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ACCEPTANCE OF MARKETING CONCEPT AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS- STUDENT FOCUSED APPROACH

ПРИХВАТАЊЕ МАРКЕТИНГ КОНЦЕПТА НА ВИСОКОШКОЛСКИМ ИНСТИТУЦИЈАМА - ПРИСТУП УСМЈЕРЕН НА СТУДЕНТА

Summary: *Due to the decrease in the number of students, increase in the number of higher education institutions and universities and the reduction of income of budget funds, educational institutions have no choice but to accept marketing concept as a guide in their activities. Acceptance of the student-focused concept is a starting point for a fundamental reform of teaching and curricula at higher education institutions. Since the satisfaction of students in the field of teaching quality, which is directly related to attracting new students, is a source of income for universities, marketing concept can mean a condition of survival. Work on creating a positive image of higher education institutions at all levels of action, and work on increasing the satisfaction of students and being responsible to them are the tasks of the management, teaching and administrative staff and all employees at the University.*

Keywords: *marketing concept, higher education institutions, satisfaction, students, educational services*

JEL classification: *M31, M39*

Резиме: *Услед смањења броја студената, повећања броја високошколских институција као и смањења прихода универзитета из буџетских средстава, образовним институцијама не преостаје ништа друго, него да прихвате маркетинг концепт као водилу у свом пословању. Прихватити концепт усмјерен на студента, полазна је основа за суштинску реформу наставе и наставних планова на високошколским институцијама.*

Будући да задовољство студената на пољу квалитета наставног процеса, које је непосредно повезано са добијањем нових студената, представља извор прихода за универзитете, маркетинг концепт може значити и услов опстанка.

Радити на стварању позитивног имиџа високошколске институције на свим нивоима дјеловања, и радити на повећању сатисфакције студената и према њима се односити одговорно, задатак је менаџмента, наставног и административног особља и свих запослених на универзитету.

Кључне ријечи: *маркетинг концепт, високошколске институције, сатисфакција, студенти, образовне услуге*

JEL класификација: *M31, M39*

1. INTRODUCTION

The competitiveness of higher education institutions has recently become an important worthy of attention factor at all institutions, especially public higher education institutions. Note "Breakthrough" of foreign universities and colleges, mobility and removal of the borders of the scope of higher education has been noted. The privatization of higher education institutions, market operations of the universities, the fight for students, succumbing to market forces require adjustment of public universities, which must abandon obsolete concepts, respecting the social concept of their existence. In the book "The global market for higher education," the authors Tim Mazzarol and Geoffrey Norman Soutar, based on years of research in the field of education at the international level, presented very important results. The authors describe education as a service, subject to market changes. Based on conducted research authors showed that in the 21st century customization to increasing need for high-quality, internationally comparable education and changes in the globalized market services in higher education have been seen as the basis of competitiveness (Mazzarol and Soutar 2011). Considering universities as companies providing services to end users - students, then the basic aim is a satisfied customer-student. In this case, the students are at the top of the pyramid and the employees control and management below them. Satisfied education customer remains at the institution, spreads a positive

image and thus attracts other potential customers. Acceptance of the concept of marketing at higher education institutions is the basis for proper and functional management of these institutions.

The aim of this article is a discussion of the importance of accepting the approach focused on students, and acceptance of the concept of marketing in higher education institutions.

Accepting the marketing concept by all employees at the higher education institution leads to professionalism in relation with the end user - the student.

This issue is important to researchers in the world, while in our country and in the region it is a relatively new topic for discussion. Many world studies have addressed the issue of the impact of student satisfaction on the success and development of the institution. Results of a large number of world studies have shown a significant association between growth and development of the institutions and institutional efforts to increase students' satisfaction.

This paper deals with the following hypothesis: acceptance of the marketing approach focused on the student will lead to improvements in enrollment results, improving the image of higher education institutions as well.

The aim is to show the connection between the application of marketing concepts focusing on relationships with students, improving enrollment results and the satisfaction of students. During the preparation of this paper common methods and techniques of data collection and analysis will be used. Theoretical and empirical analysis will be conducted on the basis of national and international professional literature, and reports and documents of the University of East Sarajevo. The data will be processed by statistical methods and presented in tables and charts.

2. STUDENTS' SATISFACTION

Marketing is one of the most neglected and the least studied areas by public sector employees (Kotler and Lee 2007, 10). We are overwhelmed with a flood of ads from the private sector every day. However, public institutions have been criticized daily. Usually these critics address wasteful spending of public goods. The public sector in any area of its activity has to improve its performance and to adapt to the changes in the society. The globalization of the services market has led to the fact that higher education institutions pay more attention to their competitiveness.

