

Exploring the Factors That Influence Students' Choice of Higher Education in Ghana

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Abstract

Marketing of higher education has become a strategic competitive tool in Ghana due to the emergence of private universities. The paper was designed to identify the important factors that influence students' choice of university and also to measure the satisfaction levels of students with respect to the services offered by Ghanaian universities. Data was collected through interviews and surveys from randomly selected 400 respondents from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Christian Service University College. The data was then coded into the SPSS.16 program and was used for analysis. The study found that, courses offered, high calibre lecturers, well stock library and internet, flexible lecture timetable and recognition of qualification by employers were the top important factors that influence students' choice of university. It was also discovered that students were satisfied with the student-staff relationship, university environment, flexible timetable etc. However, the students shown dissatisfaction with weak university policies, number of courses offered in each semester, and unresponsiveness of the university. The study recommended that universities should introduce courses that are highly marketable, continue to recruit high calibre lecturers, improve library facilities, issue university degrees to only deserving students and design flexible timetable. Universities must also design policies to regulate students' behaviour and must be responsive to students' problems.

Keywords: Students' Choice, Higher Education, Ghana, Educational Marketing, Marketing mix, Student Choice Models, Student Satisfaction

1. Introduction

The earlier higher educational institutions in Ghana were established by the government and for that matter are largely Not-for-Profit Organisations aiming at providing access to education for all Ghanaians. As a result, marketing has not found its feet in the Ghanaian educational sector. However, the introduction of private universities has brought some changes in the Ghanaian higher education sector. There have been massive changes in educational policies. Governance and structure of higher education have also emerged all over the world (Nicolescu, 2009). Again, the democratisation campaign of education in Africa has also contributed to the restructuring of higher education in Ghana. Some of the changes include accrediting private universities, tax exemptions on imported books, decline in the funding of higher education by the government and decreased enrolment by public universities in order to pave way for the private ones (Manuh, et al., 2007). Higher education in Ghana has therefore been characterised with privatisation and competition. These changes have affected the operations of higher education nowadays and they are seen as the driving forces for the marketing of higher education (Maringe, 2006). As a result, the motivating factors for students in their choice of a university have become a vital issue and the role of marketing in enrolment has also been given greater attention recently. As competition in the higher education increases, universities are now faced with the problem of competing for students to improve enrolment. Attempt to increase enrolment in this case calls for the application of the marketing concept. The marketing concept states that, in order to be successful, a company must identify the needs and wants of specific target markets and deliver the desired satisfactions better than competitors (Schiffman & Kanuk 2010). By application, both the private and public universities must identify the needs and wants of students in respect to the motivation factors that influence students' choice of a university in Ghana. The current paper therefore focuses on the marketing of universities in Ghana. Specific aims include identifying the factors that influence students' decisions in choosing a university and to measure the satisfaction levels of students with respect to the services offered by the university after enrolment. This paper provides valuable information for higher institutions to be better aware of their students' needs and wants as customers so that appropriate marketing strategies can be designed to meet the needs of the students in order to make them satisfied. It will also help to equip the educational policy makers of universities in formulating, implementing and modifying educational policy for the expansion of the higher education system in Ghana. The paper is organised as follows: It begins with an overview of higher education in Ghana and discussion of similar studies around the world. It is followed by methodology and presentation of results. The paper concludes with key findings, recommendation and direction for future studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Educational Marketing

There has been a considerable amount of debate over whether educational institutions should get involved in marketing (Dirks 1998 and Bartlett, *et al.* 2002). Some literature has revealed that education should not be marketed because marketers are profit-oriented and so cannot be applied to higher educations since many of the higher educational institutions are mostly not for profit. Other scholars also think that students cannot be considered as customers (Sharrock, 2000). This argument is seen to be valid in a situation where there is no competition and the government finance all higher education. However, the issue cannot be applied in the educational industry in UK, USA and other European countries (Agasisti & Catalano, 2006) where state intervention is at a lower level and the idea of marketing has been 'normalised' especially after the universities have had to compete for funding and more students (Bridges & Husbands, 1996; Pugsley, 2004; & Drummond, 2004). On the other hand, scholars of educational marketing believe that when higher education is marketed, the focus will be organisational efficiency rather than social equity. Accountability will also be measured primarily by customer satisfaction (Pierre, 1995). Again, educational institutions rely on money from tuition or other sources to finance its activities. To substantiate this argument, Pasternak, (2005) argues that, in contemporary societies, higher education is being marketed just like any other product or service. A student's decision to acquire advanced knowledge is therefore the culmination of a process of weighing cost against benefits, and this is similar to the process applied when a customer selects a product or service. Hence, education must be marketed.

