

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF A MASTER'S PROGRAM COURSE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Student satisfaction can be measured using the concept of disconfirmation. Disconfirmation is the difference between the expectations concerning a service. Using regression analysis and the concept of disconfirmation, easily interpretable graphical displays can be produced to identify areas that are important to student satisfaction. This article illustrates that there are some components (dimensions) related to courses which have a positive impact on student satisfaction.

1. Introduction

In recent years the universities in Romania, whether private or state owned, are facing an increasingly competitive environment. Among the factors contributing to these environmental changes we may include: the modification of the demographic structure, the major socio-economic change, the development of new communications and information technologies, an increased involvement of the civil society in the public debates regarding the role and the purpose of education generated by the society, the pressures exercised by the society aimed at making the education system more accountable and effective and, not least, the demand for the creation of different professions or specialities. In our opinion, these factors generate a new reality for the Romanian universities and for the higher education system.

Moreover, important changes taking place in the space of the Romanian education system reflect several aspects, such as: increased gradual system internationalization, increasing competition and also the establishment of connections between different universities or other public or private organizations.

These changes, taken together with the concerns and the public debate on the functionality and performance of the higher education institutions, the increased societal expectations regarding the performance of these institutions and the increased demands of the various users of these services, contributed to the growth of the worries that demanded the improvement of the education quality, including the improvement of the quality of teaching and of all related services provided by these institutions.

Besides that, the concern for the improvement of services offered by universities, have resulted in the analysis of two important issues, namely: quality and satisfaction. Recently, the Romanian universities manifested the tendency to implement management systems that aim to improve service quality and increase users' satisfaction. Therefore, given the decreasing size of the potential student market, the availability of public or private educational alternatives, the increased mobility of students population, we can certainly say that the analysis and studies related to the overall effect of customer satisfaction are vital and important to university survival and its adaptation to new requirements imposed by the market.

On the other hand, in the present context, the higher education institutions in Romania are meeting new requirements and demands, which reflect not only the changes in society but also the tasks and traditional duties of universities. In this respect, the new tasks and duties of universities include those related to the development of research and field innovation, and those related to the development of a body of professionals who continually rely on these institutions to develop and update their specialized knowledge, in a sense this body of professionals representing a new type of students with special needs. Finally, universities are required to be able to update and upgrade the education level of different categories of people (meaning developing knowledge and skills among disadvantaged groups of population or minority population).

The fundamental aim of the paper is to determine, based on the measurement of MPA student satisfaction, which are the components (dimensions) and subcomponents that affect satisfaction related to the students' MA courses, namely which of these components and subcomponents need to be improved to increase the satisfaction and excitement regarding the courses.

Based on the analysis of disconfirmation of master students' expectations, the present study intends to do an exploratory analysis which will reveal an overall picture of how the courses are appreciated in terms of quality, highlighting the issues to be improved or which lead to the increase in satisfaction and enthusiasm. Finally, the paper tries to stress out the consequences and impact that students' satisfaction has on the level of perceived quality of courses and the image of these courses among MPA students.

2. Quality in higher education

Although the idea of applying quality management or total quality management (TQM) in education or training process is not currently a new topic for higher education institutions, the interest in implementing a quality management system is still important. Moreover, according to the specialists (Sakthival and Rajendran, 2005) total quality management (TQM) is essential for higher education institutions, both to ensure that these institutions work and achieve higher performance and results, and that the services provided to customers (students) are of high quality (student satisfaction).

On the other hand, the assessment of quality of higher education institutions may target three main categories of people:

1. teachers who use student evaluations to get feedback on teaching in order to improve courses and teaching methods;
2. students who use assessment information in order to make an effective course choice;
3. management representatives can use the comparative approaches in human resource management.

In our opinion it is extremely difficult to study the concepts of quality and satisfaction and their relationship in such a highly complex field like higher education. This can be attributed to the fact that education as public service can only be provided by organizations such as multi-service organizations, which in addition to ensuring optimal training framework must also cover other requirements and needs of the consumers.

