



### The student as customer and quality in higher education

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Educational Management</i>
Manuscript ID	IJEM-03-2019-0093.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	quality, quality assurance, student as customer, business education, higher education quality

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

## The student as customer and quality in higher education

### Abstract

This paper explores some management concepts and how applying these concepts from business to higher education can be problematic, let alone incompatible, particularly in relation to measuring quality in higher education. A number of compelling reasons for this are explored. It discusses that the current bases for perceiving quality such as meeting customer expectations, satisfying the customer, ensuring quality control, meeting standards and assessing the costs associated with poor quality are in disagreement with the principal aims and measures of quality in higher education. Some considerations for understanding quality in higher education are proposed such as when thinking about quality of teaching, quality of programs and quality of the student experience. These considerations aim to refocus education to centre on the student as a learner and an active participant in the learning process.

*Keywords:* student as customer, quality, quality assurance, models, business, business education

## Introduction

Over the past decades, the increasing interest in quality in higher education has led to higher education and higher education policy being scrutinised (e.g. Tight, 2013). These policy developments include: 1) increased focus on the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience; 2) changes in the funding of higher education; 3) changes in the costs of participating in higher education; 4) increased pressure from accreditation, quality agencies, government regulation, and professional bodies to maintain quality; 5) establishment of quality frameworks in higher education, including setting minimum quality threshold standards for various levels of study; 6) increased pressure from employers for universities to provide quality graduates that meet the demands of future work, including graduates possessing work-ready skills; and 7) an acknowledgement that there are new methods of delivery thus providing an increase in how delivery methods are evaluated. Such developments have been felt in many countries (Guilbault 2016a; Woodall, Hiller & Resnick 2014a) as quality is subjectively applied based on the context. 'Quality' in higher education is suggested by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) as "a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them" (University of Glasgow, 2013, p.3). This definition suggests that quality is a subjective concept to define, even for QAA, which makes communicating it to students difficult.

Using product-based quality indicators will not apply neatly in an educational setting (Lomas 2007; Ng & Forbes 2009; Watjatrakul 2014; Woodall, Hiller & Resnick 2014b). This has to do particularly with the intangibility of the benefit of a degree or award (Ng & Forbes 2009; Ogunnaike, Tairat & Emmanuel 2014). While it is true that there are aspects of the student

1  
2  
3 experience that can be measured using quality indicators (e.g., sufficiency of learning  
4  
5 resources, the design of a classroom, achievement of learning outcomes), these aspects sit  
6  
7 only at the periphery of a bigger quality issue (McCulloch, 2009; Tight, 2013). When  
8  
9 speaking of quality, contemporary ideologies, metaphors of the student as customer and the  
10  
11 contemporary organisational functioning of universities are key discussion points. As a result,  
12  
13 quality talk in the academia reverberates as a ticking box exercise that meets various  
14  
15 stakeholders' demands (e.g., employers, regulatory agencies, students, etc.). In reviewing  
16  
17 these corporate ideologies, and how they are applied in the university setting, this article will  
18  
19 first situate educational institutions in the business model where students can be seen as  
20  
21 customers and/or consumers. By situating educational institutions using a business model, it  
22  
23 forces a review of the extant literature. The review culminates in the intersection of higher  
24  
25 education, the psychology of learning, marketing, policy analysis, higher education standards,  
26  
27 value management and finally disruptive methods. Referencing the literature that positions  
28  
29 the student through a variety of lenses as a customer, client, evaluator, partner and/or co-  
30  
31 creator of their own knowledge (Alexander, Schallert & Reynolds 2009; Laing & Laing  
32  
33 2016; Naidoo & Jamieson 2005; Ng & Forbes 2009) and being part of a system (Horine  
34  
35 1994; McGregor 1960; Von Bertalanffy 1972) sheds light into the understanding of the  
36  
37 students participating in the higher education enterprise. In this paper, we employ a  
38  
39 systematic review of the relevant literature, particularly those related to management ideas  
40  
41 that have been pervasive in higher education and the polarising conceptualisations of the  
42  
43 student as a customer. We focus on a number of management theories and ideas that have  
44  
45 been used in higher education and the debates surrounding the student as customer. Then the  
46  
47 article will then delves into the role of students within the organisation's operational model,  
48  
49 thus proposing possible areas for improvements. Finally, some considerations to actualise  
50  
51 these operations are proposed, thus answering the question "What aspects of a business  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 model could be used to guide practices in higher education and in particular higher education  
4  
5 quality in particular?”  
6  
7  
8

### 9 **Practices in a business context**

10  
11  
12 Recent developments in the quality regime are driven by corporatism and neoliberal  
13  
14 education (Hicks, 2015). Businesses aim to meet what customers want. This includes creating  
15  
16 expectations (need) and fulfilling them. A product can be made to meet what customers want  
17  
18 or it can be made to make customers create a need for it (e.g. Davenport et al., 2011).  
19  
20 Companies are or have brands and it is important for businesses to maintain strong brand  
21  
22 awareness in the public eye (Foroudi, 2019; Kim ~~and~~ & Kim, 2016). To maintain strong  
23  
24 brand presence and reputation companies deliver value to customers or through the various  
25  
26 product lines they carry that consumers may or may not associate with the company. Among  
27  
28 many other things, brands communicate value, expectations, and benefits to and for the  
29  
30 consumer (Brydges & Hrac 2018; Choi, Ko & Kim 2016).  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

36  
37 Standards are set on products and services to ensure they consistently perform in the way  
38  
39 they are intended (Standards Australia, 2016). One of the major benefits of doing so is to  
40  
41 protect consumers as they encourage innovation, productivity and competition. Standards  
42  
43 allow quality to be administered where a product or service can be directly associated with  
44  
45 poor quality. A product can be returned, short-lived or defective while a service can be  
46  
47 unreliable. Ultimately, however, consumers benefit from products or services that comply  
48  
49 with certain set standards. It helps with making informed decisions and their choice. There  
50  
51 are also both financial and non-financial costs associated with poor quality such as declining  
52  
53 profits, loss of customers, contracts or goodwill (Falck, Örtengren & Högberg 2010;  
54  
55 Mahmood et al. 2014; Shetty 1987). These costs are managed or mitigated during the  
56  
57 production or service process.  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The awareness of standards and the quality of products or services against such standards  
4  
5 have become more accessible worldwide. Take customer reviews for example. The use of the  
6  
7 internet and social media allows customer reviews to become ubiquitous thus making it an  
8  
9 uncommon practice to not find users' feedback on products or services. Customer reviews  
10  
11 can be found in blogs, e-commerce platforms (e.g., Amazon), dedicated product review  
12  
13 websites and resellers' websites, right alongside recommendations for similar or related  
14  
15 products or services. Communication of value towards a standard, once distributed via the  
16  
17 old-fashioned 'word of mouth' is now freely available online (Wright & Goodwin 1999).  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

