

Systematic Literature Review on Service Quality in Business Schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a systematic literature review on student satisfaction as part of service quality assurance in business schools. The literature review is mainly focused on the constructs and variables used to measure student satisfaction in higher education, specifically in business schools. The main findings show that most of the papers on student satisfaction in universities are based on internal factors of the institutions, such as classes and curriculum, academic staff and teaching, advising support and skills development. There is an increasing stream of papers in which external factors such as preparation for the future, services and facilities, social integration, and student centeredness are included when student satisfaction is evaluated, while very few papers are focused on pre-enrolment factors, school image and research and development, which require further research. Some gaps need to be addressed. First, a proposal to specify the dimensions of service quality assurance factors at an international scale is presented. Second, the relations among different factors should be analysed. Finally, new factors should be considered among the measures of students' satisfaction in their choice of business school.

KEYWORDS

Service quality assurance, business schools, business education, student satisfaction, excellence in higher education.

1. Introduction

In recent years, many papers have highlighted that service quality is crucial in higher education institutions (Urgel, 2007; Marimon, 2019). Nevertheless, differences exist in the variables that measure the service quality of public and private universities and business schools (Mai, 2005). Service quality assurance measures the academic experience of higher education students in academic programmes and higher education institutions. Student feedback provides institutions with data to analyse the institutions' performance and progress, make comparisons with similar programmes and institutions, establish actions for future enrolments, and design new programmes, among other applications (Douglas et al. 2006; Teeroovengadum et al. 2016).

The academic experience mainly relates to the satisfaction of students with their teachers and classes. Academic experience is also an overall level of satisfaction that encompasses other aspects of a university, such as services and facilities, advising support, administrative practices, and the staff and social environment (leblanc and Nyugen, 1997, Sohail and Shaik, 2004; DeShields et al. 2005). In the case of business students, other factors related to the acquisition of specific skills, employability, internship opportunities and the corporate connections of the business school are taken into account when such students assess the business school to which they belong (Browne et al. 1998; Debnath 2005; Mai, 2005; Lagrosen, 2017).

Business schools have an important role in the competitiveness of both large firms and small and medium-sized enterprises (Al-Mutawah et al. 2009; Samuel et al, 2011). Urgel (2007) stated that business schools, with their continuously increasing numbers, need to follow quality standards if the excellence of these institutions is to continue advancing in service quality assurance systems. Lagrosen (2017) added that service quality assurance for business schools needs to be developed under the values of quality management: namely, customer orientation, leadership commitment, participation by all, process orientation, continuous improvement, and management by fact.

Student satisfaction has a central place among quality indicators for higher education institutions as well as business schools (Gibson, 2010). Nevertheless, the changing environment and the differences between universities and business schools require the introduction of new measurement parameters for both student satisfaction and the new initiatives that are generated through them (Zhao and Ferran, 2016). A first step is to perform a literature review on the variables that drive service quality in business schools,

which will allow us to determine new approaches that address current challenges in the markets.

The paper is structured as follows. After this introduction, the second section explains the methodology used in the systematic review. Then, the third section continues with the analysis of the content of the selected papers, and the final section offers conclusions and implications for future research.

2. Methodology

A systematic review of service quality and student satisfaction is the methodology used in this research.

This methodology involves the carrying out of an overview of different scientific works based on a thematic review [27]. A systematic literature review is organized by a sequence of between 10 and 12 phases starting with the selection of keywords, classification of the selected papers according to different features and summarization of the main contributions of each paper found on the topic, among other steps (Greenhalgh, 1997; Pittaway et al., 2004; Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). The preparation of a systemic literature review has two parts (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012). In the first part, the protocol to follow and the importance of the papers for the topic of study are defined. In the second part, the gaps identified in the field of study are defined.

The systematic literature review presented here is divided into 2 steps and 2 phases that can be summarized as follows:

1. Paper search and selection

(a) Search for materials: This phase involves searching for keywords in the chosen database, in this case, Scopus.

(b) Selection: This phase involves elaborating the criteria for including papers and proceeding with the final selection.

2. Descriptive and content analysis of the selected papers

(a) Descriptive analysis: A description of the papers classified according to different perspectives (for example, publication year, methodology used, etc.) is provided.

