

VALUE CO-CREATION AND UNIVERSITY TEACHING QUALITY: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

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Purpose: According to the latest developments in service research, value co-creation is a central concept general applicable to service. This paper addresses the service of university to students. We look into the role of students in the value co-creation of an academic service and how students influence the quality evaluation of teaching. Many universities in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA*) administer satisfaction surveys where students evaluate lecturers performance. Then, results from these surveys have an influence to different extent on the lecturers' promotion. The purpose of the paper is to investigate value co-creation in university service and especially the implications of the status of the interacting parties, nature of service, methods to evaluate teaching quality, real value for students, and long-term consequences.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper is based on a review of the latest developments in service-dominant (S-D) logic and many-to-many marketing. It presents case study research applied to a Spanish university. Data derives from documents, students surveys and lecturers interviews.

Research limitation/implications: As university teaching quality measurement methods and programs in the EHEA context are quite recent, time is a required factor to be able to assess the expected consequences drawn in this paper. Similar research should be conducted in other countries to assess whether the EHEA teaching quality objectives are approached in the same way.

Practical implications: The status of the interacting parties is decisive to successfully implement a value co-creation approach. As for the university service to students, ignoring this fact in the design of the service process may corrupt the system and its detrimental consequences can even determine the economic and social future of a region. Combined student collaborative attitude and reasonable lecturers' freedom to select their "best teaching methods" are highlighted as key factors for successful value co-creation and subsequently long-term student success.

Originality/Value: This paper focuses on the special service of higher education. This service embraces certain particularities such as its non lucrative and vocational nature, its formation purpose, its responsibility and commitment with societies, students and the lecturers are administratively involved within the same institution and there exist an unbalanced position between them, etc., thus, it offers a wider and fresh perspective on the application of a value co-creation approach to particular service.

Keywords: Value co-creation, teaching quality measurement, EHEA, university service

Paper type: Case study

* EHEA: plan to foster European Convergence on Higher Education.

Introduction

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. It is a result from the Bologna Declaration which aims to harmonize the education systems of the European Union by means of ensuring more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. This project is brought to fruition in the EHEA.

Its essential parameters were established in the Bologna Declaration signed by 29¹ European States on 19 June 1999²:

- The adoption of an easily readable and comparable system of qualifications through the implementation, among other means, of a European Diploma
- The adoption of a system based on two principle cycles: degree and master.
- The establishment of a system of credits, such as the ECTS system, which encourages mobility.
- The promotion of European cooperation to ensure quality for the development of comparable criteria and methodologies.
- The promotion of mobility and the suppression of obstacles that hinder this mobility by students, lecturers and administrative staff of universities and other European higher education institutions.

The present stage of this process is aimed at consolidating the EHEA. Hence Universities adapting to it are currently passing through a key moment which will determine their position in the European University market. They are striving to achieve certain quality goals which in general are common to most of them. However, the means used to achieve these goals differ from one University to another.

This paper deals with the concept of *quality* in this changing context, particularly it focuses on teaching quality what has become a central issue for all universities in order to achieve the Bologna Declaration goals. We part from the premise that universities, as service institutions, should consider as well as other organizations the new developments on service. The S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), many to many marketing (Gummesson, 2004, 2006) or service science can provide universities with useful tools and insights that would enable an effective achievement of Bologna's goals in a fluent manner. We are aware there are many actors that interact in the university service since it is part of a big network which meantime is made of other sub-networks where governments, unions, society, economy, public/private institutions, etc. interact at a macro level; and lecturers, students, service staff, University board, other professionals, etc. at a micro level. However, we have picked one relationship to be analysed to some depth, the one who represents the essence of the University, that

¹ At present there are 47 participants in the EHEA (Bologna for Pedestrians, The Council of Europe <http://www.coe.int/>):

From 1999: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

From 2001: Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Turkey.

From 2003: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Holy See, Russia, Serbia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

From 2005: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;

From May 2007: Montenegro.

From March 2010: Kazakhstan

² www.queesbolonia.gob.es

between the lecturers and students. Especially we focus on teaching quality and value creation aspects based on the value co-creation approach advocated by the aforementioned service developments. In so doing, we present case study from a Spanish University.