### 23 **Practices in an educational context**

24  
25  
26 Universities can be likened to companies that are protective of their brands. A university can  
27  
28 appeal to stakeholders in the same way a company can be perceived by the customer. A  
29  
30 university's strong brand presence may experience preferential choice for university study  
31  
32 thereby raising the rate of enrolment and retention or students' value co-creation (e.g.  
33  
34 Foroudi et al., 2019). Its branding can also work for its international recognition as well as in  
35  
36 university rankings. University branding influences cross-cultural perceptions and positioning  
37  
38 in the global international higher education market (Harvey, 2018; Neumark, 2012).  
39  
40  
41  
42

43  
44 Whilst there are similarities between product-based organisations and universities in regard to  
45  
46 branding and reputation, the conditions in which branding is managed over time or conveyed  
47  
48 can be different. University branding may focus on lifelong partnerships with alumni,  
49  
50 positioning the university and its role in the region and the communities that it serves, student  
51  
52 life, its partnerships with the industry and so on (Harvey, 2018).  
53  
54  
55

56  
57 In the education setting, the classroom experience cannot be simply likened to any paid  
58  
59 service. If so, the higher education sector becomes a marketplace where 'marketisation'  
60

1  
2  
3 persists. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) have also expressed concerns about the  
4  
5 commodification of teaching and learning. They relegated the commodification to inflated  
6  
7 managerialism, and its associated effects, in universities. Thus, this questions the university's  
8  
9 organisational ecology, losing its focus from teaching students to one that is characterised by  
10  
11 efficiency, productivity, results, performance, outputs, and key indicators of 'success' –  
12  
13 measures that are more concrete for business models than being reflective of the learning  
14  
15 process (Alexander, Schallert & Reynolds 2009). This means that the role of universities to  
16  
17 prepare students for the future world of work, lifelong learning and global citizenship is no  
18  
19 longer the only or true focus of such an institution. This means that such institutions may  
20  
21 have additional purposes which require addressing how goals are prioritised.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26

27 Drawing on the pervasiveness of technology in classrooms, which ~~have~~has direct  
28  
29 ramifications on the learning process via teaching and learning activities, higher education  
30  
31 institutions are rationalising any factors that can assist in bolstering their own competitive  
32  
33 advantage (Saunders 2015; Wilson et al. 2007). If higher education institutions focus on  
34  
35 business models to produce education, would it be wrong for students to adopt a  
36  
37 consumer/customer mindset (Laing & Laing 2016; Ng & Forbes 2009)? This mindset has  
38  
39 resulted in metaphors reflective of the corporate practices being associated with the student.  
40  
41  
42  
43

#### 44 **Where are students in the business model: customers, consumers, or what?**

45  
46  
47  
48 University funding processes are structured so that programs are competitively modelled.

49  
50 Understanding that students have a choice in their selections of programs, and ultimately  
51  
52 what and how they learn, this fuels the suggestion that they should be considered customers  
53  
54 (Alexander, Schallert & Reynolds 2009; Laing & Laing 2016). This view helps propagate the  
55  
56 "students as customers" stance; thus enabling somewhat of a social movement within  
57  
58 university systems. When universities review their funding processes, it is with the intent to  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 increase income by managing growth of the organisation (Naidoo & Jamieson 2005; Ng &  
4 Forbes 2009). Growth is typically seen as an increase in student numbers, which can also be  
5 interpreted as an increase in competitively-situated intellectual knowledge streams (Woodall,  
6 Hiller & Resnick 2014a).  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11

12  
13 As universities are seen as organisations, consumerism models are easily attributed to their  
14 existence. This allows for general concerns that such markets need to be established and  
15 managed; thus, customers need to be satisfied (Guilbault 2016a). Recruitment and general  
16 management processes which draw from marketing principles allow for these key proponents  
17 to guide the economic and financial process (Kotler 1991). Therein lies the challenge, as  
18 organisations respond to the needs that guide the organisation's growth and as such the  
19 corresponding business model needs to be re-engineered towards being more like a learning  
20 organisation (Drucker 1988; Senge 1990). Applying business principles to a framework  
21 where the outcome of the product is intangible challenges many notions in these  
22 contemporary times. Universities once seen as knowledge producers are now seen as  
23 knowledge curators with technology infusions as ways to increase, strengthen and create  
24 direct causations of learning outcomes (Wilson et al. 2007). Changes in how a learning-  
25 generated product is viewed creates a perceived change in the power of the learning dynamic  
26 and also brings to question the ideals associated with the democratisation of education  
27 systems (Alexander, Schallert & Reynolds 2009; Laing & Laing 2016; McCulloch 2009).  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 The challenge in understanding the phenomenon of "students as customers" is that customers  
50 possess an autonomous power to act throughout the relationship (Laing & Laing 2016;  
51 McCulloch 2009). As we delve one level down from the strategic level into the operational  
52 level of the university (i.e., the learning process), the student struggles between being  
53 autonomous and having their own agency to engage and perform with and within the process  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



(de Alvarez & Dickson-Deane 2018; Lam 2015; Thompson-Whiteside 2012). If we were to continue this approach, the perceived autonomy is provided to a student literally before the actual enrolment and after the graduation event. The autonomy is a perceived layer which is governed by policies and procedures and it becomes weakened as controls are put in place. These controls guide decisions on how, when and where the learning occurs. For customisation of the system, which is key for competition, there would be a need to identify the areas which are viewed as service-oriented and then illuminate cases or incidences where the customer can have experiences. Douglas, McClelland and Davies (2008a) argue that students' university experience is now largely managed through a controlled mechanism of processes and procedures. Understanding that these empower students as a form of agency to guide the decisions that students can make once they are enrolled in a university, however, it restricts autonomy to a confined boundary within the process. This is not quite a democracy of control but more about allowing for choice within the learning process (Douglas, McClelland & Davies 2008a; Thompson-Whiteside 2012); thus being consumer-like. As a consumer, the power dynamic shifts to being more open and reactive than a customer who can be proactive in their relationship with the organisation (Tight 2013a; Titus 2008; Woodall, Hiller & Resnick 2014b). The student decision-making process then begins to emulate a consumer process because of the blurring of the boundaries where control occurs.

