. However, students' perceptions of university facilities were overwhelmingly poor, indicating the criticality of the student voice in the quality assurance processes. A criterion of quality assurance is recommended to improve the quality of student services in relation to academic and non-academic services, and to ensure the provision of high quality facilities.