POOR REPUTATION CAN CAUSE FUTURE TROUBLES – A CASE OF UNIVERSITY QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: This paper shows the results of a survey conducted at the University of Miskolc among the students of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and the Faculty of Economics. The results would like to represent the ideas and opinions among the students about the courses taught by the Faculty of Economics. We really believe that the satisfaction of our clients (the students) must be ensured in all circumstances and all the activities which are trying to enhance the quality of the education are really useful and worthy. We hope that these co-operations between the two Faculties can provide better curriculum and high quality education.

Keywords: quality assurance, higher education, customer satisfaction

1. Introduction

If we really believe in the idea of "Homo Economicus" that means that every costumer would like to get the best product or service for their money. This statement must be true for all the goods and services and higher education is not an exception. This must be also true for all nations as well and Hungary cannot be exception either. Although the Hungarian society (due to historical reasons) accustomed to the idea that all types of education (including higher education) is "free of charge"(State-funded). But if something was is for free than usually we are not worrying about its value or quality. (Don't forget that the education was never costless, but it wasn't financed by the consumer) This era is over. From the year 2012 the state don't finance the trainings for business and law, all the trainings in bachelor level have a tuition fee. The pricing mechanism for the educational service is ruled by the government but the universities can determine their tuitions in a wide range. (By business studies between 1100 and 2500 Euros) From this year all universities must be aware of the fact that a new era of higher education has just started. The students and their parents will be really conscious about choosing the best universities and the best trainings for their money.

2. How can we determine the value of the higher educational service?

The University of Miskolc started its quality assurance processes in the year 2007. In this year the UNI-EFQM model (basically the EFQM model for higher educational institutes) was introduced to the institution. Also a Quality Insurance Office was established

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to monitor the different activities of the University and to perform surveys and questionnaires among the students related to the UNI-EFQM model. The original EFQM Excellence model was established in 1998. The model was designed by involving 14 European large companies [1]. Although the model is used by the non-profit sector as well and most of the European universities have implemented the framework of EFQM as the basis for the measurement of their activities [2, 3].

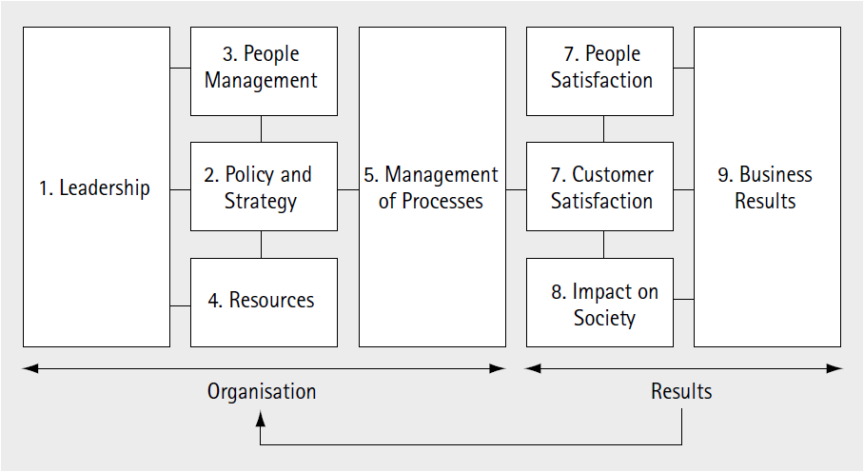

Figure 1. The EFQM model – www.efqm.org

Our focus from the UNI-EFQM model is limited to the customer satisfaction. In the case of a university of primary customers are the students. Their satisfaction can be measured through questionnaires about the courses which are performed twice a year in the University of Miskolc. The final costumers of the universities are the companies who will employ the graduates. The companies need well trained students who have the competencies that their future employer need. Nevertheless the concept of this paper was to identify the beliefs and ideas about the trainings of the Faculty of Economics. We believe that all the students who are taught by the professors of the Faculty of Economics must have an opinion about the trainings and this opinion is significantly influencing the future students in their decision of choosing a higher educational institution for their studies.

