STRIVING FOR QUALITY - THE PROCESS OF CREATING A STUDENT SATISFACTION ASSESSMENT TOOL

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Abstract

Universities are currently being challenged by deep and demanding change processes brought about by the Bologna Process. Moreover, competition in Higher Education is so strong that universities have to constantly adjust their policies.

Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa (UAL), a private university founded in 1986 in Lisbon, Portugal, has always been concerned with knowing their students' perception of the institution so as to better meet their expectations. Therefore, a questionnaire on self-assessment was designed in 2007 by the Office for Quality Self-Assessment at UAL inspired on Servqual (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1988, Caruana, Ewing, Ramaseshan, 2000).

Servqual has been applied in higher education, adjustments being made in accordance with the specificities of each organization. This questionnaire was initially applied as a paper version and, in the past years, it has been applied as an online version. Having suffered several changes, its scales now evidence strong internal cohesion, which allows us to consider it an effective tool for measuring student perceived satisfaction at this Higher Education Institution (HEI).

Besides this standard tool, in 2010-11, researchers from CELCT, one of the university's research units, also applied a questionnaire, as part of a project called "New Learning Identities", on the relevance of ICT contents and resources for the students' learning experience in Higher Education (see Fernandes Silva & Rodrigues Duarte, 2011, 2012). This questionnaire was applied to students doing a degree and attending the course unit of English and to students attending an Erasmus Intensive Language Course (EILC) in Portuguese.

This paper derives from these two different experiences and aims to assess the perceived satisfaction of two groups of Erasmus students who attended an EILC at UAL in July and September 2012 by means of a paper version of our standard questionnaire.

Subsequently, we will compare this data with that collected through the application of the same questionnaire to full-time students at UAL so as to assess which differences and similarities arise, considering that full-time students and EILC students are subject to different integration processes at social, time and space levels

Keywords: satisfaction, perceived quality, EILC, questionnaire.