Value Co-Creation And University Teaching Services. The Case Of Teachers' Evaluation Process

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Abstract: In this research the teaching quality concept is explored. Concerning the area of higher education offered by Universities and Technological Institutions in Greece, there are many parties involved in the provision of services. In this study only one relationship, between students and teachers, is examined. For many this relationship is considered to be as the most essential one while there are others that argue that fact claiming that even if teaching quality is excellent and value creation aspects are based on the value co-creation approach the total provision in the university context will not be of excellence if all the other parties of networks involved do not promote quality and value. It can be sensed that students do co-create the value they expect to obtain from university service. The results of our case study revealed that teachers do not appreciate the way they are evaluated and think that this strategy may have very bad consequences for the whole education system. It is obvious that according to the results of the teachers' interviews, they think that evaluation is something that must exists and that good evaluation system will lead to the upgrade of courses to the professional development of teachers and to more satisfied customers that in our case are students. On the other hand, bad evaluation systems, such as evaluation through student questionnaires may lead to lowered teacher expectations, lowered teaching difficulty and teacher manipulation by the students.

Index Terms: value co-creation, services, education, evaluation process

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1 INTRODUCTION

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched along with the Bologna Process' decade anniversary, in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. As the main objective of the Bologna Process since its inception in 1999, the EHEA was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. Between 1999 - 2010, all the efforts of the Bologna Process members were targeted to creating the European Higher Education Area, that became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of March, 2010. The Bologna Process is designed to introduce a system of academic degrees that are easily recognizable and comparable, promote the mobility of students, teachers and researchers, ensure high quality teaching and incorporate the European dimension into higher education. The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 has been signed by 30 European countries, including the then 15 Member States of the EU (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom) as well as the 10 countries that joined the EU on 1 May 2004 (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia).

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Iceland, Norway and the Swiss Confederation are also signatories to the declaration, as are Bulgaria and Romania, who became members of the EU on 1 January 2007. Kazakhstan joined the Bologna process in March 2010.The Bologna Declaration involves six actions relating to:

1. a system of academic degrees that are easy to recognize and compare. It includes the introduction of a shared diploma supplement to improve transparency;
2. a system based essentially on two cycles: a first cycle geared to the labour market and lasting at least three years, and a second cycle (Master) conditional on the completion of the first cycle;
3. a system of accumulation and transfer of credits of the ECTS type used in the Erasmus exchange scheme;
4. mobility of students, teachers and researchers: elimination of all obstacles to freedom of movement;
5. cooperation with regard to quality assurance;
6. the European dimension in higher education: increase the number of modules and teaching and study areas where the content, guidance or organization has a European dimension.

Hence, the long term objectives of the reforms outlined in the Bologna Process are essentially threefold:

1) To facilitate the speedy entrance of educated professionals into the job market through shortened degrees.
2) To enhance the cross-border mobility of students and job seekers.
3) To increase the competitiveness of European higher education internationally.

In this research we will try to explore the teaching quality concept. The *Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic, as* a mindset for a unified understanding of the purpose and nature of organizations, markets and society, and many to many marketing, as a network centered to many parties [17], [18] can be proved to be useful tools and roadmaps towards the achievement of the set Bologna goals. Concerning the area of higher education offered by Universities and Technological Institutions, there are many parties involved in the provision of

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services. These parties are consisted of the main network which is divided in sub-networks that influence either in a macro level for example governments, economy, society etc. or in a micro level students, teachers, staff etc. Here only one relationship, between students and teachers, will be examined. For many this relationship is considered to be as the most essential one while there are others that argue that fact claiming that even if teaching quality is excellent and value creation aspects are based on the value co-creation approach the total provision in the university context will not be of excellence if all the other parties of networks involved do not promote quality and value. In the EHEA context a proper research should involve every single party of the network and sub networks. This study research is limited in only one relationship, the one between teachers and students based on the fact that it represents the core of EHEA quality purposes for many European universities for many years. According to Gummesson's many-to-many marketing [15], [16] most failures of the relationship marketing practice were due to the typical narrow focus on the dyadic relationship between provider and customer. Even though that this study will be based on a dyadic relationship, we recognize the fact that this relationship is an integral part of a bigger interconnections network.

