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Attributes of Quality Instruction in Business Education based on TQM Principles and Reflections of Selected Graduates in a State University

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Abstract
Instruction is one of the most vital determinants influencing students' academic performance as central to any discussion on quality education at any level. Thus, this study aimed to describe the attributes of effective instruction in business education based on TQM principles and the reflections of selected graduates about their business education experiences at Negros Oriental State University where they earned their baccalaureate degree in business administration. The qualitative method was used in the gathering of data. The findings revealed the following attributes of effective instruction in business education: Caring, Competent, Flexible, Approachable, Creative, Thorough, Focused, Professional Demeanor, and Sense of Humor. Hence, future research endeavors may be pursued to validate the findings of this study and present new perspectives toward a solid relationship between teaching and TQM Principles.

Keywords: Attributes, Quality Instruction, Graduates, Total Quality Management, Students.

Introduction
The importance of education in any discipline does not need overemphasis, but considering the huge resources that the government allocates, and the crucial role of education in the highly competitive labor environment, it is imperative for higher educational institutions (HEIs) to ascertain the quality of instruction to make it more efficient and efficacious. In this light, the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines explicitly provides that "the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all" (Article XIV, Section 1).

At the core of the discussion pertinent to quality, instruction is the central issue, for it is widely believed that the teaching philosophy and the example that college instructors demonstrate have a profound influence on their students. Educators who set a good example are more likely to make a real difference by being able to communicate more effectively what they profess in those students, who are more likely to accept, adopt, and later transfer to practice that which is taught.

In a business school, the quality of instruction is routinely assessed. Yet the researcher has been unable to locate any study on the students' overall business education experience, particularly the quality of instruction. While there is a vast amount of research in the field of education, particularly concerning instruction, a search on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) reveals that there is still a dearth of literature that deals primarily on instruction in business education, and the study that comes closest to the present study is "The Role of Classical and Modern Teaching Methods in Business Education" by Contu (2017). However, the present study focused on the attributes or characteristics of quality instruction and not the teaching methods.

Given the foregoing, this study aimed to identify the attributes of quality instruction in business education based on the reflections of selected graduates in the educational institutions where they earned their baccalaureate degree in business administration.

This study is anchored on the Total Quality Management principles and concepts. TQM is one of the management philosophies emerging in the academic setting. Its applicability is as

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much to the teaching context, the teacher stands in for the manager, the classroom culture for corporate culture, and the student for the customer. These parallels are essential in applying the TQM philosophy to the educational setting. However, despite receiving recognition and acceptance as an effective approach for achieving quality and performance enhancements in the industry (Krone & Maguad, 2009), those academic institutions have started to explore the potential for applying the TQM philosophy to education, according to Waldman (cited in Soltani, 2005), many administrators and educators remain wanting of an understanding of how it can be applied to teaching.

From a business perspective, the essence of the TQM management theory is that the driving force behind it is a relentless daily hunt for opportunities to improve quality and productivity. The concept of total quality improvement means getting every person in a company to evaluate continually and aggressively how every job, every system, and every product can be improved (Bowles & Hammond, 1991). TQM is based on the participation of all members of an organization in improving processes, products, services, and the culture in which they work (Bemowski, 1992). And finally, TQM is a way of doing business that must be instigated by top management and flow as a way of life throughout the organization, to focus on the customer and strive to improve the product, performance, etc. continually, to ensure competitive advantage (Galagan, 1992).

The concept of TQM was developed by an American Management Guru, W. Edwards Deming for improving the quality of goods and services. However, many educators believe that Deming's concept is highly applicable in the academe. Chaffee and Sheer (1992) aver that while TQM has made tremendous inroads in the business sector, it has recently begun to seep into the service industry, particularly education. Today, some higher education institutions in the United States have continuously experimented using the TQM management theory.