### **Conceptualising a student as a customer?**

The user of a product or service, in business parlance, is a *customer*, defined sometimes by their tastes, preferences, habits, lifestyle, age group, income and so on. Thus, businesses rely on customers to sustain their activity. Arguably, it is less problematic to define the user as a customer than as a student. Although it can be argued that the student is a 'customer' (Saunders 2015), and many have applied this metaphor in higher education (Guilbault 2016b;

1  
2  
3 Koris & Nokelainen 2015; Tight 2013b), it reduces our perceptions of students. A student  
4  
5 who struggles to participate in and engage with the learning experience requires support and  
6  
7 assistance, as opposed to an opportunity to purchase a pathway over and around the learning  
8  
9 process. By treating students as customers, the learning process is now an economic  
10  
11 commodity, and they are reduced to constantly looking for value for money and as economic  
12  
13 beings that want to satisfy a particular need. While it can be argued that this *student-as-*  
14  
15 *customer* is a reasonable and appropriate metaphor, it does, however, dismiss the fact that  
16  
17 they are “learners within” not “purchasers of” an educational experience. They participate in  
18  
19 higher education not to buy an experience but to explore, co-create and be co-responsible for  
20  
21 such (Alexander, Schallert & Reynolds 2009; Anderson 1984; Biggs & Tang 2011; Kirschner  
22  
23 & van Merriënboer 2013). A customer-focused education is dissimilar to a student-focused  
24  
25 education; and in this instance, the customer should not be reduced to an object, a patient or a  
26  
27 driver for improvement but remain a participant, willing yet challenged in the educational  
28  
29 process (Guilbault 2016b; Pitman 2016; Tight 2013b; Watjatrakul 2014).  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

### 36 **Challenging the notion**

37  
38  
39  
40 This is somewhat prosaic of a comparison – students as customers. While it is true that  
41  
42 students have expectations (e.g., to learn ~~the things~~ in a course), these expectations cannot be  
43  
44 measured solely on the basis of satisfaction ratings or value received when ‘met’ (Lomas  
45  
46 2007; Saunders 2015). Educational institutions provide opportunities to explore knowledge  
47  
48 using a variety of methods. These methods ensure that all participants in the learning process  
49  
50 can build a network of cognitive schema between and with individuals towards the creation  
51  
52 of new knowledge (Alexander, Schallert & Reynolds 2009; Rumelhart 1984; Senge 1990).  
53  
54 There is an opportunity for everyone who participates in the learning process to “learn” and  
55  
56 through this process, to receive evidence (i.e., certificates/awards, knowledge artefacts, etc.)  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 but there is no guarantee of such (Lomas 2007). Equating being a participant (active or not)  
4  
5 to be a guaranteed benefactor is the misnomer with what is expected. By dismissing the  
6  
7 learning experience as a customer expectation, rather as a student expectation, it can assist in  
8  
9 shifting the focus to the student as a learner and not a client or a buyer.  
10  
11  
12

### 13 **Students as customers and their experience as a quality measure**

14  
15  
16  
17 While it may be relatively easy to observe improvements in the quality of a product or  
18  
19 service, such as better taste or faster delivery times, this is not necessarily true for university  
20  
21 programs or subjects, let alone 'overall university experience' (Edmonds 2007). As  
22  
23 mentioned earlier, one familiar measure of satisfaction is student evaluation surveys. Student  
24  
25 evaluation surveys are administered in an effort to improve programs and the overall study  
26  
27 experience. These improvements can be as little as changing assessments in subjects or as  
28  
29 radical as ceasing to offer a course and offering a new one. While students can reasonably  
30  
31 assume that their feedback in student evaluation surveys is used to improve programs and  
32  
33 subjects, students rarely see the visible improvements (Campbell ~~and~~ & Bozeman 2008;  
34  
35 Griffin ~~and~~ & Cook 2009). Knowing how evaluations are used, if at all, for quality assurance  
36  
37 may affect their perceptions towards completing evaluation surveys (Kim, Otani ~~and~~ & Cho,  
38  
39 2013), providing a less reliable data for use in improving programs and subjects.  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45

46 Quality improvements in a product through feedback can be incompatible with quality  
47  
48 improvements in a program or subject due to the differences in the customer as user of a  
49  
50 product or service and the student as a learner. While both can provide feedback on their  
51  
52 'experience', it is the translation of improvements that differ in both settings (Campbell et al.,  
53  
54 2005; Edmonds, 2007). The quality of a tangible product, for example, can be judged using  
55  
56 senses or perceptions, whereas an intangible product like education cannot be easily  
57  
58 measured by the same approaches used for a product or service (Titus, 2008; Woodall et al.,  
59  
60

2014). Quality improvements in student experience are influenced by a variety of initiatives, often not readily observable, such as improvements in the instructional practices of instructors (Edmonds, 2007) to engage students more effectively in the learning process. Or, initiatives could relate to improving the suite of student services, supporting diversity and inclusion, and increasing student's civic engagement (e.g. see University of Tasmania, 2016). These initiatives that can improve student experiences are often not felt within a particular unit or course of study (unlike a commercial product or service) and not measured easily through student evaluations. The student experience is also a learning process where the student is an active participant who co-curates their personal educational experience which is dissimilar to buying a product or service. While students can describe their learning experience, this does not equate to effective pre- and post-delivery comparison of a program or subject.

### **Standardisation**

The education experience can be made consistent but should not be relegated to just being standardised (*i.e.* processes kept within a set of guidelines) as it will reduce competitiveness (Klochkov, Papic and Butkevich, 2017). While standardisation aims to achieve a consistent level of quality, this is less of an easy task in the academy. The delivery of programs provide numerous combinations and permutations of the factors within the delivery model: different lecturers, same course content and different modes of delivery can adhere to standard but each experience will differ thus opposing a Fordism-like (Jorge & Albagli 2015) product. Diploma-mills, which challenge the quality debate within higher education, do adopt a Fordism-like approach but are less reliable in their legalities of what is considered a true educational institution (Noble 1998).

1  
2  
3 It was not clear who will set the standards and how they will be determined (Thompson-  
4 Whiteside, 2012). As Thomson-Whiteside writes (para. 21),  
5  
6

7  
8  
9 Teaching and learning standards are set implicitly within the curriculum, the practice  
10 of teaching and the expectations of students. Staff with similar disciplinary knowledge  
11 interpret these standards and describe the disciplinary values and implicit expectations  
12 required of the students. It may be possible to see similar sets of values and standards  
13 within the same disciplines across different institutions but to those outside of the  
14 discipline group, standard setting is a subjective, tacit and opaque process.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23

24 Because standards become more 'opaque' in the academe, it is difficult to compare them with  
25 standards associated with products and services. It is extra difficult to determine the quality  
26 of teaching, the standards set for this activity and the judgments made against those  
27 standards. It is equally challenging to determine the quality of the learning experience, based  
28 on standards set for this experience and judgments made to assess such an experience.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

34 Because unlike a product or service, teaching and learning experiences seem impossible to  
35 return, refund or exchange if dissatisfaction or 'change of mind' exists. A further example is  
36 when standards are demonstrated in the form of learning outcomes. One way to judge the  
37 attainment of these learning outcomes is to assess student performance based on specific  
38 criteria set against these standards. When these standards are met, it reflects students' ability  
39 to demonstrate the associated knowledge, skills, or attitudes that come with the standards.  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49

50 Standard setting has also pervaded higher education. The standard setting exercises carried  
51 out among selected disciplines from various universities reflect the importance of standards  
52 in higher education (e.g. in Australia, The creation of Tertiary Education Quality and  
53 Standards Authority (TEQSA) and Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). These are  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 created for quality purposes which allows educational organisations to remain internationally  
4  
5 competitive and implement a “demand-driven funding model” (Bradley et al., 2008, p.128).  
6  
7

### 8 9 **The costs associated with poor quality**

10  
11  
12 There are also costs associated with poor quality teaching and learning. Either these costs can  
13  
14 reflect low retention rates or loss of quality in the workforce and their impact on society.

