

A SURVEY OF STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAMS AT SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY, ACADEMIC YEAR 2021

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to survey student satisfaction towards the graduate program of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in the academic year 2021. This research was a quantitative study, and data were collected using a questionnaire. The sample consisted of 399 graduate students in the academic year 2021. The results showed that the majority of respondents were females, with 226 representing 56.64 percent of the sample, while 173 were males, representing 43.36 percent. In terms of education level, 220 people (55.14 percent) had a master's degree, 59 people (14.78 percent) had a doctoral degree, and 120 people (30.08 percent) had a graduate certificate. Educational administration students (M.Ed.) comprised the largest group with 178 people (44.61 percent), followed by graduate certificate students with 120 people (30.08 percent), and Public Health students with 21 people (5.26 percent).

The satisfaction survey results of graduate program applicants were at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.63$). The aspect of learning support had the highest mean score at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.66$), followed by instructors and advisors at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.65$). Student development and curriculum were also at the highest level with mean scores of $\bar{x} = 4.63$ and $\bar{x} = 4.61$, respectively.

Keywords: Terms: Student Satisfaction/ Graduate Program/ Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

INTRODUCTION

The effective production and development of high-level manpower to meet both local needs and national development require graduates to be examined qualitatively and quantitatively to demonstrate their competence. Graduates' ability to possess sufficient knowledge and skills to pursue a career, including ethics that enhance their own quality of life and society, is crucial. It is an important mission for institutions at the higher education level to manage education and produce graduates who are desirable for organizations in terms of professional knowledge and living in society as a whole, in order to enhance the quality of the workforce and high-level skills that keep pace with the changes in the global economy. Therefore, various educational institutions recognize the significance of producing graduates to meet the demands of the labor market and local areas, which tend to increase gradually [1].

Education is a vital mechanism that drives development and progress across various fields. Many countries, including Thailand, recognize its importance and are increasingly promoting education. The Thai government has placed significant emphasis on education, as evident from its 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006). The plan aimed to promote Thai society as a society of wisdom and learning by providing equal opportunities for all Thai citizens to think practically, reasonably, creatively, be lifelong learners, have global awareness, and always be prepared for changes [2]. Currently, Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plan adheres to the philosophy of sufficiency economy, which puts people at the center of development and aims to balance development in all dimensions.

The Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University serves as a center for coordinating and supervising the standards of graduate education management. Its primary objective is to produce personnel with specific competencies that align with the needs of society in developing the country. The Graduate School has a vision to "promote, support, and control the quality of graduate education to meet international standards." Its mission is to produce graduates at the graduate level, emphasizing local knowledge, establishing professional standards, promoting and supporting research academic services, and preserving arts and culture. This aligns with the development of higher education across various fields to produce quality graduates capable of developing the country across various sectors. In line with this mission, the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University is conducting a survey on student satisfaction with graduate programs in the academic year 2021.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the level of satisfaction among students with the graduate programs offered by the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in the academic year 2021.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the research conducted on the survey of student satisfaction towards graduate programs at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for the academic year 2021, the researcher reviewed relevant documents and research to present the following topics:

1. Concepts and Theories related to Satisfaction

Definition of Satisfaction

According to Charinee Dejchinda [3], satisfaction is defined as an individual's feelings or attitudes towards something or related factors. The feeling of satisfaction occurs when an individual's needs are met to a certain extent, and the feeling decreases or does not occur if the desire or purpose is not fulfilled.

Sa-nga Phunarong [4] has stated that satisfaction refers to the feeling that arises when a goal has been achieved or when the final objective has been accomplished.

Prinya Jareratch et al. [5] have defined satisfaction as an individual's positive attitude or feeling towards what they perform, participate in, or are assigned to perform. The reward received and various related environments are factors that can cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Concepts and Theories Related to Satisfaction

Wichai Luengthammachart [6] proposed that satisfaction is related to human needs, and it can only occur when human needs are fulfilled. Basic needs are universal and are the same for all human beings, regardless of their location.

Pitak Trutthip [7] suggested that satisfaction is a reaction to a stimulus or a situation that is

expressed in the form of the final result of the evaluation process, indicating the direction of the evaluation result as positive or negative, or no reaction which is indifferent to the stimulus.

Suthep Panichpan [8] summarized the motivations that are used as tools to motivate people to be satisfied as follows: (1) Material incentives such as money, and objects; (2) Desired physical conditions, which are the environments in which various activities are performed, and are crucial for physical happiness; (3) Ideal interests, which are things that satisfy a person's needs; and (4) Social benefits, such as friendly relations with participants, which promote bonding, satisfaction, and a state of coexistence that is satisfactory for the individual in terms of social or social security, making them feel secure and stable in their activities.

Satisfaction measurement

Prinya Jareratch et al. [5] stated that there are many ways to measure satisfaction, namely: (1) Using a questionnaire: the questionnaire will be issued to obtain opinions. This can be done in a way that provides a choice of answers or answers to independent questions. Such questions may ask about satisfaction in areas such as services, administration, and conditions; (2) Interviews: It is a direct method of measuring satisfaction that requires good techniques and methods to obtain factual information; and (3) Observation: It is a method of measuring satisfaction by observing the behavior of the target person, whether expressed through speech or gestures. This method requires serious action and methodical observation.

2. Course

Curriculum is a word derived from the Latin word "race-course," which refers to the path used to run a race. Due to the goal of the curriculum that aims for students to grow up to be quality adults and be successful in living in the society of the future, the current definition of a curriculum has given the meaning of a curriculum as the mass of learning experiences defined in a course, subject group, content, including various activities that have been conducted to teach or organize activities for learners effectively [9].