2 VALUE CO-CREATION

2.1 Value co-creation and the S-D logic
According to Vargo and Lusch [38], the S-D logic perspective posits goods as resources that are used in service provision, that is, service is defined as the application of competences for the benefit of another party and is the fundamental basis of economic exchange. A key assumption in S-D logic is that resources – operand and operant – do not "have" value per se, but value is created by customers when resources are used, hence the term value-in-use [38], [39]. S-D logic categorizes operand resources as typically physical and categorizes operant resources as typically human, such as knowledge, skills and information [23]. Vargo and colleagues [40], [41], however, have lately, begun to recognize that value-in-use is a transitional concept and should be replaced by the term value-in-context. The essential principles of S-D logic perspective can be summarized as follows [39], [40], [41]:

1. Customers are the arbiters of value in the service provision – either directly in interaction with the company or through service interaction derived from goods.
2. Competitive advantages are based on operant resources, the co-creation of service and the sharing of collaborative competence. This advantage is achieved by engaging customers and value-network partners.
3. S-D logic emphasizes the dynamic development of relationships through which various forms of interaction and value creation can emerge over time.
4. The creation of value is a phenomenological concept determined by and in the context of the resource integrators.

The discussion around value co-creation was intensified due to research on service-dominant (S-D) logic [38], [39], [40], [41]. S-D logic can be regarded as a logic or a mind-set that incorporates many loose ends resulting from the fragmentation of the marketing field [17], [18]. According to S-D logic,

marketing has absorbed a logic based on goods-centric thinking including how value and value creation are perceived. Service – instead of goods – should be the fundamental unit of exchange. Goods are only transmitters of service and act as means for the customer to benefit from firm competences [38], [40]. In order to actualize the value of the goods, customers need to continue the marketing, consumption, and value creation process [38]: "for these services to be delivered, the consumer still must learn to use, maintain, repair, and adapt the appliance to his or her unique needs, usage situations, and behaviors". As operant resources are heterogeneous and individual, the amount and quality of customer skills and knowledge affects the way value is created. Hence, following Prahalad and Ramaswamy [32], [33], [34], value becomes a joint function of the actions of the provider(s) and the consumer(s) and is therefore always co-created [40].

2.2 Value co-creation in the higher education context
Higher education institutions try to offer high quality and satisfaction to its customers in order to be competitive. In order to achieve that services that either meet or exceed the expectations of students must be offered. According o Yeo [44] a quality educational experience encompasses a whole-of-person, growth oriented experience which is achieved inside and outside the classroom, as well as between educators and students, and between members of the student body itself. . Understanding the tertiary student experience and delivering an exceptional educational service therefore requires the adoption of a student-centered framework [37]. A marketing orientation can assist with this approach since an understanding of students' evaluation processes enables institutions to develop a high quality tertiary experience to meet students' needs [37], [43], [45]. According to the perspective that the student is the customer of the institution, the student and the institution are in a dynamic and mutual process of co-production and value exchange [38] that work together to create the educational experience. education also involves the simultaneous production and consumption of the service. That is, "people", both students and staff, are inherently involved in the production of the educational experience [5], [22] and the service is consumed at the same time that it is produced. For example, educators provide and respond to information which is cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally acted upon by the students' who receive and respond to it. The service exchange is therefore dyadic, and two-way [6]. A marketing perspective therefore recognizes that understanding client perceptions and their service evaluation processes are essential to ensuring retention and loyalty [37], [25]. The EHEA points at lectures as the only responsible of value creation for students; but what is worst is that some universities are identifying students' satisfaction with lectures quality. Elliot and Healy [11] consider students' satisfaction is a short-term attitude that results from the evaluation of their experience with the education service received. Students satisfaction varies according to the profile of every student; factors such as age, subject likings, education, ambition, responsibility sense, maturity, etc. condition not only their perception of value but the real value they get. Thus, it can at least be sensed that students do co-create the value they expect to obtain from university service [6] Students together with lecturers play two principal roles in the university service value creation by means of integrating resources. Resource integration is not a unidirectional process from customer to

