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## Original Research Article

## Customer relationship management and higher education in India

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## ABSTRACT

Educational institutions worldwide are undergoing fundamental shifts in how they operate and interact with their “customers”, students, alumni, donors, and faculty members. Higher education, especially the management education has been changing rapidly and educational institutions are compelled to focus and shift their strategies on student community, faculty members, and industrial organizations so that they remain relevant to the society at large. A nation can remain competitive and its economy can continue grow, only if the quality of knowledge provided by higher education institutions becomes meaningful. Technological, economic, sociological, and governmental forces are altering education dramatically, impacting its institutions, teachers, students, funding sources, and basic function in society. To unlock potential and help talented people to gain advanced training, whatever their background, requires customer-centric approach to education.

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## 1. Introduction

In today’s scenario, higher educational institutions face huge competition to provide better education, but at the same time keep the cost of education at reasonable levels. In today’s challenging environment, institutions try and become highly competitive through becoming autonomous, or get ISO certificate, or get NAAC Accreditation, or become deemed universities or tie-up with foreign universities. Customer Relationship Management today focuses on “delighting” customers, and institutions, if they are to remain relevant, need to provide a quality education to its customers; ‘students’. In today’s business environment, the institution cannot tie itself with knot with irrelevant education. Educational Institutions have become commercial ventures, and they need to focus on CRM to impart state-of-the-art education to their students.

Educational Institutions have three major customers:

- 1. Students :** Students today are highly technological oriented and have multi-faceted talent. The faculty members and institutions need to constantly update their knowledge base and be technical savvy to meet the growing expectations of the students. The institutions will also need to understand that it is not mere bookish knowledge, but the practical happenings in the corporate world that will help the students
- 2. Companies :** Companies come to educational institutions for recruiting talents in campus selection procedures. Keeping continuous and direct contacts with these companies will enable institutes to maintain good and healthy relationships and improve contacts and service to them.
- 3. Faculty members :** The faculties need to update themselves to keep pace with the happenings in the global economy. In the new learning environment, faculty and student services are closely linked, and

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faculties need to constantly learn and de learns to be meaningful to students.

## 2. Statement of The Problem

Universities and colleges in India offer a wide range of programs and courses to the national and international students. The growth in intake of higher education has gone multi-fold, post-independence in India. This is happening in a circumstance in which, universities and colleges are competing in a tremendously globalized and high competitive environment in offering educational programs and services. Universities and colleges today in India are to enter the competition ground of the higher education market in which they must be able to compete not only with their Indian counterparts, but also with the market leaders such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, where students prefer to go and study and do researches.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the demand to meet the world standards as well as the threat of losing a part of their students are two major forces that will cause Indian colleges and universities not only upgrade themselves in terms of quality of education, employment opportunities, etc, but also remain competitive in terms of cost factors. Thus, it is imperative for Indian Universities and Colleges to take strategic steps and make preparations to meet these forces safely. Not astonishingly, information and communications technology (ICT) can play a facilitating role in this regard. Therefore, the novelty of this situation motivated to scrutinize this problem from the ICT point of view within the context of business is attempted.

### 2.1. Objectives

The initial purpose of this paper is to investigate the marketing efforts of colleges and universities in order to identify the practical elements that play a significant role in establishing relationships with their students. Further, the main purpose of the study is to combine all these identified elements together in an integrated framework and describe the process flow between them in order to come up with the proposed CRM model. This framework can be used for the following purposes:

1. To identify, collect, store, manage and disseminate right knowledge about and from students' behaviors, needs, preferences, values, desires, problems and complaints in a systematic way,
2. To create a collaborative student-centric environment inside colleges and universities which will lead them to engage in satisfying students' needs,
3. An interface between colleges and universities and their students as a tool of building effective communications with the aim of establishing, managing and retaining relationships with these students.

This framework therefore brings two benefits for Indian Colleges and Universities:

1. Firstly, it increases the awareness of all parts of the universities which are directly or indirectly interacting with students about their needs, preferences, values and problems in a systematic way.
2. Secondly, it enhances their abilities to establish, manage and retain effective relationships with their students by satisfying their needs, preferences and values as well as by solving their problems and complaints.

