



AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ON THE
CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC INFORMATION
SERVICES, UNIMAS, THAT WHETHER THIS
DEPARTMENT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE
DIRECT AND INDIRECT CUSTOMERS

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine the consumers' awareness of the Centre for Academic Information Services (CAIS) library services in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) available to them and to find out whether they are satisfied with CAIS services or vice versa. Furthermore it aims to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the existing library services, facilities and resources. Besides that, the study hoped to provide improvement to the existing library services in terms of library operations, equipment and technology with a view to further enhance the service quality. This study also hoped to assess the adequacy, relevance and updated collection of materials and references that can provide and support students' study, research work and academic programs.

It was found that the adequacy of resources, facilities and services were closely linked to the customers' satisfaction. Some recommendations made are generic courses for postgraduate students upon registration, should be done to make them aware of the CAIS facilities, resources and services. CAIS should also come up with its marketing strategies in trying to promote its services to its customers and show them the benefits they could derive from using them.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

As a university that is fast developing, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak continues to focus on various strategic issues related to organizational development, in order to support and keep abreast with the rapid academic developments in the university. Unimas continues to give emphasis to its Staff Development Programme to ensure that their staffs will give their best to offer quality services to their clients.

The undertaking of this study is to look into Unimas services in serving the students' needs and to meet those needs as desired by the students. Some of the services are courses/programmes and teaching facilities, residential and health care facilities and academic information services. For the purpose of this study, I will take into serious consideration the existing information services available in the Centre for Academic Information Services (CAIS) to the students in terms of accessibility and convenience of the facilities and resources.

As the student population in Unimas is ever increasing, Unimas has to cater its students' needs by giving better academic information services for example the library services. CAIS functions as the knowledge centre for the University. Its strategic location enables students and academics easy access to the Centre. The Information Technology infrastructure enables the Centre to function as an integrated user-oriented Centre for the acquisition, processing and dissemination of information. CAIS aims to provide a

1.3 Literature Review

Much of the published work on service quality aspects of higher education has been concentrated on effective course delivery mechanisms and the quality of courses and teaching (Athiyaman, 1997; Bourner, 1998; Cheng and Tan, 1997; McElwee and Redman, 1993; Palihawadana, 1996; Soutar and McNeil, 1996; Varey, 1993; Yorke, 1992).

The mechanisms for measuring service quality of courses and programmes often rely on research instruments (for example student feedback questionnaires) devised by the representatives of the higher education institutions to provide data which addressed various externally set audit criteria.

Judgements on services are often subjective rather than objective and providing a consistent service is difficult as factors such as the interpersonal skills of contact staff and the demeanor of consumers (students) can be crucial (Kotler, 1982). These conditions necessitate that institutions could address the issue of quality, not only through the traditional routes of accreditation and course review, student feedback questionnaires on the quality of course delivery and teaching, but also through evaluating what students themselves consider to be the elements in service quality.

Evidence suggests that listening to and facilitating people to participate in decision making is more likely to assist positive outcomes (Gardner, 1988; Oldfield, 1997;