company, instead it is multidirectional in a many-to-many view [16], [17], [18], [19]. Lecturers must understand what students need and want, efficiently transmit knowledge [9] and actively get involved in their global formation. The S-D logic refers to resources as "potential resources" and value creation occurs "when a potential resource is turned into a specific benefit" [26]. Thus, resources (whether tangible or intangible) are not valuable by themselves; rather, they need to be applied and integrated into a service process so as to become valuable by means of making a benefit for a specific actor [30]. Teaching quality evaluation is a positive action and the question that comes up is who and how a lecturer has to be evaluated? In practice, students are usually who evaluate lecturers quality, through filling out some satisfaction surveys. This survey explores the implications of this practice for the value co-creation purpose. Sakthivel and Raju [34] state that "as quality is more difficult to measure in education, and student evaluation of lecturers and instruction is a source of input data [21], higher education designates the student as the element in the best position to evaluate the teaching received by measuring the levels of satisfaction [29]". However, according to many-to-many marketing it is considered that complex service can also be properly evaluated.

3 METHODOLOGY RESEARCH

Trying to document all the above statements concerning the suitability of students to evaluate teachers quality and try to create some arguments for correct value co-creation a case study of a Technological Education Institute of Greece is presented. The research was made during the second semester of the 2012-2013 academic year. At first 30 members of the teaching staff of Technological Educational Institute of Central Macedonia in Greece was interviewed in order to see their opinions concerning the evaluation method that is followed (satisfaction surveys that are given to the students at the end of the each semester for every course in order to evaluate and measure the performance of the teacher, as well as the course itself). Secondly, a survey questionnaire was administrated to 350 students from the degree level to gather information and possibly create a profile of them while they are the active evaluators of the institutions teaching staff. The questionnaire for the student's survey was adopted from Bowden Jana Lay-Hwa [6] with minor alterations that conducted a similar but more in depth study in a Spanish university.

4 RESULTS

a) Teachers

A stated above the teachers' opinion about the evaluation method was surveyed through a 20 minute interview that they agreed to participate. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions concerning the opinion they have about the evaluation of teaching quality in general and the evaluation of their teaching quality though the student's questionnaires. Also they were asked to make suggestions for this teaching evaluation method as well as other possible evaluations methods.

Evaluation method in general

Their replies showed that all of them, unanimously, agree that a teaching evaluation method must exist. The public has a right to expect high-quality teaching and this right must be reassured in every possible way. Teacher evaluation can promote professional development. It typically serves this more developmental purpose through professional conversations between teachers and colleagues who observe in their classrooms and between teachers and supervisors following formal or informal observations. A commitment to professional learning is important, not because teaching is of poor quality and must be "fixed," but rather because teaching is so hard that it can always be improved. No matter how good a lesson is, it can always get better. Just as in other professions, every teacher has the responsibility to be involved in a career-long quest to improve practice. A credible system of teacher evaluation requires higher levels of proficiency of evaluators Seeking feedback on the success of teaching and the quality of classroom experience is desirable because as a professional, you have a desire (indeed an obligation) to critically reflect on your activities, to judge the quality of those endeavors and to seek quality improvements. Also, the university is accountable to its various stakeholders – particularly its students – for the quality of learning outcomes, and course evaluation is one important component of the University's quality assurance system. Quality assurance and quality improvement in terms of student participation and achievements are the reasons for evaluation. Some quotes that represent the total of the replies illustrating the opinion of the teachers about the evaluation of teaching in general are:

"Teachers must be evaluated because evaluation is the path that guides in a ongoing effort for improvement".

"Evaluation is one of the most important activities in a higher education institution and the people in charge for all the evaluation process must pay attention to the strategy and the process of the evaluation process. Otherwise, a bad evaluation model is almost certain that will lead to devious results and obstruction of the whole teaching process".

"I believe that evaluation must be an integral part of the teaching services provision. The reason for that is because there were, there are and there always be teachers that instead of dealing with how to make their job better they deal with how to make their job easier, which is a completely different thing and most of the times not in the educational favor of students".