2.2 Marketing Mix for Education

The underlying conceptual framework adopted for the paper is the concept of the marketing mix in higher education, in particular on what Kotler & Fox (1995) have described as the 7Ps model. Marketing mix is the tactical, controllable marketing variables a business combines to produce the services its constituents desire (Hayes, 2009). These are product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence and processes. However, Kotler & fox (1995) developed a version of the marketing mix specifically for higher education, where product was replaced with programme. The first element of the marketing mix specifically designed for higher education by Kotler & Fox (1995) is 'programme'. Many scholars, including Frumkin *et al.*, (2007), Cubillo *et al.*, (2006), Hesketh & Knight (1999), Yusof *et al.*, (2008), Gibbs & Knap (2002) have contributed to the influence of academic programmes on students' choice of higher education. The second element of the marketing mix is 'price'. Hayes (2009) defined price from the perspective of education as the amount of money a student must pay to obtain education. He further explained that price includes tuition, grant, loan or scholarship along with such non-financial costs as time, inconveniences and distance between the university and the resident of the student. Many scholars including (Domino *et al.*, 2006, Wagner & Fard, 2009 and Beneke & Human, 2010) have investigated the effect of price on students' choice of a university. The place element of the marketing mix refers to the system of delivery and channels of service distribution (Brassington, 2006). It deals with making education available and accessible in terms of time and physio-geographical distribution of teaching and learning (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Additionally, place in service marketing also relates to the convenience of an institution's location and access to the students. Ivey & Naude (2004) and Maringe, (2006) relate place to the campus built-environment and residential facilities. Promotion in marketing is also known as marketing communication (Kotler & Keller 2009). Hayes, (2009) define promotion in education sector as all the activities that communicate the benefits of an educational service and that are intended to inform, remind, or persuade relevant markets about the advantages of purchasing the institution's educational offerings. Some institutions use television, radio, newspaper, internet advertisement to communicate to prospective students and parents. Other institutions rely on admission counsellors, to make the rounds of high schools across its target marketplace in order to educate potential students about the benefits of attending this particular university. People in marketing mix represent every individual or group which is involved in the provision and delivery of the service. They include teaching and non-teaching staff and other consumers who often add significant value to the total service offering. The dressing of employees, personal appearance, and their attitudes all influence the customers' perceptions of the service (Hinson, 2006). Although Ivy & Naude (2004) claim that people are not weighted to be an influential element in the mix on the part of prospective students, other researchers e.g. Brassington, (2006), Hollensen, (2003), and Kotler & Fox (1995) do not agree to that. Process on the other hand is referred to as the way an institution does business, and this relates to the whole administrative system (Kotler & Keller 2009). It involves how things happen in an institution, such as the process of management, enrolment, teaching, learning, registration process, examination process, social and even sports activities. Palmer, (2001) stated that processes may be of little concern to customers of manufactured products nonetheless, they are of critical

concern to high contact services such as education. For this reason, universities are recommended to take into consideration how their services are to be offered. The environment in which the service is delivered is referred to as physical evidence (Hinson, 2006). Physical facilities play a major role in the marketing of education as it is the means by which an institution is likely to increase the tangibility of its offering, especially with the fact that there is no usually much to be inspected before purchase (Gibbs & Knapp, 2002). Such facilities include buildings, interior and exterior decorations, offices, colour schemes for indoors and outdoors. Hayes (2009) indicated that physical evidence is the immediate clue that provides an assurance to parents and students about the quality of education.