1. The complexity of the university service

Before discussing about quality and value in the university context, it is paramount to be aware of the complexity the university service embraces. The implementation of the EHEA must consider the different actors and factors that interact in this service, and consequences that common measures can give rise in different cultures and idiosyncrasies. The harmonization of the Higher Education systems of 47 countries implies the consideration of 47 complex service systems interacting. Table 1 shows some actors and factors that interact and influence the university service system:

Table 1: Actors and factors influencing the university service

Actors	Factors
- Lecturers	- Universities' economic resources
- Students	- Laws (local, national and European's)
- University board	- Cultures and idiosyncrasies
- Service staff	- Universities management style
- Local and national authorities	- Student selection methods
- Societies (local and European's)	- Lecturers recruitment systems
- Private/public institutions	- Universities reputation
- Unions	- Etc.
- Etc.	

Thus, we see the complexity the EHEA aims to -or should- deal with. Obviously, a real value co-creation study in the EHEA context should involve all actors and consider all factors; however, the magnitude of this study is out of reach of this paper. We are going to approach the value co-creation process in the university service choosing one relationship, that between lecturers and students. This has been the essential relationship in the university for years; but the main reason why we have chosen this dyad is because it represents the core of EHEA quality purposes for many European universities at present.

It is widely accepted that we live in an interconnected world where all relationships are multi-party. This idea was conceptualized and developed by Gummesson's *many-to-many marketing* (Gummesson, 2004, 2006). He concluded that most failures of the relationship marketing practice were due to the typical narrow focus on the dyadic relationship between provider and customer. We completely agree with the author and our approach fits the many-to-many marketing theory, that is, we are aware that in spite of the fact that we study here a dyadic relationship, it is part of a bigger interconnections network.

2. The value co-creation in the university service

Thinking of the meaning of the objectives of the new EHEA it easily underlies the implicit goal of improving value for University actors. In this sense, quality requirements established in the EHEA project should be addressed to value creation; otherwise quality for quality, that is, without a value result, turns into a useless goal. Recent developments in service like the *Service-Dominant logic* (Vargo and Lusch,

2008) are focusing on the joint creation of value also known as “value co-creation”. This implies that organizations do not *provide* value anymore; instead they actively participate in a joint process where customers also play an active role in order to obtain the value expected from an interaction. Resources both from the *supply side* and customers are integrated in a process where factors such as role of participants, knowledge, shared information and the profile of people involved will determine the final outcome of a relationship (Barile and Polese, 2010).

Zeithaml (1988: 14) classic definition of value said that it was “the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given”; this is an old definition but still keeps its meaning in the present time. Briefly, value has also been defined as “what one gets for what s/he pays” (Sirohi, McLaughlin and Wittink, 1998) in the context of the traditionally known as *goods market*. However, value has to do not only with money, service is present in most relationships and so also a value perception linked to service, regardless its lucrative nature: the service a priest offers a parishioner, the service public administrations offer citizens (although here the payment exists via taxes), the service a colleague who holds a position offers another, the service a non profit institution offers beneficiaries, etc. are some examples of the previous statement. Sakhivel and Raju (2006), in the high education context, claim that value is not only transmission of technical knowledge to students, but something more: a value for the money they have paid. According to this definition, students holding a scholarship cannot demand any quality standards since they have not paid for the service, and thus, anything would be more than what they have paid for. But value goes beyond money (Michel *et al.* 2008) and students play an active role in the value they expect from the university service.

The EHEA points at lectures as the only responsible of value creation for students; but what is worst is that some universities are identifying *students’ satisfaction* with lectures’ quality. It seems there is a problem with value concept in university service. In order to shed some light to this concept it is interesting to answer the following question: what is better for a student: to be satisfied with lecturers or to be able to perform well in a qualified job? Some times these two factors may be interconnected but many others not. Elliot and Healy (2001) consider students’ satisfaction is a short-term attitude that results from the evaluation of their experience with the education service received. “Short-term” is a very illustrative expression that refers to the fact that student satisfaction is not a consistent indicator on which to base crucial decisions regarding teaching quality evaluation. Maybe satisfaction of alumni would represent a more accurate indicator since they are not biased by recent experiences (whether good or bad). Furthermore, students’ satisfaction varies according to the profile of every student; factors such as age, subject likings, education, ambition, responsibility sense, maturity, etc. condition not only their perception of value but the real value they get. Thus, we can, at least, sense that students do co-create the value they expect to obtain from university service.

