Exploring Major Predictors of Student Satisfaction: An Input Towards a Learning-Friendly School Environment

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Abstracts
The study sought to ascertain the perceived level of importance and perceived level of satisfaction of college students on 16 student services commonly provided in a tertiary education setting within any University which include a) University Instruction, b) University Admission, c) Guidance Office, d) Accounting Services, e) Dean's Office, f) Bookstore, g) Library, h) Canteen Services, i) Computer Laboratory, j) Science Laboratory, k) Student Affairs Office, l) Campus Security, m) Clinic, n) Janitorial Services, o) Audiovisual Services and p) Overall Campus Facilities. The study was furthered by identifying specific services among the 16 listed student services that serve as determinants to a learning-friendly school environment in the tertiary level on the basis of an existing significant relationship on the perceived level of importance and perceived level of satisfaction of students on indicators embedded along the 16 student services identified. Item analysis was conducted on the services identified as determinants to a learning-friendly school environment to determine the items that serve as the specific determinants to a learning-friendly school environment on the basis of student satisfaction. The research was conducted with 399 students enrolled in Saint Louis University distributed in accordance to the population distribution of students in the different colleges within the said University.

Keywords
Student satisfaction, perceived level of importance, student services
The 21st Century Educational Goals suggest a reconstruction on the different educational principles which to a degree of urgency include citizenship preparation, inclusion, and creation of an optimum learning environment (Laguardia and Pearl, 2009). While citizenship preparation is to be more of an outside-school concern, Inclusion and the Creation of an Optimum Learning Environment are the core focus of any educational institution for that matter.

Inclusion is defined as the approach whereby students with disabilities receive all instruction in a general education classroom while support services, like specialists, are expected to come to the student (Hardman, Drew & Egan, 2006) while the Learning Environment, which serves as the subject of this research, pertains to any formal or non-formal setting where students gain knowledge and skills to be used in their daily lives such that it may take form of schools, colleges, cultural centers, hobby centers and social clubs from which definition extends from the confined idea of buildings, infrastructures and machineries to the quality of service and efficacy of workforce inside an educational institution (UNESCO).

As inferred from different researches that were conducted, the learning environment is composed of 4 particular elements: Teacher-Student Relationship, Atmosphere of Inclusion, School Facilities and Services, and School Departments and Bureaucracies (Coll and Draves, 2009; Laguardia and Pearl, 2009; Stebleton, Huesman and Kuzhabekova, 2010; Roberts and Styron, 2009; Johnson, 1997; Umbach and Porter, 2002).

Additional feature of the 21st Century Educational goals is the promotion of learner-friendly school environments which is determined by the evident existence and interplay of the 4 elements of the learning environment which implies the full-scale existence of all student services in the learning environment (Gulosino and Lubienski, 2011).

In the Philippines, it is a normative practice by most Colleges and Universities to assess one variable of the learning environment, which is instruction, and make this as the sole basis in improving the learning environment. Moreover, national citations, accreditations and civil service examination passing rates are perceived as the basis of the effectiveness of the school environment in promoting learning to the students (Corpus, 2003).

However, these traditional practices of assessing the learning environment of a school are seen futile as these undermine the importance of direct understanding of the working system of the learning environment. The dangerous side encountered in such techniques of assessing the learning environment includes the ability to prepare and improve the learning environment before accrediting agencies, civil service examinations and categorical citations come into event.

This kind of scenario doesn’t exempt that locale of this study, Saint Louis University, from the roster of Philippine Colleges and Universities practicing such. As far as status quo is concerned, the only area of the learning environment that students have a direct say is the time when students get to assess their instructors using a standard test that rates their teaching methods and strategies, instruction and attitudes towards the student and the subject. While for the other three areas identified, a clear and systematic student feedback is not solicited, hence, one can say that no particular improvements are done in the other components of the learning environment in basis of students’ perceptions.
Hence, it is suggested that students are the best evaluator of the learning environment as students are knowledgeable with the daily transactions happening inside the school. Moreover, due to the students’ direct encounter of the learning environment, no form of preparation can alter the working knowledge of the students with regard the school environment such that feedback of students on their learning environment is seen as more reliable and more authentic.

