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**Influence of University Service Quality on International Student  
Perception of Satisfaction: A Mixed Method Investigation**

**By**

**Ijeoma Onwumere**

**Supervised by: Dr Radi Haloub and Mohammed Mirza**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy - March 2018**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research focuses on international students using an in-depth exploration of service quality in a UK University and to evaluate the comparative effectiveness of one measuring instrument of service quality (namely Higher Education Performance) within a university setting. This scale is advantageous because it examines service quality from a wider point of view; highlighting five dimensions (academic aspects, access, non-academic aspects, reputation and programme issues). A mixed method approach was used for data collection. In the sequence, a quantitative approach was used first by means of a cross-sectional survey. Respondents were drawn from 493 international students at different levels at the University of Huddersfield. Findings from the quantitative method using factor analysis, and principle component analysis, show that on the overall, service service positively influences international students' perception of satisfaction with the school. However, when examined at the individual dimension level, academic aspects, access and reputation were the only dimension of the HEdPERF scale that positively and significantly predicted international students' perception of satisfaction. Non-academic aspects and programme issues were not significant predictors.

To further have an indepth understanding of the results of the quantitative analysis, a qualitative investigation was conducted by means of interviews. Ten interviews were conducted. Findings from the interviews corroborated the results of the quantitative study. Significantly, analysis show that international students had a negative perception of the communication they had with administrative staff of the business school. Results also show that students did not consider some of the programmes offered as relevant. These explain why non-academic and programme issues had negative results from both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Further, longitudinal research is required to consider satisfaction of student and lectures in relation to service quality. Also, Study is needed to be extended to both international and domestic student. And also, a comparative study within UK and other countries been highlighted as a vital aspect in achieving a high-quality service.

## **Keywords**

Academic aspects, access, non-academic aspects, dimensions, international students, programem issues, reputation, service quality, satisfaction.

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## **List of abbreviations**

HEFCE- Higher education funding council for England

SQ- Service quality

LEA- Local education authority

IS- International studente

HESA- Higher education statistics agency

HUD- University of Huddersfield

HEQC- Higher education quality council

AA- Academic aspects

NSS- National student survey

NA- Non-academic aspects

LDG- Learning development group

PI- Programme issues

HEA- Higher educatio academy

HE- Higher education

QAA- Quality assurance agency

HEi- Higher education institutes

CVCP- Committee on vice chancellors and principals

HEdPERF- Higher education performance

HEPI- Higher education policy institution

ACT- Assimilation Contrast Theory

Academic Biography

Onwumere I. (2015). Service Quality in Higher Education. *British Academy of Management*.

## **Chapter One: Introduction Chapter**

### ***1.1 Research background***

The debate about service quality (SQ) improvement, how it affects student perceived satisfaction and its continuity has been a recent phenomenon in higher education institutions (HEi) (Sultan & Wong, 2012). Recently, student perceived service quality has been a growing research interest in higher education (HE). According to (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), Service quality can be defined as a method of assessment that results from the evaluation of customers expectation with perception of performance; in other words, with regards to how customers really evaluate SQ. (Hill, 1995) suggested that customers perceptions of service quality, results from the comparison of expectation before service is received and the actual experience of service. Therefore, the importance of service quality to all organisation cannot be neglected as it is regarded as a critical element of competitiveness through service superiority and differentiation (Lewis, 1989; Smith, Smith, & Clarke, 2007). However, the question of what forms SQ within the HEi is a controversial one (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). HE in this aspect can be defined as all types of research or studies and training, provided by universities or other educational institutions that are designated higher learning institutions by governmental authorities (UNESCO, 1998).

Recently in 2015/2016, the total composition of students in the UK HEi was around 2.3 million of which UK domiciled student accounts for about 80% (1.842 million) and 20% (.438m) are non-UK domiciled student otherwise refer to as international student (IS) (HESA, 2017). International students in this context consist of EU and other nationalities outside the UK that pays huge amount of tuition fee. As such, the perceived satisfaction of these student are key and of paramount importance to the higher education system. According to (Smith et al., 2007; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985) Perceived satisfaction in this research can be defined as the overall customer's decision of how well a delivered service fulfils the customer's expectations about the

service excellence. In the University of Huddersfield Business School, the number of international student which ranges from 2800 to 3500 has warrant the need to investigate the perceived satisfaction level of the international students in the university business school .

## ***1.2 Statement of problem***

### ***1.2.1 Higher Education Changes, Trends and Concerns in the UK***

The dramatic changes undergone by the UK higher education environment has caused a lot of controversies. Traditionally, the funding of the UK HEi activities was solely based on the government in 1960 to early 2000 without fear or pressure of insufficient enrolment of student (Hefce, 2016). For decades UK universities has been world leading universities attracting full-fee international paying student, which turns the UK HEi into the world's second largest export earner (Benos & Zotou, 2014; HESA, 2016; universityuk, 2014; Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). However, the current decline in funding of UK HEi has led to the adoption of internalisation strategy to increase its income, with the short-supply of funding from government, one-eighth of UK HE income now had to be sourced from international student's tuition fees (Universities, 2014). Currently, the situation has changed: the complexity and sophistication of problems that UK HEi faces both nationally and internationally has grown. Following the white paper (Department for Business & Skills, 2011), the governments funding support has decreased significantly. In line with inflation, the tuition fee which was £3290 in n 2010/2011 was significantly raised in 2012/2013 to £9000 (Bachan, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013).

Furthermore, following the change and several reforms made by the UK government on immigration system, international students which contributes more than £7 billion to the UK economy, have witness a dramatic drop-off in enrolments from 2011 till now (Universities, 2014). Coupled with desire to widen participation and the rapid expansion of the UK HEi, economic pressure have forced universities to adopt and seek alternative source of revenue, through

marketization of HE, research earning and development of oversea campuses (Browne, 2010; Universities, 2014), in order to capitalize on their efforts and unceasingly advance and remain sustainable (F. Abdullah, 2006a; Quinn, Lemay, Larsen, & Johnson, 2009; P. Sultan & H. Wong, 2010). These changes, pattern and uncertainties in the UK higher education system has resulted in increased competition of recruiting students both locally and especially internationally. Indicating a need and clear value for proper examination of SQ in UK universities, firmly focusing on its international student centric objectives, guaranteeing satisfaction and assurance to student that the quality provided is basically essential (Lecca & Macredie, 2015; Sally, 2011).

### ***1.3 Research Aims and Objectives***

Instigated by the recent competitive demand and development, frustrating HE segment and its Investors, the overall aim of the study is

**To unbundle the components of service quality and examine the implication of service quality on international student perceive satisfaction using HEdPERF.**

In line with the above mention the aim of this study is devided into the following objectives, broken down into quantitative and qualitative phases.

#### **Quantitaive phase**

1. To analysis the reliability of HEdPERF scale as a tool for determining international students' satisfaction.

#### **Qualitative phase**

2. To determine the dominant underlying perceived service quality dimension among international business school student

- a. To gain insight of how University of Huddersfield Academic aspects affects international student perception
- b. To gain insight of how University of Huddersfield Non-academic aspects affects international student perception
- c. To gain insight of how University of Huddersfield Reputation affects international student perception
- d. To gain insight of how University of Huddersfield access affects international student perception
- e. To gain insight of how University of Huddersfield Programme issue affects international student perception.

#### ***1.4 Purpose and Significance of the Research***

##### ***1.4.1 Purpose***

That we live in a service-driven economy is factual. Being that within the hub of every economic activity in any society lies services, it is very important to every economic performance. This ranges from “people processing services (services directed at people’s bodies – healthcare, personal services), possession processing services (services directed at physical possessions- freight transportation, laundry services, repair and maintenance), Mental stimulus processing (services directed at people’s Minds-Education, advertisement PR, psychotherapy) and Information Processing (services directed at intangible assets- banking industry services, accounting, and legal services)” (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018, pp. 15-16). According to (Fitzsimmons, Fitzsimmons, & Bordoloi, 2014), government Investments in public services plays an important role in ensuring a sustainable environment and sustainable economic growth. For example, health care, good roads, clean drinking water, education and public safety services are essential for people’s prosperity and survival of the nation’s economy.

Services are not marginal activities but must be acknowledged as an intrinsic part of a society, which form an influential force in today's global economic development. Leading to a progressive thriving economy. In today's competing environment, HEi are more concerned with and continuously seek to develop the quality of service of education that they provide to the student, firmly focusing on student centric mission, guaranteeing assurance of student satisfaction and quality provided (Lecca & Macredie, 2015; Sally, 2011). This is because students are now faced with eccentric challenges and fee-paying student (international student) like other consumers are now demanding attention to their student service and experience, greater value for money, and wanting their voice to be heard (Dehghan, Dugger, Dobrzykowski, & Balazs, 2014; Kärnä & Julin, 2015; Sigala, Christou, Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, & Romanazzi, 2006; Teeroovengadum, Kamalanabhan, & Seebaluck, 2016). More so, (Shelley, 2005) argues that irrespective of high cost of fee, an institutional reputation can be improved by high performance. Evidenced in the increasing UK Education reformation and laws (Berlyne, 2016; Boxall, 2016; QS, 2016).

There has been ongoing research on the need to understand how student perceived the quality of service they receive (F. Abdullah, 2006a; Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair, & Ragavan, 2016). The reason being that when HEi provide analysis and understand how student evaluate services, it may assist in attracting and retaining student. Therefore, the need for higher education sectors to improve their services, through consistent heightening of their service strength has become a key objective (Clemes, Cohen, & Wang, 2013; Teeroovengadum et al., 2016), in order to meet the needs, demands and expectations of their student and maintain student satisfaction (F. Abdullah, 2006b; Ahmad, 2015; P. Sultan & H. Y. Wong, 2010). Previously, research on service quality development has dependably been an constitutional objective for higher education service providers; still, the percieved concept of students is not identified (Narang, 2012; Sultan & Wong, 2013). Some published work on service quality in higher education have focused on actual training



and quality of education and teaching, healthcare, or educational setting (Athiyaman, 1997; Cheong Cheng & Ming Tam, 1997; Moullin, 2002; Nealon, 2005). There is currently no research about international student satisfaction and how it is influenced by service quality using HERdPER measuring scale in the UK. This model or scale has been used in Malaysia and some other part of the country but not in the UK and have not been tested among international business school student. This study therefore, explores international business student's perceived satisfaction of service quality provided, and its disparities and contributes in some ways to literature on service quality in higher education.

#### ***1.4.2 Significance***

The contribution of this study to theory and practice is described as followed: The study used an unprecedented data survey to measure and examine the factors that influences student perception of SQ. This scale, dimensions of the HEdPERF scale is important for policy formation. The study also examines the impact that international student's expectations have on their perception during their period of study. It also offers exceptional contribution to the scanty literature that exists on the international student perception of service quality. By understanding the needs of students in the university for marketing purposes, there is an opportunity to enhance the quality of service provided. This research contributes profoundly towards understanding the advantages and disadvantages of perception gaps in students education system. The mixed method deployed for this study is apt because it allows for better understanding into how service quality influences international students perception of satisfaction. Also, the discrepancies between the expectations of their services and student views allow management of business-student to manage the identified dissatisfaction areas, and improve their overall service quality. this study makes contribution to service quality literature in HE especially within the UK by showing that HEdPERF

scale is a reliable tool for measuring service quality. Additionally, improvements to the results of these studies can influence the general and global reputation of the University.

### ***1.5 Research Methodology***

This study adopts a pragmatist philosophical paradigm. The investigation of the variables in the conceptual model is done to determine whether the five dimensions of service quality collectively and individually influence international students' perception of satisfaction in the UK. International students are the unit of analysis as the focus of the study is to evaluate how they respond to the dimensions of service quality in the University of Huddersfield.

### ***1.6 Research Design***

The research is designed by using an abductive approach. First the investigations are done to establish the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction using quantitative method. Findings are observed further by means of qualitative method using interviews to be able to provide rationale for the outcome of the quantitative study. The reason for this approach is to allow for an in-depth explanation of the implications of service quality for international students' perception of satisfaction.

### ***1.7 Scope***

This section is designed in line with the aims and study objective to explain the basis of generalisations in this research.

#### ***1.7.1 Theory***

The assimilation-contrast theory is used in this study to explain the relationship between service quality and students' perception of satisfaction. The theory is premised on a pragmatist paradigm. It suggests that international students form an expectation of the performance of the university before they arrive for studies. Depending on the actual performance they receive when they commence their studies, they may either be satisfied or dissatisfied.

### **1.7.2 Location**

The study was conducted at a UK university i.e The University of Huddersfield business school (UHBS) which recruits about 3300 international students yearly. For the aim of this study, the phrase ‘international student’ according to UNESCO can be referred to as ‘internationally mobile student’, i.e. one ‘who has physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in a destination country, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin’ (UNESCO, 2014). This definition was important for the study, as the term is not always consistently applied (Abdullah, Aziz, & Ibrahim, 2014), and the university in question has a wide transnational reach, in-country offices in a number of countries and a wide network of agents who can provide assistance with the application process and visa advice when recruiting high numbers of students. Only those students who had left their own countries to study in Huddersfield business school contributed to this research, because the study was predicated on the assumption that the international student transitory nature of study would be relevant to the findings. This group was therefore a subset of the total number of students enrolled at the institution.

Data was collected from students at the Huddersfield business school, University of Huddersfield in the UK. The choice of UK premise on the fact that the country is a top destination for international students and the University of Huddersfield has a reasonably high number of international student (56% in 2017 enrolment) that contributes greatly to the financial position of the school.

### **1.7.3 HE Sector**

The focus on higher education is followed from the above rationale provided above for location. Higher education institutions in the UK have a high percentage of international students

as compared to other levels of education in the country. This makes it apt for the study to be carried out in a university.

### ***1.8 Outline of Study***

The thesis content which consist of 9 chapters is briefly illustrated below.

**Chapter one:** This chapter outlines the comprehensive setting that impel and persuades the researcher to carry out this research. Briefly introducing the topics of the researcher, accentuating and underlining the importance of understanding student perception and expectation of service in the higher education sector. Also, the influence of service quality and its changes on student were investigated. The aims, objectives and the research questions have been identified and a review of the adapted research methods which will help in accomplishing these objectives were also identified. Finally, the breadth and significant contribution has been described and the research outline provided.

**Chapter Two:** This section described service quality and its trend, also the various models and measurement of service quality were analysed.

**Chapter Three:** This section contains a detailed analysis of the HE sector in the UK in the following sections. Firstly, the global development of HE and the development of the HE in the UK were explained. HE customers were identified and their roles as primary stakeholders, customers and partners were defined. Subsequently, a detailed explanation of the financing of HE in the UK and the diverse emerging issues with government financial backing and regulations were analysed, explaining its effects on structure of fees, the HE quality assessments and number of students.

**Chapter Four:** This section presents literature upon which the theoretical framework is developed. Discussions on formation of the theoretical framework and the suitability of HEdPERF in higher education, its trends, the significance of service quality in higher education and the measurement issues are presented. Further discussion where on international student perceived satisfaction, explaining different student expectations and perceptions and identifying how service quality affects students. Finally, the dimensions of HEdPERF service quality in higher education are discussed.

**Chapter Five:** This section presents the philosophical and methodological underpinning guiding the research: analysing and featuring the research design, research method, study site and stages of data collection. Also, the research limitations and ethical considerations are also discussed.

**Chapter Six:** Quantitative analysis is presented in this chapter. First the part presents descriptive statistics and conducts analysis to determine the adequacy of the scale used to measure the main variables. The second part presents inferential statistics by presenting analysis to test the hypothesis.

**Chapter Seven:** In line with the abductive reasoning, quantitative findings are further analysed by means of qualitative methods in this chapter to provide in-depth explanations for the outcome of the quantitative method.

**Chapter Eight:** Discussion of findings is presented in this chapter. The chapter presents discussion on the quantitative findings and thereafter provides in-depth explanation of the results from the qualitative analysis.

**Chapter Nine:** Conclusion, contributions to theory, implications for practice, limitations and recommendations are presented here.

### **1.9 Key Team Definition**

**Service quality**--the difference between customer expectation and perception i.e. the perception of student towards their higher education service element which is a primary determinant of their satisfaction.

**Student satisfaction**—the outcome of student evaluation of a service which can be referred to as perceived service quality

**Academic aspects**-- the aspects of university performance that is essential for students to meet their academic requirements because of the activities of academics

**Non-academic aspects**-- essential duties carried out by non-academic staff that enable students fulfil their study obligations.

**Access**-- These are items that relate to such issues as approachability, ease of contact, availability and convenience.

**Reputation**--- These are items suggest the importance of higher education institutions in projecting a professional image

**Programme issues**—this emphasizes the importance of offering wide ranging and reputable academic programmes/specializations.

**International students**---students seeking a tertiary-level education outside their country of citizenship.

**Higher education**--- HE in this aspect can be defined as all types of research or studies training, provided by universities or other educational institutions that are official higher learning institutions by the ruling governmental authorities (UNESCO, 1998)

**Mixed method**—a research design with philosophical assumptions that guides the collection, analysing and mixing persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data based on research question, in combination, gives a superior comprehension of research issues (Creswell and Clark 2011).

### *1.10 Summary*

This section summarizes an overview of the research. It is designed such that the various chapters mirror the different sections of this thesis. The aims, objective and significance of this study has been presented in this chapter. This helps to underscore the importance contributions that the study makes to existing literature. The next chapter will provide literature about service quality in the higher education.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The earlier section, outlined thoughtfully the concept of service quality and its problem of education in the UK, objectives and significance of the study were presented. This chapter unveils a comprehensive review of literature on SQ and higher education SQ; highlighting, the various features of services, its economy importance, definition of quality and service quality, importance of service quality and the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. It further explains the various theories, models and dimensions of service quality with service concept challenges. This chapter examines service quality and international student perceived satisfaction.

### ***2.1 Defining Quality***

Service quality is not a recent phenomenon as it can be traced back as far as the 1920s. It is important to define service quality to better understand how to investigate it. Quality is viewed as one of the keys to customer satisfaction success. It is one of the leading concerns of businesses and a strategic tool which affects production and marketing strategies in many service industries (Armstrong, Cunningham, & Kotler, 2012; D. A. Garvin, 1988; Goetsch & Davis, 2014; Palmer, 2011). Quality in marketing is nothing new; however, it should be noted that the economy is transitional and the service sector is classified as top priority for the development of the economy. Hence, a key issue which exists in the service industry is determining a clear and precise definition of quality, because quality can be explained from many different points of view (J. Bowen & Hedges, 1993). Though there is no agreement about the definition of quality, researchers have defined quality in different ways. (Crosby, 1979) a Japanese philosopher, defines quality as zero defects (doing it right the first time) with no tolerance for failure. Stating that in order to achieve quality, firms need to conform to requirements, by establishing the specifications for this requirement. However, this was critiqued by (Palmer, 2001) asking: whose requirement and what specification?



Furthermore, (Juran, 1989) defined quality as those product features that meets the needs of the customer, thus providing customer satisfaction. This definition is focus on customer satisfaction and value. (Crosby, 1979) and (Juran, 1989) definition was supported by (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004) stating that quality occurs where organisation where organisation and provided goods and service to customers specification to satisfy customer's needs. (D. A. Garvin, 1988) looked at quality through incidence of internal failure and external failure and presented five different approaches to understanding quality which includes, **Transcendent-Based Quality** - This is quality which cannot be defined precisely (quality through experience). When this approach is applied to service you can see that many service experiences are transcendent because it is impossible to describe exactly why they felt so good (Kasper, Van Helsdingen, & Gabbott, 2006). **Attribute-base quality** - This approach was generated by (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) maintaining that quality is a direct outcome of the number of features or attributes of a product. **User-Based Quality**- (J. M. Juran & De Feo, 2010) defines quality as fitness for purpose of use, which means the extent to which a product successfully serves the purpose of the user during usage. The researcher believes that quality is associated with product satisfaction and dissatisfaction. (Ghobadian, Speller, & Jones, 1994) identified this approach as organisational capability of determining customer's requirement and meeting these requirements. This implies that quality is simply determined by the customer, which makes this approach highly subjective. **Manufacturing- based quality**- quality is conformance to requirement (Crosby, 1980). Simply means that quality is measured by conformance, with divergence considered a decrease in quality. The focus of this definition is internal rather than external and it's useful for organisation in transformation or engineering process, it is also useful in industries that produce either standard product or services (Ghobadian et al., 1994; Kasper et al., 2006). **Value-based approach**- according to (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990), quality is exceeding what customers expect

from service. This means that often the perceived value of something is derived from a complex assessment of both product and customer's attributes.

Furthermore, other studies have define quality as the excellence of anything (product or services) perceived by customer which creates value for customers expectation (Edvardsson & Mattsson, 1993; Gronroos, 1988; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). This definition was supported by (B. Lewis, 1993), which indicates that quality can be defined as the degree to which service provided matches the expectations of the customer on a constant basis. The regular business element definition of quality is that product and service quality basically refers to how well the product or service meets consumer expectations. A wide range of literature in the last 25 years have studied the concept of service and recognized the elusiveness of services as one of the complications associated with measurement (Joseph, Yakhou, & Stone, 2005; B. Lewis, 1993; Lovelock & Wright, 2002; C. Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 2002). In addition, in service sectors, where product process, distribution and consumption occurs at the same time, the definition of quality denotes the correspondence between customers anticipation and their actual experience. Customers evaluate quality by comparing what they expect with what they already receive or experienced (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

## ***2.2 Defining service and service Characteristic***

### ***2.2.1 Defining Service***

Several empirical studies have found that there is a relationship between service and organisational financial and competitive results such as market share, profitability and asset turnover(Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2009). Thus the focus of services is most often embedded in service activities, processes, interaction and deeds, which further classified service as (1) A Process, which was discuss by (Lovelock & Wright, 2002) as a sequence of activities, which

classically involves several phases that often need to take place in a defined order, this was also supported by (Grönroos, 2001, 2007; Polyakova & Mirza, 2015) which agreed that service is a procedure which results in inadequate coincident of production and consumption processes. Furthermore this argument was supported by (Gummesson, 2007) that service are progressive processes, whereas goods are fixed. (2) service as customer problem solution was view by (Polyakova & Mirza, 2015) as an intangible activities generated during the interaction between service organisation employees and customers in order to provide a solution to the customer in question. Finally (3) service as customers expedient result viewed service as a major application of special competences in business enterprise functions through deeds, activities for the benefit of another entities (Polyakova & Mirza, 2015).

These definitions which have a great significant effect to the delivery of high-quality service, has moved organisations to re-evaluate how best to meet customers needs in todays business evolution (Hill, 1995). And are related to the five distinguished features of service: intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity, inseparability and ownership (Kasper et al., 2006), which needs a complete understanding of its terms.

### ***2.2.2 Unique Characteristics of services***

**Intangibility:** Service intangibility which is the overcritical distinctive services from all other variances emerge (B. Edvardsson et al., 2005) denotes that service construct such as its measurment and enumaration cannot be directly examined or experienced in advance before purchases (Palmer, 2011, 2014). Services are considered intangible because they are based on performance with certain characteristics such as reliability, personal satisfaction, staff attention, consumer feedback and the lack of a general standard of measure (Polyakova & Mirza, 2015).

Though services are not tangible measurable objects, they are measured through experience or activities (C. H. Lovelock & L. Wright, 2002).

**Perishability:** Services are perishable and have no later storage for use or sale which makes it different from goods (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2009). According to (Khan, Nawaz, Ishaq, & Tariq, 2014), service "perish in the very moment of his performance, and rarely leave any hint or value behind them." This indicates that services die instantly once produced and cannot be stored. From customer's perspective service are perishable because they cannot be saved, stored, reused or returned later, but from operations viewpoint, it is easier; production capacity is perishable because it is explicitly time dependent (Edvardsson, Gustafsson, & Roos, 2005). This inability to store service and the short-term fluctuations in availability of service processing capacity has leads to problem in service perishability results where demand pattern and requirement for just-in-time production of service is difficult to predict (Boshoff & Du 2009; Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2009).

**Heterogeneity:** Heterogeneity is a service characteristic which refers to the difference encountered during service delivery, it is therefore define as result in service variation from one service provider or another or may vary from the same service provider at different times (Zeithaml et al., 1985). According to (Rathmell, 1966; Zeithaml et al., 1985) service heterogeneity describes how difficult it is to ensure consistency in service experience because what customer receives sometimes differs from what the firm intends to deliver. This is due to the "live" production and interaction between customers and service providers (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2009). Other studies have argued in favour of heterogeneity factors that influence heterogeneity such as awareness of customer's needs, service provider's attitude, and customers priority affects (B. Edvardsson et al., 2005; Polyakova & Mirza, 2015).

**Inseparability:** Inseparability of service refers to service production and consumption in a coincident process, whereby consumers have to be designed into the company production process and the consumer needs (Palmer, 2014). This has led to two concepts being established. Firstly, the provision of services in the form of a performance or a series of act (Buttle, 1993; Normann, 2000). Secondly, the idea that production processes of service occurs in the presence of the customer (C. a. Garvin, 1989). This entails that to a greater or lesser extent customers need to be present when a service is being performed (C. Williams & Buswell, 2003). (Parasuraman et al., 1985) Argues that the personal contact in the service interaction can affect the quality of service because of the individualistic nature of customers. Furthermore (Kotabe & Murray, 2004) states that inseparability of service is more likely to have more disadvantages than advantages as it customers needs change from time to time. This may lead to business uncertainty. The negative effects that inseparability does not overshadow its positive effects. For example, studies have shown that it results in brand loyalty because it brings in customers into the production process (Lawler, 2001).

**Inability to own:** the perishability of Service activity does not generally bring about allocation of title (Kasper et al., 2006). When services are bought, it does not require the possession of a material object, this can be seen in service co-creation practice designed for creating customer satisfaction (Kasper et al., 2006). The above mentioned characteristics are the major components that differentiate physical products from services. Other features of service delivery, which can be used to classify services are, place of delivery, service timing, customisation level against standardization, technology role in service delivery (i.e. by making service available at the right time and place needed), the duration and the difficulty of the assets needed for service activities (Matear, Gray, & Dean, 2000). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2014) each of these service descriptions is a problem for management, the services intangibility nature makes the description of the service difficult for the manufacturer and for customers to establish the expected

characteristics. In light of this, service industries work hard to find ways to make their service more tangible because customers often look for signs of quality in service. The service inseparability nature makes hiding mistakes and service shortfall hard; and service managers are trying to increase the productivity of providers who are inseparable from their products. In order to standardize the quality in face of variability and to improve demand movements and supply capacities in the face of service perishability. Therefore to succeed, service providers need to create superior service, aggressive service distinction, and discover approaches to expand service profitability (Ghobadian et al., 1994).

### ***2.3 Importance of service***

Around the world, service industries have become the dominant element of the economy, encompassing a diverse and complex range of organisations and enterprises, this justifies the importance of services (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2016). The service economy can be seen as very important in many advanced economies, which has made it crucial in many countries economic development (Baron, Harris, & Hilton, 2009). The growing size of the service economy is virtually increasing all around the world. This global growth recognizes that service is an integral part of the society, rather than a peripheral activity (Lovelock, Patterson, & Wirtz, 2014). Service are becoming more crucial in many countries economy development, they are central to a functioning and health economy and lie at the heart of every economy (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2012). This trending growth which is virtually increasing applies to both developed countries like United States, Germany, Switzerland, Australia and United Kingdom and developing countries like Vietnam, Thailand, Nigeria, and Indonesia (Lovelock et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2012). The tremendous growth in the service sector and the increasing dominance of services in the economies such as Technology, government regulation, and change in consumer tastes and

preference are compelling service industries to re-evaluate their current business practices (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2008).

From a historical perspective, services until the late 1970s, did not develop as a distinctive study (Zeithaml et al., 1993). Since then service has grown into a major sub discipline of marketing as a dominant economic activity in developed and developing countries and have continuously grown, while other sector such as manufacturing and agriculture are declining. Recently report has shown that the service sector importance to the entire economic activity is due to its consistent dominance for over four decades (F. Abdullah, 2006a; Palmer, 2011). The significance of services for the development and success of most of the world economies cannot be ignored, as it provides the foundation for wealth creation and overall daily activities, which is economically regularly calculated by factors like GDP and VALUE ADDED (Urban, 2010). Furthermore, report from CIA (2013) shows the importance of services to various economies as it amounts to nearly 78.9% of the United Kingdom GDP, 77.8% of United States and 64% of world product GDP.

## ***2.4 Service quality***

### ***2.4.1 Definition of Service Quality***

The concept of Service quality is a thought that has motivated extensive concern and argument in research literature due to the difficulties both in the definition and measurement (Wisniewski, 2001). The key problem facing the service sector/industry is a detailed definition of service quality which has led many researchers to the theoretical study for several years and has made them to focus on different aspect of services. Hence various definition of service quality revolves around the way in which service expectation by customer and percieved service performance of service quality are been assesed (Ghobadian et al., 1994; Grönroos, 1984; Kasper et al., 2006; Parasuraman et al., 1991; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1985,

1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1994; Parasuraman et al., 2002). However, Cronin and Taylor (1992) based their logic on the fact that "service quality should be measured as an attitude" without any consideration for expectations. Furthermore, Wilson et al. (2008) defines service quality as the perception of customers towards the service element of a product which is a primary determinant of customer satisfaction. Other researchers on the other hand defined service quality as the difference between the perceptions of customer service and their expectations or desire. If customers' expectations are met, then perceived quality is satisfactory but if exceeded, then perceived satisfaction is high. Thus, when customer expectation is less perception of satisfaction quality is less and hence customer experiences dissatisfaction (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982; Lewis & Booms, 1983; Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Prasad & Jha, 2013; Zeithaml et al., 1990).

To further explain his notion (Grbnroos, 1982) developed the perception minus expectation (P-E) conceptualization model of service quality which suggest that the difference between customers expectation of a service and the actual performance of the same service drives the evaluation of service quality, he further classified service quality in two forms namely, technical quality –which relates to process provided during service and functional quality- which refers to the actual method in which service is delivered. On the other hand (Zeithaml et al., 1993) pointed out that the satisfaction of customer is a functional assessment of service quality, product quality and price. The implication of the this debates on service quality includes its emphasis on paying attention to customers' behaviour and motivation, rather than focusing on only the service providers' perspective. Finally Service quality according to Wu, Yeh, and Hsiao (2011) is define as the rate of compromise between customers expectation and the service provided. This definition implies that the customer is the judge and determiner of the superiority of service provided (Esfidani, Jandaghi, & Soltaninejad, 2016).



#### ***2.4.2 Importance of service quality***

Service has played a big role since the late 1980s; there has been an emerging understanding of the importance of services in the global economy. Therefore, some researchers have repeatedly stressed the significance of improvement in quality dynamism by accomplishing a sustainable competitive improvement (Zeithaml et al., 1990). According to (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002b) Service industry contributes immensely to the growth of the global economy. And this makes firms to start using various tactics to improve and provide superior service quality to meet the customers needs. Buzzell and Gale (1987) and B. R. Lewis (1989) found a huge benefit of service quality, which shows that the provision of high quality service forms an affirmative connection between service quality and Organization and can also aids in achieving many benefits such as high market share, high return on investment and asset turnover. This indicated that high service quality is a key component of competition in the sservice industry.

In addition, researchers have demonstrated how important service quality is to customers satisfaction, customer loyalty and market share as well a showing how it can improve financial performance, increases productivity, profitability, employee morale, reduce cost and lower staff turnover (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Berry, 1995; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Caruana, 2002; Jabnoun & Hassan, 2003; Lassar, Manolis, & Winsor, 2000; Lewis & Booms, 1983; B. Lewis, 1989, 1993; Llosa, Chandon, & Orsingher, 1998; Newman, 2001; Rechinheld & Sasser, 1990; Wang, Lo, & Hui, 2003; Wang, Lo, & Yang, 2004). In order to keep up with the growing economy and competition, (Iacobucci, Grayson, & Ostrom, 1994) suggest that organisation need to acknowledge the definition of service quality and its measurement, and set up strategies on how to improve and guarantee the quality of their services to meet the needs of their customers.

### ***2.4.3 The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction***

Generally service quality has been considered as a complex concept prompting researchers to investigate the area with precision and diversity, as clearly evident by a number of models which applies to service as a means of understanding and managing the improvement of service quality (Kasper et al., 2006). Nevertheless, consistent confusion still exist among the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, the two perceptions are essentially different in relations of their undelaying causes and outcome (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Though they have certain things in common, Quality simple denotes to some characteristic of what is offered, produced and delivered, while satisfaction means how customer response to the offer (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002a). This makes them different but interrelated as quality is something an organisation is accountable for, while satisfaction is an experience in the customer's sphere of influence (Liechty & Churchill, 1979). This relationship is based on the fact that customer's responses level (satisfied or dissatisfied) are used as a technique of evaluating if quality service have been delivered, which implies that customer's satisfaction to a service is not solely derived from the service itself.

Service quality are frequently assessed at the time of encounter and according to (Taylor & Baker, 1994), quality is defined as the whole value perceived in the service encounter that is expected by the customer, therefore it is essential for organisations to pay more attention to customer perception and service process. As suggested by (Bearden, Malhotra, & Uscátegui, 1998; Suneeta & Koranne, 2014) a better service quality process can be beneficial in two ways namely customer attraction and retention, with the later achievable by satisfying attracted customers. Oliver (1980) state that customers' satisfaction is a comparative opinion among expectations and services received. Dib and Alnazer (2013) agreed that by comparing actual perception of performance with expected performance, the result confirmed that when two performance

(perceived performance exceeds expectation performance) the resultant effect will be positive confirmation but when (perceived performance falls below expectation) a negative disconfirmation will occur, this indicates that emotional responses of satisfaction/dissatisfaction is a result of confirmation/disconfirmation.

These were further confirmed by (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1988) stating that satisfaction is an emotional state which occurs when there is a combination of emotion surrounding disconfirmed/confirmed expectation and customer's previous feeling about the consumption experience, on the other hand (Woodside, Frey, & Daly, 1990) explained that satisfaction of customer is a post-purchase assessment of service offered. A contemporary method adopted by (Gilbert, Veloutsou, Goode, & Moutinho, 2004) defined satisfaction of customer as a state of mind whereby the needs, wants and expectations of customers have been exceeded or met, throughout the product service life, which result in future repurchase and loyalty. Based on this view Wilson et al. (2008) emphasised that service quality is a component of customer satisfaction, which brings about customer loyalty. According to (Wilson et al., 2008), SQ evaluation which focuses on responsiveness, perception of reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibles, reflects customer perception. This shows that satisfaction is which is influenced by perceived service quality, product quality and price is more comprehensive (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1994; Wilson et al., 2008). Therefore, the key to customer satisfaction, competitive sustainability and customer loyalty lies in delivering great service quality.