3. The resource integration and the role of participants

Resource integration

Students together with lecturers play two principal roles in the university service value creation by means of integrating resources. Resource integration is not a unidirectional process from customer to company, instead it is multidirectional in a many-to-many view (Gummesson, 2006, 2008). Lecturers must understand what students need and want, efficiently transmit knowledge (Chung and McLarney, 2000)

and actively get involved in their global formation. However, the job of a lecturer has a vocational nature and she/he also expects to get some value from their teaching performance through students' global learning. Lecturers and students have resources that need to be integrated in the process in order to create value for both parties, what implies to create value for all students and all lecturers in a network.

The S-D logic refers to resources as "potential resources" and value creation occurs "when a potential resource is turned into a specific benefit" (Lusch *et al.* 2008, p.8). Thus, resources (whether tangible or intangible) are not valuable by themselves; rather, they need to be applied and integrated into a service process so as to become valuable by means of making a benefit for a specific actor (Mele *et al.* 2010).

Students' basic resources are intelligence, study habits and methods, responsibility sense, personality, etc. and the learning level they get from the education service will depend to a great extent on the way they integrate these resources in the service. The basic lecturers' resources are knowledge and teaching abilities; then, they have other resources as well such as formality or their personality. In order to be able to co-create value, these resources need to be high quality. For this reason, teaching quality evaluation is a positive action. However, the question that comes up is *who and how a lecturer has to be evaluated?* In practice, students are usually who evaluate – and even dare to measure!- lecturers' quality. And they do so by filling out some *satisfaction surveys*. This paper looks into the implications of this practice for the value co-creation purpose.

Role of participants

There is little research on Higher Education value. The extant research shares two principal aspects: (1) it considers teaching as a service encounter where the student must be treated as the customer of any type of service (Krehbiel, *et al.* 1997; Chung and McLearn, 2000; Lawrence and Sharma, 2002; Sánchez-Fernández, 2010). (2) Value is approached mainly from the side of students and it is understood that value has to be delivered to students by the lecturers. This approach is mainly based on students' satisfaction as a lecturers' performance indicator (Hill *et al.*, 2003; Marzo-Navarro, *et al.* 2005; Sakthivel and Raju, 2006). Sakthivel and Raju (2006, p. 24) state that "as quality is more difficult to measure in education, and student evaluation of lecturers and instruction is a source of input data (Helms, *et al.*, 2001), higher education designates the student as the element in the best position to evaluate the teaching received by measuring the levels of satisfaction (Marzo-Navarro *et al.*, 2005)". However, according to many-to-many marketing we consider that complex service can also be properly evaluated. The criterion of identifying "the feasible" with "the correct" turns out feasible but not correct. In this regard, two notable differences between traditional service customers and students must be highlighted:

- a) *Education is a special service everybody receives from birth.* Traditional *service quality*, was dealt at great length since early 80s (Grönroos, 1982, 1984, 1988; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Berry *et al.* 1985; Gummesson and Grönroos, 1987; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1988). Many theoretical models proposed aimed at measuring service quality. A common feature to all models developed was the predominant role of *perceived quality* concept in quality matters. It was widely accepted that a client who felt satisfied with a service would repeat the service experience thus gaining client loyalty. However, the particularities of some service, like education service, make this approach somewhat imprecise. The very nature of education service does not allow thinking about *education quality perception by*

students, at least in the short term. Education is a special service that everybody receives since the very moment of their birth. Part of this education service is not systematized by rules and other part is. The *education service* is “rendered” to people by different educators: parents, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and university lecturers. Then students’ education continues in a not systematized way. If education service could be measured simply by asking subjects about satisfaction, Education Authorities could ask children and teenagers about satisfaction with their parents’ and teachers’ performance. Nevertheless, these measures have not been even suggested...yet. This questionable attitude is actually been applied by many universities in order to determine the lecturers’ quality. Those who advocate this *student=customer* pattern appeal to age of majority as a discriminant factor trying to find a reasonable answer. However companies who offer toys and other service to children and teenagers are interested in knowing their satisfaction to preserve profitability. Then if students were to be treated as customers, then Authorities should safeguard children’s education also by asking them about their satisfaction just like companies do. But we find that education subjects do not have the right criteria to evaluate service education –which difference respect a toy is obvious. Therefore, we state that treating students as service customers -as for professionals’ performance quality measurement- is a mistake common to other service’s subjects: patients’ satisfaction would never determine the quality of a doctor; in a trial, the accused satisfaction would never determine the quality of a judge; and student’s satisfaction will never determine lecturers quality. Some other objective indicators should be used to evaluate a professional’s performance. Thus, we suggest that lecturers’ quality cannot be measured; it can be evaluated: students could assess lecturers’ quality but only in the mid or long term, just when they are mature enough to assess whether what they were taught was –and still is- useful for them to perform a specific job. Then students would also be mature enough to assess to what extent they contributed to make the most of what lecturers offered them.

