GRADUATE STUDENTS SATISFACTION
OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION BACHELOR'S PROGRAM

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Abstract
Higher education institutions are increasingly aware about the need to deal with many competitive pressures and important challenges related to continuous adaptation to labor market requirements. In this competitive framework, only those institutions which provide high quality education for their students to meet the expectations of the international labour market can survive. Under these circumstances, higher education institutions put greater emphasis on student satisfaction that occurs when perceived performance meets the students expectations regarding curricula, usefulness of studied subjects related to individual preferences and requirements of the labor market, quality of teaching process and information resources available for students, communication with teachers and other faculty staff members etc.

With the objective of knowing the opinions of license graduates in the Business Administration field concerning the quality of the educational service and to acquire deeper understanding about the factors influencing their satisfaction, an extended research was conducted to determine overall satisfaction about the educational offer of the Faculty of Business and Tourism from Bucharest University of Economic Studies and the assessment of the utility of the subjects provided by the faculty. The results of the research revealed that the majority of respondents have a positive assessment of the quality of educational activities relating the teachers and the support staff as well as the resources available to the students during their university training process.

This study is helpful for academics in order to learn more about the nature and predictors of student satisfaction and to identify and address areas in need of improvement, especially regarding academic curricula. Also, this study is useful for labor market and business representatives for understanding the competences and abilities gained by graduates in Business Adminstration and setting the requirements for future employees.

Keywords: higher education; student satisfaction; Business Administration degree program; curriculum; labor market

JEL Classification: A22, I23, M10

Introduction

After signing in 1999 the Bologna Declaration, the EU countries started an educational reform. Changes in the higher education system precipitate reorganizations and increasing competition among institutions (Tóth and Jónás, 2014). The fundamental structural changes of the Romanian higher education system make it imperative to address the issue of quality of educational process. On the other hand, the Romanian business environment is facing a number of challenges that need to be addressed by academic curricula considering that correlation between curricula and labor market requirements is a key issue of modern education and a primary pillar of the Bologna process (Marin, Horobeț and Belașcu, 2015). In this context, Romanian universities understood the importance of developing strategies considering all these factors that impact the academic environment.

In order to develop such strategies, first of all, is necessary to assess the level of satisfaction of the undergraduate and graduate students of higher education institutions regarding educational programs provided by the Romanian universities. As mentioned by Stukalina (2014), understanding the factors behind the student satisfaction may provide universities with the tools needed to improve the quality of their services. Evaluations of educational programs by students and graduates are a useful means for gathering feedback about the overall delivery of courses and services offered by an university and are used to inform staff and decision-makers about relevant issues that can impact the educational programs (Office of Academic Planning and Assessment - OAPA, 2001).

Under these circumstances, a survey was conducted among young people who have completed the undergraduate program in Business Administration of the Faculty of Business and Tourism from Bucharest University of Economics Study in order to identify their degree of appreciation regarding attributes such as: quality of teaching activities related to courses and seminars, usefulness of Bachelor's curricula in regard to their career development goals, the opportunities for interactivity during class activities, communication with teachers and auxiliary personnel, resources and teaching materials provided by the university etc.

Literature review

Higher education degree programs are expected to provide tangible benefits to students, employers, and society. Their purpose is "to equip students with the essential knowledge, skills, and habits of mind needed to become competent workers, as well as productive citizens" (Bright and Graham, 2014, p.17). Educational programs that enhance the satisfaction of students are more likely to produce the outcomes that are valuable to students, society, and the workplace. However, to increase satisfaction of students is necessary the knowledge of the factors that determine their satisfaction, the aspects that contribute to favorable assessment of the study programs.

Student satisfaction is "a short-term attitude that results from evaluating their experience of the education service" (Elliott and Healy, 2001). According to Abrudan, Plăiaș and Dabija (2015), satisfaction is based on customer expectations and perception of service quality. The concept of the student as a customer is now commonplace in higher education. Some authors (DeShields, Kara and Kaynak, 2005) even talk about the need to adopt a consumer-centric approach in the educational services, a principle which is now widely used within for-profit institutions, while other authors, like Sirvanci (1996), consider that students are rather partners in the learning process than customers.

In academia there is a keen competition between higher education institutions, given that prospective students must choose from a wide range of specializations, must determine whether to study in a public education institution in the detriment of the private higher education institutions or they must decide whether to study in their country or abroad. On the background of this increased competition and, also, the changing demographics in the population and declining enrolments, universities must adopt an entrepreneurial approach in order to better serve their customers/students. In this context, is very important for an university to listen "the voice of students" to better understand the reasons behind choosing a particular university and, further, to know the degree of satisfaction of the enrolled students and, also, the perception of the graduates regarding curricula, academic staff or other features or attributes of the university.

