

QUALITY PERCEPTIONS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION – THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRAINING WHILE PROVIDING A SERVICE

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Abstract

The present article is intended to evaluate the quality of training and initial vocational qualification of young people, of professional courses secondary levels, with school accreditation and professional qualification of level IV. In that sense, it's intended to know the perspective of students of professional courses in various areas of knowledge, their perceptions and expectations about the quality observed in a vocational education organization in Alentejo – Portugal through the SERVQUAL methodology.

With this work it is shown that, on the one hand, the continuous improvement in the quality of vocational training process brings new approaches and best strategies in order to achieve competitive and sustainable development. On the other, it was found that the need for investment in quality management systems must not be separated from the acquisition of specific knowledge, justifying the analysis of perceptions of trainees in vocational education.

Keywords: Quality, Vocational Training, SERVQUAL, Continuous improvement.

1 INTRODUCTION

With increasing globalization and competitiveness, that has been reflected in recent years, the issue of vocational training represent a greater relevance, both personally and collectively, of individuals and organizations [1].

According to the authors [2], [3] and [4], the vocational training is a means of maximizing obtaining knowledge for proper execution of skills, abilities and social and professional skills in the framework of a particular professional area.

For this purpose, a priority for vocational training should be the provision of a service, with quality and excellence, as this will bring benefits (responsibility, diligence, punctuality, dedication) that will manifest in future labor relations of the students, but also on competitiveness of school organizations [5], [6], [7] and [8].

The choice of this theme is due to the growing interest and usefulness of combining the concept of vocational training to quality, since the greater the provision of quality service, the greater the satisfaction of the students. This satisfaction is based on the expectations and the perceptions of students, a quality service [9] and [10].

The general objectives of this article are related with the evaluation of the perceptions and expectations of students of a school of vocational education at the secondary level, with school accreditation and qualification of level IV, in Évora (Alentejo - Portugal), about the quality of training and professional qualification offered by the institution. In this regard will be applied a quality instrument, SERVQUAL, which was adapted to the proposed objectives.

In the author's conception [12] and [13], the SERVQUAL is an instrument that shows the five dimensions of quality perceived by the customer, defined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) [11]: Tangibility, Reliability, Availability, Confidence and Empathy.

With the dimensions of the quality perceived by the customer, you can compare the expectations of customers with their perceptions about the experience of the service acquired, and later establish the degree of satisfaction, for the same [14], [15] and [16].

Thus, the concept of SERVQUAL promotes various definitions and approaches; it is a quality instrument that is constantly developing, and a research target, by various authors [12], [13], [14], [15] and [16]).