15  
16 However, these costs are less explicit, at least in quantifiable terms, when compared to the  
17  
18 examples above. Customer reviews are an example of conveying experience. The various  
19  
20 sources of reviews can be used by customers to help with their choice. Quite often, reviews  
21  
22 can either have positive or negative effects on both customer decisions, customer satisfaction  
23  
24 and sales (Hsu, Yu ~~and~~ & Chang, 2017; Nga, Carson ~~and~~ & Moore, 2013; Roosen ~~and~~ &  
25  
26 Raedts, 2018).  
27  
28  
29

30  
31  
32 ‘Customer reviews’ are not as varied in regard to university experience. While word of  
33  
34 mouth, such as through recommendations from family and friends, can be the same method  
35  
36 used for choosing where and what to study, there are not many ways in which to influence  
37  
38 future students. This is presumably due to the nature of the ‘offer’ in universities compared to  
39  
40 companies. Education is an intangible and less tacit experience than, say, acquiring a product.  
41  
42 Although, lately, websites are or have been established to help students make informed  
43  
44 decisions to study, such as the defunct MyUniversity website in the case of Australia;  
45  
46 however, websites like these do not necessarily provide detailed consumer feedback and  
47  
48 ratings. Rather, they provide information about courses and universities in an aggregated and  
49  
50 accessible ‘one-stop shop’ manner. There are, however, reviews about specific professors  
51  
52 such as those collected by ratemyprofessors.com.  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 However, by default, companies and universities differ in collecting and sharing reviews  
4 about their offerings. This makes the student-as-customer metaphor even more opaque.  
5  
6  
7

### 9 **Equating sStudent sSatisfaction to cCustomer satisfaction**

10  
11  
12 One test of meeting customer expectation is satisfying the customer. Often, this is done  
13 against pressures to increase market share and reduce costs (Ramadan & ElMaraghy 2014).  
14  
15 When a customer is satisfied, it is likely that they associate a good or service, a brand or a  
16 company with good quality. There is potential for repeat purchase, referral or good review;  
17 thus, improving the business' ability to depict themselves as satisfying their customers  
18 (Alexander 2012; Kuo, Hu & Yang 2013; Pokryshevskaya & Antipov 2012). This is one of  
19 the fundamental purposes of a business enterprise: keeping customers satisfied.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

29  
30 It comes no surprise that customer relationship management (CRM) theories have been  
31 applied to measure student satisfaction in higher education (Ogunnaike, Tairat & Emmanuel  
32 2014). It has been an important part of university work to gauge student satisfaction in many  
33 ways. The most popular of which is course/subject satisfaction surveys. However, these are  
34 often used to indicate measures of quality of the student experience (Elliott & Shin 2002).  
35  
36 The more satisfied the students are, the higher the perceived quality. However, while surveys  
37 are useful, the quality of a course cannot be measured solely by the student feedback on their  
38 own study experience (Al Kuwaiti & Subbarayalu 2015; Douglas, McClelland & Davies  
39 2008b; Elliott & Shin 2002; Kim, Otani & Cho 2013; Mark 2013). It becomes problematic  
40 when these results are used to indicate quality and furthermore, create an inaccurate  
41 representation of the measures used for this type of transaction (Elliott & Shin 2002; Mark  
42 2013). Student evaluation surveys can measure student satisfaction, attitudes and perceptions  
43 about a recent course or the range of student support available (Martirosyan 2015) but they  
44 do not provide sufficient information about the overall quality of the course. They have also  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 been found as unreliable measures of teaching quality (Feistauer & Richter 2016). Often,  
4  
5 their use is associated with assessing teaching competence (Boring, Ottoboni & Stark 2016;  
6  
7 Kelly 2012) inadequate at such (Hornstein 2017), and are beset with a number of issues  
8  
9 (Braga, Paccagnella & Pellizzari 2014; Wright 2006). Student satisfaction is but one “weak”  
10  
11 measure for this product as it measures the product before it comes into full fruition – when  
12  
13 the knowledge is actually put into practice (Burgess, Senior & Moores 2018). Thus focussing  
14  
15 on satisfaction as a measure to justify quality in this instance is insufficient based on the  
16  
17 service provided (Matthews 2018).  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

### 23 **Towards some considerations**

24  
25  
26 Considerations for action begin with a re-conceptualisation of our understanding of quality in  
27  
28 higher education. To start, the student-as-customer idea should be evaded because such  
29  
30 framing of the discourse around the quality of the service/product and the value attached to  
31  
32 quality positions educational institutions [will](#):  
33  
34  
35  
36

- 37 • *Focus on brand.* Universities will focus on their public image in websites, social  
38  
39 media, and so on, to promote, improve and protect their brand. They will focus on the  
40  
41 emotions and impressions they convey to decision makers, particularly parents and  
42  
43 students. They will aim to focus on ‘selling points,’ including the values espoused and  
44  
45 the benefits in choosing their university;  
46  
47
- 48 • *Focus on growth.* Just as companies wish to establish a bigger customer base, one of  
49  
50 the approaches of universities for growth would be to establish a large student cohort  
51  
52 which will and can equate to a forecast in the dollar revenue; and  
53  
54
- 55 • *Focus on a unique ‘selling the experience’ proposition.* Universities will focus on  
56  
57 making the offer of education as pleasant and appealing as possible with the main  
58  
59 focus on students gaining knowledge, skills and abilities.  
60



1  
2  
3 In a rather extreme case, academics may be asked to participate in the process of attracting  
4 students. Attracting students can be seen as a response to an act of competition and academics  
5 could be seen as the key players in attracting students to participate in higher education – a  
6 responsibility that is historically not theirs. Funding of academics' salary could change in the  
7 future as a result. When students are customers, payment to academics may be likely  
8 dependent on the number of students recruited. We have seen current cost-saving  
9 mechanisms on the basis of keeping large sizes to meet resource and administration  
10 constraints already happening. As a further example of Overload teaching responsibilities  
11 could prove cost-effective, for example.

12  
13 Furthermore, excluding students from the process of accountability [of learning] creates a  
14 void that Von Bertalanffy (1972), a general systems theorist, would consider irresponsible.