From the previous considerations it can be derived there is an initial problem in students’ value approach. This problem stems from the definition of *value for students*. In this paper we consider that value for students is not short-term students’ satisfaction but long term satisfaction. And long-term students’ satisfaction comprises two aspects: (1) the education received from lecturers and (2) their implication in the value co-creation.

- b) *Other service customers do not expect from providers to be marked through an exam*. In the context of Higher Education Institutions, Sánchez-Fernández *et al.* (2010, p. 30) state that “in current competitive environments, repeated purchases by customers are necessary in order to guarantee the survival of the organization, which means customer retention”. There is a tendency among some marketing practitioners and researchers to consider all service alike regardless it is a hernia operation or a cafeteria service. But *service* is intrinsically linked to complexity. Standardization and generalization are not friends of reality since they elude dealing with all variables, factors and actors interacting in the service. So far no research on higher education service has stood out the big difference there is between students and other service customers: *in any service the costumer ends up the relationship by having an exam and getting a mark from the provider*. In market relationships customers

expect from providers some results in exchange for the money they pay. Applying this to higher education service we see that students also expect from lectures some results: knowledge. In the short term, for students these results are materialized in the form of a mark in an exam. This mark determines the level of knowledge the student has on certain subject and this knowledge has been “provided” by lectures but, who is responsible of the mark a student obtains in an exam? Clearly, students have to study in order to make the most of a lecturer’s performance. Maybe the education service is one of the best representative examples of the value co-creation approach: if students do not work on their own, they cannot get a result out of lecturers’ performance. According to S-D logic terminology, lecturers provide students not with value but with a value proposition (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Anderson, *et al.*, 2006).

4. The research

In order to justify the aforementioned arguments some evidence is required. Thus, with the aim to assess the suitability of students as teaching quality evaluators and suggest some recommendations for a proper value co-creation approach a case study on a Spanish University is presented. Case study is an adequate research methodology when complexity is to be tackled (Gummesson, 2000, 2007; Yin, 2009). However, the case study presented here is of an exploratory nature and aims to set the basis for a further stage of this research.

The university studied was chosen because it has developed a very formal, rigid and very controversial program to evaluate lecturers’ quality. It illustrates well what many universities are doing or working on and represents an example of what is not value co-creation. The procedures that make up this program are gathered in a 160-page book and are approved by the Spanish National Evaluation Agency called ANECA. The ANECA was created in 2002 to adapt Spanish Higher Education structures to the EHEA. We will call this University’s teaching evaluation program “Docent”.

4.1. The research protocol

First, an exhaustive analysis of the *Docent* program was carried out. Secondly, 20 lecturers from this university were interviewed in order to obtain explanatory reasons whether to support or reject the *Docent* program. Finally, a survey were administered to 200 students from degree and master levels in order to be able to define a profile of them, who are widely considered the Higher Education teaching quality evaluators.

4.2. Results and discussion

a) The *Docent* program

The index of the content of the *Docent* program can be found in Appendix 1. Here we present its most relevant aspects in regard with teaching quality evaluation. Specifically the sections chosen to be analyzed are: objectives, procedures and consequences from evaluation results.

Objectives

With the aim to understand the *Docent* program and assess whether it fits the EHEA quality requirements or exceed them, it is necessary to know its objectives. Although there are 18 of them we only present here the most controversial according to lecturers’ opinion:

1. To obtain evaluations from the lecturers in order to detect their qualification levels.
2. To get to know students' satisfaction with lecturers' performance.
3. To help to reflect on their performance.
4. To encourage lecturers to improve their performance and innovate, by means of updating their knowledge and methods in order to favor students' learning.
5. To obtain new criteria for the assignation of research projects, study licenses, etc.
6. To obtain new criteria to assign remunerative complements.
7. To obtain criteria to hire bad quality lecturers.
8. To obtain criteria to control lecturers performance from School boards and Departments.

At first sight, these objectives may sound reasonable and at the same time complex. However, the procedures through which they are to be achieved seem too simplistic.

