

Gaps in education sector

[Education](#)



Therefore, we applied a quality gaps model to ten courses belonging to the open university system in Brazil, researching course coordinators and students. The multi-methods research noticed that institutions generally do not adopt a market-oriented model for decision-making in their courses and, therefore do not own a well-defined process to identify students' expectations and, consequently, to create quality strategies and policies based on these expectations. On the other hand, although higher education is legally regulated by the Ministry of Education, institutions seek differentiation in the market by hiring and retaining qualified and caring personnel and by the development of innovative and exciting learning activities that stimulate student motivation. These actions are strategically differentiated and help reducing barriers related to distance education. The infrastructure which is vital to the success of a technology-based course, still, is limited in remote areas. Finally, a t-test showed there was a favorable perception of quality for both students and coordinators, but the latter were more optimistic about services quality.

Introduction The study of services quality dates of the 1980's. These studies began with Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry published papers. Until then quality used to be studied only by operations field, which focus on tangible products quality. In operations quality means the absence of defects or compliance with the requirements of production [1]. Operations approach to quality assessment proved inadequate for the study of services, given its peculiar characteristics: intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability. Intangibility means the inability to account for, store and test a service before its delivery.

The heterogeneity comes from the intrinsic variability of the service, it means, a service will have different performance depending on the service provider, the client engagement and the context in which service is provided. Finally, inseparability concerns to the fact that a service is consumed simultaneously to its production. These unique characteristics make it difficult to assess quality for a service [1]. Parasuraman et al. were pioneers in assessing quality in services.

Their approach was so successful that it has been used since the 80's. For the authors, unlike tangible products, the quality of a service refers to the perception customers have about it [1] and this perception occurs during the interaction between the client and the service provider [2]. Under this perspective, perceived quality is measured by the difference between the perceived performance of a service and the initial expectations about it (service quality = perception of service performance - expectations about the service). This approach considers that expectations refer to the service desired by the customer and the minimum level of service acceptable in his/her point of view. Then, a zone of tolerance is created, determining satisfactory and acceptable levels of service [3]. Difference between perception of service performance and initial expectations gave rise to what is called "gaps model of service quality", the object of this study. Pioneer studies focused on banking services quality, credit card and maintenance services [1].

Services quality assessment became popular and other services began to be studied in the same light. Higher education can be understood under <https://assignbuster.com/gaps-in-education-sector/>

services point of view, since education market has become client-oriented (considering student as a client). This means education market is no longer purely education-oriented (pedagogy-oriented), which makes it possible to consider education institutions as providers of educational products and services [4]. It is important to note that education is not a common service, like banking or restaurant services, since it owns a key role in society and has a non-business mission to develop critical citizens.

Education core mission is social, non-commercial; it means education aims to develop better human beings and better citizens. Higher education institutions (HE's) have been facing fierce local and global competition, besides of challenges, such as high dropout rates and limited understanding of the market and students' needs. Online distance education has outstanding participation in increasing competitiveness among institutions around the approach feasible for education comprehension. Word of mouth communication

In Brazil, distance education has been gaining importance. In 2010, 14.6 % of college students were attending distance education course, compared to just 0.2 % in 2002 [7]. This scenario can be explained by the expansion of education in Brazil, with the creation of new institutions, creation of new vacancies and creation of the Open University of Brazil (I-JAB), subject matter of the article. Distance education, for its peculiar characteristics (space and temporal separation between instructor and student, technology intensive use, learner empowerment etc. faces its own challenges, such as student motivation difficulties, high dropout rates and time management trouble. Given social importance of education, the growing role of distance education in

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Brazil and the challenges faced by this modality, the purpose of this article is to assess quality gaps in a distance education undergraduate course. We studied Public Administration undergraduate distance course from the Open University of Brazil, using the perspective of services quality.

Thus, we compared students' and managers' (course coordinators) perceptions about the education services provided. We collected data from institutions belonging to I-JAB project and applied oth qualitative and quantitative methods in a multi-method research approach. Quality Gaps Parasuraman et al. [1] were pioneer on services quality research. As a result, they observed gaps between executives perceptions and consumers' perceptions about a same service quality, which gave rise to a five gap model, presented in Fig. 1.