With the existence of myriad theories on the psychology of satisfaction, the necessary task to fulfill is to identify the theories of satisfaction and to narrow down roster of options and to scrutinize on these theories which fit best under well established criteria of relativity, interconnectedness and function correlation.

Following the said consideration, the theories that were adopted in this research includes the S-O-R Theory, the Satiation Cycle and the Theory proposed by Vohs and Baumeister.

The Stimulus-Organism-Response Theory incorporates the value of the individual variables of organisms, like one’s personal beliefs and idea, cognition and emotion, in terms of receiving, processing and responding to certain stimulus (Algharabat, 2007) —this form of belief is called introspective or subjective psychology of satisfaction.

As for the Satiation Cycle and the theory by Vohs and Bauemeister, both speaks of satisfaction as a correlated function with motivation except that the former espouses an indirect relationship between motivation and satisfaction as rooted on its target which is the short run event of things while the latter speaks of a direct relationship between the two on the basis of the long run effects of things (Vohs and Baumeister, 2008).

Having been able to identify the components of the aforementioned theories, a hybrid concept is constructed identifying the S-O-R theory as the guiding structure of the event of satisfaction and the satiation theory and Vohs-Baumeister theory as the working components which describes the psychological process of satisfaction in this way: there is an existence of a clear desire, which extends to the development of a motivation, and there exist to be a stimulus in the environment from which, a reconciliation of event happens and so if the stimulus fits the desire then satisfaction occurs and if otherwise happens, then dissatisfaction comes into event.

In the context of education, the stimulus is identified as the learning environment which comprises the different student services meaning the basis of educational satisfaction is the degree to which the learning environment provides viable and complete services to students.

Since educational satisfaction centers on the quality of services provided by the school and that the measuring stick identified is level of satisfaction students have on these service, it is only but proper to identify the different considerations students have in identifying a satisfactory forms of services.

This can be done by examining Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the Valence Variables of Gender, Age and Culture and Gardner’s Theory on Multiple Intelligences. The Hierarchy of Needs by Maslow assumes that there are existing needs that are categorized in a hierarchical manner;
hence, each level of needs comprise different variables that needed to be satisfied (Steve, 2007) so that if we take this concept in the context of a learning environment, different services which satisfies the physiological, safety, shelf-esteem and other needs of students should be in personal experience by students.

The idea of Age as a factor to a personalized system of satisfaction is in consonance with the theory of Development by Piaget and Erikson which says that the satisfaction of people gets into a complex state as a person gets into higher stage of cognitive and psychosocial development (Lucas and Corpuz, 2007). The element of Sex and Culture on the other hand is supported by the role congruity theory and the cultural system principle respectively. The theory of role congruity suggests that there are different needs embedded in people in the basis of their gender as gender roles and functions sometimes define the nature of work of people (Deikman and Eagly, 2008). Also the system of culture by people sometimes defines the expected values harbored by group of people and extending their constituent needs.

Lastly, the Multiple Intelligences Theory by Gardner supports the idea that different students, in line with their field of specialization, manifest different kinds of needs for the purpose of their skill acquisition and development.

In its very sense, the satisfaction of students varies for different reasons concerning their individual needs, state of existence and the like.

The stimulus is powered by the interconnectedness of the 4 different given variables of the learning environment which are (1) Teacher-Student Relationship, (2) Atmosphere of Inclusion, (3) School Facilities and Services, and (4) School Departments and Bureaucracies. All of these 4 represent the expected general atmosphere of any educational institution. An extended function of these four is the determination of an authentic learning-friendly environment. Hence, no single element is indispensable to the other in assessing the school’s learning environment (Laguardia and Pearl, 2009).

**Purpose Statement**

This study aims to identify the major predictors affecting student satisfaction along student services provided in a university, particularly its locale that is Saint Luis University.

