Influence of Learning Methods Factors on Satisfactions of Overseas Students: A case of Shandong University, Jinan, China

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Abstract

Satisfaction of students in an educational institution has become a strategic issue for universities to survive and flourish**.** The foremost object of this study is to investigate how learning approaches satisfy level of satisfaction of international students in China, like teaching staff, study programs, method of instruction, and engagement of teachers with students, seminars, use of multimedia in presentation, group discussion, internship, field trips, and implementation along with academic performance of the students. It would also employ IPA framework by which teachers and policy makers in the respective international office would search out guidelines directly from international students' importance to learning methods and their outcome through a questionnaire. These instructions will not only improve the quality of international education but will also enhance the demand for international education and stiff competition worldwide. Data were collected from International students in Shandong University. The findings of this study indicated all learning methods play vital role for satisfaction of international students. However, almost all the mean scores of performance were lower than those of the importance ratings. Hence, efforts should be made to improve the good performance. A practical recommendation was given to decision makers to enhance the international student satisfaction. For future research, it was suggested that to conduct qualitative studies it was necessary to identify the dimension of international student satisfaction.

Keywords: Learning method, satisfaction, international students, Shandong University

Introduction

Recent and ongoing economic progress and improvement of China's international status caused an ever-increasing number of international students both from developing and developed countries in Chinese universities. Despite this acknowledgement, education service value and students' satisfaction are important issues for universities involved in stiff competition for international students and education quality generally couldn't meet the universal excellence level due to cultural and linguistic diversity, and traditional teaching methods of teacher-centered and power point. This research will utilize IPA framework by which lecturers and institution policy makers will directly search out guidelines using international students' importance to learning methods and their outcome (satisfaction or dissatisfaction) information collected through questionnaire. The research outcomes have directed institutions of higher studies to follow more competitive learning practices that are firmly based on the quality assessment.

After World War II, the division of a more mutually dependent universal society and economy into the developed and developing worlds challenged the developing countries to exploit the advantages of globalization via mobilization and endowing of their human resources with knowledge (Michael; 2004).

The concept of internationalization in higher education is also a feature of globalization (Elkin, Devjee, & Farnsworth, 2005; Knight, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Trahar, 2013). Many researchers stated that the general trend of international student from Asian nations to Western nations, India and China come out as two key sources of worldwide students contributing to over 70% demand (Arambewela & Hall, 2013; Lasanowski & Verbik, 2007). The import and export of education had been so fast since the last two decades. The stream of universal students may likely carry on to increase and grow over the world in future (Woodfield, 2010).The International Development Programs in Australia estimated a four times higher world demand of worldwide education around 7.2 million students by 2025, highlighting a 5.8% compound growth rate in this period. The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) is reported, China, Malaysia and Singapore as the emerging competitor in market of worldwide education (Chong, 2015). The rising trend of large number of international students in different university campuses of China began to draw the attention of Chinese scholars (Tang, 2017). Despite this advancement, knowledge quality of overseas students registered in institute of higher education in china generally couldn't meet the universal excellence level due to cultural and linguistic diversity, and traditional teaching methods of teacher-centered and power point. This paper will encompass the following key concepts: internationalization of higher education particularly in China, customer satisfaction premise, predictors of international student's gratification and the proposed empirical framework.

Customer Satisfaction Theory and International Students' Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction means customers' attitude and feelings as they purchase or consume products or services. This manifests that certain expectations are under consideration in customers mind before buying. After their consumption or purchase, the services or products are evaluated. If the performance of the services or products are coincided their expectations, the buyer will enjoy satisfaction (Jamal & Naser, 2002). Therefore, client contentment determines how well buyers' viewpoint are being targeted (Türkyılmaz & Özkan, 2007). Client contentment will effect market share, increase productivity, powerful competitive situation, profitability, investment return and quality of service (Bianchi & Drennan, 2012; Clemes, Gan, & Kao, 2008; Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004; Türkyılmaz & Özkan, 2007). This satisfaction results in positive WOM (word of mouth) which highlights the client's willingness to suggest the goods and services to other buyers in the near future (Clemes et al.; Bianchi & Drennan, 2012;, 2008; Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007; Jiewanto, Laurens, & Nelloh, 2012; Kuo, Wu, & Deng, 2009). These ideas can be separated into three key processes. In the first important process, the drivers or causes of satisfaction for instance customers' expectations, perceived value, perceived quality and image are underlined. The second process contains the achievement of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Jamal & Naser, 2002). The final and third process is the conclusion of satisfaction which may direct to client devotion and complaint behavior. Such expectations were originated from clients' awareness about the product and company, which may also be retrieved from given information prior to the purchase via marketing, image, product promotion or branding by the company, as well as their past experiences in the usage of goods or services (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2004; Türkyılmaz & Özkan, 2007). Thus the client's estimation of the recent consumption experience shows the perceived quality of goods and services. Clients are always witting about the amount what they give up when they purchase goods or services. Consequently, comprehended value is an exchange between what clients receive like benefits, quality and utilities and what they give up such as price, time, opportunity cost and efforts.

