Quality metrics in academic libraries: Striving for excellence

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Outline of paper

1. Quality management and Quality Assurance in academic libraries
2. Service quality
3. Quality metrics in academic libraries
4. Quality and the digital environment
5. Methodology of quality measurement
6. Conclusions

1. Quality management and Quality Assurance in academic libraries

- *Quality management*: Processes, activities and measures that contribute to the management of the quality of the products, service or other outputs from the institution.

- *Quality assessment* is part of the Total Quality Management (TQM) of the institution.

1. Quality management and Quality Assurance in academic libraries

- *Quality management* includes quality assessment and quality enhancement.

- *Quality Assurance:* Processes to ensure that quality adheres to externally or internally set standards – accreditation.

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1. Quality management and Quality Assurance in academic libraries

Audit criteria of the South African HEQC (Higher Education Quality Council):

"Academic support services (e.g. library and learning materials) adequately support teaching and learning needs and help give effect to teaching and learning objectives"

1. Quality management and Quality Assurance in academic libraries

- Dimensions of Quality Management in academic libraries:

➢ Accreditation by external bodies: formal quality audits

➢ Institution's mission, vision, aims and objectives

➢ Service satisfies expectations, research & information needs of different stakeholders

➢ Library management and services – staff, facilities, resources, finances

2. Service Quality (GAP model)
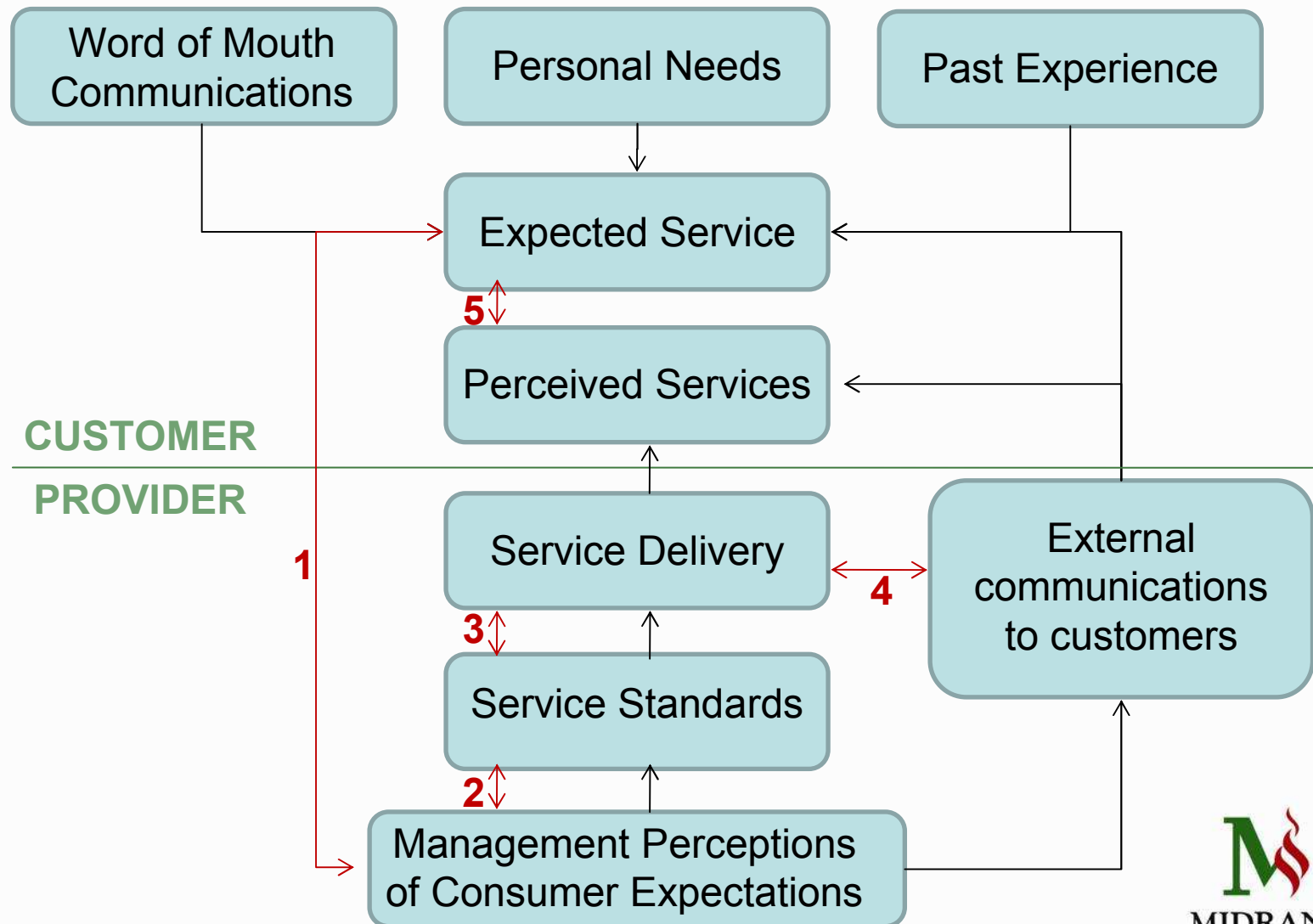
2. Service Quality

- *Provider Gap 1:* Not knowing what customers expect and desire
- *Provider Gap 2:* Wrong service quality design and standards
- *Provider Gap 3:* Service-performance gap
- *Provider Gap 4:* Promises do not match delivery
- *Consumer Gap 5:* Difference between consumers' expectations and perceptions *vs* the service delivered

3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- ***Quality: ISO 9000:*** "the consistent conformance of a product or service to a given set of standards or expectations"

- ***ISO 11620 Performance indicators for libraries:*** "quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on the library's ability to satisfy stated or implied needs"

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3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- ***20th century:*** Focus on quantitative measurements
- ***21st century:*** Shift "from measuring what you can count to measuring what counts"

3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- Various studies to assess performance in academic libraries, e.g.

  ➤ UK: "The effective academic library" – Higher Education Funding Council for England

  ➤ UK – Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL)

  ➤ "Performance analysis for Polish research libraries" – Derfert-Wolf, Gorski & Marcinek

  ➤ Evaluating Croatian academic libraries – Petr

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3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- Northumbria International Conference on Performance Management in Libraries and Information Services biennial since 1995