Since the aim is geared towards knowing the level of satisfaction and perceived level of importance on the student services as perceived by the students, the essential questions of this research are identified as:

- What is the perceived level of importance of students on the different services of the school? Services include (A) University Instruction, (B) University Admission, (C) Guidance and Counseling Office, (D) Financial/Accounting Office, (E) Dean’s Office, (F) Bookstore, (G) Library, (H) Food/Canteen Services, (I) Computer Laboratory, (J) Science Laboratory, (K) Students Affairs Office, (L) Campus Security, (M) Clinic, (N) Janitorial Services, (O) Audio-Visual Rooms and (P) Over-all Campus Facilities.
- What is the level of students’ perceived perceive along the same identified services?
Is there a relationship in the student’s perceived level of satisfaction of the student services and their level of importance?
Extension to these questions is the task of identifying programs that would enhance the student services of an educational institution by utilizing student satisfaction as standard.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This research, centering on knowing the variables that determine a genuine learner-friendly school environment involved the assessment of all the 9 colleges—namely the School of Administration and Business Management (SABM), School of Computing and Information Sciences (SCIS), School of Engineering and Architecture (SEA), School of Humanities (SOH), School of Law (SOL), School of Medicine (SOM), School of Nursing (SON), School of Natural Sciences (SNS) and School of Teacher Education (STE)—present at Saint Louis University as its target population. Respondents included the population of Saint Louis University in the 3rd, 4th and 5th year collegiate levels. Such was so because of the running assumption that students on these year levels, at least, have a first-hand experience and working knowledge with regard the different offices, services and operations present in the university.

Population sampling was used to get the total number of respondents as the representative figure of the entire population. The calculated number of respondents resulted to a total of 399 students from the varied colleges of the university. The administration of questionnaires was held using random floating of questionnaires in cooperation with the respective deans of each college.

The instrument employed in gathering data was thru the use of three-column survey questionnaire from which left most column tried to assess the perceived level of importance of students on the given items and the right most column assessed the level of satisfaction of students on the given items.

The items or determinants were placed between the column for the perceived level of satisfaction and column for the perceived level of importance by students.

There are 267 items contained in the questionnaire which were distributed among the 15 different services/facilities identified as Instruction (22 items), Admission (10 items), Guidance Office (13 items), Accounting Office (13 items), Dean’s Office (20 items), Bookstore (14 items), Library (30 items), Food Services (15 items), Computer Laboratory (20 items), Science Laboratory (26 items), Students Affairs Office (16 items), Campus Security (10 items), Janitorial Services (10 items), Audio-Visual Rooms (8 items) and Over-all Facilities (30 items).

Statistical formulas employed include the use of Weighted Mean (WM) and Regression Analysis (r).

In answering problem number 1 and problem number 2, the general weighted mean (WM) of items were used to which results were interpreted in the following manner: 1.00-1.74: Not Important (NI)/Dissatisfied (D), 1.75-2.49: Slightly Important (SI)/Slightly Satisfied (SS), 2.50-3.24: Important (I)/Satisfied (S) and 3.25-4.00: Very Important (VI)/Highly Satisfied (HS).
In treating question number 3, Regression Analysis (r) was used to derive the possibility of an existing relationship between the items and the significance of the relationship was validated by using a P-value of .05.

After deriving the existence of relationship between areas, item analysis was conducted using Regression Analysis (r) to identify items that serve as major predictors of student satisfaction in line with student services.

In terms of answering the different problems of this research, the researchers tried to incorporate local and international literatures to substantiate claim.

Also, since this research concerns students’ satisfaction, researchers incorporated the perceptions, students of the locale of this research. The suggestions of students and the programs that were gathered thru informal interviews were incorporated to come up with a single suggestion for each program/service that was assessed in the research. All in all, the methods mentioned are the ones employed in the completion of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*What is the perceived level of importance of students along the different services of the school?*

Students’ perceived level of importance on the different university services garnered weighted means for individual items in the different areas that were identified that lie within the range that corresponds to a descriptive equivalent of “very important” except for two items. This means that 265 of the total items in the questionnaire were considered as “very important” in determining a learning-friendly environment while 2 items were considered as “important” determinants of a learning-friendly school environment.