Regarding the definition of the concept of quality, the literature confirms there is a variety of such definitions and approaches. In this regard, in an attempt to define the concept of quality in higher education, Harvey and Green (1993) noted that there are many ways of defining this concept; the best definition is that the quality of higher education is linked to interest groups. According to the experts, the interest groups consist out of students, teachers, parents, the administrative staff of the universities but also political and business classes, bank or lending institutions, and even the entire community; each category has its own criteria and interests.

Although some authors consider the teaching effort to be the main determinant of teaching quality in higher education (Casanueva, Peribanez and Rufino, 1997), most authors recommend that quality analysis to be carried out in the light of the general experience that students have with regard to all services provided by universities (Hill, 1995; Joseph and Joseph, 1997; Kwan and Ng, 1999; Marzo-Navarro, Iglesias and Rivera Torres, 2005; Telford and Masson, 2005).

Therefore, we believe that the concept of quality in higher education should not be confined to analyzing the quality of the teaching, namely the perception of students regarding the teaching, but should also include other aspects, such as: related or auxiliary services to learning or training process (classrooms and workshops, access to libraries), access to scholarships or camping, access to the canteen and dormitory, discounts for participations to different cultural and social events, the behavior and politeness of the university staff.

It should be noted that the vast literature in the field of service quality analysis converges on two major trends:

1. The first trend considers that the clients or the services consumers are active participants in the process of providing these services.
2. The second trend considers that the perceived quality of service depends on customer expectations related to the provided service, namely the degree or level to which customer expectations are confirmed/disconfirmed by the provided service. This is particularly true for higher education. Moreover, certain tests for quality in higher education highlighted the fact that the values and expectations of students are strongly and positively associated with student participation and involvement (Claycomb, Lengnik-Hall and Inks, 2001) and customer satisfaction (Cermak, File and Price, 1994).

Furthermore, a series of studies have tried to highlight the essential aspects of constructing and finding operational definition for the concept of quality. In this regard, a number of studies have shown that there are multiple dimensions that comprise the concept of quality, without reaching a consensus on the number and content of these dimensions (Table 1).

Table 1: Dimensions of perceived quality in higher education

No.	Dimensions of perceived quality in higher education	Author
1.	Personal attitudes; explanatory competence; objective aspects of preparation and evaluation; seriousness; demands of effort.	Casanueva, Peribanez, and Rufino (1997)
2.	Schedule; academic reputation; physical/cost aspects; career opportunities; location; time; others.	Joseph and Joseph (1997)
3.	Personal contact with teaching staff; reputation; physical evidence; personal contact with the administrative personnel; curriculum; response capacity; ease of access.	LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997)
4.	Tangibility; reliability, security; empathy; response capacity	Li and Kaye (1998)

5.	Office has a professional appearance; staff dresses smartly; never too busy to help; opening hours are personally convenient.	Galloway (1998)
6.	Attitude; content; academic resources; competence.	Owlia and Kaye (1998)
7.	Service personnel; functional dimension of the teaching staff; technical dimension of the teaching staff; accessibility and teaching structure; tangibility; physical appearance of the service providers; other services.	Camisón, Gill and Roca (1999)
8.	Course content; facilities; evaluation; advising service; communication with the university; concern for students by the professors; social activities.	Kwan and Ng (1999)
9.	Essential elements (requisites); desirable (acceptable) elements; functional elements.	Oldfield and Baron (2000)
10.	Tangibility; security; reliability; empathy; response capacity.	Bigne, Moliner and Sánchez (2001)
11.	Attitudes and behavior of the teaching staff; competence of teaching staff; content of the study plan of the degree; facilities and equipment; teaching organization.	Campelleras and Viciano (2001)
12.	Commitment of the top management; course delivery; campus facilities; courtesy and respect, customer feedback and improvement.	Sakthivel and Rajendran (2005)
13.	Course design; course marketing; student recruitment; induction; course delivery, course content, assessment and monitoring, miscellaneous, tangibles.	Telford and Masson (2005)
14.	Teaching ability of staff; subject expertise of staff; IT facilities, supplementary lecture materials; tutorials; consistency of teaching quality; approachability of teaching staff.	Douglas and Barnes (2006)
15.	Functionality, socializing, motivation, friendliness, responsiveness, communication, access, management, team work, attitude, communication, tangibles, reliability, flexibility, aesthetics, comfort, competence, courtesy, security, commitment, credibility/integrity.	Douglas, McClelland and Davies (2008)
16.	Curriculum; educational effectiveness; material endowments and facilities.	Raboca and Solomon (2009)

3. Higher education client satisfaction

For over a decade, universities worldwide are concerned about quality assessment of both the universities and programs of study. However, in the quality assessment process, a large number of universities ignore quality assessment in terms of the beneficiaries of educational services (consumers), namely in terms of their own customers.

