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Are the Customers Comfortable with Seats in the Classroom or Is the Customer wrong This Time? An Empirical Analysis of the Customers Satisfaction from the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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Abstract:

From the marketing point of view, 'the customer is always right' and the customer satisfaction is believed to be derived from the extent to which the perceived standard of service matches the expectations of the customer. Based on these ideals, this paper used the multinomial logit model to analyse how the University of Education, Winneba Evening programme Level 400 Managerial Economics students are comfortable with the seat they sit on in class to study. The study revealed that the students are not comfortable at all with the type of seat provided and it is recommended that the necessary action be initiated to provide students with comfortable seats.

Keywords: Students, marketing, customer, satisfaction, evening programme, multinomial logit

1. Introduction

The higher education policy based on neoliberal ideals which seeks to find ways to foster the operation of the market, increase competitiveness by having higher educational institutions (HEIs) to compete against each other in the market and ensuring that HEIs students pay market rate fees have gained grounds in the recent past. This neoliberal policy has come to be known as 'marketisation of higher education' in the higher education literature. There is inherent logic attractiveness in the neoliberal philosophy that espouse that students will benefit from the marketisation of higher education. It reasons that students who pay for their education will demand more from the provider of that education and institutions that compete for the revenue derived from the students will be more responsive to students' demands, and the quality of the tertiary education experience eventually for the students will improve. This resonates with a considerable marketing literature which stipulates that we are living in a 'customer care revolution' (Dando-Collins, 1996), and that 'customer value' is 'the path of sustainable competitive advantage' (Naumann, 1995). According to (Aina, Chachage, & Annan-Yao 2004; Aseka 2005; Bundy 2004; Toress & Schugurensky 2002; Aina 1997) neo-liberalism may be described simply as an ideology that favours *Laissez-Faire* or free market economics. It advocates for privatisation, marketisation and performance; and the shift of the cost of public services (e.g. higher education) from the state onto the individual. By privileging privatisation and marketisation, neo-liberalism thus occasions the significant withdrawal of the state in social provisioning through drastic reductions in social expenditure. (Aina, 1997; Aina et al., 2004; Aseka, 2005; Toress & Schugurensky, 2002).

(Johnstone 2003, p.3) outlines the tenets that shape strategies proposed by proponents of neo-liberals. They believe that (a) the private rate of returns to higher education to the individual is very high, and that the beneficiary should contribute toward education; (b) regressive free tuition would be used to compensate for individuals who cannot afford the cost of college education as this will create equity as students from middle and upper income families would pay, and there would be a means tested approach to providing grants, loans and scholarships to individuals from the less advantaged families; (c) paying tuition ensures the efficiency and accountability of institutions to students and parents; and (d) the increased difficulty of taxation in many low income and transitional countries and/or the competition from other compelling public needs such as health care and primary education, make increased tax resources doubtful at best to supporting higher education. (Johnstone 2003, p.351) also advocated for cost sharing. He defines cost sharing in higher education as 'the assumption by parents and students of a portion of the costs of higher education – costs that, in many nations, at least until recently, have been borne predominantly or even exclusively borne by governments, or taxpayers. (Mamdani, 2006) argued that the neo-liberal approach of funding HEIs is an assault on the development role of the African HEIs. Although a 2000 study by a task force convened by the World Bank and UNESCO questions the logic of subjecting higher education to resource starvation, the findings of this report have not occasioned any significant policy shifts towards greater public funding of higher education, (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). Public Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs), those HEIs that are fully owned by the Government of Ghana (GOG) and are funded from the public purse still has to grapple with reduced state support that has been advocated for by the neo-liberal

Bretton Wood institutions and the University of Education, Winneba is no exception. Historically, there have been three major shifts in funding Ghanaian Higher educational sector since independence namely; the era of free education, the era of cost sharing and the present cost sharing cum internally generated fund (IGFs) or income generation era.

