

Defining Quality Education: What Students Want out of Education?

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ABSTRACT

Most societies assign education a unique place of importance in their national priorities for many reasons. Proper education of its citizens is critical to a society's existence, smooth functioning, and sustained prosperity. It stores accumulated knowledge of the past, enhances it with new innovations, and disseminates it to the next generations for preservation and use in sustaining economic and social advancement. As a result, societies spare no effort and expense to provide high-quality education for their citizens.

However, education quality would have a different meaning for society as a whole as compared to its meaning at the individual level. A society may define quality education in terms of three important components: Knowledge, Skills, and Experience needed for a person to do a job well. On the other hand, individuals may define education quality in terms of what outcomes they expect out of education for their own careers and lives. Therefore, the success of any education effort will depend not only on the contents and delivery of education but also on how happy and fulfilled the students, as the customers, recipients, and beneficiaries of education are with the process.

This paper examines students' career goals and happy-life expectations as consumers and users of education. Further, it would discuss how "what students expect out of education" will impact the definition, measurement, and delivery of education.

INTRODUCTION

Most societies assign education a unique place of importance in their national priorities for many reasons. Proper education of its citizens is critical to a society's existence, smooth functioning, and sustained prosperity. It stores accumulated knowledge of the past, enhances it with new innovations, and disseminates it to the next generations for preservation and use in sustaining economic and social advancement (Joag 2017). As a

result, all societies, developed as well as developing, spare no effort and expense to provide high quality education for their citizens (Joag and Kavil 2014)

After studying various definitions of education, we use the following working definition for this research: Education required to gain expertise in a field or to do a job must be defined in terms of its 3 critical components: Knowledge, Skills, and Experience (Cambridge Dictionary, American Heritage Dictionary).

Interestingly, with rapid developments in sciences, information technology, and artificial intelligence, the very definition of what constitutes education (and its three important dimensions: knowledge, skills, and experience) has become fluid and constantly evolving.

In other words: “What is needed for a person to do a job well” keeps changing at an ever-increasing pace. And so do the techniques of preserving knowledge, and the need for, and tools of learning and applying it.

Defining education quality too is a complex endeavor. Education quality would have a different meaning for society as a whole as compared to its meaning at the individual level (Allen & Reich 2013; Moore and Leckenby 1973). A society may define quality education in terms of three important components: Knowledge, Skills, and Experience needed for a person to do a job well. On the other hand, individuals may define education quality in terms of what outcomes they expect out of education for their own careers and lives. And the success of any education effort will depend not only on the contents and delivery of education but also on how happy and fulfilled the students are, as the customers, recipients, and beneficiaries of education, with the process.

To make definition of education quality meaningful, we must define the purpose of the education first and only then attempt to define its quality as a construct. In other words, we can meaningfully define education quality only for “Education Needed (necessary and sufficient) for a Particular Purpose” such as: to do a Job, to handle a responsibility, or to perform a particular task (Joag 2023).

Realizing the vast scope and complexity of education quality as a subject matter, the scope of this research was limited to: “Defining Quality Education Needed for Business Graduates”

This paper examines students’ career goals and happy-life expectations as consumers and users of education. Further, it discusses how “what students expect out of education” will impact the definition, measurement, and delivery of education.

The rest of the paper presents information about a preliminary survey of undergraduate business students to understand what career expectations they have as the result and pay-off of their education.

THE STUDY

A survey of undergraduate business students was conducted at the end of the Fall Semester. The demographic profile of the surveyed students was as below:

Gender: Male = 70% Female = 30%

Year in Program: Sophomore = 11%, Junior = 78%, Senior = 11%

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Survey Questionnaire constituted an important part of a Career Planning effort for the students. Specifically, the survey investigated “Student Preferences for an Enjoyable and Fulfilling Work” in their chosen careers. Specific Areas of Investigation in the Survey Questionnaire were as below:

Items 1-9: Student Preferences and Expectations about the Nature of Work

1. Choice of the type of position or role
2. Preference for the pace of work
3. Preference for Supervision from Superiors
4. Competitive Environment at Work
5. Nature of Work Routine

- 6-8. Interactions at Work
6. Contact with Outsiders
7. Contact with other employees
8. Intensity and Frequency of these Contacts / Interactions

9. Travel Requirements

Items 10–16: Student Preferences and Expectations about Income and Benefits

10-16. Your Expectations of Income and Benefits

10. Annual Salary (in 000' \$)
11. Vacation (Days per year)
12. Personal Leave (Days per year)
13. Sick Leave (Days per year)
- 14 Family Leave (Days per year)
15. Health Insurance (% employer contribution)
16. Retirement (% employer contribution)

Items 17-20: Demographic Profile of Respondents for Classification Purposes

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Summary Findings of the study are presented below:

Students' Most Preferred Choices of Nature of Work

Nature of Work	% Preferring
1. Position of power to make financial and personnel decisions.	57
2. Work at your own pace and schedule	47
3. Moderate, infrequent, supervision, . Minimal supervision with a lot of freedom to work.	55
4. Some competition for rewards	43
5. Some routine work, some new and challenging tasks	60
6. Some contact with outsiders	64
7. Regular contact, group work with other employees . Some contact, for collaborative tasks with other employees	62
8. regular and frequent contact/interactions	45
9. Occasional Travel	49
	77
	55

Students' Average Expectations of Income and Benefits

Income and Benefits	Average Expectations
10. Annual Salary (in 000' \$)	163
11. Vacation (Days per year)	24
12. Personal Leave (Days per year)	10
13. Sick Leave (Days per year)	9
14 Family Leave (Days per year)	19
15. Health Insurance (% employer contribution)	57
16. Retirement (Employer contribution as % salary)	19

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study are most revealing about what type of work they prefer and expect to be able to do after graduation and what they expect to receive in return in terms of income and benefits.

These results raise some important and critical questions for educators to ponder as listed below:

First, how realistic are business students' expectations about the nature of the work they expect to and would like to do and the income and benefits they expect to receive in return? And if they are not realistic, how to build more realistic expectations as educators guide them through the undergraduate business programs.

Or second, and looking at it from another angle, what type of education business students must receive in school to be able to meet their expectations about the nature work they prefer to do and the income and benefits they would like to receive in return?

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