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Classroom (an Abstract)

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# VALUE CO-CREATION AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSOR AND STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM (AN ABSTRACT)

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education is in a transition period with a focus on diversity: the offer of technical courses, technology courses, sequential courses and distance learning has been growing steadily in recent years in Brazil. On the other hand, we have the traditional face-to-face courses offered by Universities, which are in a period of greater instability in relation to their growth. This new scenario drives the University through a moment of organizational and pedagogical restructuring in their way of thinking and acting, driven by the new needs of the educational market, the social context and the labor market (Aléssio, Domingues & Scarpin, 2010).

For better understanding, Universities should be in tune with the “new” skills expected for people entering the labor market, where the quality of higher education in Brazil is intrinsically linked to the identification and fulfillment of factors that clarify the higher education quality level (Paula, 2018; Grasel, 2000). Thus, value co-creation becomes an important tool for Universities in the students' learning process, as it enables the exchange of experiences in the classroom environment, providing students with experiences that resemble the labor market (Nenonen & Huntelin, 2015).

Thus, in the classroom, the use of active methodologies with the exchange of knowledge and experiences between professors and students is fundamental, factors that facilitate group engagement, resulting in their satisfaction (Karns, 2006). Given the above, the present study aims to highlight the importance of the value co-creation theme for the educational market, more precisely for private higher education institutions, and it is possible to think of the classroom in a Postgraduate Course in Administration as a space for reflection and exchange of experiences between professor and student, presenting the following question: *How can the professor-student relationship co-create value in the teaching-learning process, in the Master Business program in a University in south of Brazil?*

In this sense, the importance of this research for marketing management, focused on the educational market, is evidenced in different contexts related to value co-creation in the classroom, enabling multiple experiences and interactions between professor and students, which contribute to the processes of teaching and learning.

## **BACKGROUND**

Appeared in the early 2000s as an offshoot of the term co-production, the value co-creation construct involves interaction between customers and companies, agents whose individual experience adds some value to the product or service (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This phenomenon is relevant in a world of constant change, where organizations, in search of new business strategies, are driven to attract customers and value the network in co-creation activities in order to gain competitive advantage (Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien, 2007).

From the perspective of service marketing, the classroom can be interpreted as a service gathering environment in which phenomena linked to value co-creation can be saliently observed (Brambilla & Damacena, 2012; Chung & McLarney, 2000). In some contexts, co-creation is not only desired but essential to value generation. This is the case with teaching, more precisely in the classroom environment where students should be concerned with the effective outcome of the service by developing expected skills such as cognition and logical reasoning. On one hand, students are concerned with learning (or developing the skills needed for the job market), not simply an approval or fail process (Brambilla & Damacena, 2012). Particularly due to the high level of complexity of the interactions that take place in this environment and the relationship established between the front-line provider (the professor) and the consumers (the students), the experience of teaching a subject in the classroom is characterized as a complex and multidimensional service (Crosby, Evans & Cowles, 1990).

The success in value co-creation in this environment is substantially linked to the conduction of the experience that occurs in it and the evolution of the relationship between the actors involved during the meetings. Nevertheless, it is recognized that the professor, as a front line agent of the higher education institution in this environment, becomes an actor of strong effect on the effectiveness of the service delivery through its interaction with the students (Brambilla & Damacena, 2012; Eiglier & Langeard, 1996). For better understanding, the analysis of professor/students relationships involves intentions and interests, and this interaction is the axis of consequences, as education is one of the most important sources of behavioral development and value-adding element in the members of the human species (Brait et al., 2010).

Thus, interactivity is essential in the educational setting, so that the teaching-learning process can occur, especially through professor or lecturer/students contact. Interaction in education accounts for the construction of desired and necessary knowledge (Abrantes, Seabra & Lages, 2007; Chung & McLarney, 2000). Interaction between professors, student and student groups is a practice that can be co-creative (Brambilla & Damacena, 2012).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research brings a qualitative approach to be more adequate to the understanding of the studied phenomenon, whose method is to use strategies based on social interactions (Vergara, 2009), as well as based on the precepts of Yin (2015), using the case study research. Only one unit of analysis was used (single case study), the classroom of a Master program at a south Brazilian University.