2.3 Students' Choice Models

A number of models have been used to explain students' choice of higher education. These models have been examined by diverse methods, assumptions, and varied theoretical perspectives (Hossler *et al.*, 1999). Hossler, *et al.*, (1999) has suggested four forms of models for examining the determinants of students' choice of colleges or higher education. The four major types are: econometric models, socialization or status attainment models, information processing models and combined models. The econometric model focuses on the assumptions students make regarding the cost benefits of college and the social and educational outcome related to the investment in college by the individual (Bishop, 1977, Hossler, 1999 and Paulsen, 2001). This means that the models follow a cost-benefit framework that assumes that students of higher education are rational and are completely informed about the potential costs and benefits of both education and non-education to arrive at a decision regarding choice of higher education. The sociological models are also known as status-attainment models. They concentrate on the importance of students' background characteristics and socioeconomic status as factors affecting students' choice of higher education. For instance, Hurtado *et al.*, (1997) demonstrated that Blacks were less likely to attend their first choice higher institution compared to white students. Hossler, *et al.*, (1999) posits that information processing models incorporate the information gathering process as the main component of the college choice decision. The models are with the assumption that the decision to enrol in any higher education institution is dependent on the amount of information gathered by the student. Emphasis is placed on the student who is gathering and processing the information (Hossler, *et al.*, 1999). The fourth choice model is the combined models. The combined models use the characteristics of the economic, status attainment models and information-gathering models to describe students' college choice process (Clark & Wiebe 1993, McDonough, 1997 & Stinchcombe, 1990). According to Hamrick & Hossler (1996), the combined models offer more depth and perspective to the college decision-making process. The combined models can be discussed under four major models; Jackson's Model, Chapman's Model, Hanson and Litten's Model & Hossler and Gallagher's Model (Hossler *et al.* 1999).

2.4 Student Satisfaction

Kotler & Keller (2009) define satisfaction as: "a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations". In education, student satisfaction is therefore the extent to which the performance of universities matches with the expectations of their students. Student satisfaction can be associated with the overall student feelings of acceptance, happiness, relief, excitement, and delight. Universities that achieve 'high student satisfaction' realise that highly satisfied students produce several benefits for them. Such students will be less-price sensitive and remain customers for a longer period, enrol again for further studies, and they talk favourably to others about the institution and its services / products (Kotler & Fox 1995). Dissatisfied students on the other hand, can decide to discontinue schooling, complain to the university or to other higher institutions, or engage in negative word-of-mouth. Some students are satisfied with the academic performance of universities. This includes the way the lecturers deliver, the methods they use, their experience in lecturing etc. Also, a growing body of research suggests that the social adjustment of students may be an important factor in predicting students' satisfaction (Mallinckrodt, 1988). These studies argue that integration into the social environment is a crucial element in commitment to a particular academic institution (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975). Deming, (1982) also confirms that most people form their opinions based on the people that they see, and they are either dissatisfied or delighted, or some other point on the continuum in-between. The location of the university also contributes to student satisfaction. Some students also appreciate one of the main elements of the "mission" of the University of Bari that is, to grant the possibility of a high education to people of all ranks and classes. Banwet & Datta (2003) also indicate that physical environment, layout, lighting, classrooms, the size of the class, appearance of buildings and grounds and the overall cleanliness of the university campus also significantly contribute to students' perception of quality of institutional performance. Again, Cole (2002) found that student satisfaction is decreased when class sizes are larger in earlier cohorts, and when students are taking compulsory core modules rather than optional modules. On the other hand, the 'dissatisfied students', identified their disappointment with

bad organisation and a general failure to meet their expectations (Petruzzellis et al., 2006). Therefore in order to deliver total student satisfaction, all employees of a university should adhere to the principles of quality customer service, whether front-line staff, lecturers, administrators, or non-contact staff in management of the university (Gold, 2001, Low, 2000, cited in Banwet & Datta, 2003).

3. Research Methodology

The research design for this paper is descriptive due to the fact that the study seeks to identify the factors that influence students' choice of higher education in Ghana. The target population was composed of students of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and Christian Service University College (CSUC) which total to 30800 students. The selection was based on ownership; KNUST is a public university while CSUC is a private. Stratified probability sampling method was used to select 300 and 100 students from the KNUST and CSUC respectively as respondents for the study. Therefore the sample size chosen for this paper was 400 students based on the calculation of Taro Yamane's formula of sample size in order to obtain reliable data (at 95% confidence level and a 5% error level) (Yamane, 1967).

