

The service quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley Region of Assam: The student-teachers perspective

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Abstract

Service quality has become an important aspect of educational institutions. Higher educational intuitions including teacher education institutions focus mainly on delivery of service quality to achieve effective learning in the students. The main purpose of this descriptive paper is to examine the expectation and perception level of student-teachers towards the service quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley region of Assam. In order to examine, a standardized tool was prepared relevant to the teacher education context based on the SERVQUAL model. The questionnaire was distributed to 158 randomly selected samples through a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data are analyzing using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results and findings that carried out revealed that the student-teachers have higher expectations than their perceptions of the quality of offered service by the B.Ed. colleges. The results and findings would help the competent and appropriate authorities to enhance service quality.

Keywords: Expected and Perceived service quality, Service Quality, SERVQUAL

1. Introduction

Service quality is the difference between stakeholder's perception of quality provided by a service provider and their expectations towards the service (Quinn, 1997; Gronroos, 1984; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). "Quality is a comparison between expectation and

performance” (Parasuraman, Zeithmal, & Berry, 1985, p. 42). When the stakeholder’s expectations are fulfilled by the quality of offered service, it satisfies the stakeholders and when stakeholders expectation is higher than the quality of offered service, it fails to satisfy the stakeholder.

Monitoring and maintaining service quality for higher education institutions are also important to safeguard the best interest of the students (Nazarian, Mahani, & Beheshtifar, 2012). Arshad, Bhutto, Sarki & Khuhro, (2011) found that students are satisfied with the service quality of their university. But in some regards, the students show dissatisfaction with the service quality of their universities. Alam, (2016) examined that students are somewhat satisfied with the service quality of the colleges. The quality assurance is not only needed in universities, but it is also important for other educational institutions like Teacher Education Institutions. Teacher Education as a service provides in-service and pre-service training to its student-teachers. It develops quality in student-teachers through developing attitudes, skills, competencies, and knowledge. Dwivedi & Singh, (2012); Kulshrestha & Pandey, (2013) found that teacher education has a positive influence on student-teachers in developing an attitude towards teaching and enhances teaching competencies. “Quality teachers are the products of quality teacher education programs, policies, and practices” (Seymour 1992, as cited in Islam 2017, p. 2). The quality of education of the nation largely depends upon the quality of the teachers of the country. B.Ed. colleges or Teacher education institutions are the institutions that prepare the teachers of the country. So, compromising the quality of B.Ed. colleges means compromising on the quality of school education system of the country.

Assam government has made B.Ed. as a mandatory/required criterion for the teachers of secondary and higher secondary schools. This resulted in a huge enhancement in the enrollment of educated youth in B.Ed. colleges with an expectation to get a government teaching job. this resulted in the emergence of a large number of new B.Ed. colleges and also resulted in the establishment of Teacher Education Institution with commercial motive floating quality norms and standards. In 2019, NCTE has withdrawn the recognition of seven B.Ed. colleges and given final show-cause notice to three B.Ed. colleges due to floating and breaching of quality norms prescribed by NCTE. (NCTE, Proceedings of 274th Meeting of the ERC-NCTE held on 15th -

16th July, 2019, 2019). The poor service quality of B.Ed. colleges would certainly affect the quality of the school education system of the entire nation. Hence, it has become the need of the hour to maintain the quality of teacher education programs, which is done through assessment and evaluation of quality practices of teacher education institutions. Hence quality assurance of B.Ed. colleges are becoming inevitable for a nation that struggles to improve the quality of its school system. Quality assessment is performed through various means. Different quality assessment agencies like the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), National Board of Accreditation (NBA), Quality Council of India (QCI) are there for quality assessment of higher education institutions in India. Even though quality assessment of higher education institutions by these agencies is current practice, taking students' feedback is also a worthy practice of quality assessment of higher educational institutions (Alam, 2016; Onditi & Wechuli, 2017; Smith & Smith, 2007; Yousapronpaiboon, 2014). In this paper, the researcher opted for students' feedback as to quality assessment and enhancement mechanism of Teacher Education Institution of Assam.

