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Educational Services as a Natural Environment of Shaping Enterprising Attitudes

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The aim of the article is to identify opportunities of shaping active attitudes of students inherent in the very essence of educational services and the evaluation of the current degree of involvement of students of postgraduate in contributing to educational services.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: To achieve the objective of the article, the theoretical part is written based on literature studies (Polish and foreign). The empirical part uses the results of a survey conducted among students (223 persons) of postgraduate accounting courses at the Cracow University of Economics.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: The article is divided into several parts, respectively: (1) Entrepreneurship is defined as an active attitude, (2) educational services are presented as a product co-created by the service provider and the customer, (3) results of the study on the evaluation of the active postgraduate student attitudes are presented, (4) conclusions of the study are provided and opportunities to activate students to co-create the educational service they use.

RESEARCH RESULTS: Literature studies indicate that in the essence of services (and in particular educational services), there are significant possibilities to shape the attitudes of their active participants. Empirical studies show, however, that this potential is not fully used. Only 50% of the participants of the study stated that the teachers allowed the students to actively influence the course of the classes. Every fourth participant admitted simultaneously they took advantage of such possibilities extensively.

CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION: Full use of the possibilities inherent in the essence of the educational service to build enterprising attitudes requires changing the attitudes of the teachers in the first place. Because the study presented in the article was fragmentary it seems justified to conduct similar studies regarding other types of courses and among other teachers.

→ **KEYWORDS:** CO-CREATING SERVICES, EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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STRESZCZENIE

Usługa edukacyjna jako naturalne środowisko kształtowania postaw przedsiębiorczych

CEL NAUKOWY: Celem artykułu jest wskazanie możliwości budowania postaw aktywnych studentów tkwiących w samej istocie usługi edukacyjnej oraz ocena obecnego stopnia zaangażowania studentów studiów podyplomowych we współtworzenie usługi edukacyjnej.

PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE: Aby zrealizować cel publikacji, jej część teoretyczną napisano na podstawie studiów literaturowych (pozycji krajowych i zagranicznych). W części empirycznej wykorzystano wyniki badań ankietowych przeprowadzonych wśród studentów (223 osoby) studiów podyplomowych z zakresu rachunkowości na Uniwersytecie Ekonomicznym w Krakowie.

PROCES WYWODU: Artykuł podzielono na kilka części, w których kolejno: 1) zdefiniowano przedsiębiorczość jako postawę aktywną, 2) przedstawiono usługę edukacyjną jako produkt współtworzony przez usługodawcę i klienta, 3) zreferowano wyniki badań dotyczące oceny aktywnych postaw studentów studiów podyplomowych, 4) przedstawiono wnioski płynące z badań oraz możliwości aktywowania studentów do współtworzenia usługi edukacyjnej, z której korzystają.

WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ: Studia literaturowe wskazują, że w samej istocie usług (a w szczególności sposób usług edukacyjnych) istnieją znaczne możliwości kształtowania postaw aktywnych ich uczestników. Badania empiryczne pokazują jednak, że nie są one wykorzystane. Jedynie 50% badanych uznało, że prowadzący zajęcia w dużym stopniu pozwalają studentom wpływać na ich przebieg. Co czwarty badany przyznał równocześnie, że takie możliwości wykorzystuje w dużym stopniu.

WNIOSKI, INNOWACJE, REKOMENDACJE: Pełne wykorzystanie możliwości tkwiących w samej istocie usługi edukacyjnej do budowania postaw przedsiębiorczych wymaga zmiany postaw przede wszystkim prowadzących zajęcia. Ponieważ prezentowane w artykule badania miały charakter wyrwykowy, zasadne wydaje się przeprowadzenie podobnych badań także na innych formach studiów oraz wśród prowadzących zajęcia.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** **WSPÓŁTWORZENIE USŁUG, USŁUGA EDUKACYJNA**

Introduction

Entrepreneurship can be understood in many ways: as an attitude, behavior, competence or process (Piecuch, 2013, p. 39). Each of these aspects involves different opinions on the level of education. Entrepreneurship is not just action and relevant competencies and skills. It is based on attitudes, behaviors and approaches to life and challenges it poses. In a wide perspective, entrepreneurship is defined as an attitude of a creative individual, able to actively participate in social and economic life (Wiśniewski, 2016).

