

DO MARKETING FACULTY HAVE A LEADING ROLE TO PLAY IN DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL SERVICES-MARKETING-BASED MEASURES OF STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Student evaluation of courses and teaching are the subject of a great deal of controversy in higher education. It is easy to dismiss the validity of student evaluations if one considers the evaluative criteria students consider on sites such as ratemyprofessor.com or myprofessorsucks.com. For example, the categories students consider when using ratemyprofessor.com include: helpfulness, clarity, easiness, something called overall quality, and for some, the ever-elusive 'hotness.'

While these may indeed be the way students rate professors or recommend us to their classmates, most universities use some manner of scaled instrument to measure various areas of student satisfaction. However, the instruments used vary greatly across organizations. For example, The California State University system educates some 400,000 students on 23 different campuses. A joint report commissioned by the Academic Senate, the system-wide administration, and the faculty union found that the practices for student course and teacher evaluations varied greatly across campuses. The impetus for the commission was a concern that on some campuses, online evaluations were being used to attack and undermine professors who teach controversial or difficult topics and in some instances, faculty were being unfairly targeted due to race and gender. Based on a review of the extant literature and an exploration of practices throughout the Cal State System, the report put forth some best

practices. Namely, that student evaluations of teaching should be used formatively, rather than summatively, as but one of many ways of evaluating faculty performance.

Some institutions of higher education - and some educators - approach the mission of the academy from a decidedly service business perspective wherein students are to be treated as consumers of education. Those that adopt such a perspective (including many students) believe that the goal of such higher education experiences is student satisfaction defined as meeting or exceeding student expectations. Those who approach research from this perspective even eschew the use of the word student in favor of the term learner. These fee-paying learners, according to Watson (2003) expect "value for money" and behave more like consumers. Faculty may argue the appropriateness of the student-as-customer paradigm or favor the student-teacher partnership in a co-creation of value. Many question the appropriateness or validity of current instruments for assessing student satisfaction (however it may be defined).

Nonetheless, we live in an era in which assessment and accountability are the mantras of institutions of higher learning and those who administer them. In some form or another, such assessments will be used to make decisions that affect faculty careers. Thus, it behooves faculty to take a more active role

in designing meaningful assessment tools to apply to the classroom environment.

Marketing educators are in position to take a leading role in such an effort. As marketing scholars, we are in a unique position to understand both the dynamics of the academy as well as the dynamics of the relationship between the providers and consumers of educational services. This special session presents several different perspectives that attempt to apply well-accepted models from the marketing literature than may be useful for guiding the development of more meaningful ways to measure student satisfaction with their educational experiences.

If one does adopt a service business perspective of education wherein students are thought as customers of education, one can also adopt a consumer analysis perspective for students' evaluation of teaching. For example, Peter and Olson (2008) explain that three primary elements for consumer analysis are cognition, affect, and behavior. Marketing strategy is then a set of stimuli placed in consumers' environments to influence their cognition, affect, and behavior. The design of marketing strategy and a comprehensive understanding of their consequences for consumers must include an analysis of all three. In a similar way, instructional strategies can be thought of as a set of stimuli place – including courses, professors,

and classrooms -- in students' environments to influence their cognition, affect, and behavior (Neu 2011). Just like marketing strategy, the design of instructional strategies and a comprehensive understanding of their consequences for students must include an analysis of all three.

Course evaluations used in practice seem to notably miss an assessment of important affective consequences of emotions that, in the end, may be as important as cognitive or behavioral consequences. After all, what motivates a student to become a life-long learner? Educational experiences that produce positive emotions could likely be the key.

In the work currently underway by Natalie Spielmann and Glen Brodowsky, a co-creation of value perspective is taken. Initially, their research set out to test the interpersonal personality scale (IPS) in a school setting. However, the results of the scale did not perform well. Simultaneously, the Brand Personality Scale (BPS), SERVPERF and a classic class evaluation measure (CEM) from one of the California State University Schools were also included in the questionnaire. The BPS also did not perform well which may indicate that for school contexts, personality measures may not be appropriate. However, a review of both SERVPERF and the class evaluation measure (CEM) showed interesting results that will be detailed here.