

The quality of providing educational services in the higher education system in Ukraine: Students' opinion

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Abstract: The article presents the features of measuring the quality of educational services in the higher education system of Ukraine through the evaluation by the recipients of educational services: the students. The main aim of the research is to find the state of satisfaction of students with the provision of educational services. To find the students' level of satisfaction electronic questionnaire was applied. The proposed questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, 2 of them - of an organizational nature (specialty and course) and 13 closed questions, and 1 open-ended question. To determine the validity of the survey results it was applied the χ^2 test. The information obtained gives a scientifically sound picture of the quality of the provision of educational services in higher education institutions as a whole, and identifies specific gaps for identifying problematic areas of the activity for further improvement at different levels of management.

Keywords: education quality, education quality measurement, recipient of services, university rating, educational process

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INTRODUCTION

The modern higher education system in Ukraine is on the way of its renewal and transformation towards the best European and world models. This is due, first and foremost, to preparation of a competitive specialist who can present himself or herself with dignity in the global and European labor markets.

The main indicator of the success of a higher education institution is its presentability in market of educational services both nationally and internationally. We have in mind the ranking position among other educational institutions in different rankings.

There are now many methodologies for evaluating activities of higher education institutions and provision of educational services. At national and world level, the methodology for rating higher education institutions mainly includes such indicators as material and technical support, level of teaching staff, presentability of research and scientific activity, participation in scientific projects, level of publications of employees of higher education institutions and etc.

Of course, all these indicators are significant, but for recipients of services - entrants and students - the main indicator is the level of provision of educational services, i.e. the quality of educational process. This indicator is difficult to define and many researchers propose their own different assessment methodologies. But overwhelming majority agrees with one common indicator of evaluating the quality of educational services: students' satisfaction with educational process.

THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH FOCUS

Nowadays the quality of education can be measured through two components: indicators/quality measurement criteria that must comply with specifics of a particular of educational institutions and be appropriate for clients/applicants of higher education.

Basically the quality of education is now measured by national and international ratings of universities. However, we believe that learning about the quality of educational process can be largely measured by students' satisfaction with educational process. This is confirmed by many scientific studies. The most important component of the evaluation of educational process quality is monitoring of satisfaction of stakeholders with results of education (Belash et al. 2015). As a result of studying the quality of educational process at university through eyes of students, researchers Svetlana S. Kotova and Irina I.

Hasanova (Kotova & Hasanova 2016) proposed to define concepts of “quality of educational process” and “consumer monitoring”, reflecting the level of mastering students educational programs.

Scientists in other countries have also studied students’ opinions on organization of educational process. For example, M. Moraru (2014), whose research answered to questions regarding roles of teachers in higher education, the qualities of a teacher, effectiveness of assessment and teaching methods, ways to improve the quality of teaching performance time for individual study. Conducted study showed the necessity of developing and strengthening a modern instructional process, centered on student.

From the other hand the current controversy requires scientific correction and rethinking of the methodology of quality evaluation of educational process. In this regard, Julia A. Krokchina et al. (2016) have made qualimetric grounds for projecting and implementation of monitoring technologies in educational process of University. They have presented discourse of concept “monitoring technology”, essence, structure and content of qualimetric grounds of monitoring technologies in educational process of University.

We consider that quality of education can be measured through the set of competencies that determine professional ability to carry out professional activities on a certain level of efficiency with an understanding of social responsibility for its results, as the process and the result of the formation of professional competencies and professional consciousness of future specialist (Bezpalko et al. 2016).

When discussing the organization of educational process and student satisfaction with it, it is important to take into account peculiarities of interpersonal interaction between teacher and student. Helena Pennings et al. (2018) believe that it is interpersonal interaction of teacher and student that is the driving force behind successful organization of educational process and its effectiveness. In addition, the study has shown that it is the personality/style of teacher that constructively influences students’ success/failure in learning the training material. The corresponding statement is found in Stan and Manea (2014) study that examined students’ educational expectations depending on personal and professional qualities of teacher.

At the same time, many studies have shown that the quality of educational process also depends on student’s ability to self-education and professional self-development. Accordingly, the personality of teacher and student’s satisfaction with educational process also

influence formation of this ability. Confirmation of this view is found in study of Amirkhanova et al. (2015), whose research shows that formation of readiness for professional self-education through training company is an important step towards a new quality in preparation of future teachers.