Thus, it is expected that utilizing such strategic student-oriented CRM framework in marketing strategies of colleges and universities can contribute well in decreasing the threat of losing students to some extent.

### 2.2. Review of literature

The move towards more customer centric direction can be traced back to the 1960s when the focus of marketing started to shift from managing products or marketing campaigns to managing the profitability of each individual customer over the entire life of relationship. The paradigm shift brought lots of discussions on "relationship marketing" since the 1980s (Berry, 1983; Håkansson, 1982).<sup>2,3</sup> Relationship marketing aims to identify, maintain and build up a network with individual customers and to continuously strengthen the network for the mutual benefit of both sides through interactive, individualized and value-added contacts over a long period of time (Shani and Chalasani, 1992).<sup>4</sup> CRM evolving from business processes emphasizes not only a comprehensive strategy, but also the process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2000). Pradeep. K. V and Karunakaran N (2021)<sup>5</sup> studied customer perception-cum-preferences in the business sector.

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a set of practices that provide a consolidated, integrated view of customers across all business areas to ensure that each customer receives the highest level of service (Karakostas, et al., 2005; Chinnappa T B, Karunakaran N and Ajith Kumar K R, 2021).<sup>6</sup> The most popular use of technology to provide students with formative feedback is through computer-based testing or assessment using multiple-choice or similar objective question types (Denton, et al., 2008). Such software can deliver detailed formative feedback for each individual question more efficiently than is possible with traditional assessment (Brown, et al., 1999),<sup>7</sup> and it has been reported that students favour the immediacy of such feedback as it keeps the activity and result closely connected (Denton et al., 2008). However, the validity of automated formative assessment has been queried by Gipps (2005). Chinnappa. T. B. and Karunakaran N (2021)<sup>8</sup>

analyzed industry-business-education through academia-industry interface.

It has been claimed that sending tutors' comments electronically by email, via the internet or virtual learning environment (Denton, et al., 2008; Gipps,<sup>9</sup> 2005) can enhance the way in which students receive and engage with feedback. Students receive their individual feedback in privacy, enabling them to respond to their feedback in different ways and at different times (Price and O'Donovan, 2008). A number of other studies have reported on the greater impact of electronic or online feedback (Van den Boom, et al., 2004; Guardado and Shi, 2007).<sup>10</sup> However Rowe and Wood (2007) have suggested that further examination of how students receive and respond to electronically redelivered feedback is required. Chinnappa. T. B., Karunakaran. N and Ajith Kumar. K. R. (2021),<sup>11,12</sup> studied the customer relationship management and consumerism in the post COVID-19 period.

Many scholars have encouraged educational institutions to have a customer-view to their students, believe that one of the aspects of empowering students at a university or a college is to take the current view that they are now regarded as "clients" or "customers" rather than recipients of education. Meanwhile, Seeman and O'Hara (2006) believe that considering students as customers provides a competitive advantage for educational institutions and improves their capabilities to attract, retain and serve their customers more. Ajith Kumar K R, Karunakaran N and Chinnappa T. B. (2021)<sup>13–16</sup> evaluated the repositioning of business education for employment and self employment through content pedagogy and constructive alignment of learning outcomes.

### 3. Materials and Methods

Kumar (2005) has distinguished qualitative and quantitative research methods based on the purpose of research, data collection process and analysis of data. Unlike the exploratory research design, in a descriptive research, through a carefully planned research procedure, researchers can achieve a precise answer to the research problem. The main purpose of such studies is to describe what is prevalent with respect to the issue or problem under study. In the study descriptive research design is relevant and is used. Both primary and secondary were used; secondary data has been collected from various journals, and internet publications. The primary data has been collected through questionnaire distributed to 100 management students in a college in Pollachi, Coimbatore and Tamilnadu. Interviews with college professors and university faculty members were also conducted. In the study, since the problem is associated with marketing efforts of colleges and universities; the sample unit has been planned to target those students of colleges and staff in charge of marketing activities who might be associated with student

recruitment department. In the study, in order to analyze data, the empirical findings collected from questionnaire and interviews have been analyzed with the support of CRM model. The analysis of data has been carried out in a way that all CRM processes applicable to the study have been identified firstly and then, all engaging elements of the desired model including people, channels and ICT-based tools associated to each process have been categorized and prepared a comprehensive summary of the results derived from empirical findings.