One of the principles aimed at quality, now generally accepted by experts in evaluation, refers to the fact that any qualitative assessment or any attempt or initiative to improve education or training process involves, in general, an assessment of the beneficiaries of these services (particularly students), beneficiaries which are entitled to be recognized as customers of these services (Turner, 1995). Moreover, some experts began to recognize that higher education is essentially a service industry, and therefore emphasis should be put on meeting customer requirements and needs, especially the students'.

We believe unequivocally that for university it is justified and legal, that the quality of services provided by them should be tested, monitored, and evaluated through the beneficiaries of these services, namely their students.

The proof of the importance of customer satisfaction measurement lies in the number of countries using this type of measurement in the evaluation of the quality of teaching and universities. In this respect, it is to be noted that evaluation of teaching by students, in many countries with a well developed system of higher education, has become the main tool for assessing the quality of university education or higher education system, used at the same time, as the main medium of communication towards the students and the public.

Literature review on faculty students' evaluation reveal both positive and negative site of evaluation. On the positive side, we could argue that student evaluations of teacher or faculty are highly reliable, moderately valid, and more important for assisting the teachers in improving subsequently the methods of instruction. Available empirical evidence suggests that student ratings can lead to changes in course delivery and thus more favorable student evaluations (McKeachie, 1997). Other articles conclude that student ratings are acceptably reliable and valid indicators of teaching effectiveness that can lead to modest improvements in teaching (Branskamp and Ory, 1994).

On the other hand, critics argue that student evaluations of teachers or faculty: (1) are biased because students tend to give higher ratings when they expect higher grades in the course; (2) encourage teachers to dumb down courses to keep students happy at all costs; (3) ratings are often influenced by the cosmetic factors that have no effect on student learning; (4) are a threat to academic freedom in the sense that teachers may feel inhibited from discussing controversial ideas and presenting challenging questions to students. Furthermore, some specialists ask themselves "why teacher effectiveness is defined in terms of "student satisfaction" and why are faculties so willing to trust judgment made by student in areas beyond their competence to judge?" (Gray and Bergman, 2005, p. 45). Therefore, we believe that it is much suitable not to use student ratings as only measure of teaching effectiveness as they do not provide evidence in all areas relevant to teachers' effectiveness.

While there is an extensive literature related to the concept of customer satisfaction, there aren't too many studies and surveys regarding customer satisfaction of higher education system. It should also be noted that most studies related to universities' customer satisfaction focus primarily on student satisfaction analysis related to the main service offered by these institutions - educational services (Table 2), without taking into account other aspects or additional services offered by universities.

From the conceptual point of view, as compared to the concept of quality, the concept of customer satisfaction is more complex and difficult to define (Raboca, 2008). This applies fully to higher education systems as well, namely to universities. Moreover, in case of universities, experts consider that the concept of customer satisfaction has a multidimensional nature (Table 2) bearing an interdisciplinary approach, aspect which generates lack of consensus regarding the definition of customer satisfaction for this activity sector (Hartman and Schmidt, 1995; Raboca and Solomon, 2009).

