

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESIS ORAL DEFENSE EXAMINATION PROCESS OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS AT FACULTY OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS, SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The objectives of this research were to: 1) examine the arising problems in conducting the thesis examination for foreign students in postdoctoral level, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the COVID-19 pandemic and 2) develop the process of organizing the dissertation examination for foreign students in postdoctoral level, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the COVID-19 pandemic. The population for this study were 20 foreign students whereas the research instrument was a questionnaire and data analysis were made by percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation. The findings showed that most of the samples were female at the age between 31-40 years with average monthly income of 35,001 - 45,000 Baht. The population's level of knowledge and understanding about the examination process of the performing arts field, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, overall, was at a high level. The highest perceived level was the aspect of reliability of the system, followed by responsiveness, assurance, understanding and perception of needs, respectively. The lowest one was the tangible process. The research findings shall fruitfully help develop the thesis examination process to facilitate foreign students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The technology has been also applied to develop the process of submitting the petition via online platform and online thesis examination contributing the efficiency of internal operations of the curriculum.

Keywords: Development, Process, Foreign Students, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

Currently, many countries around the world are dealing with the epidemic of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The World Health Organization has declared the disease a global pandemic. On March 11, 2020, the study of Güner, H. R., Hasanoğlu, İ., & Aktaş, F. (2020) indicated that this disease was an infectious disease caused by a new strain of virus and there were 750,890 cumulatively infected patients and 36,405 deaths. Many countries in western pacific region had accumulated 104,868 infections and 3,671 deaths whereas those in Europe had accumulated 423,946 infections and 26,694 deaths and Southeast Asia had a cumulative total of 4,215 infected cases and 166 deaths. For Thailand, there were a cumulative total of 1,524 infections and 9 deaths, 2) From the current epidemic situation, new infections are still detected with the increasing number of deaths every day. In the United States of America, there were 140,640 cumulative infections and 2,398 deaths. And every 24 hours,

more than a thousand of people died, 3) The highest mortality rate was in the elderly aged of 80 years or older including people with congenital disease. People with heart disease showed the highest mortality rate, followed by diabetes, respiratory disease and hypertension, respectively, 4) The World Health Organization has recommended a primary prevention method and avoidance of close contact with people showing symptoms of respiratory disease (Singweratham, N. (2020). The outbreak of the COVID-19 caused an immediate closure of schools and universities that led to an adaption of the education system to the use of technology for distance learning such as real-time teaching.

Performing Arts Department, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University has been long time a well-known field of study with its updated development and improvement of curriculums especially the Doctor of Philosophy Program in Performing Arts popular among Thai and foreign students (Chinese). The knowledge of performing arts is an important factor in building relationships, understanding between both national and international groups of people and ethnic groups as a principle of common economic development. Therefore, the educational development process of Thailand should be well-prepared to produce academics, performing arts researchers with capability to transfer wisdom through teaching and learning process. In knowledge integration to develop a conceptual framework and service quality skills, it consists of the following aspects; tangible process, system reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and understanding & perception of needs in order to continue creating wisdom and knowledge standards in the performing arts to be managed effectively especially in human development, an important factor for the national development by upgrading competitiveness of arts and culture (Pahasing,B.,Girdwichai,P.,Kulwanich, A., Siriyanun, S.(2022) to continue and promote art and cultural wisdom to be in line with social, economic, political and technological changes.

As per the above reasons, Doctor of Philosophy Program in Performing Arts is therefore very attractive to both Thai and foreign students (Chinese.) This captioned program has been implemented for 3 years emphasizing on research with a total number of 75 students whereas an in-class instruction has been conducted with the process for organizing the essential in-class thesis examination as the required process. To assess learning achievement according to the objectives of the curriculum, the thesis examination is an essential process divided into 2 steps as follows; Firstly, the preparation step consists of scheduling the examinations, examination arrangement, examination room arrangement and clarification of examination practice guidelines whereas the second one is the examination process related to the practice of the examination superintendents divided into 3 phases; before the examination, during the examination and at the end of the examination. Should the implementation of both steps are effective, the most effectiveness of conducting the examination will be most highly beneficial to the students, instructors, executives and parents (Koonchayangoon, S. (2017). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the examination cannot be held in the examination room at the educational institution causing the examination committee to be unable to measure knowledge and ability of the candidates to be in accordance with the qualifications as required by the field and also students are unable to complete their studies according to the curriculum goals whereas concerned personnel face problems of coordination and service with instructors and the examination committee that considerably impacts their operations. To solve the problems in order that this captioned examination process can be conducted in compliance with the

university's requirements and realizing that the development of examination process is essential, the researcher therefore conducted this research on "The Development of Thesis Oral Defense Examination Process of Doctor of Philosophy for Foreign Students at Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the COVID-19 Pandemic".

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the arising problems in conducting the thesis examination for foreign students in postdoctoral level, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. To develop the process of organizing the dissertation examination for foreign students in postdoctoral level, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concepts and Theories of Service Quality

The meaning of service quality is a measure indicating how well the level of service delivered by the service provider reaches customers' needs. Delivering service quality therefore means responding to customers who use the service based on forecasting of customer demand (Lewis & Bloom, 1983). The service quality can be divided into 2 types; technical quality related to the results or what the service recipients receive from that service of which its product quality can be evaluated and the functional quality that can be evaluated by methods or working procedures (Gronroos, 1990).

