

## **Students' Expectations Research as an Estimating Base of Educational Services Quality Level**

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Over time the problem of quality work of high educational institutions becomes apparently the most current question to discuss in lecturers and administrators environment in Ukraine. In witness of this there are numerous publications on the subject, organization of conferences and concrete arrangements of Ukrainian higher educational institutions to improve the quality of their services.

A starting point in managing the educational services quality is analysis of expected and perceived services. In purpose of estimation the level of educational services on the base of Regional Communal Higher Educational Institution "Strategy" the Institute for Entrepreneurship, the model of estimation the educational services quality was developed on the basis of conceptual service quality model proposed by the Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml.

The model developed is basing on defining the difference between students' expectations about quality of educational services and their perceptions of the real services level.

The estimation of both expectations and perceptions are conducted by 45 indices joint in 10 parameters of educational service quality. Big number of indices complicates the estimation procedure but it's necessary in connection with complexity and visitation of higher educational services.

Today the given methodic is applied not only in RCHEI "Strategy" Institute for Entrepreneurship, but in estimation of work of some other Universities

of Ukraine also. Such apply in different conditions (city of University, its size and orientation) gave the possibility of check the reliability and validity of the tool.

So the comparison of the research' results has let to define some common characters for different higher educational institutions and confirm the tool's reliability.

This article contains some results of the research concerning the students' expectations and their changes for the whole period of studies.

The data analysis received in the course of the research in 4 higher educational institutions in Ukraine (common selection over 1000 persons) , average expectation level about the educational service quality is very close in different educational institutions independently of their type.

The value varies in the interval from 5.5. to 6.3. Futher in the table 1 there's a comparison of average value of the students' expectations by 10 parameters of educational services quality which were defined in time of prediscovery by focus – group method.

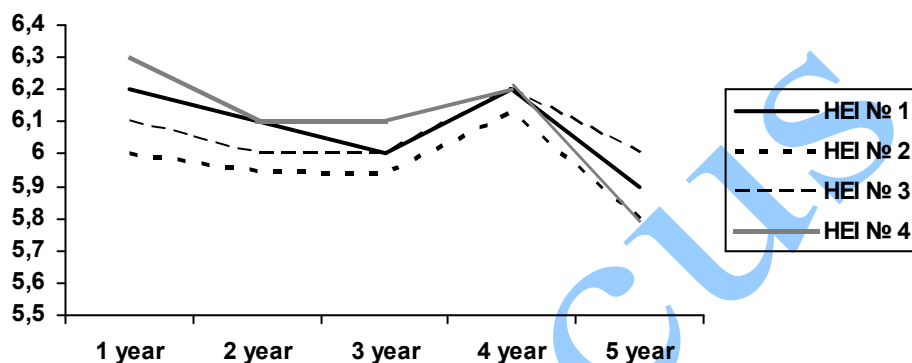
**Table 1. The ranking of student's expectations by the quality parameters**

| №   | Quality Parameter | Average value                      |                                    |                                    |                                    |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|     |                   | Higher educational institution № 1 | Higher educational institution № 2 | Higher educational institution № 3 | Higher educational institution № 4 |
| 1.  | Reliability       | 6.3                                | 6.28                               | 6.32                               | 6.28                               |
| 2.  | Communication     | 6.24                               | 6.15                               | 6.09                               | 6.25                               |
| 3.  | Security          | 6.21                               | 6.14                               | 6.29                               | 6.27                               |
| 4.  | Responsiveness    | 6.18                               | 6.2                                | 6.13                               | 6.2                                |
| 5.  | Understanding     | 6.15                               | 6                                  | 6.02                               | 6.099                              |
| 6.  | Competence        | 6.15                               | 5.93                               | 6                                  | 6.098                              |
| 7.  | Pithiness         | 6.1                                | 5.9                                | 5.96                               | 6.11                               |
| 8.  | Courtesy          | 6                                  | 5.83                               | 5.94                               | 6                                  |
| 9.  | Tangibles         | 5.8                                | 5.71                               | 5.83                               | 5.8                                |
| 10. | Access            | 5.7                                | 5.5                                | 5.73                               | 5.7                                |

As it's seen from the Table 1, the rank of the educational services quality parameters has almost the same results. The difference is only in the factor of responsiveness. Besides, it's possible to notice, that the order of expectation's index value by the different parameters of the quality is also

very close, which says about the existence of the common features in expectations of students in higher education institutions of different Ukrainian regions.