There is considerable uncertainty about how to define or discern quality as a concept in higher education. According to Smith (1993), when higher educational institutions were examined in the United Kingdom, quality was defined as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs… (it is) the extent to which a program of study satisfies its customers' expectations *(p. 91).*

Despite considerable deviation, there are many areas of consensus regarding the characteristics of quality education. The definition of "quality" is premised in part upon the concept that, "Quality is fitness for use", according to Mehrotra (2010). Consideration is, therefore, given to how well educational institutions facilitate the transition of the learner in terms of the acquisition of the necessary skills, knowledge, and values. After a review of the various definitions of "quality" from the literature, the definition by Mayhew, et.al (1990) seems to be both appropriate and workable in the context of higher education, of which he expressed that, Quality undergraduate education consists of preparing learners through the use of words, numbers, and abstract concepts to understand, cope with, and positively influence the environment in which they find themselves (p. 29).

This definition is believed to be useful in guiding this study. While it is recognized that quality takes on slightly incongruent meanings in different settings, the key concepts from TQM literature that are useful in framing this study are: Continuous Improvement, Benchmarking, Employee Empowerment, Feedback, Clientele Focus, and Cultural Transformation.

In respect to improving the systems of teaching and instruction, these terms are defined broadly and include many aspects of the teaching role. Ultimately, the words used to describe excellence (or quality) in higher education are of little consequence according to Conrad and Blackburn (1985), who found little difference between the terms used. The key criterion is in striving for higher standards no matter how defined as claimed when it comes to the concepts of excellence and quality… (the) two terms are essentially interchangeable. Like quality, excellence carries with it a dimension of style, not just an outstanding achievement but the manner in which the accomplishment is achieved. Both excellence and quality imply the highest standards and an unwillingness to settle for anything less than that which could be achieved (p. 287).

Yet, one of the key principles of Quality Assurance that helped the Japanese achieve unprecedented business success is the objective of "continually improving" a system, no matter how successful it might be at present. There is no conception of a pre-existing limitation or ceiling which would limit efforts at self-study and improvement. According to Tzannes (1995), the strength of the Japanese Quality Program is the eventual goal of dantotsu - the aim to become the best of the best.

Finally, Green (1993) asserted that it is a truism to say that quality is the touchstone of education. In examining how quality might be defined and assessed in the context of business education, the study will draw upon the theory and practice of quality management. Two key concepts are the "commitment of continuous quality improvement" and the "customer" or "client" as the center or standard in determining progress towards quality.

Methodology

With due consideration to the main objective of this study, a qualitative research method through a phenomenological perspective seems to be the most appropriate. According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), adherence to traditional methods of inquiry has limited access, particularly in respect to the subjective experiences of research subjects. Many scholars have called for the use of qualitative research to help us increase our understanding of human experience (p.150). Moreover, this study was also concerned with the personal interpretation of events that occurred in business schools, as it is important to take a phenomenological approach which is a focus on understanding the meaning events have for persons being studied (p. 3). The characteristics of qualitative research, the primary data-gathering instrument is human contact initiated by the researcher. To understand the experience of others, one must be attuned to the participant's experience and must listen to them as they tell their stories. According to Borg and Gall (2007) much can be learned from human subjects simply by asking for their perceptions (p.3).

In conducting a study of what is being taught and how it should be taught, it is important to consider the experiences of the graduates as they are in the best position to reflect upon their business education experience and consider its quality. This is particularly important as they can draw

upon both their educational and professional experiences to guide their assessment of business education.

Purposive, rather than random, sampling was employed to select ten business graduates as participants. Relevant to this, Borg and Gall (2007) asserted that by purposely selecting a wide range of subjects… the qualitative researcher will be more likely to uncover the full array of multiple realities relevant to the inquiry (p. 386). In the determination of the sample size, Patton (1987) has this to say, Validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-riches of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size (p. 185).

As soon as all the interviews were completed, audio-recorded sessions were reviewed and verbatim transcripts were prepared. Transcripts were also reviewed in detail and key phrases and ideas in response to each question were highlighted. This process helped in identifying the repetition of themes and areas where there are commonalities in the participants' experiences. After the analysis of data, the works of literature were reviewed in greater detail to provide further support or commentary on the findings. Finally, specific quotations from the transcripts were identified and selected as being the most representative of either a general theme or an individual's unique or contrary perspective.