Procedures

The program establishes there are three sources of information to evaluate lecturers which in order of importance are: students, the own lecturer (self evaluation) and School boards and Departments. However, the program also establishes that "it is a fundamental requirement for a lecturer to be evaluated to have results from students' satisfaction surveys in at least two years" and refers to students along the document as "lecturers evaluators". Then the program explains what students have to evaluate through satisfaction surveys (satisfaction survey is on Appendix 2).

It starts by stating the following: "Students are direct customers of the 'service' of education and they will provide with information on lecturers' planning, performance and results through satisfaction surveys (...)". From this statement underlies that *Docent* designers are not confidence of what service embrace. The fact that the document puts 'service' in quotation marks leads to think the *Docent* does not consider education to be really service.

Specifically, students have to evaluate the following aspects of lecturers' performance:

- a. The program of the subject taught by a lecturer: is the content of the subject appropriate? Are the activities planned by the lecturer appropriate? Are evaluation criteria appropriate? Is the bibliography used by the lecturer appropriate?
- b. The development of the classes given by the lecturer: does the lecturer convey enthusiasm and interest to students for the subject? Does the lecturer use the appropriate means and methods to teach? Is the lecturer punctual? Does the lecturer do his/her duty to attend his/her classes?
- c. The students' results based on lecturers' responsibility: do students think they have learnt what they expected to?

We can see that *Docent* program use students' opinion as a reliable source to evaluate aspects a student just cannot due to several factors: (1) *the status they have in*

the service: students are very concern about marks and the existence of a final exam can easily condition their opinions. (2) *The information asymmetry*: it is a typical characteristic of professional service (e.g. Gummesson, 1981; Aarikka-Stenroos *et al.*, 2009). Students do not have the technical knowledge to evaluate lecturers' knowledge and professional methods. Lecturers' performance addresses students' global education by means of reducing students' ignorance and working on discipline and ethics. Most times they are not aware of the benefit the measures taken by a lecturer will have for them in a future; however, they have to evaluate lecturers in the immediate short term. (3) *Objectivity*: some items students have to evaluate are of great objective simplicity. Class attendance and punctuality are aspects that can be easily controlled. Furthermore, in the university studied here lecturers have to sign for every class they give so it is already controlled by the Schools' boards. Some students' opinions about some lecturers say that they often attend their classes but not always whereas control signatures sheets show they have fulfilled their duty.

Lecturers' teaching quality is also measured through students' success rates. Specifically the following data are taken into account to assess lecturers' performance: students' marks, students' performance, percentage of students who do not take the exam, number of examinations taken by a student to pass a subject, students' class attendance. Service latest research applied to Higher Education understands that lecturers' performance may influence the previous rates but in any case lecturers can be held responsible of students' marks and behavior. A clear evidence of this is the existence of different marks for students. Students belonging to the same group who take an exam with the same lecturer usually do not get the same mark: how can this be if the lecturer is the same for all of them? Probably because not all students have the same intelligence, abilities, responsibility, motivation, studying discipline, etc. Aspects that are surprisingly not contemplated in the *Docent* program and others universities' teaching evaluation programs.

Consequences

The *Docent* program establishes different negative consequences for those lectures' whose students' satisfaction survey results are not positive. There are 9 of them and are mostly focused on promotion and remunerative aspects. The *Docent* program says the results from lecturers' evaluation will be taken into account for: (1) lecturers selection (to contract or dismiss lecturers), (2) lecturers' promotion, (3) seniority remunerative complement assignment, (4) regional remunerative complement assignment, (5) recognition of teaching excellence, (6) obligation to take formation courses, (7) assignment of research projects, research grants, research licenses, etc., (8) Departments budgets assignment and (9) teaching assignment.

Consequences linked to students' surveys results are clearly out of proportion. Although the *Docent* contemplates also other aspects like lecturers' teaching formation, the weight given to students' opinion can be described as dangerous for the real teaching quality and the desired value co-creation. Furthermore, the application of this program may give rise to situations where, for example, a prestigious professor who teaches a difficult subject to 1st year students has to be dismissed because his/her students are not satisfied with the content of the subject program, the demand level, the professor's methods and marks obtained in the exam.

b) The lecturers' perspective

With the purpose to get to know lecturers' opinion about the *Docent* program 20 personal interviews were conducted to different lectures teaching in 5 different Schools. Interviews lasted an average of 30 minutes, some open-ended questions were asked to informants in order to guide the interview which took the form of a conversation in all cases.