#### ***2.4.4 Customer expectation of service quality***

In service quality, expectation plays a vital role in customer's decision-making process, therefore service providers with intention to manage service quality need to understand the development of customer's expectation and its significance to service quality (Hill, 1995; Oldfield

& Baron, 2000; Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, & Romanazzi, 2006). Expectations are preconceived ideas that services have about what a product or service should offer (Teas, 1993). Despite this, Zeithaml et al. (1993) defined it as a reference point that service users use to evaluate the quality of service delivery. This implies that customers take into consideration prior upon exposure to service when evaluating service quality. Service quality also changes according to level of service expectation that customer develops, which indicated that individual customer expectation may vary from time to time. Regardless of this Zeithaml et al. (1993) noted that the various factors which influenced the view of service quality expectation are both controllable (explicit and implicit/ tactic service promises) and uncontrollable (word of mouth communication, personal needs, perceived service alternative, previous experience, communication available from the service provider, price, situational factors and predicted services). Therefore service providers need to understand that knowing what customers need are is key (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

#### ***2.4.5 Customer perception of service quality***

Various ways at which customers perceive and evaluate the quality of service rendered remains an aspect for organisation to think about as the need to understand customers perception cannot be ignored. Hence understanding perception is critical for the diagnosis of service problems and making immediate changes. Perceptions are formed through the appraisal of service delivered by a company to its customer and how satisfied they are with the overall experience; it can also be defined as the difference expectation of the customer and perception towards service functionality (Edvardsson, A. Gustafsson, & I. Roos, 2005; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). Ismail, Abdullah, and Francis (2009) suggested that generally, quality perception is an evaluation of service while (Cronin & Taylor, 1992) agreed that quality perception should be viewed as “similar to an attitude” method. From the preceding description we understand each service experience is a moment to create perceptions of quality and satisfaction. Furthermore Zeithaml et al. (1990) and Hill (1995)

identify factors which influence customer's perception of service performance as tangible, environment of service, facilities and equipment involved, the competence, credibility, reliability, responsiveness and courtesy of the service providers. Therefore perceived quality service is the product of the evaluation of a number of services encountered. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) argue that because perceptions may shift over time, it is therefore necessary for companies to continuously assess customer perceptions.

#### **2.4.6 *Various dimensions of services quality***

Many authors suggest that service quality dimension represent customers organisation of data about services received in their minds (Lagrosen, Seyyed-Hashemi, & Leitner, 2004; Lee, Lee, & Yoo, 2000). Since service quality is built on several dimension and no understanding as to the description of its dimension, a contemporary discussion by several scholars on the various measurements of service quality have started (Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001; Grönroos, 2001, 2007; Kang & James, 2004; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Several aspects have been suggested and established as dimensions or elements of service quality and no single dimension can be applicable to all areas of the same service in the service sectors. This implies that organisations use different dimension of service qualities from time to time in different service industries (T. J. Brown, Churchill, & Peter, 1993; Carman, 1990; Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Prasad & Jha, 2013). Researchers also agree that the determinant of service quality must be the customer's rather than the management (Carman, 1990; Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Lagrosen et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Among the popular dimension used to measure service quality are SERVQUAL AND SERVPERF. A summary of studies conducted with list of various service quality dimensions considered is presented in Table ( 1 ). Table 1- Existing conceptualisation of Service Quality

S.No.	Authors	Dimensions
1	(Parasuraman et al., 1988)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tangibles: the physical facilities, equipment, appearance of personnel;</li> <li>• Reliability: the ability to perform the desired service dependably, accurately, and consistently;</li> <li>• Responsiveness: the willingness to provide prompt service and help customers;</li> <li>• Assurance: employees' knowledge, courtesy, and ability to convey trust and confidence; and</li> <li>• Empathy: the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.</li> </ul>
2	(Grönroos, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionalism and skill: customers see the service provider as knowledgeable and able to solve their problems in a professional way.</li> <li>• Attitudes and behaviour: customers perceive a genuine, friendly concern for them and their problems.</li> <li>• Access and flexibility: customers feel that they have easy, timely access and that the service provider is prepared to adjust to their needs.</li> <li>• Reliability and trustworthiness: customers can trust the service provider to keep promises and act in their best interests.</li> <li>• Recovery: customers know that immediate corrective action will be taken if anything goes wrong.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reputation and credibility: customers believe that the brand image stands for good performance and accepted values.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	(LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate image</li> <li>• Competitiveness</li> <li>• Courtesy</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Competence</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	(Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Quality</li> <li>• Interactive Quality</li> <li>• Corporate Quality</li> </ul>

Sources adopted from (Prasad & Jha, 2013)

These are some of the service quality dimensions by various researchers, and having analysed these dimensions, the following findings were made. There are imperative comparisons in the dimensions and also changes in the size of quality of the service developed and used by various researchers. Each of the dimensions developed are exceptional, therefore supporting the proposition that there is no single dimensions of service quality that are related and suitable for all types of service quality research (Ramaiyah & Ahmad, 2007). Furthermore, several new dimensions are still being developed.

## ***2.5 Service Quality in Higher Education***

Having view the concept of service quality in the previous section, this section will link the concept of service quality with service quality in higher education, examining the higher educations in UK as service providers, the stages in HEi service quality, the international student and their perception, the significances of higher education service quality; analysing the contribution of international student to the uk economy and the various service quality models in higher education. The comprehensive review of this study will shed light on how HEi service quality affects student satisfaction.

### ***2.5.1 Background of service quality in Higher Education***

Emphasises on SQ strategic role and how it enhances attraction of new student, retention of existing student and competitiveness has been a focal point for higher education provider (P. Sultan & H. Y. Wong, 2010). In the case of higher education, there is a growing competition between higher education institutions and opportunities accessible to international students when searching for schools all over the world. The administrators of several university and college see quality implementation practice such as, quality management, as well functioning and as a way of relying on good customer service (Beaver, 1994). Thus, many higher education institutions are determined to implement good practice and apply the process to changing the fundamental character of academic life or curriculum. There were also some challenges that the reorganization of such campuses are primarily related to non-academic issues, such as better reception, upgrading of the campus administration, effective and efficient use of funds (Koch & Fisher, 1998). The issue of service quality is important in today's industry and organisation, as a result of the increase competition between various industrial segments. Quality of service is one of the most imperative aspects of the strategic development of any service organization, which affects the organizations



fundamental elements (such as return on investment, market share and total costs) (Palmer, 2011, 2014). This affects business efficiency, which has raised concerns about the areas in which they need to be managed in different ways (Kamble & Sarangdhar, 2015). A higher education institution should be considered as a service sector among all service organizations, which is designed to meet the needs of students and overcome their needs in assessing the quality of service delivery.

Quality of service is one of the most important aspects of the strategic development of the service organization, which affects the basic elements (such as return on investment, market share and total costs) (Palmer, 2011, 2014). This affects business, which is a matter of concern for industries that need different approaches to managing it (Kamble & Sarangdhar, 2015). Higher education institution, Among all service organizations should be considered as a service sector that emphasizes on meeting the needs of students in assessing the quality of service delivery (S Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2014; Hemsley-Brown, Lowrie, Gruber, et al., 2010; P. Sultan & H. Y. Wong, 2010). Moreover, enviromental problems cause by commercial competition on higer education institutions to achieve high quality service such as changes in financing higher education, globalization, digital revolution and continues expansion in number of higher education providers has emphasized the need for HEi to identify key issues in qualities (UniversitiesUK, 2015). More definitely, higher educational institution tuition fee rises has affected the student thinking and education (mintel, 2014). The Institute for Higher Education Policy (HEPI), reported that student assesment to their education reflects low value for money (Hillman, 2015). These changes have led to a more competitive environment, stimulating new opportunities, investment and innovation, with increase student satisfaction at the heart of how institutions are responding (UniversitiesUK, 2015).

Higher education in the UK competes not only for UK's brightest students but also with other countries overseas (British Council, 2012), with increasing expectations about the quality and sustainability of the provision of services in higher education (UniversitiesUK, 2015). In particular, the students, as the main financiers and recipients of higher education careers, and their families, will want sound and definite assertion on the safety and value of the investment they make (UniversitiesUK, 2011a, 2015). This indicates that in order to better understand the market situation, and match the needs of the target market, higher education institutions need to build a better customer-centered approach (Temple, Callender, Grove, & Kersh, 2014). Thus to differentiate their services, higher education institutions in UK need to reevaluate their business processes in the education competitive market (Noaman, Ragab, Madbouly, Khedra, & Fayoumi, 2015). Therefore, higher education institutions should strengthen their marketing performance by showcasing their positive side and deliver superior service quality which enhances customer satisfaction (S Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2014; Hillman, 2015).

### ***2.5.2 Higher Education Institution as Service Providers***

Higher education has been seen as pure service. Today, as with many other industries, this suggests that it acquires all distinctive features of service, which are different from other contemporary marketing services in various ways (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). Higher education institutions are in themselves service organizations. In addition to educational services, institutions offer other services such as libraries, cafeterias, counselling services, employment agencies, banks, telephone and internet connections, health clinics, indoor and outdoor sports facilities (C. Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007; Palli & Mamilla, 2012). Hennig-Thurau, Langer, and Hansen (2001) work pointed out that education services are conceptually different from other services because of the central position of service provided in the student life and the enormous amount of intellectual skill and motivation required from students. Furthermore, Gruber, Fuß, Voss, and Gläser-Zikuda (2010) also

noted that educational service have various unique characteristics which makes it difficult for service quality to be measured objectively, looking at teaching which is concurrently “produce and consumed” and which deals with co-creation of the teaching experience between student and teachers. service quality with this unique qualities cannot be measured.

Accordingly, institutions are progressively becoming aware of the significance of higher education as a service sector, focusing on the satisfaction of students' expectations and needs (DeShields Jr, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005). Therefore (DeShields Jr et al., 2005; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006) argued that applying the principles of market-orientated and strategies to higher education management is essential because it helps to gain competitive advantage. Furthermore Nadiri, Kandampully, and Hussain (2009b) Suggested that it is important to comprehend what constitutes the expectations and perceptions of students service quality in order to appeal student and meets their needs. Hence the need to support and enhance the student experience which encompasses all aspect of the student life: academic, social, welfare, support, library, equipment throughout the student lifecycle is crucial to the success of the institution today for both student and the organisation (F. Abdullah, 2006a; J. A. Douglas, Douglas, McClelland, & Davies, 2015). This will help ensure the need for service quality in higher education institution and ensure that students participates in a competative service environment (DeShields Jr et al., 2005).

According to (Gruber et al., 2010; Oldfield & Baron, 2000) higher education institution is largely a intangible, perishable and heterogeneous service sector recently. This is because of variations in service experience from one condition to the next, Due to the following situation, it is difficult to standardize services provided by higher education institution. Higher education services also meet the disruption criteria, taking into account the difficulty of storage. However, ways to overcome it, for example, are evident in e-learning and video (Cuthbert, 1996a). As a result, services such as higher education seek to counteract the perishability of service due to

innovations and technological advancements. Regardless of the characteristics of higher education, it is important to understand that as a university, there are different stakeholders and different stakeholders, such as any other company (Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Chua, 2004).

### ***2.5.3 The crucial stages in higher education service quality***

When analysing the higher education institution as a service industry, (Mizikaci, 2006a, 2006b) highlights the essential principles, philosophy, values and norms of quality systems that reflect high service quality appropriate to HE. These service focus values and concepts are: anticipating students' needs and aspirations, by improving the teamwork collaboration, process change, systems, cooperation and solving problems based on systematic methodologies identified. Therefore to improve these essential principles of high service, (Sharabi, 2013) identified three folds of higher educational system that needs to be explored:

#### ***2.5.3.1 The coordinators level***

This level which is the leadership, managerial and other units of the institution that provides services to the other levels in the organisation, contents that the behaviour of workers and their performances are being influenced by the manager which can directly or indirectly affect the internal service delivery to other teams (Sharabi, 2013). Therefore, the managers need to constantly coach and improve the work quality process by paying attention to employees, giving them positive feedback and implementing their suggestions for improvement. According to Sharabi (2013) by providing on-going training and achieving open communication channels, the employees' commitment to service quality work process will increase thereby minimizing mistakes, complaints and criticism. Furthermore, Deming (2000) claims that 85% of work errors are caused by improper and contradictory work processes while 15% are caused by workers which makes it difficult for organisations to realize superior service and productivity. Therefore, to

maintain and improve the organisational quality, (the coordinator tier) need need not to patch situations but rather redesign procedures and create first hand quality culture.

### **2.5.3.2 *The boundary levels***

To accomplish commitment to quality, Workers needs to be enlightened about the problem of quality and their participation in solving these quality problems and improving processes (Zelnik, Maletič, Maletič, & Gomišček, 2012). This can be achieved by empowering incresed participation and commitment of staff (Dewettinck & van Ameijde, 2011). In addition, together with the staff, the resources needed to achieve the set quality goals should be provided. Also, Quality statements without equipment will disrupt the staff and lead to negative results (Deming, 2000). Again, it is often necessary to repair old machine/ equipment which will increase return on investment (ROI), than to use non-working tools which will inevitably cause the employee to improvise and influence their readiness and decision to produce quality products (Deming, 2000). Quality of life of employees does not differ from product / service quality. Worker with poorly-capitalized and minimal investment does not produce good results.

### **2.5.3.3 *The customer level: The student focus in Higher Education Institution***

The success of the higher education organization rely on the level of students' involvement in the service process. According to D. E. Bowen and Schneider (1995) Students are very important and consider a part of the organization. students are aware of different aspects of service, so ignoring students remarks and complaints will hinder the organization's improvement plan. Students complaints should be considered as a tool for service improvmnt. focusing and responding to students grievances, criticisms and recommendations, will help in organizational system enhancements (Sharabi, 2013; Sharabi & Davidow, 2010). At present, students are armed with sophisticated technological devices and are more complex than ever. As noted above, Sharabi

(2013) claim that the impact of the unsatisfied consumer is likely high among student and with the rate of various communication gadgets accessible to student, who are intensely accustomed to campus; satisfied student can shares their level of satisfaction with one or two people, while the level of an unsatisfied student experience can be shared among 10 and above. In view of this, few unsatisfied students may have a great impact on the image of the institution. Therefore, consideration to student needs allows the management to predict future demand and adapt to expectations.

When looking at the customer, we need to ask ourselves what our customers need. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly interact with students to meet the needs and expectations of students and to identify deficiencies in quality (J. A. Douglas et al., 2015). This can be achieved through focus groups and indepth interviews and periodic satisfaction surveys, covering different quality criteria for each HE service departments. These intaractions (survey, focus group and interview) will provide a clear picture of the student's perspective of service quality to senior management and identify deficiencies (Julia Vauterin, Linnanen, & Marttila, 2011; Sharabi & Davidow, 2010). This can be view according to Kordupleski and Simpson (2003) as the "tree of attributes" design, which indicates that institution need to constantly find what student value most (i.e what they receive or how much it cost) and link it to business developments. If student weight are defined in each branch, we foresee how organizational developmental changes affects the student. Then, a comparision can be carried out with specific customer behaviour to confirm this pattern. This is risky because countinously, money will be spent on unimportant things which will not help improve quality of service. rather than taking the easy way to measure what is available , institutions need to focus on measuring what is necessary/ needed (Sharabi & Davidow, 2010).

Concerning sexpectations of student, Lagrosen et al. (2004) proposed that education effectivness such as employee collabration, international reputation, course content,

facilities, teaching methods, information, responsiveness and internal assessments are the major criteria of quality dimensions in HE from the student's viewpoint. facilities (library resources and computer facilities), information, responsiveness and internal evaluations. According to Nadiri, Kandampully, and Hussain (2009a) research, on the degree of satisfaction with the administrative units, the comprehension degree has a great impact on service quality. Internal evaluation of the student's expectations of services is the foundation for organizational continuous improvement training (Gitachari Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005; G Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2002). By minimizing these deficiencies, it enhances the quality of the organization's services reputation and revenues (Heskett et al., 1997; Sharabi 2014). The service profitability has been identified through increased high-quality services, revenue, growth and profitability (Buzzell & Gale, 1987; Isa & Usmen, 2015).

## ***2.6 Service quality significance in higher education***

The services industry has gained so much economic importance in the last few decades especially in higher education; this is due to the modernization of the service economy, which now recognizes customers worth, more energetic and efficient (van Schalkwyk & Steenkamp, 2014). Service operations can be categorized into factories services, private service providers, service shops, professional services and large-scale service providers. The package of services offered by higher education institution, bank, clinic, dental, food, veterinary practice, and the architectural firm (to mention a few) can be explained in terms of the service recipient, the condition (tangible or intangible), and the level of customization, interaction, personal contact and labour force (van Schalkwyk & Steenkamp, 2014). The recent change towards more service economies has made service quality to be the important topic of competitive advantage amongst businesses, and this has been contended as one of the essential approach for competitiveness (Kotler, Keller, & Bliemel, 2007). Over the past four decades, service has dominated economic activities and are

currently playing an important role in many countries economy (F. Abdullah, 2006a; Rastgoo, 2014).

A much-advocated definition of service quality is one that developed from the customer's perspective. Customer has a distinctive way of perceiving service and only what the customer thinks is true (Peters & Austin, 1985). Additionally, (Feigenbaum, 1991) argued that quality as compliance to customers specification, must be recognised by established organisations (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Grönroos (2001), suggested that it is important for firms to remember that quality as perceived by customer counts. Therefore, it is appropriate to evaluate firms quality by measuring perception of customers experience during the process of delivery. According to service marketing literature, customer perceived service quality is a function of customer expectation from service and the actual perceived performance of the in providing the service (Nell & Cant, 2014; Niveen Mazen Alsayyed, 2015; Palmer, 2014). According to marketing concept, Every organisational definition of business aims and objectives should focus on customer or be customer centric in order to achieve high customer satisfaction (DeShields Jr et al., 2005). This also applies to higher education institution. Yet many institutions creates dissatisfaction for student by concentrating on attracting and admitting more students rather than managing and increasing satisfaction level for already admitted students (DeShields Jr et al., 2005).

On the other hand, higher education competitive environment and change in students' needs has made higher education institutions, to recognized the need for SQ and service quality dynamism (Elliott & Healy, 2001; O'Neill & Palmer, 2004). In order to succeed in higher education institutions, it is necessary to introduce a service quality assessment to account for service effectiveness (DiDomenico & Bonnici, 1996; Dimitroff & Nguyen, 2004; Sirvanci, 2004). According to (Suganthi & Samuel, 2004, p. 8), service quality effectiveness is becoming the key major factor in organization, therefore all organisational department needs to be educated and take



the issue of quality serious. The implementation of effective service quality systems in Industries, service organisations and educational institutions has resulted to: - the elimination of the internal and external customer complaints; Decreased product cost; production time Reduction; Improved system performance; Moral growth of employees; and increasing customer satisfaction. satisfaction is the precursor variable of dedication and loyalty in service organisation, which are connected; and this relationship exists in higher education sector (Gonçalves, Souza, & Inacio, 2004; Gronholdt, Martensen, & Kristensen, 2000). In educational sector, embracing students satisfaction and educational quality concept are viewed as a crucial point for their success and survival (Vatta & Bhatara, 2013). In light of this relationship, a satisfied student with the institutions services, will potentially develop loyal behaviour, such as communicating positively about the institutions establishments to potential student (Mavondo, Zaman, & Abubakar, 2000; Tsarenko & Mavondo, 2001). These students may wish to return for other courses / development or post-graduate education at that university (Olsen & Johnson, 2003), and also maintain their alumnihip with the university (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001).

## ***2.7 International student***

Today, International students represent a substantial growing market of the global economy (P. Altbach, 2015a; P. G Altbach, 2016). Undeniably, student movement across boarder has profoundly affected the higher education policy in UK (Chan, 2017) and as such are significant to the economy. For the purpose of this study, according to UNESCO (2014) the term ‘international student’ can be refered to as students who has moved from one country to another with the objective to participate in educational activities in a destination country (i.e. an ‘internationally mobile student). In UK, international student are students seeking a tertiary-level education outside their country of citizenship or have physically crossed an international border between two countries, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin(Universities,

2014). Globally, the marketization of international students has significantly shown signs of growth and within this; the UK holds an enviable position, being the second most popular destination in the world for international student with over 438,018 population in 2015/2016, generating over 25.8bn in UK economy (Universities, 2016). Currently, the UK have a huge range of benefit associated with international student, apart from the tuition fee and the rich cultural diversity, which will be discuss further.

### ***2.7.1 International students as economic contributors in UK***

The contribution of international student in the UK during their study term is significantly huge both to the economy and social properties. The recruitment of overseas student and international higher education is constructed as a global business (Department for Business & Skills, 2011), which generates economic activities and benefits to the UK GDP and supports jobs and tax revenues (Bohm et al., 2004). In the recent years, international student market size in higher education institution in uk has immensely developed (BIS 2013a) for example 2015/2016 international global market size was about £4.5 billion of tuition fee (HESA 2015).

#### ***2.7.1.1 Income contribution***

The financial gains from high tuition fee forms the core increase in the UK market share (BIS 2013a, DfES 2003, DTZ 2011). Income from tuition also add to the financial benefit that the UK economy gets from international students. In addition to tuition fees, international students also spend on accommodation and other maintenance expenses, all of which contributes to the GDP of the UK (British Council, 2003;Conlon et al., 2011). Furthermore, international students income is worth over £ 6 billion a year and forms a major export for the UK economy.

### **2.7.1.2 *Research and development contribution***

Research and development from international students contributes towards intercultural learning (British Council, 2003). Students bring in diverse views and research projects that cuts across different countries. This is advantages because it provides a pool of information that the UK can use to assess how well the country is faring in comparison with others using different way of measurement.

### **2.7.1.3 *Contribution to labour market***

Through the participation of international students in the lanour market, revenues are generated and skills gap are filled (Cameron, 2011). Certain professional skills are filled by international students upon graduation, their participation in the workforce also increases intercultural diversity in the workplace.

### **2.7.2 *The relationship between international student satisfaction and service quality***

Several considerations will invariably influence international students' choice of universities in UK such as an perceived service quality. Service quality represents an attitude or verdict around the superiority of a service (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and expectations play an indispensable role in service quality evaluation. Consumers (e.g. international students) will compare their expectations of the level of service with what they have experienced. Consumer satisfaction will become apparent if the perceived service quality exceed what consumers expect (Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Service quality focuses on how best to meet customer's expectation, it is in essence related to how best to measure service delivery level to match customer's expectation which leads to customer satisfaction (Palli & Mamilla, 2012). Regrding SQ relating to student satisfaction, institution managments need to pay attention and be more focus on the quality of

services rendered to student, facilities provided and information in order to increase level of student loyalty Helgesen and Nettet (2007). According to Purgailis and Zaksa (2012) research report, student perceive quality is closely related to factors such as quality education, training materials, labor market skills, which ultimately affects the loyalty of students in higher education institutions. Research shows that students' satisfaction reflects the quality of services provided by educational institutions (Gruber et al., 2010).

According to H. Alves and Raposo (2010), the development of positive perceived quality image in students mind leads to satisfaction. When evaluating the quality of service, in particular, the three key aspects in a typical institutions context are academic, administrative and facilities Sultan and Wong (2013). Letcher and Neves (2010) in HEi, reported that the level at which are student satisfied boost self-reliance that would help them develop skills and acquire knowledge. This pays great attention to the quality of higher education services to improve educational standards. Service quality is a dominant element of student assessment (Palli & Mamilla, 2012), because higher education skills are considered to be the most developed, educated and potentially constructed.

As indicated by Johnston and Clark (2005) satisfaction is the aftereffect of how customers evaluate its services grounded with earlier effect of how they perceive service delivery. However, characterised satisfaction which can range from delight satisfaction to extreme dissatisfaction, can be referred to as the result of customers assessment of perceived service quality (J. A. Douglas et al., 2015). Dabholkar (2015) proposed that when good complex work are comprehensively done by the institutions administrative and educational systems students' satisfaction increases. Therefore, student are satisfied if service attributes are performed well.

### **2.7.2.1 *International Student expectation***

Existing debates in marketing presents a conflicting position as to how to consider the expectation of customers. (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, 1994) noted that the disagreement is based on how to describe customer perception. The authors noted that while some studies used customer perception as customer expectation, other used it as a basis to understand customers judgement. Irrespective of this fact, studies have shown that customers perception are influenced by their needs, the information they receive through recommendation of other users, and promotional materials that they are exposed to (Zeithaml et al. (1990). However, the decision as to whether a rate the service used as high or low is premised on customers preconceived expectation and the experience they have from the service (Berry and Parasuraman (2004).

Understanding what a customer expects is a precursor for effective service delivery (Zeithaml et al. (1990). It is therefore important for service providers to improve their knowledge of customer satisfaction. However, within academic contexts, there is a disregard for this principle as academics focus more on criteria provided by government for university's performance (F. Abdullah, 2006a, 2006b; Cronin & Taylor, 1992, 1994; Oldfield & Baron, 2000). A reason for this is that academics are of the opinion that customer perception of expectations and experiences are affected by bias (Hawkins & Hastie, 1990). People on the other hand, are affected by what they experience and if it is good they do not remembebr their preconcieved expectations (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). This position was echoed by Hill (1995) as students perceptions evolve overtime throughout their academic journey.

### **2.7.2.2 *International Student perception***

There are various ways to define Perceptions. Joshi and Chadha (2016) definition of customer perception highlited certain process that occurs before customers decide on a service. Perceptions

are influenced by the information that customers are exposed to and as well as the environmental context. Customer perceptions are also influenced by the service. Service quality as a major key for sustainable competitive advantage leads to creating customer satisfaction and is connected to customer perception. Service quality perception has recently taken centre stage among researchers and scholars irrespective of the fact that it had always been considered important (Sharabi, 2013).

When it comes to the higher education services sector, it turned out to be offering comparable types of services worldwide, corresponding quickly to their competitor's innovations. However, in higher education student's perception may differ in quality of service, because student evaluates service based on their expectation which is dynamic. Thus Universities have realized the importance of focusing and monitoring services quality as an approach to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and to develop their basic skills and business performance (Cheng Lim & Tang, 2000; Kunst & Lemmink, 2000).

### **Link between student expectation and perception of service quality in Higher Education**

Having a total understanding of student perception is essential as it forms the underpinning for higher education strategic formation (Voss, Gruber, & Szmigin, 2007). However, how closely customer expectation meets customer perception is based on service quality delivery (Fisk, Grove, & John, 2008). Therefore, service quality as an indicator of how acceptable the service was delivered and how closely it exceeds student expectations can be regarded as perceived service quality (F. Abdullah, 2006a, 2006b). For this reason, if higher education institutions want to achieve high levels of student service quality expectations, they need to have a firm understanding of their student perception and provide an outstanding level of service quality which will satisfy their students and make the institution successful (F. Abdullah, 2006b; Narangajavana & Hu, 2008).

Furthermore, (Darlaston-Jones et al., 2003), highlighted that student has pre-formed perception and the level of service they expect to receive while coming to their institutions about the department

ands school (Tan & Kek, 2004).showing apprication of students expectation and perceaption by higher education institution and the key linkage between them, has steered institutions to effectively focus more on providing superior service quality and satisfy their student body(F. Abdullah, 2006b; Nadiri et al., 2009a).

### ***2.8 Dimension of service quality in higher education***

The development and analysis of service quality models in the context of higher education has been attempted by several studies using (Parasuraman et al., 1988) SERVQUAL scale. This scale consists of 5 dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and a total of 44 items, measuring expectations and performance. However, (Cuthbert, 1996b) critic that ‘the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument is not an appropriate dimension for measuring service quality in higher education’ because of its low reliability score and the different factor structure. The focus shifted entirely to perceptions with the development of SERVPERF which considered performance as an attitudinal measurement, suggesting that expectation needs to be excluded as it is redundant (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Both SERVQUAL and SERVPERF have been used generally in various range of industries.

In 1997, LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997) conducted Another study that examined the dimensions of service quality and how business students perceived their relative importance to service quality. The study developed 7 dimensions: personnel/faculty, contact personnel/administration, responsiveness, reputation, curriculum, physical evidence and access to facilities with a 38-item instrument. However, this study major limitation and critic was that it focused on a small student population of a small university business school (LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1997; Rodríguez-González & Segarra, 2016).

In 2006, the HEdPERF which was proposed by (F. Abdullah, 2006a, 2006b) measures perceived service quality in the Malaysian higher education sector using 5 dimensions: academic aspects, non-academic aspects, program issues, reputation and access. This scale used a sample of 409 students and 41 items from six Malaysian universities for its validation and development.

In addition, Mahapatra and Khan (2007) proposed EDUQUAL as a measurement scale in a technical education system. the scale consists of 5 dimensions: learning outcome, responsiveness, physical facilities, personality development and academics with 28 items. P. Sultan and H. Wong (2010) developed “The Performance-based Higher Education” for evaluating the perceived service quality of Japanese universities. The scale includes 8 dimensions i.e, dependability, effectiveness, capability, efficiency, competencies, assurance, unusual situation management and semester-syllabus with a 67-item instrument.

Furthermore, Tahar (2008) in another study postulated 5 dimensions namely issues of the program, ability to create career opportunities, cost/time, physical aspects and location which students uses to define quality. Other service quality frame work similar to HEdPERF are shown in table 2



Other service quality frameworks similar to HEdPERF: Table 2

Scale	Year	Author	Location	Measure	Data collection	Result
EduQUAL	2007	Mahapatra and Khan (2007)	India	1 Learning outcomes 2 Responsiveness 3 Physical Facilities 4 Personality Development 5 Academics	Data was collected from student, alumni, and parents of student and recruiters of different technical institution using 43 questionnaires items.	The scale used 28 item questionnaires to measure 5 dimensions of Technical Education system service quality with 1024 respondent.
SQM-HEI	2011	Senthilkumar and Arulraj (2011)	India	1 Teaching methodology 2 Environmental change in the study factor 3 Disciplinary action	Data was collected from 1600 final year student in India	The scale contains 30 questionnaires, to measure 5 dimensions.

				4 Placement 5 Quality of education		
Hedqual	2014	Anil and Icli (2014)	Turkey	1. Academic quality 2. Administrative service quality 3. Supportive service quality 4. Library service quality 5. Quality of providing career opportunities	Data was collected from 317 MBA student from 5 state-owned and 6 foundation university from Turkey	The scale contains 26 items, under 5 factors, used to measure MBA student service quality. Following a
HiEduQual	2014	S Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2014)	India	1 Teaching 2 Administrative service 3 Academic facilities 4 Campus Infrastructure 5 Support services	Data was collected from senior student from seven universities. Total sample 2565.	The scale contains 23 items, under 6 SQ dimensions used to measure student perceived service

				6 Internationalization		quality, student satisfaction, student loyalty and student motivation on senior student of seven universities in Andhra Pradesh in India
TEdPERF	2016	Rodríguez-González and Segarra (2016)	Mexico	1 Academic aspect 2 Non-academic aspect 3 Reputation	Data was collected from 204 undergraduate student from tertiary institution	The scale contains first 21 questionnaires, which was finally reduced to 18 to measure 3 dimension adopted from HedPERf.

Univqua	2017	Marimon, Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent, Llach, and Excellence (2017)	Spain	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. curriculum- which refers to the quality of the learning methods and the coordination efforts throughout the whole study period</li> <li>2. Skills development- referring to the skills that students might acquire and Services and facilities of the university.</li> </ol>	Used a single quantitative method, with a survey of 2557 undergraduate students	The scale measured 20 item using a PCA to explore the dimension of the 20 items of perceive quality, followed by an explanatory analysis to how perceived quality of service delivered impacts student satisfaction.
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All these studies according to (Angell, Heffernan, & Megicks, 2008; Sultan & Wong, 2013) suggested that different dimensions of service quality in higher education varies and has been used widely. To date existing service quality in higher education studies have been dominated by comparative analysis aimed at suggesting the scale that best characterises service quality and its efficacy (F. Abdullah, 2006b; Brochado, 2009), Both authors came to the conclusion that the HEdPERF scale reported more reliability and validity. Some of These dimensions adopted the HedPERF in developing their tools, the HedPerf which comprehensively captured the specific dimension of service quality in assessing complete student experience, incorporates all crucial components that facilitate student study obligation. The HedPERf have successfully been applied across the globe and proved to be a robust instrument and for these reasons, was adopted for this study. There is however a lack of attention on the applicability of the scale and how it influences students' satisfaction. This study will contribute to the debate by examining how service quality influences international students' perception of satisfaction. Additionally, this scale is yet to be operationalised in the UK context and as such this study charts new waters in the service quality literature within the UK context.

## ***2.9 Summary***

This chapter explains in-dept explanations of the meaning of the key concepts in the study. The rationale for this chapter is to provide some background that would allow for proper understanding of the concepts of service quality and how it is related to students' perception of satisfaction. Following from this background, chapter three is designed to provide literature that focusing on the UK and the University of Huddersfield.

## **Chapter Three: The UK Higher Education Context**

### ***3.1 The Field of study***

Considering the new development, competitive demand and challenges in HEi, this research aims to investigate how international students' perception are influenced by the recent developments in higher education institutions and focusses mainly on such institutions in the United Kingdom. The study also highlights some of the implications that changes in HEis have both for students and the institutions. The background of study for this research is discussed in this chapter. This is done to provide better understanding into the issues that HE sectors are facing and to provide show the significance of the research. Topical issues that are important in general to the research is presented here. The main focus of this chapter is to provide some background to HE sector in the UK; other literatures that are critical to this study are discussed in chapters 2 and 4. Hence, this chapter will first introduce, the global trends in HE, the purpose and role of HEi in the development of HE in England. Specifically, the structure is presented as follows; first, discussions highlights how HE has evolved from an elitist perspective to an institution that provides education to the masses. Also, the chapters discusses how administrators in HE are developing the sector business-wise. Additionally, considerations are given to better understand the part that students play as key stakeholders, customers and partners in the HE sector. In the latter part of the chapter, discussions cover funding issues and other regulatory challenges that plague HE. The regulatory issues discussed include the assessment of quality and description of fees structure.

### ***3.2 Global Trends in Higher Education***

The current global development in higher education cannot be analysed without understanding the global context of political, economic and societal of higher education and its events. The increased integration of the world economy through globalization and global

knowledge has directly impacted higher education in various forms (P. G Altbach, 2016). In the current economic environment education is a means of improving the overall welfare, economic advancement, social development and democratic accountability of the community. It enables information and cultural principals to be brought together and shared. It is therefore an inclusive society, an equal partnership and a cornerstone of culture (P. Altbach, 2015b). Inclusively, the prerequisite for individual development and well-being is the open access to all levels of education. However in the economic debate, highlighting the importance of knowledge-based economy, the definition of education is increasingly contested and education has come to be understood only as an economic factor, rather than a tool for social development (ESU, 2011). Hence the dramatic reformation in education with student trans boundary, which have grown twice the rate of all student , has seem education as a commodity that is universally traded (P. Altbach, 2015b).

Remarkably, the effects of globalisation have made the world increasingly independent and universal and have caused an increase in demand of higher education, imposed by highly knowledge intensive information and innovation. Inclusively student high demand for quality education service and cross-cultural exposure (P. G Altbach, 2016; British Council, 2012). In part, this is because within the knowledege economy, it is becoming increasingly important for for people to get quality university training in oder to secure well paying jobs (Carnoy, 2005; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002). Furthermore, the payoff for a higher educated labour force has in some ways increased the need for people to get university education and thus, influencing government policies toward expaning the capacity of higher education institutions (Carnoy, 2005). While the demand for higher education has been driven by economic forces, it has also been influenced by socio-political developments and movements such as changes in demography, technology and macroeconomic policies (Carnoy, 2005; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002). It is imperative to note that education as a global industry has been estimated to worth £3 trillion every year and contributes

about 73 billion to UK economy (Kelly, McNicoll, & White, 2014a). This is as a result of how important and fundamental the improvement of learning outcome and student satisfaction has become in HEIs global economic competition (Kelly et al., 2014a). Globalisation has resulted in the exodus of students from countries with lower standards of education to those with higher standards and in most cases warranting the migrating students to pay so much more to the country with a higher standard of education. Thus, with globalisation, there is a likelihood for increased inequality of access to quality education (Carnoy, 2005).

Macro and Micro variable that impacts UK HE:

Nowadays, the changing market in the educational environment institutions affects its stakeholders because of its inability to effectively deliver and respond to their needs. In order to have a competitive advantage over others, a in-depth enquiry of all the institutions Internal and external issues is needed to explain the educational environmental context (Filip, 2012).

the education institutional environment is experiencing a deep change in institutional process, which consist of components that involves the destandardization of the embedded principles and policy guiding the institution and plays vital roles to the corresponding methodization of new principles which affects its consumers. These factors can be classified as Microenvironments and Macro environments (Filip, 2012).