Evaluation of teachers with student questionnaires

Many faculty members believe that student ratings of instruction measure instructor expressiveness or style rather than the substance or content of teaching. They argue that, "Most student rating schemes are nothing more than a popularity contest with the warm, friendly, humorous instructor emerging as the winner every time" [2]. Also, Aleamoni [2] found that students praised instructors for their warm, friendly, humorous manner in the classroom but frankly criticized them if their courses were not well organized or their methods of stimulating students to learn were deficient. Many faculty members strongly believe that students tend to rate them more highly when they expect to receive good grades, and that low ratings might reflect students' retribution for low grades [2], [4] found that over two thirds of faculty members hold this belief. A few studies [14], [42] indeed found a direct relationship between expectations of high grades and positive

teacher evaluations. They interpreted this as a clear indication that students reward instructors for lenient grading by increasing their ratings, and thus that grading leniency may bias SRI results The most popular beliefs among faculty are that they can "buy" higher ratings by lowering course requirements, that is, that "bribing" students by entertaining them, watering-down the course material, reducing difficulty/workload, and giving undeserved high grades will translate into higher student ratings [13], [20], [28]. Of the large number of faculty SRI-related beliefs, these are probably the most potentially damaging, because they may lead faculty to resort to counter-productive teaching strategies. Faculty may be tempted to grade higher and to lower the level of difficulty/workload in order to receive higher ratings from students [8] This, in turn, may lead to grade inflation and to a decline in the amount of effort that students put into their courses. The ultimate consequence could be the "dumbing down" of college education [14]. Concerning the opinion of teachers about their evaluation through student questionnaires to the institution of our case study the replies were very negative. The majority of them stated that it is objectionable and unacceptable the fact that they are being not only evaluated but also measured by students. It is impossible for students to be aware of how a correct teaching process may be or what teaching methods are proven to successful. Some argue that being evaluated by the students even discredit their profession and their job. Instead of being a process that will work in favor of the educational process and in favor of students by constant improvement of teachers it just lays the professional future and career of each professor to s group of people - students that are uninformed, superficial and sometimes even thoughtless. This is something that could be proved through the fact in according to the interview there are many times that teachers who get very low scores have very high passing rates in the final exams (more that 70% of the students passed the course and with good marks). On the other hand teachers that happened to score very high in the evaluation process had a low passing rates (less than 40% of the students that participated in the course passed it). Some quotes that represent the total of the replies of the interviews of this research illustrating the opinion of the teachers about their evaluation of teaching student questionnaires are:

"Being evaluated by students is crazy! It is like asking you child to tell you in the age of 16 years old if you are a good or a bad parent. It is normal that if he/she gets what he/she wants e.g. money, freedom etc you are a good parent to his/her eyes and if you push him/her a little harder for better grades or he/she has limits in his/her free hours etc you are a bad one."

"Asking students to evaluate teachers is something that in my point of view almost infringes the rights of us. It demotes us and makes our job unrespectable."

"Evaluation is something good in every single job in the world. But it must be made by the right people. Asking a student to evaluate me after I have put him/her a low grade in a test and his is angry with me is something that leads only to giving a way to the students to take revenge and not promoting them to work harder to get a better grade in the final exams. Evaluation under the emotions of anger or satisfaction is not considered unbiased and every kind of evaluation in

order to be correct and must be unprejudiced in every single way".

"Student opinion is something that all teacher should try get and hear. But opinion in not the same with evaluation and grading. Evaluation can be reliable only if people that have the type of knowledge that I have evaluate my job in continuance with my educational results".

"All this must stop and the evaluation method must be reorganized. We have reached a point that we are more concerned on how to please students and get better grading than how to make our course more effective".

b) Students
According to the questionnaire administrated to the students a students' profile as teachers evaluators was created. The students were from Business School in the undergraduate level and their ages ranged from 18-22. The results are presented below:

1. Only 3% of the students try to find references for the teacher under investigation. The 3% that actually searches for references tries to find through the website of the institution where the qualifications of the teachers are provided.

2. 37% states that attends classes regularly. The problem here lays on the fact that course and teacher evaluations are being made during the last week of classes. This has always been the week with the highest rates of student attendance due to fact that revision of the course material will be made and exams materials will be handed. This means that the teacher may be also graded by students that have attended class only two or three times.

3. What they value most in a teacher is the attitude of helping students (52%). Teachers pedagogical skills followed with a percentage of 21% and then responses showed that that what they also value is when the teacher provides all the necessary information for the course and he/she does not obligates them to search for other course material. The element of qualification had the lowest grading showing that students do not pay much attention with how their teacher is and what is his/her past on the area.