Service businesses also have unique characteristics different from other general products that marketers and business owners should take into account as follows (Na Aythuya, W.2004):

1. It is an intangible product and in general, the nature of service is rather abstract, invisible and shapeless.
2. It is variability heterogeneity. Generally, the service quality is highly inconsistent since it often depends on the employees delivering the service, delivery time of service, method of providing service and locations of serving customers.
3. Consumption and production are inseparability. Generally, the services are firstly offered and after that followed by the simultaneous production and consumption of the service.
4. The service is perishability. In general, the service cannot be retained in a form of inventory causing an organization to lose its opportunity to deliver such a service.

Methods for Measuring Service Quality

Gronroos, C. (1990). proposed the concept indicating the perceived service quality (PSQ) and overall quality that customers could recognize (Total Perceived Quality) that obtained from the research on consumer behavior and consumer expectation towards the quality service. The service quality that consumers could perceive was caused by 2 elements; Expected Quality and Experienced Quality. The customers would assess whether these two elements were in harmony with each other. In conclusion, it was the quality that consumers or customers could

recognize (PSO). In case the experienced quality was not in line with the consumer expectation, it could impact their perception in view of poor service quality.

As per the study of Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985) on the quality of service, it was found that the fundamental factors of consumer's determination towards the service quality consisted of 10 aspects of which the data was collected in two terms; Perception and Expectation as follows:

1. Reliability: related to the process and method of service.
2. Responsiveness: the commitment and readiness of team and employees including timeframe appropriate with the service
3. Competence of the service provider: studious, skilled and talented employees
4. Access: flexibility, ease of contact and communication.
5. Courtesy: employees' service mind, politeness, humbleness and good interpersonal skills
6. Communication: employees' capability to explain all required issues raised by customers based on thorough understanding with communication
7. Creditability: the reputation of an organization, trustworthy nature of employees who negotiate with customers, honesty, reliability, trustworthiness and excellent service offer to customers
8. Security: delivery of services that are harmless to customers, no risk and without any problems
9. Understanding / Knowing the customer: understanding customer needs and learning about personal needs with attention on individual basis and recognition of customer names
10. Tangibles: organizational physical characteristics, external characteristics of employees including equipment and materials related to various facilities

Parasuraman, Zeitham & Berry (1988) developed all 10 factors to be as a service quality indicator tool called "SERVQUAL" consisting of service quality indicators in only 5 dimensions as follows: 1. Reliability, 2. Assurance, 3. Responsiveness, 4. Empathy and 5. Tangibles

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The population used in this research was Ph.D. students in Performing Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, and research instrument for data collection and statistical data analysis was an open-ended questionnaire. To ensure the questionnaire quality, the researcher conducted the quality test in two aspects: content validity and reliability with the basic statistics consisting of percentages, mean and standard deviation.

DATA ANALYSIS RESULT

Table 1: Perception Level and Creating Understanding among the Foreign Students on Examination Process of Performing Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

Assessment Items	Level of Demand		
	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	Level
Tangible Process	3.40	0.69	Moderate
System Reliability	3.96	0.56	High
Responsiveness	3.65	0.59	High
Assurance	3.61	0.53	High
Understanding/ Perception of Needs	3.45	0.52	High
Total	3.61	0.46	High

From Table 1, the data analysis results showed that the foreign students' perception level of understanding on the examination process of the performing arts field, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, overall, was at a high level. The highest perception level was system reliability, followed by responsiveness, assurance, understanding and perception of needs whereas the lowest aspect was the tangible process.

CONCLUSION

In view of personal data of the foreign students, the findings revealed that most of the samples were female at the age between 31- 40 years with average monthly income of 35,001 - 45,000 Baht. The perception level of creating understanding on the examination process of the performing arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, overall, was at a high level. Considering on aspect basis, the reliability of the system obtained the highest level, followed by responsiveness whereas the tangible process was at a moderate level.

From the results of the study on "The Development of Thesis Oral Defense Examination Process of Doctor of Philosophy for Foreign Students at Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University during the COVID-19 Pandemic", it was found that, overall, it was at a high level consistent with the research of Intaso, N., 2011, pp. 129-133 on "The Real Perception of Service Quality in the Master of Business Administration Special Project and Loyalty of Students to Suan Dusit Rajabhat University" revealing that students had a real perception of the quality of instruction especially in creditability in the overall instruction quality standards and on aspect basis ;curriculum quality, special project management of Master of Business Administration Program, Suan Dusit Rajabhat University, and the quality of employees in the captioned special project that were at a good level. Regarding the quality of instructors, the real perception was at a high level whereas the real perception of the quality of instruction in terms of an overall of the following aspects; , responsiveness to students, assurance, understanding and empathy and tangible service were at a good level.

According to the results of this research in developing the thesis examination process during the COVID-19 situation, overall, there were many aspects of factors that influence the perception of foreign students in the postdoctoral level towards the field of performing arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University to be at a high level. It was also found that the service aspect of the concerned personnel was actually essential for the foreign students' perception of

service quality; professional service, politeness & service mind, coordination, facilitation and immediate problem solving. In addition, the application of technology for development of the process of submitting the petition via online platform and online thesis examination contributed the efficiency of internal operations of the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For future research, it is recommended to examine the factors influencing decision-making of foreign students at higher education institutions in Thailand.
2. Methods of motivating those who are interested in further study at other educational levels should be examined in order to deploy and develop the research findings to be as a guideline for motivating interested students.
3. Communication/coordination between Thai personnel and foreign students should be examined for effective mutual understanding.

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