The Micro Environments

The *Educational organization itself*. According to Filip (2012) within the higher education itself, the micro environment or the prospective of the organization market are define by the resources available and the definite way by which the resources are developed and used.

Certainly, the most important resource of any educational institution are customers, which differentiate it from other competitors and its image. These refers to primarily the higher education stakeholders (ie students, staff, administration, faculty and community), which are crucial in



creating the basic educational product such as delivering and creating knowledge. Also, due to the advancement of various external activities, online learning services in educational services modification, financial resources and Technological resources need to be examined when analysing the internal environment (Filip, 2012).

Generally, the quality of educational process and its features such as physical facilities and evidence, due to services intangibility are difficult for external public to evaluate but will have great impact on stakeholder perception (Filip, 2012). Therefore, the possibility of attracting and keeping customers also depends on the institution physical resources such as, the infrastructures and facilities used in the teaching activity because they form a tangibility of the educational fundamental product, assist in the service delivery process and have significant contribution to educational institution (Filip, 2012).

**Customer;** The basics prerequisite and requirements concerning the learning content and their qualification in relation to specific skill advancement of professional capabilities should be the focal theme of an educational institution marketing policy design (Filip, 2012). As the customers are the main characters of organizational microenvironment of an educational institution, which can be classified into the society, students, employers, and parents with diverse requirements among themselves which the institution have to meet (Filip, 2012).

**Suppliers** as an actor of educational microenvironment consist of all providers of educational resources both tangible and material according to the institutions specific needs to facilitate service delivery (Filip, 2012). these includes suppliers of office equipment, furniture, service providers, labor forces and books. Other actors that are classified under education microenvironment are educational ministries, institution accreditation team, inspectorates, research institutions, mass-media and alumni associations (Filip, 2012).

### **The Macroenvironment**

The educational macroenvironment consist of all external factors that such as demographic, economic, cultural, political and technological environment which creates innumerable prospects and threats for the organization.

**Demographic environment** which includes people that settled in the education institution geographical area which affects and are significant in defining the quantitative potential demand of the educational local force and services (Filip, 2012). These includes the significant demographic decrease of student (both international and local student) which have become a serious threat to the educational system.

**Economic environment:** the UK higher education economic environment, has been affected by the ongoing student and stakeholders demand for quality, increased competition, internationalization of higher education and reduction of higher education funding. These have posed a major menace on the UK gross domestic product, inflation rate and affects the financial motivation of teachers and the quality of educational development (Filip, 2012).

**The cultural environment** which defines individual behavior, perception and expectation, refers to the norms, systems values, beliefs and traditions that governance a society (Filip, 2012). The UK educational system which welcomes student from different countries and regions has an important role in the development of people values, which depends on their level of knowledge.

**Political environment:** the recent changing government policies and laws which control and limits the UK higher education political environment such as student immigration cut, Brexit etc. has posed a threat on the educational system (Filip, 2012).

**Technological environment:** the 21 centuries in the UK higher education has seen new and rapid dynamic technological transformation. The higher education technological environment has revolutionized the process of teaching and learning in the institution. This is evident through information infrastructure investments, new education equipment or access to several sources of studying(Filip, 2012).

The environment on which an educational institution operates is potentially an important driver of economic growth. This consist of the long-term benefits for individuals and the econmomy as a whole (Filip, 2012). The risk of Increases internal crisis, falling behind competition and survival problem will arise if institutions ignores or resist these significant changes and occurrence in the education environment.

the central importance to policy-makers today is how to Quantify the economic benefits of education and educational reform on growth (Filip, 2012). While education can affect growth via both its local and global impacts in the economy, the existence and debate of how to prerpere future student for skills needed in a fast evolving global and society economy is of importance to policy and raises a number of challenges and possibilities (Filip, 2012).

### ***3.3 The basis of higher education***

There has been a serious argument over the purpose of higher education in the past 20 years. HE in general can be associated to the provision of education by institution of higher learning such as (universities, colleges, and technological institutions) for students who have satisfyingly finished high school or secondary education. According to Shapiro, HE is a place where the preservation, re-evaluation and transmission of knowledge, learning, skills and traditions transpires(Shapiro, 2009). In agreement with the above point of view, Cremin (1974) defines education as a continuous stimulation and transmission of knowledge, approach, value, expertise and awareness, which is predetermined and methodical. Nevertheless, Barnett (2004) argues that the real meaning of education is not the basis; It is often misleadingly criticized that there is no exact description of university education today and that HE is equalized with HEis. Education According to Gibb (2015) has three different purposes; it is the basis of a vital preparation for our culture and adult life and the channel of a good economy. Presenting a country's support to social justice needs to be backed up with the actions that put education as its core focus.

### ***3.3.1 Education and culture***

Educational intent is far vaster than gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to provide good work to people, but it is closely related to culture (Gibb, 2015). Education in a comprehensive logic adds a fundamental value to the characteristics of culture foundation and a civilized society; hence, culture is not a part of education alone, but education itself because of its important role in shaping student learning and teaching strategies (Chuenjitwongsa, Bullock, & Oliver, 2016; Gibb, 2015). The basis of a society educational system which affects the culture of that society simultaneously by shaping and influencing the thinking and behaviour of the individual depends on the society cultural pattern.

### ***3.3.2 Education and Adult life preparation***

One of the main purposes of educating people is to prepare them for the challenges that adult life brings. In preparation for adult life, people need to be exposed to education in a broader sense that supports character and values learned in environments that will enable them to succeed. Therefore, educators need to make sure that the people enrolled for studies are equipped with the right characters to live pragmatically and have a sense of moral purpose to succeed and live as members of a society (Gibb, 2015). Education in preparation to adult life includes development of good citizens, personal growth and self-improvement and developing social and moral responsibilities (Adler & Isaacs, 1983). Therefore by creating avenues for students to acquire important values such as determination, optimism and curiosity in student life, higher education institutions can significantly contribute towards their student success (Gibb, 2015).

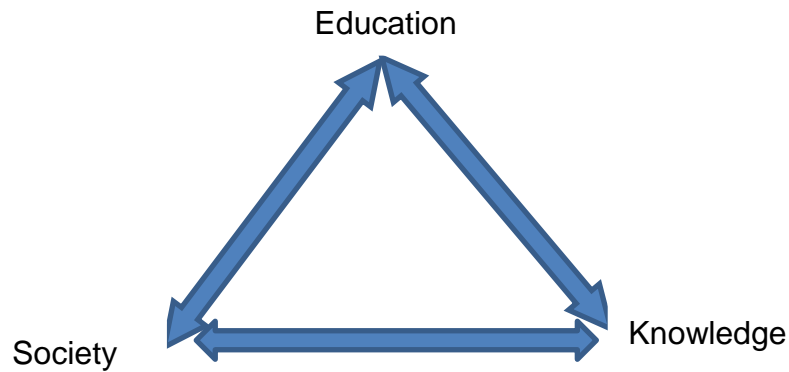
### ***3.3.3 Education and Economy***

The economic role of education is a matter of growing interest in UK and internationally which is also attracting extensive attention. Education is considered as one of the most significant human capital investments which plays a vital role in the process of economic growth (Benos & Zotou, 2014). Higher education has at least three potential channels through which to affect economic development. These include: the provision of skills and capabilities that will make students productive, stimulating innovation through the creation of new knowledge and facilitating the use of world class technologies (Holmes, 2013). The objectives of HE are to improve the economy and society as a whole by providing the enabling environment for creation of new knowledge. Knowledge created has the potential of shaping the value systems of the society (Gould, 2003). Emerging technologies in teaching has seen shift in the focus of education from influencing society's values to improving the economic outcomes of the student and the society (J. Browne, 2010). This is evidenced in the adopting of new strategies such as online education, private HE providers and partnerships between HE institutions on a global level.

This is further echoed by the explanation of the Higher Education Funding Council of England Hefce (2009a) on the goals of HE. (Hefce, 2009b) noted that the major goals of education are: shaping and developing personal prospective relevant to professional and personal skills; to advance facts and understanding both through education and research; and add to the economic realisation and general efficiency. In the so called knowledge based society or knowledge based economy, which is affected by various issues such as worldwide integration, innovation and rapidly technological advancement, The main reason is the development and sharing of knowledge (often for the purpose of economic benefit of some kind). Consistent with this viewpoint, Barnett (2004) associate knowledge, education and society in a coherent triangle of forces, emphasising

the role of HEi in the transfer and production of knowledge and the importance of knowledge for the success and development of society. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1-Triangulation of knowledge, education and society**



The following section which briefly summarizes the development of the HE from elites to mass education will expedite understanding of the HE sectors in the UK current position. Furthermore, the understanding of the ancient past to know how and why current changes are being made and how they affect students and HEIs is very important because it will emphasize the most important breakthrough during this period.

### **3.4 UK Educational field**

The United Kingdom higher education sector, which came into existence in mid-1980s has been a global leader, second only to the United States of America, in providing education services and learning to citizens of other countries have seen a clear efficiency report of commitment relating to higher education (Philip G Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; British Council, 2012). The United Kingdom has been chosen because it has several long-established universities and is a leading country in the field of higher education. This is further evidenced in the working paper of the Department for Education provided in 1985. In the paper, the UK government

suggested that core focus of the higher education should be to seek ways to contribute to the development of the economy (DES, 1985). The way that was suggested in the paper was for institutions to raise their academic standards. As a result, the higher education sector in UK has witnessed a lot of changes in recent years. The country now has well over 163 universities, that have been estimated to generate over £100m in revenue per year (Universities, 2013). Since 2003-2004 to 2011-12, the total number of student accepted into higher education institution has increased by almost 300,000 or 13.5 % (Ulrichsen, 2014). Corresponding to the growth, the higher education sector in the United Kingdom is undergoing a period of restructuring in recent time (Universitiesuk, 2013). This restructuring is driven by factors such as political, economic, technology advancement and population (UniversitiesUK, 2011a). This is perhaps because the sector is currently contributing hugely to its national treasury, and imparting on the employment market, and have earned the nation international recognition in education service delivery. The evidence is manifested in the number of international student hosted by universities annually. However, the rate of change which fluctuated within the period: 2009–10 saw the largest year-on-year increase, of 4.1%, and 2011–12 was the only year that the total student population decreased in this period, by 0.2 % (Universitiesuk, 2013).

In support of this, the report by (UniversitiesUK, 2011a, 2011b) examined the contributions of higher education sector to the UK economy in the year 2011-12. The report emphasizes universities crucial impact on the economy in terms of productivity, contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the creation of jobs and investment abroad. It also estimated its economic contribution in other sectors of the economy through its social and domestic spending by its staff, domestic customer and international customers. The report finds that in 2011–12, the UK higher education sector, which generated over £73 billion of output up to 24% from £59 billion in 2009 and also contributed 2.8% of UK GDP in 2011 – up from 2.3% in 2007. Furthermore it

generates 2.7% of all UK employment and 757,268 full-time-equivalent jobs (Universitiesuk, 2013). Hence the higher education sector has seen a great deal of changes. The sector is undergoing constant re-adaptation and has been the subject of several restructuring, largely related to political, social and economic recession (Department for Business & Skills, 2011). The higher education sector is faced with the risk of students marginalization, as cost of tuition has risen. Also, the sector is facing challenges as result of the decline in the amount of funds that HE institutions get from the government which have led to a lot of service quality lapses among higher education institution.

### ***3.4.1 The HE Marketization***

Currently, the management and the activity of HEIs are like other establishments in the (global) market context which are overseen and marketed like other businesses, and are contingent on their stakeholders and customers (students) because today universities are often seen as business (Gould, 2003; Hemsley-Brown, Lowrie, & Chapleo, 2010; Masschelein, Simons, Bröckling, & Pongratz, 2006; Neary & Winn, 2009; O'Neill & Palmer, 2004; G. Williams, 2003; Willmott, 2003). Common expressions like institutional universities, commercialization, marketing or institutionalization have entered the terms of institutes of higher learning, and with institutions of higher education having a substantial impact on their society, for example through community investment and the creation of knowledge affecting national economies, HE institutions are considered as business partners. With improved life opportunities, HEi has an economic value to society for graduates, generally by developing top-level skills and innovations for the economy, and by developing knowledge based on research output. furthermore, HEi does not only increase the economy of an individual country by providing skill and information, HEIs as institutional enterprises also support employment opportunities and the local economy through the use of local structures and facilities such as housing, transport, eateries and foreign



investments. For this reason, universities have a phenomenal and substantial economic impact on their surroundings and societies.

The report of the universityuk (2014) carried out found that in 2011/2012 the measure of the UK HE sector, contributes over £39.9 billion equivalent to 2.8% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides about 2.7% or 757,268 full-time jobs of all the Uk job equivalent. The economic output of the HE sector produced about £ 73.1 billion and at the same time it was estimated that the HE sectors generated export earnings of £ 10.7 billion. Of this, 3.8 billion pounds were spent on fees and accommodation related to international students, and 3.4 billion pounds were spent on off-campus services and products (Kelly, McNicoll, & White, 2014b). Looking at these figures, the evidence of the commercialization of the HE sector in England and the economic health importance of both national and international students in the country where given. In light of this economic benefits, supporting the national and international student's involvement in the HEi should be of immense benefit to the economy, community and government as a whole. This evolvement of the HEi into the business world has been reflected in the use of different business strategies such as quality management, marketing, accounting policies, cost effectiveness, fight and focus on more customers and public relation orientation in the education environment.

Therefore, as transition into the business world has become an important element in the HEi, it can be contended that students can possibly be referred to as customers of HEi businesses (G. Williams, 2003). Understanding the exigent situation of students and HEi customer-student paradigm (considering student as customer) in the present state of the institution, allows for the existence of a versatile student interrelationship between the institutions and can inform efforts in improving that relationship not only during enrolment but throughout the entire student period in the university (Bay & Daniel, 2001). Hence, an understanding of the role of students in the Uk educational sector today is exceptionally paramount as this study is stimulated by crucial debate

that presently, students always change their expectations in connection to their perception of the quality of services due to tuition fees increase and related changes and challenges facing the HEi. Thus, the role of student will be explored further in the following subsections.

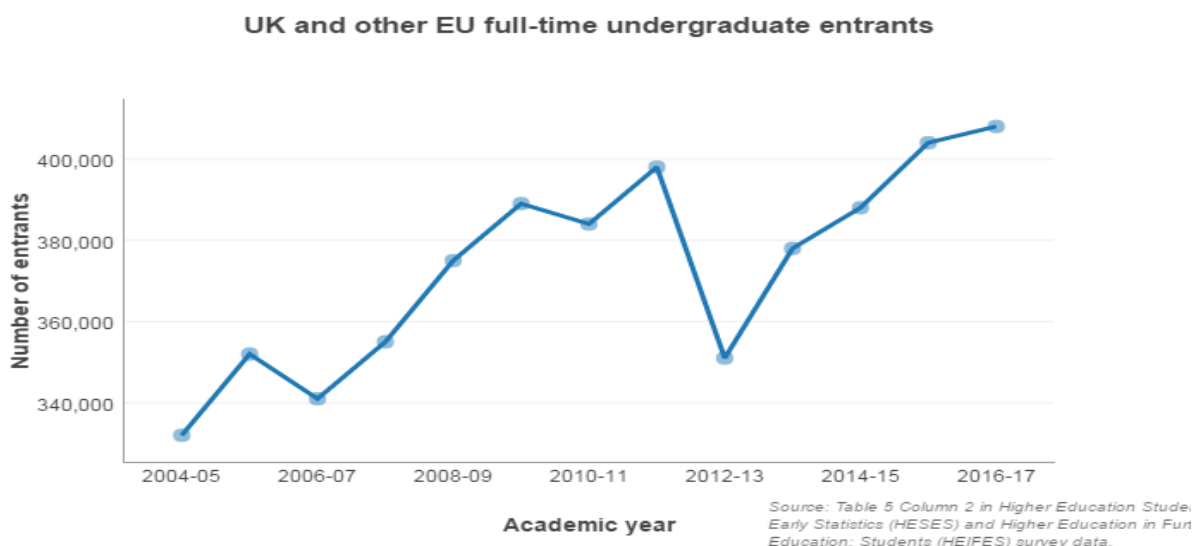
### ***3.4.2 Students as HEIs Stakeholders, Customers and Partners***

The shift to view student as partners and customers, universities as entrepreneur universities and to reinforce high standard quality assessment was reported by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), chaired by sir A Jarratt (Lysons & Hatherly, 1998; Vice-Chancellors, Universities, & Jarratt, 1985). Furthermore, due to the shift in power of the Education Acts in 1988, from the Local Education Authorities (LEA) to the government, and the elimination of the ‘binary divide’ between universities and polytechnics in 1992, the fiscal business exchange between institution of higher education, government and community has drastically changed. The implementation of some of the Browne Review proposals in 2012, goes ahead to exploit commercialisation of the HE sector by increaisng the tuition fee cap to £9,000 for UG students from the UK and EU. Thus, in addition to the diversification and marketization of HE, the challenge facing the the sector is students’ increased perception of consumerism and a ‘value for money’ attitude (M. Morgan, 2012). This has resulted in the increased in literature that considers students as customers and the universities as organisationa that provide services (Acevedo, 2011; Gruber et al., 2010; Gruber et al., 2012; Hill, 1995; Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009; Naidoo\* & Jamieson, 2005; Neary & Winn, 2009; Ramsden, 2008; G. Williams, 2003; Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014). This has been further influenced by the increase in the tuition fees that students pay for HE studies. A resultant effect of the increased tuition fees in the UK is that the increased student customer orientation may have a positive impatc on the HE sector. This is because it may embolden students to make demands on their universities that are geared toward the improvement of the quality of services that they receive. Such improvements may include changes to curriculum

that is focussed on skills sets that are relevant to the modern economy, influencing university to seek sources of alternative funding and improvement of service delivery (McCulloch, 2009; Naidoo\* & Jamieson, 2005; Ramsden, 2008).

Some existing studies, for example, (McCulloch, 2009; McMillan & Cheney, 1996) have criticised the notion that students are customers. The authors argue here that instead of customers, students are partners of their universities (McCulloch, 2009). In line with this stream of thoughts, this research considers students as partners within the HE sector and in addition as customers that patronise the university for services that they offer. This partnership/ customer focus is further supported by the notion that although students are recipients of the services offered in their universities, they play an active role in the way knowledge is delivered through their interaction with the process and creation of knowledge (J. Douglas, Douglas, & Barnes, 2006; J. Douglas, McClelland, & Davies, 2008; Gruber et al., 2010; Neary & Winn, 2009). Drawing from the above perspective, this study argues that the marketization of HE sector in UK has resulted in a change in HEi focus which primarily was on making sure that students were developed as critical learners, to wanting to satisfy students' need of getting a degree. Consequently, Molesworth et al. (2009) criticise the British government for "applying capitalist economic principles to HE, competition amongst producers to reduce costs and to 'improve' their offerings based on consumer demand" (p. 278). HE sector has continued to see an increase in the number of students irrespective of the challenges facing the sector. Student enrolment increased from about 400,000 in the 1960s to over 2.5 million by 2012 (Universitiesuk, 2013). Yearly enrolment was at all time high in 2012 with almost 700,000 (UCAS, 2014). This was due to the planned tuition increase scheduled to take effect in 2013. As anticipated, following the increase in tuition from £3,375 in 2011/12 to up to £9,000 in 2012/13, enrolment dropped by almost 50,000 students in 2013 (P. Bolton, 2014; UCAS, 2014). See Figure 2.

Figure 2-UK/EU Full-time UG entrants (2002/03 – 2013/14)



(Hefce, 2014, 2016)

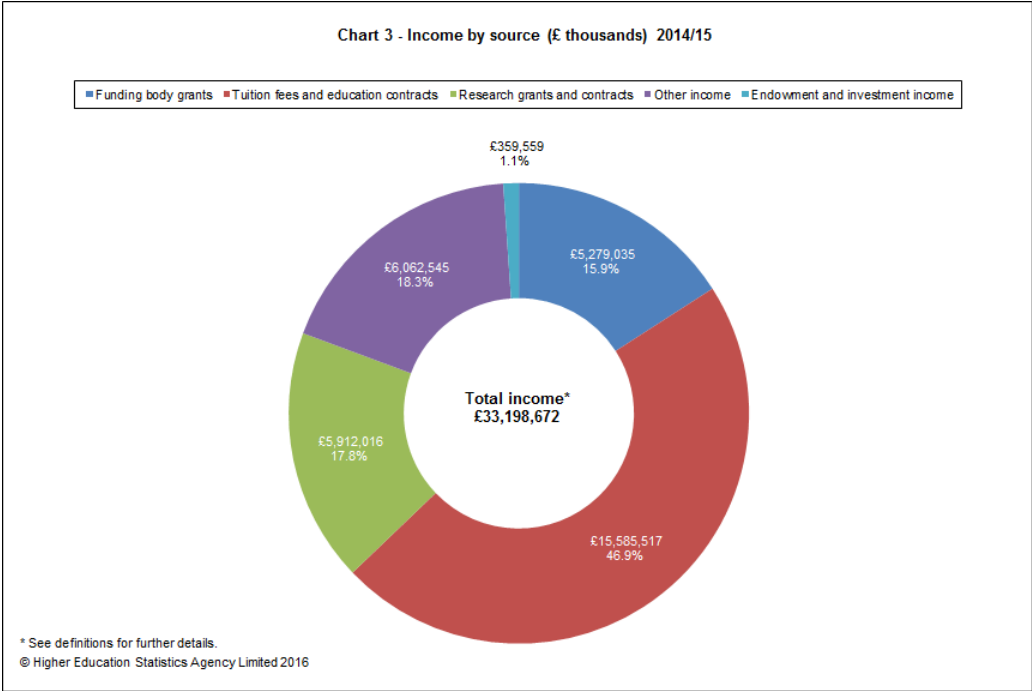
In summary, the effect of the education policy that introduced an increase in HE fees, universities are now seeking ways to secure funding to develop the HE sector. This has also led to a competitive HE market where HEIs compete to get new student otherwise regarded as customers. The next section presents discussions on some of the funding challenges facing HEIs.

### 3.4.3 HE Funding in England

Following the introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992, changes were made to the way universities and polytechnics were funded. One of such changes was the formation of Hefce. With Hefce, both universities and polytechnics funding were now sourced from one body. This increased the level of competition among universities and polytechnics, with the situation getting worse because of the establishment of new universities. Hefce allocated funds to university using different models: in the first instance, universities were funded for their research

and performance, secondly, based on the number of students in enrolment and lastly, based on the funds they generate from tuition fee. In addition to government source, universities received more funding for their research activities from research councils and non-governmental organisations. In order to access these funds, there has been an increased competition among universities and leading to the classification of some universities as teaching-focused and research-focused institutions. The composition of income generated by different universities from different sources for the 2014/15 academic year is shown on Figure 3. The two most important are tuition fees and education contract which represent 46.9 per cent out of the total income of £33.198 billion, and 18.3 per cent from other income related to teaching and research. 15.9% per cent relates to funding body grants. And increase of 8.0 per cent of total income was recorded from 2013/14 to 2014/15, which indicate increase across all sources except for funding body grants which decreased by 13.3%. The largest increase was observed in research grants and contracts (16.4%). See Figure 3.

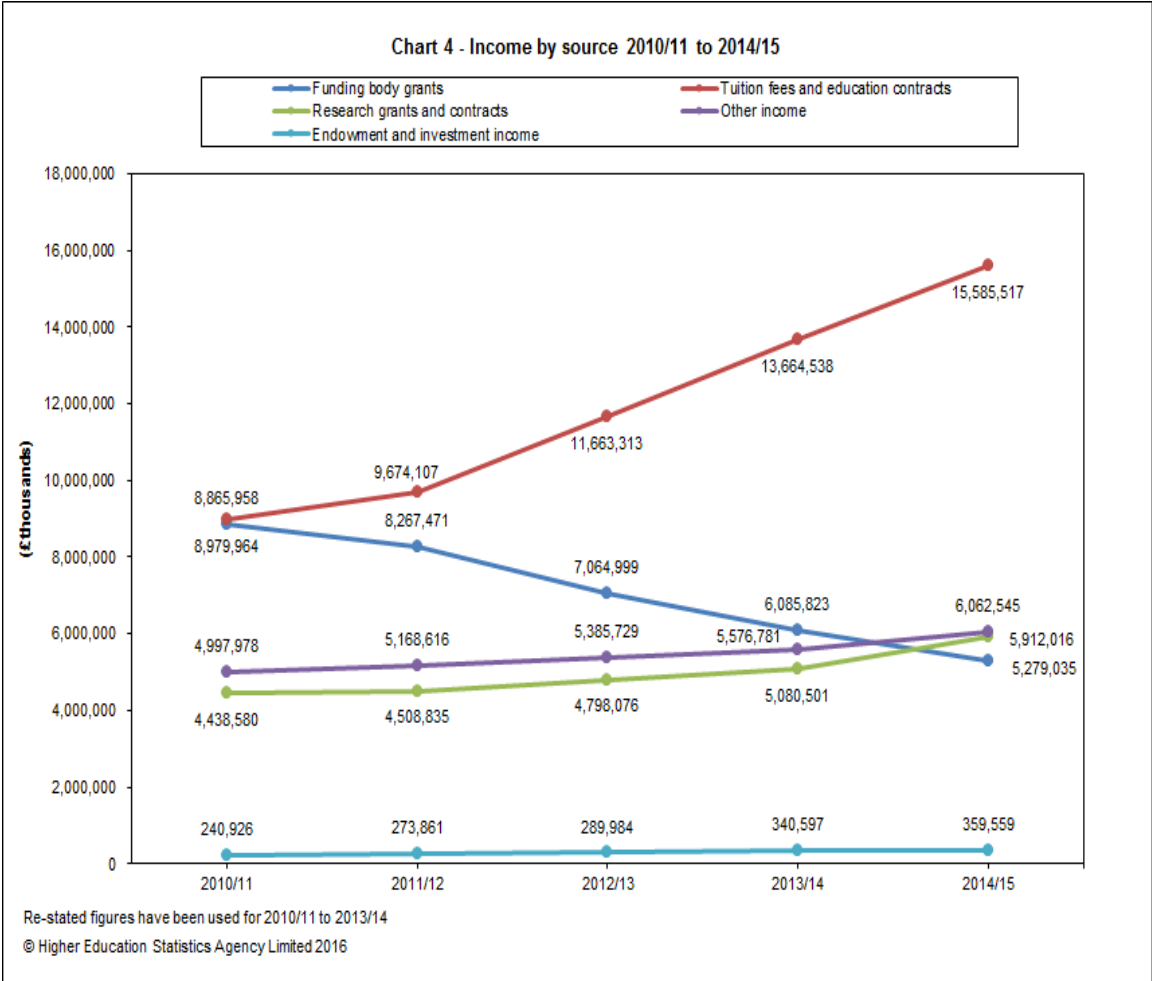
**Figure 3-Income of UK HEiS by source 2014/15**



Source: (HESA, 2016)

Figure 4 shows the source of income from 2010/11 to 2014/15, which indicate a decreased in Funding body grants due to the change in the funding regime, every year since 2010/11, but all other sources of income have increased.

**Figure 4-Income of UK HEiS by source 2010/11 to 2014/15**



(HESA, 2016)

**The financial impact of international student on the UK HE institution**

The financial gains from high tuition fee forms the core increase in the UK market share (BIS 2013a, DfES 2003, DTZ 2011). Income from tuition also add to the financial benefit that the UK economy gets from international students. In addition to tuition fees, international students also spend on accommodation and other maintenance expenses, all of which contributes to the GDP of

the UK (British Council, 2003; Conlon et al., 2011). Furthermore, international student's income is worth over £ 6 billion a year and forms a major export for the UK economy.

Furthermore, according to Universityuk (2017), in 2015-2016 funds generated from international student formed over 12.8% of UK income sector. Table 3 highlighted ten international most spending countries in the UK.

Table 3

Countries	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
China	91,215	89,540	87,895
Malaysia	17,405	17,060	16,635
USA	17,115	16,865	16,485
India	16,745	18,320	19,750
Hong Kong	16,745	16,215	14,725
Nigeria	16,100	17,920	18,020
Saudi Arabia	8,570	8,595	9,060
Singapore	7,540	7,295	6,790
Thailand	6,095	6,240	6,340
Canada	5,980	6,075	6,350

Source Universityuk (2017)

Additional, international student not only contribute through tuition fee but by other Non-tuition fee spending, which also represent a substantial element of the total UK GDP economy. Table 4 according to HEPI (2018) shows effect of non-fee revenue in 2015/16 group - by level of study and domicile.

Table 4

Level of study	Impact of non-fee expenditures per student, £			Total impact of non-fee expenditures, £bn.		
	EU	Non-EU	Average	EU	Non-EU	Total
Other undergraduate	£60,000	£54,000	£55,000	£0.21bn	£0.65bn	£0.86bn
Undergraduate degree	£61,000	£65,000	£64,000	£1.75bn	£3.68bn	£5.43bn
Other postgraduate	£69,000	£65,000	£67,000	£0.20bn	£0.28bn	£0.48bn
Higher degree (taught)	£35,000	£30,000	£31,000	£0.68bn	£2.67bn	£3.36bn
Higher degree (research)	£84,000	£79,000	£81,000	£0.39bn	£0.80bn	£1.20bn
Average	£55,000	£47,000	£49,000			
Total				£3.24bn	£8.09bn	£11.33bn

Source: HEPI (2018)

Interestingly, the wealth of benefit through tuition and Non-tuition fees that international student brings to UK together with knowledge sharing and cultural integration and awareness, cannot be neglected (Chandler, 2018; Matthews, 2013). Therefore one major concern to higher education institutions is the proposal to downturn or reduce the number of international student through immigration cut and control (Universityuk, 2017).

#### **3.4.4 Funding: Quality Evaluation, Performance, and Research**

The White Paper labelled “Students at the Heart of the System” (Department for Business & Skills, 2011; Thompson & Bekhradnia, 2011) pointed out the role of universities to include providing students with high quality experience across the various areas (academic and non-academic services) (M. Morgan, 2012). This has resulted in the focus of assessment criteria mainly on matters related to academics (teaching and research). Those who were performed better in line with the assessment criteria received more funds (F. Abdullah, 2006b; Harvey, 2005). To enable easy assessment across the universities, standardisation criteria were introduced (Harvey,



2005). Over time, some organisations have been set up to assess the quality of universities. These include University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1986, Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), established in 1992 and National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE, 1997). Some recommendations that were made to improve quality in universities were the improvement of staff development opportunities and governance structure of universities (NCIHE, 1997).

The activities of these assessment bodies have received criticisms from universities because the criteria was not clear to them, the criteria was not uniform across board, the perception of bias and the lack of effective feedback mechanism (Green, 1995; Harvey, 2005; Watson, 2009). Echoing the criticism, studies show that the evaluating bodies did not measure and examine university's performance and thus, offered little option for improvement (Becket & Brookes, 2008; Green, 1995). In addition, universities criticised the proliferation of different assessment bodies for complicating the assessment criteria; there were overlapping processes and contradictory conceptualisation of what quality of service is (Harvey, 2005). Following the increased number of students in universities, universities have continued to seek for ways to improve the experience of students. One of such is the inclusion of student surveys; these include the National Student Survey (NSS) for UG students; and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) for PG students. Information gathered from these surveys are useful to universities as they are able to ascertain what students' expectations were at different levels of study.

#### ***3.4.5 Student Numbers and Funding***

Several platforms have been made available to students in order to enable them decide on school choice. Organisations such as The Complete University Guide, The Sunday Times Good University Guide or the Guardian's University Guide) and student experience surveys such as the

NSS, PRES and PTES have provided resources to enable students decide on which university or college to attend. Information provided by these sources have the potential of influencing students' choice and thus, indirectly affect the funding potential of universities. This has made several universities continue to find ways of improving their students experience and to publish same on the sites where student visit for information on students experience and university quality of service. The surveys that universities commission are in some ways linked to their bid for increased funding as positive survey results have the potential of increasing students' enrolment and this will ultimately increase their revenue. Studies have show that this practice may adversely affect a university's quality as their focus may be on mass education and increased revenue rather improving the quality of their services (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001), because their funding is linke to enrolment and not performance.

A new approach to funding HEi was introduced in 2012. A 'core -and margin' model was introduced to replace the contract model. This new model considered the courses that students were enrolled to study as a core requirement for a university's fundings. Also, universities were allowed to enroll students by a margin of 5% over their quota without sactions that affected their funds; especially when the over enrolment were for student studying courses that were as shortage occupation (Jongbloed & Vossensteyn, 2001).

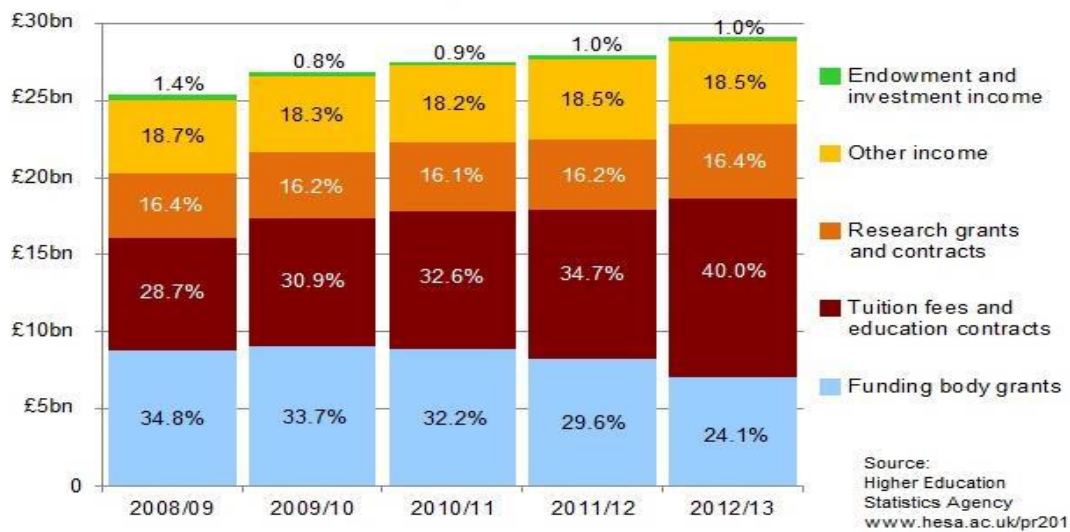
The introduction of the core-and-margin model resulted in a reduction of the grant that HEi received by 10% as some of the schools were not providing degrees for core subject areas such as medicine, chemistry, physics, engineering, mathematics, and modern foreign languages (Hefce, 2012). Also included in the new model was the requirement for universities to enrol more students should they consider them to be high achievers (students with AAB or ABB grades or higher qualifications). In view of the recent shortfall in the funding available for HEi, they are

increasingly seeking ways to increase their enrolment as a way to generate adequate funding for their activities. More consideration is given to issues of student funding in the next sub-section.

### ***3.4.6 Student Funding and Fees***

Following the reduction in the funds that government provides for HEIs, a new tuition fee system has been introduced for home/EU students. This new system allows universities to charge up to £9,000 a year per student. With this increase, HEIs are now relying more on both domestic students and international students for their funding (Hefce, 2012). To be able to charge £9,000, HEIs are required to meet the criteria of providing opportunities of students to have equal access irrespective of their background. An office of Fair Access was set up in the department for education to monitor the implementation. HEIs were required to meet certain criteria set by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) for them to charge the increased fee of £9,000. These include making sure that students had equal access irrespective of their background. As a consequence of increase in tuition fees, the amount of funds received from UK/EU students have increased, while funds from research agencies and government has decreased. See Figure 5.