Results and Discussion
The whole issue of effective instruction in higher education has been discussed in several works of literature, but there is resistance by some educators to take the time necessary to review, revise, and improve their course delivery. Moses (2006) asserted that despite a good deal of rhetoric about the importance of teaching, it was still found to receive more rewards than do excellence, traditional scholarship, and innovation in education. As a result, many in the academe have chosen to spend more time developing their research profile at the expense of improving their expertise in teaching.

Relative to the premises cited one of the participants, NORSU Business Graduate 1 or NBG 1, expressed the importance of instruction. Moreover, she stated her concern that other demands on the instructors interfered with the time they were able to devote to the teaching task. She was worried about the effects on the quality of instruction by having rigorous requirements for publication and other involvement in the University.

Continuous Improvement
An essential component of the TQM philosophy is the drive for continuous improvement, with no limits placed on what one can accomplish. The more the goals are stretched. The greater is the likelihood of attaining a higher or performance plateau through involvement, participation, commitment, and effort. The instructor should work not only with improving results but, more importantly, with improving the capabilities of the students to produce better results in the future.

Anent to this principle, the participants have asserted that students expect the instructors to be knowledgeable of the subject area in which they teach above and beyond course objectives. They expect the instructors to have the ability to communicate freely about their subject area; possess a strong background in the area; inspire confidence by serving as a student resource; elicit student interest; and the ability to respond to students' problems. Two of the participants equate the instructor's command of the content to the level of students' trust.

On this note, they affirmed:
"If I believe them to be credible, I will be more prone to trust what the instructors have to say. An instructor needs to be competent in his discipline. This includes the knowledge of the subject matter, as well as being able to be organized and prepared, and being able to give feedback promptly".

The participants also emphasized flexibility as an attribute of two areas of quality instruction: in the instructor's knowledge of how to teach and what to teach; and in the administration of a course. They claimed that:
"In my opinion, life cannot be lived by rigid standards. Flexibility, in some cases, is necessary and helps students feel understood. Flexibility is important for many reasons; an instructor should be flexible in the answers they receive. They should not have one viewpoint of something and not allow people to argue otherwise. If someone makes a logical argument, they should be open to that argument even if it goes against what they believe. Also, it's important to be flexible for deadlines but not too flexible".

The participants also identified the instructor's ability to vary teaching strategies as another attribute of quality instruction and an indication of strong content knowledge. To them, the instructors need to adapt to the learning styles of students, provide different approaches to teaching, and offer a variety of evaluation alternatives noting that not all students perform well in written tests and prefer other forms of assessment.

According to one of the participants, NBG 9 expressed:
"Students learn in many different ways; it's important to deliver the material effectively in as many ways as necessary".

The findings suggest that instructors should have the thrust for continuous improvement. In doing so, they should invariably stretch their goals and ask students to make an unyielding commitment to a cause, be it what they want to learn, the grade they wish to earn, or what they want to accomplish. Getting the students to take pride in higher performance constitutes not only a prerequisite but also catalyzes getting them to stretch their goals. A primary objective may be for the students to get more out of the course than just the coverage of material from a text, and this should be conveyed to them on the course syllabus itself, as stipulated in the teaching objectives.

Benchmarking
With regard to continuous improvement, benchmarking is an essential element of a TQM process of improvement. As Schonberger (1992) pointed out that the instructors establish a benchmark to achieve excellence, and then set out to match and even surpass it (p.16).

To establish a benchmark, the participants believe that instructors should be creative with their approach to teaching, they value instructors who employ a variety of teaching strategies and interactive activities. Creative approaches keep students interested in topics. They make dry abstract content come alive and the majority of the participants clarified that:

"Having a creative instructor helps to make the class enjoyable. When you have a   class which you enjoy going to because it is different all the time and creative ideas are coming out of it, you want to attend and do well".