2. The rationale of the study

In Assam, new B.Ed. colleges are establishing at a rapid pace that rose from 68 in 2018 to 74 in 2019 (NCTE, 2018; NCTE, 2019) with a commercial motive breaching the quality norms of NCTE. In Assam, NCTE has withdrawn the recognition of seven B.Ed. colleges and given final show-cause notice to three B.Ed. colleges (NCTE, Proceedings of 274th Meeting of the ERC-NCTE held on 15th - 16th July, 2019, 2019) due to a breach of quality norms of NCTE. NCFTE, 2010 & NCF 2005 mentioned that the quality of pre-service teacher training is deteriorating, and because of this, the quality of school education of the country suffers (NCTE, National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, 2010), (NCERT, 2005). In this context, the quality of existing B.Ed. colleges are also questionable (Kalra, 2019). Chand, (2015) found that teacher education is not capable of developing values, creativity, etc. Islam, (2017) expressed that, teacher education now rarely contributes to enhance teachers' lifelong learning and to be familiar with new developments. The researcher suggested structuring the program based on the recent findings of research in the field of Education. The researcher also mentioned that, while planning such a program, due consideration should be given to the needs of the society,

technological advancement and innovations, needs of the learner, future employability, etc. The quality of an institution is reflected in the student satisfaction and is expressed in the gap analysis as the gap between the expected and perceived service quality of these institutions. A study to know the student-teachers expectation and perception about the service quality of teacher education would be of immense use since it has a direct relation with the quality of schooling. Also, many studies revealed that the quality of school education of Assam is not much encouraging and part of the responsibility lies in the presence of incompetent teachers in the schools who underwent “rigorous training” in various teacher education institutions. In this context, the researcher intends to identify the real quality of the Teacher Education Institutions through a gap analysis of the perceived and expected service quality based on the student teacher’s feedback, since the researcher found evidence from many studies that the student feedback is a reliable source of information about quality of an institution (Okogbaa, 2016). The school education in the Barak valley region of Assam is lagging far behind the Brahmaputra Valley of the state (Laskar, 2019; Sentinal, 2019).

In view of this, the researcher has framed an objective to find out the level of satisfaction of student teachers in terms of student-teachers expectations and perceptions about the service offered by B.Ed. Colleges of Barak Valley region of Assam. A hypothesis ‘There is no variation in the level of student teachers’ expectations and perceptions about the service offered by B. Ed. Colleges of Barak Valley region of in Assam’ have been proposed to test the above objective.

3. Methodology

The researcher used an exploratory descriptive survey method to study the expectation and perception level of student-teachers about the quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley region of in Assam. There are 74 B.Ed. colleges in Assam as per NCTE, 2019, as the study is limited to Barak Valley only, the researchers considered the second-year student-teachers of B.Ed. Colleges of Barak Valley as the population of the study. In Barak Valley, there are 10 institutions imparting B.Ed. program including 2 District Institute of Teacher Education (DIET). Barak Valley consist of three districts namely, Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj and in these districts there are 3, 3 and 4 B.Ed. colleges respectively. The total intake capacity of these 10 colleges is 720 (NCTE, 2019). The researcher randomly selected one B.Ed. college from each district and

from that 50 student-teachers have been chosen randomly as the sample of the study. Hence, the total sample for the study is 158 i.e. 22 % approximately of the total population.

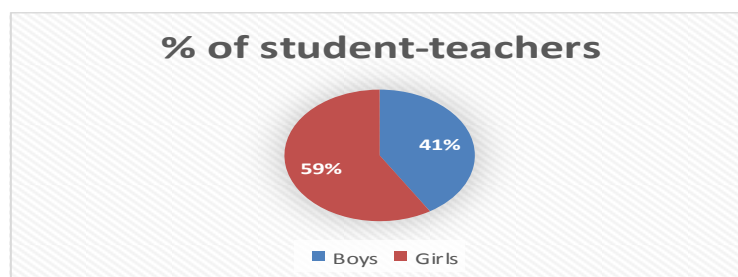
The researcher used two tools to measure both expectation level and perception level of the student-teachers'. The tools have been developed and standardized by the researcher. The tool consists of 48 items under five dimensions i.e. Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness, and Empathy. The tool has been standardized by establishing validity and reliability. Content validity of the tool has been established by using the Lawshe method (Lawshe, 1975) and the Content validity index (CVI) was found to be 0.78. To establish the reliability of the tool, the researcher used the Rational Equivalence Method, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (α) was computed and Coefficient Alpha (α) found to be .939. Thus, the validity and reliability of the tool have been established. "Expected service quality measurement tool for Teacher Education Institutions" is used to measure the expectation of student teachers about quality and "Perceived Service quality measurement tool for Teacher Education Institutions" is used to measure the perception of student teachers about the quality of the services offered by their teacher education institutions. The researcher used descriptive statistics, Pie Chart and Line graphs for analysis of data.