**Figure 5-Income OF UK HEIs by source 2008/09 TO 2012/13.**



(HESA., 2014)

### **3.5 Brief on the University of Huddersfield.**

The aim of this study is to examine how the quality of services offered by the University of Huddersfield has influenced the perception of satisfaction of international students enrolled in the school. The aim is to generalise the findings to determine how the current state of HEIs in UK are affecting international students' perception. The university of Huddersfield business school (hereafter also simply referred to as HUD) is site where data collection for the phases of research in conducted. The University of Huddersfield has a vision to be an internationally renowned institution that is able to inspire innovatiion by improving students learning experience. The university also strives to pioneer research and professional services that will improve its image as a high quality center of learning. Was rooted back to 1825 when it was called Huddersfield scientific and mechanical institution, in 1841 it became the young men's mental improvement society and in 1884, it became the technical school and mechanic institution. In 1896 was called Huddersfield technical college, in 1947 was Huddersfield technical teachers college. 1958,

Huddersfield college of technology. In 1963 was called Oasler College of education and was renamed Huddersfield polytechnic in 1970 and in 1992 was granted university designation and degree awarding powers, with two other annexes in Barnsley and Oldham which was open in 2005.

The university has earned and achieve a notable award such as: Queen's Anniversary Prize (2015), New University of the Year (Educate North 2015), Four-star University (QS awards 2015), University of the Year (Times Higher Education 2013), Entrepreneurial University of the Year (Times Higher Education 2012), Queen's Award for Enterprise (International Trade 2013), Guardian Education Awards (Inspiring Leader 2013). With over 19620 students and the highest population from the university business and management school, which was established in built in 2010, with the most ecological building on a £17m structure on campus. The business school with over 130 academic staff and about 3600 students has provided a modern, professional environment with its cutting-edge facility in which to learn and develop. The researcher chose the HUD business school for the following reasons. First, the choice of HUD Business School provided the researcher with easy access to participants. Second, HUD business school is a well-established school in the university and have been highly affected by the recent government changes to HEI in England. The university depends more on students' enrolment for its fees and also recieves grants from funding organisations. .

Third, the focus of the first research phase will be on issues relating to the quality of services that students receive as well as academic issues– HUD Business School which was located after the student central building and the main library at the university has five academic departments namely accounting and finance, law. People management and organisation, logistics, operation and hospitality management, strategy, marketing and economic but was recently in 2016 reduced to four namely; Accounting, Finance and Economics, Management, Logistics, Operations, Hospitality and Marketing, Law and has promise to therefore, deliver an inspirational learning

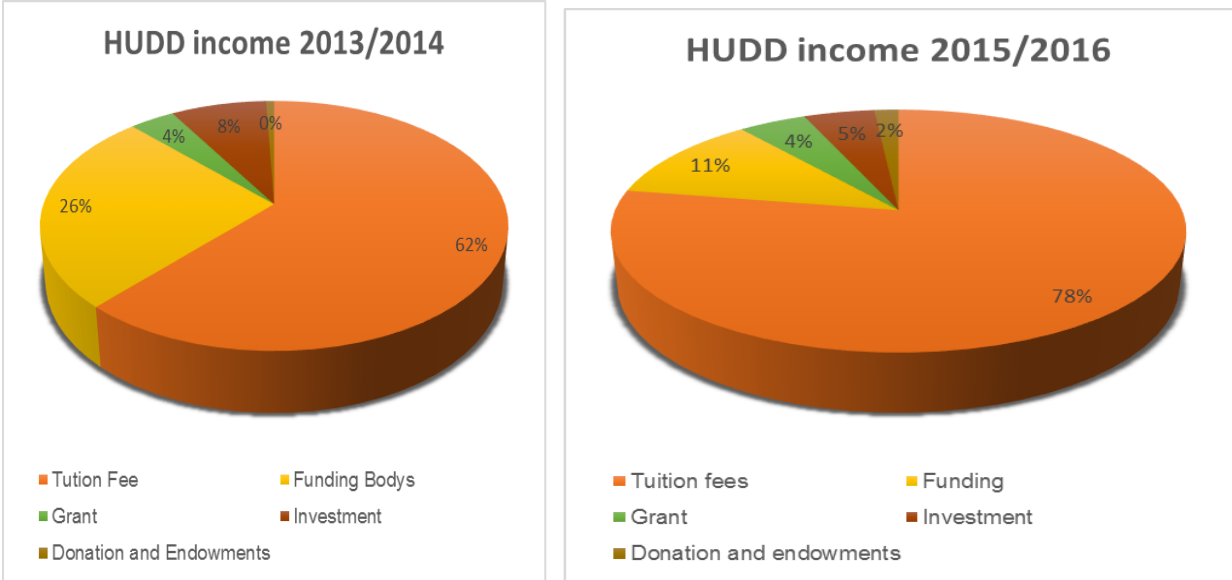
experience, provides a wide array of services and undertake pioneering research with a practical emphasis and real-world application. HUD prides it self as an institution that focusses on the quality of services that students are offered. Thus, this attested the researchers rational for evaluating the influence of service quality on student satisfaction on all aspect of services provided by the business school. Fourth, in the second part of the research, it foccuses on the topic of how the recent development in the HE sector has influence student perception in relation to service quality and to what extent and what are the effects for HEIs. This will be done through in-depth face to face interview with students, describing their service quality experience in HUD business school. Also the HUD business school being renowned for advising student in area of employment such as skills for interviews, CVs preparation and cover letters writing and supporting student placement with both national and international employers through the placement office, and also encouraging student by offering dedicated service to help student improve in their academic skill, referencing, academic writing and research skill through their learning development group (LDG) has won various awards for their outstanding performances.

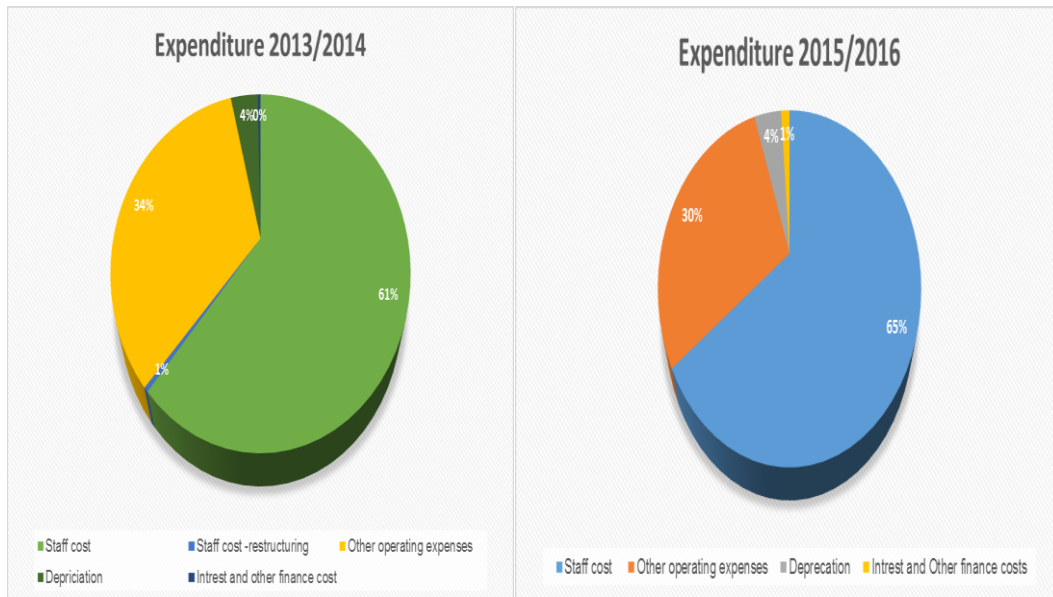
To further position the school within the UK HE landscape, the development and current state of the school will be outlined briefly. The university of Huddersfield mission statement is to provide an accessible and inspiring learning experience, undertake leading research and professional practices by fully involving employers and community, with a vision to be an inspirational, innovative, internationally renowned university (Huddersfield, 2016). University of Huddersfield as mentioned above has acquired both national and international recognitions with a strategic plan to ensure that their students achieve the highest academic and professional standards; inspire their students to enjoy an elite University experience; Inspiring graduates of entrepreneurial entrepreneurship; increasing the number of their active staff and the quality of their output; increase the quality and quality of their postgraduate research student community;

Increasing the quality and range of their external research, enterprise and innovation income; becoming an increasingly popular preference zone for world-class international students; Ensure that international students have an inspiring world-class student experience and Being an outstanding international university.

To achieve this and improve and strengthen their employees, financial sustainability and Efficiency and effectiveness. The university measures their performance measured against a set of Key Performance Indicators Supported by specific targets (Huddersfield, 2016). In 2013/2014, university of Huddersfield income totaled £141.2m and in 2015/2016, the university income totaled £159.8M of which more than 50 per cent stemmed from tuition fee. Likewise total expenditure for 2013/2014 were £119.7m and in 2015/2016 were £136m. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6-Income 2013-2016**

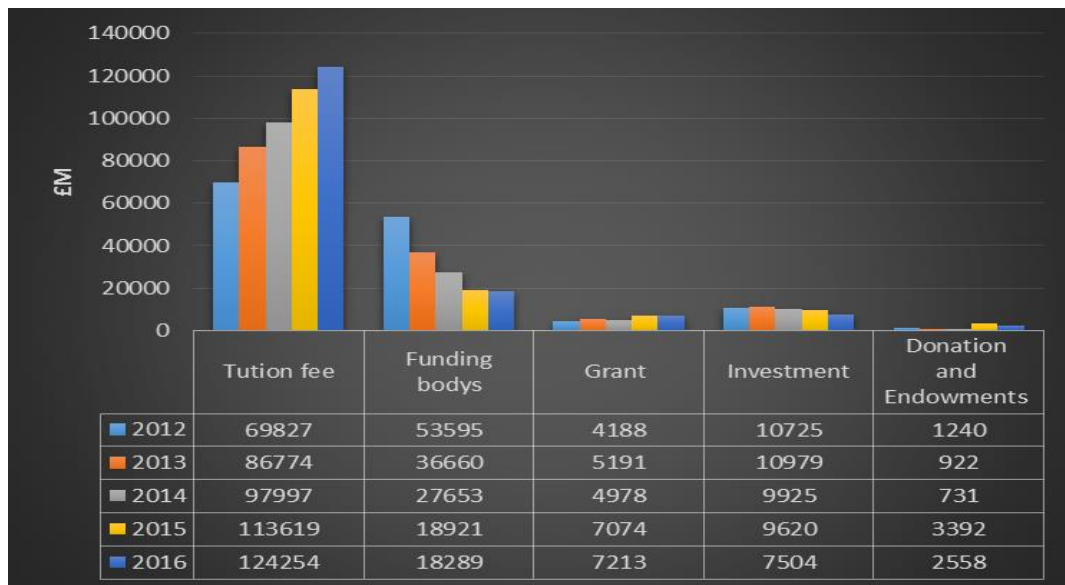




The trends revenue generation at the HUD is similar to those of HEIs as discussed earlier. Figure 7 shows that while tuition fee income increased from £141.2 million in 2013/2014 to £159.8 million in 2015/16, within the same periods, the university's funding from other sources reduced. Furthermore, in 2013/14 the school reported revenues from tuition fee to be £97.9 million, and this increased to £124.2 million in 2015/16. On the other hand, funds from grants reduced from £27.6 million in 2013/14 to £18.2 million in 2015/16. This goes to show that HUD has been significantly affected by the new government policy on HEI funding.



**Figure 7-University of Huddersfield income 2012-2016.**



### ***3.5.1 Contribution of international students to the University of Huddersfield.***

As earlier pointed out international student contributes immensely to the UK economy and to the higher education setting. The university of huddersfield, has benefited from its internationally student in many areas;

#### ***3.5.1.1 Rich cultural diversity***

The high population of international student in the university contributes to the rich cultural diversity ; this can be seen through the high number of student and cultural exchange such as the international week in the university. This is one of the reasons why the university prides it self as a global community. Having students from different countries is important for students because it helps them connect and collaborate with others and learn something new.

#### ***3.5.1.2 Financial contribution***

Financially, international students' tuition fee which ranges from £ 9000 to £ 13,000 contributes immensely to the growth and development of the university; further to this, the enrolment figures

of the university for the 2016/17 academic session show that international students account for a larger percentage of students with over 51% of international population. In view of the high tuition fee and population, it is evident that international student makes huge financial contribution to the school.

### ***3.5.1.3 Research and development***

In the area of research and development, international students contribute by engaging in research activities which in most cases use data outside the context of the UK. The outcome of the research is useful for comparing advances in the UK and other parts of the world, it also broadens the intellectual perspective of the university and enhances collaboration by providing information from different parts of the world.

### ***3.5.1.4 Recognition to the University***

Having a large population of international students in the university, has brought recognition to the university such as the 2013 “Queens’s Award for Enterprise”(International Trade 2013).

### ***3.5.1.5 University Brand Strategy***

The university prides itself as a global destination of choice for international students and students in general. This is evidenced by the large number of international students in the institution. This large population of students helps to enhance the marketing strategic formulation of the university.

## ***3.6 Summary***

This chapter has provided some background to the HE context in the UK. From the background of the study, it could be deduced that this study is important and has potentials to make contributions calling for the attention of universities to the issue of service quality from a students’

perspective. It is important to understand the issues of service quality from the perception of students as students' enrollment accounts for the larger amount of funds that universities generate. Thus, those universities that are perceived to have better service quality may have higher students. In the later part of the chapter, the focus on international students are justified by the large number of enrollment that HUD has in the 2017 year as well as the increased revenue that international students bring to the university. Building on this background of the study chapter, the next chapter will provide literature that develops this study's theoretical framework.

## **Chapter Four: Development of theoretical framework**

This chapter presents the underlining rationale that explains how service quality affects international students' perception of satisfaction. Assimilation-contrast theory is used to achieve this. Discussions here is presented in two parts; first, the chapter explains the assimilation-contrast theory and secondly, it links the theory to the relationship between service quality and international students' satisfaction by suggesting some hypotheses.

### ***4.1 Assimilation-contract theory***

Assimilation contracts theory is use to predict effect of disparities between and product performance of customer satisfaction (Rolph E. Anderson, 1973). This theory combines (1)assimilation(cognitive dissonance) which states that individual has cognitive knowledge about their beliefs, past experience, environment and attitude and use this information to make judgement about a product; the theory further explains that when there is a strong cognitive dissonance, customers tend to reduce dissonance by changing the cognitive element. (2) Contrast theory which states that customer's reaches higher satisfaction due to slight understatement of product qualities in advertising (Rolph E. Anderson, 1973).

In order to reconcile the difference between assimilation theory and contrast theory, the assimilation-contrast theory was introduced to bridge the gap; suggesting that the performance of product inconsistent from the expectation of one customer leads to a change of product result in perceptions toward their expectation (assimilation effect), while huge discrepancy between expectations and perception (actual product performance) be likely to be overstated (contrast effect)(Rolph E. Anderson, 1973).

ACT believes that customers operates within a range where they accept, reject or are neutral towards a product performance (Rolph E. Anderson, 1973).

Therefore in accord with assimilation-contrast theory, Universities need to understand students' expectation if they must be able to provide services that are superior. Ong (2013) noted a gap in literature that explains how students' perception of satisfaction is determined by the service quality of a university and suggested that assimilation-contrast theory be used for this purpose. Assimilation-contrast theory is key for understanding how students evaluate their expectation of the services that a university offers and their perception of satisfaction. The theory as suggested by (Rolph E Anderson, 1973) holds that students as customers of the university have zones in their perception where they either accept or reject the quality of service they receive from the school. These zones are further described as ranges in students' perception. The theory posits that disparity in expectation and actual services may be due to the influence of promotional material used by the international office for admissions during recruitment exercises. "Advertising messages ought to create expectations of the product as high as conceivable without making such degree of discrepancy between expectations and target performance that falls outside the customer's acknowledged scope" (Ong, 2013, p. 45). Within the range of acceptance and rejection of service quality, students compare the performance of the university by formation of expectation and disconfirmation expectation process. W. O. Bearden and Teel (1983) emphasised the importance of the disconfirmation process by noting that the process is used to investigate what a student expects of a university and what they actually received. It may therefore be suggested that disconfirmation process is the linkage between expectations and perceptions. This assimilation-contrast theory is also in line with the pragmatic approach. International students make predictions in advance following the admission engagements and this leads to formation of standards or expectation that they use to measure the performance of the University (W. O. Bearden & Teel, 1983). The pragmatic view is seen in the determination of the satisfaction. When student's perception performance matches expectation of students, student's perception falls within the range of neutrality feeling (Cadotte, Woodruff, & Jenkins, 1987). If they perceive the performance

of the school exceeds their expectation, they become satisfied. However, should they perceive that the performance of the school is below their expectation, they become dissatisfied (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996). Depending on each student, when performance is within the neutral and satisfied range, it is accepted, while it is rejected when it falls below the range.

#### ***4.2 Determining the suitability of HEdPERF scale as a tool for measuring service quality***

The HEdPERF (Higher Education PERFORMANCE only tools), is a scale developed to measure dimensions of service quality within the He sectors. This new measurement scale developed by (F. Abdullah, 2006a) incorporates both the academic part, and other service segments in the education environment. The emphasises on SQ strategic role and how it enhances attraction of new student, retention of existing student and competitiveness has been a focal point for higher education provider (P. Sultan & H. Wong, 2010). F. Abdullah (2006a) developed five scale used to measure SQ dimension in the higher education context called HEdPERF; this scale evaluates perceived satisfaction using academic aspect, Non-academic aspect, programme issues, Access and Reputation. As this scale has not been utilised in the UK to measure students' perception of service, but, has been used in other countries, the following hypothesis is there presented:

**Hypothesis 1.** HEdPERF scale is reliable tool for measuring international students' perceived service quality in the UK.

#### ***4.3 Service quality and international student (IS) perceived satisfaction***

##### ***4.3.1 Service quality in higher education***

The quality of service is not only the result but also the process, depending on the production and consumption of the service (Sureshchandar et al., 2002b). When the process is flawed and the

result favourable, service quality can still be measured low because quality corresponds to expected customer service specifications (Gitachari Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2005). Therefore, higher education service quality has become a crucial objective for most HEi (A. Alves & Vieira, 2006). Higher education institutions aim, is to provide high-quality service, as they have a great interest in contending for students and building quality management systems in reaction to the intricate, erratic situations enforced by the governments(Faganel & Macur, 2005; Zafiroopoulos & Vrana, 2008). Thus, that it is so hard to lure students, in light of the fact that the generational shift in students, are winding up more intuitive and selective as regards to their future having greater awareness and are more influence as consumers(Sigala & Baum, 2003; Sigala et al., 2006). Thus, Zafiroopoulos and Vrana (2008) Suggested that HEi needs a superior comprehension of the nature of service they offer, due to the recent high competition faced by universities. Oldfield and Baron (2000) appealed that HEi should address the issue of value, not just through the conventional ways of courses accreditation review/audit, through student's input surveys on the nature teaching and courses, but through assessing what students consider as essential/components in service quality.

#### **4.3.2      *Student satisfaction***

The concept of student satisfaction has predominantly increased in response to changing student partners of activities, revolutionized higher education system, and increased social trend and technological advancement (Benckendorff, Ruhanen, & Scott, 2009). Student satisfaction practice has long been established in UK government agency, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the higher education academy (HEA); And can be traced back to its creation in the institutional practices by series of quality assurance and enhancement policy initiatives relating to teaching and other activities / services provided by the institutions(Sabri, 2011). However, the management of student satisfaction as a set of linked activities within higher education institution is relatively new (Temple et al., 2014). According to the oxford dictionary, satisfaction is the

pleasure acquired from the realization of one's expectation or needs, furthermore (Sultan & Wong, 2012) defined satisfaction in higher education as the outcome of overall evaluation and the totality of student interaction and relationship with services provided by the institution. This satisfactions are not only affected by teaching and learning activities only but an entirety of all perceived value of the student interaction within the institution (Temple et al., 2014). The term student satisfaction varies based on the viewpoint and the parts played by various staff working in the institution (for example, academics may have completely different views on what forms student experience and the comparative significance of diverse elements from other professional, administrative and support staff). Therefore, Russell (2005) states that the satisfaction of student especially international student influences perceived service quality and affects profitability. From the above discussions, the following relationship among service quality and student satisfaction emerged:

**Hypothesis 2a.** International student satisfaction have significant effect with the perception of service quality

#### ***4.4 Dimension of HEdPERF service quality and international student (IS) perceived satisfaction***

In line with the theorisation of HEdPERF service quality scale, (F. Abdullah, 2005, 2006a) proposed that service quality consist of five dimensions. These include: non-academic aspects, academic aspects, reputation, access and programme issues. Academic aspects dimension is used to explain the aspects of university performance that is vital for students to meet their academic demands because of the activities of academics. The non-academic dimensions highlight the important role that non-academic staff members play in enabling students achieve their study goals. Reputations underscore the professional image that the university projects while access dimension explains how approachable members of staff of the university are. The last dimension



of service quality in the HEdPERF scale is programme issues. This focusses on the reputation of academic programmes and the flexible structure of the programme content. In line with the objective of determining the dominant dimensions of the HEdPERF service quality scales, this study examines how each dimension relates with students' satisfaction and hypothesises as follows:

**Hypothesis 2b.1:** Academic aspects of SQ are positively related to overall students' satisfaction

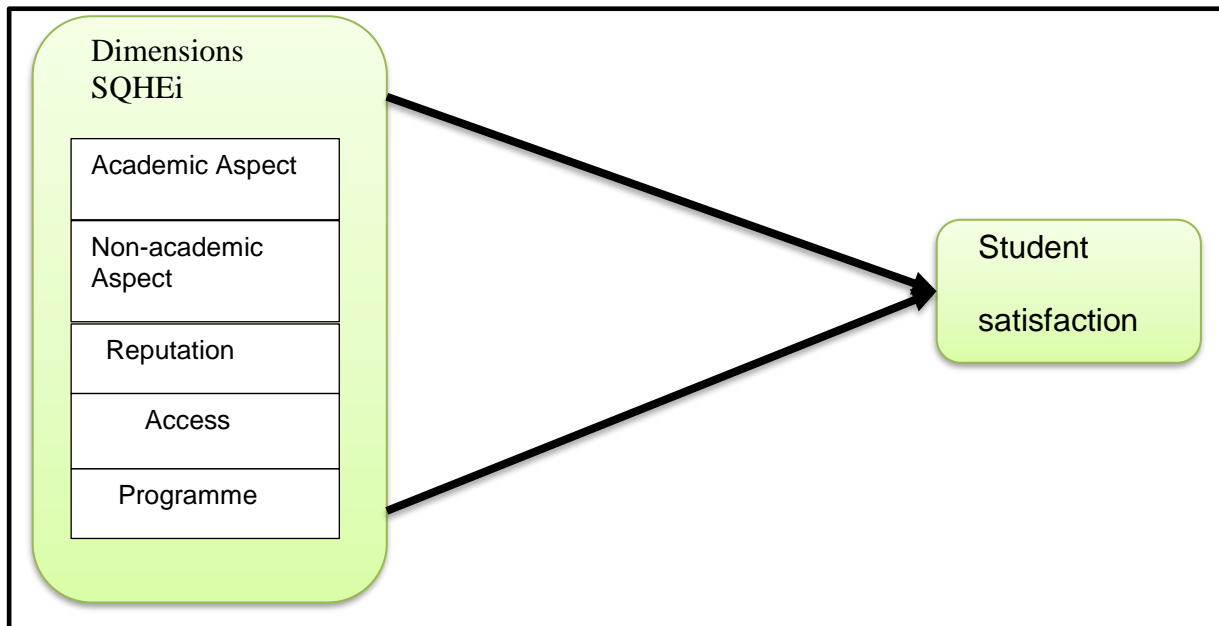
**Hypothesis 2b.2:** Non-academic Aspects of SQ are positively related to overall students' satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2b.3:** Reputation dimension of SQ are positively related to overall students' satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2b.4:** Access aspect of SQ is positively related to overall students' satisfaction

**Hypothesis 2b.5:** Programme issues dimension of SQ is positively related to overall students'

**Figure 8-Conceptual model/Framework**



From the conceptual framework, straight line regression is used to examine the extent to which HEdPERF scale predicts international students' perception on an individual dimension level and as a whole.

#### ***4.5 Summary***

This development of theoretical framework chapter has explained the basis upon which the hypothesis developed in this study is framed. Investigations on the first hypothesis contributes to existing literature by confirming whether or not the HEdPERF scale is reliable within the UK context. The theorisations here provide the foundation that supports the analysis and the discussions presented in the chapter 6. The next chapter presents the research methodology

## **Chapter Five: Research Methodology**

This chapter discusses the reasoning behind methodological choice of this study and presents its description. To do this, the researcher used a mixed methodology approach to examine how the current international student perception in HEi affects their satisfaction and uses a complex method to determine its effects in HEi. This chapter is divided into 5 sections; a summarised detail outline of the research paradigm, explaining the philosophical underpinnings and position of the researcher and analysing the research methodological and design approach adopted, also the study site and stages of data collection was explained. This is done in order to show how and why the research strategy was chosen.

### **5.1 *The Research Paradigm***

It is essential to describe the research approach taken in any academic study, it shows how the research aim, objectives, and questions guide the processes undertaken. A Paradigm in research is a framework intervention that instructs how a research should be accomplished based on the nature of people assumption (Collis & Hussey, 2014). It describes the world of knowledge of researchers providing the processes by which the investigation has to be completed (Weaver & Olson, 2006). This study adopts a pragmatic paradigm with a critical realism ontology (Guba and Lincoln (2005) and an improved objectivist epistemology and tentative mixed methodology. Researchers supporting pragmatic however see the traditional approach as a false dichotomy, arguing that in business research, the importance of the framework, meaning and clarification in relation to behaviour and activities was not accept by the traditional approach (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009b). Within the pragmatic paradigm, there are predetermined theories or framework that shape knowledge and truth, nor does it accept that

people can construct their own truth out of nothing (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Gray, 2013; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Rather pragmatism accepts that ideology is true when it works and generates realistic values for society, with the aim of searching for useful point of connection (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Reflecting on the main variables in this research, the link between service quality and international students' perception of service quality is examined to determine the dimensions of service quality that significantly predict students' perception of satisfaction. Although existing studies have shown that the five dimension of service quality positively influences students' perception of satisfaction, the pragmatic approach taken by this study allows for investigation of how international students perceive service quality in the University of Huddersfield. In general, researchers are urged to locate their research in a selected paradigm which are define by a distinct elements including ontology which refers to the nature of reality, epistemology which explains how we know, what we know and methodology which describes the process of carrying out research (Creswell, 2014; Gray, 2014; Saunders et al., 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009a).

### **5.1.1 *Ontology***

Ontologically pragmatist, beliefs that the use of metaphysic concepts such as truth and reality that cause endless and often useless debates should be avoided (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009a). Pragmatic as an anti-dualists, treats inter-subjectivity (the inquiry of subjectivism and objectivism) issues as a social life key element, attempting to produce knowledge that best represent reality; affirming that all individuals have their own unique world viewpoints (Feilzer, 2010; Mertens, 2014, p. 37). This abruptly differentiate the other paradigms, which maintains the possibilities of objective truth and nature of reality. Rather one defining features of pragmatism is that it emphasis on what difference it makes to act one way rather than another(Mertens, 2014). In view of this, seeing pragmatism an aspect of paradigm that treats research as a human experience that is based on the

beliefs that are more connect to actions (D. L. Morgan, 2014), the researcher aims to recognise some level of agreement about the importance of services quality from international student perspective and desire ends (Mertens, 2014). Also the researcher hope to cross-examine how student satisfaction opinions, agrees with service quality dimensions (through particular research question, philosophy, or phenomenon with the most effective method of research)(Feilzer, 2010).

### **5.1.2 Epistemology**

Similarly, in terms of epistemology, the pragmatic researcher believes that ideologies exist on a continuum, rather than two opposing poles (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009a). This implies that researcher do not position themselves as distance observers, rather researchers needs to take a place in the community, by interacting with the various members of the communities in order to gather intelligent action which can foster better understand and help evaluate the research problem (Hall, 2013; Mertens, 2014). Thus the researcher works with the community to determine the intelligent course of action and to determine the appropriate action to be implemented(Mertens, 2014). Therefore, in this research, the researcher will assume an objective/subjective viewpoint, interacting with the student in the education environment in order to understand and gain more insight about the factors that influence international student satisfaction from the student perspective. This will be very importance during data collection process, analysis and interpretation, in order to understand the research truth or paradox. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) in terms of methodology, which is seen as a combination of methods used to inquire strategically into a detailed situation, instead of methods of data gathering and data investigation techniques per se, pragmatism research is often categorised by mixed methods. These are explained further in the following section.

## **5.2 Research methodology**

Mixed method research has numerous typologies which has been proposed in the past by scholars (Creswell & Plano clark, 2011; John W. Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009a) and can be used by researchers as a guide for recognising and categorising the strategies which a researcher may adopt. These typologies helps researchers to impose orders, structures and simplify complex phenomena in research.

John W. Creswell and Creswell (2018) identified four basic mixed method research design drawn from different field of studies, which includes convergent parallel, exploratory sequential, explanatory sequential and embedded design.

The types of data collection, design description, data analysis, validity challenges and interpretation associated with this design will be discuss in this section.

This research applies the Explanatory sequential design, where the quantitative data provides the basis for collecting the qualitative data, in which the result of one phase of data collection emphasizes the collection of the next data research phase, with an intention to explain the quantitative result using qualitative data as a follow-up. This will be explained in more details with other mix method approach in next section of the research design.

### **Convergent mixed method design**

Description of design: This design consists of a single-phase approach in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected together and analysed separately and the results are merged to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other in the overall interpretation. Convergent design is the most familiar of the core and complex mixed method approaches. The aim of this approach is to collect different (both qualitative and quantitative data) but complementary data at same time for same topic, providing different types of information. This is use to best understand the research problem (John W. Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data collection: the convergent method collects data at same or parallel variables, constructs or concepts both for quantitative and qualitative. This concept argues that the research intent changes; one to gain an in-depth viewpoint and the other for population generalization.

Data analysis and integration: convergent MMR can be analysis by First analysing the qualitative data using coding data and collapsing the codes into broad themes. Secondly; analysing the quantitative database in terms of statistical result and then using the mixed method data analysis to integrate the two databases.

Interpretation: the understanding of convergent approach is usually written out in the discussion sector of the study, which includes a compared discussion of the result from two databases and note the convergence or divergence between the two sources of information, which does not always produce a clear situation between convergent or divergent.

Validity: using the convergent approach, validity should on each database should be based on establishing quantitative construct validity and qualitative triangulation validity. Which brings potential threats such as unequal sample size, the use of different variables on both side which yield incomparable and difficult to merge findings.

#### Explanatory sequential mixed method design:

This approach consist of a two-step data collection design in which the researcher first collects a quantitative data, analysis the result and then uses the result to plan or form the basis of designing the qualitative data collection which is the second step. This approach is important and has been applied to this research because the quantitative inform the type of participant that will be purposefully targeted for the second qualitative phase (John W. Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This approach overall intents to use the qualitative data/ result in explaining in-depth the initial quantitative result. This study follows the explanatory sequential method by collecting quantitative

survey data of 498 international student at the first phase, followed by 10 qualitative structured interviews.

Data is collected in explanatory design in two phase, firstly using an initial robust quantitative sampling and a purposeful sampling at the second stage. The qualitative data collection of this approach builds directly on the quantitative findings/result obtained during the first stage.

According to Creswell (2014) and John W. Creswell and Creswell (2018), the aim of using a purposeful qualitative approach is specifically to fellow-up and explore in more comprehensive depth, the result of the quantitative phase which is the key strength of the design. When analysing an explanatory sequential method, the data sets is admitted separately. For example, in this research the quantitative results using the HEdPERF inform the qualitative stage by determine the focus, sampling approach and the question to be covered. Using the explanatory sequential approach, the interpretation follows first quantitative result reporting, secondly qualitative result reporting and then thirdly, an interpretation of how the qualitative finding aided in explaining the quantitative result. The main aim of this approach is to provide more depth, more insight into the quantitative result using the qualitative result.

Similarly the use of explanatory sequential mixed method in this research will enhance the interpretation of HEdPERF data, i.e. using the qualitative data to collect more comprehensive evidence to enhance the statistical analysis of service quality dimension (HEdPERF), which will help provide the most complete analysis of the study problem on how service quality influences international student satisfaction (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007; Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006; Creswell & Plano clark, 2011).

The advantages of this approach comprises a forthrightness and chances for the examination of the quantitative results in more detail. This design is particularly suitable when unanticipated results arise from a quantitative study (Morse 1991). The limitations of this design are lengthy time and feasibility of resources to collect and analyse both types of data.



### Exploratory sequential mixed method:

The exploratory MMR is a three-phase approach in which the researcher, starts with an exploration of qualitative data and analysis, followed by a quantitative phase to build on the result of the initial qualitative database (John W. Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design intends to explore a sample first followed by a quantitative phase tailored to meet the needs of the individuals being studied. The three-phase procedure of the exploratory MMR follows the exploratory, the instrument development and administering and testing the instrument feature to a sample population.

The data collection in this strategy occurs in two points, the initial qualitative data collection and the test of the quantitative feature, the qualitative data analysis usually yield quotes, codes and themes, then a measurement of the instrument through quantitative measure. However to achieve a good procedure, requires drawing both sample from the same population, but make sure that the individual for both samples are not same.

The data analysis and integration of the exploratory MMR, follows analysing the two database separately and uses the findings of the qualitative analysis to build into a feature that can be quantitatively analysed. This approach can be integrated by using the qualitative findings or result to inform the design of the quantitative phase such as the development a new variables or a new measurement instrument.

The interpretation of exploratory sequential is argued in the discussion section where the first qualitative findings, the development or new feature design is reported, followed by the result of the quantitative test in the final study, this is intended to determine if the qualitative themes can be generalized to the quantitative sample.

### Other advanced mix method research

In mix method, after identifying and working with the three core widely used designs, three other designs which incorporates the element of the convergent, explanatory and exploratory approaches emerge. This designs fits complex projects, which means they involves more steps procedures that

are embodied in the three core designs which involves incorporating more steps and the core designs into the research processes. These includes

Embedded mixed method: this designs nests one or more form of data within a larger design (quantitative or both). It can be used when investigators test an intervention or program in an applied setting.

Transformative mixed method: this designs includes elements of convergent, explanatory or exploratory sequential approaches within framework to help a marginalized group. The transformative approach uses social justice theory as framework, which frames many aspects of the study such as research problem, the question, data collection, analysis, interpretation and the call for action. This approach is mainly used for feminist, racial, ethnic group or disabled individual research.

Multiphase mixed methods: this research approach consist of where a researcher sometime incorporates several mixed methods projects in a longitudinal study with a focus on a common objective for the multiple projects (Creswell, 2014). This is popular mostly in the evaluation and implementation stage of a project in which multiple phases of the project stretch over time.

Considering the research aims, statement problems, desired information and data collection, the research methodology of this research will follow the explanatory sequential design. The design uses a mixed method combination (quantitative and qualitative) with quantitative method implemented first to collect analyse and interpret data. Furthermore, according to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) mixed method data, alongside triangulation leaves more room for development (when the result of one method develops or help to develop/inform the use of other methods) (Collins et al., 2006). Expansion (looking to advance the scale and scope of research using different methods for different research components)(Collins et al., 2006). Initiation (the discovery of inconsonance and flaws that always lead to the rethink/reframing of research question), complementarity (looking for clarification,

elaboration, illustration, enhancement, and explanation of one method result from the other method)(Molina-Azorin, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

Furthermore, following Collins et al. (2006) RAP (rationale and purpose of mixed method research), the rationale for using a mixed method in this research is to optimize the HEdPERF scale by increasing the number of its participant and the research sphere which will enrich its participant through mixing of qualitative and quantitative techniques; whereby the qualitative approach will be used to enrich the sample and analysis of the quantitative study. Similarly the use of mixed method in this research will enhance the interpretation of HEdPERF data, i.e. using the qualitative data to collect more comprehensive evidence to enhance the statistical analysis of service quality dimension (HEdPERF), which will help provide the most complete analysis of the study problem on how service quality influences international student satisfaction (Collins et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2006; Creswell & Plano clark, 2011). This is one of the fundamental reasons why pragmatism is often dominated by a mixed method approach because it allows researchers to find the best technics to solve the research problem.