Table 2: Dimensions of satisfaction regarding the higher education service

No.	Dimensions of client satisfaction	Author
1.	Library services; computer service; dining facilities; housing service; course organization and assessment; teaching staff and teaching style; teaching methods; student workload and assessment; social life; self-development; financial conditions aid; university environment.	Harvey (1995)
2.	Library services; computing facilities; catering service; accommodation service; personal contact with the academic staff; teaching methods, teaching quality, student involvement; work experience; financial services; feedback, joint consultation; university bookshop; counseling welfare; career service, health service; students' union; physical education; travel agency.	Hill (1995)
3.	College/personal tutor system; good food at reasonable prices; communication/publicity rights in student union; training opportunities for students serving on committees; feedback opportunities regarding the course and service through questionnaires.	Aldrige and Rowley (1998)
4.	Clarity of professor's teaching; professor's enthusiasm; encouragement of participation in class by professor; utility and interest of reading assignments and the recommended bibliography; professor punctuality.	Cardone, Lado and Rivera (2001)
5.	Academic advising; effectiveness, campus climate; campus life; campus support services; concern for the individual, instructional effectiveness; recruitment and financial aid effectiveness; registration effectiveness; campus safety and security, service excellence; student centeredness.	Elliot and Healy (2001)
6.	Teaching; support facilities; physical facilities; social climate; leisure activities.	Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Groggaard (2002)
7.	Learning and career; reputation and facilities of the university; availability and sympathy of staff.	Raposo and Alves (2003)
8.	University's facilities; availability of computers; good teaching reputation; quality of public transport in the town/city; friendly attitude towards students.	Price, Matzdorf, Smith and Agahi, (2003)
9.	Facilities; teaching staff; teaching methods; environment; enrollment; support service.	Marzo-Navarro, Iglesias, Rivera Torres (2005)
10.	Core service (lecture, tutorial, classroom delivery, class note and materials); physical facilities; teaching and learning experience; teaching staff response to students.	Douglas and Barnes (2006)
11.	Placement; leisure time; accommodation, international relations; language course; on-line exam booking; scholarship, counseling; internship; educational offer; internet access; tutorial; administrative services; contacts either staff/professors; libraries; teaching equipment; lecture halls and laboratories.	Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, Romanazzi (2006)
12.	Fairness of the teacher's grading procedures, teacher communication, course content, effectiveness.	Parayitam, Desai and Phelps (2007)
13.	Knowledge level regarding academic experience, academic advisor, residential life, campus life, personnel and development opportunities, resource and student service.	Nasser, Khoury and Abouchaidt (2008)

Banwet and Datta (2003) found that satisfied students were loyal and they were likely to attend another lecture delivered by the same lecturer or opt for another module or course taught by the same professor. This is supported by the research done by Douglas and Barnes (2006) who found that students “vote with their feet”,

based on their experiences in lectures and are more likely to enroll on an optional module delivered by a teacher perceived as providing good teaching. In the same time, regarding the factors which cause dissatisfaction, Cole (2002) found that student satisfaction decreases when classes are larger in early cohorts, and when students are taking compulsory core modules rather than optional modules.

Krehbiel, McClure and Pratsini (1997), suggested that improvement of service quality requires the goals of satisfying and delighting the customer. The term delighting, in economic and marketing senses, could be defined as the most extreme form of satisfaction, or positive and good surprise. In general, delight produces customer actions that are more positive (i.e. repurchase and referral) than those resulting from mere satisfaction. In the same time, the specialists believed that satisfaction and delight are both determined by customers' satisfaction (Raboca, 2008). For instance, if the expectations of students are met, then students are satisfied. Once the student is satisfied and the service provides a positive or good surprise, or additional positive benefits, the customer may be delighted.

In the same time, in the service sectors, and this is available for university, the main predictor of customer satisfaction is the difference between perceived and expected service quality. This difference is known as "the process of disconfirmation" (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993; Vavra, 1997).

If the perceived quality is much worse than the expected one, negative disconfirmation takes place and results in customer dissatisfaction. If perceived quality is about as expected, no disconfirmation (i.e., confirmation) takes place and the customer is satisfied. In the same time, if perceived quality is much better than expected, positive disconfirmation takes place and is usually associated with customer delight.

4. Research methodology

To examine the issues influencing student satisfaction related to the courses in the MA program, we conducted a survey among the first year students of the master's program in Public Administration offered by the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. In this regard, all students from the MPA first year (67 subjects) were asked using a questionnaire to express their satisfaction on the course "Methods and techniques of sociological research" – currently binding for all students of this program.

We started from considering that the students' experience related to the course consists of a set of components (dimensions), components which in turn consist of a set of subcomponents; we found that overall satisfaction related to these courses is based, as components, on three key dimensions related to (Table 3): (1) professor (performance, professionalism); (2) course content; (3) assessment (the assessment of students). Also, each of these three dimensions, in turn, is built on a set of subcomponents (Table 3).