4. Result and findings

Demographic data of respondents

Figure 1.1. shows that, the respondents are mostly girls, approximately 59%, and approximately 41% of respondents are boys. Both of the respondents belong to the 2nd year of the study (3rd Semester in case of semester system) in B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley.

Figure 1.1



4.1 Gap Analysis

Table no. 1

Dimensions	Item No	Expectations Mean (I)	Perceptions Mean (II)	Gap (P-E)
Tangibles	1	4.66	2.61	-2.05
	2	4.22	2.16	-2.06
	3	4.35	3.64	-0.71
	4	4.66	4.01	-0.65
	5	4.68	4.17	-0.51
	6	4.77	3.77	-1
	7	4.73	3.45	-1.28
	8	4.27	2.27	-2
	9	3.93	2.08	-1.85
	10	4.39	3.39	-1
	11	4.57	3.30	-1.27
	12	4.01	2.29	-1.72
	13	4.14	2.34	-1.8
	14	4.38	2.20	-2.18
Reliability	15	4.57	3.67	-0.9
	16	4.71	4.07	-0.64
	17	4.50	3.70	-0.8
	18	4.11	2.25	-1.86
	19	4.53	3.83	-0.7
	20	4.61	4.21	-0.4
	21	4.39	3.57	-0.82
	22	4.56	3.77	-0.79
	23	4.43	3.78	-0.65
	24	4.18	2.54	-1.64
	25	4.20	2.54	-1.66
	26	4.45	2.29	-2.16
	27	4.62	3.73	-0.89
Responsiveness	28	4.63	4.16	-0.47
	29	4.61	4.08	-0.53
	30	4.56	4.13	-0.43
	31	4.66	4.30	-0.36
	32	4.58	4.13	-0.45
Assurance	33	4.67	4.15	-0.52
	34	4.74	4.41	-0.33
	35	4.45	4.05	-0.4

	36	4.46	3.90	-0.56
	37	4.76	4.22	-0.54
	38	4.72	4.26	-0.46
	39	4.63	4.03	-0.6
	40	4.64	4.08	-0.56
	41	4.56	3.91	-0.65
	42	4.60	3.89	-0.71
Empathy	43	4.42	3.78	-0.64
	44	4.63	3.99	-0.64
	45	4.68	3.88	-0.8
	46	4.50	3.22	-1.28
	47	4.64	4.04	-0.6
	48	4.58	4.02	-0.56

The above table no.1 shows the mean score of each item of expected and perceived service quality. The last column of the table shows the gap between expected service quality and perceived service quality which is calculated by subtracting the expected service quality from perceived service quality. The gap analysis clearly depicts that, in all the dimensions of service quality of teacher education institutions of the Barak Valley region of Assam a serious gap is experienced. This denotes that, the offered service quality of the teacher education institutions of the Barak Valley region fails to meet the expectation of the student-teachers.