Building up entrepreneurial attitudes requires, therefore, shaping and development of personal characteristics apart from the transfer of competence.

From the point of view of shaping enterprise, it is important to answer the question as to the features of the enterprising person and what it means to adopt this attitude. An enterprising person in general understanding is also: ingenuity, resourcefulness, activity, ability to take risks or make predictions (Białasiewicz, 2008). P.F. Drucker defines entrepreneurship among others as a readiness and ability to undertake and creatively solve new problems, the ability to use emerging opportunities and threats, and flexible adaptation to changing conditions (Drucker, 1992, p. 35).

According to B. Sypniewska (2016) entrepreneurship requires a proactive and non-conformist attitude. According to this author, a proactive person is change-oriented and tries to initiate change taking personal responsibility for it. Such people are characterized by optimism, faith in their own strength and abilities, and thus the positive perception of reality and seeing the opportunities. Non-conformism means striving for a particular objective and reasonableness.

If the task of the university is to build entrepreneurial attitudes, the question arises whether and how the previously mentioned attitudes and characteristics can be shaped. It seems, however, that the teaching process itself is conducive to the development of a proactive attitude of students and, consequently, to shaping the basic traits necessary for an entrepreneurial person. It is, in fact, nothing more than the provision of educational services, where the essential characteristic (as in each service) is the active participation of both parties and mutual contribution.

In order to indicate the possibilities of building active attitudes of students in the article, a review of the literature on services (with special references to education services) and their co-creation by both parties (service providers and clients) was made. The aim of the article was also to assess the current state of students' involvement in the process of creating an educational service and their proactive attitudes. The study involved students of post-graduate studies. The choice of the research sample was not accidental.

Postgraduate studies are a special kind of tuition, as they are chosen with full awareness and in a close relation to the professional activity of the student and their need to educate and grow themselves. Postgraduate studies there are also sometimes taken to change one's situation in the labor market, and to acquire new knowledge and skills. Regardless of their motives, the students can be assumed that starting a postgraduate course requires an active attitude towards reality – willingness to take on challenges, faith in one's abilities and ability to shape reality. Postgraduate students are usually more aware of their needs, which is expressed in the selection of specific studies consistent with their interests and needs.

A question arises though whether this attitude is also present during the use of the services or whether it is expressed also by the feedback on the individual subjects or the very course of studies. The empirical part using the results of a survey conducted among students of postgraduate accounting courses at the CUE is presented below. The study included all the participants of postgraduate accounting course in the years

2016-2017. The selection of the sample was intentional due to the previously described features of the course and the nature of accounting as a branch of science. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire. As a result of the research and verification 223 correctly filled questionnaires were obtained.

Educational services – product co-created with the consumer

One of the basic features of services mentioned in the literature is inseparability understood as the simultaneity of the process of production and consumption of the service. This characteristic of services means that the customer is present when the service is provided and is an important element of the process. Inseparability is thus perceived literally. However, it can be understood more broadly – as the impossibility to separate the service from the person for whom it is provided. As noted by K. Rogoziński (2007) service is produced always for someone, and without a recipient, the service cannot exist. In addition, for most of them, the customer is not anonymous, and the relationship between the consumer and the service provider will determine the shape of the service, its quality and customer satisfaction.

In the English literature suggestions can be found to speak more about co-creation services by the service company and its customer. As Edvardsson et al (2005) put it, in the course of providing services, processes overlapping in time and space of (not necessarily place) which bind together consumers, employees and other partners/actors in the constellation of co-production and co-consumption.

These considerations point to the important role of the consumer as the co-maker of the service. Thus, the service is not exclusively the work of the provider, but a product resulting from the joint efforts and the relationship between the service provider and the consumer. According to D. Kellog et al. (1997), customer participation in the service (co-production of services) can consist not only in the active participation in the process itself but also in:

- preparation for the service meeting, which may include a variety of activities such as gathering information, searching for references, time-keeping, compliance with the instructions of the service provider;
- building a relationship with a service provider through activities such as smile, friendly gestures and words, reference to previous experience with the service;
- exchange of information which includes not only the precise expression of needs and expectations, but also searching for information on the characteristics of the service, its course and the role attributed to the customer;
- intervening in a crisis situation – inadequate service or unhappy customer – by making a complaint or participating in service improvement.

