



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**MANAGING SERVICE QUALITY IN  
AKADEMI LAUT MALAYSIA, MELAKA**

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**by**

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**Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Master of Science  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A - age
- R - race
- Rk - rank
- Ss - ship service time
- C - course taken at present
- S1 - experience attending courses at ALAM
- S2 - experience attending other training institutions

### Expected Tangibles

- E8 - the campus is clean and well kept
- E9 - accommodation equipment in good working condition
- E10 - catering services provide good quality food
- E11 - employees are neat appearing
- E12 - printed materials are visually appealing

### Expected Responsiveness

- E13 - employees do so when promise
- E14 - employees perform service right the first time
- E15 - employees provide service when promise
- E16 - employees provide accurate information
- E17 - institution insists on error-free records

### Expected Reliability

- E18 - course registration is timely and fast
- E19 - employees tell students when service will be performed
- E20 - employees give prompt service
- E21 - employees always willing to help students
- E22 - employees have sincere interest in solving students' problems

### Expected Assurance

- E23 - employees never too busy to respond
- E24 - employees instill confidence in students
- E25 - students feel safe in transaction with institution
- E26 - employees consistently courteous
- E27 - employees have knowledge to answer questions



### Expected Empathy

- E28 - institution gives individual attention to students
- E29 - institution's operating hours convenient to students
- E30 - students' best interest always at heart
- E31 - institution gives personal attention to students
- E32 - institution understands specific needs of students

### Perceived Tangibles

- P33 - ALAM's campus is clean and well kept
- P34 - ALAM's accommodation equipment in good working condition
- P35 - ALAM's catering services provide good quality food
- P36 - ALAM's employees are neat appearing
- P37 - ALAM's printed materials are visually appealing

### Perceived Responsiveness

- P38 - ALAM's employees do so when promise
- P39 - ALAM's employees perform service right the first time
- P40 - ALAM's employees provide service when promise
- P41 - ALAM's employees provide accurate information
- P42 - ALAM insists on error-free records

### Perceived Reliability

- P43 - ALAM's course registration is timely and fast
- P44 - ALAM's employees tell students when service will be performed
- P45 - ALAM's employees give prompt service
- P46 - ALAM's employees always willing to help students
- P47 - ALAM's employees have sincere interest in solving students' problems

### Perceived Assurance

- P48 - ALAM's employees never too busy to respond
- P49 - ALAM's employees instill confidence in students
- P50 - students feel safe in transaction with ALAM
- P51 - ALAM's employees consistently courteous
- P52 - ALAM's employees have knowledge to answer questions

### Perceived Empathy

- P53 - ALAM gives individual attention to students
- P54 - ALAM's operating hours convenient to students
- P55 - students' best interest always at heart in ALAM



- P56 - ALAM gives personal attention to students
- P57 - ALAM understands specific needs of students

### Overall Satisfaction

- S58 - students satisfied with facilities at ALAM
- S59 - students satisfied with services of ALAM
- S60 - students feel ease staying in ALAM
- S61 - staying in ALAM gives atmosphere of home
- S62 - students like attending courses at ALAM
- S63 - students will recommend others to attend courses at ALAM
- STT - overall satisfaction level

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**July, 1998**

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Faculty : Educational Studies

The purpose of this study was to examine the quality of the non-academic services provided by the Students Affairs Department of Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM) in five dimensions, that is tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. The study discusses aspects of current service quality theories with focus on the Gap Theory developed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman.



A total of 128 students attending various courses in the first week of August, 1998 were selected to participate in the study. Data collection was done by using the standard service marketing instrument SERVQUAL, developed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman. Minor modifications however was done to the SERVQUAL instrument to suit the higher education setting. Apart from the SERVQUAL that explored the expectation and perception levels of the students, the researcher had developed a questionnaire soliciting information regarding the overall students' satisfaction level with ALAM services. Data collected were analyzed using the *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* program. Descriptive statistic was employed in analyzing the expectations, perceived performance, overall satisfaction level and the gap difference (perceived performance minus expectations).

The results of the study revealed negative gap scores for all five dimensions, indicating that the students did not obtain the services as expected. Dimension tangibles was rated poorest in terms of quality of service, followed by empathy, reliability, responsiveness and assurance. In terms of the specific areas, quality of food served was ranked poorest followed by accommodation facility, registration process, cleanliness of the campus and attractiveness of the printed materials such as forms, brochures and pamphlets. The study also shows that the gap score is a



reliable indicator to determine the students' overall satisfaction level with the quality of services provided.

The study highlighted some important facts regarding the quality of ALAM's services. Since excellent service quality can give organization competitive advantage, ALAM should make every effort to improve the quality of all areas concerned with priority on the dimension tangibles. ALAM needs to provide better services to its customers, hence the need to measure the service quality. In this respect, gap analysis method offers an approach to assess and scrutinize the various dimensions of service quality. Through this measurement, ALAM gains valuable information regarding the areas which need improvement.



Abstrak projek yang dikemukakan kepada Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian syarat bagi mendapatkan Ijazah Master Sains.