**Table A**

Overall weighted mean of students’ perceived level of importance of the school services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>OWM</th>
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<tr>
<td>A) University Instruction</td>
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<td>B) University Admission</td>
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<td>C) Guidance Office</td>
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<td>D) Accounting Office</td>
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<td>E) Dean’s Office</td>
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<td>F) Bookstore</td>
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<td>G) Library</td>
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<td>H) Canteen Services</td>
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<td>I) Computer Laboratory</td>
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<td>J) Science Laboratory</td>
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<td>L) Campus Security</td>
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<td>M) Clinic</td>
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<td>N) Janitorial Services</td>
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<td>O) Audiovisual Services</td>
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In Table A, it can be seen that all of the groups of services that were identified were considered as “very important” in its very existence

Results above suggest that the qualification of a learning-friendly school environment is based on its ability to provide the different needs of each student in the maximum possible level.

Since students’ educational needs vary according to different introspective standards, then the components of a learner-friendly environment should be considered as multivariate. This means that it the learning-environment should comprise of different services that are perceived by students as important in their learning.

Most likely, if this holds to be true, then additional ten or more items would still be perceived to be important or even very important determinants of a learner-friendly school environment. This is so because of the idea that a learning-friendly environment should provide the complete package of learning services to the students meaning the more services that are included in the learning environment then the package of learning services gets to be more complete.

With this function of an academic institution to provide the diverse needs of students, then the balancing element to fulfill such function lies on the sensitivity of the school to provide the needs of students.

The ability to sense the needs of the students is the very foundation of all learner-friendly services. This because the consideration of students’ perception on the creation and modification of student services allow the establishment of services that is initially student friendly.

Only when the school knows what are the real needs of students can a school improve on its services and provide the necessary services because of the idea that it would still be the students who are to utilize the services at the very end and would be the one to identify whether the service is satisfactory or not.

What is the level of satisfaction of students along the different services of the school?

**Table B**
Overall weighted mean of students’ level of satisfaction of the school services

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<th>Areas</th>
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<td>B) University Admission</td>
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<td>C) Guidance Office</td>
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<td>D) Accounting Office</td>
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<td>E) Dean’s Office</td>
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<td>F) Bookstore</td>
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<td>G) Library</td>
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<td>H) Canteen Services</td>
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In reference to the table above, it can be seen that students expressed different levels of satisfaction towards the student services. This can be verified on the services where students expressed a slight satisfaction on the area provided.

It can be seen that there are three areas which garnered a “Slightly Satisfied” form of response which include the Canteen Services, Audiovisual Services and Overall Facilities of the University. This only means that these areas need the most focus by the university in terms of service improvement and development.

Specific reasons given as to why these areas were least satisfying students are due to the reasons that: a) canteens in the university don’t consider the suggestions of students in coming up with the daily menu, b) there are shortages of units and rooms for audiovisual services and c) miscellaneous services like elevators, online enrollment and vending machines are not located within the university premises.

Common reasons why students didn’t express full satisfaction or highly satisfied response on the student services is due to the absence of some services in some university, the presence of slow and obsolete forms of services and issues concerning the approachability of school staffs.

Is there a relationship in the student’s perceived level of satisfaction of the student services and their level of importance?

The importance of knowing if a significant relationship between the level of satisfaction and perceived level of importance by students do exist lies on the purpose of knowing the major predictors of student satisfaction. By this, the services crucial to the satisfaction of students can be easily identified which will allow the identification of services the needs utmost focus by school administration.