"It's important to be creative because, as I would assume, most students like to learn interactively rather than just by having an instructor read excerpts of the book. We can do that by ourselves. I feel it's a waste of time to show up to a class where an instructor is just reading me a book".

"Creative instructors use interesting teaching methods that hold attention and offer refreshing variety and spark interest and understanding. They also propose interesting ideas and leave you with something to think about".

The findings are indications that there is a need for college instructors in a business school to establish a benchmark of their performance as well as be creative in doing so. However, in conformity with this TQM principle, they need to base their decisions on data and performance measures, according to Tenner and De Toro (1992) rather than simply describing their instructional approach, it is imperative, in general, to consider adopting the benchmarking element of the TQM philosophy as a framework for improvement.

Employee Empowerment

TQM in a classroom setting involves the college instructors adopting a holistic approach to teaching so that the needs of the students and those of their would-be employers are best served. Germane to this, the participants asserted that "instructors should be encouraged to their responsibility and they are empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for their superiors to tell them what to do".

According to the participants, students expected their instructors to display a sense of confidence and to pass that confidence on to their students. Without confidence, students are left to doubt their knowledge because they doubt the instructional materials being taught. The participants also noted that instructors should be confident in their technical skills and explained that:

"This attribute is important because an instructor who is confident in his/her work and his/her students will raise students' self-esteem and provide confidence to the students".

"An instructor can demonstrate this attribute by using several examples or stories, depending on the type of class, to help demonstrate the point he/she is trying to teach. The instructor can also provide positive reinforcement by giving positive remarks, such as you're all doing great in this course, you're a good class, etc.".

"Confidence in their technical ability and course topic is necessary to impart to students that you only have limited access to. All interactions must be quality interactions".

The foregoing seems to suggest that total quality initiatives require a total effort, a can-do attitude, and, most of all, total involvement. Empowerment, teamwork, reward systems that encourage continuous improvement efforts while eliminating the fear of failure, effective and open communication, and the sharing of common goals are just some of the attributes the TQM philosophy encompasses, according to Babbar (1995).

Feedback

Feedback plays an important role in individual behavior and performance, according to Ashford and Tsui (1991) be

it positive or negative, it is inherently effective. It plays a crucial role in the fostering of goals any TQM-driven effort might aim to achieve, be it in business or education. Similarly, fairness and encouragement serve as powerful motivators in any such context. The level to which the instructor is perceived as being fair by the students can exert a strong influence on their level of motivation, involvement, and effort.

In consonance with the foregoing, one of the participants, NBG 2, believed:

"That instructors ask for suggestions and/or feedback from the students, and then take steps to improve the quality of their services based on what they hear".

The participants have emphasized that being approachable is one good feedback of an effective instructor because they are concerned about the effects of intimidation.

As NBG 8 emphasized:

"The instructor is an expert in the field and we are the students. Therefore, we have lots of questions and need plenty of guidance. Being approachable means that we can help ourselves achieve our academic goals with his assistance".

"Often students are too intimidated to go and seek help because the instructor seems very intimidating. This affects the performance of the student in the subject since they are not comfortable with the instructor and they may feel stressed when confronted in the classroom".

"By removing intimidation, an instructor is keeping those channels of communication open and enhancing the learning process".

Students expected instructors to maintain a professional demeanor when dealing with students' questions, both in person and electronically, according to the participants. Students usually take note of the importance of prompt responses to communication. They expected instructors to be in class on time with well-planned lectures and activities. The majority of the participants affirmed:

"When instructors are on time for lectures, students are eager to get to classes on time as well. If an instructor is always late, students tend to come to class late, which in some cases interrupts classes".

"This characteristic is important because if an instructor is very slack in his or her work,   being late for class, taking a long time to pass back assigned work, and ending classes early every other class, passes on such characteristics to the students. Students will then follow suit by showing up to class late or not going at all then leaving in the middle disrespectfully".