The formula is represented as $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$

Where 'n' represents sample size (400)

“ 'N' represents research population (30800)

“ 'e' represents sampling error (5%)

$$n = \frac{30800}{1 + 30800(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 394.87 = 400 \text{ (approximate)}$$

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the selected students. Out of the 400 questionnaires issued, 292 of them were received by the researcher indicating 73% response rate. Systematically, the researcher first administered 300 questionnaires at KNUST. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 students from each college. Secondly, 100 questionnaires were administered at CSUC where the simple random technique was again employed to select 25 students from each of the four departments. The questionnaires were of three sections A, B and C. Section 'A' was designed to collect the demographic data of the students. 'B' concentrated on the factors that influence the respondents' choice of university. This section utilises mainly 5-points semantic differential scale on which the respondents were required to indicate their opinions between two extreme choices; important and unimportant of the factors listed. Section 'C' was centred on students' satisfaction after enrolment. In this section, customer satisfaction guide was used to ascertain students overall satisfaction level after enrolling in their respective universities. Interviews were also conducted with the respondents in order to ascertain the consistency of the responses. The researcher was guided by interview schedule with some questions which were basically derived from the theoretical framework of the study. The data from the surveys was first coded into appropriate categories of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The SPSS program was used to analyse the data. The digitally recorded data from the interviews was transcribed into interview note and was used for comparisons. Additionally, the Pearson Chi-Square was used to test the levels of significance of each of the factors that influence students' choice of university. This helped in determining the factor(s) to be given much attention when taking decision to attract students for enrolment.

4. Discussion of Findings

The total number of participants who took part in responding to the 400 questionnaires was 292 representing 73% response rate. Out of the 292 respondents, 198 students representing 67.8% were from KNUST while 94 (32.2%) of the respondents came from CSUC. The number of male respondents were 195 (66.8%) which is twice as the number of female respondents 97 (33.2%). This indicates that the number of male students in Ghanaian universities far exceed that of the female students. Again, majority of the respondents in this study were between the ages of 20-30 constituting 251(86%) while 25 (8.5%) were below 20 and 16 (5.5%) of the respondents were above 30 years of age. This indicates that the average age of Ghanaian university students falls between the ages of 20-30. Additionally, the respondents were selected from all level of studies and from all the colleges and departments of the two universities.

To identify the factors that influence students' choice of university, respondents were asked to respond to 31 items based on the extent of how important or unimportant each item is when taking a decision on which university to attend. Each of the 31 items was mapped to one of the marketing mix (7Ps) elements for the

purpose of easy application of the findings to improve the marketing of universities in Ghana. The initial findings were that, both students place great deal of importance on all the 31 items listed in the questionnaires. However, the chi-square test performed ranked the factors in a degree of most important or most influential factors to the least ones. As a result, it was revealed that in order of important, courses offered, high calibre lecturers, international accreditation of qualification, areas of specialisation and recognition of qualification by employers were the top five important factors that influence KNUST students' choice of university. Three of the least important factors were university distance from home or work, having foreign teaching staff and university website as indicated by table 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6 Chi-square test of sig. values of the factors that influence KNUST students' choice of university

VARIABLES	Chi – Square Value	Sig Value
Courses offered	293.061	0.000
High calibre lectures	175.44	0.00 0
International accreditation of qualification offered	161.637	0.000
Majors and Specialization Courses offered	160.865	0.000
Recognition of qualification by employers	148.788	0.000
Availability of accommodation options	129.576	0.000
Recommendation by friends and family	124.677	0.000
Good student staff relationships	118.919	0.000
Well stocked laboratory	99.828	0.000
Relatively affordable tuition fees	97.163	0.000
Entry requirements	96.845	0.000
Availability of course materials	96.040	0.000
Availability of online programme	92.827	0.000
Flexible lecture timetable	84.980	0.000
Well stocked library and internet facilities	82.606	0.000
Teaching methods	74.454	0.000
Staff & recruitment team were friendly with me on my first visit	66.192	0.000
Possibility of paying fees in instalments	49.663	0.000
Transportation cost to and from the university	48.938	0.000
University infrastructure and buildings	47.455	0.000
Location of the university	47.404	0.000
Online semester registration	46.866	0.000
University website	45.020	0.000
Multiple campuses	43.414	0.000
Admission counsellors	38.263	0.000
University leaflets or brochures distributed in public places	38.111	0.000
Possibility of getting scholarship	33.970	0.000
Advertisement about the university	31.242	0.000
University website	30.434	0.000
Having foreign teaching staff	26.798	0.000
University distance from home or work	17.909	0.001