In reference to Table C, there are only 6 areas which were identified with an existing significant relationship and these are: C) Guidance Office, I) Computer Laboratory, J) Science Laboratory, L) Campus Security, M) Clinic Services and N) Janitorial Services. The other ten areas resulted to an insignificant result meaning the areas do not have a significant relationship at significance level of .05 and cannot be subjected to further tests to explain existing relationship so that on these items, students don’t consider their level of satisfaction in determining whether the determinants or items in the said area contributes to their consideration of variables contributing to the determination of a learning-friendly school environment.
Therefore, the next task to be done is to identify which specific items serve as major predictors of student satisfaction through item analysis.

**Table C**  
Regression analysis on the perceived level of importance and level of importance on students’ services

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* r value is significant; P-value ≤ .05

**Major predictors of student satisfaction**

**Guidance services**

In the area of Guidance Services, the major predictors of satisfaction include a) the presence of extension services like scholarships, exchange student programs and student organizational networking, b) the issuance of printed results of tests and c) the availability of staff during working hours.
The nature of counseling includes the prevention and correction of students’ misbehavior thru student monitoring techniques, direct student intervention programs, collaboration with school educators, assisting in the implementation of school instruction and providing miscellaneous activities that will develop the motivation of students to develop good interpersonal relationship with other people and motivation enough to sustain survivability in the university (Jones and Jones, 2001).

The availability of extension services like scholarship programs and exchange student programs was considered as the most important indicator of student satisfaction in the said area of service as it embodies the very essence of direct relationship and genuine student support given by the school to the students.

Computer laboratory

In the computer laboratory services a) the adherence of computer laboratory instructors to school policies regarding computer use and ethics in accessing information, b) the giving of manuals on rules and policies regarding computer use and reservation and c) the presence of monitoring and inspection of laboratory facilities were considered as the major predictors of satisfaction in the area of computer laboratory services.

These items were considered as major predictors of student satisfaction along the field of computer laboratory services because it provides for the preemptive measures in promoting the good state of computers and its peripherals.

The adherence of computer laboratory instructors to school policies regarding computer use and ethics of accessing information is seen as an indicator of student satisfaction was considered as the most important indicator of student satisfaction on the said area as it provides for the protection of the personal information of students utilizing the computer services.

Science laboratory

Among the specific services provided in the area of science laboratories, items that were considered as major determinants of student satisfaction includes a) the conduct of experiments that are only authorized by the school, b) the proper explanation of written laboratory directions to student before execution of any activity and c) the presence of enough water supplies and faucets in the laboratory.

The first item, though having the nature of restraint in the students’ free and full-scale use of science laboratories, was considered as the most important determinant of student satisfaction as it deals with the protection of students in the use of laboratories.

The limitation of activities that can be performed inside science laboratories is very important indicator of student satisfaction as it indirectly serves as a mechanism to protect students from possible harms that may take into account due to the pure egalitarian and free use of services contained therein.
Campus Security

Specific items that were considered as major determinants of satisfaction in the area of campus security include the assurance that security guards are a) equipped protective skills, b) well-groomed and c) well-disciplined.

The idea of security involves the idea of defensive and protective skills as the paramount value that is upheld. This serves as the most important determinant of student satisfaction in the area of campus security as it involves the protection of students within the university.

Clinic Services

In the area of clinic services, items that were considered as major determinants of student satisfaction includes a) the sterilization and cleaning of clinical equipments, b) the availability of doctors in the clinic at anytime of the day and c) the approachability of staff.

The presence of sterilized and clean clinic equipments was considered as the most important determinant of student satisfaction in the area of clinic services as it concerns the clinic apparatus used in treating students. This is the most important determinants of student satisfaction as it serves as the tool to diagnose and treat ailments concerning the health of students.

Janitorial Services

In the area of janitorial services, items that were considered as major determinants of student satisfaction includes a) the friendliness, honesty and approachability of janitors, b) the presence of cleaning materials and tools inside the classroom and c) the presence of janitors in all areas of the school.

