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PATRÍCIA SILVA MONTEIRO BOAVENTURA

**DEFINING STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN HIGHER
EDUCATION**

SÃO PAULO
2016

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Dissertação apresentada à Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, como requisito para obtenção do título de Mestre em Administração de Empresas.

Campo de conhecimento:
Administração Mercadológica

Orientadora: Prof^a Dra. Eliane Pereira Zamith Brito

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Ao meu marido Laercio, que me apoia
incondicionalmente.
Aos meus queridos filhos Guilherme e Gustavo,
inspirações da minha vida.

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“No one educates anyone, no one educates himself/herself, men educate each other, mediated by the world” (Paulo Freire)

RESUMO

A participação dos clientes tem sido estudada ao longo de décadas; no entanto, ela ganhou uma perspectiva pós-moderna em torno do ano 2000. Os clientes tornaram-se cocriadores de experiências personalizadas, movendo-se da plateia para o palco. No contexto educacional, os alunos devem assumir a responsabilidade por seu processo de aprendizagem e participar da produção do serviço. Esta mudança tem gerado desafios e oportunidades para as instituições de ensino superior (IES) redefinirem suas relações com seus *stakeholders*, especialmente com os estudantes. Este estudo baseia-se na perspectiva da lógica dominante de serviços (SDL), porque os alunos assumem o papel de cocriadores do conhecimento no ambiente educacional. A pesquisa utiliza *frameworks* e conceitos adaptados de estudos de organizações de serviços intensivos em conhecimento (KIBS) e também de estudos médicos para avançar na compreensão da cocriação de valor no contexto das IES. O estudo tem objetivo de definir os conceitos de participação do aluno e de “empoderamento” no contexto do ensino superior. Uma investigação empírica foi desenvolvida com escolas tradicionais no Brasil. Esta investigação permitiu a descrição dos construtos no contexto específico. A descrição da participação dos alunos nesse contexto reflete a relevância de três dimensões - compartilhamento de informações, interação pessoal e comportamento responsável. No contexto brasileiro, comportamento responsável é a dimensão mais fraca do construto, porque as responsabilidades estão desequilibradas entre alunos e professores. Os principais motivos identificados para este desequilíbrio foram questões culturais e de regulamentação local. O “empoderamento” do estudante foi descrito como composto por quatro dimensões - significado, competência, impacto e escolha; no entanto, uma delas - escolha - foi identificada como a dimensão mais fraca, enfrentando barreiras culturais e burocráticas para uma adoção mais forte no contexto educacional brasileiro. Adicionalmente, os entrevistados espontaneamente citaram a confiança no corpo docente como importante antecedente da participação do aluno que deve ser considerada quando se analisam os mecanismos de participação e “empoderamento”. Como contribuição adicional foi proposto um *framework* teórico para a compreensão na perspectiva da lógica dominante serviço no contexto de IES, no qual a participação dos alunos e o “empoderamento” dos alunos foram explorados como mecanismos que podem levar a um comportamento dos alunos mais positivo em relação à instituição.

Palavras-chave: cocriação de valor; instituições de ensino superior; lógica dominante de serviços; “empoderamento” do aluno; participação do aluno.

ABSTRACT

Customer participation has been studied for decades; however, it gained a postmodern perspective around the year 2000. Customers have become co-creators of personalized experiences, moving from the audience to the stage. In the educational context, students must take responsibility for their learning process and participate in the production of the service. This changing is providing opportunities and challenges for higher education institutions (HEIs) to redefine their relationship with stakeholders, especially with students. This study is based on the service dominant logic (SDL) perspective because students are assumed to take the role of co-creators of knowledge in the educational setting. The research uses adapted frameworks and concepts applied in organizational, knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) and also medical studies to advance the understanding of value co-creation in the HEI context. The current study addresses a lack of research in the higher education context focusing on defining students' participation and students' empowerment in higher education context. An empirical investigation was developed with traditional schools in Brazil. This investigation allowed the description of the constructs in the specific context. The description of student participation in HEIs context reflects the relevance of three dimensions – information sharing, personal interaction and responsible behavior. In the Brazilian context, responsible behavior is the weakest dimension in the construct, because the responsibilities are unbalanced between students and professors. The main reasons identified for this unbalanced relation were cultural issues and local regulation. Student empowerment was described as composed by four dimensions – meaningfulness, competence, impact and choice; however, one of them – choice – was identified as the weakest dimension, facing cultural and bureaucratic barriers for implementation in the Brazilian educational context. Moreover, interviewees spontaneously cited the idea of trust in the faculty as an important antecedent of student participation that must be considered when analyzing student participation and empowerment mechanisms. An additional contribution was the proposal of a theory-based framework for understanding the service dominant logic perspective in the HEI context, in which student participation and student empowerment were explored as mechanisms leading to positive student behavior toward institution.

