

QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract:

Quality in higher education is a high form of service learning, breaking the transmission of information, scientifically, according to labor market needs, while generating maximum consumer satisfaction. OECD says that "a culture of quality in higher education system, shared by the academic management, staff and students, help to strengthen academic quality assurance system," (OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education- 2006, p. 9, op. Cit. Sorin-George Toma, Shinji Naruo, 2009, p. 575) which leads to success.

Key words:, quality, higher education, satisfaction

JEL Classification: I23, M31

Introduction:

Quality and excellence - two vital concepts in the information society in which we live that must be the premise of any system of education in any country in the world - as a quality educational system, able to prepare highly qualified graduates to become competitive worldwide, is a prerequisite ensure of a prosperous future for any nation.

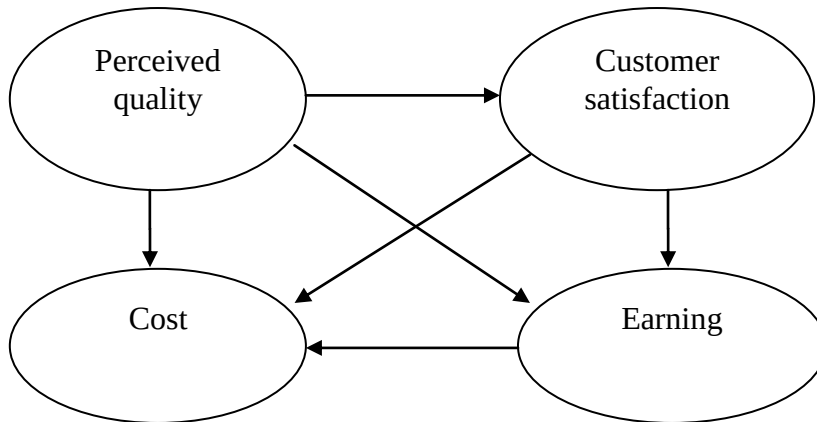
This article is structured in two parts: the first shows the impact of satisfaction on quality, cost and gain in higher education, while the second refers to the academic quality management based on the relationship *quality - satisfaction - marketing*.

1. Quality - a prerequisite for the development of higher education system

Lately, the quality of academic education has acquired a special importance because in a knowledge society all countries face a special situation in education. "The new trends in higher education such as fierce full global competition, lifelong learning, student migration, rapid dissemination of knowledge, internationalization of education, development of higher education as a export-oriented industry, underscores the need for continuous improvement from academic quality."(George Toma, Shinji Naruo, 2009, p. 575) Worldwide, more and more every nation recognizes the great importance that higher education has for the economic development because between quality and performance there is a cause-effect relationship. The efforts to improve the quality have often important results in reduced long term costs. Thus, as shown in diagram No.1, the

relationship between perceived quality, customer satisfaction, cost and profit is a functional one.

Diagram No. 1 – The impact of quality on satisfaction, cost and earnings



Source: Adapted from: Shah, Abhay (2009) - *The Impact of Quality on Satisfaction, Revenue, and Cost as Perceived by Providers of Higher Education*, Journal of Marketing For Higher Education, 19: 2, p. 130

Improving quality has *direct effects in generating a substantial increase in consumer satisfaction, leading to gains by increasing the number of students, increasing confidence in the institution of higher education, research development and dissemination of knowledge, reducing the cost of promoting and attracting new consumers of higher education services*, as consumers' perception about the quality generates reputation for the higher education institution, putting its brand mark on the university. "The brand of a university is a manifestation of the characteristics that distinguish one from another higher education institution, reflecting its ability to meet high-level higher education needs of consumers creating confidence in its capacity to provide a high quality education, helping the consumers to make a wise decisions for their future." (Bick, G., Jacobson, M., & Abratt, R. 2003, p. 835–855, op. cit. Bennett, Roger and Ali-Choudhury, Rehnuma, 2009 p. 86)

In Example No.1.2 below is shown the activity of quality assurance in Japanese Higher Education System through its internationalization while increasing its number of foreign students studying in Japanese universities.