Finally, the participants appreciated a sense of humor as an attribute of effective instruction. It encompasses many facets of the instructor's personality, including having a positive outlook on teaching, being kind and approachable, and building a more engaging pedagogical experience through classroom atmosphere and student-instructor rapport. Participants contended that instructors with a sense of humor help students feel relaxed. As expressed by some of the participants:

"Being able to laugh in the classroom engages more students, even if the jokes are academic".

"A joke lightens the mood and brings people out of their shells. It makes for better relationships between students and instructors".

"Humor helps create a positive environment. If you are too hard of the lesson drones on there is little chance of

memory retention. I remember discussing topics in class more than I remember the lesson that I studied from notes. A bit of humor makes this easier since funny things tend to stick in young memory".

The above findings implied that it is important for instructors to communicate with their students at an individual level. While they may not always be able to remember every student by name, they can easily refer to their students by name when communicating with them through comments they wrote especially in the process of grading their assignments and exams. The instructors should address every student by name on any written feedback he provided.

Clientele Focus

In conformity with Article XIV, Section 1, of the 1987 Constitution earlier cited, the participants unanimously agreed that instructors should be committed to quality education and must show sincere efforts to get students to care about what is taught.

According to the participants, being focused is a characteristic of organized teaching. They noted that instructors should stay on topic and that it is difficult to understand or pay attention when an instructor is not focused on a topic. As one participant, NBG 4 emphasized:

"It's really hard to understand a subject and to pay attention when the instructor keeps going off/on tangents every two minutes. Some topics time is okay and can even help, but every class or multiple times a class makes the subject confusing".

"A focused instructor creates focused students".

"If the instructor is not focused on the course, the content of the progression of the students, then the students themselves won't be".

One participant said that students also wanted their instructors to be thorough. This descriptor refers specifically to maximizing the use of instructional time, avoiding irrelevant material, providing lists of supplementary course materials, and giving tutorials. According to NBG 5, another participant argued, *"I need an instructor who does not waste time, is very clear in expectations and instruction. I have no time to waste. . . I want and need consistent instructors."*

The findings implied that it is imperative for college instructors in business schools to get more involved with students, care about them how much they learn; maintain an open-door policy, and always be there to help them in their effort to improve. All of these will go a long way in establishing the instructor's commitment to students, in conveying this commitment, and in getting the students to put in their best. In turn, this will help get the students to take on more responsibility themselves. As Ciampa (1992) pointed out concerning this TQM principle, the instructors and students must welcome a new level of responsibility and fulfill their obligations. The priority the instructor places on setting an example of caring through timeliness and what extra effort it takes to do so, overrides any other demands placed on his time. Educators must not compromise the students.

Cultural Transformation

On the importance of getting the students to stretch their goals is the shaping and providing of culture for interdependence. Culture is a combination of all intangibles that powerfully direct behavior (Vroman and Luchsinger, 1994).

For this TQM principle, the instructors and their students should be interdependent and value each other, according to the participants. When the participants were asked what they had thought was a necessary part of excellent business education, many referred to the key role played by the instructor.

One participant, NBG 10 replied to this query by saying:

"Instructors who care and instructors who can communicate clearly and who treat the students with respect" are critical".

Another participant, NBG 3, also noted that

"An excellent faculty is critical to an excellent business education but she clarified this statement by adding, ...and when I say that, I mean good instructors as opposed to well-published people who have been high achievers".

Although she recognized that these attributes may not be mutually exclusive, she was concerned that:

"There is a real drive to get people who are considered to be the best and brightest without considering their teaching ability because if you can't pass the information on, it is not much value to your students. Good teaching is the most important thing".

The participants noted the nature of the valued relationship between instructors and students. They appreciated compassionate and understanding instructors of the unique and challenging situations that students sometimes have experienced when enrolled in a course. The majority of the participants commented:

"Instructors should be compassionate about their students, who could be going through rough times or have extended circumstances that require adaption of the normal course requirements".