On the premise of the pragmatics paradigm, in this study, the mixed method approach utilized questionnaires and interviews; this will be examined in the methodology associated with each research sections. As early stated, a mixed method design has both methodology and method, as a methodology, it involves collecting, analysing and mixing two different approaches from the initial philosophical assumption, to the drawing of conclusion in the study procedure and strategy. It also focuses on gathering, investigating and analysing various Data in a single research report or other studies which offers the researcher the chance to utilize the most-proper systems to discover solutions to the study inquires. Numerous scientists, including Creswell (2014), Bryman and Bell (2015), Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) and Mertens (2014), have recognised the complementary role qualitative and quantitative methods, plays in each research phase and stress that for researchers to

achieve the research objectives, the most suitable method(s) have to be chosen. The specific value of this approach is aims towards solving or understanding the international student social complex on educational setting problem (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009b)

Furthermore, acknowledging at what point the different methods are used is very important; because generally, mixed data collection can be designs parallel (concurrent) or in a sequential manner(Mertens, 2014). Generally, the mixed method data collection as adopted in many social and management research studied, proceeds in either parallel (simultaneous Quan + Qual, in which two types of data are collected and analysed at same time) or sequentially(chronologically Quan—Qual, where one type of data provides a basis for collecting another type of data)(Armitage & Campus, 2007; Cameron, 2009). Which can be classified according to Creswell and Plano clark (2011) into four major different type. See Table 5.

**Table 5-Types of mixed method**

<b>Design types</b>	<b>Triangulation design</b>	<b>Embedded design</b>	<b>Explanatory</b>	<b>Exploratory design</b>
<b>Timing</b>	Concurrent: quantitative and qualitative same time	Concurrent or sequential	Sequential: Quantitative followed by qualitative	Sequential: qualitative followed by Quantitative
<b>Mixing</b>	Merge data during analysis or interpretation	Embed one type of data within a larger design using the other type of data	Connect the data between the two phases	Connect the data between the two phases
<b>Weighting/ Notation</b>	QUAN + QUAL and usually equal	QUAN(qual) Or QUAL(quan) unequal	QUAN _ qual and usually quantitative	QUAL-quan and ususally qualitative

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 85)

This research applies the Explanatory sequential design, where the quantitative data provides the basis for collecting the qualitative data, in which the result of one phase of data collection emphasizes the collection of the next data research phase, with an intention to explain the quantitative result using qualitative data as a follow-up. This will be explained in more details in next section of the research design.

### **5.3 Research Design**

Research design according (Yin, 2014), can be thought as a Logical sequence linking experimental data on initial research question to study and ultimately to conclusions. Furthermore (Saunders et al., 2016) defines it as a framework for collecting and analysing data to answer the research question and meet the objectives of the research. It has the function of providing reason, justification/ classification for choice of data source, procedure, and analysis techniques. Also ensuring the quality of the data collected by following the guidelines related to the design of selected research. Aforementioned, as a pragmatic approach, the research aims to search for a specific problem facing the international student the public/society and its solution (the influence of service quality on international student satisfaction and its consequential challenges), rather than a theory. Furthermore, the research as an explanatory sequential mixed method, is not grounded on one particular theory or support a defined predetermined theory; rather the research, underpinning is to explain a reserch issue. Therefore, the research will adopt an abductive approach, which is the method of developing an explanatory theory, and begins with the observation of a surprising facts; working out an argument to know how things could occur (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016; Van Maanen, Sørensen, & Mitchell, 2007). The abductive approach in effect combines inductive (generalization from specific instances) and deductive(inference from logical premises), moving back and forth (Suddaby, 2006).

Applying the abductive, the researcher explores the phenomenon, identifying and explaining themes and patterns regarding international student satisfaction and dissatisfaction and to identify

them within a testable range by further data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This will then be integrated into an overall conceptual framework, thereby building up a theory on how service quality influenced student satisfaction. This will be tested using evidence provided by the collected data. This implies that the information of data are gathered without a pre-defined existence of a theory or a hypothesis. The next chapter analyses will confirm gaps in each study area and explain adequate knowledge in all the interesting phenomenon of concern. It is still expected of procedures and principles in the HEi sector to change in the next year and change during this study and will affect different aspects of HEi. Thus, data collection will be carried out with the recognition that there is a problem to investigate. This clarifies the use of an abductive method and use of explanatory sequential method in order to get understandings into the topic by means of two different research phases.

The present study could be assumed to have adopted a case study approach, according to Yin's description of a case study which is "a pragmatic analysis about the current phenomenon (for example, "case"), in the real world context, especially when the boundary between the phenomenon and the context is unclear (Yin, 2014). Having the ability to understand all the situations as a complex situation, case study believes that cases should be analysed in a broader context to achieve access to the data. Therefore, case study research does not include isolated variables, but is often the most convenient method in their broader relationships and when the main focus of the study is in the context of reality (Yin, 2014). The methodology for researching a case is often used when the main research question is descriptive (what) or explanatory in character (how) and is often asked for current events. As a result of the research, changing environment in the higher education institution can be considered as a broader context of the research studies at different stages of the research and the Huddersfield University as a single case. This can be referred as or seen as single units of analysis. Research can be done within pragmatic paradigm of explanatory studies; the researcher will avoid using the term case and instead uses the term phase or study. Thus, the two study phases can be

regarded as a kind of research that focuses on the impact and significances of service quality on international student and their effects and truths (Altheide & Johnson, 2011). In this regard, using Torrance (2008) guidelines for research methodology, the research should include a description of the context of the study, how it can affect the collection of methods/data used, and the background of the research site. Also, it includes a prospective perspective or philosophical commentary from the researcher. Each of these aspects will be considered in this thesis. As part of the first section, the following section describes the background of the research context; the University of Huddersfield Business School.

#### **5.4 *Study Site and Stages of Data Collection***

##### **5.4.1 *Study site:***

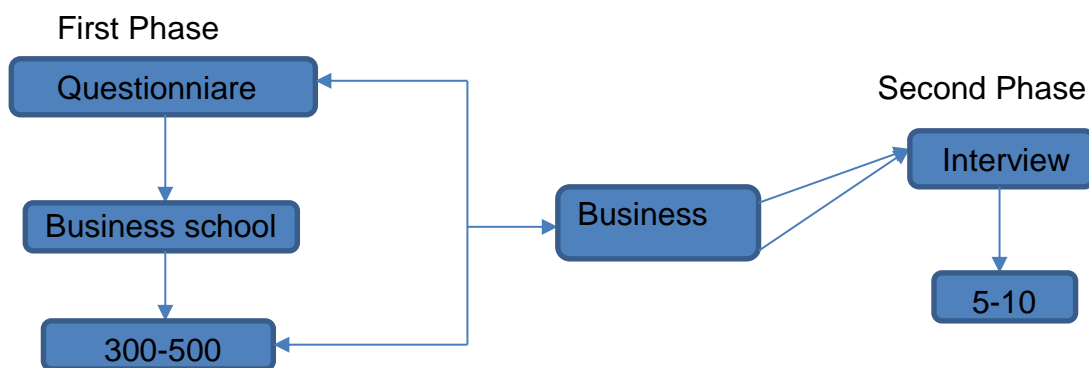
Following the changes in policies governing the HE sectors in UK; this research was conducted to understand how universities are affected by the new policies and how the changes affects international students from their own perspectives and experiences. To accomplish this, the research was conducted at University of Huddersfield Business School (hereafter also simply referred to as HUD).

##### **5.4.2 *Stages of data collection***

As earlier stated the study will embrace the sequential explanatory mixed method, whereby the survey will be carried out before the interview. The characteristics and size of the primary data collection will be limited to international student in the business school at the University of Huddersfield. This will be the sample size; however, it will be impossible to reach all student within the time frame of the project so a sample size of about 500 students will be considered to answer the survey questions and about 5-10 of these students will be interviewed if possible. The University of Huddersfield Business School student is predominantly made up of young adults and adult's males and females

from different countries; this will be the characteristics of the student considered for the survey. This can be express in a diagram as shown below in Figure 9.

**Figure 9-Sequence of mix method**



Source: Author

The research is divided into two different phases, with each phase focusing on different but yet relevant aspect of HEi and collects data to answer diverse questions for each. Each study will be presented in an independent chapter (chapter 6-7) and will be arranged as an individual work piece. Table 6 provides a sketch of the general research design, but specifically, extensive discussions are provided in the relevant chapters in this thesis to explain each phase of the research. During the two research phases, literature and secondary data were collected from books, academic journal and publications from the university. Primary data were collected from surveys and interviews. Regarding the analysis of data, data collection and analysis tasks are carried out in units (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Cohen, Manion, Morrison, & Bell, 2011). This process inspires the use of research design, where the analysis of a research phase and the results motivated the next research phase.



**Table 6- Research design and research phase**

Research Phase 1—Quantitative Approach (using HEdPERF Model )				
Research Question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 How do academic and non-academic factors influence students service quality in business school</li> <li>2 How do reputation, access and programme issues affects student perception in the business school</li> <li>3 Which factors are highly influencing student perception of service quality in business school</li> </ol>			
Methods	Justification	Timeline	Sample size(N)	Method of Analysis
Questionnaire	The possibility of a high response rate, using an established model designd for higher education, addressing multi-faceted issues for higher education, and questioning concerns in a relatively productive way, for the acquisition of knowledge and student opinion.	September 2017  January 2017	1: N=350  2:N=493	Statistical analysis with SPSS  Likert scale
Research Phase 2 ---- Qualitative Approach				
Research Question				
Methods	Justification	Timeline	Sample size(N)	Method of Analysis
Interview	In explanatory research, quantittive data collection is often follwed by qualitative data collection to futher enhance/ explain the HEdPERF statistical analysis of service quality phnomenon or findings	April 2017	N= 2 x 5	Nvivo and qualitative data analysis

## **5.5 Phase 1- Quantitative method**

This section addresses the quantitative methodological approach. It starts with explaining the variables that are used in the study and then provides details of ways in which the adequacy of the scales used are determined.

### **5.5.1 Variables of the study**

The independent variable of the study is service quality. It is conceptualised using five dimensions; academic aspects, non-academic aspects, access, reputation and programme issues. The dependent variable is student perception of satisfaction. Service quality is measured using F. Abdullah (2005); (F. Abdullah, 2006a) HEdPERF scale. While student satisfaction is measured using items adapted from Subrahmanyam Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016) scale.

#### **5.5.1.1 Academic aspects**

Abdullah (2006a) service quality scale provides a dimension for academic aspect. 10 items were used to measure the dimension. The scale consists of 7-point Likert scale, with (1) as strongly disagree and (7) as strongly agree. Examples of items in the scale are ‘academic staff are well-informed about my course content’ and ‘academic staff provide Feedback on my academic progress’. The 10 items reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.95.

#### **5.5.1.2 Non- Academic aspect**

Abdullahi (2006a) service quality scale provides a dimension for non-academic aspect. 9 items were used to measure the dimension. The scale consists of 7-point Likert scale, with

(1) as strongly disagree and (7) as strongly agree. Examples of items in the scale are ‘administrative staff show a sincere interest in solving my problems’ and ‘the administrative staff perform the promised service dependably and accurately and as when promised’. The 9 items reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.93.

#### ***5.5.1.3 Reputation***

Abdullahi (2006a) service quality scale provides a dimension for reputation aspect. 9 items were used to measure the dimension. The scale consists of 7-point Likert scale, with (1) as strongly disagree and (7) as strongly agree. Examples of items in the scale are ‘the institution has a professional appearance/ image’ and ‘student feedback are valued and used for service performance improvement’. The 9 items reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.94.

#### ***5.5.1.4 Access***

Abdullahi (2006a) service quality scale provides a dimension for reputation aspect. 6 items were used to measure this dimension. The scale consists of 7-point Likert scale, with (1) as strongly disagree and (7) as strongly agree. Examples of items in the scale are ‘I have a safe and confident feeling when I deal with the institution’ and ‘the institution provides adequate recreational facilities’. The 6 items reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.91.

#### ***5.5.1.5 Programme issues***

Abdullahi (2006a) service quality scale provides a dimension for reputation aspect. 4 items were used to measure this dimension. The scale consists of 7-point Likert scale, with (1) as strongly disagree and (7) as strongly agree. Examples of items in the scale are ‘the institution offers variety of programme, with different specializations’ and ‘the institution has internal quality programme’. The 4 items reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.90.

#### **5.5.1.6 Student satisfaction**

Student perception of satisfaction was measured using Subrahmanyam Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016) scale. 3 items were adapted to measure this variable. The scale consists of 7-point Likert scale, with (1) as strongly disagree and (7) as strongly agree. Examples of items in the scale are ‘satisfaction with how academic staff show positive attitude towards students’ and ‘satisfaction with how the institution deals with my Inquiries/complaints efficiently and promptly’. The 3 items reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.80.

#### **5.5.1.7 Control variables**

The study included nationality, gender, age, level of study and mode of study as control variables. Analysis was done for each of these variables in chapter 6 and findings show that irrespective of demographic variables, the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction was similar. This suggests that the control variables did not influence the responses of participants.

### **5.5.2 Piloting the questionnaire**

Approval was secured from the Ethics Committee of the business school before preliminary data collection was done. 60 survey booklets were distributed to students of the business for a period of one week. 25 of them were returned. The outcome of the questionnaire did not result into any change on the questionnaire outlay. The pilot study was useful as it enables the researcher to determine whether students understood the questions on the scale. Preliminary analysis did not provide meaningful results as the sample size used for this study was low. However, data collected was useful as it enabled the researcher practice how to utilise the data analysis software.

### ***5.5.3 Questionnaire design***

The questionnaire used for this study ensured that reliability and validity concerns were met. While reliability assesses whether the questionnaire conveyed similar meanings across the participants (Choi, 2004), validity underscores the accuracy of the survey instrument (Berdie, Anderson, & Niebuhr, 1986). Saunders et al. (2012) suggested that questionnaire design need to meet its validity and reliability. To ensure that the questionnaire meets the validity requirement of the research, content validity was employed. Content validity of a quantitative research pertains to the degree to which the instrument (questionnaire) test/measures the construct of interest (Bolarinwa, 2015; Heale & Twycross, 2015). Content validity takes the form of face validity where the researcher review the instrument using colleagues and experts in the field to check the instrument covers the areas it is designed to cover. To ensure that the questionnaire met the requirement for content validity, the questionnaire was tested prior to full deployment to determine whether students understood the items. This form of validity was achieved as the study utilised already validated scale.

Given that the HEdPERF questionnaire is an already developed measuring scale, and comprehensive reviewed and validated by (F. Abdullah, 2006a). A further pilot study was carried out with 10 student to examine with greater emphasis on the topics if the content validity covers all the content in the course as an adequate instrument. Also various experts (my supervisor and other marketing colleagues) in the field were asked their opinion, using face validity to examine if the HEdPERF instrument measures the intended concepts.

### ***5.5.4 Strategy for data collection***

Papers surveys were distributed to student in the business school. Prior to the administration of the survey, all ethnic ethical considerations were observed. Questionnaire

returned were screened and recorded into excel spreadsheet. Each questionnaire was given a unique code to avoid double entry error.

#### ***5.5.5 Analytical approach***

At the end of the survey data collection exercise, SPSS statistical package was used to check for outliers and surveys with incomplete record and missing items were not utilise for the main analysis. Reliability and factor analysis tests were conducted to determine the adequacy of the scale, after which, regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction. Following the outcome of hypothesis testing, a further qualitative data collection was initiated to better understand the relationship between service quality and student's perception of satisfaction.

#### ***5.6 Phase 2- Qualitative method***

Structured interviews were conducted using 10 participants drawn from the business school. The questions were drafted and asked to the participants to in line with the outcome of the hypothesis from quantitative analysis. Each interview lasted for 45 minutes. Interview were recorded on a device in English language and transcribed. Transcripts of the interviews were further investigated to understand the underlining reasoning for the hypothesis using NVIVO.

#### ***5.7 Summary***

This chapter has provided insight to methodological considerations for this research. The methodological approach taken is in line with the research objectives. As the research tows pragmatic paradigm, a sequential mixed method is presented for the analysis of the relationship between SQ and students satisfaction. Quantitative considerations were presented first, before qualitative considerations. Data collection was done within the University of Huddersfield

because the school has a large population of international students and is influenced by the changes in the HE sector policies. Analysis are presented in chapters 6 and 7.

## Chapter Six: Analysis of Quantitative Result

This section is structured in other to address the research objectives. Prior to presenting findings with regards to the research objectives, descriptive statistics of participant’s demography is presented. Next, an analysis is presented to determine the validity of the scale within the context of the case study. Furthermore, the chapter presents findings on the relationship between international students’ perception of satisfaction as a result of the service quality dimensions within the context of the University of Huddersfield Business School. Additionally, in line with the third objective of the study, the chapter presents analysis of investigation as to how demographic variables affect international students’ satisfaction with the Business School as result of the dimensions of service quality. A summary of chapter is presented at the end.

### 6.1 Description of participants

This section provides a description of participants demography used in this study. Table 7.

Table 7- Participants Description, n=493

Nationality	
China	286
Qatar	31
Thai	11
Myanmar	2
Nigeria	28
Indonesia	2
Ukraine	6
Bahraini	3
Hong Kong	5
Burkina faso	2
Gambia	3
Iran	8

Age	
16-25	414
26-30	44
31-40	25
41-ABOVE	10

Department	
ACCOUNTANCY AND FINANCE	177



Pakistan	2
Vietnam	14
Libyan	13
Egypt	4
Sudan	4
Dutch	2
Ghana	11
Jordan	6
French	4
Bangladeshi	2
India	2
Lebanese	4
Malaysia	2
Japan	4
Spain	6
Hispanic	2
Iraqi	2
Kurdish	2
Italian	2
Cameroonian	2
Kuwaiti	2
Syrian	3
UAE	3
Omani	3
Saudi Arabian	2
Sri Lankan	3
Total	493

LOG, OPERATION AND HOSPITALITY	77
PEOPLE MGT AND ORGANISATION	129
STRATEGY, MARKETING AND ECONOMICS	77
LAW	33

Title of Course	
UG	113
Top-Up	241
PG	90
PHD	49

Tenure	
New Student	371
Returning Student	122

Type of study	
Full Time	487
Part Time	6

Sub				
Variable	category	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Continent	Africa	69	14	14
	Asia	335	68	82
	Europe	22	4	86.4
	Middle east	67	14	100
Age	16-25	414	84	84

	26-30	44	8.9	92.9
	31-40	25	5.1	98
	41 & above	10	2	100
Department	Accounting & Finance	177	35.9	35.9
	Logistics, operations & hospitality	77	15.6	51.5
	Management	129	26.2	77.7
	Strategy & Marketing	77	15.6	93.3
	Law	33	6.7	100
Level of study	Undergraduate	113	22.9	22.9
	Top-up	241	48.9	71.8
	Masters	90	18.3	90.1
	PhD	49	9.9	100
Tenure	New student	371	75.3	75.3
	Returning student	122	24.7	100
Type of study	Full time	487	98.8	98.8
	Part time	6	1.2	100

## ***6.2 Findings in relation to reliability of scale***

This section focusses on the first objective. It provides analysis measuring the reliability of the Higher Education Performance scale as a tool for measuring students' perception of satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 1:** Higher education performance (HEdPERF) scale is a reliable tool for measuring higher education service quality and international students' satisfaction (ISS) in the University of Huddersfield Business School.

Higher education performance scale has been used to measure student perception of service quality in different context. For example, in Malaysia (F. Abdullah, 2006b), Lisbon (Brochado, 2009), Croatia (Jelena, 2010) and India (Barani & Kumar, 2013). The tool has not been widely researched upon within the context of higher education in the United Kingdom. The first objective of this research is to determine the reliability and validity of (F. Abdullah, 2005, 2006a) higher education performance scale as a tool for measuring international student perception of service quality. To do this, a reliability statistic is presented first, followed by a factor analysis. Findings from the reliability analysis suggests that Abdullah (2005,2006) HEdPERF scale is reliable for measuring student perception of service quality. For example, Cronbach alpha results of the 5 dimensions were all above 0.70.

Furthermore, factor analysis findings below support reliability of the Abdullah (2005,2006) HEdPERF scale for measuring service quality. Principal component analysis presented show that the items for each of the dimensions were loaded on a single component and were cumulatively responsible for over 60% of the variance explained. Thus, all items were utilised in the study. Following the results of both reliability statistics and factor analysis, it is therefore suggested that HEdPERF scale could be used successfully to measure perception of

service quality in higher education. Hypothesis 1 therefore holds. See details of reliability and factor analysis explanation and results.

**6.2.1 Reliability statistics**

This section presents findings on the test to determine whether the items are testing what they are meant to in the variables (Santos, 1999). Reliability statistics checks the extent the items on the scale measures the variable (Read & Dillon, 2013). The rule for a good reliable result for the variables is to have Cronbach alpha figures above 0.70. Findings from Table 8 shows that all variables have a good result on the reliability statistics table. Thus, suggesting that the items are good for measuring the variables. Additionally, the mean and standard deviations are presented. The results show that for each of the scales used for analysis in this study, there is no significant difference in the dispersion of the reliability. This further confirms the reliability of the scales.

**Table 8-Reliability Statistics**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Standardized Items	N of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic aspects	0.947	0.948	10	5.616	1.116
Non-academic aspects	0.928	0.929	9	5.382	1.063
Reputation	0.941	0.941	9	5.614	1.057
Access	0.904	0.905	6	5.626	1.056

Programme					
issues	0.899	0.901	4	5.702	1.118
Student					
satisfaction	0.787	0.786	3	5.669	1.110
Overall			41		

### 6.3 Factor analysis

In this section, the findings chapter presents result of the factor analysis. Factor analysis is used to determine whether the items are loaded together in measuring the variables (Jolliffe, 1986). In this chapter, the thesis uses principal component analysis (PCA) to determine whether the items load in the same component. Items that load in the same component indicates that they are measuring the same variable. Table 9 are the results of the total variances for the variables in the model. It shows that all variables have a single component. This show that the items are loaded properly in measuring the variables used in the theoretical framework.

**Table 9-Total Variance Explained**

Initial Eigenvalues				
Variables	Componen			
	t	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Academic				
aspects	1	6.797	67.974	67.974
Non-academic				
aspects	1	5.754	63.931	63.931
Reputation	1	6.128	68.087	68.087

Access	1	4.074	67.906	67.906
Programme				
issues	1	3.089	77.225	77.225
Student				
satisfaction	1	2.105	70.167	70.167

---

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 9

above shows that the items are loaded in a single component, and also show that the total variances explained for each variable in the model is above 60%. A cumulative variance above 60% indicates that for each of the scales, the items load properly and significantly measure the variable (Santos, 1999). This further supports the first hypothesis that HEdPERF reliably measures international students' perception of service quality.

#### ***6.4 Findings in relation to the relationship between perception of service quality and ISS of the University of Huddersfield Business School***

Analysis presented here focuses on investigating HEdPERF service quality as a determinant of student satisfaction in Huddersfield Business School. To achieve this, a regression analysis is used. Regression analysis is normally used to investigate the extent to which a variable (dependent) relates to another (independent), such that an increase or decrease in the former will result in an increase or decrease in the later (Darlington & Hayes, 2016). This analytical technique is ideal in this instance to establish the extent to which service quality influence international student satisfaction. In the regression analysis, correlation statistics is presented, analysis of variance and the model summary. Correlation statistics presents findings on the association of the variables in the model. Although the correlation statistics does not explain causality, it provides information as to the association between service quality and student satisfaction, thus, providing a preamble for regression analysis that follows thereafter. The analysis of variance explains the extent to which a change in the dependent variables is

attributable to the independent variable. The ANOVA statistics is important because it confirms that the significance of the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction does not occur by chance. Thus, the Sig figure less than 0.001.

#### ***6.4.1 Correlation of variables***

In this section of the analysis, the thesis presents discussions on the association among variables in the theoretical model. Findings from the analysis show that there is correlation among the variables. For example, on Table 10, the variables have high positive correlation such that an increase in one results to increase in the later. With the size of the correlation coefficients above 0.5, all the 6 variables in the model can be deemed to be associated (Hemphill, 2003). The rule for deciding on the size of correlation coefficient as suggested by Hemphill (2003) is as follows:  $r$  less than 0.29 is low,  $r$  above 0.29 but less than 0.5 is moderate, while a coefficient  $r$  greater than 0.5 is classified as high. With all variables having a p-value less than 0.05, this signifies that in addition to their high positive relationship, the relationship or association is significant.

**Table 10-Correlation between variables in the theoretical model**

Variable	Student satisfaction	Academic Aspects	Non-Academic Aspects	Reputation	Access	Programme issues
Student satisfaction	1					
Academic Aspects	0.86	1				
Non-Academic Aspects	0.767	0.805	1			
Reputation	0.827	0.827	0.794	1		
Access	0.835	0.819	0.783	0.857	1	
Programme issues	0.714	0.748	0.735	0.795	0.797	1

**6.4.2 Model summary**

All the variables in the theoretical model are continuous variables. This thesis adopts the HEDPERF scale to investigate the relationship between students’ satisfaction and the service quality in their university. From the theoretical model, the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable is presented linearly. The thesis investigates the overall effect of the service quality represented by five dimensions are suggested by Abdullah (2006) on student satisfaction. Findings also show how each of the dimensions influence students’ perception of satisfaction with their University Business School. On the overall relationship between service quality in higher education and student satisfaction, findings show that with respect to the student in the Business School of the University of Huddersfield; that there is a strong positive relationship between service quality and students satisfaction. From



the analysis of variance (ANOVA) on Table 11, findings show that service quality significantly influences international students' satisfaction with a p-value less than 0.05. The model significance is therefore  $F(5, 487) = 395.3, p=.00$ . The ANOVA table therefore suggests that the theoretical model is significant (Roberts & Russo, 2014. p93). This result also confirms that the independent variables are good predictors of the dependent variable (Galwey, 2014; Roberts & Russo, 2014). From the model summary table, the adjusted R square show that 80% of the changes or variations in student satisfaction is influenced by service quality in their university. This is also another confirmation of the successfulness of the HEdPERF model.

**Table 11-ANOVA for student perception based (a) on HEdPERF model**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	486.009	5	97.202	395.251	.000b
	Residual	119.765	487	0.246		
	Total	605.774	492			

a. Dependent Variable: Student perception satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Programme issues, Non-academic aspects, Academic aspects, Access, Reputation

**Hypothesis 2a:** international student satisfaction is dependent upon the perception of the dimensions of HEdPERF service quality.

This hypothesis focusses on the first part of the second objective of the study. Existing literature suggests that service quality in higher education influences students' perception of satisfaction. Findings from analysis suggests that service quality has a positive relationship with students' perception of satisfaction. This implies that on the overall, an increase in service

quality results in an increase in students' level of satisfaction with the university. For example, the regression weight of service quality influence on student satisfaction is 0.80, and with a p-value less than 0.05. Having such high regression weight and a p-value lower than 0.05 implies that service quality has a significant positive relationship with student satisfaction. Thus, perception of service quality as presented by Abdullah (2005,2006) HEdPERF Scale may successful influence students satisfaction. This suggests that international students' satisfaction within the case study is dependent on HEdPERF service quality dimension. Hypothesis 2a is therefore supported. See Table 12 below:

**Table 12-Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.896a	0.802	0.8	0.49591	0.802	395.251	5	487	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Programme issues, Non-academic aspects, Academic aspects, Access, Reputation

b. Dependent Variable: Student perception satisfaction

**Hypothesis 2b (Objective 2).**

In the next section, this chapter presents findings in relation to the second part of objective 2. The second objective of this study aims to determine the dominant underlying perceived quality dimensions. To achieve this, the relationship between each of the dimensions of service

quality is measured against students' perception of satisfaction using a regression analysis. The dominant ones are those with positive regression estimates and with p-values lower than 0.05. The strength of their relationships is expressed in the regression weights as follows: academic aspects 0.45, non-academic aspects 0.06, reputation 0.21 and access 0.30. In addition to having a positive relationship with student satisfaction, the p-value show that the relationships are significant for academic aspects, reputation and access. Although the non-academic aspect component has a positive relationship with student satisfaction, the relationship is not significant. This is because the p-value is greater than 0.05. Table 13 also show that programme issues have a negative relationship with students' satisfaction. With a regression weight of -0.6 and a p-value of 0.6, this relationship is negative and not significant (Roberts & Russo, 2014).

**Hypothesis 2b.1:** Academic aspects of SQ are positively related to overall students' satisfaction

Existing literature suggests that academic aspect dimension of service quality in higher education influences students' perception of satisfaction. Findings from analysis suggests that academic aspect dimension has a positive relationship with students' perception of satisfaction. This implies that on the overall, an increase in academic aspects results in an increase in students' level of satisfaction with the university. For example, the regression weight of academic aspects influence on student satisfaction is 0.45, and with a p-value less than 0.05. Having such high regression weight and a p-value lower than 0.05 implies that academic aspect has a significant positive relationship with student satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2b.1 is supported.

**Hypothesis 2b.2:** Non-academic Aspects of SQ are positively related to overall students' satisfaction.

Existing literature suggests that non-academic aspect dimension of service quality in higher education influences students' perception of satisfaction. Findings from analysis suggests that non-academic aspect dimension has a positive relationship with students' perception of satisfaction. This implies that on the overall, an increase in non-academic aspects results in an increase in students' level of satisfaction with the university. For example, the regression weight of non-academic aspects influence on student satisfaction is 0.06, and with a p-value of 0.15. Having such marginal regression weight and a p-value greater than 0.05 implies that non-academic aspect is not a significant dimension of service quality for influencing student satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2b.2 is not supported.

**Hypothesis 2b.3:** Reputation dimension of SQ are positively related to overall students' satisfaction.

Existing literature suggests that reputation dimension of service quality in higher education influences students' perception of satisfaction. Findings from analysis suggests that reputation dimension has a positive relationship with students' perception of satisfaction. This implies that on the overall, an increase in reputation results in an increase in students' level of satisfaction with the university. For example, the regression weight of reputation influence on student satisfaction is 0.21, and with a p-value less than 0.05. with a regression weight of 0.21 and a p-value lower than 0.05 implies that reputation has a significant positive relationship with student satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2b.3 is supported.

**Hypothesis 2b.4:** Access aspect of SQ is positively related to overall students' satisfaction.

Existing literature suggests that access dimension of service quality in higher education influences students' perception of satisfaction. Findings from analysis suggests that access dimension has a positive relationship with students' perception of satisfaction. This implies

that on the overall, an increase in access dimension results in an increase in students' level of satisfaction with the university. For example, the regression weight of access influence on student satisfaction is 0.30, and with a p-value less than 0.05. with a regression weight of 0.30 and a p-value lower than 0.05 implies that access dimension has a significant positive relationship with student satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2b.4 is supported.

**Hypothesis 2b.5:** Programme issues dimension of SQ is positively related to overall students.

Existing literature suggests that programme issues dimension of service quality in higher education influences students' perception of satisfaction. Findings from analysis however suggests that on contrary programme issues dimension has a negative relationship with students' perception of satisfaction. This implies that on the overall, an increase in programme issues results in a decrease in students' level of satisfaction with the university. For example, the regression weight of programme issues influence on student satisfaction is -0.06, and with a p-value less than 0.08. with a regression weight of -0.06 and a p-value greater than 0.05 implies that programme issues do not have a significant relationship with student satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis 2b.5 is not supported. See Table 13.

**Table 13-Coefficient of regression showing relationship between SQ dimensions and student satisfaction**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.236	0.129		1.837	0.067
	Academic aspects	0.443	0.041	0.446	10.716	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.057	0.04	0.055	1.451	0.147

Reputation	0.222	0.048	0.211	4.618	0
Access	0.312	0.047	0.297	6.618	0
Programme issues	-0.063	0.036	-0.064	-1.751	0.081

a. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

The constant value is the student satisfaction intercept on the regression line for various outputs for the relationship between SQ and students' perception of satisfaction. The equation on a linear regression line is  $Y = a + bx$ , Y is the dependent variable, X is the dependent variable, while the slope of the line is b. a is the constant or intercept of the value dependent variable when the independent variable is= 0.

### ***6.5 Findings in relationship to the socio-demographic characteristics of participants sampled.***

In line with the third objective of this study, findings in relation to demographic variables are presented. The third research objective of this study is aimed at examining how the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction might be affected by the variation in the demographic characteristics of the participants. This will enable the determination of effects of these variables on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

#### ***6.5.1 Gender***

section presents findings on the difference in response of student based on their gender. Findings show that for both female and male students, change in student perception of satisfaction is the university of Huddersfield is positively influenced by service quality by 0.82 and 0.81 respectively. With the p-value of the relationships less than 0.05, findings show that service quality significantly influences students' satisfaction for both female and male students. Also, with the R square change value higher for female students, this suggests that service influences female students than male students. It may therefore be suggested that within the context of the University of Huddersfield Business School, there is no significant difference between male and females in their bias towards SQ.

**Table 14-Model Summary for female and male students**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
Female	0.91	0.823	0.819	0.42417	0.823	187.069	5	201	0
Male	0.9	0.807	0.804	0.54146	0.807	261.916	5	314	0

a. Predictors: (Constant), Programme issues, Non-academic aspects, Academic aspects, Access, Reputation

b. Dependent Variable: Student perception satisfaction

**Table 15-Coefficient of regression for female and male students**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
Female	(Constant)	0	0.205			0.001	0.999
	Academic aspects	0.505	0.052	0.496		9.706	0
	Non-academic aspects	-0.091	0.064	-0.083		1.422	0.157
	Reputation	0.117	0.07	0.104		1.661	0.098
	Access	0.407	0.059	0.408		6.928	0
	Programme issues	0.06	0.055	0.057		1.091	0.276

Male	(Constant)	0.145	0.156		0.93	0.353
	Academic aspects	0.304	0.058	0.295	5.211	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.142	0.049	0.134	2.889	0.004
	Reputation	0.397	0.061	0.383	6.512	0
	Access	0.268	0.067	0.247	4.03	0
					-	
	Programme issues	-0.119	0.047	-0.12	2.523	0.012

a. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

In this section, findings are presented indicating the individual relationships of the dimensions of service quality in the higher education and students' perception of satisfaction with relation to gender differences. From the analysis on Table 15, findings show that there is a positive relationship between academic aspects and student satisfaction for both genders. The standardised coefficient is higher for female students (0.50) than for male students (0.30). The p-value for the relationship between academic aspects and student satisfaction is less than 0.05 for both genders. Thus, suggesting a positive and significant relationship. For non-academic aspects, while the relationship is negative for female students (-0.08), it is positive for male students (0.13). The p-value is 0.16 for female students and less than 0.05 for male students. Thus, suggesting that while non-academic aspects is not significant for female students, it is significant for male students. On the relationship between the university reputation and students' satisfaction, findings show that standardised coefficient of regression of reputation on student satisfaction is positive for female (0.10) and male (0.38). The p-value for female is 0.9, while that of male students is less than 0.05. This therefore suggests that while the university reputation is not significant for female students, it is significant for male students. Access variable has a positive significant relationship with student satisfaction with a standardised regression of 0.41 for female students and 0.25 for male students. The findings also show that access dimension influences female students of satisfaction more than male students.