Source: Field work 2014

On the other hand, a well-stocked library and internet facilities, flexible lecture timetable, recognition of qualification by employers, courses offered and high calibre lecturers were the five most important factors that influence CSUC students' choice of university whilst the three least important factors were having foreign teaching staff, multiple campuses and university distance from home or work as displayed by the table 4.7 below.

Figure 4.7 Chi-square test of sig. values of the factors that influence CSUC students' choice of university

VARIABLES	Chi – Square Value	Sig Value
Well stocked library and internet facilities	150.295	0.000
Flexible lecture timetable	137.516	0.000
Recognition of qualification by employers	122.404	0.000
Courses offered	105.537	0.000
High calibre lectures	96.756	0.000
Good student staff relationships	73.495	0.000
Relatively affordable tuition fees	73.250	0.000
Location of the university	65.822	0.000
Entry requirements	65.635	0.000
Possibility of paying fees in instalments	65.264	0.000
Majors and specialization of Courses offered	61.067	0.000
University infrastructure and buildings	58.011	0.000
University website	56.337	0.000
Advertisement about the university	54.366	0.000
Availability of course materials	52.607	0.000
Recommendation by friends and family	51.730	0.000
International accreditation of qualification offered	48.000	0.000
Teaching methods	47.494	0.000
Well stocked laboratory	42.891	0.000
University website	42.568	0.000
Availability of accommodation options	40.523	0.000
Availability of online programme	39.095	0.000
Online semester registration	38.477	0.000
Admission counsellors	35.977	0.000
University leaflets or brochures distributed in public places	33.528	0.000
Possibility of getting scholarship	30.864	0.000
Staff & recruitment team were friendly with me on my first visit	29.517	0.000
Transportation cost to and from the university	22.943	0.000
University distance from home or work	20.438	0.000
Multiple campuses	20.157	0.000
Having foreign teaching staff	15.889	0.003

Source: Field work 2014

Comparing the findings, the paper revealed that three factors (courses offered, recognition of qualification by employers and high calibre lecturers) were consistent among the top five factors that influence students' choice of university from both private and public universities. It can therefore be said that the three most important factors that influence students' choice of both public and private university in Ghana are course offered, high calibre lecturers and recognition of qualification by employers. These factors are in line with career and job issues. A probable reason is the high unemployment rate in Ghana, making students very selective when deciding the higher institution to attend and course to pursue. They usually consider the possibility of securing job after school and for that matter consider universities, courses and qualification that would be recognised by employers. The findings of this paper is in line with the works of Yusof et al (2008), Baharun, et al, (2004) Maleney (1987), Martin (1994), Joseph et al (2000) and Paulsen (2001). Baharun, et al. (2004) for instance, identified that course structure was the second most important factor that influence Malaysian students' choice of university. According to Martins (1994), first-year students at the University of South Australia ranked quality of teaching and high calibre lecturers as one of the most important factors influencing students' choice of university and this corresponds with this study. Paulsen (2001) also revealed that students often select colleges based on existing job opportunities for college graduates. Therefore students are interested in outcomes.

To understand how students are satisfied with the services offered by the universities, the students were made to respond to 15 categories of services offered by the universities. The chi square test was performed to identify the extent of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each of the 15 services offered by the universities. The paper revealed that student-staff relationship was ranked the most important service that satisfies the students of

KNUST. This indicates that the university lecturers understand the value of good inter personal relationship in educational institution. Study materials and books were ranked the second, follow by the university's environment and infrastructure. How the lecturers deliver their lessons was the fourth most significant service that influences the satisfaction level of the students whilst the fifth one was interaction with non-teaching staff as shown by table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Chi – Square Test of Sig. Values of Satisfaction Issues at KNUST