"A level of understanding is often required in dealing with students. Many students struggle with family or other issues in addition to their subjects. When severe cases arise, it is reassuring to know that instructors are understanding and somewhat flexible, because we all have good and bad days".

The participants singled out instructors who were caring and patient. They described a caring instructor as one who displayed an interest in them, made them feel comfortable, remembered their names, and offered professional help. Patient instructors were those who were willing to answer any questions and explain a concept several times if necessary. Such instructors discovered that all students did not learn at the same pace.

According to a participant, NBG 6:

"It's not always the students' fault that they don't understand. Maybe they need to see things in a different light to process the information correctly".

Without exception, the participants who cited "concerned" as a characteristic of effective teaching, were referring to the instructors' concern for the student's academic success. They noted that students would perform better from an instructor who exhibited an emotional investment in their academic achievement.

One participant, NBG 7 asserted:

"More often than not, students fail to comply with course requirements because instructors do not take the time to help them. If students ask for help, and an instructor takes time to help them, then that instructor cares. Also, good teacher-student relationships are formed".

The findings revealed that if the students were expected to excel, then the faculty members must set a positive example for them and a standard to match. The faculty members must be well prepared, have a strong interest in teaching, be enthusiastic about what he or she taught, and wanted the student to learn. But the best effort to be done is to be knowledgeable, pay attention to detail, have students participate and, most of all, show respect for the students to motivate and involve them. Of all the attributes that can foster quality, what Peters (2009) is most obsessed with is respect for people. In teaching, respect for students is absolutely important to motivate them.

With the foregoing implication, Andrews (2014) stressed that furthering the cause of the organization one works for requires a strong foundation in commitment and ethics. As educators, teachers must go beyond covering the content from textbooks to helping instill in students the desire to make a real difference. Ethics play a crucial part in managerial performance, and the values of a company's leaders are evident in every strategic decision that they make (pp. 99-104).

Through many similar comments made by the participants, the findings of an earlier study by MacFarlane (1997) reflected. He explored the personae of the ideal instructor through the perceptions of students and found out that they never valued the research and writing functions of an instructor.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The reflections shared by the participants in this research led to vital conclusions. Firstly, the approach to data gathering provided students with a clear voice on their perceptions of the professional attributes of an effective instructor in higher education.

Secondly, this study has identified the following attributes of effective instruction in graduate education: Caring, Respectful. Communicative, Compassionate, Understanding, Patient, Knowledgeable, Confident, Competent, Flexible, Approachable, Creative, Thorough, Focused, Professional Demeanor, and Sense of Humor.

Thirdly, the emphasis that the participants placed on the attributes of the instructors indicate the intense importance that relationships play in the teaching and learning process. As Norman (1975) indicated, when you feel good… you are better at brainstorming, at examining multiple alternatives (p. 19). This emotional perspective holds with teaching and learning. The participants also put a premium on instructors who are cognizant and respectful of them as people. They feel better in classrooms that respect their individuality and, therefore, are better people. They feel better in classrooms that respect their individuality and, therefore, are better able to learn. The nature of the student-instructor relationship has also been highlighted in this study.

Finally, the study showed that the participants have a great deal to share about their experiences in business education. The rich data they provided produced compelling results, indicating that students can play an active role in improving the quality of instruction and their learning. Hopefully, the results of this study and those that follow will fuel the debate about effective instructional practice in business education, leading to an increase in the quality of instruction and learning for every student.

Based on the findings and conclusions, this study proffers the following recommendations:

The attributes identified by the participants may be considered for inclusion by business schools in the formulation of policies for the enhancement of instructional practices without prejudice to academic freedom.

The business school faculty should aim to teach more than what the course outline stipulates because students entering business schools are expecting to receive a broader education that would encompass a full range of knowledge and skills. Providing them with a balance of practice and theory could be of help to meet their expectations.

Students should be given a realistic appreciation of the current state of business and entrepreneurship in the Philippines as well as providing them with relevant information on the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes essential for the successful transition to the real world.

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