Within the immediate-post independence era, PHEIs education in Ghana was free, with the public purse covering tuition and students' living allowances, pedagogical and research infrastructure, buildings and staff costs. The rationale for state subsidization of higher education, especially tuition, was based, *inter alia*, on the country's desire to create highly trained person power that could replace the departing colonial administrators, and also to ensure equity of access. (Sawyer 2001) asserts that, in the welfare-dominated postcolonial period, it was argued that unless the state subsidised the highly expensive higher education system, many students would be unable to benefit from it and that formation of citizenry power would be compromised. Free provision of public higher education was therefore seen as the surest way for the state to guarantee equality of opportunity. The university was also seen as the epicentre of social and economic development, which the newly independent state so much desired and aspired to. To achieve its role of spurring social and economic development, it was argued that generous funding be provided. By offering highly subsidised education, free of any direct charges, the GOG hoped to stimulate enrolments (access) into higher education. This situation continues until the end of the 1960s, when the Ghanaian higher education budget increased to the extent that the GOG could not afford to remain the sole financier of higher education in the country, leading to the era of cost sharing. In Ghana, cost sharing accord apportioned the responsibility for PHEIs funding in the ratio of 70:30. Thus the GOG is responsible for 70 percent of total funding and the PHEIs responsible for 30 percent, to be met by increasing internal revenue-generation, private donations and student tuition fees. Student academic and residential facility user fees in Ghana were also introduced in 1998.

(The World Bank 1988; 1994) policy papers, together with the World Bank and IMF-assisted global re-orientation of economic policies from Keynesian economics to neo-liberalism, triggered major changes in PHEIs funding, in Ghana. The coercive influence of the World Bank, expressed in structural adjustment programs that favoured drastic reduction of state funding of social services, including higher education, led to a change in the manner in which higher education was funded. The World Bank wanted educational services to be brought into the market place, *inter alia*, through increased private provision and cost sharing (World Bank, 1988; 1994. As is characteristic of World Bank loans to poor countries, conditionalities were attached. These included the institution of new financing strategies for higher education, which they actually referred to as cost sharing. In effect, the Bank prescribed reduced funding by government to the higher education sub-sector and the introduction of cost sharing, eventually culminating into the present era of marketisation.

The latter can be linked to the discrediting of the public model of financing higher education, aided by the establishment of neo-liberalism as the dominant economic mode of the century. This is the era of shifting the PHEIs resource dependence from the state to the market, as evidenced by the decline of public expenditure in the total expenditure in the PHEIs administration. In this era, higher education is predominantly viewed as a private commodity and much less as a public good. Consequently, as observed by (Altbach 2002), a revolution is taking place in African public higher education; it is becoming a traded commodity to be purchased by a consumer, a product to be bought and sold by academic institutions that have changed themselves into 'businesses'. In Ghana, this period (i.e. 2000 onwards) may be described as the era of marketisation. Marketisation refers to several income-earning strategies that PHEIs have adopted. Various descriptors have been coined to depict these strategies, such as privatisation, commercialisation, commodification, academic capitalism and entrepreneurialism (Clark, 1998; Johnstone, Arora, & Experton, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

At the UEW, the Faculty of Business Education (FBE), in line with the neoliberal ideals of marketisation of higher education commenced evening programmes in 2004. The evening programmes also refers to as the 'part-time' programme in the UEW academic circles is a fee paying programmes offering degrees in Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Bachelor of Science in Administration (B.Sc. Admin). The application to higher education of the neoliberal policy stems from the philosophy that the benefits of participation in higher education are equal to or greater than the benefits to society (Meek & Wood, 1997, p.129). As a result, academic consumers are now turning their attention to the quality of the service they are purchasing. They are demanding the same high standards from service providers which they have come to expect from manufacturers (Belgrave, 1995 p.310). (Shank *et al.*, 1995) reported that educational services has been a neglected area in the recent growth in the literature on services marketing and educators have been very reluctant to cross disciplinary boundaries to consider marketing perspective on what they do. At the root of reluctance of professionals to embrace marketing appears to be fear of power shift towards the student, as encapsulated in the marketing slogan that the 'customer is always right'. Marketing is customer-oriented and the marketing concept requires that customer satisfaction rather than profit maximisation be the goal of an organisation (Aaker *et al.*, 1995). Customer satisfaction is believed to be derived from the extent to which the perceived standard of service matches the expectations of the customer. In claiming that higher education is an emerging market for marketers, (Marshall and Craig 1998) argue that the educational organisation must seek to fulfil both their own 'educational goals and those of clients'; the ultimate goal of marketing should be to achieve the objectives of the institution. The application of a marketing perspective to higher education does not, then involve a dramatic shift of power from the educator to the student but does suggest that in order to achieve service quality the expectations of the student need to be taken into account and ideally, their views and those of the educator be brought into harmony; not knowing what customers expect is one short fall that can lead to a gap between what customers expect and what they receive (Zethamal *et al.*, 1990). Although the UEW, evening programme course aims assessment criteria and the teaching process are made explicit because of an 'implicit contract between students and the UEW as well as seeking students feedback upon completion of a unit of study, these strategies has been