Table 3: Components and subcomponents of course quality

Components/subcomponents
1. Teacher performance
• Level of knowledge
• Knowledge structure of the course
• Equitable attitude of the teacher
• Kindness of the teacher
• The teacher's ability to make the course interesting
• Teacher enthusiasm
• Teacher availability to students
• Teacher punctuality
2. Content of the course
• The course content contributes to the formation of future specialists (relevance of knowledge for student training)
• Concordance between course content (themes and subjects approached) and course purpose
• Clarity and simplicity of explanation in the textbook
• Relevance of examples given in the course
• Volume of themes and subjects approached by the course (volume of knowledge)
• Relevance of bibliography and required texts
• Volume of bibliography required
• Access to bibliography required
3. Student evaluation
• Method of course knowledge evaluation (course relevance)
• Method of examination
• Clarity of examination subjects (of test)
• Level of exam difficulty (of test)
• Volume of course subjects covered by the exam
• Equitableness of student evaluation
• Time for communicating the exam grades
• Manner of communicating the exam grades
4. Level of general satisfaction related to course

Therefore, in what concerns the questionnaire, it was structured in terms of components and subcomponents of quality, satisfaction and course image rates among students. Thus, students had to express the degree of overall satisfaction regarding the course in general and regarding the components and subcomponents

of operationalizing (construction) and of course image. It should also be noted that satisfaction levels were probed using a scale of disconfirmation. The disconfirmation scale (of expectations) used was chosen based on the fact that many studies related to customer satisfaction recommend using this type of scale (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988), the authors opted for an ordinal scale of three levels: (1) well below my expectations; (2) my expectations; (3) over my expectations.

However, probing the course image rate (Table 4) among master program students was done using three questions about course image among students and using a Likert scale of three level type: (1) total disagree; (2) nor agree nor disagree; (3) totally agree.

Table 4: Components and subcomponents of course image

Components/subcomponents
Course image among students in the MA program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to say something positive or good about the course
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to recommend this course to friends or colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to choose this course again

Regarding the image, it should be noted that, in general, there are studies showing that there is a link between customer satisfaction and image of product or service offered by governmental organizations. In this respect, a positive level of image of the product or service provided attracts new clients or consumers (Raboca, 2008).

As to the methods of analysis used for the intended purposes the authors have turned to methods of statistical analysis based on regression analysis to identify the components and subcomponents which determine and have a significant impact on student satisfaction. A change and recoding of observable variables in dummy variables (variables 0/1) was made for both independent variables and dependent variables, by changing the scale (Table 5).

Table 5: Dummy variable coding for the level of disconfirmation

Response	Dummy variables (0/1)
Level of disconfirmation	Satisfied
Much better than expected	1
About as expected	1
Much worse than expected	0

The recoding of the variable into dummy type variables (variables 0/1) illustrates the fact that the concept and philosophy according to which customers (students) whose expectations are met or exceeded by the services which they turned to, tend to be satisfied. More than that, we believe that when customer expectations are exceeded by the service, they will not only be satisfied but will be delighted as well.

This coding assumes that a customer cannot be delighted until satisfied. Giving a customer something beyond his or her expectations will not delight the customer unless basic expectations are met. Customers who perceive the level of service to be less than their expectations are neither satisfied nor delighted, and thus are labeled dissatisfied. Customer satisfaction and customer delight were analyzed separately. To analyze customer satisfaction we considered only half of the 0/1 dummy variables, especially those relating to satisfaction. A multiple regression analysis was performed using overall course satisfaction as dependent variable and using the 3 component of satisfaction variable (professor, content, evaluation) as independent variables. This regression identifies the important components and describes the relationships between each of the components and overall course satisfaction.

5. Results

A) Student satisfaction regarding the MPA course

The responses were first analyzed for student satisfaction with the course. In Table 6 we present the results of the regression analysis. The magnitude of the estimated beta coefficient was used to judge the importance of the component.