For the demonstration of those common features in expectations, the diagram demonstrating the dynamic of changes in students' expectations in different years of studying should be built.

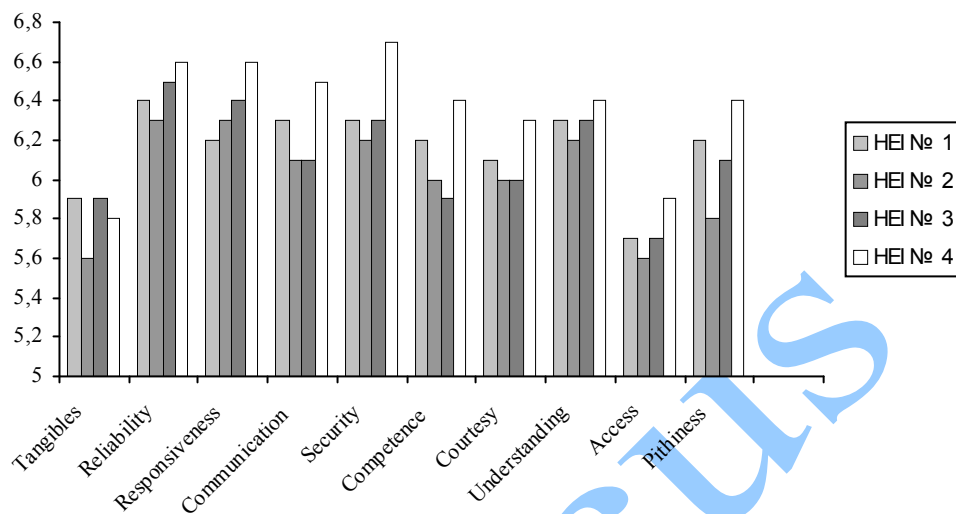


**Figure 1. The dynamic of expectations' changes of different years students from several institutions**

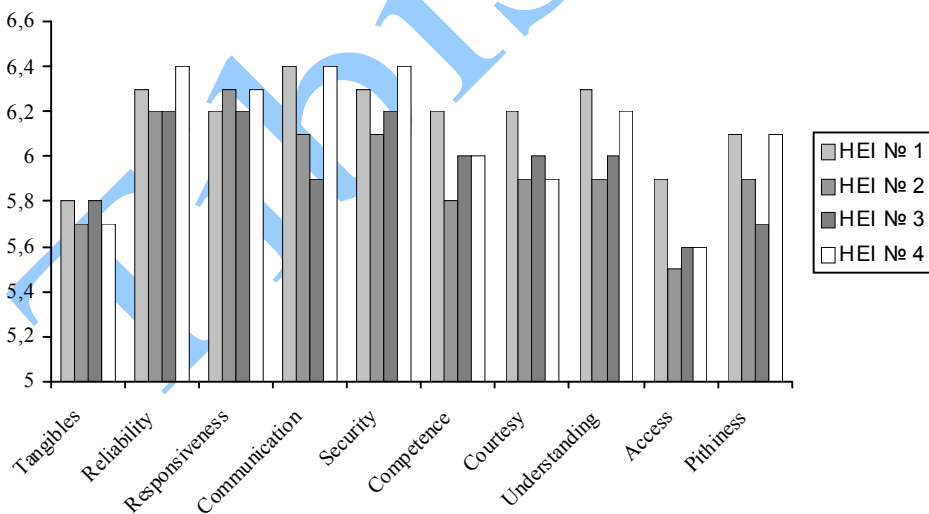
As it may be seen from the graphics, besides of some divergences, there is a common tendency in expectations' changes of the respondents.

On the first year of studies, students' expectations have rather high value. To the second year this parameter insignificantly decreases saving the tendency for the third year. On the fourth year of studies there is an increasing of expectations (requirement to the education institutions) almost the same as on the first year. But on the fifth year (the last one) students' expectations have the lowest value. This tendency itself causes an interest and requires additional researches and studying the reasons of. Probably the best method for such research is qualitative analysis with using the depth interview or focus – group method.

