Using the QFD Matrix as a Major Continuous Improvement Tool to Improve Organizational Quality

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a case study of an Australian higher education institution (HEI) using quality function deployment (QFD) to identify areas of improvement in serving and meeting the needs of international students enrolled at this university. The composite institution reflects what is currently happening at the time of this writing as part of a process of determining international student needs and ensuring that these are met while meeting academic and institutional requirements (IR). The use of QFD fills a major gap since most methodologies practiced do not focus on either capturing the international students' voice or align these with IRs to enhance the opportunities for successful completion of a degree and meeting student personal and professional expectations. Results are incomplete at this time and thus cannot be reported, but a discussion of the approach is provided, and initial observations are presented to adequately describe the use of QFD and processes and tools used to complete different parts are the central piece of the process, the house of quality (HoQ).

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Composite University (CU) is an independent, multi-campus Australian university, with the main campus located in a suburban setting outside Brisbane in the State of Queensland. It has approximately 30,000 students, with 3000 students alone (10 percent of the total student body population) coming from outside Australia and matriculated as international students. Most of the international students are enrolled in higher degree research (HDR) programs. These students come primarily from China, India, Japan and the Middle East. The University has an annual budget of approximately $350 million AUD and employs approximately 1500 academic and professional staff.

CU, as most Australian universities, actively recruit international students as these are a source of revenue augmenting fees accrued from enrolling domestic students and a mechanism to increase institutional reputation. The University is also keenly interested in pursuing a diversity agenda, believing that international students enhance its learning environment and expose domestic students to different worldviews that will serve them well upon graduation. Student recruitment is centred on attracting students for its applied science, business, nursing, and education programs at the post-graduate level, although about one-third of the international students enrolled are at the undergraduate level. CU does not have a recruitment challenge when it comes to attracting international students because of its reputation as a provider of good educational experience, high employability of graduates, recognised academic staff and research outputs.

SETTING THE STAGE

Higher Education and Internationalisation

Propelled by globalisation and framed by the World Trade Organization's (WTO) legally enforceable set of rules in the *General Agreement on Trade in Services* (GATS – Mishra & Bhatnagar, 2009), learners interested in pursuing vocational and higher education opportunities can consider options outside their country. Learners can consider one of these three options:

- Enrolling at a foreign university in the university's home country,
- Enrolling and attending courses at a foreign university that has a physical presence in the learner's home country as a branch campus or as a partner with a domestic provider or
- Enrolling with a foreign university through an online program.

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