A Strategic Paradigm: Linking Marketing and TQM in Higher Educational Institutions

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Chapter VIII: Assumptions and Limitations

Fourth Law of Revision:

After painstaking and careful analysis of a sample, you are always told that it is the wrong sample and doesn’t apply to the problem. 

Murphy’s Law

I. Assumptions and Limitations

Several assumptions and limitations exist in this research:

1. The sample of education administrators was drawn from the entire 73 HBO education administrator population. Thus, the research results can be projected to the total population. Student samples, on the other hand, were drawn from seven HBO schools, representing 12,000 plus students. Even though the research results may very well reflect the total student population from all 73 HBO institutions (because the research results are generally consistent with 30+ research results reported during the last 25-30 years), statistically speaking, this research cannot make the claim that the results represent the total student population.

2. While there is no denial that there exists cultural differences between Dutch and American students, previous researches on student needs showed that in terms of student education and education-related needs, they are somewhat universal, with only minor differences from group to group. Consequently, there is no inherent conflict in referring to both American and European research reports in this thesis.

3. Student respondents were ‘current students’ at the time of the research. Even though the majority of the respondents (69%) had studied at their respective institution for less than two years; nevertheless, it was still possible that some might have faced memory lapse in answering the questionnaire. Still, the information is valuable. Perhaps, it is more valuable than if the data had been collected from potential students. This is because the current students have gained
considerable experience and insight into their education. Therefore, they are better able to express their demands. Furthermore, the current students' demands are more pressing than those from potential students.

4. Both student and education administrator questionnaires were written in English. One of the major concerns at the time of research was whether respondents would be able to understand each question correctly. Because of this, not only was the draft questionnaire given to two marketing research classes that consisted of mostly Dutch students for wording feedback, but also, the revised questionnaire was then administered to a large number of Hotelschool students twice in order to further detect possible language problems.

The thoroughness in preparation of the questionnaire plus the fact that student assistants who administered it were instructed to clarify any point respondents did not understand helped to overcome most of the language problems. As for the education administrators' questionnaire, because it was identical to that of the students', no additional revision was made.

5. It was with regret that the student questionnaire did not include questions rating students' satisfaction with their education. This was due to the fact that had these questions been included in the questionnaire, there might not have been any school that were willing to be researched.

II. Suggestions for Future Research

Possible future research may compare HBO students and regular university students education and education-related needs. Other possible researches include:

• Higher educational institution positioning research, both in and outside the Netherlands;

• Student market segmentation research;

• Research on reasons as to why the majority of student respondents failed one or more courses during the duration of their study;
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- Researches on reasons as to why education administrators are not aware of student education and education-related needs;

- Application research on using SEN and BEN research findings to design education programs and curricula;

- Application researches on using the research findings to design an integrated marketing communications strategy for higher educational institutions;

- Application research on using the proposed TQM model to design a quality management program for a higher educational institution;

- Application researches on using the proposed Strategic Paradigm Model to guide higher educational institutions' reorganization effort;

- Application research on using the proposed Student Decision Model to predict students' decision-making;

- Research on student satisfaction ratings;

- More researches in the area of higher educational institutions and their social responsibilities and accountabilities;