Changes in the educational environment change focus of marketing instruments. Petruzzellis and Romanazzi argue that the lack of care and individual attention for students is an important issue for the management of universities which are facing modern and global competition. For most universities teaching is still basic way of providing services. Quality teaching is still very important, but, as a result of the marketing strategy it should include: the systematic realization of the study in the internal and external environment, analysis of desires, needs and demands of the public, and audit of educational programs structure. In this context, the evaluation of students' satisfaction has become important and significant at the educational institutions in the field of strategy and tactical plans (Orindar 2015, 167-182).

Satisfaction is a feeling of satisfaction or frustration of a person which derives from a comparison of the perceived impact of a product in relation to expectations (Kotler and Keller 2006, 144).

Satisfaction of the students is based on whether the student is satisfied with what the higher education institution offers in terms of teaching quality, learning and working environment, availability of facilities (libraries, etc.), and the environment where students learn and spend most of the time. Will the student be satisfied with what university offers depends on whether the service meets his/her expectations. Student develops expectations according to what he/she heard about the higher education institution from his/her friends, in the media, and the very offer of the institution at the time of enrollment policy promotion.

If the institution promises to provide more than what is actually offered, the student will be disappointed. If the institution does not offer enough, the students will go on to another institution. The point is that what is offered is in line with what is actually provided.

The companies measure customers' satisfaction and that is one of the key elements of their retention (Kotler and Keller 2006, 145). It can be applied to higher education institutions. Satisfied student will speak positively about the university and recommend it to their friends.

There are a number of methods to monitor customer satisfaction, such as: direct monitoring using a "periodic review" and tracking "lost customer rate" (Kotler and Keller 2006, 146).

The most common method used to measure the satisfaction of students is completing the questionnaire, with carefully defined questions. Most investigations of this problem are based on a questionnaire, as a means of data collection.

Teaching quality, academic rigor that will make students develop critical thinking and problem solving, close relations with the institution, personal development, and social life of students in the campus have been identified as the basis of good students' satisfaction. As a result of good students' satisfaction there is an increase in rate of number growth of students at the higher education institutions (Billups 2008).

The research results of measuring the impact of human factors on the students' satisfaction shows that the human factor plays an important role in achieving the satisfaction of students by which these institutions achieve a competitive advantage in the market.

In addition, the analysis demonstrated that quality work of teachers and staff, with friendly attitude of non-teaching staff is the key to success in meeting the needs of students (Ćirić et al. 2015, 17-33).

Experiences of the big universities have shown that the willingness of students to recommend higher education institution to others increases when his/her stay at the university is well managed. Also, relationship between parents and university management leads to a positive recommendation of the university to others.

According to Ogunnaike, Borishade and Jeje universities should adopt an effective strategy for managing relationships with clients to achieve the satisfaction of students, and to provide services at a level that exceeds the expectations of customers through effective management of student life, such as quality assurance and regular communication with the students about their activities at the university.

In addition, universities should maintain a healthy relationship with the parents if they need to talk about problems. This ensures that both parents and students are satisfied. There is a need to establish a strong alumni base for effective monitoring of graduates in their careers (Ogunnaike, Borishade and Jeje 2014, 59).

In terms of international market development of higher education, positive image of the university is a prerequisite for ensuring the quality, credibility and competing advantage.

Image determinants in higher education are given in the following table:

Table 1. Image determinants in higher education

General determinants of brand	Determinant factors of higher education brand
Consumer-university staff relationship	Academic and non-academic performances, Support for students
Size of the university	Positive influence over the reputation and market classification
Availability of information	University curriculum, Extra-curriculum, Posters, Magazines, Local media, Regional media, National media, Radio, TV, Golden Pages, Press Releases, Web
The quality of the university activities	Academic services, Curriculum structure, Academic facilities, Library, General facilities Accommodation for students, The modernity of the premises, Sports facility, Laboratories, The availability of courses, Availability of consulting programs
Study fee	Study fee represents the main source of income for the private as well as public universities and exerts a major influence over the students and their families. At the level of university, fees should reflect the quality of delivered services.
Personality and style	General environment of the university

Source: Diaconu and Dinescu 2012, 7

According to research done by Miljković and Kovačević, there is an optimal combination of marketing mix that would give a positive image of higher education institutions.