(b) Content analysis: In this step, the papers are deeply read and reviewed to detect strengths and weaknesses, which will allow us to state the gaps and recommend future lines of research.

2.1. Search for materials

The papers are selected using the Scopus databases. The publication years for the search are 1990 to 2020. The keyword sets used are “service quality” or “student satisfaction” combined with “business school*” and “measur*”. The results are shown in Table 1. The search for student satisfaction and measures or measurements of student satisfaction delivered a total of 1459 papers. This search included student satisfaction in any field, not only in business education. For this reason, “business school” was also included as a keyword for the search. This yielded an enormous reduction in the number of papers, resulting in a total of 56 papers. As student satisfaction is part of service quality in higher education and business schools, a search for “service quality” and “business school*” revealed 35 papers. Then, a concrete search with the keywords “student satisfaction”, “measur*” and “business school*” was performed.

Keywords used	Total number of papers
	Date range from 1990 to 2020
“student satisfaction” AND “measure*”	1459
“student satisfaction” AND “business school*”	56
“service quality” AND “business school*”	35
“student satisfaction” AND “measure*” AND “business school*”	12

Table 1. Search for materials.

2.2. Selection of papers

To focus on the research outputs closest to the topic under investigation, two selection criteria for research papers were identified, as reported in Table 2.

Criterion	Definition
First criterion: focus of the abstracts	Abstracts focusing on service quality in business schools
Second criterion: focus of the papers	Papers including variables to measure student satisfaction in business schools as part of business school service quality

Table 2. Criteria for inclusion or exclusion of papers

The first criterion allowed us to select only those papers with abstracts dealing with the topic of service quality and measures of student satisfaction in the context of business schools. With this aim in mind, we analysed the abstracts of the selected papers following the criteria shown in Table 2. The first criterion was to include only those papers in which the abstract focuses on the service quality of business schools. The second criterion was to select those papers that include variables measuring student satisfaction in business schools. The resulting 22 papers were selected for the descriptive analysis.

2.3. Descriptive Analysis

The objective of the descriptive analysis is to provide a first analysis of the 22 selected papers on service quality and student satisfaction in business schools. Four different sections make up the descriptive analysis, focusing on different issues defined as follows:

1. Papers over time;
2. Papers across journals;
3. Papers by methodology; and
4. Papers by variables measuring service quality in business schools.

2.3.1. Papers over time

The distribution of papers over time in Figure 1 indicates that there are few publications on the topic of service quality and student satisfaction in business schools in the selected publication years. The production of papers is similar in terms of the number of papers produced, namely, between 1 and 2 per year or every two years. In 2005 and 2010, the number of papers was 3 and 4, respectively.

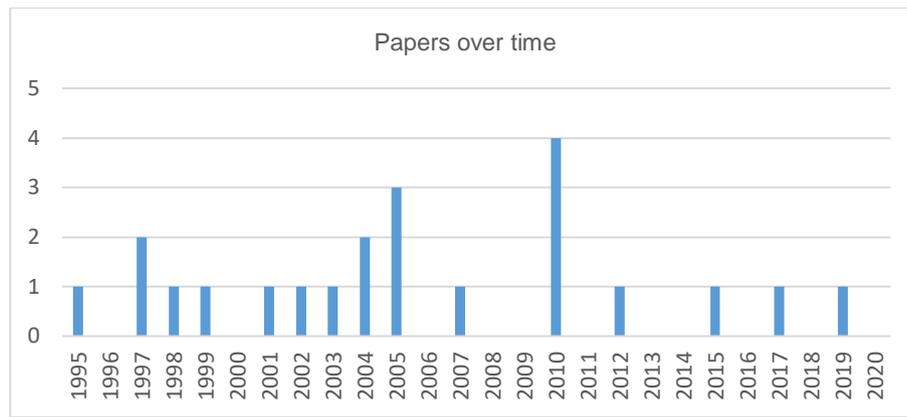


Figure 1. Paper distribution over time

2.3.2. Papers by Journal

The SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) and Journal of Citation Reports platforms were used to analyse the areas of the journals in which the selected papers were published. Eighteen journals were identified. There were three fields of research covered in the different journals: education, management and marketing.