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3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- The most important international set of performance indicators and standards on library performance : ISO 2789 and ISO DIS 11620, and the IFLA guidelines for performance measurement in academic libraries.

3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- IFLA indicators are:
  - Resources and infrastructure: What services does the library offer?
  - Use: How are the services accepted?
  - Efficiency: Are the services cost-effectively?
  - Potentials and development: Are there sufficient potentials for future development?

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3. Quality metrics in academic libraries

- Measuring service quality in academic libraries could thus include:

  ➢ *Resources (information content)*

  ➢ *Management and organisation (service environment and resource delivery)*

  ➢ *Staffing and staff management*

4. Quality and the digital environment

- Move from collections to connections

- Who needs the library anymore? We have the Internet!

- Additional measures to evaluate the performance of digital library environments needed

- Number of projects on e-metrics, e.g. EQUINOX, University of Illinois, ARL

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5. Methodology of quality measurement

- Quality criteria determined by the institution's requirements and objectives, as well as users' needs & expectations

- Common framework, agreed set of performance standards and indicators, but local conditions can differ

- SERVQUAL and LibQUAL valuable instruments in measuring library service quality

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5. Methodology of quality measurement

- Involve different user groups
- Formal and informal evaluations
- Performance measures may rate the overall performance of the service, or specific aspects
- Review performance measures from time to time, adjust

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5. Methodology of quality measurement

Quantitative	Qualitative
Breadth / mass data	Depth / smaller samples
Objective	Subjective
Highly structured approach – pre-coded	Looser approach – free response
"Scientific"	"Non-scientific"
Answer "how often" / "how much" - statistical	Answer "why" - causative

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5. Methodology of quality measurement

Quantitative	Qualitative
Less helpful with complex topics	More helpful with complex topics
Emphasis on neutrality	Emphasis on the interviewee's perspective
Usually clear-cut precise results	Content analysis

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6. Conclusions

- Quality in academic libraries a multi-dimensional construct

- Performance measurement is part of a broader quality framework

- Expectations and perspectives of different groups of people

- Both qualitative and quantitative measurements required

- Quality measurement is a recurrent process to keep up with new demands, changes, trends and developments

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6. Conclusions

- All stakeholders should be aware of the importance of quality – "Insufficient awareness to library service quality affects all library processes, and ultimately leads to deterioration of that service quality"

- What are we doing? Why are we doing that? What matters? Where can we close the gaps?

- Ultimate goal of measurement: improving the "fitness for purpose" of the library and its services, enhance quality

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