In general, the issue of monitoring the quality of educational process is an ongoing process and a prerequisite for studying modern trends and developing a modern university facing constant social changes. Igor V. Kovalev, Yuri Y. Loginov and Tatiana G. Okuneva (Kovalev et al. 2017) have a similar opinion. Scholars note that monitoring the training of graduates, on the one hand, makes it possible to correlate actual state of affairs with what was planned, and on the other hand, facilitates planning activities to improve the organization and implementation of educational process during analysis, development of marketing and other strategic directions of university. Thus, university monitoring of graduates' training can be viewed as a means of managing the quality of educational process.

The analysis of scientific works on issue of determining the quality of educational process leads us to conclude that today there is no single approach or methodology to determine the effectiveness. Researchers point to many criteria and indicators that can determine the quality of educational process. However, we have noticed that all methodologies and approaches have one common criterion: the satisfaction of educational process by recipients. That is, students' opinion on organization of educational process is perhaps the key criterion in determining the quality of educational process of each particular institution of higher education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

At the first stage of our study, electronic questionnaire was applied. Its goal was to obtain necessary information from participants to describe the point of view regarding the quality of organization of the educational process and students' satisfaction with its current state. Students from two Ukrainian higher education institutions: Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and V.G. Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University were involved in survey. This choice is due to fact that these universities have the same accreditation level, training professionals in the same specialties and similar educational programs. In addition, this choice is explained by the fact that Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University is located in a big city - the capital of Ukraine - and

V.G. Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University is in a much smaller city. That is, we envisaged the possibility to exclude the influence of location of higher education institution in the opinion of students, which allowed us to determine objective indicators of the quality of educational services, regardless of the location of university.

The survey included students in three specialties (Special Education (speech therapy) (n = 74), Social Work (n = 70), Practical Psychology (n = 76)), first (n = 113), second (n = 62), and third (n = 45) courses. The total number of respondents is n = 220 (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University n=100, V.G. Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University n=120).

Respondents were interviewed at the end of the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year during the period of the students taking the exam. The proposed questionnaire consisted of 16 questions; 2 of them - of an organizational nature (specialty and course) and 13 closed questions, which related to the organization of the educational process and students' opinions on the quality of educational services, and 1 open-ended question: Indicate how easy it is for you to perceive the course material (scale 1 to 5); Do you consider the knowledge gained in the lessons relevant (useful) to you? Do you have the desire to further your own knowledge of the subjects you study at the university? Are you well aware of the requirements for assessing your knowledge? Do you have enough opportunities to express your thoughts in class? Do you want to discuss your ideas with your teacher? How many independent work tasks are best for you? Which form of exam is more convenient for you? In what form you compose credits? What is the ratio of lectures and practicals that is best for successful mastering of the material? Who made the choice of specialty and educational institution at admission? Are you satisfied with the choice of the educational institution as a whole? Does it matter to you what grade you get on the credit/exam? What should be corrected in the organization of the educational process (open-ended question with no answer).

The questionnaire was offered to students by sending a personal email invitation to the questionnaire form. The results of the questionnaire made it possible to make a comparative analysis between two universities and the opinions of students of the same specialties, and to identify the main emphasis for improving the quality of the educational process.

To determine the validity of the survey results it was applied the χ^2 test. This criterion is an objective assessment of the proximity of empirical distributions to theoretical ones. It is used in cases where it is necessary to establish the correspondence of two comparable series of distribution – empirical and theoretical, or two empirical. At the same time the frequencies of the named distribution series are compared, the differences between them are revealed and the probability of these differences is determined (Kendall and Stewart 1977).

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

As a result of a student survey, we were able to examine their views on the quality and organization of educational process at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University.

The students' answers were distributed as follows.

On the first question of the questionnaire (Indicate how easy it is for you to perceive the study material, scale from 1 to 5), students of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (further BGKU) answered as follows: scale 1 - 0, scale 2 - 3, scale 3 - 23, scale 4 - 61, and scale 5 - 13. Student answers of Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (further PNPU) were divided as follows: scale 1 - 4, scale 2 - 6, scale 3 - 45, scale 4 - 50, and scale 5 - 15.

As can be seen from the results of question 1, the number of students who find it difficult to perceive the teaching material at PNPU is 4 persons (3.3%) of total number of respondents; but as a whole the results show that students of both universities perceive the teaching materials provided in class equally easy.

The distribution of answers to the second question (Do you consider the knowledge gained in the lessons relevant/useful to you?) is presented in such way. Students of BGKU answered “yes” 40%, “rather yes than no” 45%, “I don't know” 9%, “more likely no than yes” 5%, “no” 1%. PNPU students answered “yes” 46.7%, “rather yes than no” 40%, “I don't know” 4.2%, “more likely no than yes” 6.7%, “no” 2.5%.