Journal acronym	Journal Name	SCImago Journal Ranking
JHEPM	Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management	Q2
RHE	Research in Higher Education	Q1
JMHE	Journal of Marketing for Higher Education	Q2
TEM	Tertiary Education and Management	Q1
JEM	Journal of Educational Management	Q2
JCSR	Journal of College Student Retention	Q2
TQM Journal	Total Quality Management	Q2
JMD	Journal of Management Development	Q1
TRT	The Reading Teacher	Q1
IJEM	International Journal of Educational Management	Q2
JMM	Journal of Marketing Management	Q1
	DECISION	Q1

QAE	Quality Assurance in Education	Q2
RHEJ	Research in Higher Education Journal	Q1
TQMBE	Total Quality Management & Business Excellence	Q1
ET	Education + Training	Q2
IJQRM	International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management	Q1
IJQSS	International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences	Q1

Table 3. Paper distribution by journal.

Table 3 shows that most of the papers focus on service quality; papers measuring service quality and student satisfaction in business schools are mainly published in the field of education (10 journals), followed by management (6 journals) and marketing (2 journals).

2.3.3. Papers by methodology

The methodologies identified in the selected papers encompass quantitative, qualitative, conceptual, mixed and literature review methods, as shown in Figure 2.

Nineteen papers use a quantitative methodology, making this the most representative type of method used to study the topic of service quality and student satisfaction in higher education. Qualitative methodologies (1 paper) and conceptual papers (2 papers) or literature reviews (1 paper) are less common in the literature on this topic.

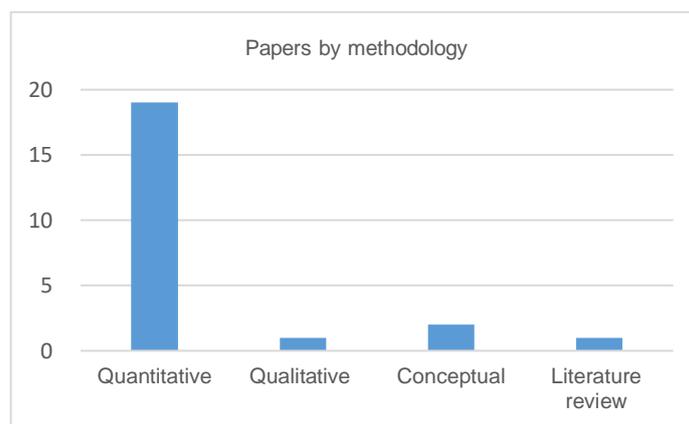


Figure 2. Paper distribution by methodology

The papers using quantitative methods are based on the SERVQUAL, EQUIS, AACD, AMBA, or EFQM quality standards frameworks and surveys adapted to previous service quality standards. TQM is the most commonly used approach. The surveys were distributed by email to higher education students. The only qualitative paper found presents the viewpoint of the European Foundation for Management Development's Director of Quality Services on the value of international accreditation. Two conceptual papers were identified. The first provides a critical analysis of the fundamental challenges facing business schools and their contributions in the areas of education, research, faculty management, and the role of business schools. The paper presents suggestions regarding what responsible management education for a sustainable world could and should look like. The second conducts a comparison of the standards of service quality of different accreditation models and the factors these models take into account in accrediting higher education institutions, including business schools. The literature review papers provide summaries of the major attributes of an educational programme that predict student satisfaction.

2.3.4. Papers by variable of measure

Papers were further classified according to the variables measuring service quality and student satisfaction in business schools. Papers were divided into 2 groups defined by whether they measure internal or external drivers of student satisfaction in business schools. The two sections are explained below.

1. Internal factors that impact student satisfaction. These internal factors include academic staff/teaching, classes/curriculum and advising support.
2. External factors that impact student satisfaction. The external variables are skills development, preparation for the future, services/facilities responsiveness/student-centredness, sustainability, image, pre-enrolment factors and research and development.