15 This is because students are part of the system and therefore need to work together with  
16 academics in order for the “product” to be successful. Deming (as cited in Horine, 1994)  
17 would further elaborate that the quality of the system is the true measure of success; thus  
18 catering for all students including both poor performers and those who may be recognised as  
19 achieving the ultimate goal (McGregor, 1960). Using these three tenets (i.e., brand, growth  
20 and uniqueness) allows educational institutions to build a framework that leverages business  
21 models within the context of the values akin to the education system. These tenets are  
22 supported by two key positions: the learning experience is not finite and measuring such is  
23 time-based.

### 24 **Students are students, not customers, and the learning experience is not finite**

25 Tight (2013, p. 26) explains that the ‘student as customer’ metaphor relates to the university  
26 being the provider of products and services (programs and support) and students act as  
27 consumers. This metaphor drives change in the university, mostly relating to accountability,

quality audits, student support and institutional marketing (McCulloch, 2009; Tight, 2013).

Higher education is distinct from the business community and that “educators have a more principled mission – a higher calling – that does not centre on achieving some bottom-line profit” (p.3). However, the more contemporary conceptualisations remain the same: that there is the potential danger in focusing on student satisfaction or grades instead of providing education or learning (for example, George, 2007; Titus, 2008).

As a concept, theoretically, satisfaction can be measured in, say, a hypothetical unit of measurement called ‘utils’ (O’Connor & Faille 2000). However, learning could be possibly measured using a hypothetical unit of measurement but it is without meaning to the individual student (Nel 2017). As such, it is probably inappropriate to conceptualise students as customers or clients as this refocuses higher education teaching and learning to business activity intended to ‘satisfy’ the student. It puts an emphasis on treating the student as ‘customer is always right’ and a redirection of attitudes and beliefs to delivering ‘excellent customer service’ to the student. This may create an ‘entertainer’ role rather than a ‘facilitator’ role for the teacher. This may also reduce quality into measures that objectify the student as a customer (e.g. how satisfied were the students instead of how well they have achieved learning outcomes or how work-ready they were). If at all, students should be partners in learning (Matthews, 2018).

### **Education quality, which has many measures, is felt later in life**

Lomas (2007) posits that “the student is only able to reflect fully upon the benefits of the knowledge and skills acquired and the attitudes that have been developed after a number of years when there has been sufficient opportunity to realise what they have learnt in a workplace setting (p. 35).” Thus, to measure quality, such as in student evaluations, represents only a short snapshot of the experience. Education quality is not measured in terms

1  
2  
3 of the employment gained in return for paying tuition fees or accruing student debt. It is felt  
4  
5 later in life as the whole extent of opportunities derived, in both personal and professional  
6  
7 ways, out of the educational experience.  
8  
9

10  
11 Inherently, measuring quality in higher education is challenging (OECD, 2010). Measuring  
12  
13 teaching quality is challenging. Measuring learning quality is also challenging. It becomes  
14  
15 even more problematic when we design instruments that do not measure what they intend to.  
16  
17 Measuring quality of research may be doing a far better job at this. Established metrics to  
18  
19 measure quality and impact in research are already in place and well-understood  
20  
21 internationally. However, measuring teaching and learning quality begins with gradually  
22  
23 moving away from the concept of the student as a customer.  
24  
25  
26  
27

### 28 **Limitations, implications and further research**

29  
30  
31

32 This paper can certainly benefit from many other concepts in business that have been applied  
33  
34 in higher education, which it lacks. It only focussed on a number of key and popular ideas in  
35  
36 management theory that have been used in higher education more broadly. Nonetheless, it  
37  
38 offers a rethinking of the quality initiatives of universities to improve the student experience  
39  
40 against the backdrop of pressures emanating from practices that influence universities to  
41  
42 display more 'corporate-like' behaviour.  
43  
44  
45  
46

47 There are a number of implications for higher education the discussions above can assist in  
48  
49 unpacking. First, it may not matter whether universities treat customers as students or not  
50  
51 when talking about quality in higher education. Student-focussed quality initiatives can be  
52  
53 devoid of the student as customer concept. How programs, subjects and experiences are  
54  
55 curated can be solely for the purpose of continuous improvement, an ongoing commitment  
56  
57 within departments and schools to better the student experience, improve learning outcomes,  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 or completion and retention rates. Second, universities that choose to treat the student as a  
4  
5 customer may find it beneficial to apply a relationship marketing approach to higher  
6  
7 education (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). This might influence the orientation of  
8  
9 services provided to students that have to do with other aspects of their study experience  
10  
11 quality such as student accommodation, parking, sports facilities and campus safety. Lastly,  
12  
13 those against the student as customer concept may focus on the long-term impact of quality  
14  
15 initiatives such as promoting lifelong learning, building long-term relationships with alumni  
16  
17 and employers and those that further promote academic integrity.  
18  
19  
20  
21

22  
23 A further research is to explore the various forms of quality initiatives already in place and  
24  
25 the strength of influence management theories have. For example, the extent to which  
26  
27 business accreditation (e.g. Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [AACSB]  
28  
29 or European Quality Improvement System [EQUIS]) influences the quality processes within  
30  
31 a Business School can be explored. Do prescribed accreditation standards inhibit (or  
32  
33 promote) creativity and innovation in improving the quality of the teaching, learning and  
34  
35 assessment activities within a unit of study or the whole program? Also, how is student  
36  
37 experience linked with accreditation or accreditation-driven quality processes? Or, one can  
38  
39 look at the peer review frameworks and processes (e.g. academics providing formal feedback  
40  
41 to other academics through teaching observations) across a number of universities and  
42  
43 examine how these complement student evaluations in measuring teaching competence and,  
44  
45 by extension, their impact on student experience. Perhaps a systematic review could do this.  
46  
47  
48 Further research can also include a review of existing quality frameworks or processes that  
49  
50 have significant influence on teaching quality and the quality of the experience of the learner  
51  
52 such as student support and library services and how pervasive management theories are on  
53  
54 those frameworks. These investigations may also reveal how nuanced the student as customer  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 concept is, and how beneficial for universities it can be such in developing marketing strategy  
4  
5  
6 (Guilbault, 2018).  
7  
8

## 9 **Conclusion**

10  
11  
12 This paper ~~reviewed~~ explored some of the issues associated with using some management  
13  
14 concepts into higher education. Many of the concepts used in business that were migrated to  
15  
16 quality talks in higher education are argued as fundamentally lacking in substance or at least  
17  
18 not easily transferable or directly applicable to higher education. They can also be tricky and  
19  
20 with potential adverse consequences such as the education experience being simply  
21  
22 transactional in nature (Matthews, 2018). It is argued that when the student is referred to as a  
23  
24 customer, quality improvements in teaching and learning can be skewed towards satisfying  
25  
26 the student-customer, disregarding the real and true value of the educational experience. The  
27  
28 focus is in the price of the experience rather than its value.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