2.1. Your opinion matters. The aim of this study was to get a clear view about thinking of the students about the courses taught to them by the Faculty of Economics (referred in the paper as business studies).(Economics students, business students, students of the Faculty of Economics are used here as synonyms) The results could be used to improve the curricula especially by the courses designed for engineering students. The Institute of Management was originally called the Department of Industrial Economics a part of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering from 1957 till 1987. This department was the essential basement to the foundation of the Faculty of Economics and now it is part of this Faculty in the organizational structure of the University of Miskolc. Most of the courses have a strong engineering approach, nevertheless not favored by the engineering students. This dislike of

the students was only sensible on the seminars and never examined before. From another point of view we can also give a feedback to the respondents about the utility of the questioned skills and competences. None of them was aware of that the questioned competences were not selected randomly but they are the ones that the employers stated as the most important ones for their future employees. [1, 2] The Institute of Management Sciences is committed in the quality improvement of the university's activities and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Informatics is a great partner in that common goal.

2.2. The questionnaire. The survey was performed among 262 students from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Informatics. To collect data for comparison we also conducted a survey among the students of the Faculty of Economics. We had 81 respondents. By both faculties requests were sent through the e-mail address lists of the Student Council to bachelor and master students, and bachelors were asked to tell the current year of their studies as well, but none of these questions were compulsory. That is reason why the sum of the results does not reach 100 percent. The structure of the respondents is shown in Figure 2.

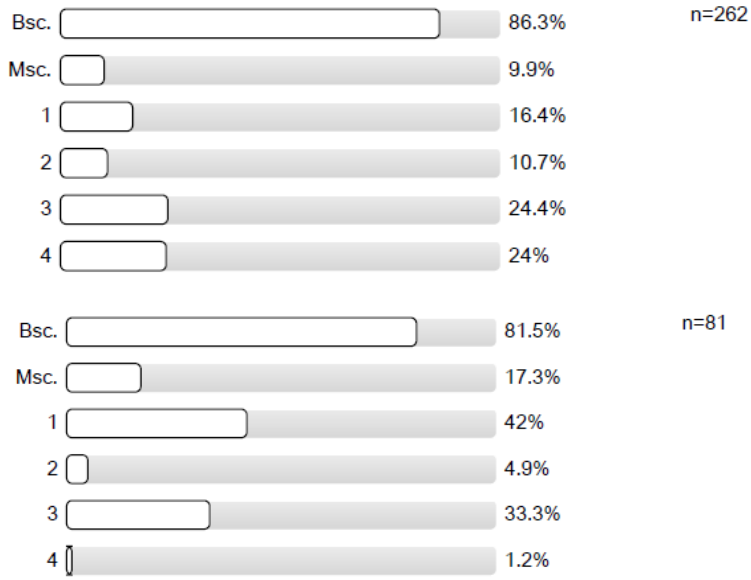

Figure 2. Respondents at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Informatics and at the Faculty of Economics

In both results we can see that more bachelor student responded to the questionnaire. Among the engineer students the different students from different school year answered in balance, but more students in their third or fourth study year formed their opinion. (For us it is more useful because these students have more experience about the courses). The results from the students of the Faculty of Economics are slightly distorted because mainly the

students in their first year (actually in their first semester before any exams are passed) and the students in their third year responded mainly to the questionnaire.

2.3. General questions. By all the questions we used a 1 to 5 scale. In the first part of the questionnaire (general questions) 1 meant to be: Absolutely not true; and 5 meant to be: Absolutely true.

General question were as follows:

"The courses taught by (NEn,Ec,NEc) are…:

- Important to me
- In my focus
- Difficult
- Interesting from a professional point of view
- Useful in my future career
- Useful to get a higher salary in the future
- Giving me more complex view on the future field of my activity"

(NEn, Ec, NEc) refers to Non-engineering faculties (NEn), Faculty of Economics (Ec) and the Non-economics faculties (NEc). The engineer students were asked about the NEn and the Ec courses and business students were asked about Ec and NEc courses.

We did not compare the results of the two different samples by the general questions. Only differences between the answers about "Nen-Ec" and the answers about "Ec-NEc" courses were examined in their own context. The results showed us that the engineering students do evaluate the business studies below average among the other courses taught by NEn faculties. The average values are below (in Table I. and II.).