Student satisfaction surveys are commonly used as feedback to determine the delivery of education. The surveys can also gather information about former students' academic achievement and their employment and further education outcomes. Student and graduates' satisfaction and the quality of education from their perspective are of compelling interest to students, academic staff and policy-makers. Satisfaction surveys can serve as a tool for planning and implementing continuous improvement activities by higher education institutions in order to adapt to the changing circumstances of the business environment and the labour market (Tóth and Jónás, 2014).

It is obvious that no single factor explains (dis)satisfaction among students; there are a range of academic, personal and financial factors. Recent studies (Alzamel, 2014; Priya, Bhadouria and Charu, 2013; Sweeney, 2016) have found that student satisfaction is strongly related to a range of important factors within the control of the higher education institution, such as quality of lecturers and teaching, learning resource, facilities and staff, campus atmosphere and climate, assessment and feedback, design and delivery of service, cost of education, nature of the learning environment, reputation and recognition of the institution and its programmes etc. There are also many factors external to the institution which may cause dissatisfaction among students and disruption to their education such as financial problems, family issues, student motivation, self-confidence, effort and anxiety about their personal ability (Sargent, Borthick and Lederberg, 2011; Sweeney, 2016; Thompson and Prieto, 2013). These findings are consistent with other studies (Gorgan, C. and Gorgan, V., 2014; Marin, Horobeț and Belașcu, 2015; Săvoiu et al., 2014) undertaken among undergraduate and graduate students of the economic faculties in Romania. Studies on graduates from Romanian economic higher education institutions indicate a positive attitude and a perception of relative contentedness regarding the opportunities offered by the economic faculties, but emphasizes the need for universities to focus their attention both on the students' needs as well the employers' need in order to harmonize the two sides of the labor market (Marin, Horobeț and Belașcu, 2015). In this regard, the role of graduates is even more important because they should participate actively to this process, mainly by providing active feedback to universities on how well the academic curricula is fitting the labor market requirements.

Methodology
In the sight of clarifying the aspects highlighted by the literature it was carried out an exploratory research among some older students and master graduates that studied in business administration.

The target of this research was to determine the degree of satisfaction of the license graduates in the Business administration field offered by the Business and Tourism Faculty. The objectives followed were:

- The identification of how useful the license studies are in business administration;
- The evaluation of the quality of the didactic activities, the relationship with the teachers and the auxiliary personnel and the resources provided for the students during their training for the license as well;
- Measuring the degree of importance granted to the mandatory and optional classes studied within the Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

The hypotheses pursued in this research were developed in line with the purpose and the objectives above.

Those assumptions were:

1. Most respondents have a favourable attitude toward undergraduate studies in business administration;

2. The majority of respondents have a positive assessment of the quality of educational activities relating the teachers and the support staff as well as the resources available to the students during the preparation for their license;

3. Among the research participants we can acknowledge significant differences regarding the degree of importance of the subjects studied in the Faculty of Business and Tourism.

The research was carried out between 10 January to 15 March 2017 and was based on a structured questionnaire, which contained 26 questions. The content questions were closed. The closed questions had an unique, simple, of the rating scales type, as well as matrix responses. The questionnaire was posted on the website isondaje.ro and participation was voluntary. Therefore, the questionnaire was self-administered.

The sample studied was randomly chosen, being based on the voluntary choice of respondents to participate in the research. Although not representative, the sample is relevant from the perspective of some people who attended undergraduate studies in Business Administration from the Faculty of Business and Tourism. The sample used consists of 294 people who graduated from the Faculty of Business and Tourism (formerly Commerce) in the period 2009-2016, with the structure shown below, in Table no. 1.

Table no. 1: Respondents distribution according to graduation year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2009	6	2.0	2.0	2.0
	2010	30	10.2	10.2	12.2
	2011	12	4.1	4.1	16.3
	2012	21	7.1	7.1	23.5
	2013	21	7.1	7.1	30.6
	2014	30	10.2	10.2	40.8
	2015	75	25.5	25.5	66.3
	2016	99	33.7	33.7	100.0
	Total	294	100.0	100.0	

The data was processed using the SPSS 23 version and in the analysis there have been used various methods: analysis of the frequencies and structures, medium, standard deviations, correlation, analysis of variance (ANOVA), F and t tests, as well as comparisons of environments throughout testing a sample.

Results and discussions

An important section of the survey was dedicated to the evaluation of compulsory and optional subjects during the preparation in the license cycle. The evaluations were made on a 6-speed scale, where the 1st meant not at all important, and the 6th very important. Questions were of the matrix type and included all subjects taken in the order of all 6 semesters.

For the matrix-type of questions it was aimed the scaling accuracy using the Cronbach α coefficient and the Fisher test (Table no. 2). These questions are from 21-26 and contain compulsory and optional subjects performed on each of the three years of study and in each semester. All coefficient values indicate a higher statistical reliability, the scaling being correct and the values exceeding 700.