SATISFACTION ISSUES	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total	Chi Square value	Sig. Value
Student - staff relationships	38	99	49	10	2	198	149.222	0.000
Study materials & books	18	40	100	30	10	198	128.364	0.000
University environment	23	50	96	17	10	196	126.296	0.000
How lectures delivered	39	92	47	16	2	196	121.704	0.000
Interaction with non - teaching staff	64	70	48	12	4	198	91.394	0.000
University infrastructure and buildings	44	76	47	16	11	194	71.412	0.000
Flexible Lecture timetable	34	71	58	23	12	198	60.434	0.000
Transportation to and from the university	45	52	69	22	8	196	60.071	0.000
Foreign teaching staff	36	89	51	18	0	194	56.351	0.000
Number of courses taken	44	63	52	25	12	196	43.235	0.000
Laboratory facilities	30	55	60	35	16	196	33.745	0.000
Technology and internet facilities	40	60	45	38	13	196	29.459	0.000
Social adjustment of students	51	71	57	19	0	198	29.313	0.000
Accommodation options	47	61	42	29	17	196	29.102	0.000
Size of class	31	46	54	41	26	198	12.859	0.012

Source: Field work 2014

At CSUC, the chi-square test shows that student-staff relationship was the most important service offered by the university that satisfies the students. The second ranked service offered by CSUC that was considered significant in satisfying students is the university environment and infrastructure. The class size was ranked the third most satisfactory service offered by the university. The chi-square test also revealed that, CSUC students are also satisfied with the lecture timetable. Lastly, it was indicated that the availability of study materials was also among the top five important services that increase students' satisfaction level at CSUC as displayed by table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Chi – Square Test of Sig. Values of Satisfaction Issues at CSUC

SATISFACTION ISSUES	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total	Chi Square value	Sig. Value
Student-staff relationships	59	24	8	1	1	93	128.667	0.000
University environment	35	41	9	5	4	94	112.400	0.000
Class Size	54	28	7	2	1	92	112.022	0.000
Flexible time table	45	37	5	2	1	90	100.222	0.000
Study materials and books	62	24	4	3	0	93	98.183	0.000
Univ. infrastructure & buildings	46	37	7	2	1	93	97.269	0.000
Number of courses taken	45	33	5	4	2	89	88.472	0.000
Lecturing style	54	28	9	0	1	92	72.435	0.000
Technology and internet facilities	35	41	9	5	4	94	67.064	0.000
Social adjustment of students	38	33	15	5	3	94	54.511	0.000
Interaction with non-teaching staff	30	25	34	3	2	94	49.298	0.000
Foreign teaching staff	10	23	38	4	9	84	45.167	0.000
Accommodation options	29	27	28	3	2	89	43.978	0.000
Transportation to and from the university	17	36	29	7	4	93	40.925	0.000
Laboratory facilities	21	30	27	2	11	91	29.604	0.000

Source: Field work 2014

A comparative study was also done to identify the similarities and the differences in the services that satisfy the students from both universities. The result was that both students are satisfied with the student-staff relationship, the universities' environment and availability of study materials. These services were counted among the first five services that satisfy the students from both universities. The indication is that Ghanaian universities have adopted service marketing strategies in meeting the needs of their students. The finding is consistent with the work of Deming (1982). Deming (1982) revealed that most students form their opinions based on the people that they see and interact with, and they are either dissatisfied or delighted, or some other point on the continuum in-between. Again, the universities also have nice environment that communicates the intangible nature of education to interested parties. This supports the work of Kotler and Fox (1995), Banwet and Datta (2003) and Gibbs and Knapp (2002). Banwet and Datta (2003) recount that institutional environment; layout, classroom, appearance of buildings etc significantly contribute to students' perception of institutional quality. The students were also satisfied with the study materials available at each university which shows that universities in Ghana are equipped with study materials that support the academic work of the students. Jacqueline et al (2006) and Leng (2010) support the idea that university students are satisfied when study materials are available for their use. In order for universities to improve the satisfaction of their students, universities are therefore encouraged to pay much attention to the above mentioned services.

