

## A discussion on mutual expectations and contributions of different stakeholders in higher education

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### Abstract

When we talk of higher education managing the perceptions and experiences of different stakeholders becomes very important. Education industry is a perfect example of service industry. The service quality plays a vital role in the success of any service organization. Students today don't join an education institute only for getting knowledge and education; they are looking for an overall experience. Along with students an educational institute today is facing challenges from various other stakeholders too like parents of students, government agencies, and the industry and also from teachers. The current paper throws some light on the expectations of these different stakeholders and the contributions which these stakeholders can make in order to improve the overall quality of higher education.

**Keywords:** Higher education, Quality of service experience, Stakeholders.

### Introduction

One of the important determinants of national competitiveness in this global era is the quality of its higher education. This quality comes from the combination of excellent learning process and public satisfaction in the service delivered (Hanasya, Abdullah, & Warokka).<sup>1</sup>

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal of all organizations (Razavi, Safari, & Shafie),<sup>2</sup> including higher education sector. Defining quality of education as stakeholder satisfaction will help higher education development, because there are many views that quality (Reichheld)<sup>3</sup> and the perception of quality is multilateral (Gerson).<sup>4</sup> A higher education institution which attempts to provide exceptional quality of education should attempt to fully realize the needs of its stakeholders. One of the finest ways to do so is through direct opinion from its internal and external stakeholder uniformly, i.e. between student and lecturer. Along with these two stakeholders other stakeholders like parents of students, the industry who is going to place the students after studies and government through university accreditation and affiliation also plays a significant role in the overall working of institutions providing higher education. Here an attempt has been made to list out all the factors affecting the satisfaction of these varied stakeholders and suggestions have been provided to improve the overall experience of these stakeholders.

Higher education institutions stakeholders can be defined as the groups or individuals who can affect, or are affected by, the institutional activities such as academic activities (academic staff and students), administrative (academic and non-academic staff) research work (academic and non-academic staff, funding agencies, government, students, industry and society as whole), financial support (government and other financial supporters), students activities (students, parents, graduates, alumina, training organization) etc.

Quality and relevance of education and stakeholder satisfaction can be taken as the most important concerns.

### Stakeholder identification

The first step of stakeholder analysis is to identify the relevant stakeholders. In an education institution, a stakeholder analysis should start by identifying the key stakeholders such as students, faculty, and administrators. At the same time educational institutions need to consider, among others, their alumni, the parent body, the community where they are located, and the entities--both public and private—that will be employing their graduating students.

Various types of stakeholders are involved within the system of higher education. Kasetwar<sup>5</sup> has identified main stakeholders in higher education institutions point of view and their role of improving quality of institutions. They are namely as parents, students, educationalist, faculties, head of institution, academic heads of the universities, statutory bodies, industries, trainers, educational loan providers, researchers and academic scientists, society, politicians, judiciary.

The important stakeholders can be identified as students, academic staff, non-academic staff, employers, training organization, graduates, government, professional organizations, and parents, funding agencies, other interesting parties, administration and society. Most important key stakeholders are students, staff, administration and employers.

### Stakeholder satisfaction

What do stakeholders need?

#### Students

It has been observed through various researches that quality of the faculty is perceived to be very important at both undergraduate and post graduate levels hence impetus should be given to retain the best intellectual capital. The need today is to realize and make education more 'demand driven' to meet the emerging needs of the economy. It may also be observed that students at the undergraduate levels are callous in their attitude and relative importance they attach to faculty as intellectual capital. The need is therefore more to develop

a positive attitude for this group who are just out of school and are not able to understand the importance of the course they are enrolled in. Most of them attach great degree of importance to infrastructure facilities and support services for assessing an institute.

### **Graduates**

Graduates look for employability and enough of skills to crack entrance exams for professional courses. In order to do that most of them either compromise with their graduation courses or joins some other coaching institutes. Many graduates when appear for interviews find themselves not suitable for job because of lack of clarity about the practical aspects of job. Thus graduates need practical exposure and clarity at conceptual levels to crack entrance exams for professional courses.

### **Academic staff**

Academic staff needs respect from their students. They also expect the students to go for some level of self-study. It is also expected that the students when join higher education should have a minimum level of understanding of concepts as taught to them in their school. These are the expectations from students. In addition to this the needs of academic staff include good academic support, research support from the institute including opportunities to attend conferences, FDP, workshops etc. and also time and library support for conducting researches. Academic staff also needs financial and non-financial rewards in terms of recognition of their work, learning opportunities. An environment conducive to personal and professional development is also desired in order to perform the duties well.