34  
35 We argue that some of the underlying concepts in business used in education are not easily  
36  
37 transferable, let alone usable. Thus, some considerations have been put forward. These  
38  
39 considerations revisit the basic notions of teaching and learning in higher education. It puts  
40  
41 an emphasis on sidestepping the student-as-customer metaphor, that learning is not expressed  
42  
43 in dollar terms, and that the quality of the student experience cannot be measured by student  
44  
45 evaluation alone because it is felt much later in life. There are implications for higher  
46  
47 education when moving away from the student-as-customer metaphor. It refocuses education  
48  
49 to centre on the student as a learner, an active participant in the learning process and a co-  
50  
51 creator of knowledge.  
52  
53  
54

55  
56 Arguably, in the coming years, the student will remain commoditised as a customer, and  
57  
58 perhaps particularly for those higher education institutions whose funding is heavily  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 dependent upon course fees. It can be expected that the notions of student as customer will  
4  
5 not disappear quickly, and perhaps never will. This may actually be perceived as not  
6  
7 problematic. Institutions of higher learning may see this as an opportunity to redesign their  
8  
9 offer that mimics a value-for-money approach to business. Their key offer strategy could be  
10  
11 answering the student's "What's in it for me?" question, which tries to use 'selling strategies'  
12  
13 that focus on the key strengths and value propositions of the offer. As discussed in this  
14  
15 article, notions such as this can muddy the true value of the student experience because the  
16  
17 implications for higher education could potentially be forgetting that the student is not just a  
18  
19 number.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24

## 25 **References**

- 26  
27  
28  
29 Al Kuwaiti, A. and Subbarayalu, A. V. (2015), "Appraisal of students experience survey  
30  
31 (SES) as a measure to manage the quality of higher education in the Kingdom of  
32  
33 Saudi Arabia: an institutional study using six sigma model", *Educational Studies*, 41  
34  
35 (4), 430-443.  
36  
37  
38  
39 Alexander, P., Schallert, D., & Reynolds, R. (2009), "What is learning anyway? A  
40  
41 topographical perspective considered", *Educational Psychologist*, 44 (3), 176–192.  
42  
43  
44  
45 Alexander, M.W. (2012), "Delight the Customer: A Predictive Model for Repeat Purchase  
46  
47 Behavior", *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 11 (2), 116-123.  
48  
49  
50  
51 Anderson, R. C. (1984), "Role of the reader's schema in comprehension, learning, and  
52  
53 memory", *Learning to Read in American Schools: Basal Readers and Content Texts*,  
54  
55 29, 243–257.  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2007), "Teaching for quality learning at university", Society for  
4  
5 research into higher education, Retrieved from  
6  
7 <http://www.citeulike.org/group/4810/article/3680928>  
8  
9  
10  
11 Boring, A., Ottoboni, K. and Stark, P. B. (2017), "Student evaluations of teaching (mostly)  
12  
13 do not measure teaching effectiveness", *ScienceOpen Research*, 2016 (01), 1-11.  
14  
15  
16  
17 Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. and Scales, B. (2008), *Review of Australian higher*  
18  
19 *education*, Canberra, Australia, Department of Education Employment and  
20  
21 Workplace Relations.  
22  
23  
24  
25 Braga, M., Paccagnella, M. and Pellizzari, M. (2014), "Evaluating students' evaluations of  
26  
27 professors", *Economics of Education Review*, 41, 71–88.  
28  
29  
30  
31 Brydges, T. and Hrac, B. J. (2018), "Consuming Canada: How fashion firms leverage the  
32  
33 landscape to create and communicate brand identities, distinction and values:",  
34  
35 *Geoforum*, 90 (March), 108–118.  
36  
37  
38  
39 Burgess, A., Senior, C., & Moores, E. (2018), "A 10-year case study on the changing  
40  
41 determinants of university student satisfaction in the UK", *PLOS ONE*, 13 (2),  
42  
43 e0192976. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0192976>  
44  
45  
46  
47 Campbell, J. and Bozeman, W. C. (2008), "The value of student ratings: Perceptions of  
48  
49 students, teachers, and administrators", *Community College Journal of Research &*  
50  
51 *Practice*, 32, 13–24.  
52  
53  
54  
55 Campbell, H. E., Steiner, S. and Gerdes, K. (2005), "Student evaluations of teaching",  
56  
57 *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 11 (3), 211–231.  
58  
59  
60



- 1  
2  
3 Choi, E., Ko, E. and Kim, A. J. (2016), “Explaining and predicting purchase intentions  
4 following luxury-fashion brand value co-creation encounters”, *Journal of Business*  
5  
6 *Research*, 69 (12), 5827–5832.  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11 Davenport, T. H., Mule, L. D. and Lucker, J. (2011), “Know what your customers want  
12 before they do”, *Harvard Business Review*, 89 (12), 84–92.  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 de Alvarez, M. S., & Dickson-Deane, C. (2018), “Avoiding Educational Technology Pitfalls  
18 for Inclusion and Equity”, *TechTrends*, 1–9.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23 Douglas, J., McClelland, R. and Davies, J. (2008), “The development of a conceptual model  
24 of student satisfaction with their experience in higher education”, *Quality Assurance*  
25 *in Education*, 16 (1), 19–35.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31 Drucker, P. E. (1988), “The coming of the new organization”, *Harvard Business Review*, 45–  
32 53.  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37 Edmonds, C. (2007), “Continuous quality improvement: integrating best practice into teacher  
38 education”, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21 (3), 232–237.  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43 Elliott, K. M., & Shin, D. (2002), “Student Satisfaction: An alternative approach to assessing  
44 this important concept”, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 24  
45 (2), 197–209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080022000013518>  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51 Falck, A-C., Örtengren, R. and Högberg, D. (2010) The Impact of Poor Assembly  
52 Ergonomics on Product Quality: A Cost-Benefit Analysis in Car Manufacturing”,  
53 *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing*, 20 (1), 24-41.  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



- 1  
2  
3 Feistauer, D. and Richter, T. (2017), “How reliable are students’ evaluations of teaching  
4  
5 quality? A variance components approach”, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher*  
6  
7 *Education*, 42 (8), 1263–1279.  
8  
9  
10  
11 Foroudi, P. (2019), “Influence of brand signature, brand awareness, brand attitude, brand  
12  
13 reputation on hotel industry’s brand performance”, *International Journal of*  
14  
15 *Hospitality Management*, 76 (Part A), 271–285.  
16  
17  
18  
19 Foroudi, P., Yu, Q., Gupta, S. and Foroudi, M. M. (2019), “Enhancing university brand  
20  
21 image and reputation through customer value co-creation behaviour”, *Technological*  
22  
23 *Forecasting & Social Change*, 138, 218–227.  
24  
25  
26  
27 George, D. (2007), “Market overreach: The student as customer”, *The Journal of*  
28  
29 *SocioEconomics*, 36, 65– 977.  
30  
31  
32  
33 Guilbault, M. (2016), “Students as customers in higher education: reframing the debate”,  
34  
35 *Journal of Marketing For Higher Education*, 26 (2), 132-142.  
36  
37 doi:10.1080/08841241.2016.1245234  
38  
39  
40  
41 Guilbault, M. (2018), “Students as customers in higher education: The (controversial) debate  
42  
43 needs to end”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 40, 295–298.  
44  
45  
46  
47 Griffin, D. and Cook, V. (2009), “Acting on evaluation: Twelve tips from a national  
48  
49 conference on student evaluations”, *Medical Teacher*, 31, 101–104.  
50  
51  
52  
53 Guilbault, M. (2016), “Students as customers in higher education: reframing the debate”,  
54  
55 *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 26 (2), 132–142.  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Harvey, S. (2018), "University branding: Your clever guide to higher education branding",  
4  
5 Accessed 25 October 2019 from [https://fabrikbrands.com/university-branding-and-higher-](https://fabrikbrands.com/university-branding-and-higher-education-branding/)  
6  
7 [education-branding/](https://fabrikbrands.com/university-branding-and-higher-education-branding/)  
8  
9