## 4. Results, Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1. Higher Education in India

It is most evident by the fact that India is lagging behind in higher educational services as it consists only 6-7 percent students as against international standard of 16 percent. Of the 7 percent academia, 87 percent of it is concentrated in three faculties of arts by 42 percent, science by 20 percent and commerce by 21 percent and the remaining 13 percent is absorbed by professional faculties like medicine, engineering and management education. The number of universities and students increased from just 17 and 3.5 lakhs in 1947 to 350 and 1 crore respectively in 2007. The great concern here is the fall in percentage of plan expenditure on higher education to total education has fallen from 22 percent in fifth five-year plan to 6 percent in eleventh five-year plan (2007-12).

In the changing and challenging scenario of globalization and privatization, the higher education, cannot remain aloof. So, institutions need strategies that make them more receptive and responsive to their core constituencies — their students. Students increasingly see themselves as customers who purchase education services from competing providers.

Higher education, today, is undergoing a more radical transformation than perhaps any other aspect of our culture. Educational institutions world-wide are undergoing fundamental shifts in how they operate and interact with their "customers": students, alumni, faculty members, and staff members. The quality of knowledge generated with higher educational institutions and its availability to wider economy is becoming increasingly critical to national competitiveness. With the threat of foreign universities setting up their institutions in India, existing universities and colleges need to augment their resources and meet the expectations of students in a competitive environment.

New technology-based tools for gathering and disseminating knowledge have become central element of today's education. Technological, economic, sociological, and governmental forces are altering education dramatically, impacting its institutions, teachers, students, funding sources, and basic function in society. To unlock potential and helping talented people to gain advanced training, whatever their background requires customer-

centric approach to education. Colleges at graduation and Post-Graduation levels are increasingly challenged to maintain student enrollment levels. Enrollment management programs to market the institution are growing in number and their efforts are paying off. Though enrollments in India might be rising on an average for almost all graduate and PG colleges due to demographical shifts, the quality of students is not standardized across all the colleges. Some colleges are more preferred while some lie at the bottom. The challenge is not only at the initial admission level. Once students arrive on campus, however, the challenge is to keep them there. Retention activities had focused traditionally on comprehensive orientation programs, in-depth student advising, and a variety of student-focused activities. Students expect technology to be an integral part of their entire educational process and anticipate a higher level of access to information. From the “student-as-customer” perspective, an educational CRM system would provide interaction with all the traditional student touch points—admissions, registration, and financial aid through a single system that would facilitate a complete understanding of each student’s unique situation.

Students of today do not want to have the over-crowded classes, inadequate library and laboratory facilities as was prevalent in 60s and 90s. They live in the world of Wi-Fi, lap-tops, face book, twitters and exactly know what to expect from educational institutions, where do they want to go. In the past, rarely has an institution responded by creating remedial program for inadequately prepared students. But now colleges and universities have initiated re-structuring and re-engineering their operating processes to cut costs and become more efficient while responding to increased competition.

Higher education customers are demanding more attention and immediate service. Proactive institutes are now adjusting their practices by refocusing their efforts externally. Because of the need to concentrate more on customers, many institutions are tuning to customer relationship management.

#### 4.2. Why implement a CRM business strategy in higher education

CRM is important because of the changes occurring in the competitive environment. Globalization and the Internet mean that competition can now come as easily from around the world as from around the corner. Power and choice are moving to the customer as never before, and leading to the commoditization of products and services in most situations. In today’s scenario, most of the institutions want to compete with others. To compete with other institutions, some institutions are getting autonomous status, some of them are trying to get ISO Certification, others are looking for accreditation status, deemed university status, and some others are tied-up with multi-national companies (MNCs),

and so on. The institutions, which are not ready to compete, will surely become as “Void and Vanish”.