4.2 Expectation and Perception Level of Student-teachers

Figure 1.2

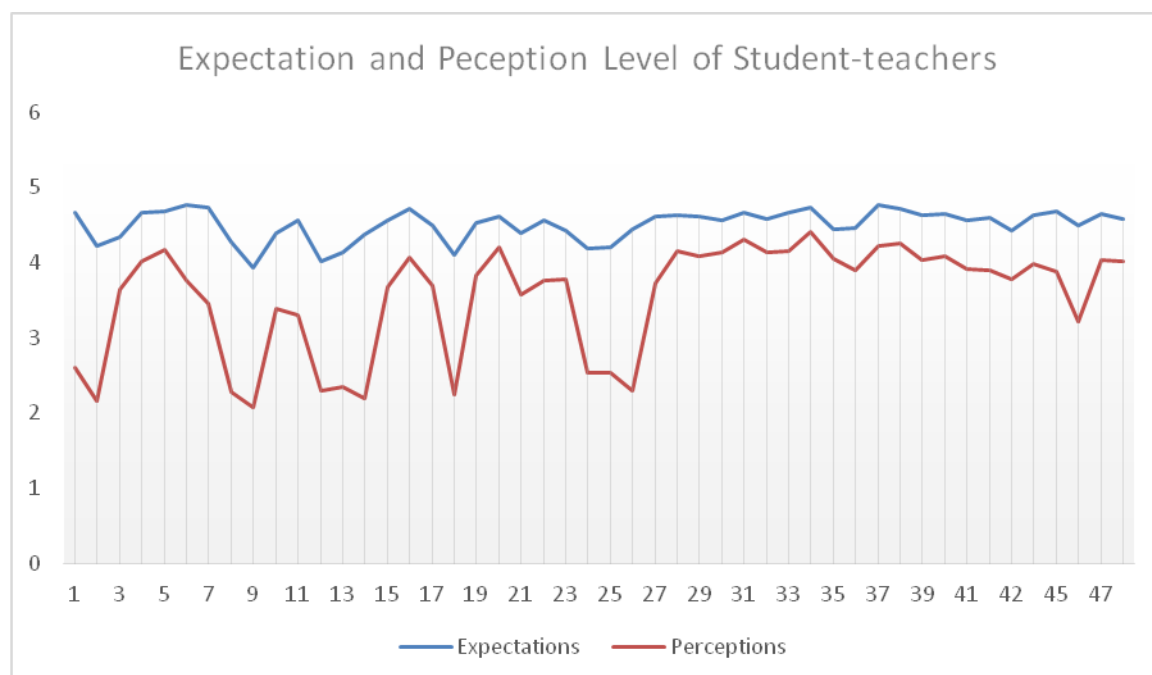


Table 1 and figure 1.2 shows the mean score of expectation and perception level of student-teachers. Figure 1.1 evidently depicts that, the respondents are not satisfied with the service quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley. The researcher found serious gaps in expectations and perceptions in all the five dimensions of service quality. Though the expectation level of student-teachers is not high enough, still the colleges are unable to provide services that meet the expectation level of student-teachers. From the figure it is found that, item no two “The college should have enough computers to work individually”, item no nine “College should have free Wi-Fi facility”, item no 14 “The college should have an ICT laboratory”, item no 18 “The college should give free access to internet facilities to the students” and item no 26 “The college should give access to the ICT laboratory to the students” have serious quality gap. However, in Responsiveness and Assurance, the gap is smaller than the other three dimensions. The researcher found the highest gap in the Tangibles dimension with a mean difference of 1.43 and a smaller gap in Responsiveness with a mean difference of 0.44.

4.3 Dimension wise comparison of expectation and perception level

Figure 1.3



Figure 1.3 presents the mean score of the five dimensions of service quality for expectation and perception. For the expectation level, the mean score is range from 4.42 the lowest to 4.62 the highest. Similarly, in the perception level, the mean score is range from 2.99 the lowest to 4.16 the highest. The Tangibles dimension depicts the highest gap among all the dimensions with a mean difference of 1.43 followed by Reliability with a mean difference of 1.07. The researcher found a mean difference of 0.75 in the Empathy dimension. The figure shows that the Assurance

and Responsiveness dimensions have a smaller gap than the other dimensions with a mean difference of 0.53 and 0.44 respectively.

Table 2

Paired Samples Statistics						
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Perceived	170.25	158	25.242	-19.633	.000
	Expected	216.31	158	14.550		

From the test statistics, it can be seen that $p = .000$ ($p < 0.05$) which implies that there is a statistically significant difference in expectation and perception among the student-teachers about the service quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley. The mean of expected and perceived service quality found to be 216.31 and 170.25 respectively. Hence, the null hypothesis “There is no variation in the level of student teachers’ expectations and perceptions about the service offered by B. Ed. Colleges of Barak Valley region of in Assam” is rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in expectation and perception among the student-teachers about the service quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley region of Assam.

5. Conclusion

The study involves student-teachers expectations and perceptions of the service quality of B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley region of Assam. This study revealed/indicated a quality gap in service quality of B.Ed. colleges. The stakeholders of the B.Ed. colleges have shown dissatisfaction with the different aspects of service quality. Most of the stakeholder thinks that the availability of physical facilities and lab equipment in the colleges are less and needed to be improved. It is concluded that, the B.Ed. colleges have to improve their service quality considering the different dimensions of service quality.

6. Recommendations

Considering the results of the study, the present study recommended that, the B.Ed. colleges of Barak Valley need to improve the physical facilities of the colleges i.e. ICT lab, Language Lab, Playground, Smart classroom, Psychological Laboratory, drinking water facilities, etc. This study also recommended providing reliable service to its stakeholders i.e. evaluation, passing of information, etc. The colleges should facilitate professional ethics in the student-teachers. Career counseling, proper guidance during practice teaching, co-curricular activities needed to be dynamic in the colleges.

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