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Population and Sample

The population under consideration comprises 466 graduate students enrolled in the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, special session, during the academic year 2021. The sample group consisted of 399 graduate students selected from the population of interest.

2. Data Collection Method

The researcher employed a questionnaire-based survey to collect data from the sample group. The questionnaires were distributed to the department staff, who in turn disseminated them to all graduate students enrolled in the academic year 2021. The response rate was 61.16 percent, which implies that 243 students answered the questionnaire.

The interpretation of the survey scores is based on the following criteria:

An average score ranging from 4.50 to 5.00 indicates the highest level of satisfaction.

An average score ranging from 3.50 to 4.49 indicates a high level of satisfaction.

An average score ranging from 2.50 to 3.49 indicates a moderate level of satisfaction.

An average score ranging from 1.50 to 2.49 indicates a low level of satisfaction.

An average score ranging from 1.00 to 1.49 indicates the lowest level of satisfaction.

RESULTS

The present study examines the satisfaction levels of students towards the Graduate Studies Program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the academic year 2021. The study's findings are presented in a table, accompanied by a detailed description, as follows.

Part 1: General Information of the Respondents

The study surveyed a total of 399 respondents, comprising of 226 females (56.64 percent) and 173 males (43.36 percent). Among the respondents, 220 (55.14 percent) held a master's degree, 59 (14.78 percent) held a doctoral degree, and 120 (30.08 percent) held graduate certificates. Educational Administration students constituted the largest group, with 178 individuals (representing 44.61 percent of the respondents). This was followed by graduate diploma students, with 120 individuals (representing 30.08 percent), and public health students, with 21 individuals (representing 5.26 percent), respectively.

Part 2: Student Satisfaction with the University's Curriculum

In summary, the survey results on student satisfaction towards graduate programs indicated a high level of overall satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 4.61$, S.D. = 0.045). These results were further analyzed and categorized based on specific aspects, with the curriculum receiving the highest average score ($\bar{x} = 4.64$, S.D.=0.570), followed by student admission ($\bar{x} = 4.64$, S.D.=0.620), learning support ($\bar{x} = 4.60$, S.D.=0.696), and finally, satisfaction with lecturers and advisors ($\bar{x} = 4.60$, S.D.=0.641), respectively.

Part 3: Results of handling student complaints

The survey results revealed that the students were highly satisfied with the handling of their complaints ($\bar{x} = 3.80$, S.D.=2.251). Among the graduate programs, the Business Administration and Environmental Management programs were rated highest in terms of satisfaction with handling student complaints ($\bar{x} = 4.45$, S.D.=1.538), followed by the Applied Thai Traditional Medicine program ($\bar{x} = 4.33$, S.D.=0.482), the Development Administration program ($\bar{x} = 4.31$, S.D.= 1.448), and the Educational Administration program ($\bar{x} = 4.23$, S.D.= 1.282), respectively.

Part 4: Suggestions for Operations to Improve the Quality of the Curriculum

For the Educational Administration Program, it is recommended that lecturer pay attention to their students and that staff members be attentive in serving the students. This could help to ensure that students feel supported and valued throughout their studies.

For the Forensic Science Program, offering more study visits is recommended. These visits could help students gain a more hands-on understanding of the subject matter and improve their overall learning experience.

For the Development Management Program, there are several recommendations that could improve the quality of the curriculum. Firstly, improvements in courses, lecturer, locations, and facilities are recommended. Additionally, notifications and class schedules should be improved to avoid delays. Clear guidelines should also be provided for students entering the program, and a clear academic calendar and class schedule should be provided to avoid problems with overlapping subjects. These changes could help to create a more organized and supportive learning environment for students.

DISCUSSION

Based on a study conducted on the satisfaction of students towards the program offered by the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, the findings revealed that the respondents

expressed a high level of satisfaction. The factors that contributed to this satisfaction, in descending order, were the curriculum, student admissions, learning support, and instructors and advisors. This result aligns with the research conducted by Kesmanee Karin et al. [10], which examined the satisfaction of undergraduate students enrolled in the Bachelor of Business Administration Program in Finance and Banking at the Faculty of Management Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University. Their study investigated various factors that affect satisfaction with the program, such as the curriculum's subjects, teaching staff, teaching and learning management, faculty advisor system, public relations for the project activities of the department, measurement and evaluation of teaching and learning, and teaching support. The results revealed that the overall satisfaction level was high.

The study's findings regarding student satisfaction with the handling of complaints reveal a high level of satisfaction among respondents. The programs that received the highest level of satisfaction in the results of handling student complaints were Business Administration and Environmental Management, followed by Applied Thai Traditional Medicine, Development Management, and Educational Administration, respectively. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Pansak Charoen [9], which investigated the complaints and the results of assistance provided by the People's Service Center, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office, a center that receives complaints. The study found that the complaint resolution process at the People's Service Center, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office, faces similar obstacles due to the lack of specialized complaint handling departments.

The findings of the study suggest that improving the quality of the curriculum can be achieved by professors paying attention to students, staff providing excellent customer service, arranging study visits, and having well-equipped facilities. These attractive features can encourage more students to enroll in the Graduate School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. These results are in agreement with the research conducted by Prin Jiwchayapak and his team [11], which focused on the quality of service that impacts the satisfaction of service recipients of the Thailand Shooting Sports Association. The study found that the service quality was of a high standard. Additionally, the study revealed that all aspects of the service, namely trustworthiness, knowing and understanding customers, responsiveness to customers, customer confidence, and service concreteness, were at a high level.

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