10  
11 Hemsley-Brown, J., Oplatka, I., 2006. Universities in a competitive global marketplace: a  
12  
13 systematic review of the literature on higher education marketing", *International*  
14  
15 *Journal of Public Sector Management*, 19 (4), 316–338.  
16  
17

18  
19 Hicks, D. (2015), "Neoliberal education", Retrieved November 4, 2015, from  
20  
21 [http://www.teaching4abetterworld.co.uk/docs/Neoliberal\\_Education.pdf](http://www.teaching4abetterworld.co.uk/docs/Neoliberal_Education.pdf)  
22  
23

24  
25 [Horine, J. \(1994, March\), "Improving the Educational System through Deming's Systems](#)  
26  
27 [Theory", In \*The educational forum\* \(Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 30-35\), Taylor & Francis](#)  
28  
29 [Group.](#)  
30  
31

32  
33 Hornstein, H. A. (2017), "Student Evaluations of Teaching Are an Inadequate Assessment  
34  
35 Tool for Evaluating Faculty Performance", *Cogent Education*, 4 (1), 1-8.  
36  
37

38  
39 Hsu, C.-L., Yu, L.-C. and Chang, K.-C. (2017), "Exploring the effects of online customer  
40  
41 reviews, regulatory focus, and product type on purchase intention: Perceived justice  
42  
43 as a moderator", *Computers in Human Behavior*, 69 (2017), 335–346.  
44  
45

46  
47 Jorge, V.D. and Albagli, S. (2015), "The role of information in the area of quality: From  
48  
49 fordism to cognitive capitalism", *Transinformacao*, 27 (3), 245-253.  
50  
51

52  
53 Kelly, M. (2012), "Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness: Considerations for Ontario  
54  
55 universities", Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities.  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Kim, B.J. , Otani, K. and Cho, J-I. (2013), “Customer Satisfaction Theory in Public  
4 Administration Education: Revisiting Student Evaluation of Teaching”, *International*  
5  
6 *Journal of Public Administration*, 36 (11), 791-797.  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11 Kim, D. K. and Kim, M. (2016), “Influence of Brand Awareness and Brand Attitude on  
12 Purchase”, *Journal of Marketing Thought*, 3 (1), 16–26.  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 Kirschner, P. A., & van Merriënboer, J. J. (2013), “Do learners really know best?” *Urban*  
18 *legends in education. Educational Psychologist*, 48 (3), 169–183.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23 Klochkov, Y., Paptic, L. and Butkevich, R. (2017), “Development of the Standardization  
24 System in an Organization”, *International Journal of Reliability, Quality & Safety*  
25 *Engineering*, 24 (6), 1-15.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31 Koris, R. and Nokelainen, P. (2015), “The Student-Customer Orientation Questionnaire  
32 (SCOQ): Application of Customer Metaphor to Higher Education”, *International*  
33 *Journal Of Educational Management*, 29 (1), 115-138.  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39 Kotler, P. (1991), “Marketing management: Analysis, planning, and control”, Prentice-hall.  
40  
41  
42  
43 Kuo, Y.-F., Hu, T.-L. and Yang, S.-C. (2013), “Effects of inertia and satisfaction in female  
44 online shoppers on repeat-purchase intention The moderating roles of word-of-mouth  
45 and alternative attraction”, *Managing Service Quality*, 23 (3), 168–187  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51 Laing, C. L., & Laing, G. K. (2016), “The student-as-customer metaphor: A deconstruction  
52 using Foucauldian constructs”, *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance*  
53 *Journal*, 10 (1), 40–54.  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Lam, J. Y. (2015), “Autonomy presence in the extended community of inquiry”,  
4  
5 *International Journal of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning*, 8 (1), 39.  
6  
7  
8  
9 Lomas, L. (2007), “Are students customers? Perceptions of academic staff”, *Quality in*  
10  
11 *Higher Education*, 13 (1): 31–44.  
12  
13  
14  
15 Mahmood, S., Ahmed, S. M., Panthi, K. and Kureshi, N. I. (2014), “Determining the cost of  
16  
17 poor quality and its impact on productivity and profitability”, *Built Environment*  
18  
19 *Project & Asset Management*, 4 (3), 296-311.  
20  
21  
22  
23 Mark, E. (2013), “Student satisfaction and the customer focus in higher education”, *Journal*  
24  
25 *Of Higher Education Policy & Management*, 35 (1), 2-10.  
26  
27 doi:10.1080/1360080X.2012.727703  
28  
29  
30  
31 Martirosyan, N. (2015), “An Examination of Factors Contributing to Student Satisfaction in  
32  
33 Armenian Higher Education”, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 29  
34  
35 (2), 177–191.  
36  
37  
38  
39 Matthews, K.E. (2018), “Stop treating students like customers and start working with them as  
40  
41 partners in learning”, *The Conversation*. Retrieved 25 October 2019, from  
42  
43 [https://theconversation.com/stop-treating-students-like-customers-and-start-working-](https://theconversation.com/stop-treating-students-like-customers-and-start-working-with-them-as-partners-in-learning-93276)  
44  
45 [with-them-as-partners-in-learning-93276](https://theconversation.com/stop-treating-students-like-customers-and-start-working-with-them-as-partners-in-learning-93276)  
46  
47  
48  
49 McCulloch, A. (2009), “The student as co-producer: Learning from public administration  
50  
51 about the student-university relationship”, *Studies in Higher Education*, 34 (2), 171–  
52  
53 183.  
54  
55  
56  
57 [McGregor, D. \(1960\), “Theory X and theory Y”, \*Organization theory\*, 358, 374.](#)  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Naidoo, R. and Jamieson, I. (2005), "Knowledge in the marketplace: The global  
4  
5 commodification of teaching and learning in higher education", In P. Ninnes & M.  
6  
7 Hellstén (Eds.), *Internationalizing higher education: Critical explorations of pedagogy*  
8  
9 and policy (pp. 37–52), Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14 Nel, L. (2017), "Students as collaborators in creating meaningful learning experiences in  
15  
16 technology-enhanced classrooms: An engaged scholarship approach", *British Journal*  
17  
18 *of Educational Technology*, 48 (5), 1131–1142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12549>  
19  
20  
21  
22 Neumark, V. (2012), "What's in a name? The value of a good university brand", Retrieved 25  
23  
24 October 2019, from [https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-](https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2012/apr/03/branding-universities)  
25  
26 [network/blog/2012/apr/03/branding-universities](https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2012/apr/03/branding-universities)  
27  
28  
29  
30 Ng, I. C., and Forbes, J. (2009), "Education as service: The understanding of university  
31  
32 experience through the service logic", *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 19  
33  
34 (1), 38–64.  
35  
36  
37  
38 Nga N. Ho-Dac, Carson S.J. and Moore, W.L. (2013), "The Effects of Positive and Negative  
39  
40 Online Customer Reviews: Do Brand Strength and Category Maturity Matter?",  
41  
42 *Journal of Marketing*, 77 (6):37-53.  
43  
44  
45  
46 Noble, D. F. (1998). Digital diploma mills: The automation of higher education. *Science as*  
47  
48 *Culture*, 7 (3), 355–368.  
49  
50  
51  
52 O'Connor, D. E. and Faille, C. (2000), "Basic Economic Principles", Westport, CT:  
53  
54 Greenwood Press.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Ogunnaike, O., Tairat, B., & Emmanuel, J. (2014), "Customer relationship management  
4 approach and student satisfaction in higher education marketing", *Journal of*  
5  
6 *Competitiveness*, 6 (3), 49–62.  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), "Learning our lesson:  
12 review of quality teaching in higher education", Paris: OECD.  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 Pitman, T. (2016), "The Evolution of the Student as a Customer in Australian Higher  
18 Education: A Policy Perspective", *Australian Educational Researcher*, 43 (3), 345-  
19 359.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25 Pokryshevskaya, E. B. and Antipov, E. A. (2012), "The strategic analysis of online  
26 customers' repeat purchase intentions", *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and*  
27 *Analysis for Marketing*, 20 (3), 203-211.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33 Ramadan, K., and ElMaraghy, W. (2014), "Product Families and Platforms Diversification:  
34 Customer Expectations, Product Variations, or Self-competition?", *Procedia CIRP*,  
35 16(Product Services Systems and Value Creation. Proceedings of the 6th CIRP  
36 Conference on Industrial Product-Service Systems), 104-109.  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1984). Schemata and the cognitive system. In R. S. Wyer, Jr. and T. K. Srull (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition*, 1, 161-188). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