The paper also revealed that, both students are dissatisfied with the number of courses taken in each semester, unresponsiveness of the universities and weak university policies. Students from the two universities expressed their dissatisfaction about the number of subjects taken in a semester most especially the core courses or university requirements. This finding confirms the study of Cole (2002) that found that students' satisfaction decreases when they are taking compulsory core modules rather than optional modules. A good number of students from both KNUST and CSUC expressed dissatisfaction about weak university policies governing the behaviour of students on campus. The issues mentioned relating to the weak university policies include

punctuality, policy on students dressing, lateness and noise-making on campus. This issue of weak university policy is consistent with the findings of Leng (2010). Leng (2010) identified that students of Cambodia private universities are dissatisfied with the weak policies governing the behaviour of students. Additionally, the research revealed that the students from both universities are dissatisfied with how the universities response to their needs. A number of the students indicated that they usually find it difficult getting their exams results and registration of course rectified when the need arises. Again, some complained that the university delays in repairing faulty facilities such as bulbs, fan, marker board and other laboratory items. Studies identified to be in support with the unresponsiveness of universities include Petruzzellis et al (2006), Deming (1982) and Banwet and Datta (2003).

5. Conclusion

The paper has accomplished its objectives. The findings show that students are influenced by a number of factors when choosing the university to enrol. However, the top six important factors that influence students' choice of university were courses offered and areas of specialisation, high calibre lecturers, recognition of qualification by employers, well stocked library and internet facility, international accreditation by qualification and flexible lecture timetable. In addition to these factors, there were other factors that influence both students' choice of university. This indicates that students are being influenced by multiples of factors when deciding which university to attend. As a result, universities are therefore encouraged to match their offerings with the identified factors that influence students' choice of university in order to increase enrolment. Again, the findings of this paper indicated that the students from both universities were greatly satisfied with a number of services offered by the universities. The key among these services were student-staff relationship, the universities' environment, availability of study materials, lecturing style, class size, flexible lecture timetable etc. On the other hand, there were certain practices and services of the universities that were found to be dissatisfying by the students. The common ones were weak university policies governing students' behaviour, the number of courses taken per semester, responsiveness of the university and the poor conditions of some academic facilities.

5.1 Implications and Suggestions for Universities

In order to fully market higher education in Ghana and beyond, universities are entreated to be concerned with the findings of this paper and use them as the basis for developing marketing strategies to attract potential students for enrolment.

Specifically, universities are being encouraged to recruit experience, competent and high calibre lecturers. They must also design and introduce courses with many specialisations that are in high market demand so that more students would be attracted to enrol with the university. Again, suggestion is made to universities to issue degrees to only deserving students, who have been well taught and examined. Students must also be taught the practicality of theories so that they can prove to employers the knowledge acquired when employed. This will help improve the recognition of qualification by employers.

To attract a large number of students, universities can therefore organise classes in the morning, afternoon, evening, and on weekends so that workers of all kinds of work schedule can access education at their universities.

Universities must invest in the establishment of well stocked libraries and internet facilities.

Relationship marketing is also recommended for universities so that both lecturers and non-teaching staff may build strong relationship with students.

Entrepreneurs who want to enter into the establishment of higher institutions must also be careful with site selection. Basic location strategies suggest being close to major highways in order to facilitate mobility and visibility.

In order to improve students' satisfaction, universities are advised to develop policies on prescribed clothing for students as some colleges and departments have begun at KNUST. Students must also be made to sign attendance sheets any time they attend lectures in order to check punctuality at lectures.

Universities must additionally design strict policies on noise making on campus.

Again, universities are recommended to move away from the bureaucratic, tall structure to a more flat organisation structure in order to speedily respond to the needs of students. Departments must also be empowered to handle students' queries as early as possible.

It was also identified that students were not happy with the many subjects taken in each semester, especially the core subjects and the university requirements. If possible, this research suggests that those subjects must be made optional if not cancelled.

The study revealed that students from both institutions were satisfied with a number of services offered by the universities such as lecturing style, class size, student-staff relationships, study materials and books, convenience lecture timetable, university environment (cleanliness) etc. As a result, universities are advised to continue provide such services and even improve.

To gain more insight into the higher education market, similar studies are recommended to be conducted for students in only public universities, only private universities and mix of all kinds of higher education.

Further studies could also be done on students of particular field such as Business students only.

Finally, further studies can also be done to find out why and why not students consider certain factors in their choice decisions.

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