Here person-job fit also plays a very important role. If the subjects taught by the teachers are not personally desired by the teachers the overall interest is lost which leads to lower performance of the teachers. Same applies for additional duties assigned to any teacher like documentation, mentoring etc.

### **Non-academic staff**

Non-academic staff desires achievements, proper working conditions, different types of support, financial and non-financial benefits, recognition. Non-academic staff also plays a very significant role in creating a good experience for students as students first of all interact with the non-academic staff.

### **Parents**

Family involvement is the strongest predictor of child educational outcomes. This dimension associated significantly with children's motivation to learn, attention, task persistence, receptive vocabulary skills, and low conduct problems. Family involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in young children's learning (National Research Council [NRC], 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Parents play a significant role in how students perceive their studies. Parents expect the institutes

to provide quality education and more opportunities for their children. They also want responsible and skilful graduates.

### **Society**

Society expects the educational institutes to nurture students by providing quality education, and value education. The society as a whole is dependent on the proper functioning of educational institutes. Society wants employable and responsible graduates who treat their host communities with dignity and who understand their responsibility and accountability towards society.

### **Government**

Government wants smooth functioning of all the laws and regulations, proper financial management and good governance. All this is possible only with responsible citizens.

### **Employers**

Employers or the industry wants educational institutes to produce good quality employees who are conceptually strong and also have the required soft skills for working in industry and corporates. Employers want the educational institutes to train students for all the practical orientation required in the working not only for theoretical knowledge.

### **Training organisations**

All graduate students may not be interested in joining the workforce. Many graduates opt for further studies or professional courses. These training institutes want the educational institutes to instil in students all the qualities required for absorbing the training provided by them as a part of professional courses. These training organisations want committed trainees and this again becomes the responsibility of educational institutes to provide them trainees who are committed to their professions.

### **Parent body**

With commercialisation of almost everything gone are the days where educational institutes were working for the noble cause of educating only. Now parent body wants the educational institutes to be profitable. So, educational institutes need to keep these objectives in mind. This objective is related to the needs and wants of many other stakeholders like students for providing good infrastructure, for academic and non-academic staff to fulfil their financial needs the achievement of this objective becomes of primary importance. Parent Body wants smooth functioning of educational institutes along with a good brand name which helps to attract good quality and quantity of students to the institutes.

**Table 1:** Wants and needs of stakeholders in higher education institutions

Stakeholders	Stakeholder Wants and Needs
Student	Good Learning Environment, Academic Guidance, Well Designed Courses, Quality Education, Qualified Teachers
Graduates	Employability skills, lifelong learning experiences and achievements
Academic Staff	Achievements, academic support, teaching and research skills improvement opportunities and financial and non-financial benefits, recognition
Non-academic Staff	Achievements, support, financial and non-financial benefits, recognition
Parents	Quality education and more opportunities for their Children, responsible and skilful graduates
Society	Quality education, employable and responsible graduates and accountability
Government	Smooth functioning, financial management and good governance
Employers	Skilful and market oriented graduates
Training Organisations	Committed trainees
Parent Body	Smooth Functioning and Good Brand Name

### Strategies, processes and capabilities

Formulating strategies to add value to stakeholders and to fulfil stakeholder needs are more important. Higher educational institutions need to look into existing and required institutional processes and institutional capabilities. At the same time strategies, processes and capabilities need to be linked to each other. Formulated strategies cannot be implemented without proper process and capabilities, such as committed employees, practices and infrastructure.

### Stakeholder contribution

In the other way what we expect from our stakeholders. In order to get something we have to give something. This is what is listed in the paragraphs below. Unless and until all stakeholders understand what the others want from them a proper model of quality enhancement cannot be developed. So what is to be done by different stakeholders?

#### Students

Students need to understand that their commitment and sincerity is very much important for their bright future. Unless and until students are clear about the strategies to be adopted for their development no educational institute can make a difference in their life. So students needs to be counselled in such a way that they have a clear map of their objectives and the actions needed to achieve them. Students should contribute by participating in all the activities organized by the institutes.

#### Graduates

Graduates by providing proper feedback of the services received by them can help the academic institutes improve the quality and experiences. Graduates are also expected to provide contributions in developing the institutes by helping liaisons with industry once they join industries and start working there.