Keywords: co-creation of value; higher education institutions; service dominant logic; student empowerment; student participation.

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1 Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are experiencing an increased turbulence across the globe. More established markets are dealing with budget pressure, and institutions in many developing economies are facing the challenges from managing a rapid growth in HEI provision (Chalcraft 2015). In Brazil, there was a growth in the number of private HEIs during the last decades, aiming to guarantee a greater access to higher education. According to the 2008 census, published by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research-INEP, 89% of Brazilian HEIs were private institutions, and 75% of students' admissions occurred in private institutions. Despite all that growing on offering, the enrolling rate was still very low, getting the average of 13,6% of the 18 to 24 years old population; and with huge discrepancies among geographic regions (Northeast 8,2% versus South 18,6%) (Speller et al. 2012). Besides, the annual dropout rate averaged 23.4% for private schools and 11.7% for public schools from 2006 to 2010, according to the higher education census published by INEP (Silva & Sauaia 2014).

The quality of education has been an issue discussed worldwide (Economist 2015) and is, in Brazil, one of the primary challenges to government and private institutions, together with higher education access and dropout reduction (Speller et al. 2012). To guarantee higher education access, to reduce dropout and to improve the quality of education are among the elected priorities for higher education in Brazil. Moreover, the dropout problem seems to be related to the quality of education (Silva & Sauaia 2014). Nevertheless, factors that may contribute to increase enrolling rates and to reduce dropout rates¹ have been little studied by researchers (Speller et. al. 2012).

Furthermore, HEIs have undergone a challenge to shift from an instruction to a learning paradigm during the last decades aiming to get a higher quality in the educational experience. In the instruction paradigm, the school aims to teach, taking responsibility for the quality of the lectures and talks (Barr & Tagg 1995). In the learning paradigm, the student is considered to be at the center of education (Webber 2012). This change is expected to provide opportunities for students and HEIs to re-model their relationship; however it has been permeated with challenges that are not easily overcome, and institutions are struggling to successfully incorporate this mindset. The current research intends to address a lack of studies in the higher education context, despite its social and economic relevance (Morosini et al.

¹ Percentage of students that do not finish the course

2011), adding experiences from other areas of study in order to advance the understanding of the HEI context.

The higher education system can be considered a service encounter between professors and students (Chung & McLarney 2000; Mavondo et al. 2004). In this context, institutions need to create conditions so that students can be active in the learning process.

Services are defined as heterogeneous, intangible and the production and consumption of many services are inseparable experiences (Parasuraman et al. 1985), characteristics that can be applied to higher education institutions (HEIs) because, no matter how much the professor tries to conduct classes in a consistent pattern, the outcomes may differ depending on the students and variation in the ambience. The educational experience is built through interactions between professors and students, who become involved in the class, bringing their experiences and perspectives. These interactions make the education experience what it is (Chung & McLarney 2000).

This study is based on the service dominant logic (SDL) perspective because students are assumed to take the role of co-creators of knowledge in the educational setting. The transfer of ownership as the primary and only focus of the transaction is not the dominant model of exchange anymore (Sheth & Usley 2007). In the new SDL context, value formation is based not only on companies' competence, but also on the environment that is composed by, for example, customers' skills, competence and culture, since the market is inseparable from the value creation experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). The SDL relies on the fact that value is accumulated during the process and not only at the end of it; that customers are active in creating value and it is crucial that interactions can happen between the customer and the firm so that value can be co-created (Gronroos 2011).

The co-creation of value perspective is based on the idea that there is no value if the customer does not incorporate the product into his/her life (Gronroos 2011). Then, value is always determined by the beneficiary and companies cannot deliver value but only offer value propositions (Vargo & Lusch 2008).