Internal factors	Variables of measurement	Papers	Papers
Academic staff/teaching	Quality of instruction Expertise and interest in subject Degree of caring Helpfulness Accessibility Provision of feedback	Borden (1995) Browne et al. (1998) Delaney (2001) DeShields et al. (2005) Elliot & Shin (2002) Elliot (2002-03)	Leblanc & Nguyen (1997)(1999) Mai (2005) Sohaiel & Shaikh (2004) Thomas & Galambos (2004) Tsinidou et al. (2010) Gibson (2010)
Classes/Curriculum	Overall design and delivery Usefulness Scheduling Content Availability Class size/logistics Level of difficulty	Borden (1995) Browne et al. (1998) Delaney (2001) DeShields et al. (2005) Elliot & Shin (2002) Elliot (2002-03) Gibson (2010)	Leblanc & Nguyen (1997) Mai (2005) Sohaiel & Shaikh (2004) Thomas & Galambos (2004) Tsinidou et al. (2010) Letcher & Neves (2010)
Advising support	Accessibility Reliability Professionalism Helpfulness Responsiveness Understanding	Borden (1995) DeShields et al. (2005) Elliot & Shin (2002) Thomas & Galambos (2004) Gibson (2010)	
External factors			
Skills development	Relationship skills Critical thinking Intellectual growth Social/moral awareness	Browne et al. (1998) DeShields et al. (2005) Thomas & Galambos (2004)	Marimon et al. (2019) Gibson (2010) Leblanc & Nguyen (1999)
Preparation for the future	Preparation for or advancement of career Expecting good job/quality of life Corporate connections Fulfilling expectations Employability	Borden (1995) Debnath et al. (2005) DeShields et al. (2005) Gibson (2010) Letcher & Neves (2010)	Mai (2005) Tsinidou et al. (2010) Leblanc & Nguyen (1999)

	Internship opportunities	Gault, Leach & Duey (2010)	
Service/Facilities/ Tangibles	Availability Access Physical aspects Usefulness IT support Library services	Borden (1995) Delaney (2001) Elliot & Shin (2002) Pariseau et al. (1997) Gibson (2010)	Leblanc & Nguyen (1997) Mai (2005) Sohaiel & Shaikh (2004) Thomas & Galambos (2004) Marimon et al. (2019) Tsinidou et al. (2010)
Sustainability	Opportunities to socialize Campus safety Sense of belonging Enjoyable experience Diversity of student body Location Contribution to community	Borden (1995) Thomas & Galambos (2004) Elliot & Shin (2002) Delaney (2001) Elliot (2002-03) Tsinidou et al. (2010) Urgel (2007) Dyllick (2015)	Leblanc & Nguyen (1999) Gibson (2010) Lagrosen (2017)
Responsiveness/ student- centredness	Responsiveness to student concerns/suggestions Helpfulness, empathy Academic support Financial aid	Borden (1995) Leblanc & Nguyen (1997) Sohaiel & Shaikh (2004) Letcher & Neves (2010)	Thomas & Galambos (2004) Pariseau et al. (1997) Elliot (2002-03) Gibson (2010)
Image	Brand Rankings	Urgel (2007) Jewett (2012)	Alves & Raposo (2007)
Pre-enrolment factors	Accuracy of information provided 1st, 2nd, 3rd choice Admissions and orientation Degree that met student expectations	Thomas & Galambos (2004) Gibson (2010)	
Research and development		Urgel (2007)	

Table 4. Papers by variable measured

Table 4 shows a classification of the selected papers with the variables taken into account for the analysis of student satisfaction. Some papers use similar names for the factors as those in the table. Regarding the internal factors, the most commonly measured variables are classes and curriculum (13 papers) and academic staff and teaching (12 papers), with fewer papers on the variable of advising support (5 papers). Related to external factors, the variable measured most often in the papers selected is services/facilities/tangibles (10 papers), followed by preparation for the future (8 papers), responsiveness/student-centredness (7 papers), skills development (5 papers), image (3 papers), pre-enrolment factors (1 paper) and research and development (1 paper).