Image relates to "the customers perception from the product and company, the brand name and the kind of associations" (Türkyılmaz & Özkan, 2007). The later study reported a positive association of image with customers' expectations, as well as their satisfaction and loyalty. Reliable clients will show post-client behavior like re-purchase, positive word of mouth and recommending to others (Hui et al., 2007; Andaleeb, 2001). Above and beyond the customer loyalty, customers' complaint reduction behavior is another result of customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers will exhibit fewer complaint behaviors (Bianchi & Drennan, 2012).

Service-recipient pattern provided the base for students to be treated as customers. Thus, universities have to be very student-oriented to deliver their service. Universities contending one another at undergraduate and postgraduate stages for national and worldwide students face two important issues of Service quality and client satisfaction (Douglas, McClelland, & Davies, 2008). Thus dynamic global, regional and national developments have obligated universities of higher education to improve client perceived quality because satisfied students will be helpful to magnetize more hard working students to their universities via increased students' devotion, optimistic (WOM), message and higher education institutes (Slethaug & Manjula, 2012). In opposition to gratifies scholars, disappointed scholars disclose no positive WOM may dull the brand of university and reputation, and finally may cause the university to drop their possible students (Arambewela & Hall, 2013; Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, & Hon-Tat, 2011; Slethaug & Manjula, 2012). Consequently, students' satisfaction is an important strategic variable in keeping up the rigid rivalry in Internationalization of advanced education. International education owns distinctive characteristics because education services are consumed by international students in a foreign country. It is analogous to healthcare and tourism services offering industries, where their relevant services are provided to overseas clients by companies in domestic market. These companies are named by ISE (inward service exporters) (Chong, 2015). Keeping in view of the first key process of customer satisfaction theory, researchers are susceptible to vie key predictors of students' satisfaction resulting from learning methods for research perspective, therefore develop strategies accordingly to keep up firm competition in international higher education market.

Factors in Measuring International Students' Satisfaction

Being a customer, students' satisfaction was influenced by both internal factors related to education services like learning and teaching styles and external factors for instance the different experiences which comprised of interaction with international and local students, living in a new country, and teachers belonging to different cultural surroundings (Bianchi & Drennan, 2012).

Long, Ibrahim, & Kowang, (2013) stated that sufficient subject knowledge, conveying and knowledge via suitable learning techniques favorable techniques for the satisfaction of international students.

Lecturer competency, motivation, group discussion, interaction with students and book contents

Consequently, the theme comprehensive knowledge is fundamentally imperative for lecturers so that scholars could achieve the preferred knowledge result and could satisfy with their knowledge (Fresen, 2007; Seng, 2013). In recent years, two teaching methods like Power-point based teaching style and teacher-centered schooling techniques, namely, transferring knowledge from lecturers to students were considered very popular means among many Chinese teachers. They mostly followed these traditional teaching processes which had very little interaction between instructors and students (Xiaoqiong & Xuyan, 2014). Three kinds of interactions like quality and timely interaction among students and their teachers, and finally between learners and their course content, were notably confirmed by (Young & Norgard, 2006); (Shin, Jonassen, & McGee, 2003);

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(Jucks, Paechter, & Tatar, 2003). Swan (2002) reported that students' satisfaction and perceived learning can significantly be profound by the prior concept of three factors such as active discussion among course participants and their interaction with lecturers, and clarity of course design. Yang & Cornelius, (2004) concluded that poorly designed course content and absence of instructors' participation in discussions were considered key responsible to students' frustration in class room