The interview comprised three main groups of questions to be commented: (1) opinion on teaching quality evaluation, (2) opinion on Docent program (objectives, procedures and consequences) and (3) suggestions for teaching evaluation methods.

(1) Lecturers' view on teaching quality evaluation

All interviewees agreed that teaching quality evaluation was necessary in order to improve value creation for both students and lecturers. They understand that the recognition of a high quality performance and suggestions to improve were always welcome to grow professionally. Quality evaluation was admitted to be necessary in all jobs in spite of the fact that not all activities were equally easy to evaluate. For this reason complex service require complex evaluation measures. Some quotes illustrating this are:

"Of course, evaluation is something positive. The problem comes when evaluation is not properly addressed."

"Evaluation: yes, but good evaluation."

"I think evaluation is necessary since we do know there are some colleagues that are not performing well. They are too little demanding and let students easily pass the exam."

(2) Lecturers' view on Docent program

This part took most of the interview time. All interviewees looked indignant with the treatment received by the *Docent* program and describe it with adjectives like "evil", "ridiculous", "crazy" or "unfortunate". Lecturers interviewed could not understand the logic in basing the performance of a professional like a lecturer on students' opinion. They consider their job to be of a high qualified nature which is neither known nor understood by students; and therefore it was not fair that all their efforts, time investment, experience, research, qualification and duties fulfilment were now subjected to students' opinion.

"The same way medicine doctors are not good or bad according to what their patients think of them; lecturers are not better or worse because our students think we are. I teach in 1st year and 4th year and students profile differs a lot from one year to another"

"In our School students are not selected. We receive all kinds of students and I can assure they are not qualified to assess a qualified job like University teaching. At least, they do not have the skills to say whether my knowledge and qualification is appropriate for the subject I teach"

"Students' opinion is something we are very interested in. But this opinion has to be taken as such, as an opinion. A simple opinion on matters that students have not the criteria to appropriately assess cannot be taken as a reliable and irrefutable source of information. My job can be evaluated only by colleagues more experienced than me."

“We can’t be evaluated according to students’ marks, this is ridiculous. I explain myself through an example: it is the same as if the managers of an olive oil factory obligate their employees to produce the highest quality olive oil in the world and to do so the employees are provided with bad quality olives. Employees can’t make miracles and so they need high quality raw material to produce high quality olive oil. Then if I am obligated to make my students get the highest marks I have two options: (1) asking the University board to let me select my students or (2) give them an “A” for free, thus forgetting about real quality.”

“It is crazy that students who can be angry with me because of the mark obtained in my exam have to complete a satisfaction survey about me. Once a student confesses me that she usually does not read the questions, she chose a mark for the lecturer from the beginning according to her personal experience with him/her”

“What does a student have to say about my punctuality? I am punctual or not, it is not a matter of opinion. We should clock in and out and the information on punctuality will be objectively gathered”

“The Docent program is evil. Many colleagues would be more concern now about pleasing students, forgetting about knowledge and discipline demands and giving good marks for free to them so as to be well-marked on the surveys”

“This is the end of the lecturers’ social prestige. This Docent program does not respect our job at all. Our salary, professional reputation and research opportunities can’t be in students’ hands. This is crazy.”

(3) Suggestions for teaching evaluation methods.

Interviewees agreed that teaching evaluation is a positive initiative as long as it is appropriately approached and oriented to value creation not to punishing measures. Information asymmetry and the role of participants in the teaching relationship make evaluation through students’ opinion impossible. However, all lecturers were in favour of evaluation and suggested some methods to carry it out. The following quotations are representative of lecturers’ common impressions:

“A good way to evaluate teaching could be by asking graduated students who are now working about the value of the education received at the university. A utopian method would be asking only students who were really involved in the teaching-learning process. This would provide us with a close picture of teaching quality.”

“It is not an easy task. However, I think that we should be evaluated by experts’ commissions. Only experts in the subject taught can give their opinion about lecturers’ knowledge.”

“Objective questions such as punctuality or class attendance should be observed through objective methods out of anyone’s opinion.”

c) Students’ perspective

The same research instrument that the *Docent* program uses to evaluate lecturers' performance was used here to get a profile of students. In order to obtain an approximation to students profile as lecturers' evaluators, 200 surveys were conducted to students from Business School. Students ranged 18 to 24 from graduate and master degrees were surveyed (survey administered to students is on Appendix 3). Main results are presented:

- Only 6% of students sought information about lecturers before making the decision to study in this university.