The fifth dimension of service quality (programme issues) show that while the relationship is positive for female students (0.05), it is not significant with p-value of 0.28. For male students, programme issues have a negative relationship with student satisfaction (-0.12) and a p-value of less than 0.05.

### 6.5.2 Nationality

This section presents findings on the difference in response of student based on their nationality. Findings show that for students from the nationalities sampled, change in student perception of satisfaction is the University of Huddersfield is positively influenced by service quality by 0.87, 0.81, 0.90 and 0.82 for African, Asian, European and Middle East students respectively. With the p-value of the relationships less than 0.05, findings show that service quality significantly influences students' satisfaction for students irrespective of their nationality. Also, findings show that the R square change value is higher for European students than students for other nationalities. See Table 16.

**Table 16-Model Summary for female and male students**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
African	0.93	0.865	0.854	0.48759	0.865	78.342	5	61	0.00
Asian	0.902	0.814	0.811	0.45397	0.814	287.529	5	329	0.00
European except UK	0.95	0.903	0.872	0.46599	0.903	29.738	5	16	0.00
Middle East	0.904	0.818	0.803	0.51006	0.818	56.458	5	63	0.00

**Table 17-Coefficient of regression for female and male students**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		T	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
African	(Constant)	0.052	0.32			0.161	0.872
	Academic aspects	0.664	0.087	0.69		7.591	0
	Non-academic aspects	-0.102	0.145	-0.083		-0.707	0.482
	Reputation	0.243	0.169	0.219		1.439	0.155
	Access	0.445	0.155	0.382		2.877	0.006
	Programme issues	-0.242	0.108	-0.232		-2.237	0.029
Asian	(Constant)	0.336	0.149			2.256	0.025
	Academic aspects	0.322	0.051	0.334		6.31	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.054	0.042	0.056		1.288	0.199
	Reputation	0.192	0.059	0.187		3.241	0.001
	Access	0.432	0.058	0.419		7.433	0
	Programme issues	-0.048	0.041	-0.05		-1.167	0.244
European except UK	(Constant)	-5.695	1.146			-4.968	0
	Academic aspects	1.013	0.296	0.576		3.425	0.003
	Non-academic aspects	0.118	0.352	0.073		0.336	0.741
	Reputation	1.131	0.245	0.535		4.613	0
	Access	-0.233	0.177	-0.143		-1.313	0.208

	Programme issues	-0.123	0.241	-0.075	-0.512	0.616
Middle East	(Constant)	0.355	0.34		1.043	0.301
	Academic aspects	0.489	0.122	0.469	4.001	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.055	0.109	0.05	0.51	0.612
	Reputation	0.223	0.098	0.227	2.283	0.026
	Access	0.251	0.112	0.268	2.235	0.029
	Programme issues	-0.059	0.092	-0.058	-0.64	0.524

a. Dependent Variable: Student satisfaction

In this section, findings are presented indicating the individual relationships of the dimensions of service quality in the higher education and students' perception of satisfaction with relation to nationality differences. From the analysis on Table 17, findings show that there is a positive relationship between academic aspects and student satisfaction for international students (African, Asian, European and Middle East students). The standardised coefficient for international students is 0.70 for African students, 0.33 for Asian students, 0.58 for European students and 0.47 for Middle East student.

For non-academic aspects dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a positive relationship between non-academic aspects and student satisfaction for students from Asia, Europe and Middle East). The standardised coefficient for these groups of students is 0.06 for Asian students, 0.73 for European students, and 0.05 for Middle East students. However, for African students, the relationship was negative (-0.08), with a p-value of 0.48. Also, the p-value for Asian, European and Middle East student is greater than 0.05. This suggests that non-academic aspect is not important dimension of service quality for influencing students' satisfaction for international students. For reputation aspects dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a positive relationship between the university reputation

and student satisfaction for students from all nationality. The standardised coefficient for these groups of students is 0.22 for African student, 0.19 for Asian students, 0.54 for European students, and 0.23 for Middle East students. The p-value for these groups of students is 0.16 for African student and less than 0.05 for students from other regions in the school. This suggests that reputation dimension is not significant dimension of service quality for influencing students' satisfaction for African students. It is however significant for students from the other regions.

For access dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a positive relationship between university access and student satisfaction for students from Africa, Asia, and Middle East. The standardised coefficient for these groups of students is 0.38 for African students, 0.42 for Asian students, and 0.27 for Middle East students. However, for European students, the relationship is negative ( -0.14), with a p-value of 0.21. The p-value for other groups of students is less than 0.05. This suggests that access is important dimension of service quality for influencing students' satisfaction for all groups of students except for students from Europe. For programme issues dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a negative relationship between programme issues and student satisfaction for students from all regions. The standardised coefficient for these groups of students is -0.23 for African students, -0.05 for Asian students, -0.07 for European students, and -0.06 for Middle East students. However, for European students, the relationship is negative (-0.14), with a p-value of 0.21. The p-value for African students is less than 0.05, while that of other groups of students is greater than 0.05. This suggests that programme issues dimension is not significant for Asian, European, and Middle Eastern student. For African students, it is significant.

### 6.5.3 Age

This section presents findings on the difference in response of student based on their age. Findings show that for both older and younger students, change in student perception of satisfaction is the University of Huddersfield is positively influenced by service quality by 0.79 for students younger than 25 years and 0.85 for students 25 years and above. With the p-value of the relationships less than 0.05, findings show that service quality significantly influences students' satisfaction for both groups of students. Also, with the R square change value higher for older students, this suggests that service influences students 25 years and above than younger students.

**Table 2-Model Summary for age of student**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
Below 25 years	0.887	0.787	0.784	0.47232	0.787	315.351	5	428	0.00
25 years & above	0.922	0.85	0.842	0.62322	0.85	98.821	5	87	0.00

**Table 19-Coefficient of regression for age of students**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	T	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Below 25 years	(Constant)	0.184	0.143		1.286	0.199
	Academic aspects	0.416	0.048	0.406	8.717	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.067	0.039	0.068	1.744	0.082
	Reputation	0.195	0.05	0.187	3.92	0
	Access	0.332	0.049	0.319	6.754	0
	Programme issues	-0.036	0.037	-0.037	-0.962	0.336
25 years & above	(Constant)	-0.051	0.274		-0.185	0.853
	Academic aspects	0.438	0.095	0.41	4.594	0
	Non-academic aspects	-0.025	0.154	-0.02	-0.165	0.87
	Reputation	0.632	0.137	0.574	4.628	0
	Access	0.191	0.126	0.172	1.525	0.131
	Programme issues	-0.199	0.12	-0.17	-1.667	0.099

The standardised coefficient is higher for students 25 years and above (0.41) than for younger students (0.40) for access dimension. The p-value for the relationship between academic aspects and student satisfaction is less than 0.05 for both older and younger students. Thus, suggesting a positive and significant relationship. For non-academic aspects, while the relationship is negative for older students (-0.02), it is positive for younger students (0.07). The p-value for is higher than 0.05 for non-academic dimension for both younger and older students. Thus, suggesting that in relation to age, non-academic dimension is not significant for influencing student satisfaction. On the relationship between the university reputation and students' satisfaction, findings show that standardised coefficient of regression of reputation on student satisfaction is positive for younger students (0.19) and older students (0.57). The p-value for both groups' students is less than 0.05. This therefore suggest in relations to age, that university reputation is significant for influencing student satisfaction. Access variable has a

positive significant relationship with student satisfaction with a standardised regression of 0.32 for younger students and 0.17 for older students. The findings also show that access dimension influences younger students' satisfaction than older students. The fifth dimension of service quality (programme issues) show that for both groups of students, it is negative and not significant. Younger students' coefficient -0.4, p-value 0.34, older students -0.17, p-value 0.09.

#### 6.5.4 Mode of study

This section presents findings on the difference in response of student based on the duration of time spent in the university. Duration is classified as new students and returning students. Findings show that for both new and returning students, change in student perception of satisfaction is the University of Huddersfield is positively influenced by service quality by 0.79 and 0.84 respectively. With the p-value of the relationships less than 0.05, findings show that service quality significantly influences students' satisfaction for returning students and for new students. Also, with the R square change value higher for returning students, this suggests that service influences returning students than new students.

**Table 20-Model Summary for new and returning students**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
New	0.887	0.786	0.784	0.50384	0.786	277.622	5	377	0
Returning	0.916	0.839	0.834	0.51389	0.839	144.293	5	138	0

**Table 21-Coefficient of regression for new and returning student**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		T	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
New	(Constant)	0.028	0.158		0.174	0.862	
	Academic aspects	0.434	0.055	0.402	7.857	0	
	Non-academic aspects	0.061	0.044	0.058	1.383	0.168	
	Reputation	0.308	0.058	0.286	5.311	0	
	Access Programme issues	0.294	0.053	0.28	5.498	0	
						-	
Returning	(Constant)	0.097	0.207		0.47	0.639	
	Academic aspects	0.331	0.064	0.341	5.148	0	
	Non-academic aspects	0.017	0.094	0.015	0.178	0.859	
	Reputation	0.205	0.083	0.202	2.488	0.014	
	Access Programme issues	0.414	0.095	0.384	4.366	0	
			0.034	0.077	0.033	0.441	0.66

The standardised coefficient is higher for new students and above (0.40) than for returning students (0.34) for access dimension. The p-value for the relationship between academic aspects and student satisfaction is less than 0.05 for both new and returning students. Thus, suggesting a positive and significant relationship. For non-academic aspects, while the relationship is positive for both new and returning students, the p-value is greater than 0.05. Thus, suggesting that while considering the duration of students in the university, non-academic aspects is not significant for influencing student satisfaction. On the relationship between the university reputation and students' satisfaction, findings show that standardised



coefficient of regression of reputation on student satisfaction is positive for new student (0.29) and returning students (0.20). The p-value for both new and returning students is less than 0.05. This therefore suggest in relations to the duration that students have spent in the university, that university reputation is significant for influencing student satisfaction. Access variable has a positive significant relationship with student satisfaction with a standardised regression of 0.28 for new students and 0.38 for returning students. The findings also show that access dimension influences returning students' satisfaction than new students. The fifth dimension of service quality (programme issues) show that for new students, the relationship is significant and negative. For returning students, the relationship is positive, but not significant with p-value greater than 0.05. See Table 21.

#### ***6.5.5 Level of study***

This section presents findings on the difference in response of student based on their level of study in the business school. Findings show that for students sampled, change in student perception of satisfaction is the University of Huddersfield is positively influenced by service quality by 0.83, 0.78, 0.80 and 0.88 undergraduate, top up, masters and PhD students respectively. With the p-value of the relationships less than 0.05, findings show that service quality significantly influences students' satisfaction for students irrespective of their level of study. Also, findings show that the R square change value is higher for undergraduate and top up students than for students in other levels in the Business school.

**Table 22-Model Summary for students' level of study**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
Undergraduate	0.912	0.832	0.825	0.45823	0.832	119.891	5	121	0
Top up	0.885	0.783	0.779	0.43738	0.783	172.656	5	239	0
Masters	0.895	0.802	0.791	0.63507	0.802	75.993	5	94	0
PhD	0.936	0.876	0.864	0.56312	0.876	69.496	5	49	0

**Table 23-Coefficient for regression of service quality on student satisfaction (student level of study)**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
Undergraduate	(Constant)	0.09	0.229			0.392	0.696
	Academic aspects	0.282	0.1	0.264		2.807	0.006
	Non-academic aspects	0.216	0.102	0.203		2.127	0.035
	Reputation	0.177	0.085	0.175		2.078	0.04
	Access	0.395	0.098	0.384		4.024	0
	Programme issues	-0.068	0.074	-0.071		-0.918	0.36
Top up	(Constant)	0.05	0.204			0.243	0.808
	Academic aspects	0.396	0.055	0.404		7.21	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.057	0.042	0.063		1.356	0.176
	Reputation	0.165	0.062	0.158		2.666	0.008
	Access	0.389	0.063	0.351		6.136	0
	Programme issues	-0.018	0.045	-0.019		-0.409	0.683

Masters	(Constant)	-0.011	0.303		-0.035	0.972
	Academic aspects	0.325	0.146	0.288	2.231	0.028
	Non-academic aspects	0.018	0.13	0.015	0.139	0.89
	Reputation	0.669	0.162	0.583	4.119	0
	Access	0.237	0.122	0.231	1.946	0.055
	Programme issues	-0.22	0.115	-0.209	-1.904	0.06
PhD	(Constant)	-0.056	0.37		-0.15	0.881
	Academic aspects	0.493	0.102	0.491	4.83	0
	Non-academic aspects	0.359	0.233	0.275	1.539	0.13
	Reputation	0.423	0.146	0.401	2.9	0.006
	Access	-0.04	0.164	-0.035	-0.245	0.807
	Programme issues	-0.177	0.145	-0.144	-1.223	0.227

In this section, findings are presented indicating the individual relationships between the dimensions of service quality in the higher education and students' perception of satisfaction with relation to students' level of study. From the analysis on Table 23, findings show that there is a positive relationship between academic aspects and student satisfaction for students at all levels sampled in the Business school. The standardised coefficient for the different level is 0.26 for undergraduate level, 0.40 for top up level, 0.29 for masters' level and 0.49 for PhD level. The p-value at all levels of students sampled is less than 0.05. This suggests that when considering the different in response of student based on their academic level, academic aspect is an important significant dimension of service quality for influencing student satisfaction. For non-academic aspects dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a positive relationship between non-academic aspects and student satisfaction for students at all levels sampled in the business school. For example, undergraduate level 0.20, top up level 0.06, masters level 0.02, and PhD 0.28. The p-value of the analysis for students at the top up, masters and PhD levels are greater than 0.05. This suggest that at these levels of study in the business

school, non-academic aspects dimension is not significant for influencing students' satisfaction. It is however significant at the undergraduate level students with a p-value of 0.03.

For reputation dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a positive relationship between university reputation and student satisfaction for students' sample at all levels in the business school. For example, undergraduate 0.18, top up 0.16, masters 0.58 and PhD 0.40. The p-values for the relationship between the variables at all levels is less than 0.05. Thus, suggesting that university reputation is an important significant dimension of service quality that influences students' satisfaction. Findings also show that the relationship is higher for students at the post-graduate levels as compared to the undergraduate and top up levels. p-value is less than 0.05, thus suggesting that reputation dimension is significant for influencing students' satisfaction in these department. For access dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a positive relationship between university access and student satisfaction for students at the undergraduate, top up and masters' levels. For students at the PhD level, it is negative. The standardised coefficient for the relationships at the different levels is as follows: is 0.38 for undergraduate students, 0.35 for top up students, 0.23 for masters' level students, and -0.04 for PhD level students. The p-value for undergraduate and top up level is less than 0.05. Suggesting the relationship between the variables is significant at the undergraduate and top up levels. For masters and PhD levels, the p-value is greater than 0.05. Thus, suggesting that relationship is not significant at the post-graduate levels.

For programme issues dimension of service quality, findings show that there is a negative relationship between programme issues and student satisfaction for students sampled at all levels in the business school. The standardised coefficient for these groups of students is -0.07 for undergraduate students, -0.02 for top up students, -0.21 for masters' students and -0.14 for students at the PhD level. The p-value for students at all levels in the business school

is greater than 0.05. Thus, suggesting that in relation to students' level of study, programme issues is not a significant service quality dimension for influencing students' satisfaction.

## 6.6 Summary

This chapter presents results from the first set of data analysis. The chapter is exploratory in nature. Following the propositions from extant literature, the chapter presents analysis describing the relationship between service quality and students' perception of satisfaction with their university of studies. Initial results from the reliability and factor analysis show that the data collection instrument was adequate for the study. The high Cronbach alpha output for the different variables in the model show that the participant's interpretation and understanding of the items on the scale was consistent. The factor analysis show that the items loaded properly for each of the scales, with the principal component analysis output indicating that the items were loaded on a single component. The factor analysis also shows that the variations in the scales were attributable to the items on the scale. In the remaining sections of the chapter, the results were presented sequentially in line with the research objectives. Analysis show that in general, service quality positively influences students' perception of satisfaction. On the second objectives, findings from the data analysed suggests that of the dimensions of service quality, non-academic aspects and programme issues are not significant are not significant predictors of students' satisfactions. See Table 24 for summary of findings from hypothesis.

**Table 24-Summary of hypothesis**

No		Hypothesis	Result
1	H1	HEdPERF scale is a reliable tool for measuring international students' satisfaction	Supported
2	H2a	International students' satisfaction is dependent upon their perception of the dimensions of service quality	Supported

3	H2.1	Academic aspect of service is positively related to overall students' satisfaction	Supported
4	H2.2	Non-academic aspects of service are positively related to overall students' satisfaction	Not supported
5	H2.3	Reputation dimensions of service quality are positively related to overall students' satisfaction	Supported
6	H2.4	Access aspects of service is positively related to overall students' satisfaction	Supported
7	H2.5	Programme issues dimension of service quality is positively related to the overall students' perception of satisfaction	Not supported

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This was illustrated by the very low standardised Beta scores and p-values over 0.05. The significant underlining service quality dimensions from the sampled data include: academic aspects, reputation of the university and access to the university. The third section of the results show that the findings generally were consistent across the different demographic characteristics of the population sample. The findings were exploratory without providing explanation as to reasons for participants' responses. In the next chapter, the propositions deducted from this chapter were structured into interview questions and randomly selected participants in the sample were contacted to provide more in-depth answers to enable the researcher to understand and possibly explain the reasons for the responses in the survey.

## Chapter Seven: Qualitative findings and analysis

This chapter detailed qualitative finding which support in-depth understanding of how the five dimensions of HEdPERF in the quantitative section, influences the participating student's satisfaction with the university. Thus, following 10 structured Interview, data were collected from students in the business school of the university. The advantage of using interview approach is that it provides respondents with an opportunity to express their opinion in their own words (Brenner, Brown, & Canter, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Respondents were able to share their perspectives and experiences, thus, providing more detailed description of findings.

### Interview demography

Respondent by Gender, nationality, level of study

Respondent	Nationality	Gender	Level of study
1	Africa	F	PG
2	Africa	F	PHD
3	Asia	M	PHD
4	Africa	M	PHD
5	Africa	F	PG
6	Africa	F	UG
7	Africa	F	UG
8	Asia	F	UG
9	Asia	F	UG
10	Africa	F	PG

## **Qualitative Interview questions**

### **Service quality**

#### **Meaning of service quality**

*What do you understand by service quality?*

#### **Importance of service quality to daily activities**

*Based on what you said, service quality is somehow important to your day to day activities right? How important is that to your school activities?*

#### **Expectation of service quality**

*What are your expectation in regards to service quality as an international student?*

#### **Knowledge of services offered in the university**

*Alright seeing how important service quality is to you, what service do you think you can get from the university?*

#### ***Expectation from service providers***

Based on what you talked about, employability, library and alumina services, what are your expectations about this service, what do you expect from them, how do you expect them to serve you and impact your studies?

#### **Experience and satisfaction with services**

Have you had any personal experience with the services, based on what you have mentioned? How did it go, where you satisfied?

#### **Non-Academic Aspect**

#### **Experience with non-academic staff**

*So, going further I want to ask you about the Non-Academic aspect of the university, which are those that has nothing to do with teaching. Have you had any experience with a Non-academic staff?*

#### **Sensitivity of non-academic staff**

*Can you relate this service or experience to the staff sensitivity to your needs, how does it make you feel?*



**Academic aspect**

**Relationship with academic staff**

*How will you describe your relationship with teaching staff in the university?*

**Perception of lecture content**

*What are your perception in terms of?*

*Content*

*How it was delivered*

*Who was involved how relevant and useful it was for your work?*

**Quality of communication**

*Are you satisfied with the quality of communication with staff in the university?*

**Expectation from academic staff**

*How well do you think the staff are meeting your needs, above expectation or below expectations? If below what can the staff do that will help them meet your needs?*

**Reputation:**

**Communication from the university**

*How effectively do you think the university communicates with you: what are the issues from your own perspective?*

**Professional image**

*How will you describe the university professional image?*

**Programme issue**

**Do you think the university run wide range of programmes?**

*If yes, how efficient is your departmental programme, does it meet your needs? If no what do you think the university should do better?*

**Access:**

**How accessible is the university and its facilities?**

*How will you describe the university, its academic and non-academic services in terms of availability, approachability, ease of contact and convenience?*

### ***7.1 Analysis Outcome***

The interview followed a general question to understand the definition of satisfaction from student, followed by 10 structured interviews conducted with the HEdPERF scales. This was conducted within the university of Huddersfield business school from July to November, 2017. Participants were drawn from international students across different departments and levels of study. A description of the interviewees is presented. With regards to gender, 8 of them were female students, while 2 were male students. 6 of them were post graduate students, while 4 of them were undergraduate students. Subsequent to 10 interviews that was conducted the resulting themes emerged which will answer research questions and objectives.

**Table 35-Themes and propositions from interviews**

Main themes	Subthemes	Propositions from themes
Theme one: International students have various expectation	Subtheme 1.1 Expectation of quality teaching environment	Proposition 1. Service quality is important to international students
	Subtheme 1.2 Expectation of conducive research environment	Proposition 2. International students have preconceived expectation of service
	Subtheme 1.3: Knowledge of available service	
	Subtheme 1.4 Importance attached to service quality	
Theme Two: Satisfaction with the quality of academic aspects	Subtheme 2.1: Course content	Proposition 3. International students are satisfied with academic aspects dimensions because of the quality of communication and teaching environment.
	Subtheme 2.2: Support for research	
	Subtheme 2.3: Teaching environment	
Theme Three: Satisfaction with the quality of access	Subtheme 3.1: Quality of facilities	Proposition 4. Students are satisfied with the quality of access they have with HUD because they consider the facilities to be good. There is however reservation on their feeling on the quality of communication
	Subtheme 3.2: Quality of communication	

Theme Four: Satisfaction with the quality of non-academic aspects	Subtheme 4.1: Sensitivity of non-academic staff	Proposition 5. Students are dissatisfied with non-academic aspects dimension because they have a mixed reaction about how sensitive non-academic staff are to them and poor quality of communication
	Subtheme 4.2: Quality of communication from non-academic staff	
Theme Five: Satisfaction with the quality of programme issues	Subtheme 5.1: Relevance of programmes	Proposition 6. Students have mixed reaction to the programmes offered. While the considering the range of programmes as adequate, they express mixed feeling to the relevance of the programmes and negative feelings to programme flexibility.
	Subtheme 5.2: Flexibility of programme change	
	Subtheme 5.3: Range of programme	
Theme Six: Professional image of the university	Subtheme 6.1: Willingness to recommend HUD to others	Proposition 7. Students are satisfied with the reputation of the school to the extent that they are willing to recommend it to others because they consider the school to have a good ranking and adequate facilities.
	Subtheme 6.2: University ranking	
	Subtheme 6.3: Facilities available	

The use of structured interviews has been considered as an effective tool for explaining the motivation behind respondent answers to questions (John W Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Patton, 1987). To ensure that the interviews cover the research objectives and that interactions are focussed, an interview protocol was developed. The interview protocol, was useful also to indicate areas that require more probing during the interview process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The interviews were recorded using high quality digital recording device. This was very useful as it improved the quality of the transcription because the researcher was able to rewind and listen to the interviews (Modaff & Modaff, 2000). Each interview was approximately 30 minutes long. Prior to the interviews, each respondent was provided with the relevant ethical considerations. Respondents were assured of their anonymity and were told that they could discontinue the interview or not answers questions that they feel uncomfortable with. Table 25 shows the themes and propositions arrived at from the interviews.

### ***7.2 Restating the findings from the Quantitative Study***

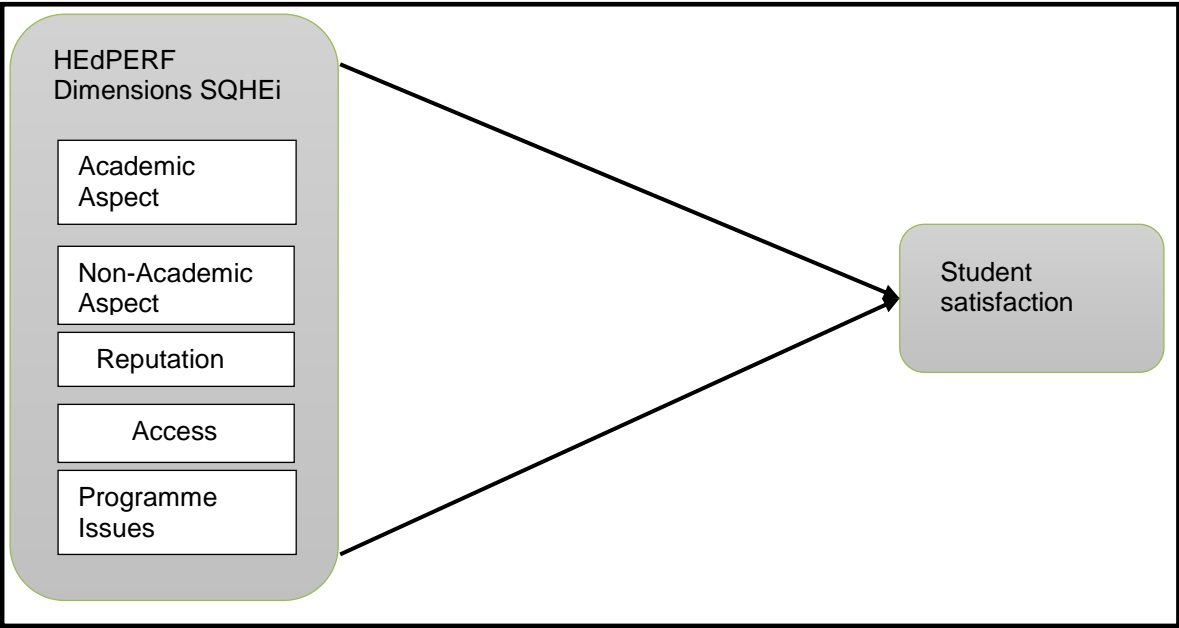
To be able to further investigate the relationships between the variables, the conceptual framework deduced from literature review and supported by a prior quantitative study is presented. The framework shows that service quality as represented by the dimensions (access, academic aspects, non-academic aspects, reputation, and programme issues) have a positive significant relationship with students' satisfaction with the university. The objectives of the study are to determine the reliability of HEdPERF scale as a tool for measuring service quality in the higher education sector and to examine the extent to which the tool influence international students' perception of satisfaction in the university of Huddersfield business school. Overall findings from a quantitative analysis in the previous chapter of this thesis show that of the 5 dimensions in HEdPERF scale (F. Abdullah, 2005, 2006a), only academic aspect, reputation and access were significant. Non-

academic aspects and programme issues dimensions were not significant. It is therefore important to further investigate the deviation in results to better understand the phenomenon of service quality within the context of HUDD.

### 7.3 Findings from Interviews

Findings from the quantitative analysis provided results that were contrary to expectation. For example, it was expected that service quality will influence international students' perception of satisfaction at both collective level and when analysed on an individual component levels (F. Abdullah, 2005, 2006a). However, quantitative findings did not fully support the hypothesis. This was because of the non-significant result of the non-academic aspects and programme issues relationship with international students' perception of satisfaction. Thus, it was therefore necessary to further investigate the rationale for the deviation in expectation. A qualitative approach was deployed to carry out with structured questions developed on the premise of the hypothesis.

**Figure 8- Conceptual model/framework**



## 7.4 Analysis from Themes

In this part, the presentation of themes supported by quotations will be mentioned to clarify the quantitative results and address the research questions. An analysis of frequently used words is presented for each dimension of HEdPERF service quality conceptualisation. Findings from the thematic analysis show that among the dimensions of service quality, only academic aspect, access and reputation had significant influence on international students' perception of satisfaction.

### 7.4.1 Service quality from students' perspective

To begin explaining the relationship in the framework, this findings section first presents the interviewees understanding of the concept of service quality. The following themes emerged from respondent when asked what their opinion is about service quality. See Figure 10.

Figure 10-Frequent words service quality



The words that stood out from the summary include service, expecting, quality, importance, help, experience, support, employability, organisation, provide, expectation, academics. Other words like resources, facilities, information, accessible, conducive, environment were mentioned but not very frequently. A key pattern or theme from the above summary could be that students' perception of service quality was influenced by the expectation they had before enrolling in the university

and the actual experience they have had so far. In describing their perception of service quality, they pattern seem to show that key aspects of service quality in the business school such as information, accessibility, resources, and conducive environment were not high in their opinion. Some responses are presented below. Respondents were quick to provide the meaning of service quality from their perspective. Themes derived are presented with statements from participants to support them.

### **Theme One: International Students have various expectation**

Majority of respondents in the business school considered the expectations as the main factor when talking about service quality. For example, respondent 10 said *“I think service quality assesses how well services are delivered in relation to the expectations of the person receiving the service. In this case, how I as a student perceive the services of the university as a whole and the business school specifically”*. Again *“so for me the service quality is to what extent I grade the service I receive whether it is high or low”* (Respondent 3). Respondent 1 *“it is how satisfied you are with what you’ve received in terms of what the university provides”*.

Interestingly, the international students use their expectations from their home country to evaluate the service quality of institution. However, two of the respondent (number 9) said is important to consider *“how I perceive university experience and how satisfied I am with the university business school and things I expect from them”*. *“To me service quality is the support and the expectation of student receive from the school”*(Respondent 6). A summary of the meaning of service quality from the international students’ point of view show that they have an expectation from the university. Some of the expectations of international students in relation to service quality are presented in the following subthemes:

#### **Subtheme 1.1** Expectation of quality teaching environment

Respondent considered the quality of teaching environment in terms of the knowledge of teachers and their attitude towards students as a determinant of quality. For example, respondent 10 said *“the expectations I had before coming here ranged from high standard and quality teaching, outstanding prowess of the tutors in their different disciplines, support in terms of career*



*development and general grooming of the student to be able not just to get graduate jobs afterwards but to be able to function outstandingly in the real world”.*

### **Subtheme 1.2** Expectation of conducive research environment

International students opinion is influence a university’s quality is influenced by the environment where they study and facilities available for research. A respondent (number 9) said *“I expect the university to provide me with resources and support/ assist me with my studies and also provide opportunities that will create a rich intellectually stimulating and research academic environment. I also expect an environment that provides teaching space, accessible libraries, and accessible range of compressive learning materials”.* Respondents were probed further to investigate whether they have knowledge of the services offered to international students in the university. Their response show that they were aware of the available service:

### **Subtheme 1.3:** Knowledge of available service

From the information gathered, it was discovered that international students have good knowledge of the services available in the Business School. For general and administrative services, respondent (number 3) said *“I think they provide services like reception, the café, the placement, the employment service and learning and development services and administrative services”* For library and informational technology services, respondent (number 4) said *“I think am conversant with the services offered in the business school and the university of Huddersfield as a whole. In terms of IT facilities, such as computer and internet, applications in which that will help support my service, they also provide human resources services in terms of hmmm counselling services, courses in which help to develop my inadequacy”.* Respondent 10 said *“Well I know there is the iPoint, the wellbeing and disability, the careers and employability, the library support, the finance office, the student union, business schools PGR support, academic English centre for international students, the LDG in the business school and other informal channels like, course and student reps and personal tutors”.* For academic support service, respondent (8) said *“I know in business school they have the learning development group (LDG) which help student especially international student) in English language and also how to structure their assignments”.* For other

service respondent (7) said *“Yea I know employability service, wellbeing service, I went for a counselling with them, house rental service as well, student finance but it’s not for international student, and in the business school I know LDG (Learning Development Group for international student) and the library. And still even with them, sometimes you go with your questions, but you come out not satisfied. I went to analysis my data and after booking an appointment, getting there I was told the people that will deal with my issue are not available”*. (Respondent 7).

#### **Subtheme 1.4:** Importance attached to service quality

From respondents’ definition of service quality, their expectation and their knowledge about the services available in the university, the data show that service quality is important to the students. For example, respondent (number 1) said *“It is very important to me because I feel personally, if they haven’t implemented the necessary facilities or if the teachers are not qualified enough to teach me whatever obviously I have enrolled in, then is there no point going to university because its goanna be a struggle”*. Respondent (number 5) also said that *“service quality is quote important to me base on the fact that my action and success somehow depends on the quality of service which I get, take for instance, if the university business school service quality is shabby and as a new student I am making enquires to gain admission into the school, the information I have both from the student, the university and website will shape my decision. For me service quality is so important to me because it is the bed rock of my day to day dealings with the institution”*. Respondent (number 6) also expressed similar opinion as to the importance of service quality in the folllowing statement *“I think it’s really important as an international student, because we came from our home country to study here, e.g. I came from Asian country, so it’s really different background from what I know, in the first few months, I suffered home sickness and loneliness, so if the university can give full support and good service quality to new international student it will help them to adapt into the new environment better and will also improve their wellbeing”*. Following the above analysis, the following propositions are presented with regards to service quality.

**Proposition 1.** Service quality is important to international students

**Proposition 2.** International students have preconceived expectation of service quality in the areas of quality of teaching, research and professional services.

Reflecting on the outcome of the quantitative analysis in chapter 6, proposition 1 supports previous results because the service quality and international students perception of satisfaction model was significant with  $F(5, 487) = 395.3, p = .00$ . The adjusted R Square value also showed the service quality highly predicted international students perception of satisfaction with  $r = 0.8$ . Proposition 2 further shows that service quality is significant and international students perception prior to their enrolment in the school.

#### ***7.4.2 Dimensions of service quality and students' satisfaction with the university***

Respondents were asked about their opinion on the manifestation of the dimensions of service quality in the university. Responses supported the findings from a previous quantitative data indicating a high positive view of the university.

##### ***7.4.2.1 Satisfaction with the quality of academic aspects***

The themes and patterns that emerged from the respondents when asked about their perception of academic aspects in the business school show that their expectations were met. Some key words that stood out were lecture, needs, communication, expected, relationship, content, meetings, help, teaching, relevant. These could indicate that the respondents perceived their lecturers in a good light and have very good contacts and working relationship with them to enable them achieve their academic objective. There were some words that were important but not frequent such as useful, research and understand. Other words that connote some negative perception of respondents' perception of the university's academic aspects include waste, sometimes and improve. This suggests that some respondents had some mixed reaction towards the academic aspects of the business school. See Figure 11 for summary of themes.

#### **Figure 11-Frequent words academic aspects**



**Theme Two: Satisfaction with the quality of academic aspects**

Some responses are presented below to further support the themes and patterns. Specifically, for academic aspects, respondents linked their satisfaction with academic aspects based on the quality of working relationship they had with their teacher. For example, respondent (number 9) said that “most of my lectures are good in directing you on how to go about your studies”. (Respondent 7) “Well personally I came to the university started with my masters but the most thing I struggle with was the pronunciation and also some lectures are very dynamic and some are so boring”. (Respondent 8) “Hmmm, I really don’t know how to start on this question. My relationship with the teaching staff, especially with my lecturers is like a dice, some days they are ok and warmth, some other time they are too harsh and rude, though not all of them. Most of my lectures are good in directing you on how to go about your studies and some other are just racist and hate my accent, I remember one of my lecturer telling me that she cannot relate with me because I don’t understand her, it made me feel so bad but I didn’t allow it overshadow my objective. The major issue here is that you don’t know who to report to and as an international student, it’s really frustrating”. Respondent 3 – “Ahhhh!!!! My relationship with my supervisors is good, owing to the fact that we don’t take any lectures, for now it’s good in terms of personality, however I have a problem in terms of how they deliver information to us, and he gives me feedback on my work, though it’s sometimes late. But other than that it’s good”.

**Subtheme 2.1: Course content**

Respondent (number 1) in providing insight on course content said “the content in terms of the lecture, one of my lectures make his lecture so interesting and detailed... most of the courses enlighten your perceptiveness about the business world, completion and how the business world functions”. (Respondent 8) *“Personally I will say some of my lecture content are good, while others are a total waste of time and money, some of them are so relevant to me but was not properly delivered, while others are completely not relevant to my course but I was forced or better said cajoled to take them”*.