It is essential that academic institutions have to concentrate about some strategies, techniques, or methods by which they can become “Brand Building”. And one such strategy is CRM. CRM strategy for an academic institution should lead to employment rather than merely giving education. At present, academic institutions are eager to maintain a long-term relationship with the students rather than a relation which is related only to their course duration. Customer relationship management is all about satisfying and retaining the customer by providing the perquisites he/she desires for. The relations that are maintained are a kind of trust that the institutions provide to its customers (students) and fulfill them.

Educational institutions are also among those profit-making institutions which are attaining the path of CRM. Academic institutions are themselves not different from any other organizations. They are themselves profit-making firms who impart education for money and try to grow as any other organization. Whether they are government-owned or self-financed private institutions; almost all educational institutions are profit-making organizations. Such organizations focus on CRM not only to impart state-of-the-art education to their students, but also have to maintain relations with their working staff, administrators, companies, vendors and with their primary customers, students. CRM plays an increasingly important role in maintaining such relationships in these organizations.

#### 4.3. The impact of CRM on the higher education enterprise

The 7Ps and their impact on the society, if analyzed would be highly revealing as detailed below:

##### 4.3.1. Students

Today’s students live in the world of “face book” and are highly technology-savvy and expect more value for their money invested in education and would like to control their learning environment to suit their needs and demands than get adjusted what is being given to them. Today’s student community live in ‘virtual world’ and just text book teaching will not satisfy their thirst for knowledge. They do not depend on institutions, but institutions are dependent on them, given the mushrooming of education institutions with every kind offer from education to make them computer-savvy to opportunities for placement in good institutions.

##### 4.3.2. Companies

Organizations today look for good students in terms of knowledge and skill sets than just book-worms. With so many institutions mushrooming in India, organizations have unenviable task of picking up quality students in campus selections processes. They also would like to have

research partnership with higher educational institutions, given the high cost of market research programmes for products. Thus, if institutions can build up strong education base, develop skill sets of students on a continuous basis; they will have continuous, healthy relationship with the organizations.

#### 4.3.3. Faculty members

Today's system provides little value for faculty members. In the new learning environment, faculty and student services are closely linked, dynamically sharing resources and strategies to enable student learning. In today's virtual world, professions can maintain contacts with students on assignments, case studies, study notes and even examination system, through computer network, even while working at home.

#### 4.3.4. The institution

CRM delivers a new conceptual and structural framework for directing institutional activities to attract and retain its various customers. Most import is the ability of a truly robust set of institutional processes and tools to bring the entire institution together around its people.

#### 4.3.5. Governmental organizations / AICTE / UGC / NAAC

CRM will ensure prompt delivery of all the processes set by Government in time, every time.

CRM plays an important role in maintaining and making new such productive, profitable, rewarding, and fruitful relationships, which benefit these organizations on short and long runs both. Fortunately, emerging methodologies in research and marketing offer higher education institutions the ability to adapt and evolve by building an ongoing dialogue with students, admissions representatives, parents, employers and alumni. This dialogue serves as the process by which an educational brand is built and maintained. Using an effective Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution is vital for education establishments to deal more efficiently with the complex multi-level relationships they have to manage. Taking a cue from 4Ps in Marketing, Booms and Bitner advocated 7Ps for education services marketing mix:

1. **Product** : It includes degrees awarded and their syllabi, paper exemptions, brand name of the degrees and its history, placement facility, lateral entries, grading given by NAAC, recognition by UGC, AICTE, NBA, etc, demand and supply conditions of the degrees offered, etc.
2. **Price**: It includes admission and term fees structure, fee concessions and exemptions, scholarship, exam fees, etc
3. **Place**: It includes selection of affiliated colleges based on their strengths and weaknesses and evaluation

of affiliated colleges, study centres (in case of DDE courses) based on their performance, and the control desired on affiliated colleges and study centres.