In that study it was shown that the quality of educational services was in the first place, and that the other elements of the marketing mix served in order to improve the quality of education services (Miljković and Kovačević 2011, 135-156). Therefore, students' satisfaction is achieved by various combinations of marketing elements, although there are restrictions relating to social, social and demographic aspects of certain society.

3. PROVIDED "PACKAGE" OF SERVICES TO STUDENTS

The service offered by the higher education institution is not just learning and teaching program. This service should also include other tangible and intangible benefits that provide greater satisfaction to the student. Levitt believes that the competition of higher education institutions is not reflected in what they offer in amphitheatres, but in what they additionally offer in terms of: package services, advertising, marketing, financial benefits, process of delivery, etc.

It includes many benefits to students such as the library, access to the Internet, study visits to gain experience, sports and other ways of organizing students, the opportunities provided by distance learning. Each higher education institution should direct the attention to these additional services to get satisfied and happy students, and therefore a better image of the institution.

The criteria that the students consider before applying to a specific academic institution are (SVINOTHKUMAR/marketing-of-educational-services, 2013):

- The reputation of the institution
- Number of applicants who wish to enroll
- The success rate of the institution
- Faculty Expertise
- The breadth of specialization offered
- Infrastructure/premises offer
- The tuition fees

Each university offers students classes, classrooms, libraries and other necessary conditions for education, but the facts that distinguish the university from others are the quality of the teaching staff, quality of learning resources, modernization of facilities and libraries, use of modern study methods (distance learning), providing the entire "package" of services.

Researchers claim that students are mostly satisfied with their academic products, but not with support services. As already mentioned, the universities need to provide other services in addition to academic ones. These support services are crucial for the successful completion of the program of study for many students, and the university itself and they are one of the competitive advantages used by institutions, due to the fact that support services at universities contribute significantly to the satisfaction of students. Amphitheater, classrooms and other university environment are network of elements that affect students' satisfaction. It is therefore necessary to continuously improve the quality of services and realize the value provided or not provided by the competition (Gajic 2015, 71-79).

Research shows that the quality of teaching necessarily implies placing students at the center. In doing so, attention should be paid not only to pedagogical skills of teachers, but also to the conditions of learning and personal needs of students. Students should get help if necessary. Adequate support for staff and students (financial support, social and academic support, support to students from minority groups, counseling, etc.) also improves learning outcomes. Learning in a community - a group of students and/or teachers learning together and building knowledge through intellectual interaction - improves student learning and teacher satisfaction (Henard, Leprince-Ringuet 2008, 41). Today students want new methods of teaching and learning adjusted to their needs and qualifications that will be acquired. They want student-centered approach, approach oriented towards development and success of students. Students want to attend programs accessible and comparable in both domestic and international context.

Reform of curricula and study programs is an ongoing process at European universities, in order to reach a high quality, flexible education programs, which will give clear qualifications and learning outcomes of students. The aim is to strengthen the students and equip them with the skills needed in

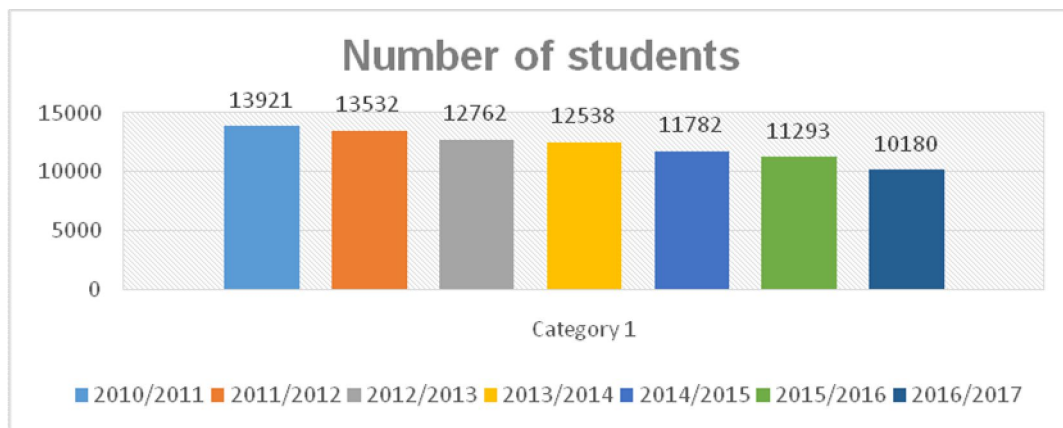
the future workplace. This refers to the specific knowledge in certain areas but also in communication skills, knowledge of information technology, teamwork, problem-solving skills, foreign languages, etc.

4. ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENT-FOCUSED APPROACH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST SARAJEVO

Kotler and Fox advocate the idea that the university is challenged by the fact that potential students make decisions based on quality of service. Different factors of macro and micro environment influence the attitudes, habits and opinions of students and other users of services related to the service of education. In contrast, future students perceive the image of higher education institutions on the basis of small piece or even incorrect information, affecting their decision regarding enrolment. Quality service and success of education institutions in the global market environment depends on the proper application of marketing concepts (Gajic 2015, 71-79). Taking into account literature findings which state that students should solve problems, meaning that their satisfaction will not always be achieved, leading to the situation where commercialization of education threatens the integrity and independence of education and environment where institutions of higher education exist, it can be concluded that the survival of these institutions is a very complex issue. In the conditions of strong competition, globalization, internationalization and massification of education, these institutions are expected to apply responsible approach to business decisions. Existing features of the environment in themselves justify the application of marketing concepts in their business. The needs and requirements of individual users for high quality service, in addition to an effective response to the different needs of society as a whole, challenge these institutions asking more and more demanding tasks, which will certainly be easier to fulfill if they use helpful tools and techniques borrowed from the business sector (Lukic 2015, 6-8).

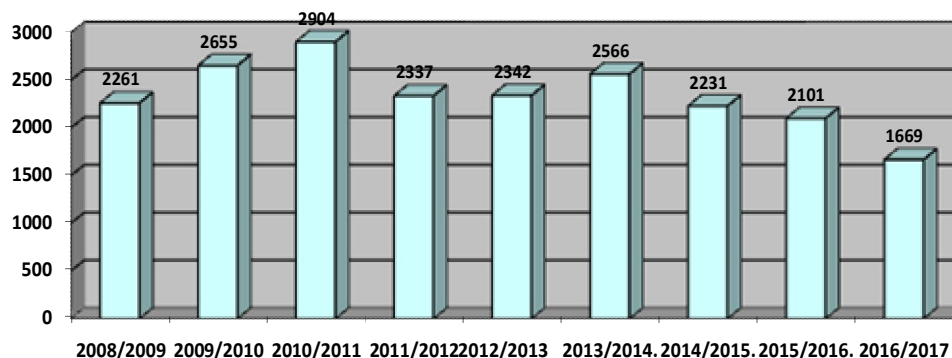
What is faced by the University of East Sarajevo, as well as by other public universities in its environments, are poor enrollment results and students dropout. This leads to a negative trend, i.e. reduction of the total number of students in higher education institutions.

Figure 1. Data on the number of students at the University from 2010 to 2016



Source: Report 2015/16

Figure 2. Number of FIRST REGISTERED students in the first year of the first cycle 2008-2016



Source: Report 2015/16

The table and graph evidently show decrease in the number of students. The constant decrease in the number of students enrolled in the first year of the first cycle of studies in the last four years is also evident.

Table 2. Number of signed out and graduated students at the University from 2010 to 2014

<i>School year</i>	Students enrolled in the first-years	Number of students signed out	Number of graduates	The inflow / outflow of students
<i>2010/2011</i>	2904	764	1478	662
<i>2011/2012</i>	2337	678	1614	45
<i>2012/2013</i>	2342	671	1488	183
<i>2013/2014</i>	2566	799	1515	252
<i>2014/2015</i>	2231	964	1513	-246

Source: Report 2015/16

The table shows the increased number of signed out students from the University in the last three years, while the latest data show that in the academic year 2015/2016 there are 1005 signed out students from the University, which is alarming information indicating that something must be done about it.

The most common reasons for signing out by students are:

- employment,
- difficult financial situation,
- termination of rights under the law for categories of students children of fallen soldiers, disabled war veterans and other categories of student disability benefit and pensions,
- transfer to other universities in the region.

Increase in the number of signed out students and reduction of the number of enrolled students, with regular graduation of students from the University, lead to a negative trend in the total number of students at the University.

Rules on Student Evaluation of the Quality of the Studies at the University of East Sarajevo determine the following:

(1) Study programs are reviewed and controlled by students of the University through electronic student survey at the end of each semester, in accordance with the Rules on Student Evaluation of the Quality of Studies. The main objective of the student evaluation is the expression of students' opinions

on the quality of study programs, subjects within the programs, functioning of organizational units and pedagogical work of teachers and staff.