Five doctors/professors and five students were interviewed in the university environment, where the interviews began after the data confidentiality criteria were explained.

In this sense, the research was conducted based on a script of previously established questions, which totaled ten people who represented the Master program of a University located in the southern region of Brazil, called 'Rio Grande do Sul'. Also, this script had open and directed questions that provided the interviewer with the flexibility to sort and formulate additional questions during the interview.

Given the above, the professors and students of the Master program were chosen for convenience, that is, for the ease of contact between the interviewer and the interviewees. For this study, a questionnaire was built with nine open questions about value co-creation in the classroom focused on interactive professor-student relationships. The elaboration of the questionnaire took place through secondary data that were collected in books and articles that deal with the subject. The application of the questionnaire occurred in the last quarter of 2018, being made a prior appointment with the participants of this research. Gil (2009) points out that the process of data collection in the case study is more complex than that of other research modalities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To elucidate the findings of this research, the profile of the professors is initially presented, being three PhDs in Business that teach the subjects of Business Strategy, Quantitative Methods, and Business and International Relations respectively. On the other hand, a professor who has a PhD degree in Agribusiness teaches the subject of Business Research; and, the professor who has degree in Production Engineering teaches the discipline of Financial Management. Still, the students participating in this research were five master's students in business administration, where the choice of students contemplates the two research lines of the Master program which are 'Strategic Marketing Management' and 'Strategic Operations and Interorganizational Relations'.

Given the importance of value co-creation for the value generation for students, we define higher education as a service, in which the institution is the provider of the action of professors and students acts as a consumers. Reports were collected aiming to relate this perception to the real context of the classroom and the interactive relationships between professors and students in the process of knowledge construction. Each contribution will be reported according to the interviewees' speech during this chapter, whose generic identification of the report can be: "professor" or "student".

**Professor 1:** The role of the professor is act as a facilitator. The initial report indicates that in service, co-creation means the involvement of the professor and the student in the teaching-learning process.

**Professor 2:** The best way is when you have dialogue to build something. In this report it is possible to understand the professor's understanding in the process of knowledge construction together with the students.

According to the professors' report, the practices developed in the classroom of this program are innovative, seeking to develop in the student the leading role in the construction of knowledge and consequently the exchange of experiences between the parties involved (professor and student). In addition to the reports collected from the professors, we also collected reports from the students of the Master program:

**Student 1:** Develop the best possible knowledge and bring a reformulated form on this issue of teaching. From this report the student brings reflections on the traditional teaching method proposed by the professors.

**Student 2:** This involvement we all have to enjoy with peers and professors in order to create and deepen knowledge. In this report the involvement between professor and student enables greater contact between all actors involved in the classroom.

For better understanding, the interactive relationships between professor and students in the classroom is, par excellence, the space for professor and student co-create knowledge. It is in the classroom that the most intense interaction occurs between both parties. Thus, in the context of value co-creation in the classroom, the relationships between professors and students are fundamental, since it is through them that existing relationships are expanded and improved.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE**

In the study the interpretation of the results, it is evident that for both professors and students the interaction between them is a key factor for the exchange of experiences in the classroom environment, generating value for all involved partners. This interactions between involved in the learning process is one of the points that arise naturally in an environment that enables value co-creation.

This study identified that professors expect students to be proactive agents in the construction of knowledge. On the other hand, students characterize the professor as a support for development and not as a source of knowledge. Thus, it can be concluded that the importance of joint action is identified in the speeches of the research participants and also in the results of the analysis developed, needing to have an alignment between the interests of the academics and the practices developed by the educators. It would allow a better use of the time spent with classes, streamlining the proposed actions and adding value to the process of knowledge construction.

In terms of contributions, this study suggests the value co-creation process as an important instrument, which enables the interaction between professor and students in the classroom environment, and can broaden the existing relationships between both parties and strengthen them, from the point of view of the knowledge development. Knowledge will come to be built through relationships established over the period comprising the course length in line with critical organizational development for non-mass organizations.

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