**MENGURUS KUALITI PERKHIDMATAN  
DI AKADEMI LAUT MALAYSIA, MELAKA**

Oleh

**AHMAD ZAHARI BIN HJ. MOHD. TAHIR**

**Julai 1998**

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Tujuan kajian ini ialah untuk mengkaji kualiti perkhidmatan bukan akademik yang disediakan oleh Jabatan Hal Ehwal Pelajar, Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM) dalam lima dimensi, iaitu 'tangibles', 'responsiveness', 'reliability', 'assurance' dan 'empathy'. Kajian ini membincangkan beberapa aspek teori kualiti perkhidmatan semasa dengan tumpuan diberi kepada Teori Jurang (Gap Theory) oleh Zeithaml, Berry dan Parasuraman.



128 orang pelajar yang mengikuti berbagai kursus pada minggu pertama bulan Ogos, 1998 telah dipilih untuk menyertai kajian ini. Kutipan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan instrumen perkhidmatan pemasaran, iaitu SERVQUAL yang dihasilkan oleh Zeithaml, Berry dan Parasuraman. Beberapa pembetulan kecil telah dibuat pada instrumen ini bagi menyesuaikan dengan senario pendidikan tinggi. Penyelidik juga telah membentuk satu soalselidik bagi mendapatkan informasi berhubung dengan tahap kepuasan keseluruhan bagi kualiti perkhidmatan ALAM. Data-data bagi kajian ini telah dianalisa menggunakan program SPSS. Statistik deskriptif digunakan bagi menganalisa tahap jangkaan, persepsi, kepuasan keseluruhan dan nilai jurang antara persepsi dengan jangkaan.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan nilai jurang negatif bagi kesemua lima dimensi. Ini menunjukkan bahawa para pelajar telah tidak mendapat kualiti perkhidmatan seperti yang mereka jangkakan. Kualiti perkhidmatan bagi dimensi 'tangibles' dinilai sebagai paling rendah diikuti dengan 'empathy', 'reliability', 'responsiveness' dan 'assurance'. Secara khusus pula, bidang yang dinilai sebagai mempunyai kualiti paling rendah ialah makanan yang disajikan oleh perkhidmatan sajian ALAM, diikuti dengan kemudahan penginapan, proses pendaftaran kursus, kebersihan kampus dan bahan-bahan cetakan seperti borang, brosur dan risalah. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa skor nilai jurang merupakan indikator



yang boleh dipercayai bagi mengukur tahap kepuasan keseluruhan bagi sesuatu kualiti perkhidmatan.

Kajian ini telah menjelaskan beberapa faktor penting berhubung dengan kualiti perkhidmatan ALAM. Oleh kerana kualiti perkhidmatan yang cemerlang merupakan suatu lebih-saing kepada sesebuah organisasi, maka ALAM perlu berusaha untuk meningkatkan kualiti perkhidmatannya dalam semua aspek dengan keutamaan diberi kepada dimensi 'tangibles'. ALAM perlu menyediakan perkhidmatan yang lebih berkualiti kepada pelanggannya, dan untuk itu ALAM perlu mengukur kualiti perkhidmatan yang diberikan. Dalam hal ini, kaedah analisa jurang menawarkan pendekatan penting untuk menilai dan mengawasi kualiti perkhidmatan dalam berbagai dimensi. Melalui kaedah ini, ALAM berupaya memperoleh informasi penting berhubung dengan bidang-bidang yang perlu dipertingkatkan.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM): An overview**

In the middle of the seventies shortage of seafarers was very acute due to the rapid expansion of the maritime industry as well as the absence of formal training in the country. The situation prompted the national carrier, Malaysia International Shipping Corporation (MISC) to take the initiative to establish a training center to train young Malaysians to become seafarers. Thus, in 1976 with the support of the Malaysian government, MISC as the main promoter together with its associates Kuok Foundation and International Maritime Carriers of Hong Kong established a foundation known as the Maritime Training and Education for Seafarers (MATES) Foundation. The main purpose of the foundation was to provide education and training for seafarers. Following its establishment, MATES Foundation acquired a piece of land in Kuala Sungai Baru, Melaka and in 1977 the Foundation set up a training center known as the Maritime Training Center (MTC). In view of the increasing demand for qualified seafarers by the

maritime industry, a decision was taken to upgrade MTC to an academy. Thus, with the award of a Government Charter on 15 August 1981, MTC was upgraded to a full fledge academy charged with the task of developing and enhancing maritime education and training. With the upgrading, Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM) was placed under the supervision of the Implementation and Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department. The government's greater involvement in ALAM reflects its support and commitment towards maritime education and training in the country. In 1997 ALAM was privatized and MATES Foundation was dissolved. The management function of ALAM was taken over by MMA Sdn.Bhd.; a consortium of marine related companies comprising of MISC, Petronas, Klang Port Management and Penang Shipbuilding Corporation.