This study will discuss international students' satisfaction resulting from learning methods that covers key educational services like teaching staff, study programs, method of instruction, engagement of teachers with students, tuition fee and all other techniques facilitating learning such as computer laboratory and library, seminars, use of multimedia in presentation, group discussion, internship, field trips, project studies and implementation and academic performance of the students based on different assessment tools, it will also employ IPA framework by which lecturers and policy makers in the respective international office will search out guidelines directly using international students' importance to learning methods and their outcome (satisfaction or dissatisfaction) information collected through questionnaire.

Materials and methods
Research Design
This study used a quantitative research methodology to explore the satisfaction of international students in Shandong University**,** Jinan, China. Self- structured questionnaire were distributed among students in the selected university.
Instrument Measurement & Target Sample
Data collected from International students of Shandong University –Jinan –Shandong province, China. The researchers used likert scale to collect data.
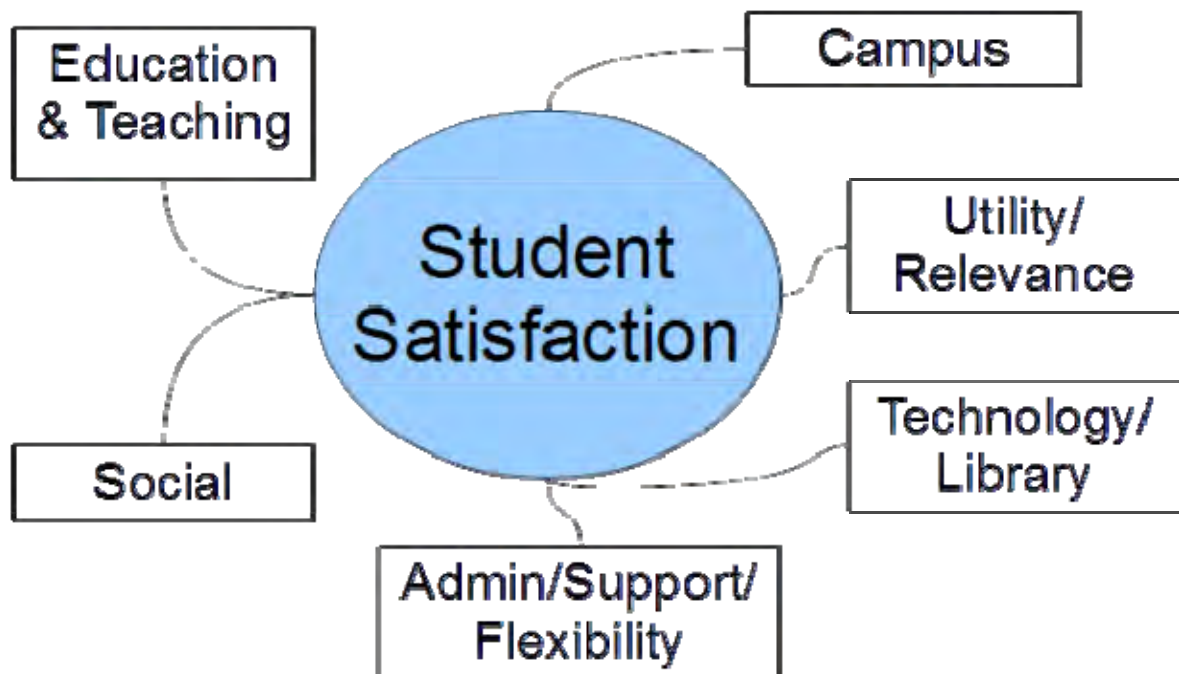

Figure 1 : Theoretical Frame Work of Learning Method

Data Collection

With the help of classmates and some managers from dormitory, questionnaires were distributed to International students in Shandong University both in central campus and medical campus. Lastly, 350 questionnaires were dispersed to respondents.

Analysis approach

For a deep assessment of the satisfaction of international students, the importance–performance analysis (IPA) approach was initially used for analyzing; it is a widely used method, which permits the concurrent analysis of items of importance and performance (Silva & Fernandes ,2010), the performance of an auto dealer's service department and to decision-makers to make decisions as well.