4. **Promotion** : It includes media propagation, CRM, Public relations with Government, UGC, AICTE, NAAC, State Councils of higher education and research organizations, press meets and public awareness programmes.
5. **People** : This includes Professors, students themselves, other students and non-teaching staff for which the colleges and universities have to plan and implement the number of teaching and non-teaching staff, their qualifications, recruitment and selection, procedure, their training and rewards and conducting research on needs and wants of students and professors, educating the cultural values with the students, number of students, their background and interest and aptitude for the course in which he / she is studying.
6. **Physical Evidence**: This includes design, aesthetics, functionality and ambient conditions of the class rooms and buildings, equipment in the labs, library facilities, dress code of students and professors and non-teaching staff, annual reports and calendars of the university, computer labs, medical facilities inside campus, banks/ATMs, post offices, cooperative stores, stationery shops, photocopies, etc.
7. **Process**: This includes types of services — standardized or customized, number of steps involved in the service process — simple or complex, and the level of involvement by students, professors and non-teaching staff in the service delivery.

#### 4.4. Customer relationship management (CRM)

Organizations seeking sustainable development in the current high-competitive business environment need to transfer their business strategies from product-oriented to customer oriented. Muther (2002)<sup>17</sup> has encouraged organizations to not only look at the quality and price differentiation, but also to identify their customers' requirements and offer innovative market services in order to stand their ground against competitors. Park and Kim (2003)<sup>18</sup> believed that organizations which focus on obtaining and retaining more customer share rather than market share, will be more capable in cost reduction since as Kotler, Wong, Saunders and Armstrong (2005) stated, the cost of attracting a new customer is five times more maintaining an existing one. This transformation towards the customer-orientation has been interpreted by Romano and Fjermestad (2003)<sup>19</sup> as a shift from "transaction-based economy" to a "relationship-based economy", implying a movement from economies of scale to "economies of interactions" or "economies of relations" which are the key value drivers for customer-centric economy.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as one of the most efficient customer-oriented business approaches can be utilized by organization to facilitate their transition from product oriented to a customer-centric strategy. CRM is literally concerned with establishing customer relationships.<sup>20,21</sup>

The relationships here can be emerged in different shapes such as business-to-business relationships, customer life cycles, different customer segments, customer lifetime value and customer profitability (Rollins and Halinen, 2005).<sup>22</sup> Williams and Curtis (2006) have defined CRM as a subset of relationship marketing indicating that, while relationship marketing encompasses all relationships with customers, suppliers and intermediaries, CRM focused on the management of customer relations only. There is still nonconformity among experts about the exact definition of CRM. However, while some specialists view it as a pure information technology solution for data collection and analysis, and some consider it as a marketing philosophy planned to achieve long-term business gains, an integration of two perspectives can generate better outcomes for organizations (Saren, 2007).<sup>23</sup>

#### 4.5. CRM in higher education

The emergence of CRM applications in colleges and universities refers back to mid 1980s and the late 1990s when educational institutions started to restructure and reengineer their operating processes to reduce costs while raising efficiency (Anderson, 2002).<sup>24</sup> The efforts made such universities turned to the use of enterprise resource planning (ERP) applications in automating business processes in areas including finance, enrollment and human resources. However, since ERP could only serve internal customers' needs (faculty staff members), there was a need for satisfying external customers' demands (students). This need, therefore led to introduction of CRM into higher education. CRM in higher education mainly focuses on automation and improvement of institutional processes associated with managing student relationships in areas such as recruitment, marketing, communication management and service and support (Anderson, 2002). Thus, adoption of the CRM in universities and colleges mainly improve the interactions between the admission, registration, financial aid and accommodation offices and students. Further, Anderson (2002) posited that the use of CRM applications can lead to improved customer responsiveness by increasing effective practices of the universities' staff members who directly deal with students and provide an actual "cradle-to-rave" customer life cycle. Nowadays, universities employ CRM to manage relationships with their students and alumni (Buttle, 2009). He supports his idea by giving an example that, if a student enjoys his or her experiences at a university, he or she might recommend it to his/her personal networks afterwards. Nonetheless, as stated earlier,

the purpose of the study at hand is to depict a knowledge-based CRM framework that can be contributed into the marketing efforts of Swedish universities as a means for managing relationships with international students. Based on a comprehensive discussion presenting in the coming section, one critical aspect in building up effective relationships with students rests on the extent to which universities possess students' knowledge. It is however notable that since "students" has been assumed as main "customers" of universities, this discussion has been put forward on the basis of the importance of customer knowledge in CRM. As Seeman and O'Hara (2006)<sup>25</sup> have stated, having a customer-view about students provides a competitive advantage for educational institutions and improve their capabilities to attract, retain and serve these customers more.