Table 6: Regression analysis regarding satisfaction of MA students with MA courses (Coefficients^a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF			
(Constant)	-.061	.055		-1.11	.269				
Satisfaction regarding the teachers (F1)	.573	.109	.568	5.27	.000	2.654			
Satisfaction regarding the courses (F2)	.232	.104	.224	2.22	.030	2.317			
Satisfaction regarding the student assessment (F3)	.164	.083	.161	1.96	.054	1.533			
a. Dependent Variable: General Satisfaction of MA students with MA courses									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.856 ^a	.733	.720	.26635	.733	55.859	3	61	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Satis. Student Assessment (F3), Satis. Courses (F2), Satis. Teachers (F1)									

As one can notice, the research results show that the overall satisfaction of master students with the courses offered depends on or is influenced by three factors, the most important factors being the dimensions of “teachers” and “course” (Table 6).

Taking into account the value of R^2 (0.72), we may say that the model built on this regression analysis can be considered a good enough explanation of the phenomenon of overall satisfaction of students regarding the courses.

Also to highlight the factors that influence students' satisfaction regarding the master program professors (F1), courses (F2) and student assessment (F3) we have turned again to regression analysis.

In this regard, the analysis results show the following aspects:

1) Related to the students' satisfaction with the master professors, data analysis show that there are three factors (dimensions, subcomponents) that influence this satisfaction.

Table 7: Regression analysis regarding the student satisfaction related to teachers (Coefficients^a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.08	.092		-.917	.363
Level of teacher knowledge (A1)	.44	.097	.415	4.553	.000
Teacher methods for explaining the course (A2)	.33	.102	.312	3.250	.002
Teacher kindness (A3)	.34	.112	.311	3.089	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction of master students with the teacher

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.737 ^a	.544	.521	.34524	.544	24.241	3	61	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher kindness, Level of teacher knowledge, Teacher methods for explaining the course

In this respect, according to the results of the analysis (Table 7), we can say that the satisfaction of students enrolled in the master program with their teachers is influenced by:

- (1) The knowledge level that the teacher has (A1);
- (2) The way the teacher explains the matter (A2);
- (3) The kindness the teacher shows (A3).

2) Related to the satisfaction of students regarding the courses, data analysis show that we can speak of two factors influencing this type of satisfaction (Table 8).

In this regard, based on the results of regression analysis, we can say that students satisfaction related to the course depends both on:

- (1) Relevance of matter taught to students for their training as specialists (B1);
- (2) Volume of issues and topics covered by the course (B2).

Table 8: Regression analysis regarding student satisfaction related to courses (Coefficients^a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.			
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
(Constant)	.087	.065		1.34	.183			
Relevance of knowledge to students future specialization (B1)	.815	.063	.840	12.93	.000			
Subjects covered by the course (B2)	.130	.069	.122	1.88	.055			
a. Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction of master students with the courses								
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.861 ^a	.741	.733	.25127	.741	88.887	2	62	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Relevance of knowledge to students future specialization (B1), Subjects covered by the course (B2)								

3) Related to the satisfaction of students regarding their evaluation, data analysis show that we can speak of four factors influencing this type of satisfaction (Table 9).

Table 9: Regression analysis regarding student satisfaction related to evaluation (Coefficients^a)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.			
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
(Constant)	-.128	.073		-1.76	.083			
Methods for evaluating the students (exam management)	.321	.097	.288	3.30	.002			
Clarity of exam subjects	.449	.086	.403	5.19	.000			
Difficulty of exam subjects	.244	.085	.230	2.86	.006			
Equitableness of exam evaluation	.276	.084	.279	3.29	.002			
a. Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction of master students with their evaluation								
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.823 ^a	.677	.656	.28961	.677	31.497	4	60	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Methods for evaluating the students (exam management), Clarity of exam subjects, Difficulty of exam subjects, Equitableness of exam evaluation								

According to the regression data analysis, the satisfaction of students related to the assessment of their knowledge depends on both the organization and carrying

out of the exam but also on the clarity of exam topics, and not least on the equitable assessment of the student.

B) Relation among course quality and master program student satisfaction

In order to highlight the relationship between overall satisfaction of students and the perceived quality of courses, the authors have resorted to an analysis of correlation between the two elements.

