

THE QUALITY OF COLLEGE LIFE (QCL) AMONG MALAYSIAN POLYTECHNICS

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ABSTRACT:

A good quality of college life (QCL) is about the overall judgment of students about their satisfaction towards the academic aspects, social as well as facilities and services provided by the institutions. This study aims to examine the relationship between the quality of college life and academic as well as social aspects and also facilities and services provided. It also determines the most contributing variables to the quality of college life. This study involved 380 students from four Malaysian polytechnics who enrolled in Diploma of Hotel and Catering. The systematic sampling was used to select the sample based on the students' list as the sampling frame. The study utilized questionnaire as the research instrument. A self-administered questionnaire was adapted from Sirgy, Grzeskowiak and Rahtz (2007). These findings provided strong supports for the importance of the facilities and services in the quality of college life. The findings also revealed the trends of college life among Hotel and Catering students in Malaysian polytechnics. The academic aspects have less impact on their quality of life which signaled that polytechnics should take proper actions regarding this matter.

Key words: Quality of College Life (QCL), Hotel & Catering Students, Malaysian Polytechnics

1 INTRODUCTIONS

The Polytechnics Education was made known in Malaysia 41 years ago. It began with the establishment of Polytechnic Ungku Omar (PUO) as the first polytechnic, in 1969 under the United Nations Development Plan. After 41 years, on 25 February 2009, the Department of Polytechnic Education launched the transformation of polytechnics with the aim of polytechnics

to sustain human capital development that will produce a new capability to the polytechnics in developing human resources towards 2020.

The transformation aimed to reinforce the role of polytechnics in providing education and training. Its mission is to break boundaries for the creation of transformative and creative learning environment for an innovation – led economy (Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik, 2010). Transformation of polytechnic education in Malaysia was planned to enhance the quality of technical education in Malaysia (Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik, 2010).

According to Wahab et al. (2010) polytechnics will have to deal with have many issues in achieving the transformation agenda and indirectly providing the best quality experiences to polytechnic students. The issues were related to the changes in technology, quality of programmes, staffing, organizational culture, infrastructure, and facilities. In reality, polytechnics are facing problems which are related to in-sufficient and out-of-date infrastructures and lab devices. The quality of programmes, facilities, academic staff, support services, accessibility and location, and campus climate are the predictors of students' satisfactions (Abidin, 2008). However, Polytechnics will have to improve on these matters to provide excellent learning experiences.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysian Polytechnic Education is producing minds -on, heads-on and hearts-on individuals. Therefore, polytechnics education is implemented based on the hybrid concept of learning experiences which are education and training. It is a combination of classroom and industrial experiences. It consists of theory in classroom learning and practical in the lab and training in the hospitality industry (Jabatan Pengajian Politeknik, 2010). The transformation of polytechnic education in 2009 introduced the Outcome Based Education (OBE) as required by the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA). The implementation of OBE in polytechnic education is new to lecturers and students (Shaari and Jusoh, 2012). Thus, the new systems and curriculum should provide a high quality of education to enhance the quality of college life among students.

Quality of college life (QCL) can be defined as overall feelings of satisfaction experienced by a student with regards to the college life. The quality of students' life is determined by their satisfactions towards academic and social aspects as well as facilities and services (Sirgy et al., 2007).

There were many dimensions which are research-able in relation to academic aspects. The academic aspects valued by students are faculty, teaching methods, the classroom environment, the workload, the academic reputation of the institutions and academic diversity (Sirgy et al., 2006). Based on British Columbia and College Student Outcomes (2003), the dimensions of educational experiences are curriculum, teaching, analytical skills, communication skills, social skills and personal growth.

Social aspects contributed to students' satisfaction towards their quality of college life. The quality of college life can be measured by considering campus housing, spiritual and services programmes, club and parties, collegiate and recreational activities (Sirgy et al., 2007, and Yu & Lee, 2007). In a study done by Astin (as cited in Joyce, 2009) there is a relationship between student participations in social activities in college and students' satisfactions towards their life in college.

The facilities and services such as labs, library, transportation, hostels, cafeterias, student centre, clinics, sport centre, I.T Department and workshop helps students to experience a conducive teaching and learning process. It enhances their creativity and helps them to perform better in their coursework (Wahab et. al, 2010). A study by James H. Manley (2011) related to outsourcing student residential services proved that there is no significant relationship between the outsourcing of the services and facilities and the students' satisfaction towards their college life. The study proved that students were not really concerned with facilities and service provided throughout their college life.

Satisfaction is a key element in determining the quality of the products and services provided (Hashim and Azemi, 2010). Customer satisfaction is a common issue for any business and organizations. It is important to ensure consumer confidence in the products or services provided. As well as product and services, quality of college life is also determined by students' satisfaction. Students are considered as customers in educational institutions. Students' satisfaction is also an important issue to be discussed because they are the main clients of educational institutions. (Kwek, et al., 2010).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a correlation study and it is a quantitative approach design to identify the relationship between satisfaction with academic and social aspects as well as facilities and services and the quality of college life. This study used questionnaires in identifying the relationship be-

tween satisfaction with academic and social aspects as well as facilities and services and the quality of college life. This study was conducted by utilizing self-administered questionnaires to gather information related to students' satisfaction towards the academic and social aspects as well as facilities and services. This study began with the adaptation of instruments by Sirgy et al. (2007), pilot testing and later proceeded with the actual study after the researcher is satisfied with the research instruments.

The actual study was administered to only four (4) polytechnics. There were four hundred (400) respondents involved from Diploma in Hotel and Catering students in four (4) Malaysian polytechnics in Malaysia which are offering this programme. The polytechnics are:

- a) Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Polytechnic, Perlis,
- b) Ibrahim Sultan Polytechnic, Johor Bahru,
- c) Kota Kinabalu Polytechnic, Sabah, and
- d) Merlimau Polytechnic, Melaka.