The friendliness, honesty and approachability of janitorial staffs was considered as the utmost determinant of student satisfaction as it incorporates the factor of utilitarianism meaning that only in cases where janitorial staffs allows the establishment of rapport between the service and the students will be the only time where the said service be deemed functional in line with its function of promoting the welfare of the learning environment.

The role of the identified major predictors in relation to student satisfaction is that it allows the easy identification of student services that have a strong effect in the satisfaction of students. In this way, the multivariate component of the learning environment can be truncated into specific services that are composed of the most crucial elements that determine the level of satisfaction by students.

Also, because of the identified major predictors, the primary focus of development and modification of student services can be directed to services that have a strong and direct influence in determining student satisfaction.

What suggested programs should be implemented to further enhance the university’s student services?
It was said that students are the best evaluator of the learning environment due to some reasons identified. This only means that the best way to ensure an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the services provided in the learning environment, as provided by an educational institution, is by creating and implementing programs that incentivize on the satisfaction of students.

**Pre-graduation satisfaction assessment program**

This program is a mandatory requirement that will be given to all graduating student as a prerequisite for their graduation which has the aim of assessing the learning environment through the students who, at the very least, have first-hand experiences as regards the different services provided in the university.

The program requires all the graduating students of the university to undergo a uniform test to assess the satisfaction of the graduating students on the various student services found inside the university for the sole purpose of assessing which services least satisfied students and for the purpose of injecting necessary changes in the identified services.

To facilitate the speedy administration of the program, the Dean’s office for each school and the Guidance office of the university are suggested to work hand-in-hand to which the administration and collection of the test will be delegated to the various Dean’s Offices of the University while the task of processing and interpreting of the said test questionnaires will be delegated to the Guidance Office.

The program is intended a) to determine areas of the university where students are least satisfied and b) to develop services necessary as determined by the administered assessment. These two objectives can be measured using the average weighted mean of students’ responses on the said assessment tests and the observance if an evident increase in the satisfaction of students is seen every batch of graduating students.

**Freshmen expectations assessment program**

This involves the identification by freshmen students of the services they expect to be present in the university in line with the degree the students are trying to pursue and in line with students’ personal needs. The identification of the services needed by the students will be placed in a form that will be provided by the Registrar’s Office. Afterwards, the forms will be forwarded to the Guidance Office for the purpose of summarizing reports that will be sent to the different offices concerned on the suggestions made by the students.

After collating the student suggestions, forms will be directed to the respective Dean’s Office to which college the freshmen students belong.

The forms will be released by the various Dean’s Office to the concerned students so that students will be able to assess personally the progress of the services they identified during their first-time enrolment.
A feedback form will be given to the students to identify the progress of their requested services to which feedbacks of the progress by the students will be sent to the Guidance Office for the purpose of collating and distributing the results of the students’ feedback to the concerned students. This will be done every after the semester to report progress or non-progress of students expected programs from their first-time enrolment.

**Student quasi-accreditation program**

This involves the active participation of the KASAMA/SSC towards promoting student learning. In this program, the KASAMA/SSC is obliged to create a pool of student who will accredit the services provided in the University. The pool of students will be chosen in accordance with the ability of the student to give clear volition as regards to the nature of the task which is to accredit the school in terms of the services provided.

The Accreditation Program will use a personalized checklist of items which is devised by the KSAMA/SSC to test areas of the learning environment that needs improvement.

The Accreditation, with the same nature of identifying the level of the services that are present in the university, is not an accreditation to promote the University of any Status but an accreditation to inform the university offices as how students tend to view the level of services provided.

The program will be performed every school year and results will be summarized by the KASAMA/SSC and will be communicated by the same to the offices concerned as regards the accreditation done by students.

**CONCLUSION**

From all of the results, discussions and recommendations that were revealed in this paper, the function of student satisfaction as a means to assess and to identify the effectiveness of services provided by an educational institution is considered as the most effective and most reliable tool of measure.

Hence, in determining the quality of services provided, student satisfaction should be considered as the primary tool of measure as it solicits authentic and objective information about the learning environment.

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