1  
2  
3 Saunders, D. B. (2014), "Exploring a Customer Orientation: Free-Market Logic and College  
4 Students", *Review Of Higher Education*, 37 (2), 197-219.  
5  
6  
7

8  
9 Saunders, D. B. (2015), "They do not buy it: exploring the extent to which entering first-year  
10 students view themselves as customers", *Journal Of Marketing For Higher*  
11 *Education*, 25 (1), 5-28. doi:10.1080/08841241.2014.969798  
12  
13  
14  
15

16  
17 Senge, P. M. (1990), "The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization",  
18 New York: Currency Doubleday.  
19  
20  
21

22  
23 Shetty, Y. K. (1987), "Product Quality and Competitive Strategy", *Business Horizons*, 30 (3),  
24 46-52.  
25  
26  
27

28  
29 Standards Australia (2016), "Benefits of standards", Retrieved 3 February 2016, from  
30 [http://www.standards.org.au/StandardsDevelopment/What\\_is\\_a\\_Standard/Pages/Bene](http://www.standards.org.au/StandardsDevelopment/What_is_a_Standard/Pages/Benefits-of-Standards.aspx)  
31 [fits-of-Standards.aspx](http://www.standards.org.au/StandardsDevelopment/What_is_a_Standard/Pages/Benefits-of-Standards.aspx).  
32  
33  
34  
35

36  
37 Thompson-Whiteside, S. (2012), "Setting standards in Australian higher education",  
38 *Australasian Association for Institutional Research Journal*, 17 (1). Available:  
39 [http://www.aair.org.au/articles/volume-17-no-1/17-1-setting-standards-in-australian-](http://www.aair.org.au/articles/volume-17-no-1/17-1-setting-standards-in-australian-higher-education)  
40 [higher-education](http://www.aair.org.au/articles/volume-17-no-1/17-1-setting-standards-in-australian-higher-education)  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45

46  
47 Tight, M. (2013), "Students: customers, clients or pawns?" *Higher Education Policy*, 26 (3),  
48 291-307.  
49  
50  
51

52  
53 Titus, J. J. (2008), "Student ratings in a consumerist academy: Leveraging pedagogical  
54 control and authority", *Sociological Perspectives*, 51 (2), 397– 422.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 University of Glasgow (2013), “Academic Quality Framework”, Retrieved 20 March 2017,  
4  
5 from [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_127773\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_127773_en.pdf).

6  
7  
8  
9 University of Tasmania (2016), “Student Experience Strategy (2016-2010)”, Retrieved 25  
10  
11 October 2019, from [https://www.utas.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/807994/SE-](https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/807994/SE-Strategy-v.6.pdf)  
12  
13 [Strategy-v.6.pdf](https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/807994/SE-Strategy-v.6.pdf).

14  
15  
16  
17 [Von Bertalanffy, L. \(1972\), “The history and status of general systems theory”, \*Academy of\*](#)  
18  
19 [management journal](#), 15 (4), 407-426.

20  
21  
22  
23 Watjatrakul, B. (2014), “Factors affecting students’ intentions to study at universities  
24  
25 adopting the “student-as-customer” concept”, *International Journal Of Educational*  
26  
27 *Management*, 28 (6), 676-693. doi:10.1108/IJEM-09-2013-0135

28  
29  
30  
31 Wilson, S., Liber, O., Griffiths, D., & Johnson, M. (2007, June 25), “Preparing for disruption:  
32  
33 Developing institutional capability for decentralized education technologies”, 1386–  
34  
35 1395. Retrieved from <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/25557/>

36  
37  
38  
39 Woodall, T., Hiller, A. and Resnick, S. (2014), “Making sense of higher education: Students  
40  
41 as consumers and the value of the university experience”, *Studies in Higher*  
42  
43 *Education*, 39 (1), 48–67.

44  
45  
46  
47 Wright, R. E. (2006), “Student evaluations of faculty: Concerns raised in the literature, and  
48  
49 possible solutions”, *College Student Journal*, 40, 417–422.

50  
51  
52  
53 Wright, G., and Goodwin, P. (1999), “Rethinking value elicitation for personal consequential  
54  
55 decisions. *Journal of Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis*, 8 (1), 3–10.