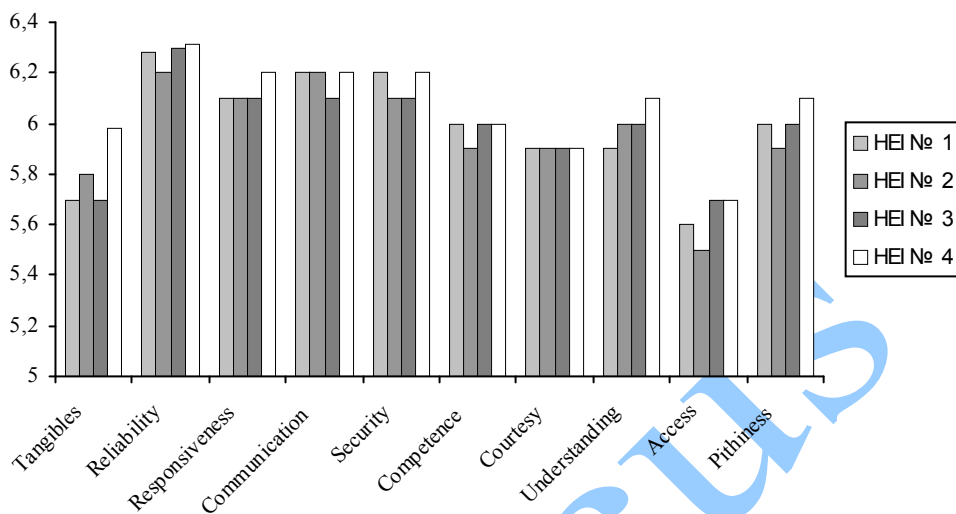
Further on the illustrations 2- 6 there is a comparison of expectations' level of educational services quality of different year's students from several institutions in Ukraine.



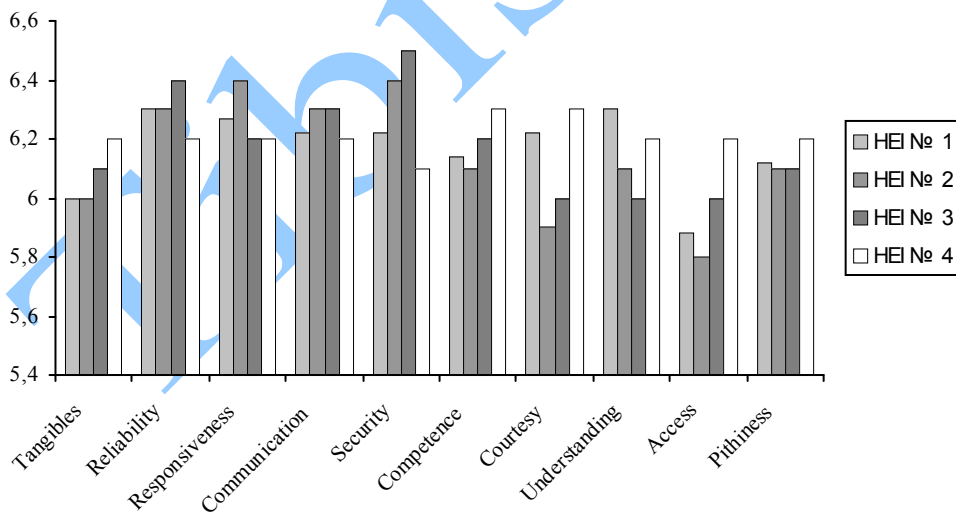
**Figure 2. First year students' expectations level by the quality parameters**