- 66% are studying in this university because it is close to their homes. This shows that one of the main purposes of EHEA, that of facilitate students mobility needs further analysis. Cultural factors have to be approached through communication actions and by offering financial support programs.

- 43% said the feature they value most in a lecturer is "pedagogical skills"; followed by the material lecturers give to students, what was considered the most important feature by 19%. They value that lecturers do not ask them to search further information on their own and prefer to be provided with all notes necessary to pass the final exam. In third place 18% students said the most important for them was lecturers' accessibility.

- For the 34% the least important feature was lecturers' qualification, showing that students do not appreciate lecturers' cv and experience. This figure supports the fact that for students, pedagogical skills are above lecturers' knowledge. 31% considered the lecturer's demanding level to be the least important feature for them, although it was some important for 39%.

- The following factors influence the marks students assign lecturers: lecturer's capacity to make lessons funny (90%), student's interest in the subject (66%), lecturer's demanding level (39%), the existence of a personal relationship with the lecturer (35%), type of exam (32%), lecturer's personality (30%) and lecturers' cv (12%). From these data it derives that marks that students give to lecturers are influenced by factors out of the scope of teaching quality. Universities managers should be aware of this circumstance before condition lecturers' research, promotion a remuneration issues to students' opinion.

- The ideal lecturer profile was described by students as follows: "lecturers have to be funny (91%), young (76%), dress formally (53%) and being demanding (49%)"

- 83% were against evaluating lecturers according to students' marks. Especially they said they disagree with the measure of subjecting remunerative complements to students' success rates. They considered this measure would involve serious consequences such as quality graduates from this university would decrease (70%), lecturers would tend to increase students marks unconcernedly (68%) and their university image would be damaged (56%). Thus we see that although *Docent* program, according to EHEA, is oriented to students; they do not even like the teaching quality evaluation program developed since they considered they can become the ultimate victim of the system once they are in the labour market.

- Finally, 65% think it is necessary to have certain knowledge on a subject to be able to assess lecturer's technical knowledge.

5. Conclusions and practical implications

New developments in service focus on value co-creation distancing from the traditional value delivery approach. The purpose of this paper was to look into value co-creation in university service in the context of the EHEA. The university service features some particularities that make it deserve an especial treatment. Especially we studied the way status of the interacting parties, nature of service and methods to evaluate teaching quality affect real value for students and give place to important consequences for different actors. The new EHEA has prompted universities to increase concern for teaching quality understanding that by means of measuring teaching quality students will get higher value from the service. This approach reflects that new developments in service are not properly contemplated in the design of the EHEA guidelines. To support this statement we conducted an exploratory case study of a Spanish University which has developed an exhaustive program to evaluate teaching quality through students' satisfaction surveys.

Case study results suggest that value co-creation has not been considered in the design of the teaching evaluation program here called *Docent*. The spirit of this program is based on lecturers' punishment if students' surveys results are not positive and leave aside the lecturers' need to get value from the teaching-learning relationship as well. Students are in charge to determine whether a lecturer has to be dismissed, get remunerative complements, obtain research project licenses, etc. Although common sense leads to conclude this is not reasonable, 200 surveys were administered to students to define their profile as lecturers' evaluators. Students confirm they pay attention to factors out of the scope of teaching quality when evaluating lecturer's performance. These factors were twofold: a) lecturers' personal features such as age, dressing style, personality or temper; and, b) external circumstances like type of exam, personal interest on the lecturer's subject or the marks obtained on the lecturer's subjects. Thus, satisfaction surveys are clearly biased by factors a lecturer cannot control. Furthermore, the own students admit they do not have the knowledge required in order to evaluate lecturers' knowledge and disagree with the fact that lecturers' remunerative complements are conditioned to students' success rates. They considered this measure a threat for their own future professional quality. In this scenario, universities should rethink their methods to evaluate teaching quality.

As for lecturers' perspective, teaching evaluation was positive considered as long as it was properly approached. They describe higher education as a complex service which require complex evaluation methods, and were against simplifying complexity through students' surveys. All agreed this evaluation methods fostered by the EHEA guidelines do not contemplate real value for students and completely neglects lecturers' value. However, we are in the initial stage of the EHEA adaptation process there is still time for universities to redesign this evaluation programs and redirect them towards a value co-creation approach. It is really important to approach appropriately teaching quality evaluation since long term consequences may give rise to a devaluation of university education (students will get high marks without studying), more professional negligence (graduates will be less qualified) and reputation and respect for lecturers will dramatically decrease.