### **Subtheme 2.2:** Support for research

To explain the quality of communication with faculty, respondent (number 4) said “I will say, I am satisfied with the level of interaction and communication I do have with my teaching staff (e.g. my supervisor). It’s grown and gotten better overtime, it’s not something that just kicked off from day one but I think overtime, relationship was built, confidence was installed, respect as well was earned, so overtime I think it’s grown and gotten to a position where I think I have developed enough confidence”.

### **Subtheme 2.3:** Teaching environment

Teaching environment was interpreted in terms of assability of teachers to support students. For example, respondent (number 5) said *“I have good relationship with those that have taught me and the teaching quality was good, I always have a one on one meeting with the lecturers when am confused with any aspect that I don’t understand and also in terms of supervision, I always have good supervisors and they have really helped me in channelling my path on what to do and go about my research. They always encourage me to study more and achieve my aim”*. Based on the above analysis of interviews, the following proposition is presented for academic aspects:

**Proposition 3.** International students are satisfied with academic aspects dimensions because of the quality of communication and teaching environment.

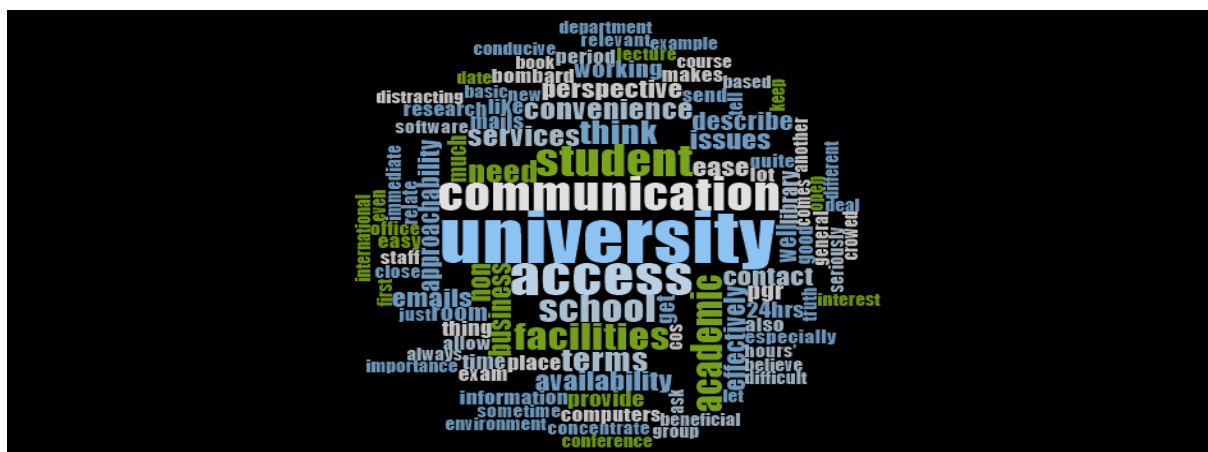
This proposition explains the previous quantitative results investigating the relationship between academic aspects and international students’ perception of satisfaction. Quantitative results show that academic aspects predicted students’ satisfaction with a coefficient of regression value of  $\beta =$

0.44,  $p < .01$ . It could therefore be suggested that quality of communication and teaching environment are factors that make academic aspects significantly predict students' satisfaction.

#### 7.4.2.2 Satisfaction with the quality of access

Respondents were also asked how they felt about the quality of access to them in the university. Their responses show that they had a mixed feeling about the access to university facilities and resources. The themes and patterns that stood out show that students' perception of how accessible the school was depended on the quality of communication they had with the school. Other key words that were frequent include facilities, academic, need, convenience, services, availability, ease, approachability. There were some key words that were not frequent and thus suggested that students' opinion with regards to them were low such as 24 hours, time, working, library, mails, information and conducive. See Figure 12 for summary.

**Figure 12-Frequent words access**



#### **Theme Three: Satisfaction with the quality of access**

Extracts from the interview are provided to further support the above discussed patterns. For example, while the under graduate students seemed to be satisfied with the quality of access, post

graduate students in addition to access, wanted comfort. Subthemes are are presented followed by participants' responses to support them.

### **Subtheme 3.1: Quality of facilities**

Analysis from the interviews showed that international students' view access to the Business school was affected by the quality of facilities in the school. For example, respondent (number 1) said that *"It's quite easy for the fact that I don't need to be in school to access some of the facilities, like the unidesktop, makes it much more convenient, basically you get all your university information at any place and at any time"*.

This position was also supported by respondent (number 9) in the following statement *"The university especially the business school has a wide range of facilities, which is good, the lecture room are well equip with computers and the library are accessible during school time and mostly during exam period. Also, the university has introduced laptop which students can borrow to complete their school work"*.

However, respondent (number 3) presented a mixed view with regards to the quality of facilities.... *"the facilities are accessible but not comfortable, as a master's student the library at some point was accessible, sometime 24hrs especially during exam ad also the 24 hours' service room but as a post graduate research student accessibility to facility is really poor because as a student I need 24hrs silent computer room, whereby I can concentrate and work"*.

### **Subtheme 3.2: Quality of communication**

Probing further, an aspect of access dimension that students also showed a mixed reaction was the communication they received from the business school. While some had a positive experience, other did not. For example, respondent (number 1) said *" the communication is like 24hr, if not immediate depending on who you are dealing with"*. Respondent (number 2) also echoed the positive view quality of communication *"I think they communicate very well because they keep you up to date with the happenings in the school and on time"*.

Some example of negative views are stated. For example, respondent (number 7) said that *"the communication for me is too much, the university bombard you with so much mail, for me this is not good"*. This view was also support by respondent (number 3) *" I don't think the business school*

*communicate well to us cos they don't send us information that we need as a student, you only get the information you need when you ask and if you don't ask, they still blame you for not asking".* From the analysis of the interview responses above, this research makes the proposition in relation to access and international students' perception of satisfaction as follows:

**Proposition 4.** Students are satisfied with the quality of access they have with HUD because they consider the facilities to be good. There is however reservation on their feeling on the quality of communication. Proposition 4 is similar to findings from the qualitative study in chapter 6 and provides an indepth explanation for the outcome of the quantitative results. The relationship reported in chapter 6 showed that access significant predicted student satisfaction as follows,  $\beta = 0.31, p < .01$ . The qualitative results showed that the positive relationship reported in chapter 6 was because international students considered the quality of access to facilities as good and adequate to support their studies.

#### ***7.4.2.3 Satisfaction with the quality of non-academic aspects***

Students were also asked about their opinion of the non-academic aspects of the dimensions of service quality in the university.

#### **Theme Four: Satisfaction with the quality of non-academic aspects**

Some themes and patterns were noticed from their responses. This was observed by the frequency of the words that they used. Some of the outstanding words include experience, needs, ask, sensitivity, feel, help. There were however some outstanding negative words such as nothing, mistake and wasted. This pattern suggests that students had a mixed reaction towards the non-academic aspects of the business school. See Figure 13 for summary.

#### **Figure 13-Frequent words non-academic aspects**





*and almost miss the assignment, I have to take extra time for submitting my assignment”. “Well I have, the experiences I just narrated to you involved Non-Academic staff members. More recently, I have been waiting for my second-year progression feedback for over four months after I had my progression assessment. You won’t believe I have not received it yet. Almost every day I am at the business school admin desk asking questions about this and I just get told one story or the other and to come back the following week. Like I said earlier, I just can’t wait to leave this institution.”*  
(Respondent 10)

From the analysis of interview responses above, the following proposition is made in relation to non-academic staff aspects:

**Proposition 5.** Students are dissatisfied with non-academic aspects dimension because they have a mixed reaction about how sensitive non-academic staff are to them and poor quality of communication.

This qualitative results is similar to the quantitative study output in chapter 6. Quantitative results show that non-academic aspect had a weak regression coefficient and did not significantly predict international students perception of satisfaction,  $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.147$ . This qualitative study contributes to the understanding of the results by highlighting the factors that negatively influenced students perception of the services provided by non-academic staff. These include non-academic staff’s insensitivity towards students needs and poor quality of communication.

#### ***7.4.2.4 Satisfaction with the quality of programme issues***

Findings from the interview show that for programme issue dimensions, students had a mixed feeling about the courses available to them.

#### **Theme Five: Satisfaction with the quality of programme issues**

An analysis of the frequency of words used to by respondents to explain their perception show that students had mixed reaction towards the programmes offered in the school. Some outstanding words were meet, wide, better, efficient, issues, focus, concern, relevant, fees, think and scrapped. These themes suggest that programme issues within the context of the study meant meeting the course needs of the students. Positive feelings are expressed when students think that their concerns are met. See Figure 14 below

Figure 14-Frequent words programme issues



Examples of students' negative reactions to the programme issue of the business school are seen in the themes and statements below:

#### **Subtheme 5.1:** Relevance of programmes

Relevance of programme has to do with students perception of the support available for their courses and whether they consider the modules linked to their overall academic goals. Respondents views were negative. For example respondent (number 3) said *“I think they need to improve more on the programme they offer, the institution should especially focus more on delivering more data collection, research method training for new PGR student, in order to help them achieve more in their PhD experience with the university”*. Respondent (number 8) also echoed this position *“some of the programmes need to be scrapped and more relevant ones introduces. For example, I did business administration and management some of the programmes or courses are so not needed for my course but I was made to take it and the ones I really need was not offered to me. This are some of the frustrations we face as international student and there is no feedback platform”*.

#### **Subtheme 5.2:** Flexibility of programme change

Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their inability to switch from one module to another. For example, respondent (number7) said *“because am mainly focuses to marketing so everything*

*was related and ok with, till I got to 3<sup>rd</sup> year and I have to change the module at some point which was so difficult to change when I wanted to change it”.*

### **Subtheme 5.3:** Range of programme

International students expressed a positive view about the range of programmes available to study. For example, Respondent (number 5) said “ *the university have a lot of student which shows that they have a lot of programmes in place especially in the business school, the modules are widely covered and touches every aspect of management even though I switched from computing to business but I have learnt a lot about management and research method*”. This position was re-echoed by responden (number 4) “*I think the university does provide adequate level of programme that will help facilitate the completion of my degree, the research method programme was quite helpful in terms of refreshing my memory in term of research method because no doubt those where elementary course on research methodology, which I believe every PGR student to go through as a refreshers course*”. Respondent (number 9) said, “*I can say yes because in the business school we have a lot of programmes, if am correct the business has 5 departments and each of this department has many programmes which they run. As a strategic management student, I will say that my course programme meets my needs and am satisfied with my programme*”.

Following from the above analysis of interviews, proposition six is presented with regards to programme issues and international students perception of satisfaction:

**Proposition 6.** Students have mixed reaction to the programmes offered. While the consider the range of programmes as adequate, they express mixed feeling to the relevance of the programmes and negative feelings to programme flexibility.

This qualitative output is similar to the quantitative output in chapter 6. The quantitative results show that programme issues negatively predicted student satisfaction with  $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $p = 0.08$ . The qualitative results provides insight into this negative relationship by highlighting the factors that influenced this outcome. These include the relevance of the programme, the flexibility of the programme and the adequacy of the programme.

#### **7.4.2.5 Satisfaction with the reputation of the university**

Students were also asked questions with relation to their view on the reputation of the university.

## Theme Six: Professional image of the university

The themes that were derived from participants' responses show that their perception of reputation involved the image of the school, quality of communication, facilities and the quality of faculty available. Some word used frequent showed that respondents were happy with the reputation of the school; such as good, better, well, effective and efficient. See Figure 15.

Figure 15-Frequent words reputation



Findings show that students have a positive feeling on the professional image of the university and statements from respondents showed three subthemes discusses below.

### Subtheme 6.1: Willingness to recommend HUD to others

Respondents were happy to be associated with the university because of its reputation the extent that they were willing to recommend it to their friends. For example respondent (number 1) said *“I definitely respect the university of Huddersfield and I have recommended it to some of my friend, they are highly professional in the way they do things”*.

### Subtheme 6.2: University ranking

In comparing the school with others, respondents expressed a positive view of the reputation of the university. In the following statement, respondent ( number 4) said *“the university has done a*

*good job over the years in terms of building a good reputation for itself over the year, it's among the committee of universities... ”.*

### **Subtheme 6.3:** Facilities available

Another reason given by respondents for the positive view of the university's reputation is the facilities available. For example, respondent (number 7) said *“I will give a good reputation to this university based on the fact that they have some good facilities”*.

Proposition seven is presented below to summarize the relationship between reputation aspects and international students' perception of satisfaction.

**Proposition 7.** Students are satisfied with the reputation of the school to the extent that they are willing to recommend it to others because they consider the school to have a good ranking and adequate facilities.

This qualitative result was supported by the quantitative results presented in chapter 6. Results from previous quantitative study showed that reputation aspect significantly predicted international students' perception of satisfaction with  $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < .01$ . The qualitative study provided more insight into this result by showing that international students considered the school to have good ranking and facilities, and were happy to recommend the school to their peers.

#### ***7.4.2.6 Satisfaction with the quality of service in university***

Following the explanations given by the students with regards to service quality and the individual dimensions, they were asked about how satisfied they are with the services in the university. The themes derived from the word frequency analysis show that students' satisfaction was dependent mainly on the experience they have in the school. Some frequently used words include need, library, academic, help, personal, support, employability. However, there were some frequently used negative words to suggest that student perception of satisfaction had mixed reaction. These include difficulties, bad, fair and issues. See Figure 16 for summary of words frequently used.

#### **Figure 16-Frequent words for satisfaction with service quality**



*but can't find it in the library, went to complain and was told they don't have the book and for me to get it I have to pay some fee. The issue is that the library has outdated book and articles, even though they have started changing but more are still needed from them".* The information point was also view negatively. For example, respondent (number 8) said *"I have a lot of personal experience with some of the teams I mentioned early, my first encounter when I came in newly didn't know where to go, went to the I-point to make enquiries and was disappointed because it took them some time to answer me"..*

### **7.5 Summary**

A reflection on the HEdPERF scale from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis shows that for both approaches, the findings were consistent. For example, non-academic aspects and programme issues displayed a non-significant relationship to international students' perception of service quality. This was supported by a mixed result from the qualitative data analysis. Responses from participants show that international students had both positive and negative views of both dimension of service quality in the university. In addition, both approach support the positive relationship between academic aspects, reputation and access dimensions of service quality and international student perception of satisfaction. The qualitative analysis result on international students' overall satisfaction did not support the findings from the quantitative analysis. For example, when students were asked to state their overall satisfaction with the business school, their responses provided a mixed result, with both positive and negative answers. This qualitative chapter has provided further evidence to support the findings from the quantitative study. The chapter has further confirmed that of the 5 dimensions of service quality, within the context of the University of Huddersfield Business School, only 3 (academic aspect, access and reputation) are significant, with 2 non-significant (non-academic aspects and programmes issues). Following the finding from this qualitative chapter, discussions of finding chapter will attempt to explain the results based on existing literature to provide possible rationale for the findings in this study.



## **Chapter Eight: Review of Findings**

Previous chapters highlight the preliminary steps of data collection, screening and data analysis. Also detailing testing of hypotheses. The key contribution of this research lies in unbundling the components of SQ dimension and broadly examine the implication of SQ dimension (HEdPERF) on international student perceive satisfaction using a mixed method approach. Quantitative Data was collected using (HEdPERF) questionnaire scale among 493 international business school students, which was backed up by a qualitative approach, in other to get an in-depth understanding of how the five (HEdPERF) dimensions of service quality influence international student's satisfaction within the university. This chapter presents discussion of findings on a thematic basis and discusses issues pertaining to aspects of the hypotheses findings identified in chapter 4. The discussions are divided into -the first part presents discussion on how service quality influences international students perception both on the overall and within each dimension. The second part attempts to explain the differences in participants' response due to their demographic attributes.

### ***8.1 Review of Research Finding and Contribution***

Some degree of comparative study has been carried out by few researchers to measure student perceived service quality using HEdPERF and ServPerf to test its practicality.

The result of these comparative studies has proved that HEdPERF is a more reliable instrument for measuring student perception in the higher education environment compare to other instrument (F. Abdullah, 2006a; Brochado, 2009). However, many studies has not been empirically tested using HEdPERF to analysis the influence of SQ on student perception of satisfaction with focus on international student (Hanaysha, Abdullah, & Warokka, 2011). This thesis has made significant findings and fill the gap in literature by investigating the influence of SQ dimension (HEdPERF) in Huddersfield university business school and the relationship between service quality and

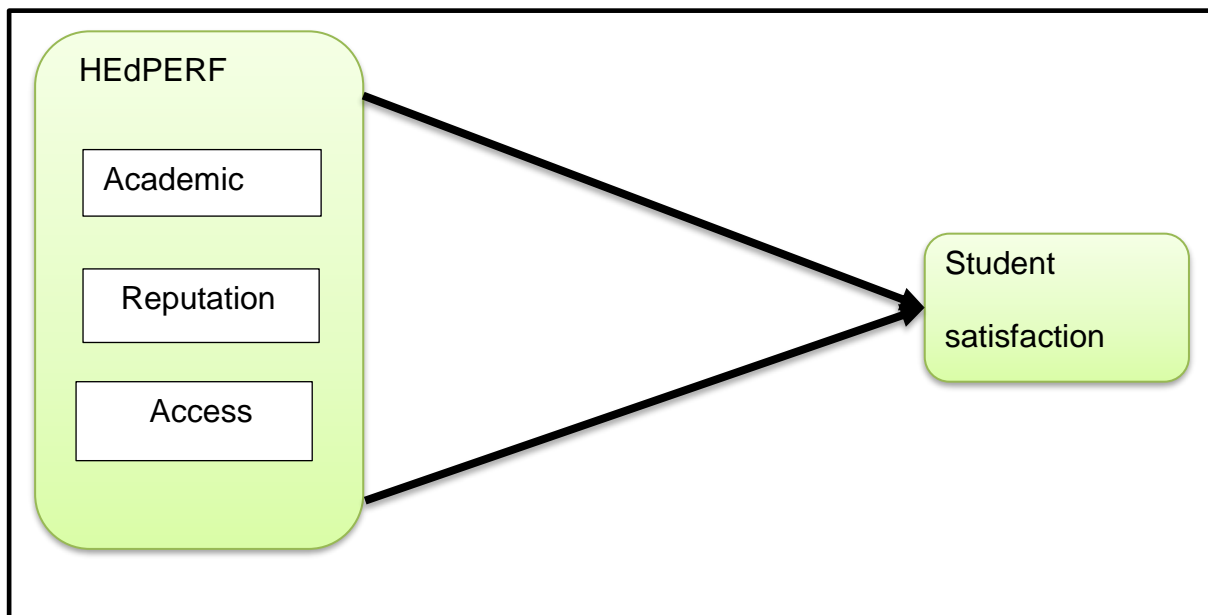
international students' perception of satisfaction. For example, while service quality on the overall had a significant positive effect on international students' perception of satisfaction, when examined at the individual level, not all five dimensions had positive relationship with international students' perception of satisfaction. Specifically, academic aspects, reputation and access components of service quality showed positive relationships, while non-academic aspects and programme issues did not show positive relationships. These findings are in accordance with other research that have studied the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction (F. Abdullah, 2006a; Afzal, Akram, Akram, & Ijaz, 2010; Ali et al., 2016). Discussions are also provided to explain the reasons why there are differences in the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction due to participants' demographic attributes. The first section of this chapter discusses the overall results while the later section considers the impact of demographic attributes.

This section presents discussion on a thematic basis to cover all aspects of the objectives of the study. The discussions are presented irrespective of participants demographic attributes.

**Hypothesis 1**-Explanations on HEdPERF tool as a reliable to for measuring international student perception of satisfaction.

The first objective of this study was to examine whether Abdullah (2005,2006) HEdPERF scale was a reliable tool for measuring international students' perception of satisfaction. Findings showed that HEdPERF service quality scale was a reliable tool for measuring students' satisfaction. Reliability is a measure of the consistency of a scale across different settings. It also confirms the extent to which the scales provide similar interpretation among the respondents. Reliability results from this study show that all the variables on the service quality scale had a reliability result of Cronbach alpha above 0.90 (Read & Dillon, 2013). The measure of students' perception of satisfaction is important and requires a reliable scale and this is especially because

of the services provided by the University. The services provided by higher education institutions (HEi) are intangible and are targeted at the minds of people. Alolayyan, Mohd Ali, Idris, and Ibrehem (2011) noted the importance of measuring what people feel about the services of HEIs. Silva, Moraes, Makiya, and Cesar (2017) noted while other scales such as SERVQUAL and SERVPERF have been implemented in HEIs to gauge students' perception, they are scales designed to measure customers perception of satisfaction on a general basis and not specifically targeted at students. Abdullah (2006) identified this challenge and developed a student focussed service quality scale meant to measure students' perception of satisfaction in HEi. It is therefore not surprising that analysis measuring reliability of the scale confirmed that was a reliable tool for measuring international students' satisfaction. This finding provides an important contribution to the service quality literature. This study is the first the utilise the Abdullah (2005,2006) service quality scale in the United Kingdom. The significance of this results suggests that this scale is reliable for investigating how to influence international students' perception of satisfaction in the United Kingdom.



## ***8.2 Explanations on the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction***

The second objective of this study was to determine the extent to which service quality influenced international students' perception of satisfaction. Results show that the relationship between service quality and international students; perception of satisfaction was positive and significant with a model  $F(5, 487) = 395.3, p=.00$ . To further understand the rationale of this result, a further qualitative investigation was carried with findings suggesting that international students had a previous expectation about the university before enrolling for their studies. The positive result was explained by student acknowledgement that the university is meeting up with their expectation. The respondents showed satisfaction with services such as the learning development group, library services, ICT and the quality of teaching staff in the school. Respondents notes that for international students, meeting their expectation was important in the way they perceive their level of satisfaction with the University. This is especially because of the high amount of fees that international students have to pay to access university education. There are two schools of thought with regards to how students are perceived in HEi. The first school considers them as products of HEi, while the other describes them as customers (Duque, Duque, & Suriñach, 2013). The importance of the customer focussed orientation is that it considers roles and responsibilities that they share in the acquisition of their degree. Lazibat, Baković, and Dužević (2014) noted that as customers, students had to pay for their studies in HEi and put in efforts to study in order to succeed. As such, HEi are constantly looking for ways to identify students' needs and to look for best possible ways to meet those needs. For international students studying in the University of Huddersfield in the UK, the amount of fees paid is much higher than their peers from the UK. International students sometimes have to meet the English language requirement and put in more extra hours to be able to perform at the same level with domestic students because of their language barrier. The dimension of service quality upon which this study is premised on includes 5 key variables that are of immense importance to international students.

international students come travel overseas because they want to have access to education that is better than what is obtainable in their local countries. They expect that the university will have better qualified teachers, administrative staff that understands their challenges to enable them navigate through their new environment, access to facilities, better reputation than what is obtainable in their local country, programmes that meets their needs (Lazibat et al., 2014). Service quality is linked to attitudes and last longer in the minds of students. Students' attitude is developed from the experience of the service that is offered. Perception of satisfaction on the hand, is linked to what student consume and is temporal. Student form their attitude when they have a positive experience with the dimensions of service quality and this results in their satisfaction.

Findings from this study show that although all the individual dimensions of service quality do not positively relate to international students' perception of service quality in the University of Huddersfield, the dimensions that are positive are those that extant literature considers as most important (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). For example, in this study academic aspect, reputation and access reported positive relationship. Lizzio, Wilson, and Simons (2002) highlighted the important role that academic aspects play in the determination of international student' perception of satisfaction. Academic aspects highlight the role of lecturers in creating and enabling environment and motivating students to learn. This explains why when all five dimensions of service quality are tested in a single regression model, the resultant relationship to international students' perception of satisfaction is positive and significant. The contribution of this study to the service quality literature is seen by the findings that highlights that within the context of this study three dimensions were significant (academic aspects, reputation, and access) while non-academic aspect and programme issues were not significant. Each of the dimensions are further discussed in the next subsection.

### ***8.3 Explanation of academic aspect relationship to international students' perception of satisfaction***

For academic aspects and international students' perception of satisfaction, findings from the quantitative data showed that this dimension of service quality had stronger effect on international students' perception of satisfaction when compared to other dimensions with  $\beta=0.44$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The reason for this result may be explained from the qualitative analysis. Respondents showed that students in the University of Huddersfield Business School had a good perception about the teaching staff in the school. They highlighted the teaching style and relationship with teachers as factors that explained their perception of academic aspects. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative analysis are corroborated by existing studies. For example, Nawaz and Qureshi (2010) noted that teachers play a significant role in the influencing students' behaviour, results and their perception about the school. Furlong and Christenson (2008) reiterated a similar position by noting that teachers who are empathetic to students create a relationship with students such that such relationship becomes a more significant factor in their perception of service quality. It may therefore be suggested that the quality of relationship between teachers and students and performance of teachers are important factors that explain the high relationship between academic aspects and international students' perception of satisfaction (Farr-Wharton, Charles, Keast, Woolcott, & Chamberlain, 2018). The contribution of this study to current service quality literature highlights the importance of faculty members teaching style and interaction with international student as a key determinant of how international student get to be satisfied with their university.

### ***8.4 Explanation of non-academic aspect relationship to international students' perception of satisfaction***

Findings from this study did not support theoretical expectation of non-academic aspects and students' perception of satisfaction. Whereas it was expected that non-academic aspects should

positively influence students' perception of satisfaction, the reverse was the case ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $p > 0.15$ ). Investigating further, the qualitative analysis showed that international students' experience with non-academic staff in the school was not been positive. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the attitude on non-academic staff. There seemed to be misunderstanding between what students need and what services was offered. This may be because of language barrier as some international student may not be able to fully express themselves. A respondent noted that a non-academic staff sent her a wrong timetable which complicated her study for 2 weeks. It may therefore be suggested that student that have a negative perception of the non-academic services that are provided in the school may have a negative perception of satisfaction (Ali et al., 2016). Similar studies have also show that although they show a positive relationship between non-academic aspect and service quality, when compared to other dimensions of service quality, they showed lower effect than other dimensions (Ali et al., 2016; Lazibat et al., 2014). From the findings of this study, contributes to existing literature by highlighting the importance of international student perception. Respondent perceived non-academic staff members to have poor attitude towards them. Both findings and literature also notes that a reason for negative impression that international students have about non-academic staff may be because of language barrier.

### ***8.5 Explaining reputation relationship to international students' perception of satisfaction***

The thesis examined the impact that reputation dimension may have on international students' perception of satisfaction and found that there is a positive significant relationship between international students' perception of the reputation of their school and their satisfaction with the school with  $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Further qualitative analysis also corroborated the findings of the quantitative study. In attempting to understand this relationship within the context of the university of Huddersfield, respondents' perception of the reputation of the school was premised on the quality of facilities in the school and the professional image of the school. This position is in line with Ardi, Hidayatno, and Yuri M. Zagloel (2012) findings on the factors that influence

student perception of a university reputation. For Ardi et al. (2012), physical structures including building and equipment have the potential for influencing student perception of the reputation of their school. A key reason why Universities are modernising and enhancing the facilities available on campuses is to improve their brand as a professional environment (Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen, & Wilson, 2016). International students form their perception of a university reputation prior to their admission to the school. The positive relationship between reputation and satisfaction is premised on the meaning and attachment that international students place on the brand of the school. Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) also linked international student perception reputation to campus life (facilities available and support available for international students). The qualitative findings and corroboration from extant studies highlights the importance of the structures and facilities in a university as a key indicator of international students' perception of university reputation. It could therefore be suggested that the huge investment made in the improvement of the facilities at the university has positively influenced students perception of the reputation of the school.

### ***8.6 Explanation of access aspects relationship to international students' perception of satisfaction***

In explaining the relationship between access aspect of service quality, findings show that international students' perception of the access they have to their university positively influenced their satisfaction with the school with  $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Investigating further by means of interviews, some factors were responsible for international students' positive perception of the access they have with the school. These include the 24 hours service provide by the university IT department. Students were pleased to be access university services remotely from their locations. However, a further probe on students' perception of access showed that they had a mixed feeling toward access aspect. For example, while the university library had a 24-hour access online, it only operated on a 24-hour basis during examination season. Students also complained about the



information overload from the university administration department. They noted that the poor quality of communication with the administrative staff affect their effectiveness.

Chanaka Ushantha and Samantha Kumara (2016) noted that access aspect of service quality was important in the way that international students perceive their satisfaction with the school. Studies suggest that the access that students have to their school especially with regards to communication from staff of the university was instrumental to how satisfied they have with their school (Dužević, Čeh Časni, & Lazibat, 2015). Following the important role that communication from the school plays in the perception of the quality of access, it is not surprising that international students expressed mixed feeling toward their satisfaction. Thus, while access aspect is positive on the overall, there is need to improve the quality of communication. From this study, 24-hour access to facilities (library and online) and quality of communication that international students receive from staff are significant indicators of their perception of access that they have in the university. Although quantitative results show a positive relationship between access and international students' satisfaction, qualitative results showed a mixed relationship. Students negative perception of access was linked to the poor communication that they had with administrative staff, further reemphasising the negative relationship that non-academic aspects have with international students' perception of satisfaction.

### ***8.7 Explanation of programme issues relationship to international students' perception of satisfaction***

Analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between programme issues and international students' perception of satisfaction. In the first quantitative analysis, findings with regards to the University of Huddersfield Business School shows that there was a negative relationship between programme issues and international students' perception of satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.06, p > 0.08$ ). Attempting to explain this result, a further qualitative analysis was done by means

of interviews and found that some viewed some programmes offered in the school as irrelevant. Students also complained that it was difficult to change from one course to another. The interviews did not only provide negative reactions to the programme issues in the school. There were some positive reactions from the students. For example, some students expressed their satisfaction with the range of programme available in the school. Studies show that programme issues are important to international students. For example, international students expect to have flexibility with their programmes and a curriculum that is robust and relevant for them to be satisfied with their school (Ali et al., 2016). Thus, the difficulties that student face with changing their course and their perception of the modules and courses offered in the business school may therefore be linked to the negative relationship between programme issues and student satisfaction.

The negative result of programme issues and international students' satisfaction may be linked to their poor perception of the non-academic aspects of service quality dimension. Qualitative findings show that respondents perceive the communication they receive from non-academic staff as poor. It may be deduced that the programme issues are not properly communicated to students or students understanding of the programme issues until they have challenges with the programme. This study contributes to extant literature by highlighting the importance of communication in the development of student's perception of programme issues.

### ***8.8 Discussion of findings in relation to demographic characteristics of participants***

The section of the discussion chapter presents discussion to explain the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction taking into consideration the effect of demographic characteristics of the respondents.

### ***8.8.1 Gender difference***

Findings show that for both male and female, the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction was similar with the general findings. The adjusted R square for both categories also reported very similar  $\beta$  values (0.82 and 0.80 for female and male respectively). A further qualitative analysis show that for both female and male students, their perception of satisfaction is met when their expectation of the quality of services that they receive at the university is met. Both genders' expectation of service quality includes teaching quality, general support from allied services like learning development and career development. Looking at the relationship between the individual dimensions of service quality and international students' satisfaction, findings show that for female students, only academic aspects and access were significant while male students results showed that all five dimensions were significant. Among the five significant relationships for male students, programme issues had a negative relationship with international students' perception of satisfaction. A possible explanation for the negative outcomes for reputation for female students was that they did not see any translation of how the investment in developing facilities impacted their wellbeing. For non-academic staff, female students' response showed their disapproval of the quality of response they got from non-academic staff. Whiles they experienced delayed response from queries made, they decried the increased rate of emails from non-academic staff that was not useful to them. Programme issues did not also have a positive relationship for female students. Female students interviewed expressed mixed reaction on the programme issues. They did not consider some of the modules and programmes relevant.

For male students, although the dimensions related significantly with students' satisfaction, the qualitative findings showed mixed or negative reactions for academic aspects, programme issues, access, reputation and non-academic aspects. Interview responses showed that male students had negative response towards the delivery of the research methodology course. For

reputation, they suggested that the university professional image was below expectation and did not focus on the need of post graduate students. For access, male student noted that the environment was not conducive for them to carry out their research. The regression model showed that service quality positively influenced students' satisfaction for both male and female students. At the individual dimensions level qualitative results showed a different outcome from the regression result. Both female and male students had a mixed and negative reaction towards the individual dimensions of service quality and students' satisfaction. This finding is similar to existing studies. For example, Tinajero, Martínez-López, Rodríguez, Guisande, and Páramo (2015) found that male and female perception of the service quality with regards to the support they had from their school was similar and as such did not require specific gender categorisation. A similar study by Albert and Johnson (2011) examining the perception of male and female students' satisfaction of learning systems showed minimal differences and as such gender categorisation did not affect students' perception. The implication of this finding suggest that student experience of service quality may not be different for both male and female students.

### ***8.8.2 Nationality difference***

With regards to the effect of nationality, findings showed that for European students (except UK students), the effect was higher than for the other nationality categorisations. The second group of international students with higher relationship were African students. The third group was Asian students and lastly was the Middle East students. All groups of students had a high  $\beta$  values (0.87, 0.85, 0.81, and 0.80 respectively). The quantitative result show that service quality was both positive and significant with students' satisfaction irrespective of international students' nationality. Findings from extant studies, for example, Ansary, Jayashree, and Malarvizhi (2014) that considered the effect of nationality on how students perceive service quality also reported similar findings with this study and found that there students' nationality did not significantly influence their perception of satisfaction as a result of their university's service quality. When

considering the relationship between each dimension of service quality and international students' satisfaction, results show that for African students only academic aspect and access dimensions were positive and significant. For Asian students, academic aspects, reputation and access dimensions were positive and significant. For European students (except UK), academic aspects and reputation was positive and significant. For Middle East, academic aspects, reputation and access was significant. Further qualitative findings analysis for each nationality is discussed below.

An African student interviewed showed a negative reaction towards the response and sensitivity of non-academic staff. Another African student highlighted her displeasure in the communication flow from the non-academic staff members. For reputation aspects, an African student interviewed noted that the University focus has been on developing the infrastructure of the school and not the students' wellbeing. Another student also decried the high rate of staff turnover as a signal of poor reputation. On programme issues, a student suggested the need for the University to broaden the programmes that will help students succeed such as research courses. For Asian students, an interviewee noted a bad experience with non-academic staff. The student noted that non-academic staff members did not inform her that her attendance records were not up to date despite her continued attendance. This challenge took a long time to be resolved. Another student noted that some of the programmes offered in their courses were not relevant. There were no respondents available to be interviewed for Europe and Middle East. However, from the quantitative results, all groups of students' responses showed that non-aspects and programme issues were not significant. From the qualitative results, the programme issues mentioned by students were linked to the activities of non-academic staff. It may therefore be suggested that the school takes actions to train non-academic staff-members to understand the needs of international students and how best to communicate with them so as to give them positive experience.

### ***8.8.3 Age and level of study***

Findings show that within the categorisation of age and level of study, the results were similar. Younger students were mostly undergraduate students while older students were post graduate students. The differences in  $\beta$  value was in significant for both categories of students. However, older students and post graduate students had a slightly higher  $\beta$  value compared to younger students and undergraduates (older students and post graduate student 0.85 and 0.86 respectively, younger students and undergraduates 0.78 and 0.78 respectively). A further investigation into the individual dimensions of service quality and international students' satisfaction, both students younger than 25 years and those older than 25 years reported non-significant relationship between non-academic aspects and programme issues. Academic aspects and reputation were positive and significant for both groups. However, access was significant for only younger students. A reason for this is that older students are able to do more of their course work remotely using available online resources. Older students are mainly post graduate students and have the discipline to carry out their assignments online. Results for undergraduate and post graduate students had similar outcome with younger and older students. An attempt to understand the quantitative results led to a further qualitative investigation using interviews. An undergraduate student that was interviewed noted that non-academic staff members were unable to communicate properly with her because of language barrier. The student noted that non-academic staff were not mindful of international students' language barrier and spoke too fast, making understanding difficult. A post graduate student interviewed also presented similar negative reaction on the quality of communication from non-academic staff. The student noted that information is not proactively given to ensure that students do not face challenges. Information is provided reactively when students are already facing a problem that would have been abated if they received prior information.