(2) The results of student evaluations are used for regular monitoring and control of the quality of the teaching process, as part of the general policy in the field of quality assurance at the University (Rules, 2011).

Student e-surveys are conducted every semester and give a picture of what student are satisfied or dissatisfied with.

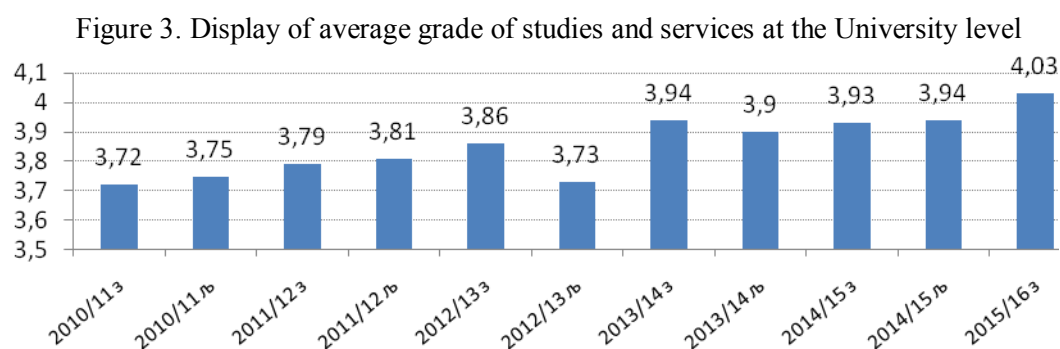
Interviewing students in all organizational units of the University of East Sarajevo in the winter semester of the 2015/16 academic year, was aimed at customer satisfaction in higher education - students, organization of the study program, the work of the service at the faculties and academies, performance of all individual courses attended in the winter semester of the academic year 2015/16, as well as educational work of all teachers and associates involved in the subjects that have been assessed (Report 2015/16).

The results of student surveys are given in the table below:

Table 3. Table of average scores of studies and service to the University level

Average studies and services	School year	Semester	Maximum number of participants	Number of respondents	The percentage share (%)	Total Average Rating
	2010/11	winter	8262	1928	23,34%	3,72
	2010/11	summer	8811	2109	23,94%	3,75
	2011/12	winter	8424	2648	31,43%	3,79
	2011/12	summer	7760	2581	33,26%	3,81
	2012/13	winter	7687	3383	44,01%	3,86
	2012/13	summer	7732	2971	38,42%	3,73
	2013/14	winter	7484	3218	43,00%	3,94
	2013/14	summer	6417	2448	38,15%	3,9
	2014/15	winter	6415	2929	45,66%	3,93
	2014/15	summer	6266	2386	38,08%	3,94
	2015/16	winter	6371	2905	45,60%	4,03

Source: Report 2015/16



Source: Report 2015/16

The student survey shows an evident increase in satisfaction of students compared to the previous surveys, with greater participation of students in the survey. However, low participation of students in the survey is evident generally. Students are indifferent and are not interested to participate or to bring about concrete change and improve their student life. Within the overall evaluation, the students evaluate individual teachers, teaching organization, the work of student services and other administrative services, library.

What the main objections of students and the areas the students are not satisfied with are: poor supply of library units, library fees, ex-cathedra teaching, excessive dictation and writing in lectures, avoidance of ICT in teaching, poor infrastructure of some university buildings regarding poor conditions of hygiene, heating, poor means of transport, etc.

One of the objections of the students at the University is ex-cathedra teaching. Students point out that the courses are taught in a way which is overcome at the European universities. A large number of students attend both lectures and exercises, making difficult interaction of professors and students. Lectures are not creative enough, and there is a lot of the dictation and writing.

Canadian scientists, led by Nobel Prize winner for physics Carl Wieman, have spent twelve weeks following lectures for physics students. Students have been therefore divided into two groups. The first group consisting of 267 students had ex cathedra lectures, and they were led by an experienced teacher who was previously praised by the students.

The second group of 271 students was led by a young assistant professor. In contrast to the more experienced colleague who passed on knowledge to students in a form of classical method, docent opted for interactive teaching dividing students into small groups and encouraging discussion.

The results show that students from the second group often came to classes filled with more enthusiasm. Also, during the final examination they achieved significantly better success which showed that they adopted material satisfactorily. "The secret is in the interactive teaching, the researchers concluded in the study, which was published in the journal Science" (Metro-portal 2011).