6. Limitations and future research

This paper presents an exploratory case study that aims to be a starting point for further research. We have focused on teaching quality evaluation as an instrument to co-create value when properly approached. However, value co-creation in higher education embraces more aspects and actors since it constitutes a complex network as it has been described. For this reason, a natural next step will be to carry out more research through case study and other methodologies in different universities from different countries in the EHEA, in order to analyze the actual situation and suggest practical ways to apply latest service developments in higher education service.

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Appendix 2. “Docent” survey on students’ satisfaction

About the student

1. How many times have you registered for this subject?
2. How often did you attend classes of this subject?
25%
25%-49%
50%-75%
75%-100%
3. Why did you decided not to attend classes?
Working problems
Timetable inconvenient
Personal reasons
Because of the teacher
I don’t like teacher’s methodology
Others
4. What is your interest about this subject?
None
Little
Indifferent
Quite a lot
A lot
5. What is this subject level of difficulty compared to other subjects?
Very easy
Easy
Normal
Difficult
Very difficult

About teaching methodology (Mark from 0 to 10)

6. The teacher explains in an organized and clear way
7. The teacher adequately complements the theoretical explanations with practice aspects (illustrative examples, cases, exercises...)
8. According to the characteristics of this subject, the teacher uses the proper methods and educational resources in order to help students’ learning (blackboard, audiovisual resources...)
9. The teacher conveys enthusiasm and interest for the subject learning

About learning organization (Mark from 0 to 10)

11. The subject content is adequate according to its length
12. The teacher relates the subject contents and activities to other subjects

About students’ attention (Mark from 0 to 10)

13. The teacher makes an effort to help students to develop professional and social skills and attitudes (public speaking, to reflect on problems, to express and defend ideas, to work in teams...)
14. The teacher encourages students’ participation in class
15. The teacher has a receptive attitude about the students’ questions and suggestions
16. The teacher treats students politely
17. The teacher is approachable when is asked by the students

About students’ evaluation (Mark from 0 to 10)

18. Have you been assessed by the teacher through exams?
19. Does the teacher apply properly the evaluation criteria established in the subject program?
20. The teacher makes exams revision easy and other evaluation activities and clarifies the results obtained by students

Global assessment (Mark from 0 to 10)

21. In general, how is your satisfaction with the teacher’s teaching?

About teacher’s teaching duties (Mark from 0 to 10)

22. The teacher has explained in advance, the program, objectives, criteria and evaluation system
23. The teacher fulfills his/her duty to give lessons
24. The teacher is punctual

Appendix 3. Students' survey

Grade/Master name _____ Year: _____

1. Did you try to find references about this university's lecturers before making the decision to study here?

Yes	
No	

If "yes" how did you get them? _____

2. Mark one of the following options:

"I chose this university because:

	It is close to my home and I think is a good university"
	I did not have financial support to study in other university"
	My parents did not want me to leave my family home"
	I wanted to be near to my family"
	I think it is a high quality university"
	Other:

3. Do you attend classes regularly?

yes		No	
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4. What do you value in a lecturer? Put in order according importance (1 most important, 6 least important)

	Qualification (PhD, experience, cv)
	Pedagogical skills
	Attitude of helping students
	Charisma
	Provision of notes (avoiding making students look for further information)
	Demanding level

5. What factors do influence the marks you give to lecturers on the satisfaction surveys?

	The existence of a personal relationship with the lecturer.
	The mark obtained on lecturer's subject exam
	His/her capacity to make classes funny
	My interest in the subject
	My affinity to lecturer's personality
	Demanding level
	Lecturer's cv

6. Mark the characteristics that would make up your ideal teacher:

Very demanding	/	Little demanding	/	Not relevant
Funny	/	Serious	/	Not relevant
Old	/	Young	/	Not relevant
Dresses formal	/	Dresses casual	/	Not relevant

7. Do you agree with paying lecturers according students' marks?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

8. What consequences do you think the previous measure would involve?

	Lecturers would low down their demanding level so as to make students get high marks
	Graduate's qualification would decrease
	University reputation would be damaged
	Organizations would avoid hiring this university graduated and post-graduate students

9. Do you think students should have some knowledge on a subject to be able to assess lecturers' knowledge?

Yes		No	
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