the conventional mode of students' evaluation. It would appear that the next step towards monitoring and increasing students' satisfaction is for the UEW, to conduct an empirical research to assess the students' level of satisfaction. The objective of the paper is to identify BBA level 400 evening programme students of the UEW, in Kumasi as customers and empirically assess their level of satisfaction of their classroom seats they sit on. A primary theme of the paper is to investigate the magnitude of problems outside the conventional student feedback and evaluation and looked at the 'credence qualities' of 'characteristics that customers find hard to evaluate even after purchase and consumption' (Lovelock *et al.*1998). The structure of the paper can now be outlined. The next section details the institutional background, followed by a section describing the data. This is followed by the empirical model and the statistical methodology used sections respectively. The penultimate section contains a discussion of the empirical results followed by concluding and recommendations section. Throughout this paper the terms satisfaction and comfort are used interchangeably.

2. Institutional Background

On 14th May, 2004 the University of Education Act, Act 2004 was enacted to upgrade the status of the University College of Education of Winneba to the status of a full University and to provide for related matters. The University of Education, Winneba was established in September, 1992 as a University College under PNDC Law 322 and the first batch of 481 students enrolled in November 1992. University of Education, Winneba brought together seven diploma awarding colleges located in different towns under one umbrella institution, viz., the Advanced Teacher Training College, the Specialist Training College and the National Academy of Music, all situated at Winneba; the School of Ghanaian Languages, Ajumako; College of Special Education, Mampong-Akuapem; the Advanced Technical Training College (presently, the College of Technology Education) Kumasi, and the St. Andrews Agricultural Training College, Asante Mampong. The Winneba Campus is the seat of the Vice-Chancellor with satellite campuses at Kumasi and Asante Mampong. *Undergraduate Admissions Brochure*, (2009).

3. Data

This study exploits data obtained in a unique survey instrument developed by the researcher and pilot-tested by him. In addition to the conventional biases associated with obtaining complete and correct responses from a sample survey, a survey on students' preference encounters difficulties arising from the zeal of respondents to reveal or over emphasize the difficulties and problems confronting them. In order to attenuate the effect of this systematic bias on survey responses, a revision to the survey instrument was implemented after the pilot test results, after which 85 instruments were distributed to the students. 82 usable instruments were returned for a response rate of (96%). The confidential nature of the survey was emphasized and students were assured that the information would only be used for research purposes. The survey was administered among the Level 400 Bachelor of Business Students (BBA) in February, 2010 to the managerial economics class which was taught by the researcher.

4. Empirical Model

The empirical model estimated in this paper is guided by some theoretical considerations that characterised the seating satisfaction of level 400 students of BBA evening programme at the College of Technology Education, University of Education, Winneba. Hence, a very general model of the seating satisfaction of the students of this paper is expressed using the multinomial logit index as:

$$\text{Satisfaction}_{ij} = \alpha_{j0} + \alpha_{j1}\text{Female}_i + \alpha_{j2}\text{Employed}_i + \alpha_{j3}\text{Private}_i + \alpha_{j4}\text{Paidfees}_i$$

where $i = 1, \dots, 82$ and $j=1,2,3,4$,

The key dependent variable is the satisfaction level of the seat a student sits on during classes as expressed by a student of the Bachelor of Business Administration evening programme at the College of Technology Education, University of Education, Winneba. A variety of explanatory variables are used and are now described in turn in Table 1.

Variable	Description	Mean
SATISFACTION	=1 if 'no idea' to satisfaction; = 2 if 'not satisfied with the seat' =3 if 'satisfied with the seat' =4 if 'extremely satisfied with the seat'.	
GENDER	=1 if student is male; = 0 if student is female.	0.70
EMPLOYED	=1 if student is employed; = 0 if student is unemployed	0.89
PRIVATE	=1 if student is employed in the private sector; = 0 if student is not employed in the private sector.	0.68
PAIDFEES	=1 if student paid school fees at a goal; =0 =1 if student paid school fees in instalments	0.74

Table 1: Description of Variables

5. Statistical Methodology

In modelling the response of a student on the quality of seat offered as a client of College of Technology Education, University of Education, Winneba level 400 BBA evening programme to sit on to study, the multinomial logit model was applied. The multinomial logit model has some intuitive appeal since individual students are assumed to attach separate random utilities to all possible outcomes. A set of four possible student rating outcomes of: (1) 'no idea', (2) 'not satisfied with the seat', (3) 'satisfied with the seat' (4) 'extremely satisfied with the seat' are prescribed.