Mean scores rating the perceived importance and performance of all items were first calculated in the importance and performance model and then plotted on the IPA grid to evaluate their performance. The IPA grid can be divided into four quadrants, which are presented as under in Table 1.

Table 1: Importance and Performance of IPA

-Quadrant 1: Concentrate here High importance Low performance	-Quadrant 2: Keep up the good work High importance High performance
-Quadrant 3: Low priority Low importance Low performance	-Quadrant 4: Possible overkill Low importance High performance

Quadrant 1 is based on the improvement efforts should be concentrated here. In this quadrant items are perceived to be very important by the respondents, but performance levels are fairly low.

Quadrant 2 is based on keep up the good work and high importance and high performance. In this quadrant items are perceived to have high levels.

Quadrant 3 suggests that limited resources should be expended on this low-priority cell. This cell is based on low priority, low importance and low performance. More precisely, the items in this cell are not perceived to be very important.

Quadrant 4 highlights likely overkill. This cell contains items of low importance and high performance. The respondents are satisfied with the performance, but owing to the low importance, the current efforts on the items of this cell can be regarded as unnecessary due to the low importance of the items.

Results and Discussion
Perceived Importance

Table.2 Findings of Descriptive Statistics Regarding Perceived Importance

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. lecturer/professor	349	1.00	5.00	4.1633	.97038
2. group work	349	1.00	5.00	3.9857	.97811
3. role play	349	1.00	5.00	3.8739	1.03454
4. overseas exchange programs	349	1.00	5.00	3.8424	1.02038

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
5. field trips	349	1.00	5.00	3.8854	1.10044
6. internships	349	1.00	5.00	4.2006	.96186
7. library resources	349	1.00	5.00	4.2665	.90372
8. case studies	349	1.00	5.00	3.9513	1.04245
9. guest speakers	349	1.00	5.00	3.9742	1.02661
10. project studies and implementation	349	1.00	5.00	4.0344	.97023
11. multimedia (VCDs/pictures etc)	349	1.00	5.00	4.0172	1.09321
12. Teachers? level of motivation	349	1.00	5.00	4.1834	.93812
13. interaction during class	349	1.00	5.00	3.8625	1.03307
14. student presentations	349	1.00	5.00	3.8653	1.01522
15. textbooks and materials	349	1.00	5.00	4.1633	.95546
16. grading methods and examinations	349	1.00	5.00	4.1289	.93341
17. style of assignments	349	1.00	5.00	3.8052	1.07579
Valid N (list wise)	349				

Table 2 presents the results of Perceived Importance with the ranking of the mean scores. The mean score of the 17 items ranged from 3.8052 to 4.2665, showing that international students in China ranked all the items between "important" and "very important".

The top three most important items were "library resources (4.26)", "internships (4.20)", and "teachers' level of motivation (4.18)". In contrast, the three least important items were "style of assignments (3.80)", "overseas exchange programs (3.84)" and "interaction during class (3.86)".

Perceived Performance

Table. 3 Findings of Descriptive Statistics Regarding Perceived Performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. lecturer/professor	349	1.00	5.00	3.6905	1.02354
2. group work	349	1.00	5.00	3.6705	1.01866
3. role play	349	1.00	5.00	3.5444	.99793
4. overseas exchange programs	349	1.00	5.00	3.4556	1.17513
5. field trips	349	1.00	5.00	3.3725	1.24057
6. internships	349	1.00	5.00	3.3524	1.19824
7. library resources	349	1.00	5.00	3.5731	1.08197
8. case studies	349	1.00	5.00	3.4613	1.08375
9. guest speakers	349	1.00	5.00	3.5673	1.17158
10. project studies and implementation	349	1.00	5.00	3.7049	1.08092

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. multimedia (VCDs/pictures etc)	349	1.00	5.00	3.8080	1.06961
12. Teachers? level of motivation	349	1.00	5.00	3.8166	1.06169
13. interaction during class	349	1.00	5.00	3.7794	1.08280
14. student presentations	349	1.00	5.00	3.7221	.98267
15. textbooks and materials	349	1.00	5.00	3.8711	1.09492
16. grading methods and examinations	349	1.00	5.00	3.7335	1.05075
17. style of assignments	349	1.00	5.00	3.8166	1.04258
Valid N (list wise)	349				

Table 3 presents the results of performance.