Example No. 1.2 – Assessing quality in the Japanese Higher Education System

Assesing quality in the Japanese Higher Education System

Japan has adapted in what concerns higher education to the European and American model. In 1877 was founded the University of Tokyo. Initially the courses were taught in Japanese universities in a foreign language by teachers from outside the country. Due to high costs, Japanese students were sent to study abroad, and with the completion of studies to become teachers in local universities. Since 1983 the Japanese Education Ministry had launched a plan to accept 100,000 foreign students to study in Japan in order to develop the infrastructure of Japanese higher education system by increasing the number of foreign students. In 2003, Japanese universities achieved 109,509 foreign students thus reaching the target set by the government. Over time, the Japanese Ministry of Education has recommended universities to adopt a system of self-evaluation in order to develop scientific research. In 2004 there was another university reform when the Japanese government has granted more autonomy for the universities. In this context, quality in Japanese higher education system was asserted by several factors:

- Japanese higher education massification
- Internationalization of the university system
- Important increasing in consumer expectations of higher education services in a knowledge based society
- Using the latest technology in the provision of information and communication
- The need to obtain international assessment in higher education
- The need to increase labor productivity
- The need to develop research and disseminate knowledge
- Adapting to new forms of work

This internationalization of higher education is the key element of ensuring a high level of quality in the Japanese universities, because the acceptance of different cultures enhances the ability of the universities to integrate into an area of intercultural dialogue and mutual acceptance.

Source: Adapted from – Sorin-George Toma, Shinji Naruo (2009) – *Quality Asurance in the Japanese Universities*, Amfiteatru Economic, , Vol XI • Nr. 26 • June 2009, p. 578-82.

2. Higher education quality management

Quality management in academic education is to appoint a higher education institution to performance through responsible leadership in pursuing the objectives and adopting strategies that lead to development, encouraging staff to an outstanding performance by empowering each employee, orientation of all the activities, especially the activities of teaching and research to meet the needs of high-level stakeholders, continuous improvement of institutional processes, establishing a system of periodic assessment to cover such shortcomings. In the European higher education system, academic evaluation is presented in three forms: (Buletin Științific, Universitatea "George Bacovia" și Editura Sedcom Libris, anul VIII nr. 1/2005, p. 21)

1. The evaluation of the forms of activity (lecture, seminar, practical)
2. The evaluation of the study programs

3. Institutional assessment - on all aspects of quality processes in university teaching and research, management activities, financial, infrastructure. (Buletin Științific, Universitatea "George Bacovia" și Editura Sedcom Libris, anul VIII nr. 1/2005, p. 21)

"Even before signing the Bologna Declaration, in many European countries, including Romania, there were agencies for assessing internal quality of education institutions and university programs and / or accreditation. The agencies from the European Union countries have set up in the second half of the 1990s a cooperation network called European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA, and agencies of the countries located in Central and Eastern Europe have established their own networks."(Vlăsceanu Lazăr, 2005, p. 4) The institute for Higher Education of Shanghai Jiao Tong University has achieved a ranking of universities in the TOP 500 depending on their performance taking account of several indicators related to quality education, university teaching and research activities: : (Răzvan Florian, 2006, p. 2)

- ☐ The number of graduates awarded with the Nobel Prize or the Fields Medal, depending on the graduating year
- ☐ Number of teachers Nobel Prize winners or the Fields Medal in the year in which award was obtained
- ☐ The number of teachers considered "highly cited" by ISI
- ☐ Number of articles published in the scientific journals Nature and Science
- ☐ Number of ISI indexed articles from the last year
- ☐ An indicator that reports the number of university academic staff total score obtained on the basis of previous indicators. (Răzvan Florian, 2006, p. 2)

In table no. 2.1 below, we can see the number of universities that are the TOP 20 TOP 100 TOP 200 TOP 300 TOP 400 TOP 500 worldwide in 2010.

Table no. 2.1 - Statistics of Universities in the year 2010 by region

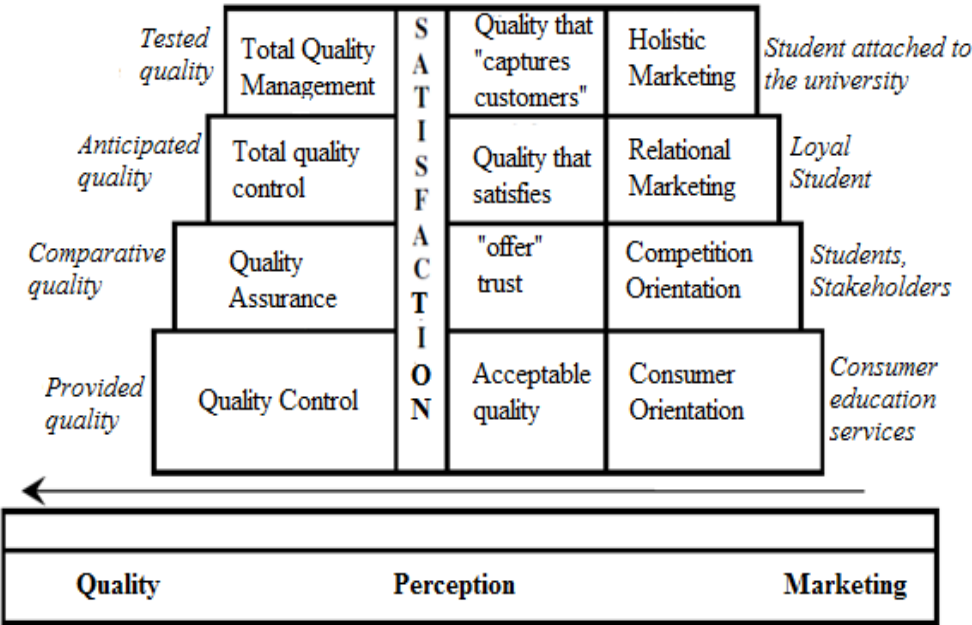
Statistics by Region						
Region	Top 20	Top 100	Top 200	Top 300	Top 400	Top 500
Americas	17	58	100	133	162	187
Europe	2	33	74	123	168	204
Asia/Pacific	1	9	26	43	68	106
Africa	—	—	—	1	2	3
Total	20	100	200	300	400	500

