

Value co-creation in education: analyzing students' and teachers' role in the higher education ecosystem through a Service-Dominant Logic approach

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Purpose - The marketization of HE is a global phenomenon that has extended through different countries around the globe, evolving towards a metaphor that envisions students-as-customers of universities (e.g. Voss et al., 2007; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Natale & Doran, 2012). The purpose of this paper is to propose the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) of marketing (Lusch, et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2016), as a framework to analyze and rethink the process of value co-creation among the student-teacher's relationship to address the complexity of HE as a service (Diaz-Méndez & Gummesson 2012). Through this approach, HE is seen as a service ecosystem where many actors interact to jointly co-create value. Implications for educators, university managers and academic researchers are discussed.

Design/methodology/approach - Through an in-depth literature review and a critical analysis, an exploration of the marketization of the HE is made. The article explores the controversies around the metaphor 'students-as-customers', considering its long-term effects on society at large. The SDL approach and the service ecosystem perspective are introduced as a framework to analyze the key components of the process of value co-creation for HE. The research is based on theoretical and empirical data from previous investigation findings.

Findings - The authors identify how SDL tenets may provide useful implications to address the controversies of the students-as-customer's metaphor in HE, such controversies include: the misunderstanding of the student-oriented university, the misunderstanding of teaching quality and student's satisfaction; and the misunderstanding of the role of student in the HE context. This article highlights the role of students as co-creators within a HE ecosystem, instead of students-as-customers, as previous research has established.

According to SDL a full description of student's and teacher's role for value co-creation within a HE ecosystem is provided.

Practical implications - Adopting a SDL mindset has several implications for the management of HE institutions.

The paper identifies practical implications for university managers and educators. For university managers adopting a value-in-context view may help them in devising quality policies focused on providing students with lifelong learning skills and oriented to reduce the time a graduate takes to find a job that pays their educational investment. For educators, this SDL approach could help them in answering questions such as *how to measure student's performance in subsequent courses, as a real base of previous learning? How to measure the development of student's lifelong learning skills?* Finally, the paper identifies research avenues for academics researchers, which would add to our understanding of HE from a service ecosystem perspective.

Keywords: Students as customers, service dominant logic, value co-creation, higher education

Paper Type: Conceptual paper.

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