#### 4.6. Empirical findings

Table 1 provides the information about the level of Generic Skills and Competencies of Students by the level of lecturer capabilities with the help of bi-variate analysis and chi-square test of significance. For this purpose, the level of lecturer capabilities has been categorized into three categories, viz., low, medium and high based on the scores assigned to responses elicited for the 12 dimensions from the students with their respective scores. Likewise, the students' level of competencies and generic skills has been measured with the help of 18 dimensions and categorized into three groups, viz., low, medium and high.

From that the following hypothesis has been postulated.

1. **H<sub>0</sub>** = There is no association between the level of lecture capabilities and generic skills and competencies of students
2. **H<sub>a</sub>** = There is close association between the level of lecture capabilities and generic skills and competencies of students

$\chi^2$  — Table Value at 4 degree freedom for 0.10 levels is 11.345, which is greater than Calculated Value of 8.008 Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted to some extent (Table 1). From Table 1, it is evident that when the level of lecturer capabilities is at lower side about 44 per cent and 32 percent of students' level of generic skills and competencies are said to be medium and lower, respectively.<sup>26</sup> Further, it is to be noted that among those students who reported that the level of lecturer capabilities are at medium, about half of their level of generic skills and competencies is at low level. On the other hand, it is conspicuous to note that among those students who stated that the level of lecturer capabilities as high 56% students fall in the category of high level of generic skills and competencies. In view of these differential patterns the association between the level of lecturer capabilities and generic skills and competencies, the

**Table 1:** Level of generic skills and competencies of students by the level of lecturer capabilities

Level of Lecturer Capabilities	Low Scores (55-69)		Medium Scores (70-77)		High Scores(78 -82)	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Low (Scores 29 – 44)	31.5	5	43.8	7	25.0	4
Medium (Scores 45 – 50)	50.0	10	30.0	6	20.0	4
High(Scores 51 – 55 )	16.7	3	27.8	5	55.6	10
$\chi^2$ - Value; Significant Level			8.008;		0.091	

chi-square test of significance results turn out as significant at a lower level ( $p < 0.10$ ).

In this study, it is also proposed that:

1. **H<sub>0</sub>** = The level of lecture capabilities would not improve the level of generic skills and competencies of students
2. **H<sub>a</sub>** = The level of lecture capabilities would improve the level of generic skills and competencies of students

This hypothesis has been tested with the help of mean generic skills and competencies of students with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test of significance and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 indicates that on the whole, the mean score of generic skills and competencies has increased with an increase in the level of lecturer capabilities. For instance, one can see that the mean score of generic skills and competencies is about 71 for those students who expressed that the lecture capabilities as low and further lowered to a level of 69 among those students who belong to medium lecturer capabilities, but conspicuously increased to a level of 75, when the students maintained the lecturer capabilities as high. The results turned out as significant shows that, the proposed hypothesis has been supported by the data to a lower extent.

#### 4.7. Differentials in lecturer capabilities and generic skills and competency of students by their selected background characteristics

In order to know whether the level of lecturer capabilities as perceived by students and generic skills and competency of students varies by their selected background characteristics; an attempt is made to analyze the data with the help of means and ANOVA test of significance, and the same is presented in Table 3. (panel 1) suggest that the mean scores of lecturer capabilities by the male students significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) higher than their female counterparts.