#### Academic staff

Academic staff needs to contribute the maximum because they are the one who are creating most of the experiences for the students. They need to understand each and every student and try to meet the expectations of students. This is only

possible when academic staff has knowledge of subjects taught by them. In addition to this they need to be considerate about the different needs of students. Here it becomes important for the academic staff to be polite with students while maintaining the strictness required for teaching. Other contributions of academic staff should be innovative thinking on improvement of the program and commitments towards working.

#### Non-academic staff

Non-academic staff plays a very significant role in the smooth functioning of any educational institute. They need to contribute in terms of timely communication with the students and academic staff, better management of day today activities, proper follow-up with university, commitment and support towards both students and institute.

#### Parents

Parents can contribute by being attentive towards the progress of their children. By participating in all meeting and taking proper feedback from students regarding their studies parents can make the teaching – learning experience a successful one. Timely feedback from parents will help management and academic staff to take corrective actions whenever and wherever necessary. By supporting and showing involvement to children parents can help students achieve their life goals.

#### Society

Society can contribute by providing support for institutional improvements. Society also plays a very important role in making the environment favourable for learning. Proper and timely feedback is also a very important contribution which can be made by the society.

#### Government

Government's contribution is very crucial in quality enhancement. Government through university can make curriculum design more practical to help students match the expectations of industry. Government can also make the teaching learning process smoother by providing the necessary infrastructure and finances needed for researches

to increase the overall knowledge base of faculty members. Proper guidance and framework of policies laid by government can help the educational institutions to plan for long term development of facilities needed for higher education.

**Employers**

Employers by way of their feedback can contribute in making the students employable in industry. Employers can also enter into strategic tie-ups like many banks have done with educational institutes where the requirement of banks are kept in mind while designing the courses and in turn banks recruit from these educational institutes.

**Training organizations**

Training organisations enhance the job oriented skills of graduates of educational institutes. The final performance of students in industry depends on both educational institutes and training institutes so they complement each other. By enhancing skills in different areas training institutes can indirectly contribute in building the brand of educational institutes as well. Their feedback also helps the educational institutes to know what qualities are needed in graduates to adapt to the requirement of professional courses.

**Parent body**

The parent body can contribute in the smooth functioning of educational institute by providing all the necessary resources; tangible and intangible to the institutes. Good management is the sole responsibility of parent body. By being fair and equitable in selection process for academic and non-academic staff the parent body can contribute in quality sustenance of higher education. Proper management will lead to fulfilment of profit generation motive of parent body, but it also needs to be made sure that the fruits are distributed fairly among the staff. By doing so, management can win the commitment of its staff both academic and non-academic which in turn can help in creating a good teaching learning experience for the internal and external stakeholders.

Table 2 presented the selected stakeholders in the higher education institutions and institutional contributions from each stakeholders.

**Table 2:** Expected contributions from stakeholders in higher educational institutions

Stakeholders	Stakeholders Contributions
Student	Active participation, honest feedback, self-achievements
Graduates	Feedback, contribution towards development of the institutions and country
Academic Staff	Support, better contribution, commitment, innovative ideas
Non-academic Staff	Smooth functioning, better management, commitment and support
Parents	Feedback and support

Society	Feedback and support for institutional improvements
Government	Financial support and guidance
Employers	Feedback, support and information on their requirement
Training Organisations	Enhancing skills and job oriented training
Parent Body	Good Management and fair selection processes

**Conclusion**

Recognizing all stakeholders’ requirements and creating value to all stakeholders are key concern areas within the performance management in the higher education sector. There is no single model still believed for assessing and managing performance in higher educational institution. Most of the performance management systems are flops in addressing and considering the entire stakeholder needs after bearing in mind the importance and contributions of all stakeholders to the organization. Hence, understanding the needs of higher education institutions stakeholders, how can we satisfy those needs and how to integrate those needs into the institutional strategy after consideration of competences of the institutions are important. The higher education institution needs to understand the stakeholder perspective in making their decisions. The fruitful application of this type of discussion depends heavily on the precise explanation of its concepts, the way of recognizing of all related activities and pattern of connecting those activities within organization. However, harmonizing all areas is not a tranquil task in the higher education. All the stakeholders need to participate with the undertakings in the institute and hard work and commitment of all stakeholders is important in the higher education sector. The process should start from identifying stakeholder needs, and then formulate strategies using existing capabilities and process and finally deliver better value with the provision of all stakeholders in the system.

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**Conflict of interest**

None.

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