Toward Internationalization of online higher education: (A study of an Iranian University)

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About UT:
The University of Tehran (UT) as the oldest university and symbol of higher education in IRAN has always striven to maintain its pre-eminent status and expand international services. Since The Third Five-Year Strategic Plan of the University (2016-2020) focuses on three main goals:

- Internationalizing the university: A global presence.
- Innovation and moving towards an entrepreneurial university.
- Promoting morality and social responsibility.
In order to reach the first goal, this university follows these three strategies:

- **Education**: developing international academic collaborations.
- **Research**: developing research activities at a global level.
- **Services**: optimizing the infrastructures and processes of internationalization.
This research emphasizes on the first and third area (Education and Services) and strive to provide university senior executives and policy makers in the international arena with a scientific solution based on user needs assessment to improve the quality of current international services and planning new online Services.

In this paper, the needs of international student's education in the on-campus courses were discussed first in order to improve the quality of current services and planning new online services. On the other hand, using the voice of the customer (VoC), the needs and demands of the current foreign students were also identified.
Methodology...

The main questions of this research are:

• **What should the investigated University (UT) do in order to enhance current international students’ services?**

• **How to discover international students’ needs in order to online educational program planning and designing?**

To answer these questions Focus groups method and QFD technique used.

The Focus Group included five UT administrators and international affairs experts.
QFD Technique:

One of the most important steps of QFD is identifying the current and potential customers and any mistake in the identification of customers often leads to deviation in quality and innovation.

In order to identify customer needs (VOCs) at UT, statistical population consisting of 1000 on-campus International Students which 317 research samples chose and their needs, problems and requests (What’s) were identified.

These data were collected using an online questionnaire consisting 30 questions. (VOC\textsubscript{1..n}).

The researchers identified solutions (How’s) by conducting interviews with the focus Group (TR\textsubscript{1..n}).
Completing QFD Matrix (House of Quality)...

1. First step was collecting students` needs and relevant solution.
2. The weight of each need obtained through paired competition.
3. Wii includes the degree of importance of each solution to response to the VOC based on three criteria, the least important (1), middle important (3), the most important (9) were determined by QFD team and based on group decision making techniques (geometrical average).
4. after matrix relation completion in this stage, the total weight of each technical requirement was considered which was the multiplication of Wii by customer importance. At the end of this stage, with the comparison of total weights, each score of TR was obtained in a way that the highest score represented the priority of TR to solve the problem and announced needs of customers

\[
\begin{bmatrix}
TR_1 & \ldots & TR_n \\
VOC_1 & [W_{11} & \ldots & W_{1n}] \\
\vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\
VOC_n & [W_{n1} & \ldots & W_{nn}]
\end{bmatrix}
\]
• The Correlation matrix builds the house of quality and each TR is inspected in comparison with other TRs. The correlation between the pairs has been shown with sign in the common cell in the ceiling of the house of quality. The positive correlation between the two TRs indicates that these two features reinforce each other the output of the above stages has been shown in Final House of Quality Matix.
The Findings and Results of The Survey

So considering the obtained total weight, the solutions categorized in three parts of high priority, middle priority and low priority and following results obtained from the final HOQ Matrix.

High priority Solutions  Red Color Columns
Middle priority solutions  Yellow Color Columns
Low priority solutions  Green Color Columns

In other words, high-priority solutions are those that cover the most important needs of international students and should be given more consideration in planning to improve current and future services to international students. Therefore, UT must consider these categorized solutions in its planning to satisfy international students, both online and on-campus.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs</th>
<th>(VOC 1..n)</th>
<th>(TR 1..n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participate in Persian language education before coming to Iran</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To attend Persian language skills programs</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lack of awareness of the importance of relative English language proficiency before starting education</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Simultaneous access to the digital content of the courses alongside on-campus programs</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Need to attend live classes to troubleshoot alongside on-campus programs</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Providing scholarship for foreign student</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Getting familiar with Iranian culture before entering the country</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lack of financial transactors between countries of origin and Iran</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Unable to open bank accounts in Iran</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Unable to work as a student or internship to the field of study in Iran</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. High tuition fees (especially for the fee and Afghanistan)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lack of role of customer services and helplines for foreign students</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The need for transparent and up to date information on educational rules and regulations to International students</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Improve dormitory welfare services to international students</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Provide remedial and refund facilities</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Shortening of licensing process after graduation</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Paying more attention to foreign Students and eliminating discrimination against native students</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Weight</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final House of Quality Matrix
Conclusion

The results of this study show that financial problems and limitations of international students of university are of particular importance. The origin of this problem is the international restrictions on money transfers between countries of origin and Iran.

The university must find a solution in order to develop current services and plan new online international services to overcome this obstacle.

On the other hand, continuous and periodic monitoring of the quality of international university services, both online and on campus needs to be revised and improved.

Other solutions that identified with middle and low priorities should be considered in the next stages.
Acknowledgements

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Thank for your Attention.