ABSTRACT

The growth of higher education has increased competition among universities globally and has drawn many universities in the world to continually assess their service quality in order to enhance student satisfaction and retention. This paper examined the determinants of service quality in universities in Zimbabwe with a view to understanding why the affluent choose to send their children to universities outside the country. This is despite the current effort to promote Zimbabwean brands through the Buy Zimbabwe Campaign. The study was further aimed at determining ways of making the Zimbabwean university education more attractive and competitive. For the study, the interpretivist paradigm which facilitated the understanding of the subjective world of human experience was used. In line with the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative research methodology, utilising a descriptive survey design was adopted to solicit the perceptions of service quality in universities. Purposive sampling was utilised to select participants for the study while in-depth interviews were employed in data collection. The subsequent collected data was analysed through thematic analysis. The findings of the study indicated the existence of numerous dimensions to service quality in Zimbabwe such as infrastructure, programmes on offer, academic expertise, extracurricular activities, parents’ level of education, prior result, university prestige and prominence of alumni, and the universities’ assessment techniques. Findings also revealed that these factors have a substantial effect on service quality perceptions in university learning. The study concluded that service quality is indeed a critical component to students when selecting a university to go to. It was also concluded that there are numerous dimensions of higher education service quality in Zimbabwe, and that these dimensions can be categorised into administrative, physical environment quality, mind set and performance of academics, pedagogy and the existence of support facilities. The study recommended that there is need for feedback on quality assessments as well as the adoption of integrity in recruitment of lecturers and admission of students.

Keywords: service quality, assessment, satisfaction, feedback, perception.