As shown in Table 3, the participants were also asked to rate of performance as well. The survey results were reported with the ranking of the mean scores in Table 3. The mean scores for all the statements ranged from the highest of 3.87 to the lowest of 3.35.

Almost all the mean scores of performance were lower than those of perceived Importance indicate that there was a lot of work to do by universities and it showed that International students in China were not highly satisfied as well.

International students were relatively satisfied with their Performance in the top three items, which were "textbooks and materials (3.87)", "style of assignments (3.81)", and "teachers' level of motivation (3.76)". In contrast, the three least important items are "internships (3.35)", "field trips (3.37)", and "overseas exchange programs (3.45)".

Gap between the Perceived Importance and Performance

Table 4. Gap between the Perceived Importance and Performance

Items	Importance	Performance	Gap	Results
1. lecturer/professor	4.1633	3.6905	0.4728	I >P
2. group work	3.9857	3.6705	0.3152	I >P
3. role play	3.8739	3.5444	0.3295	I >P
4. overseas exchange programs	3.8424	3.4556	0.3868	I >P
5. field trips	3.8854	3.3725	0.5129	I >P
6. internships	4.2006	3.3524	0.8482	I >P
7. library resources	4.2665	3.5731	0.6934	I >P
8. case studies	3.9513	3.4613	0.49	I >P
9. guest speakers	3.9742	3.5673	0.4069	I >P
10. project studies and implementation	4.0344	3.7049	0.3295	I >P
11. multimedia (VCDs/pictures etc)	4.0172	3.808	0.2092	I >P
12. teachers' level of motivation	4.1834	3.8166	0.3668	I >P
13. interaction during class	3.8625	3.7794	0.0831	I >P
14. student presentations	3.8653	3.7221	0.1432	I >P
15. textbooks and materials	4.1633	3.8711	0.2922	I >P
16. grading methods and examinations	4.1289	3.7335	0.3954	I >P
17. style of assignments	3.8052	3.8166	-0.0114	I <P

Table 4 shows the results of the comparison between recognized importance and performance.

As shown in Table 4, the largest gap between perception and performance was observed for the item 6 that is for internships with a mean difference of 0.84. Whereas the least gap between perception and performance was found for the item "style of assignments", with a mean difference of -0.01.

IPA matrix analysis

The two-dimensional matrix has been constructed for data analysis. In this matrix, item performance was depicted along the x-axis and item importance was depicted along the y-axis.

The matrix divided into four quadrants and there's results were plotted in the IPA (Figure 2).

As shown in Figure 2, there were only two items identified in the "Concentrate here" quadrant.

An item had to be rated above average for importance but below average for performance to be placed in this quadrant. These items were perceived to be very important by international students, but performance level was fairly low. These items included "6 for Internships" and "7 for Library resources". Overseas respondents regarded these two items too important to avail benefits arising from them. As availability of more updated books both in their disciplines and leisure readings as well as electronic resources would satisfy their educational level, it would enhance stiff competition regarding internationalization in China. When their great importance was not responded by the same performance, they were frustrated. This higher importance called international office for concentration to its performance. This outcome was aligned with Abbasi et al., (2011) and against by Jiewanto et al., (2012) in library resources. This quadrant findings regarding internship and its alignment with Ashong, (2017) indicated that whether overseas students were at home or abroad they considered learning as a mechanism not limited to the classroom. Therefore, beyond the classroom learning activities like planned internship were much imperative for their satisfaction.

Four items were captured in the keep up the good work quadrant indicating that for these items, higher important level from the international students coincided to the higher level of performing these things. These items included the following: "1 for lecturer/professor", "15 for Text books and materials", "16 for grading methods and examinations", and "12 for teachers' level of motivation".

These findings indicated that the University performed well in the above aspects. Nevertheless, almost all the mean scores of performance were lower than those of the importance ratings. For this reason, efforts should be made to improve the good performance. Diep, Zhu, Struyven, & Blieck, (2017) also shed light on instructors support and expertise to show their significant contribution into international students' satisfaction. This conclusion was also supported by (Seng, 2013) in teaching quality and contradicted by Xiaoqiong & Xuyan, (2014) in exam methods. The former study also confirmed students' dissatisfaction with course contents.