Letting $y_{ij} = 1$ if the i^{th} student chooses the j^{th} possible outcome, and $y_{ij} = 0$ otherwise, where $j = 1, 2, 3, 4$.

Then probability $[y_{ij} = 1] = \pi_{ij}$ and must all sum to unity. [1]

Thus, $\pi_{i1} + \pi_{i2} + \pi_{i3} + \pi_{i4} = 1$. [2]

The multinomial logit in this particular case can be expressed for the relationship as:

$(\alpha_j + \beta_j X_i)$ for $j = 1, 2, 3, 4$, where:

$$\pi_{i1} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_1 + \beta_1 X_i]}{\exp[\alpha_1 + \beta_1 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.3]$$

$$\pi_{i2} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i]}{\exp[\alpha_1 + \beta_1 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.4]$$

$$\pi_{i3} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i]}{\exp[\alpha_1 + \beta_1 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.5]$$

$$\pi_{i4} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]}{\exp[\alpha_1 + \beta_1 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.6]$$

In its more general form with j alternatives, the multinomial logit is expressed as:

$$\pi_{ij} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_j + \beta_j X_i]}{\sum_j \exp[\alpha_j + \beta_j X_i]} \quad [1.7]$$

where k is the number of outcomes being modelled. This, in general terms, expresses the probability that a student with characteristics X_i chooses the j^{th} category. A normalization is however required. This is achieved by setting α_1 and $\beta_1 = 0$.

This is usually referred to in the literature as the *Theil Normalisation*. In the four possible student ratings outcome model described in [1.3] to [1.6], the restriction implies that the probabilities are re-expressed as:

$$\pi_{i1} = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.3^*]$$

$$\pi_{i2} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i]}{1 + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.4^*]$$

$$\pi_{i3} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i]}{1 + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.5^*]$$

$$\pi_{i4} = \frac{\exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]}{1 + \exp[\alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_i] + \exp[\alpha_4 + \beta_4 X_i]} \quad [1.6^*]$$

The condition $\pi_{i1} + \pi_{i2} + \pi_{i3} + \pi_{i4} = 1$ is satisfied. Suppressing the i subscript in the preceding set of equations described in [1.3*] to [1.6*], for convenience sake, paves way for constructing expressions for various permutations of the log odds ratios. These log odds ratios can be expressed relative to any of the four categories under consideration. For this study, it is expressed relative to the *Theil Normalisation*. Given the expressions for the log odds ratios are in terms of the normalized category, the coefficients $\alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4$ are thus interpreted relative to the normalized category's coefficients, so are the β_2, β_3 and β_4 coefficients. The multinomial logit has some potential weaknesses, in that the choices made are assumed independent of the remaining alternatives. This weakness is referred to as the 'independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA)' property. This becomes a particular problem when the choices or outcomes are close substitutes for one another. Fortunately, in this study, the ordering are not close substitutes. The distinguishing feature of the multinomial logit model is that the data consist of individual-specific characteristics and this explains its preference in this application.

6. Empirical Results

The multinomial logit regression analysis was performed using the STATA statistical software package. Table 3 reports the multinomial logit maximum likelihood estimates for students' comfort on the seat they sit on to undertake their studies. The base outcome is set to category 1 (no idea).

Category	Maximum likelihood estimates
2. Employed Gender Paid full school fees Private sector employee	1.98* -17.8 -17.0* 1.72
3. Employed Gender Paid full school fees Private sector employee	22.7* 18.1** -16.7 0.33
4 Employed Gender Paid full school fees Private sector employee	1.6* -19.6** -16.6 -0.22*

Table 3: Multinomial Logit Estimates for the UEW Evening Students Satisfaction on the Seat They Sit on during Lectures