However, such differentials in mean scores of generic skills and competency among students did not differ much. In the case of differentials in the means of lecturer capabilities as well as students' generic skills and competencies are also do not vary to a large extent across their type of under graduate degree studied. It is conspicuous to note that the mean scores of both lecturer capabilities as well as students' generic skills and competencies are found

to be higher among those students who felt management education adequacy 'very much' as compared to those who felt such education adequacy is 'much' and very less in the case of those who perceived it as 'some'. These mean differentials are also turned out to be highly significant ( $p < 0.001$  in each case). Likewise, the mean scores of both lecturer capabilities as well as students' generic skills and competencies are noted to be higher among those students who believed that management education degree provides employment 'very good' extent as compared to those who considered such education is employable to a 'good' and 'some' extent. However, these mean differentials are turned out as significant at a lower extent ( $p < 0.10$ ) in the case of lecturer capabilities and at a moderate level ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the case of students' generic skills and competency.

## 5. Conclusion

The traditional marketing mix has been extended to cope with the demands of services such as higher education and can now include: physical environment, policies, processes, people and promises. However, over reliance on the first three of these without recognition of the part that people play in the delivery of the service and the promises made before delivery is a real danger. Effective selling of a service such as higher education requires promises to be made that are credible and achievable. The credibility of such promises depends greatly on the nature of the relationship with the seller, are they believable, what is the evidence and has a relationship of trust been established. Even where there are effective service policies, processes and environments in place if the relationships are not developed the long term goal of mutual exchange leading to client satisfaction will not be achieved.

Client dissatisfaction essentially exists where there is a gap between what the client expects and their perception of what is delivered. In relation to higher education this gap is mainly between what promises have been perceived to have been made and perception of what is delivered. In bridging this gap relationships play an essential role as they affect perceptions of both what is offered and what is delivered. Relationships in higher education have always played an important role with traditional university education comprising significant interaction between student and tutor through tutorials, seminars, project supervision and the role of academics as personal tutors and mentors.

**Table 2:** Mean scores of generic skills and competencies of students by the level of lecturer capabilities

Level of Lecturer Capabilities	Mean	No
Low	70.63	16
Medium	69.45	20
High	74.72	18
F-Ratio; Significant Level	2.697;	0.077

**Table 3:** Mean scores of lecturer capabilities and generic skills and competency of students by their selected background characteristics

Background Characteristics	Lecturer Capabilities		Generic Skills and Competency	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Sex				
Male	48.53	32	71.06	32
Female	43.86	22	72.27	22
F-Ratio;p Value	10.196	0.001	0.338	0.564
Type of Under Graduation Degree				
Arts	47.25	36	71.33	36
Science	45.36	18	72.00	18
F-Ratio; p-Value	1.27	0.263	0.094	0.761
Management Education Adequacy				
Very Much	52.70	10	78.90	10
Much	46.90	31	69.03	31
Some	41.31	13	71.92	13
F-Ratio; p-Value	18.967	0.001	8.480	0.001
Management Education Degree Gives Employability				
Fair	45.63	16	67.69	16
Good	46.03	29	72.45	29
Very Good	50.33	9	75.56	9
F-Ratio; p-Value	2.415	0.10	4.061	0.05

With larger and larger percentages of the population moving into higher education, this has affected the ability of Institutions to provide the same level of relationship building as in the past. This has, in many institutions, been replaced by CRM and technology supported learning mechanisms. These are undoubtedly desirable and beneficial but higher education must recognize that if the result is a reduction in relationship building this can affect their competitive advantage. Higher education has become a commodity in most countries to be bought and sold. The challenge is how to ensure that this is compatible with the provision of a responsible and professional service to clients. Marketing to customers is concerned with providing what they ask for. Marketing to clients involves making professional judgments on behalf of the client. Higher education is a professional service to clients and for such clients to accept the advice they are given the organization and individual involved must be credible. It has historically built relationships in a situation where unlike the customers for goods the clients understand that not all of their demands can be met. However, this is only sustainable where the higher education organization has established effective two-way relationships based on the delivery of a professional, quality assured service by people who are credible and whose promises can be trusted.

## 6. Source of Funding

None.

## 7. Conflict of Interest

None.

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