4. Again in the factors that influence the marks that the student will give to the teacher, the teachers' CV was the element with the lowest grading, showing that students are not concerned with the educational background of the teacher. 38% are mostly influenced by his/her affinity to teacher's personality, following the existence of personal relationship with 27%.

5. According to the students' opinions the best teacher is the one that is funny (87%), dress formal (73%), is old (61%) and demanding (42%).

6. 78% of the students believe that teachers should not be paid according to students' marks. The majority of them (94%) think that if something like this happens teachers would low down their demanding level so as to make students get high marks. Something like this will lead to a decrease on the graduate qualification (82%) and the reputation of the university will be damaged (79%). Something like this may finally have as a result organizations to avoid hiring this university graduated

and post-graduate students.

7. 48% of the students believe it is necessary to have certain knowledge on a subject to be able to assess teachers' technical knowledge.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this research the teaching quality concept was explored. Concerning the area of higher education offered by Universities and Technological Institutions in Greece, there are many parties involved in the provision of services. These parties are consisted of the main network which is divided in sub-networks that influence either in a macro level for example governments, economy, society etc. or in a micro level students, teachers, staff etc. In this study only one relationship, between students and teachers, was examined. For many this relationship is considered to be as the most essential one while there are others that argue that fact claiming that even if teaching quality is excellent and value creation aspects are based on the value co-creation approach the total provision in the university context will not be of excellence if all the other parties of networks involved do not promote quality and value. Higher education institutions try to offer high quality and satisfaction to its customers in order to be competitive. In order to achieve that services that either meet or exceed the expectations of students must be offered. Understanding the tertiary student experience and delivering an exceptional educational service therefore requires the adoption of a student-centered framework. Students satisfaction varies according to the profile of every student; factors such as age, subject likings, education, ambition, responsibility sense, maturity, etc. condition not only their perception of value but the real value they get. Thus, it can at least be sensed that students do co-create the value they expect to obtain from university service. Students together with teachers play two principal roles in the university service value creation by means of integrating resources. Teaching quality evaluation is a positive action and the question that comes up is who and how a teacher has to be evaluated? In practice, students are usually who evaluate lecturers quality, through filling out some satisfaction surveys. This survey explored the implications of this practice for the value co-creation purpose. Several authors have pointed out misconceptions about student ratings that are unsupported by research and that make improved practice difficult [1], [12], [24], [35], [36]. The following are some of the most commonly held misconceptions:

1. • Students cannot make consistent judgments.
2. • Student ratings are just popularity contests.
3. • Student ratings are unreliable and invalid.
4. • The time of day the course is offered affects ratings.
5. • Students will not appreciate good teaching until they are out of college a few years.
6. • Students just want easy courses.
7. • Student feedback cannot be used to help improve instruction.
8. • Emphasis on student ratings has led to grade inflation

The main problem is that whether these statements and views are in reality misconceptions. The results of our case study revealed that teachers do not appreciate the way they are evaluated and think that this strategy may have very bad consequences for the whole education system. It is obvious that according to the results of the teachers' interviews, they think that evaluation is something that must exists and that good evaluation system will lead to the upgrade of courses to the professional development of teachers and to more satisfied customers that in our case are students. On the other hand, bad evaluation systems, such as evaluation through student questionnaires may lead to lowered teacher expectations, lowered teaching difficulty and teacher manipulation by the students. Taking into account the fact that some of the most important factors that students tend to judge teachers are their age, dress code, level of humor and leaving aside characteristics such as educational background etc is something that may reveal the uncertainness that the results of such an evaluation system causes. There is still time for higher educational institutes to redesign their evaluation process in such ways and through such means that will be limpidness, solid and unbiased all the way as well as redirected towards a value co-creation approach.

6 LIMITATIONS

This is a case study that focuses on teaching quality evaluation as an instrument to co-create value when properly approached. However, value co-creation in higher education embraces more aspects and actors since it constitutes a complex network. Here only the relationship between teachers and students is investigated.

7 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appendixes, if needed, appear before the acknowledgment. In the event multiple appendices are required, they will be labeled "Appendix A," "Appendix B, " etc. If an article does not meet submission length requirements, authors are strongly encouraged to make their appendices supplemental material. acknowledgment goes here). Researchers that contributed information or assistance to the article should also be acknowledged in this section.

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