Table I. Results of the general evaluation among the engineering students

The courses taught by Non engineering (NEn) faculties are						
Important to me	In my focus	Difficult	Interesting	Useful in career	Usefull for salary	Giving Complex view
2,7	2,4	2,9	2,7	2,7	2,5	2,7
The courses taught by the Faculty of Economics (Ec) are						
Important to me	In my focus	Difficult	Interesting	Useful in career	Usefull for salary	Giving Complex view
2,4	2,3	2,7	2,4	2,6	2,4	2,6

The engineering and business students rated similarly the subjects outside their own field of expertise. The business students appreciated the courses of NEc as being interesting and being useful in their future career more than the engineering students. Of course the trivial fact can also be seen that the business students focus more on their own subjects as engineers.

Table II. Results of the general evaluation among the economist students

The courses taught by Non economist (NEc) faculties are						
Important to me	In my focus	Difficult	Interesting	Useful in career	Usefull for salary	Giving Complex view
2,9	2,5	2,8	3,2	3,1	2,6	2,7
The courses taught by the Faculty of Economics (Ec) are						
Important to me	In my focus	Difficult	Interesting	Useful in career	Usefull for salary	Giving Complex view
4,4	4,3	3,9	4	4	3,9	3,8

2.4. Expected competences. A survey designed by the Institute of Management Science [5] noted the need for several competences of the employees by the responses of the companies as:

1. Logical thinking
2. Sense of reality
3. Profoundness
4. Reliability
5. Professional skills
6. Ability for understanding the others
7. Self-development capabilities
8. Co operational skills
9. Honesty
10. Ability to learn from mistakes
11. Decision-making skills
12. Oral communication skills

(These numbers will be used for identification of the competencies at the Figures below.)

These competences were highlighted by the companies searching for engineers and economists as well. The demanded general skills and capabilities did not differed significantly by the two professions (except professional skills of course) so we used them in both questionnaires. We asked the students about two major aspects of the courses and competencies. One was the utility of these competencies in the eyes of the students. The other part was about the contribution of the courses taught by the Faculty of Economics to improve the students' skills in the aforementioned competencies.

By all the questions we used a 1 to 5 scale.

The questions were stated as: How important these competencies could be in your future? 1 meant to be Not important at all; and 5 meant to be: Very important.

As it can be seen the engineering students are fully aware of the importance of the demanded competencies. (4,5 was the maximum and 4,0 the minimum) The contribution of the Faculty of Economics to acquire them is poor. The best contributions are in the fields of

decision making and sense of reality (both rated averagely 2,8) and the lowest by honesty (2,3). We must examine the backround of the results. Maybe the curriculum should be redesigned in order to be more interesting and more useful. Also the utility of the business subjects must be emphasized by the lecturers. The knowledge transfer must be done by explaning the business point of view of the studies but through th eyes of the engineer. The next figure shows the results among the students of the Faculty of Economics. These results will bring us an opportunity of a more precise approach.

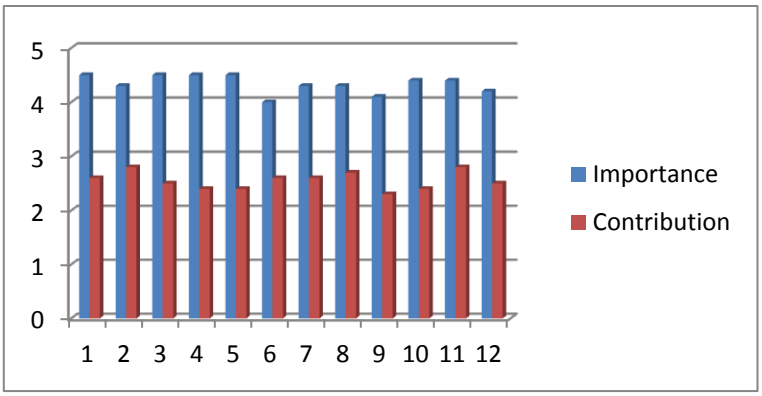

Figure 3. Importance of the competencies and the contribution of the business studies rated by the engineering students