Source: <http://www.arwu.org/ARWUStatistics2010.jsp> - accessed on 09.06.2011
Academic Ranking of World Universities

It may be noted that U.S. universities have a record with 17 universities in the Top 20 while Europe is barely present in Top 20 with only 2 universities in terms of academic performance according to **quality educational services rendered** - the quality of information provided to students, the number of successful graduates with Nobel Prize and / or the Fields Medal, **academic quality** - reflected by the number of Nobel Prize - winning teachers and / or the Fields Medal, the number of teachers considered "highly cited" by the ISI, articles published in journals Nature and Science, **research quality** - reflected by the number of ISI articles published in a year reported to the number of university teachers, and various other performance indicators of Higher education. The TOP 100, 200 and 300, U.S. universities have a record, according to the same performance criteria, but it can be seen from the table that the record belongs in the TOP 400 European universities exceed by six the number of U.S. universities, and the record belongs to all the TOP 500 European higher education institutions which exceed by 17 the number of American universities and by 98 the number of Asia-Pacific universities.

As we can see in Figure no. 2.2, between the quality of educational service provided - quality that generates consumer satisfaction – and marketing there is a bi-univocal connection. (Nicolae Teodorescu, Aurelia-Felicia Stancioiu, Augustin Mitu, 2009, p.414)

Diagram no. 2.2 - The relationship Quality Management – Satisfaction - Marketing



Source: Adapted from - Nicolae Teodorescu, Aurelia–Felicia Stăncioiu, Augustin Mitu (2009) – Considerații privind Managementul Calității în Servicii ca Instrument de

The link between quality education and consumer satisfaction highlights the difference between the projected quality of the educational services felt by the consumer. Consumer satisfaction gradul perception allows the reorientation of marketing in the activities of the higher education institution to a relationship marketing that has results in the specific evolution from the simple consumer of higher education services to a student attached to the university, even loyal, loyalty being one of the results of the perceived higher satisfaction.

The importance of marketing in quality assurance within higher education institutions stems from the following objectives:

- Identify the quality level required by market segments that it covers the higher education institution
- Identify the needs, desires, preferences of potential consumers of educational services by outlining a profile of academic expectations
- Establish a feedback of information from the potential consumers of education so that the quality of university provision of educational services offered in the market to match this level of quality required by the application of ***total quality management as a marketing strategy*** of higher education institution.

Consumer satisfaction of university education is based on three variables:

- cognitive impairments - high quality provision of educational services provided and performance
- affective – student's feelings in the university campus, the higher education environment, ease of access to different objectives such as cafeteria, library, reading room, various laboratories, gym, etc..
- conative impairments - based on the nature of the relationship between teachers and students, between support staff and students. (Nicolae Teodorescu, Aurelia–Felicia Stăncioiu, Augustin Mitu, 2009, p. 414-415)

Conclusion:

Quality in higher education - the key element differentiating a university brand from another – should be covered by the university both inside and outside, taking in account the relations with government, business and society as a whole, to prepare graduates capable of coping with increasingly sophisticated jobs required by the evolving labor market. In our view, quality in academia is a mirror of academic performance and in the knowledge-based society higher education institutions tend to achieve the compatibility with the educational systems worldwide, by the introduction of transferable credits and ensuring international dimensions of quality. We appreciate that to achieve high standards of quality is necessary the use of higher education marketing in order to have the ability to anticipate the needs of students and those of potential consumers of education, and the adoption of decisions to allow the institution of higher education better market positioning, gaining reputation among the public and their national and international recognition.

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