The question is what exactly happens after the students' survey and after recording of students' problems.

Are the problems mentioned by the students solved?

If the problems stated by the students are not solved, and if students do not have feedback about it, maybe that is one of the reasons why many students do not respond to regular electronic surveys, although that is the way they can handle their problems encountered in the course of their studies.

As an example of good business marketing decisions at the University of East Sarajevo in the last decade, the example of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering will be shown.

After the catastrophic enrollment results at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, significant marketing promotion enrollment has started since 2009, initiated by the academic staff and students.

Enrollment results after the promotion of the Faculty are given in the following table:

Table 4. Student enrollment at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in the first cycle of studies in the first year of the study period 2001-2010

<i>Year</i>	Students enrolled in the first-years
<i>2001/02</i>	12
<i>2002/03</i>	14
<i>2003/04</i>	23
<i>2004/05</i>	30
<i>AFTER THE PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES</i>	
<i>2009/10</i>	61
<i>2010/11</i>	83

Source: Report 2015/16

It is evident that there is a significant increase in student enrollment after the application of marketing promotions by the Faculty.

Saturation of the study programs leads to poor enrollment results. As an example of good marketing decisions and quality of market research and public opinion, we can mention the introduction of a new Study program of Forestry and new Department of the Faculty of Agriculture in Bijeljina in 2010 and 2011, which led to an increase in the number of enrolled students as follows:

Table 5. Number of students enrolled in the first cycle of studies in the first year of studies at the Faculty of Agriculture in 2008-2011

<i>Year</i>	Students enrolled in the first-years
<i>2008/09</i>	45
<i>2009/10</i>	63
<i>AFTER THE INNOVATION</i>	
<i>2010/11</i>	153
<i>2011/12</i>	198

Source: Report 2015/16

Acceptance of the marketing concept in higher education and student-centered approach will lead to improvements in enrollment results and improvements in the image of higher education institutions. This was demonstrated in this paper, particularly in the case of the University of East Sarajevo. What can be stated as a recommendation is that it is necessary, during the introduction of new study programs or improving existing study programs, to preliminarily assess satisfaction of students in these programs, to identify gaps and opportunities for their improvement and thoroughly carry out market research and the need for certain profiles. Regarding the enrollment policy, it is necessary to plan promotional activities involving students. Practice has shown that if the enrollment policy and innovation in programs of study are not thoroughly planned, the study programs are not attractive, they are without enough number of students, and thus are too expensive and cannot survive. Also, it is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of the reasons for student leave from the faculty/academy. Reducing the number of students at this institution suggests that steps must be taken in adopting a different approach to students putting them in the first place, because they are the reason for higher education institution's existence.

5. CONSLUSIONS

Globalization of the world market of educational services imposes higher education institutions a different approach from the traditional, based on modern methods of learning and modern approaches towards student. Acceptance of a new modern concept of education is one of the conditions for survival and development of educational institutions.

The above leads to the following conclusions:

- Acceptance of the marketing concept in higher education institutions is the basis for proper and functional management of these institutions. Attract and retain students are the tasks for management of higher education institutions and all teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Regular examination of the satisfaction of students and work towards solving their problems and improvement of student life are needed, although the measurement of satisfaction of students through student surveys showed no connection with the signing out of students from specific universities. It is necessary to regularly activate students to participate in the survey and experience it as a way of solving their problems.
- Managing student presence and her/his activities at the university will result in his/her stay at the institution, focusing on students and the quality of programs offered, and the application of marketing concepts. It is needed to solve their problems.
- In enrollment policy, it is necessary to plan promotional activities involving students.
- Prior to the introduction of new study programs or innovation of the existing ones, it is necessary to examine the satisfaction of students in these programs and make a thorough research of the market and demand for certain profiles.
- It is necessary to strengthen the development of interactive learning and educational factors such as the quality of teaching and curricula, to synchronize the output profile with demand in the labor market, and also to provide the necessary conditions for learning and stay at the university.

- With regard to the specific service institution providing its services directly to the customer, all university staff, especially the staff that communicates directly with students, must be trained in the spirit of marketing with a clear understanding of the mission and vision of higher education institutions with the approach focused to the student. This means that the student is in the foreground, and that goal is to satisfy student who will talk positively about the university. Academic staff must know that the ultimate goal is student - qualified for the labor market and satisfied with the service he/she has been provided by the university. Administrative staff must be professionally trained and at the service for users.

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