The consumer who makes such action not only the co-creator of the service, but also has a direct impact on its value (Kellog et al., 1997). Therefore, Bitner et al. (1997) attribute the role of a collaborator in shaping quality, satisfaction and value to consumers

of services. The customer as a co-creator of the service value appears very clearly in the service-dominant logic by S. Vargo and R. Lusch (2004).¹

The importance of the students as co-producers of education services results mainly from the high level of their participation as customers. Educational services require permanent customer presence in the service process and their full involvement. As M. Diaz-Mendez and E. Gummesson (2012) say, educational service is one of the best examples of co-creating value by both the service provider and the recipient. If students do not engage in work and are not involved in the learning process, they cannot create value for themselves, regardless of what the tutor has to offer.

In addition, many of the teaching methods used in teaching higher education require an active attitude of students.²

These considerations show that the more active the student's attitude, the more enterprise they will manifest in creating the reality in class, and the more value they will create for themselves. So the question arises as to how much students are aware of it, and how much the lecturer and the university helps them and allows them to adopt such attitudes.

This question seems justified because as noted by P. Szczypa (2015) about how efficient will the education (vocational training) be depends on many factors on both sides of the student/teacher relationship, including their ability to cooperate and the shared co-creation of the service.

Attitudes of post-graduate students in accounting – study results

In order to examine the degree of use as part of post-graduate studies, the possibilities inherent in the essence of educational services, the students were asked first about the attitudes of lecturers towards co-creating the activities. Over 50% of the respondents believed that the tutor allowed students to influence the shape and course of the classes to a very large or large extent (almost 10% rated their impact as very large). At the same time, 47% of the respondents felt that the lecturers agreed on their interference in the course only to a small extent. Only 4 respondents felt that there was no consent to co-create the classes (Table 1).

¹ In the Polish literature, full description of this concept can be found e.g. in (Jonas, 2014, pp. 120-122).

² The review of teaching methods and their classification is made by e.g. K. Wach (2014).

Table 1
Possibility of active behavior of students and the degree of use thereof (% of answers)

Specification	Very high	High	Low	Very low	None
The extent to which, according to the students, the teachers allow the participants to influence the course and shape of the classes	9.5	41.9	40.5	6.3	1.8
The extent to which the students do actively influence the course	1.0	26.5	53.8	8.5	10.2

Source: own research.

These results may indicate insufficient use of teaching opportunities and shaping of active attitudes. The attitudes of students were, however, even more pessimistic. Only two of the respondents admitted that they took the advantage of the possibility to shape the course of the classes used to a very large extent. A little over one-quarter (26.5%) considered that they used these capabilities to a large extent. Most of the respondents admitted, however, that their influence of the course of the classes was small (almost 62%). Every tenth participant concluded that they did not benefit from the possibility of co-creating the course.

As indicated earlier, there are four basic area of activity of the students while using educational services. These are: preparation for the service process, exchange of information on needs and expectations, building relationships with the teacher through active participation in classes and responding to the proposals for joint value creation and intervening in the event of a poorly performed service. The degree of activity of post-graduate students was diverse (Table 2).

The most common activity undertaken by the students was prior awareness of the nature and content of the course, which in the context of the previously mentioned aware choice of the course is quite obvious. However, the search for information on future service providers was, as suggested by the results, not very active – only slightly more than half of the respondents sought information also outside the official materials of the university, through getting acquainted with the opinions of others. Active participation in the classes was declared 65% of respondents, the same number that declared earlier preparation for the classes. The exchange of information was the least taken activity among the listed ones. Only 16% of the respondents stated that they gave feedback regarding the schedule and the way of providing the course. Students did not state precisely what their expectations were and their attitudes can be considered as a conformist one. It is worth noting that only 18% of those polled had a sense of influence on the shape of the course and method of teaching. Interestingly, almost one-third of the surveyed was not in a position to express an opinion on this subject.