The population of this study are Diploma in Hotel and Catering students from semester 1 to semester 6. The researcher then analysed the data by using individual unit of analysis. The respondents were chosen through systematic sampling. Systematic sampling is efficient for a large sampling frame and the advantages are ease and quickness in sample determination (Sekaran, 2009). The total population will be based on the current student cohorts. The students were selected from the sampling frame which listed every 4th targeted sample in the students' record from the Students Affairs Unit.

The study utilized questionnaire as the research instrument. A self-administered questionnaire was adapted from Sirgy et al. (2007). This questionnaire consisted of five (5) major sections. There were 76 items developed to measure the relationship between academic aspects and social aspects as well as facilities and services towards the quality of college life. The respondents were required to answer questionnaires using six points Likert Scale with six point scale represented strongly agree=6, agree=5, somewhat agree=4, somewhat disagree=3, disagree=2 and strongly disagree=1. The six points Likert Scale was used to eliminate the neutral response from the respondents and creating less biased measurement (Sekaran, 2009).

The reliability and validity of the instruments was tested by the implementation of pilot test. The reliability and validity of the content was based on discussions between the researcher and supervisor before distributing the questionnaire to the respondents. The pilot study was carried out involving 40 students from Sultan Idris Shah Polytechnic, Sabak Bernam.

The data analysis process was a quantitative analysis using “Statistical Package for Social Science” (SPSS) version 18.0. The data were analyzed using the multiple regressions to analyze the relationship among variables and determine the most contributing variable to the quality of college life. The overall conclusions were made based on the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses on null hypotheses.

4 DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The highlight of this study was to measure the relationship between academic and social aspects, as well as facilities and services provided towards the quality of college life among hospitality respondents in polytechnics. The results provided were based on 380 sample size gathered from four polytechnics. The multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the relationship and determine the most contributing variables to the quality of college life. The findings were presented and discussed clearly in this chapter. Regression models explained that 55.7% of the variance represented by the quality of college life. The other 44.3% represented by other predictor variables. The coefficient results reported that only facilities and services ($p = 0.00 < \alpha = 0.05$) and social aspects were significant at ($p = 0.02 < \alpha = 0.05$) level. However, academic aspects were found not significant at ($p = 0.42 > \alpha = 0.05$) level.

The beta value (β) was used to compare and evaluate the relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Among the three predictors entered into the model facilities and services ($\beta = .574$) contributed the largest unique determiners to the quality of college life. These findings provided strong supports for the importance of the facilities and services in the quality of college life. The findings also revealed the trends of college life among Hotel and Catering students in Malaysian polytechnics. The academic aspects have less impact on their quality of life which signaled that polytechnics should take proper actions regarding this matter. The quality of human capital produced for hospitality industry will be enhanced by understanding their satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the relationship of all predictors to the quality of college life is important to provide a good quality of hospitality education. This study helped the polytechnics to remain competitive in the higher education system

and to have a reflection of their strengths and weaknesses in order to be a first choice institution.

5 DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSIONS

The outcomes of hospitality education are very important to determine the development of quality human capital for the hospitality industry. The issue stimulated the researcher's interest to study the quality of college life among hospitality students in Malaysian Polytechnics. The quality of college life will determine the performance of the students in the real industry (Nguyen, et al., 2011).

This study was conducted to examine the relation between academic and social aspects as well as facilities and services towards the quality of college life. The objective of this study was also to determine the most contributing aspects to the quality of college life. The quality of human capital produced for hospitality industry will be enhanced by understanding their satisfaction.

Therefore, understanding the relationship of all predictors to the quality of college life is important to provide a good quality of hospitality education.

This study provided many implications to the polytechnics' education systems and other institutions. It helped the polytechnics to remain competitive in the higher education system by understanding their students' satisfaction towards the academic, social and facilities and services. It also developed future students by using the current students as the tools of promotion. In terms of finances, this study helped polytechnics' top management to improve their financial management. An effective financial management can be implemented by allocating the resources efficiently.

As a conclusion, the study on quality of college life is about understanding the students' satisfaction towards the academics and social life as well as facilities and services. In a very competitive situation, academic institution compete each other to offer higher quality of education. Polytechnics as a technical education provider in Malaysia must also compete with public and private universities, private institutions, and community colleges in winning the students' hearts to enrol for their future development. Therefore, this study helped the polytechnics to have a reflection of their strengths and weaknesses in order to be a first choice institution.

Based on the findings, there was a significant relationship between quality of college life and facilities and services. There was also a significant relationship between social aspects and quality of college life. However, there was no significant relationship between quality of college life and academic aspects. It can be concluded that, polytechnic students were more concerned on facilities, services and the social aspect through their life in polytechnics. The quality of their college life was not largely affected by the academic aspects. However, polytechnics must not neglect the quality of education offered. Hence, in order to generate students' satisfaction towards their quality of college life, polytechnics must have a continuous improvement on the quality of education, facilities and services.

The findings revealed the trends of college life among Hotel and Catering students in Malaysian Polytechnics. The academic aspects have less impact on their quality of life which signalled that polytechnics should take proper actions regarding this matter. This situation also showed that the students were less concerned about academic. Based on the findings, polytechnics or management need to enhance the students' awareness towards the importance of academic aspects. The main objectives of their enrolment in polytechnics need to be highlighted as a reminder.

Many activities, seminars or conferences must be organized for the students. From the findings we can also assume that the students were satisfied with the academic aspects in polytechnics. It can be concluded that the students are satisfied with the faculty, teaching method, classroom environment, workload, academic reputation and academic diversity. Therefore, academic issues were not influencing their quality of college life.

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