The results of the correlation analysis (Table 10) show that there is a relatively strong and significant link between the two aspects mentioned above.

Therefore, we can say, based on the correlation analysis, that the overall level of satisfaction related to the courses of the master program may be considered an extremely accurate indicator of the level of perceived quality of these courses.

Table 10: Correlation coefficients between overall satisfactions of students and course quality

		Overall satisfaction of master students with the courses	Courses quality level
Overall satisfaction of master students with the courses	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.760**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	65.000	65
Courses quality level	Pearson Correlation	.760**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	65	65.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

C) Course image among the students enrolled in the master program

The survey data reveal two important issues related to aspects regarding course image among students. Firstly, the results of the survey reveal that the image is a complex multidimensional concept which has to be measured in a multidimensional manner (Table 11).

In this respect, the results of statistical analysis of survey data regression equation show that course image among master students can be measured in terms of two dimensions related to:

- (1) Willingness to say something positive about the courses of the master program;
- (2) Willingness to recommend the master classes to friends and colleagues;
- (3) Desire to choose this course again.

Table 11: Dimensions of measuring of course image concept (regression coefficients)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.019	.116		.166	.869
Willingness to speak positively about the course (1)	.278	.083	.302	3.33	.001
Willingness to recommend this course to friends and colleagues (2)	.411	.093	.434	4.43	.000
Desire to choose this course again (3)	.237	.069	.273	3.44	.001
a. Dependent Variable: Course image in students' eyes					

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
				R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
.857 ^a	.734	.721	.294	.734	56.068	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Willingness to speak positively about the course (1), Willingness to recommend this course to friends and colleagues (2), Desire to choose this course again (3)						

Secondly, starting from the statistical analysis of correlation, the results reveal that between the overall satisfaction of master students related to courses and the image of these courses among the students there is a significant and strong link.

Table 12: Correlation coefficients between overall satisfaction of students and course image

		Level of satisfaction with the course	Image of the course among students
Level of satisfaction with the course	Pearson Correlation	1,000	,764*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,034
	N	65,000	65,000
Image of the course among students	Pearson Correlation	,764*	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,034	
	N	65,000	65,000
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

6. Conclusions

Using the survey data analysis undertaken and the results reached, the paper highlights a number of aspects regarding the quality of the master's programs courses in general and in particular the MA in Public Administration offered by the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca.

Firstly, by highlighting the link between the perceived quality and satisfaction rates of the master students on these courses, we can say that generally, the quality of the courses mentioned above can be measured and evidenced by the measurement of student satisfaction. This is, in fact, in our view, the underlying reason that suggests the massive and intensive use of measurements related to student satisfaction in universities.

Secondly, we can conclude that the overall satisfaction of students with the courses offered is a complex and multidimensional concept that can best be shown through three main factors or components (dimensions), the most important factor being the one related to the "teachers" (Table 6). Besides that, we can say that each of the three factors in turn depend on a number of other factors (the subcomponents).

Thirdly, we can conclude that students' satisfaction with teachers is mainly influenced by the knowledge that the latter hold, how they explain the matter of the course or by the kindness they show (Table 7).

Fourthly, construction of the component related to "course" depends primarily on two main subcomponents, namely the level or degree of relevance of knowledge for the training of students as specialists, and the volume of themes and topics being covered by the course (Table 8).

Fifthly, we can say that the satisfaction with the evaluation component depends on the following major subcomponents: the organization and administration of the exam, the clarity of exam topics, and not least the equitable assessment done by the teacher.

Finally, based on the results of the study we can conclude that there is a significant and strong correlation between the satisfaction with master courses and image of these courses among students. Thus, based on this link we can further infer that one way to improve course image in the eyes of students is to increase their level of satisfaction regarding these courses.

Our final conclusion in relation to this research is that students must be regarded and treated by the university like "customers" and not as mere "resources" which are necessary for these institutions. Student satisfaction should be a major concern for all universities due to its impact on both improvement of services provided by universities (especially the quality of courses or educational process) and on improvement of image the students have. In this respect, we believe that improved quality and course image can only be made by identifying and improving those components or subcomponents that are important in achieving student satisfaction regarding these courses.

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