The obtained knowledge at university is considered useful by the majority of students. However, there is also the opinion of students that the acquired knowledge is not at all useful for their future professional activities.

The next question was formulated as follows: Do you have the desire to further your own knowledge of the subjects you study at the

university? The distribution of students' answers is: BGKU students' answers are "Yes, always" 11%, "Yes, sometimes" 63%, "Difficult to answer" 12%, "Seldom" 13%, "Never" 1%. PNPu students' answers are "Yes, always" 10%, "Yes, sometimes" 60.8%, "Difficult to answer" 11.7%, "Seldom" 15.8%, "Never" 1.7%.

As we can see from the answers, the overwhelming majority of students are willing to master the educational material independently, which may indicate the students' motivation to deepen their knowledge in their chosen specialty.

The next question concerns the students' freedom of expression. The answers convincingly prove that students have the opportunity to express their thoughts freely, to express their wishes, some dissatisfactions, etc. In percentage terms, the results were as follows: PNPu "yes" 47.5% and "rather yes than no" 30.8%; BGKU "yes" 46% and "rather yes than no" 36%. Only a small percentage of students at both universities indicated that they had doubts about the ability to express their opinions in some classes.

It followed a block of questions on students' self-development questions "Do you have a desire to discuss with your teacher your ideas?" To answer, 5 scales were offered. The distribution of students' responses is: BGKU students' answers are "Yes, always" 13%, "Yes, sometimes" 49%, "Difficult to answer" 12%, "Seldom" 16%, "Never" 10%. PNPu students' answers are "Yes, always" 10.8%, "Yes, sometimes" 52.5%, "Difficult to answer" 8.3%, "Seldom" 15.8%, "Never" 12.5%.

We see the vast majority of students are willing to discuss their thoughts with teachers. Again, this indicates the students' motivation to deepen their knowledge in their chosen profession.

When asked about the optimal number of assignments for independent work (the suggested options are 1-5, 1-3, 5-10, depending on the specific discipline), students noted that the number of tasks should depend on the specific discipline: PNPu=44.2%, and BGKU=60%.

The next block of questions was about the students' knowledge assessment system and their awareness of the points accumulation system.

When asked "Are you well aware of the requirements for assessing your knowledge?" most students at both universities indicated that they were aware or more knowledgeable than not: PNPu=36.5% and 40.8%; BGKU =42% and 50%. Only 8.5% at PNPu were unable to

answer this question confidently and 13% of students were not fully aware of the assessment system (such answers were obtained mainly from 1st year students). At BGKU, the situation was completely different: 6% of students could not confidently answer this question and 2% of students were not completely familiar with the assessment system.

The results of the students' answers to the question "Which form of examination is more convenient for you?" are presented below. BGKU students' answers are: "Written exam with encrypted answers" 28%, "Oral" 15%, "Exam in the form of a test" 32%, "Mixed form (oral, written, test)" 25%. PNPu students' answers are: "Written exam with encrypted answers" 15.8%, "Oral" 20.8%, "Exam in the form of a test" 50%, "Mixed form (oral, written, test)" 13.3%.

As we can see, the students' opinions about the exam's form at both universities are very different. However, students from both universities prefer the exam in the form of a test.

The next question concerned the form of credit. This question was extremely important to us because it did not concern students as much as clarifying the adherence of teachers to rules of student knowledge assessment. In Ukraine, the credit is given to students on the results of work during the semester. That is, students do not make it separately in any form. So, according to a student survey, we found at PNPu, in 26.7% of cases, the same score as the exam, and at BGKU, only in 7% of cases. The vast majority of students at BGKU (48%) indicated that they did not score, but did receive scores on their work during the course. At PNPu, students receive credit for 27.5% of their course work. These results encourage us to work with the teaching staff of both universities to meet the requirements of an objective assessment of students' knowledge.

In this block, is significant the question: whether it is important for students what grade they will receive on credit or exam. The students' answers were as follows: in PNPu and BGKU, 84% and 51% answered "yes, unequivocally", 25.8% and 25% "not very important", 4.2% and 1% answered "it doesn't matter, I just want to get a diploma". This distribution of students' responses indicates their motivation for learning.