Table no. 2: Statistical reliability

Question	Cronbach α value	No. of elements
21	.756	7
22	.828	7
23	.874	7
24	.827	7
25	.867	7
26	.837	7

Using the analysis of variance (Analysis of variance - ANOVA) (Table no. 3) it allowed the identification of significant differences within groups only. The values obtained show that there are significant differences between the variables of each of the six questions, so within the groups (according to the Fisher test values, which in all six questions have thresholds of significance .000). Therefore, it can be acknowledged a consistency of responses from the people investigated.

Table no. 3: Value of the Grand Mean

Question	Semester	Grand Mean
21	1	4.5481
22	2	4.8134
23	3	4.6501
24	4	4.5904
25	5	4.5408
26	6	4.8324

The general averages of the six matrix questions is above 4.5, which means that the investigated participants consider that the investigated subjects taken during their

Bachelor's degree were important. The general averages for all 6 semesters had an oscillatory evolution, with a similarity trend between the 1st and the 3rd year. Explanations for these results can be found in the disciplines structure of general and specialized culture, on the one hand, and on the other, in the structure of the subject's subordinated to the two departments of the faculty.

Another section of the survey was meant to assess the quality of educational activities, the networking regarding the teachers and the support staff as well as the resources available to students during the preparation for finalization of studies. For this purpose, there have been developed 10 questions and the respondents were asked to assign a score from 1 to 7, where 1 is totally unsatisfied and 7 completely satisfied. The averages, in ascending order, shown in Table no. 4, below, shows a positive position, with only two values close to the middle of the scale, the other ones based around the value number 5. The smaller values refer to the relationship with the auxiliary personnel, where the greatest dissatisfaction is regarding the relation to the faculty secretaries as well as with contacts regarding the labor market. This last aspect can reveal both a reduced collaboration with the business environment, but also a relatively passive attitude from the students, who are accustomed to expect the faculty to solve a number of problems for their entering on the labor market. To note is the fact that the faculty runs more and more partnerships with the business environment. In contrast, there can be found students with the ability to express ideas and interactions with the teachers. The courses and seminars quality, and the curriculum is considered to be at a relatively high standard, improvements for the content are needed and for the teaching methods though.

Table no. 4: Descriptive statistics of the quality variables

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interactivity with the auxiliary personnel	294	1.00	7.00	4.1939	1.87488
Fit with labor market	294	1.00	7.00	4.3061	1.74329
Usefulness of curricula for carrier development	294	1.00	7.00	4.8163	1.35264
University resource	294	2.00	7.00	5.0816	1.27732
Quality of teaching in lectures	294	1.00	7.00	5.2959	1.12868
Usefulness of Bachelor's curricula for a master degree	294	2.00	7.00	5.2959	1.28957
Interactivity with the teachers	294	1.00	7.00	5.3673	1.39027
Quality of teaching in labs/seminar	294	1.00	7.00	5.3776	1.13145
Accessibility of instructors	294	1.00	7.00	5.4694	1.19901
Opportunities for class discussions	294	1.00	7.00	5.5000	1.28193

All of the 10 variables are strongly and directly correlated at a significance level of 1%, indicating a high consistency to the answers, according to the data shown in the Table no. 5, below. Values greater than 0.8 occurred between the quality of teaching in labs/seminar and lectures, between the interactivity with teachers and the quality of the labs/seminars, and between the capacity for the curriculum to be useful for the student's preparation for master and PhD and her ability to be necessary for their future career.

Table no. 5: Quality variable correlation coefficient

Variable	Correlation coefficient									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
quality of teaching in lectures	1									
quality of teaching in labs/seminar	**.858****	1								
accessibility of instructors	.563**	.601**	1							
interactivity with the auxiliary personnel	.505**	.463**	.601**	1						
interactivity with the teachers	.752**	**.805****	.670**	.602**	1					
opportunities for class discussions	.655**	.639**	.574**	.462**	.733**	1				
university resource	.658**	.645**	.519**	.476**	.677**	.582**	1			
fit with labor market	.526**	.517**	.528**	.514**	.489**	.463**	.518**	1		
usefulness curricula for carrier development	.794**	.761**	.510**	.571**	.729**	.626**	.667**	.571**	1	
usefulness of Bachelor's curricula for a master degree	.756**	.751**	.539**	.429**	.678**	.598**	.632**	.470**	**.824****	1

Conclusions

The data collected allowed a favorable assessment of satisfaction for the business administration graduates. There are, however, some differences between the importance of some disciplines, which can be improved by a better matching to the content with the real needs of the labor market, and by enhancing the role of each discipline for building a better

profile as a specialist in business administration. Also, strengthening the connections with the business environment can be a solution of growth of the subjects importance.

Another direction of improvement has in sight the communication at all levels. If relations students - teachers are properly assessed, problems with the auxiliary staff and, especially, with the faculty secretariat can occur.

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