Moreover, most of the selected papers contain more than one factor to measure student satisfaction with the service quality of the institution to which they belong. There are 6 papers that contain between 8 and 5 variables to measure student satisfaction, 10 papers including between 4 and 2 variables and 3 papers focusing only on one factor in student satisfaction. In these 3 papers, the analysis is on one external factor that comprises several variables. These external factors are preparation for the future and image. Furthermore, 2 papers consider research and development and pre-enrolment factors as inputs into student choices over a university or business school.

3. Content Analysis

The content analysis of the 22 selected papers revealed the detailed description in each paper of the factors and variables used to measure student satisfaction in higher education institutions. This description was based on combining the variables related to the internal and external and academic and non-academic factors that determine overall student satisfaction towards a business school. These factors and variables were outlined in the previous section.

Borden (1995) was the first study on the measurement of student satisfaction to appear in the search of the date range 1990 to 2020. In this work, the author performed a market segmentation analysis, comparing the results of student satisfaction based on 6 factors. These factors were academic teaching, overall satisfaction in classes, advising support, services, social integration and responsiveness to student concerns.

In Leblanc, G., & Nguyen, N. (1997), the dimensions used to assess student satisfaction regarding the quality of business schools were reputation, administrative staff, training curriculum, responsiveness, and physical aspects of and access to facilities. In a later

study from 1999, the same authors introduced a new classification of student satisfaction, grouping the satisfaction variables as different value perceptions among students. These values were classified as consumption value, name value, functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value and condition value. Browne et al. (1998) used measures of overall satisfaction, willingness to recommend the college, and satisfaction with the value received from the educational experience. The authors recommended studying the implications of the importance of student satisfaction for the current and augmented products of college services. Pariseau & McDaniel (1997) and Sadiq Sohail & Shaikh (2004) add several dimensions of service quality to the previous research, grouping them as guarantees, receptivity, empathy, trust and tangibility.

Daleny (2001) introduced campus social life as a factor to be included in service quality considerations. The results from the statistical analysis show campus social life as an area for improvement to help higher education institutions enhance student satisfaction. Regarding student life, Elliot (2002-2003) suggested in his findings that “student centeredness” and “instructional effectiveness” are crucial factors in determining students' level of satisfaction with their overall higher education experience.

Thomas and Galambos (2004) investigated how students' characteristics and experiences affect their satisfaction. Academic experiences are influential. In particular, faculty preparedness, which has a well-known relationship with student achievement, emerges as a principal determinant of satisfaction. Social integration and pre-enrolment opinions are also important. Campus services and facilities have limited effects, and students' demographic characteristics are not significant predictors. The results demonstrated that social integration has a greater effect on the satisfaction of students who are less academically engaged. Similarly, DeShields et al. (2005) found that the college experience is a key factor in student satisfaction. For this reason, administrators of higher education institutions are encouraged to apply customer-oriented principles such as those used by profit-making institutions.

Some authors introduced brand prestige in the assessment of student satisfaction with the provision of the business school service (Urgel, 2007; Gibson, 2010; Jewett, 2012). Urgel (2007) analysed the value added of three service quality areas for business schools: assessment of the quality of the school based on several criteria, enhanced brand recognition from being granted a distinctive accreditation label, and contributions to the actual improvement of the school. The results highlighted the importance of international

accreditation for business schools. Brand is part of the image of an institution, and it was tested by Alves and Raposo (2007) as the variable that most influences student satisfaction in higher education, followed by perceived value and quality.

Gibson (2010) classifies the factors reviewed in the literature as academic or non-academic. Academic factors include academic support and teaching, and non-academic factors include supportive counselling, skills development, preparation for the future, services/facilities, social integration, student-centredness/receptiveness and pre-enrolment factors. Variables related to employability and internship opportunities were also considered under the factor of preparation for the future in one assessment of students' satisfaction with their educational institution (Gault et al. 2010). The authors stated that average-performing interns were significantly more likely to receive full-time job offers than non-interns, and high-performing interns were more likely to receive higher starting salaries.

Tsinidou, Gerogiannis, and Fitsilis (2010) identified the quality determinants as academic staff, administrative services, library services, curriculum structure, location, facilities and career prospects. The authors ran an analytical hierarchical process to determine the relative importance of each factor.