Both undergraduate and post graduate students had negative reactions to programme issues. An undergraduate student interviewed noted that there is difficulty in changing from one

course to another. Another student noted that some of the modules were not relevant to their course. A post graduate student interviewed suggested that the university focuses on including modules that will assist research activities such as research method training and data analysis trainings. This has been explained by extant studies by the level of maturity of post graduates and older students (Arambewela & Hall, 2009). Post graduate students already have previous experience with higher education institutions compared to undergraduates and may have a higher expectation on quality of services offered in the University (Bagozzi, 1992). Houston and Rees (1999) also noted that international post graduate students are able to adjust to their new environment better than undergraduate students. Post graduate students also place higher value on the reputation of the school in the hope that it would create better chances of them gaining employment.

#### ***8.8.4 New or returning student***

Analysis shows that the effect of service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction was slightly higher for students who have stayed longer in the school than for those who are new in the school. The reason for this slight difference may due to the length of time that returning students have spent in the school. Returning students have formed networks in the school and tend to know their way around the school. They experienced all aspects of the service quality dimensions and as such can form an informed opinion of the satisfaction they receive from the schools' service. it is therefore not surprising that the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction is higher for returning students than for new students. Emphasises on SQ strategic role and how it enhances attraction of new student, retention of existing student and competitiveness has been a focal point for higher education provider (P. Sultan & H. Wong, 2010). F. Abdullah (2006a) developed a five-dimensional scale for measuring SQ in the higher education context called HEdPERF; this scale evaluates perceived satisfaction using academic aspect, Non-academic aspect, programme issues, Access and Reputation.

### ***8.8.5 Integrated quantitative findings in relation to qualitative findings***

This chapter has provided discussions from the findings of both qualitative and quantitative studies conducted for this research. First findings showed that HEdPERF scale was a reliable tool for measuring students' perception of service quality. Secondly, evidence from both quantitative and qualitative studies using explanatory mixed method design, in which the qualitative research was used to explore deeply the result achieved by the quantitative research. The findings show that non-academic aspects of service quality dimensions were not significant within the context where this study took place both quantitatively with ( $\beta = 0.06, p > 0.15$ ) and through further qualitative study. Existing literature suggests that the negative perception that international students have about non-academic aspects of the university may be linked to poor communication. Thus, highlighting the importance of training for employees working in non-academic positions. Furthermore, programme issues Analysis carried out quantitatively determine that international student has negative relationship between the programme offered and their perception of satisfaction with ( $\beta = -0.06, p > 0.08$ ). Further qualitative study confirmed that some students viewed the programmes offered in the school as irrelevant. This result can also be linked to the poor perception of the non-academic aspects by students. Findings from Qualitative show that students perceive non-academic staff communication as poor, which relates that students lack understanding of the programme issues, due to lack of proper communication to students. This study contributes extensively to literature by highlighting the importance of communication in the development of students' perception of programme issues. This has also proved that the study purpose of gaining more in-depth understanding of SQ was achieved.



## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion, Research Contributions and Implication for Practice**

From the beginning of the study, the objectives were stated. These include conducting analysis to determine the reliability of Abdullah (2005) HEdPERF scale as a tool for measuring service quality within higher education in the UK and determine the extent to which service quality using HEdPERF scale influenced international students' perception of satisfaction on the overall and within each dimension. Analysis from the quantitative study reported evidence to show that Abdullah (2005;2006) HEdPERF scale was a reliable tool for measuring international students' perception of service quality. On the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction, the results showed that while on the overall Abdullah (2005;2006) HEdPERF conceptualisation of service quality significantly and positively influenced international students' perception of satisfaction, when examined at the individual dimension level, not all the dimensions were positive.

### ***9.1 Conclusions***

This study contributes to the gap in existing literature on service quality within higher education. The five dimensions alluded to by Abdullah (2005;2006) takes the discussion on service quality in higher education beyond academic issues. From the objectives of the study, an analysis was conducted to determine the reliability of HEdPERF scale for measuring service. Following this analysis, this thesis contributes to existing service quality literature in higher education by confirming that HEdPERF scale is reliable for measuring students' perception of service quality in the UK.

Evidence from findings showed that service quality is a significant predictor of international students' perception of satisfaction with the school. It therefore important that the University

considers the conceptualisation of HEdPERF in order to influence international students' satisfaction with the university. In addition to the findings that showed the overall effect of service quality on students' satisfaction, further findings showed that non-academic aspects and programme issues were not significant in the school. A qualitative analysis conducted to explain the non-significant results showed that for non-academic aspects, students were not satisfied with the quality of communication that they received from the administrative staff. For programme issues, students did not see the relevance of some of the programmes and modules that they were asked to study. Also, enough information was not provided as to the structure of the programmes. It is therefore important that the university considers how to train non-academic staff members to better communicate with students and to review the programmes on offer to ensure that students' needs are met. The initial conceptualisation used to investigate the relationship between service quality and students' satisfaction show that only academic aspects, access and reputation dimensions were significant predictors of student satisfaction. Qualitative findings also supported the quantitative study. This suggests that within the context of the study, academic aspects, access and reputation are the major determinants in the dimensions of service quality that influences international students' perception of satisfaction.

The regression model findings showed that when analysis was conducted in relation to each of the control variables, service quality had a positive and significant relationship with international students' perception of satisfaction. This implied that within the context of this study, international students' response to the variables were not affected by their level of study, mode of study, department, nationality and age. The mixed method deployed for this study is apt because it allows for further investigation into how service quality influences international students' perception of satisfaction. The sequential presentation of methods; conducting a quantitative analysis before the qualitative analysis provides both confirmatory results and further in-depth understanding into the relationships in the framework. This process is recommended to other

researchers engaged in similar projects. The use of assimilation-contrast theory to explain the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction is important. This is because it shows how students react to their experience in the university should their expectation not be met. It is important that care is taken when designing the message included in promotional material. Such message should be factual and a reflection of reality in the school, so that students are not dissatisfied when they arrive to commence their studies. This study calls for the attention of the administrators of the university of huddersfield to the issues of service quality from the view of international students. Findings from this study supports the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) gold awarded to the university. This is because of the positive and significant influence that academic aspects have on international students perception of satisfaction. Although the university is ranked gold by TEF, this study shows the gap in the way that international students' perceive the service they receive from non-academic staff. The results show that international students are dissatisfied with the service of non-academic staff. Specifically, international students consider non-academic staff members as insensitive to their needs. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of communication. Therefore, the university needs to pay attention to the improvement of international students experience with the services of non-academic staff members.

## ***9.2 Theoretical contributions***

The contributions that this study make to service quality literature is presented in this section. This is done to further show the importance of objectives set out in this study. The two objectives of this study were to determine the reliability of the HEdPERF scale and how service quality using HEdPERF conceptualisation influenced international student perception of satisfaction.

### ***9.2.1 Reliability of HEdPERF scale***

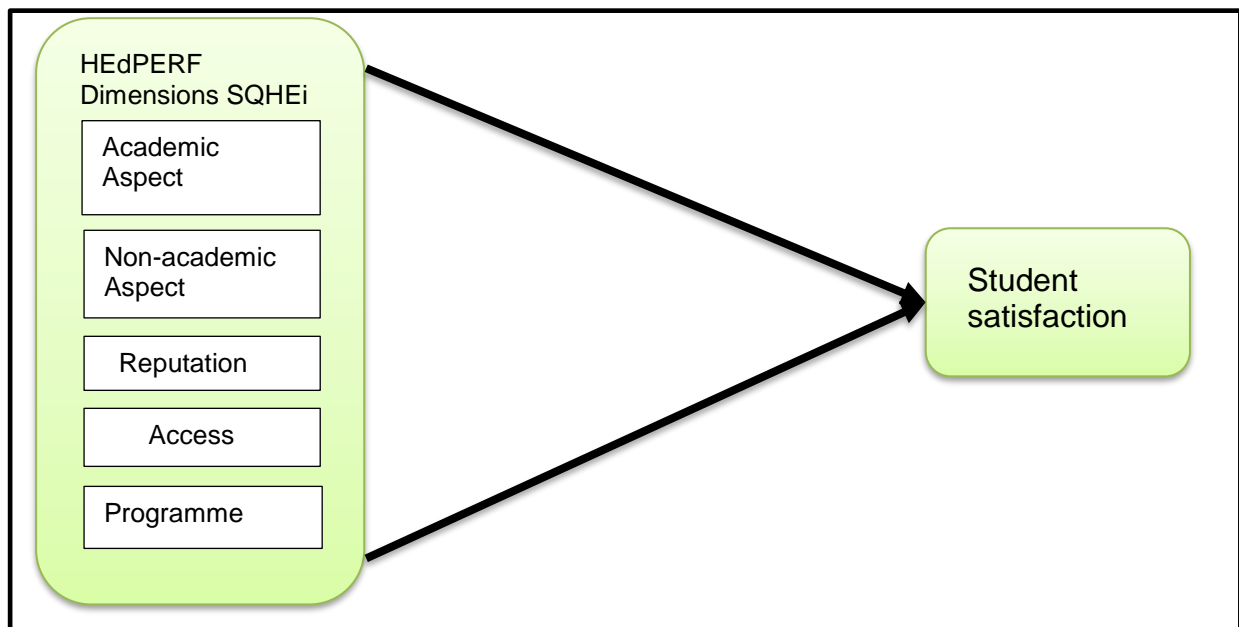
This contribution is important because it shows that Abdullah (2005; 2006) HEdPERF scale was a reliable tool for measuring international students' perception of the quality of services that

they received from the University. The items on each of the variables in the scale loaded in a single component and had high Cronbach alpha. As this tool has not be implemented within the context of the UK, this study makes contribution to service quality literature in HE especially within the UK by showin that HEdPERF scale is a reliable tool for measuring service quality.

### ***9.2.2 Relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction***

Quantitative analyses were framed using the conceptual framework designed in chapter 4. Findings contributes to existing studies by showing that HEdPERF scale significantly influenced international students' perception of satisfaction. The coefficient of regression findings makes important contributions. It shows that within the context of this study, only academic aspects, reputation and access dimensions of service quality were significant predictors. Programme issues and non-academic aspects dimensions were not significant predictors.

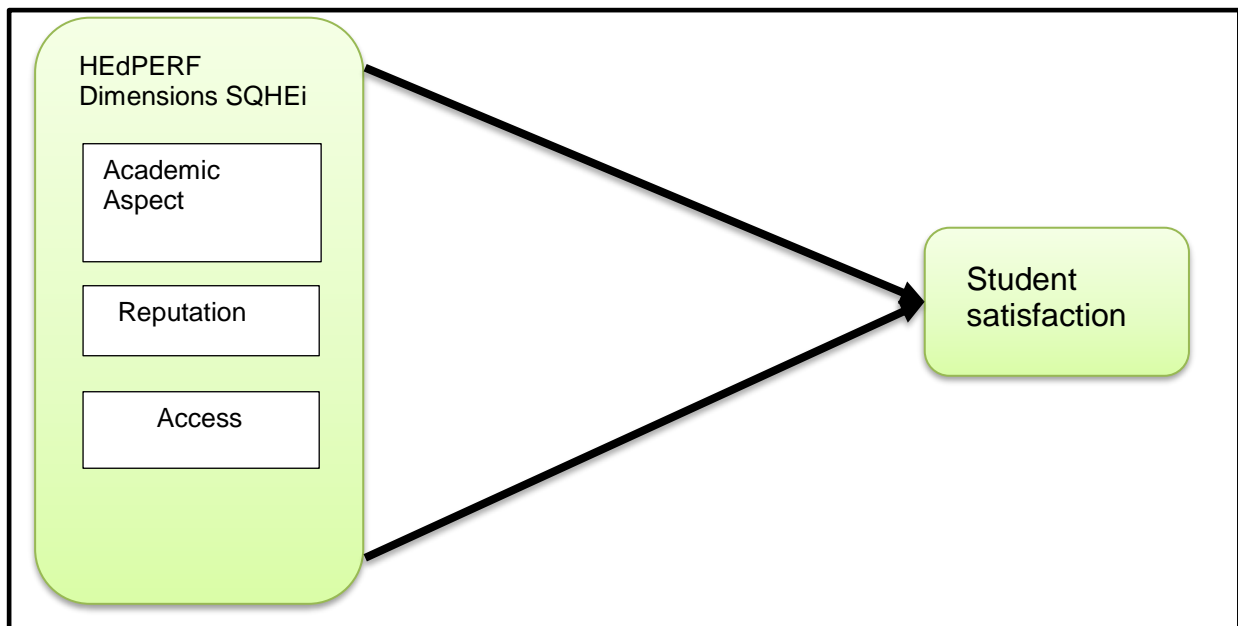
**Figure 8 Conceptual model/Framework**



### 9.2.3 Dominant dimensions of HEdPERF conceptualisation of service quality

An advantage of investigating the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction at the individual and overall levels is that it provided information on the dominant dimensions of HEdPERF conceptualisation of service quality. Findings show that academic aspect dimension had the highest regression coefficient when prediction student satisfaction. Academic aspects, reputation, and access dimensions were the only significant dimensions of service quality within the context of the study. Non-academic aspects and programme issues were not.

**Figure 17-Reconceptualization of service quality and student satisfaction relationship**



### 9.2.4 Usability of HEdPERF scale in the UK

As alluded to in chapter 1 at the background of study section, analysis that measures service quality in the UK has not paid attention to the dimensions of service quality as conceptualised in the HEdPERF scale used in this study. This study charts new waters as one of the first to examine the usability of HEdPERF service quality scale for measuring international students' perception of service quality in the UK.

### ***9.2.5 Methodological contribution***

The adoption of mixed method is in itself a contribution of this study. This is because the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allows for better understanding of the relationship between service quality and international students' perception of satisfaction. While the quantitative findings supported some of the hypothesis (the significant relationship between service quality and international students' satisfaction, as well as the significant positive relationship between academic aspects, access and reputation dimensions, non-academic aspects and programme issues were not significant). The deployed of a qualitative investigation by means of interviews provided reasons for the discrepancy. Findings from the qualitative student show that non-significant relationship between non-academic aspects and programme issues' relationship with students' satisfaction was as a result of the poor communication between administrative staff and international students. This is because programme issues were also handled by non-academic staff members. Some of the challenges enumerated by students in chapter seven regarding their programme issues may have been resolved should international students be provided adequate information on the programme before they commence their study or proper support during their study.

## ***9.3 Implications for practice***

In line with the pragmatic view of this study, this study highlights the following implication for practice:

### ***9.3.1 Cultural awareness of non-academic staff***

Findings from this study showed that there is a gap in the skills of non-academic staff member that attend to international students. International students expressed dissatisfaction with the

quality of communication with members of non-academic staff. This finding suggest there may a lack of cultural awareness among members of non-academic staff in the business school. There is a need for non-academic staff members to be exposed to trainings that will enhance the communication skills and expecially how to deal with international students.

### ***9.3.2 Improvement in University programme***

Findings from the qualitative studies show that this study has the potential to improve the quality of service providers in universities by increasing understanding of needs in the marketing of university programs. Responses from international students show that there is need for the university to improve on the quality of the courses offered. During recruitment events, international students need to be provided with as much information on a course as this may help them avoid some of the challenges mentioned in chapter 7.

### ***9.3.3 Improvement in enrolment system***

It provides a deeper understanding of the pros and cons of students' enrolment systems. International students have predefined expectations. Findings from this study is useful for the international admissions team as it would enable them identify areas of study that are of more interest to international students.

### ***9.3.4 Expectations of international students***

It increases the body of knowledge of business students' expectations and perceptions of service provided by their student advisors. Findings from qualitative studies show the importance of good communication between international students and their advisors. At the moment, findings suggest that is currently low as international students' perception of the quality of communication between them and those in the administrative office is poor.

### ***9.3.5 Data on international student perception***

This study provides more accurate data to business academics in marketing, enrolment and teaching; non-academic marketing specialists in universities; and business student advisors of student enrolment and information.

### ***9.3.6 Discrepancy between international students experience and expectation***

Results from this investigation is very useful for administrators in the business school. This research has highlighted specific gaps in the way that non-academic staff members manage the relationship of international students. The research shows that there is need for non-academic staff dealing with international students to undergo trainings that will enable them gain competence in communication with international students.

## ***9.4 limitations of the study***

The study is limited by certain factors and these include location of the study, data collection method and participants. Investigations were conducted at the University of Huddersfield in the UK and as such may report a different outcome if similar studies are carried out at a different location. This however has not affected the validity and reliability of the study as care was taken to ensure a rigorous methodological approach. Validated scales were used to collect data from the quantitative study. Findings were further investigated using qualitative approach to have a better understanding of the outcome of the quantitative analysis. Huddersfield University as a location for this study is also apt as the university has a sizable number of international students. For example, figures from 2017 enrolment showed over half the proportion of new students were international students. The second limitation is linked to cross-sectional data collection method deployed for the quantitative data. As perception takes time to form, cross-sectional data is limited



as it reports findings a given time. However, the mixed approach deployed by this study allowed for a further investigation into the relationship between the variables in the study.

In the third instance, this thesis is limited by its focus on international students. This is because the issues of service quality may also influence both domestic and international students. However, the size of data used for the quantitative study is large enough to allow for generalisation of the results. Although this study is about service quality on international student perception, the single use of HEDPERF as a measuring scale is also an apparent limitation. The use of other scales such as NSS could be address for future research.

Finially, As regard to the study population another limitation that needs to be addressed is the area or faulculty of research which is the business school. The research focus on business school due to limited access to other faculties and reseacourses. Although the rational for choosen the business school has been justified, it is still important to acknowledge that if other faculties were chossen or added, the result wolud be different and more robust sample size and generalisation achieved.

### ***9.5 Thoughts for future research***

This thesis presents three suggestions that may be undertaken by future research. The first being to conduct a longitudinal study. This will enable for an analysis of how international students' perception changes over time. The study also suggest that future studies investigated how service quality affects both domestic and international students. Futhermore, a comparitive study can be carried out within uk universities and other countries. This will allow for analysis that will show the dimensions that are of importance to the two different groups and across countries.

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## Appendix One

### *Survey instrument*

#### **Section A**

The following personal information is necessary for validation of the questionnaire. All responds will be kept confidential. Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated. Please circle the responds

#### **Demographic Question**

**Gender:** Male  Female

**Age Range:** 16year -20  21-35  36-45  46 and above

**Nationality:** .....

**Title of Course:** (UG /Top-up / PG/ PHD)

.....

**Level of study:** Full Time Student  Part Time Student

**Department:**

.....

**Year of study on course:** .....

**New/Returning Student:** .....

**How many years at the University:** .....

**Pre-Masters:** Yes / No

**International Foundation Year:** Yes / No

**International Year One:** Yes / No

**Pre-Sessional:** Yes / No: 4 / 6 / 8 / 12 / 24 weeks

## Section B

Please indicate by circling the number which best reflects your feelings about your Institution

Academic Aspect								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B1</b>	Academic staff are well-informed about my course content	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B2</b>	Academic staff are caring and Courteous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B3</b>	Academic staff always respond to my application for assistance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B4</b>	Academic staff shows sincere interest in solving my problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B5</b>	Academic staffs have good communication skill in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B6</b>	Academic staff provide Feedback on my academic progress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B7</b>	There is sufficient and convenient time for consultation with Academic staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B8</b>	Academic facilities are sufficient and essential	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B9</b>	The institution have vastly educated and experience Academic staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>B10</b>	The institution's staffs respect student information confidential	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Non –Academic Aspect								
<b>NA1</b>	Administrative staff show a sincere interest in solving my problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA2</b>	The administrative staff of the institutions provide caring and individual attention	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA3</b>	The administrative staff of the institution are never too busy to response to a request for assistance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA4</b>	The institution Administrative offices keep accurate and retrievable records	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA5</b>	The administrative staff perform the promised service dependably and accurately and as when promised	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA6</b>	The administrative offices opening hours are personally convenient for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>NA7</b>	Administrative staff show positive work attitude towards students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA8</b>	The institution administrative staffs communicate well with students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NA9</b>	The institution Administrative staffs have appropriate knowledge about the systems/procedures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Reputation</b>								
<b>RP1</b>	The institution's graduates are easily employable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP2</b>	The institution has a professional appearance/ image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP3</b>	The hostel facilities and equipment are adequate and necessary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP4</b>	The institution service deliveries are within reasonable/expected time frame	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP5</b>	The minimal class size allows personal attention	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP6</b>	Student feedback are valued and used for service performance improvement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP7</b>	The institution offers well-structured and flexible syllabus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP8</b>	The institution academic programmes are highly reputable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RP9</b>	The institution encourages and promotes student union activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Access</b>								
<b>AC1</b>	The institution provides adequate recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AC2</b>	I have a safe and confident feeling when i deal with the institution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AC3</b>	There is easy telephone contact to staffs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AC4</b>	There is well equipped and adequate health service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AC5</b>	The staff treats student equally and with respect							
<b>AC6</b>	Student receives fair amount of freedom	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Programme issues</b>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>PI1</b>	The institution has internal quality programme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>PI2</b>	There is excellent counselling service in the institution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<b>PI3</b>	The institution offers variety of programme, with different specializations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>PI4</b>	The service delivery procedure is simple and standardised	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Student satisfaction</b>								
<b>SS1</b>	Satisfaction with how academic staff show positive attitude towards students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>SS2</b>	Satisfaction with how the institution deals with my Inquiries/complaints efficiently and promptly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>SS3</b>	Satisfaction with how the location of the institution is ideal with excellent campus layout and appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## Appendix two

### *Participant information sheet*

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my doctoral research study titled: *The influence of service quality on student satisfaction: A study of University of Huddersfield Business School*. The aim of this research is *To Explore the influence and important of service quality on student satisfaction in university of Huddersfield Business School using HEDPERF measuring scale*.

. The scale measures student satisfaction on

- Academic factor- This factors highlights the key attributes of academic staff and represents their responsibilities towards students.
- Non-Academic factors- This factor includes important variables that enable students perform study obligations effectively/the respective duties and responsibilities performed by non-academic staff towards student satisfaction.
- Reputation- this factors highlight the importance of projecting professional image in higher learning institutions



- Access- this factor consists of approachability, ease of contact, availability and convenience issues
- Programmes issues- this factor emphasizes on the important of offering wide range and reputable academic programmes/specialization with flexible structure and syllabus

**How much of your time will participation involve?**

20 min.

**Will your participation in the project remain confidential?**

If you agree to take part, your name will not be recorded on the questionnaires and the information will not be disclosed to other parties. Your responses to the questions will be used for the purpose of this project only. You can be assured that if you take part in the project you will remain anonymous.

**What are the advantages of taking part?**

You may find the project interesting and enjoy answering questions. The questionnaire will be used to provide information concerning the influence and importance of service quality on student satisfaction in Higher Education Once the study is finished and published. Your views and contributions may help to identify some of the relevant issues of this research; such conceptualising the importance of service quality in higher education; and to make recommendations to the university authorities so that the causes of such discrepancy might be addressed strategically.

**Are there any disadvantages of taking part? No**

**Do you have to take part in the study?** No, your contribution in this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to take part. If you do not wish to take part you do not have to give a

reason and you will not be contacted again. Similarly, if you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the project if you change your mind. The answers provided will be entirely confidential, and used only for the purpose of the study.

**What will you have to do if you agree to take part?**

Please fill the questionnaire and the consent form

## Appendix three

### *Consent form*

#### Consent form

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that the data will not be accessed by an tutor and participation in the study is not an academic requirement.	<input type="checkbox"/>

The questionnaire is structured in two parts: which aim to obtain

- Demographic information
- Service quality influence information

## **Appendix four**

### **Information sheet for interview**

My name Ijeoma Onwumere and I am a PhD student at the Department of Logistics, Operations, Hospitality and Marketing, University of Huddersfield. My doctoral research the influence of service quality on student satisfactions, which aim to explore the perceived influence and importance of service quality on student satisfaction is motivated by the current situation facing the higher educations in the UK owing to uncertainty in the universities such as Brexit, the rhetoric surrounding immigration, changing government regulation on tuition fee, funding and student numbers.

A questionnaire has been given out to student in my previous study using an already developed service quality measuring scale called higher education performance scale (HEdPERF) to investigate student perception of service in university of Huddersfield business school.

The present study is now investigating student perception of service based on their personal experience and the resulting implication for the university,

As a participant, you will be interviewed based on your perception of all university aspect of service quality, your participation is voluntary. The interview will be recorded for later analysis, however, your identity will remain anonymous and all data collected will be encrypted so you cannot individually be identified. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical elements of this study please contact [Ijeoma.onwumere@hud.ac.uk](mailto:Ijeoma.onwumere@hud.ac.uk) or Ijeoma Onwumere, tel. no. 07471474382

*Sample interview transcript*

Appendix 4: Sample transcript

ID: P4

Nationality—Africa

Gender- -- Male

Course level—PHD

Date: 27 July 2017

Location: Hudd 1

Length of interview: 27 minutes 19 seconds

Service quality

Meaning of service quality

Interviewer: What do you understand by service quality?

**Ok**, my understanding to the concept of service quality has to do with what I believe I should get as service provided to me, in terms of satisfaction I should get from that service and what actually I do get. Is a little bit more about expectation and how that expectation is met by the provider which in this case is the university of Huddersfield and its business school, that is my understanding to the conception of service quality.

Importance of service quality to daily activities

Interviewer: Based on what you said, service quality is somehow important to your day to day activities right? how important is that to your school activities?

No doubt service quality is quite a very important aspect of any organisation vis-a vis the customer and the services provided to the customer because the satisfaction which the customer gets from the service goes a long way in terms of how they recommend sure service to other uses and the

satisfaction they get from that service and invariably it influences the goals of that organisation because any organisation that does not provide services that meet the expectations of their customer will in no doubt have problems.

#### Expectation of service quality

What are your expectation in regards to service quality as an international student?

Alright Emmmmmmmm broadly, there are a lot of expectation which I have for the university of Huddersfield especially being an international student who has paid a huge amount of money and resource to come here to get educated, having done that I expect first and foremost a very comfortable environment that provide and cater for my academic needs and resources such as library resources, environment in terms of facilities that will help me in studying as well be conducive that will enable me achieve my objectives here.

More to that, I expect environment that provides me with overall opportunities in terms of growth, ie an environment that will enable me grown after learning. Also I expect an environment that is secure, friendly and enable to be comfortable in terms of security wise and all that. Basically I think this are my expectations from the university of Huddersfield and its business school.

#### Knowledge of services offered in the university

Interviewer: alright seeing how important service quality is to you, what service do you think you can get from the university? cos I know most student don't even know the services available to them.

To a very large extent I think am conversant with the services offered in the business school and the university of Huddersfield as a whole. In terms of IT facilities, such as computer and internet, applications in which that will help support my service, they also provide human resources services in terms of hmmm counselling services, courses in which help to develop my inadequacy. As well

there is a good support academic system, especially supervisors and the coordinating team, in which they are always available to answer my question and guide me in the right direction and things like that. So far I think they are doing a good job in terms of services being provided and making me aware of what is available to me.

Expectation from service providers

Interviewer: based on what you said you talked about, employability, library and alumina services, what are your expectations about this service, the ones you've mentioned, what do you expect from them, how do you expect them to serve you and impact your studies?

My expectation as an international student is for the university to opt their game in providing quality service to suite not only the high fund we pay but to also enable us achieve our goals and be marketable in the global industry.

Non-Academic Aspect

Experience with non-academic staff

Interviewer: so, going further I want to ask you about the Non-Academic aspect of the university, which are those that has nothing to do with teaching. Have you had any experience with a Non-academic staff?

over all I thing I have had a good experience with non- academic staff in terms of the services they provide and in terms of the inter personal relationship we have when I go for services to interact with them, in terms of interaction I get with the non- academic staff as a post graduate researcher are quite limited, because there is a coordinator that basically cannel most of our request through but for the ones I have come in contact and do deal with they are quite nice even though there are times that they have not been swift and fast in terms of dealing with my enquires but then, they've done that in a polite manner. So I think they are sensitive in the way they respond, they have not been rude but kind, friendly and professionally even not meeting my needs.

## Sensitivity of non-academic staff

Probe: can you relate this service or experience to the staff sensitivity to your needs, how does it make you feel?

on no doubt Within any organisation or service been provided there is always room for improvement. However, somethings I do understand with them bcos hmmm the multitude of work in which they face sometime does not allow them to be swift and fast but then always room for improvement. I think they are doing a good job within their limitations.

like i mention during the cost of this interview for me where i am not satisfaction is from the issue of **not** providing desk, computer and comfortable working facilities for us the student. I think for some of us international student that pay a huge amount of money, the least we expect is a good working facilities, probably a personal computer, and a table.

However, various reason is being provided as to why that has not been done and the hot desk system has been put in place but then, I think what is been apply at the moment should not be applicable to all as regarding the fact that we have different circumstances, different operating procedure and also different requirement to enable us be more functional in the cause of our studies.

## Academic aspect

### Relationship with academic staff

Interviewer: how will you describe your relationship with teaching staff in the university?

ok I think during the first yr of my research we have to take a course called the post graduate business research methodology certificate, so during that time, we had like 6 months' period of time which we have lecture. It was not what I expected

### Perception of lecture content

Probe Qus: what are your perception in terms of

### Content



How it was delivered

Who was involved how relevant and useful it was for your work.?

unfortunately, my perception of that course within that short period of time is not too good, there was no enough time to have a good feel of some of the lecture and also for the lectures to know the student. So there was no interpersonal relationship. It was basically kind of come in and teach, so there was no feedback mechanism whereby students communicate their understanding and ask questions. So I think there is a need to better structure some of these classes, perhaps reducing the number of student per class and lecturers should make conscious effort to have a better understanding and communication with the students. This will go a long way in improving the satisfaction and outcome that student do get with the course.

Quality of communication

Probe Qus: are you satisfied with the quality of communication with staff in the university?

yes, overall I will say, I am satisfied with the level of interaction and communication I do have with my teaching staff (eg my supervisor). Its grown and gotten better overtime, it's not something that just kicked off from day one but I think overtime, relationship was built, confidence was installed, respect as well was earned, so overtime I think it's grown and gotten to a position where I think I have developed enough confidence.

Reputation:

Communication from the university

Interviewer: How effectively do you think the university communicates with you: what are the issues from your own perspective?

The university quite does a lot with their share amount of emails, when it comes to communication, they bombard you with a lot of things but my problem here is that some of this emails are not

related to my course of study or applicable to what I do, some of them are quite unnecessary to be candid with you, I will like a situation where I get email that relate particularly to what I do or need rather than bombarding me with email that do not relate to what I do. so in terms of communication they do a lot of that, because we get a lot of seminar, conferences from other research groups which are not related to me so is of no interest to me. There is need to kind of streamline what they send to student, no doubt that I could reason from another perspective whereby they might think if the email or research topic is of no interest to you and might just want to go listen to the lecture which you can gain something from, but then there is need to streamline, let have a situation that perhaps we can go a little bit beyond the research group, but let's perhaps limit the generality in terms of mails that come in.

#### Professional image

Probe: How will you describe the university professional image?

the university has done a good job over the years in terms of building a good reputation for itself over the year, it's among the committee of universities, prior to coming the university of Huddersfield I never knew the university and 7 yrs ago while I was undertaking a master's degree in Bradford, the university of hudd was never a uni I wanted to attend. But then over the last years, I will say they have done a tremendous job in terms of building a good image that has worn them a lot of accumulate in terms of awards. They have also done a fantastic job in terms of using that award to market themselves to the market, which in no doubt is paying off. However, of concern to me is the fact that a lot of lecturers and reputable profs and experience individuals are leaving the university in rolls and that is a thing of concerns to me, as especially when you have a number of skilled, reputable and experience manpower leaving in such a number, it gives you concern as to what is really going on, if there is a downwards decline or what is really going on, why are they

suddenly leaving, that is what the university need to look into, perhaps they might have justify reason but from an externally point it is a thing of great concern.

If staff are leaving in number for a reason or another, there is a great need to review the policy.

Programme issue

**Interviewer: Do you think the university run wide range of programmes?**

If yes, how efficient is your departmental programme, does it meet your needs? If no what do you think the university should do better?

ehhmmmmmm, as a PGR student I think the university does provide adequate level of programme that will help facilitate the completion of my degree, the research method programme was quite helpful in terms of refreshing my memory in term of research method because no doubt those where elementary course on research methodology, which I believe every PGR student to go through as a refreshers course. Apart from the methodology class the university also provide other training and course which can help student to hopefully have a successful completion.

Access:

**Interviewer: How accessible is the university and its facilities?**

How will you describe the university, its academic and non-academic services in terms of availability, approachability, ease of contact and convenience

hmmmmmm the university have a wide range of facility for especially those engaged in my own programme, they have adequate working space even though I mention early that some of us will prefer to have their own personal working space but then the software that they provide for student, the university those a lot by providing software for research student, more to that the university

business school have provide funding support to PGR student who want to go to conference and seminars they do sponsor some of that. The university is laid out in such a way that all the facility is close to each other.

## **Appendix five**

### *Confirmation from ethnics committee*

RE: Survey Questionnaire and Ethical Approval - BUSETHICS15/16:017  
Alex Thompson

Mon 14/03/2016, 16:21Ijeoma Onwumere U1277860;Eleanor Davies;Mohammed Mirza;Radi Haloub;Hannah Spencer-Chung

Dear Ijeoma,

I have been asked to forward the following to you:

Thank you for your response to the Ethics Committee which has been considered. Your application is now approved with recommendation.

The research team are advised to seek approval from the Business School in relation to naming the institution in the study title.

Dr Eleanor Davies

Chair of the Business School Ethics Committee

Regards,

**Alex Thompson**  
Course Administrator

*Organisation Consent form*



Business School Research Ethics Committee  
Organisation participation consent form (E5)  
Influence of service quality on international student perception of satisfaction: a mixed method investigation  
Name of Researcher: Ijeoma Onwumere

The Business School  
University of Huddersfield

- i) The purpose of the research study is to determine the influence of service quality on international students' perception of satisfaction with the business school
- ii) The data collection methods to be used is a mix of survey questionnaires and interviews.
- iii) Students from different nationalities in the business school will be participating in this research.

I confirm that I give permission for this research to be carried out and that permission from all participants will be gained in line within my organisation's policy.

Name and position of senior manager:  
.....  
Signature of senior manager:.....  
**Date:** .....

**Name of Researcher:** .....  
Signature of Researcher: .....  
**Date:** .....

*Letter to organisations*

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir,

ORGANISATION PARTICIPATION REQUEST AND INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCHER

Ms. Ijeoma Onwumere is a PhD researcher with our University. Her research interest is in 'Influence of service quality on international student perception of satisfaction: a mixed method investigation'. Details of the research are found in the organisation participation consent form attached.

Ms Ijeoma Onwumere hopes to administer questionnaire to students from different nationalities in the business school. I trust that the research will be carried out to the highest standards and will abide by the University's Code of research ethics.

The findings from this study will form part of her thesis and a report may be provided to your organisation at your request. The thesis will also mention your organisation, thus, requiring your consent to do so.

Kindly provide her the necessary access to carry out this very important study in your organisation by signing the attached organisation consent form.

Kind Regards