The next question of the questionnaire was to find out the situation with the implementation of practically oriented learning, that is, the students' satisfaction with the ratio of lecture and practical classes. The students' answers are: BGKU "The same number of lectures and

practical classes” 55%, “Fewer lectures and more practical classes” 28%, “One lecture and only practical classes” 4%, “More lectures and less practical classes” 11%. PNPu “The same number of lectures and practical classes” 55.8%, “Fewer lectures and more practical classes” 15.8%, “One lecture and only practical classes” 1.7%, “More lectures and less practical classes” 26.7%.

We observe that the overwhelming majority of students believe that the ratio of lectures and practical classes should be identical. But 26.7% of students at PNPu say that the number of lectures should outweigh the practical ones.

The last block of students’ survey concerned their motivation for choosing a university for higher education.

The results to the question “Who made the choice of specialty and educational institution at admission?” show that BGKU students’ answers are: “I made the choice myself” 55%, “My parents elected” 0, “Elected with parents” 25%, “I choose where I can enter on my certificates” 8%, “Filed as a fallback and entered” 11%, “Other” 1%. PNPu students’ answers are: “I made the choice myself” 53.3%, “My parents elected” 2.5%, “Elected with parents” 28.3%, “I choose where I can enter on my certificates” 8.3%, “Filed as a fallback and entered” 6.7%, “Other” 0.8%.

We see that the overwhelming majority made their own choices or at the advice of their parents.

The students’ answers to the question “Are you satisfied with the choice of the educational institution as a whole?” show that the BGKU’s students answered: “yes” 51%, “rather yes than no” 25%, “I don’t know” 11%, “more likely no than yes” 12%, “no” 1%; and the PNPu’s students answered: “yes” 43.3%, “rather yes than no” 35.8%, “I don’t know” 9.2%, “more likely no than yes” 6.7%, “no” 5%.

From the students’ answers it can be seen that the vast majority of students at both universities are satisfied with the choice of higher education institution. However, we also have a small percentage of students who are not completely or completely dissatisfied with the choice of educational institution, which is quite natural in the process of getting a higher education.

To determine the validity of the survey results it was applied the χ^2 test. The results are presented below.

Indicate how easy it is for you to perceive the course material (scale 1 to 5).

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 11.629

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.021$

Do you consider the knowledge gained in the lessons relevant (useful) to you?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 3.812

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.433$

Do you have the desire to further your own knowledge of the subjects you study at the university?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 0.578

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.966$

Are you well aware of the requirements for assessing your knowledge?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 4.428

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.352$

Do you have enough opportunities to express your thoughts in class?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 1.382

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.848$

Do you want to discuss your ideas with your teacher?

The number of degrees of freedom is 3

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 117.224

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.01$ is 11.345

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.01$

Significance level $p = 0,001$

How many independent work tasks are best for you?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 11.419

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.023$

Which form of exam is more convenient for you?

The number of degrees of freedom is 3

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 13.010

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.01$ is 11.345

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.01$

Significance level $p = 0.005$

In what form you compose credits?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 69.755

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.01$ is 13.277

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.01$

Significance level $p = 0.05$

What is the ratio of lectures and practicals that is best for successful mastering of the material?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 5.050

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 7.81

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.169$

Who made the choice of specialty and educational institution at admission?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 14.125

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.01$ is 13.277

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.01$

Significance level $p = 0.007$

Are you satisfied with the choice of the educational institution as a whole?

The number of degrees of freedom is 5

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 3.964

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 11.07

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level - Not significant

Does it matter to you what grade you get on the credit/exam?

The number of degrees of freedom is 4

The value of the χ^2 criterion is 7.389

The critical value of χ^2 at a significance level of $p = 0.05$ is 9.488

The relationship between factor and effective traits is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < 0.05$

Significance level $p = 0.117$

The answers to the final question “What should be corrected in the organization of the educational process?” mainly serve to further work on improving the quality of educational services and working with the management and teaching staff of both universities. However, it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of students indicated that the organization of the educational process at both universities is quite satisfactory and no radical changes should be made.

CONCLUSIONS

The research can serve as an objective information base for understanding the student standard on the quality of educational services provided by the university. The results of the study allow us to further adjust the educational and organizational activities of the higher education institutions regarding students’ satisfaction as recipients of educational services. Such results allow us to take into account the needs and interests of students, the dynamics of their value attitudes and orientations in the process of getting higher education. The results of the validation of the answers given by the χ^2 test showed that the results are relevant and have some differences, depending on the students’ place of study.

On the basis of the conducted research, it is planned to develop practical recommendations that aim at improving the organization of the educational process.

The information obtained gives a scientifically sound picture of the quality of the provision of educational services in higher education institutions as a whole, and shows specific gaps for identifying problematic areas of its activity for further improvement at different levels of management.

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