A new factor was introduced by the doctoral thesis of Jewett (2012): brand and ranking. This factor has greater importance for the choice of business school than faculty qualifications, importance of mission, continuous quality improvement, and assessment. Focusing on the approach to surveying students, Elliot and Shin (2002) established an alternative approach to measuring overall student satisfaction using a multiple-item weighted gap score analysis and not a simple "yes" or "no" answer in surveys of students on their satisfaction with the institution. Student feedback also plays an important role in surveying. Debnath et al. (2005) considered feedback from students to be important to upgrading the quality of a management education system. In this vein, the structure of the feedback form is crucial in the decision-making process, as students do not know what is important to them in terms of teaching and learning.

More recently, Lagrosen (2017) analysed differences in students' satisfaction with three different standards for business schools: EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA. The work was based on the values of quality management as dimensions of service quality in business schools. These values are customer orientation, leadership, participation by all, process orientation, continuous improvement and management by fact. The study revealed that

accreditation models focus more on production than on people. Marimon et al. (2019) validated a scale to assess the quality of students' university experience based on three dimensions: curriculum, skills development, and services and facilities. The authors also analysed the impact of these dimensions on student satisfaction, finding that the 'curriculum' dimension has a greater impact on student satisfaction, although skills development and services and facilities are necessary to provide excellent service to students.

4. Conclusions and implications

Several factors and variables impacting student satisfaction in higher education have been studied over the past 20 years. The dimensions for measuring student satisfaction are based on the service quality assurance pursued by the institutions. Most of the studies are focused on higher education in general, with few focused specifically on business schools. This is the first gap identified in this study.

The dimensions underpinning student satisfaction identified in the literature are academic staff/teaching, classes/curriculum, advising support, skills development, preparation for the future, service/facilities/tangibles, social integration, student-centeredness/responsiveness, pre-enrolment factors, image and research and development. Each dimension is measured by a set of variables that depend on the authors. This indicates that there is no common framework or consensus on which variables to use to measure student satisfaction, which implies a subjective interpretation by the author/s of the paper. Nevertheless, these different points of view increase the set of variables used to measure student satisfaction and allow the set to be adapted to different institutions and cultures. This is the second gap identified by this literature review.

A third gap is related to the need for a deep study of the following dimensions and variables to measure student satisfaction. Pre-enrolment factors, employability and internship opportunities need to be taken into account when surveys on student satisfaction with higher education institutions are conducted (Gault et al., 2010). Image is measured mainly by brand (Urgel, 2007; Alves and Raposo, 2007; Jawett, 2012; Ali et al. 2016), and rankings are not included in this dimension. Sustainability (Dyllick, 2015; Garvare & Isaksson, 2016) is hardly analysed in the literature, despite being a variable that influences students' perceptions of and satisfaction with the quality of business

schools. Social sustainability is somewhat covered in the dimension of social integration, but a lack of environmental and economic sustainability is not considered in service quality assurance when student satisfaction is assessed. The dimension of research and development introduced by Urgel (2007) has not been defined with any measurement variable. In this dimension, many variables should be included, such as research courses, chairs, patents, advisory and consulting works, press impact, social media impact, etc. There is a lack of definition of the dimension of internalization, which is relevant for universities in general and for business schools in particular. The literature review suggests that non-academic factors are important in service quality assurance. Lagrosen (2017) considered it important to introduce values referring to the management quality of business schools, such as customer orientation, leadership commitment, participation of all, process orientation and continuous improvement. Muhsin et al. (2020) underlined the importance of good university governance as a factor in student satisfaction.

The fourth and last gap identified involves the methodology of the studies. Although most of the papers are quantitative, they are based on linear regressions that do not analyse the impact of some dimensions on others. More studies using factor analysis and structural equations are required to determine the relationships between dimensions and variables and indicate where to combine efforts in the management of business schools.

One limitation of the systematic literature review is that the content analysis of the papers is focused on the service quality assurance paradigms of particular countries, regions and/or institutions. This means that most of the papers contain only the variables considered in the service quality assurance system of the country or region they belong to, making it difficult to compare results among countries or institutions. Moreover, student satisfaction also varies among countries, and the perception of each individual depending on their culture and values should be considered when the results of service quality assurance are compared.

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