Five items were found in the low priority quadrant. These findings suggest that efforts should not be overly concentrated on these items because international office performance and overseas students' importance level interacted at the low priority region. These items were "3 for role play", "4 for overseas exchange programs", "5 for field trips", "8 for case studies", and "9 for guest speakers".

Mostly, international office arranged exchange program, case studies and guest speakers for their own students for it did find international students less interested in these items. Therefore, no more resources should be specified for them.

Six items were in the possible overkill quadrant. These items were assignment style, project studies and implementation, multimedia, interaction during class, students' presentation and group work. It is verified by different studies that Chinese international institutions gave a remarkable importance to multimedia, presentations and project studies. Keeping in view importance to these items, they diverted their performance toward national students. These findings also displayed that more efforts were made on the items which were not as important as other items of quadrant 1 and 2. Results regarding professor/lecturer's interaction with students during class and presentation were opposed by Swan, (2002) and Long et al., (2013) respectively who illustrated students' satisfaction from these two items.
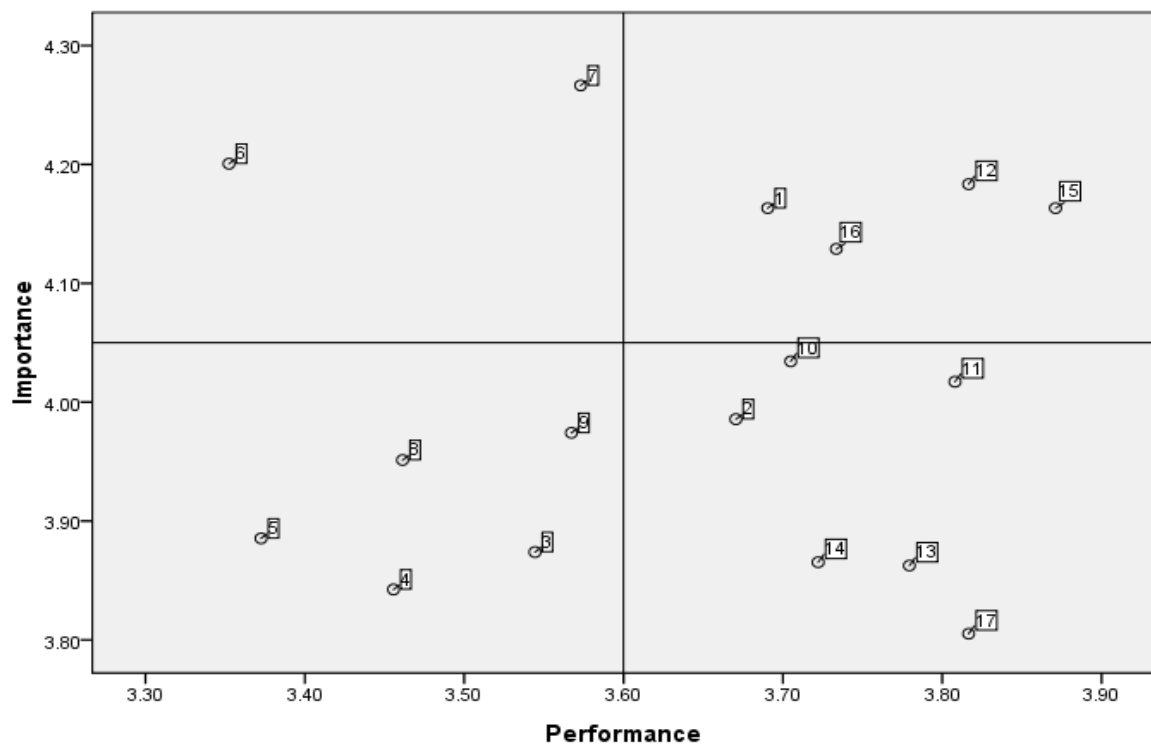

Figure 2. IPA Matrix Diagram about Importance and Importance

Programs should be designed to foster the academic involvement of both international students and host nationals such as academic salons, lectures, and clubs and so on. These plans can be helpful to increase overseas students' importance to interaction and group work activities. In this way, these two key items can lie in the "keep up good" region.

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