The activity in the area of responding to poorly performed services looks a little better. Almost 60% of the respondents agreed with the statement that if the university did not live up to its promises, they would raise their reservations. It is worth noting, however,

that this statement had a declarative character, it was not, as in previous cases, a statement of the existing state. In reality, the cases of reporting problems in the studied groups were sporadic.

Table 2

The degree of utilization of the possibilities of active co-creating the process of tuition in individual areas (% of respondents)

Action	Yes	No	No opinion
Preparation for the service encounter			
Prior of starting the course I learned about its character and content	92.8	5.8	1.4
I actively searched for opinions about the course	56.1	33.6	10.3
Building relationships Streszczenie and active participation in the process			
I systematically read the materials provided by tutors	79.0	13.0	8.0
If the classes require prior preparation I always try to prepare diligently	65.8	17.1	17.1
I take an active part in the activities	65.0	20.2	14.8
Information sharing			
I have given feedback on the schedule and the content of the course	16.1	62.8	21.1
I have felt I have had influence on the ways and method of teaching	18.4	51.6	30.0
Reacting to ill-provided service			
If, in my opinion, the school has not fulfilled its promises or I did not like something I have indicated with my reservations (or if such a situation did not occur I would have expressed my reservations)	59.3	22.4	18.3

Source: own research.

Conclusions and practical implications

The results presented above indicate relatively low activity of students in the field of co-creation of classes and educational services and their acceptance of a passive attitude.³ The reasons for this situation may be different, some of them probably lying in the students themselves. However, one of them is undoubtedly the attitude of tutors. This points to the fact that the university does not make full use of the possibilities of the pro-active education of students inherent to the educational service. Therefore, the question arises why this is happening and what actions the university could take to encourage students to participate more in creating classes.

In the literature on service management, four basic factors of the level of customer participation in the services are mentioned. These are: awareness of their role, perception role clarity, customer ability and the customer's readiness to participate (Plé et al.,

³ In view of the non-random selection of the sample, these results are of course not representative and should be treated with some caution.

2013). Awareness of the role is the degree to which the customers are aware of the tasks that they must complete to fully take advantage of service. The role clarity means the degree to which the consumers know and understand the tasks that they should complete in the process and the way in which they should behave. Due to the low activity of students, the question arises whether they are aware of their role. On the other hand, it is worth asking what are the expectations of the teachers and the University to the attitudes of students. Asking the students at the beginning of the class about their expectations about it and its course, and jointly identifying possible changes in the proposed plan may be a simple invitation to participate but also an expression of hope for active participation of the students.

Another factor conducive of active participation of students in the classes is their knowledge and skills. First of all, it is important how they see their opportunities. Lack of confidence in oneself prevents the whole process of service provision (both for the customer and the person providing the service) and reduces the satisfaction of the customer. Knowledge and skills just as perception and understanding of their role are earned primarily through experience in services. Postgraduate students already have experience of studying on top of professional experience. An invitation to co-create a service can also take place by making them aware of their experiences and the skills resulting from it, as well as by recognizing their competences in some areas.

The last factor having an impact on customer engagement is their willingness to participate. The degree of the customer involvement may be varied despite the same level of the above mentioned characteristics. Willingness to involve mainly depends on the motivation, which, in turn, depends on the perceived benefits of engagement. They may be various, and in the case of education services, it is first and foremost, the possibility of better matching the service to the needs and expectations on top of improving the quality. Incentives can also be psychological, for example, a sense of higher value, a greater sense of control and independence and the ability to interact with other customers and create something together. The passive attitude of postgraduate students is due perhaps to the fact that on the earlier stages of the process of education, they did not experience these benefits and are not aware of them.

Summarizing the above considerations, it should be stated that the nature of the educational service favors shaping the attitudes of its active participants. In reality, these possibilities, as research shows, are not fully used. Changing this requires, first of all, changing the attitudes of the teachers. Inviting and encouraging students to co-create classes cannot be based solely on requiring them to prepare beforehand. It should consist in a flexible approach to classes, agreeing to change the ways of teaching and sometimes adjusting their program or plan so that it matches the expectations of students.

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