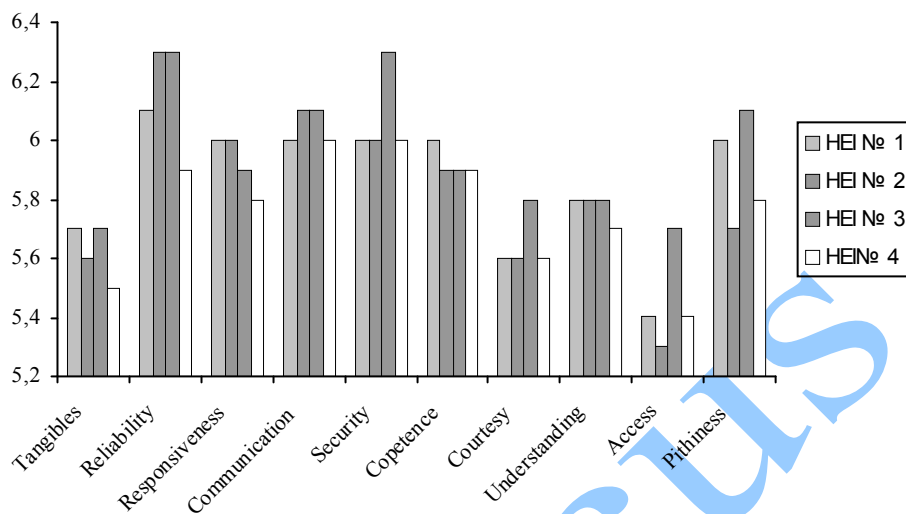
**Figure 3. Second year students' expectations level by the quality parameters**



**Figure 4. Third year students' expectations level by the quality parameters**



**Figure 5. Fourth year students' expectations level by the quality parameters**



**Figure 6. Fifth year students' expectations level by the quality parameters**

As it's seen from the graphics the expectations' level of same year but different institutions' students concerning the educational services quality level are rather close – there is clear tendency in expectations to separate parameters of quality on the first, second, third and fifth year of studies.

The data above shows the necessity of estimating the students' expectations during the whole period of studies because from the point of view of marketing approach to managing the organization, the results of its work have to meet the requirements of the consumers.

That's why considering students as one of consumers' group, the necessity of determination the level of expectations and perceptions is obvious.

The results of such determination give information about what's the most important and actual for the students in exact period of time which in turn gives the possibility to correct the service, paying the attention to most critical factors.

Besides defining the necessity of estimating the level of educational services quality during time, and defining the common tendencies in students' expectations from different educational institutions, it's possible to build the typology of service elements basing on data received.

Similar typology of service elements 'efficiency defines those quality parameters which have maximum and minimum influence on the final estimation of quality level by the consumers.

In general, there were four groups of factors defined:

1. Critical parameters of educational services quality. They are factors, which form the least tolerance zone and influence on the consumer the most.

These parameters have to undertake in attention first of all, because they are based on the minimum of standards acceptable by consumers. These are the factors, which cause the surviving of higher education institution on educational service market. These parameters are:

Reliability – during time the quality of educational service produced is constant.

Responsiveness – adequate and duly reaction to the problems and needs of students, proposing of optimal and comfortable methods of studying when teaching the theory and carrying out the seminars, and practical studying as well.

Communication – in the process of teaching the information is transferred precisely and in understandable and simple form without any barriers.

Security – institution causes trust as a partner in case of quality, timeliness and volume of service provided.

2. Neutral parameters. These elements, on the contrary, create the maximum tolerance zone and do not influence on the students. These parameters concern access – how easy is to reach the educational service in case of place and time of providing.

3. Parameters, which bring satisfaction. These are parameters, which bring satisfaction from the quality level of educational services when real estimation (perception) exceeds students' expectations.

In case when estimation is lower or equal to perceptions – students won't be satisfied, but will perceive these parameters as they come. In other words, if students won't feel satisfied by these parameters, it doesn't reduce the common quality level, but will increase the common quality level at their presence. These parameters are:

Understanding – staff and lecturers of the institution understand perfectly students' needs and establishments' needs in employees.

Competence – institution's experience in educational services providing, the presence of highly skilled teaching structure.

4. Parameters which disappoint. These are parameters that in case of their discrepancy cause negative reaction and low estimation of educational service quality. At the same time, if these parameters meet the students' expectations but there won't be any reaction. The parameters are:

Pithiness - completeness and quality of the maintenance of subjects.

Courtesy – institution' staff and lecturers treat students with respect as a partners in difficult process of studying.

Tangibles – modern and attractive look of institution's building, premises, rooms, appearance of staff, official papers and so on.

## References

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