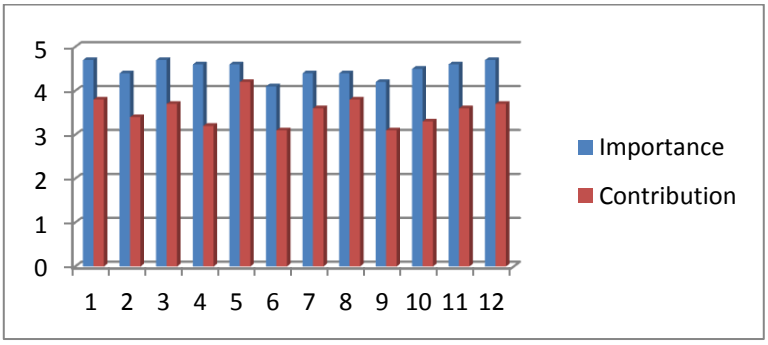

Figure 4. Importance of the competencies and the contribution of the business studies rated by the business students

The business students also think that the competences are important to them. (4,7 was the maximum and 4,1 the minimum). The contribution shows here a better a state. The poorest contribution was honesty (just as by the engineering student's sample) and the best contributions (not mentioning professional skills with 4,2 which must be the most important of all) were in the field of logical thinking and co-operational skills (both 3,8). The biggest difference between the opinions of the two samples about the importance of the competences was in the field of oral communication. The engineering students do not think

that their communicational skills would be so important for the future, nevertheless there is a need for engineers with great communicational skills especially in foreign languages such as English or German according to the experiences about the employment in the North-Hungarian Region. (Bosch is one of the biggest employers in Miskolc for engineer students)

The contribution shows entirely different results. This field was relativly poor at both samples (especially by engineers) but there is a huge gap between them. We should consider the causing fact of this. Maybe curriculum must be tailor-made for the engineer students and use different tools and literature even different methods to help them to get acquainted with the needed competencies throughout the seminars of business studies.

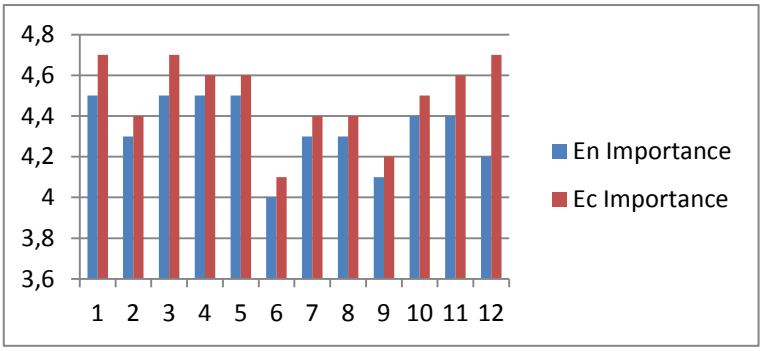

Figure 5. Comparing the results by the importance of the competencies (En: engineering students, Ec: Economics/business students)

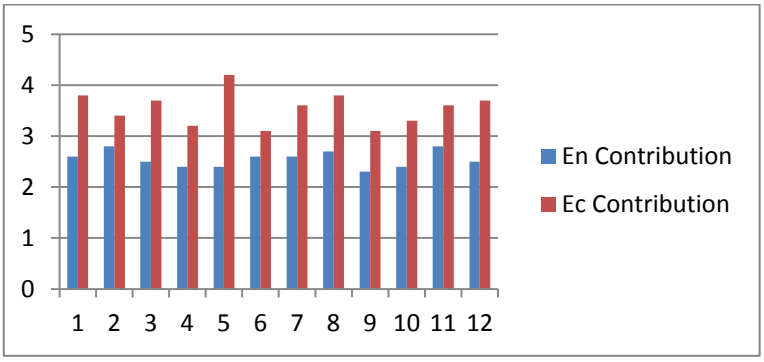

Figure 6. Comparing the results by the contribuiton to the competencies (En: engineering students, Ec: Economics/business students)

3. Summary

In the future the all the faculties training students for the fields of business and economics must focus on the satisfaction of their primary consumers, the students. If we want to be a successful university all the employees must know how to contribute in this work to reach the common goal.

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