With the privatization, ALAM has to compete with other similar private institutions in the region. Therefore, ALAM needed a shift in its culture. From now on ALAM should be more customers oriented. This is very important because in any quality process, culture change should come first. Managing culture change is the first step to managing quality. Unless attitudes and behaviors change, any improvement will be temporary. Culture change can be achieved through:

- continuous personal and corporate development,
- commitment of every person to client satisfaction,

- corporate behavior,
- clear, honest and open communication, and
- confidence in what ever the staff does.

Like any other private organizations, ALAM emphasizes on quality. It is reflected in its quality policy, which forms the basis for all work in ALAM and as a guideline for how its customers are to be treated. The Quality Policy of ALAM states that, the academy's policy is to strive to consistently provide courses, programs and services of the highest possible quality, that will satisfy the customer and where relevant, meet or exceed the requirement of the maritime education and training standards, both national and international.

### **Nature of the study**

In the past decade, following rapid economic development, the education system of Malaysia has expanded very quickly. This entails not only the public but also the private education of the country. The establishment of the Private Education Department in the Ministry of Education, and the various allocations in the Education Act 1996, the National Accreditation Board Act 1996, the Private Higher Education Institution Act 1996 proves the government's commitment in improving the country's education. This

commitment is further reflected in the government's aspiration of developing Malaysia as a center of academic excellence in this region. In this respect, the government is concerned with not only the quantity of education but also the quality of education. Thus, a number of policies have been made to upgrade the quality of education at all levels.

When we talk about managing quality we mean sustaining and continuously improving the quality. However, sustained and continuous quality improvement is not possible without measures of quality (Edvardsson, Gustavsson and Ovretveit, 1994). Quality measurement is therefore an important technique for a service aiming for more than a superficial improvement. Because of this, quality assessment has become a feature of the higher education, and in this context the measures of quality go far beyond excellent classroom practice. It encompasses:

- the support structures (maintenance of buildings, facilities and equipment),
- the educational foundations (the relevancy of courses offered and the teaching which takes place),
- the learning outcomes (the achievement of stated educational aims and objectives),
- the human resources (the caliber of the people involved), and

- the management structures (the framework that guides and coordinates).

Why should we measure quality? In answering this we need to clarify the purpose of the measurement. Here the purpose is to discover the service quality level of higher education institution, specifically the Akademi Laut Malaysia.

### **Statement of the problem**

Higher education in Malaysia forms the peak of the national education system. It plays an important role and acts as a catalyst to achieve the academic excellence and thus meeting the technical and professional manpower requirement of the country by the year 2020. In view of the limited capacity of the public institutions to cater the ever-growing demand for higher education in the country, the role of private education institutions has become important and pivotal to the economic development of Malaysia. The increasing demand for higher education has prompted many operators to establish private colleges offering wide varieties of courses from certificates level to post-graduate degrees. As a market strategy, many of these colleges embarked on twinning programs with overseas as well as local institutions.

Like many other business organizations, higher education institutions must be concerned with not only the market share and profit but also the quality of the services offered to their customers. Service quality can lead to excellence in education and can have lasting effects on the institutions and students. This can influence student recommendations of their program to others, as well as their future monetary contributions in support of their institution (Edvardsson, Gustavsson and Ovretveit, 1994).

Despite the importance given to service quality, few institutions have adopted a total quality management philosophy. As such, this has resulted in much criticism regarding both the academics as well as the non-academic service quality offered by the institutions. Lately, in Malaysia there has been much talk and complaint from both students and parents regarding the poor services of the private colleges. Underqualified teaching staffs, insufficient quantity of training equipment, makeshift facilities and uncondusive education environment are among the problems highlighted by the media. In a way, this has a big negative impact on the educational quality of the country and hence, may affect the government's planning to develop Malaysia as the center of academic excellence in the region.

## **Objective of the study**

The purpose of this study was to measure the quality of services provided by the Student Affairs Department of the Akademi Laut Malaysia. Specifically, this study attempted to:

1. measure the students' expectations about the quality of the non-academic services offered by the Student Affairs Department of ALAM,
2. measure the perceived quality of the non-academic services delivered by the Student Affairs Department of ALAM, and
3. identify the area and rank of the satisfaction/dissatisfaction level.

## **Research questions**

These research questions were developed to guide the study, that is:

1. What are the students' expectations about the quality of the non-academic services offered by ALAM?



2. What are the perceived qualities of the non-academic services delivered by ALAM?
  
3. What are the areas and rank of the satisfaction/dissatisfaction level?

### **Significance of the study**

1. This study is aimed to measure the service quality of higher education. The knowledge of this measurement is very important for higher institution in order to function efficiently and effectively. As we know, service is a feature which differentiates many educational institutions. The service package is essential to attract potential students and to bolster the satisfaction of existing students. Unsatisfied students may transfer to other institutions and impart negative comments. Therefore, institutions must come up with a strategy that addresses students' needs. An institution that delivers quality education is more likely to acquire a competitive advantage.
  
2. Zeithaml (1981) stresses the importance of measuring the students' perception because they usually participate in producing the service, thereby affecting the performance and quality of the final service. Since there is no concrete dimension to service quality, students may uphold non-existence expectations (Didomencio and Bonnici, 1996).