** ** Denote Statistical Significance at the 0.05 and 0.10 Level Respectively Using Two-Tailed Tests*

The estimated coefficients for category 2 provide the effects on the log odds ratio of being in category 2 (not satisfied with the seat,) relative to category 1 (no idea). The estimated coefficient for a student being male (gender) decreases the log odds ratio of reporting sitting on the seats as not being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 17.8 log points compared to a female student, on average and ceteris paribus. That is male students on the BBA evening programme are more dissatisfied with the seats at the classroom than the female counterparts. An evening student who is employed raises the log odds ratio of reporting the reporting sitting on the seats as not being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 1.98 log points compared to an unemployed student, on average and ceteris paribus. The estimated coefficient for a student who paid all his/her school fees at a goal decreases the log odds ratio of reporting sitting on the seats as not being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 17.0 log points compared to a student who pay her school fees in instalment, on average and ceteris paribus. A student who is employed in the private sector raises the log odds ratio of reporting the reporting sitting on the seats as not being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 1.72 log points compared to a public sector student employee, on average and ceteris paribus. The estimated coefficients for category 3 provide the effects on the log odds ratio of being in category 3 (satisfied with the seat,) relative to category 1 (no idea). The estimated coefficient for a student being male (gender) increases the log odds ratio of reporting sitting on the seats as being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 18.1 log points compared to a female student, on average and ceteris paribus. A student who is employed raises the log odds ratio of reporting the reporting sitting on the seats as being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 22.7 log points compared to an unemployed student, on average and ceteris paribus. The estimated coefficient for a student who paid all his school fees at a goal decreases the log odds ratio of reporting sitting on the seats as not being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 16.7 log points compared to a student who pay her school fees in instalment, on average and ceteris paribus. A student who is employed in the private sector raises the log odds ratio of reporting sitting on the seats as being satisfied with the seat relative to 'no idea' by 0.33 log points compared to a public sector student employee, on average and ceteris paribus. The same analyses are made for the reported coefficients in category 4.

7. Marginal Effects

The estimated marginal effects are more instructive for the various categories and they are reported in Table 4. The estimated marginal effect for gender in category 2 suggests that being a male student raises the probability of being in the not satisfied' category by 19 percentage point, on average and ceteris paribus.

Category	Marginal effects
2. Employed Gender Paid full school fees Private sector employee	-0.20 0.19 0.05 0.03
3. Employed Gender Paid full school fees Private sector employee	0.21 0.01 -0.03 -0.04
4. Employed Gender Paid full school fees Private sector employee	0-.01 0-.19 0-.01 0-.03

Table 4: Multinomial Logit Marginal Effects for UEW Evening Students Satisfaction on the Seat they Sit on During Lectures

The estimated marginal effect for a student who paid the school fees in full in category (2) raises the probability of being in the 'not satisfied' category by 5 percentage points, on average and ceteris paribus and the estimated marginal effect for students working in the private sector in category (2) suggests that being student worker raises the probability of being in the 'not satisfied' category by 3 percentage points, on average and ceteris paribus. The study also focused on whether the students are extremely satisfied with the seat they sit on in class. The marginal effects of the reported coefficients suggested that all the variables analysed indicated that the students are not extremely satisfied at all with the seats in their classroom. The estimated marginal effect for gender in category (4) suggests that being a male decreases the probability of being in the 'extremely satisfied with the seats' category by 1.9 percentage point, on average and ceteris paribus and the estimated marginal effect for a student who is employed in category (4) suggests that being an employed student decreases the probability of being in the 'extremely satisfied with the seats' category by 1 percentage point, on average and ceteris paribus. The estimated marginal effect for a student who paid the school fees in full in category (4) decreases the probability of being in the 'extremely satisfied with the seats' category by 1 percentage point, on average and ceteris paribus and the estimated marginal effect for students working in the private sector in category (4) decreases the probability of being in the 'extremely satisfied with the seats' by 3 percentage points, on average and ceteris paribus.

8. Concluding and Recommendation

The public higher educational sector in Ghana has of course undergone enormous growth in recent years and is widely believed that future success in highly competitive fee-paying programmes belongs to those Ghana public higher educational institutions that go the extra distance in providing students/customers with world class customer service. It is time for the University of Education, Winneba policy makers to face two facts: that they are in a competitive battle with both public and private universities for students, and that the students are customers. As the results in category 4 indicated all the variables analysed indicated that the BBA students are not really satisfied with the type of service in terms of the seat provided by their service provider. This is not to suggest a dramatic shift of power from the University of Education, Winneba to students but does suggest that in order to achieve service quality the expectations of the students need to be taken into account. It is therefore recommended that the views and those of the educator be brought into harmony as not knowing what the level 400 BBA evening students expect is one shortfall that can lead to a gap between what they expect as students and what they receive as customers. As to whether the BBA students are enjoying their study as a whole was not pursued here and remains an agenda for future research.

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