The study adopts the perspective of co-creation inside the classroom and it is supported by the idea that the main task of professors in management education should be to co-create knowledge through new ideas, concepts and insights that may be transmitted to members of society by active students (Holbrook 2006). Value is co-created during the learning process; the co-creation of value permeates this study as a perspective that should

permeate the strategic decisions of institutions that want to differentiate in the current context of higher education.

The co-creation of value perspective assumes that customer participation is intrinsic to the process. Customer participation is not a new concept in the relationship between customers and organizations. Customer participation had been studied over the decades in order to provide a better understanding of how companies could get better results through higher productivity (Bendapudi & Leone 2003; Mills & Moberg 1982; Mills et al. 1983; Fitzsimmons 1985). The initial emphasis changed over the years, and according to the co-creation of value perspective, customer participation has been studied aiming to promote opportunities so that customers can impact strategic decisions, getting a more active role in the process (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Concepts such as customer empowerment became more frequent in the marketing literature (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000) and needed to be incorporated in the customer participation discussion. Customer empowerment can be defined as: 1) making customers competent to contribute to the experience; 2) making them feel they are influencing decisions in the business; 3) making the experience meaningful to them; and 4) giving customers the opportunity to make decisions and choices during the process.

The study uses adapted frameworks and concepts applied in organizational studies, knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS²) studies and also medical studies to advance the understanding of how customer participation and empowerment can occur in the HEI context, leading to more value creation.

Organizational studies consider empowered employees as a source of value creation to all stakeholders. In KIBS' studies, customer participation is considered crucial to value creation. Medical studies contribute with knowledge on how empowered patients can be more active in participating to create more valuable experiences.

And, despite not being a direct focus of this study, students' participation and empowerment levels are expected to influence positive behavioral intentions towards institution - recommendation to friends, intention to return to take another course and intention to finish the course. The positive behavioral intentions would be strong allies in the reduction of dropout rates and in the increase in the enrollment rates in HEIs.

² "Knowledge-intensive business service (KIBS) firms are enterprises whose primary value-added activities consist of the accumulation, creation, or dissemination of knowledge for the purpose of developing a customized service or product solution to satisfy the client's needs (e.g., information technology consulting, technical engineering, software design)" (Bettencourt et al. 2002)

The study is organized as follow: First the evolution in perspectives regarding the service market is presented and key constructs are defined, followed by a discussion of the constructs. The study then proposes a theory-based framework of how student participation influences behavioral intentions through the leveraging mechanism of student empowerment in HEIs context. The next topic explains the methodology adopted to investigate and describe the students' participation and students' empowerment in HEI context; and describes the empirical research developed to understand and define how student participation and empowerment occur in HEI context. In the results topic, the findings of the empirical investigation were presented and discussed. The research ends with a final discussion and the overview of future opportunities related to the subject.

The current study contributes academically to the progress of the research on marketing for higher education and service marketing. An extensive literature review was conducted to clarify the concepts in the marketing for the HEI context. Some dimensions in both concepts were identified as not having strong initiatives: students' responsible behavior in student participation; and choices in students' empowerment. And the possible reasons for the lack or reduced number of initiates were presented: cultural barriers and strict institutional rules.

To managers of HEIs in particular, and of highly relational services in a more broader sense, the research contributes to the understanding of how they should organize their business, engaging and empowering their customers to attain higher customer behavioral intentions, and consequently higher value co-creation. Besides the economic motivation, some services, such as medical services and educational services, face huge social challenges and this research also contributes to public policies development through the understanding of how to involve and enable patients and students to be successful in their active roles in society. Healthcare services need patients' participation and involvement in their treatments so that a better outcome can be reached. Educational services need to engage students inside and outside the class so that knowledge can be co-created and consequently be transmitted to society. The management practice and the literature on service marketing and in marketing for higher education need to incorporate customer empowerment as a crucial variable to the service context, addressing the challenges of dealing with it.

2 Literature Review

This section presents the ideas that underlie the research realized. The first part explains the shift in perspective regarding markets from a traditional perspective centered on the product or service provider to a new SDL perspective. An overview of challenges in the higher education system is then presented. Next, the customer participation and customer empowerment literature are reviewed and applied to the HEI context, setting the groundwork for the final discussion.

2.1 Shift in Market Perspectives

The dynamics of the service market have changed remarkably; customers' competences, willingness to learn and ability to engage actively have become relevant to the competitive advantage of service companies and to customer satisfaction (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000).

Dominant in the 1990s, the relationship-marketing concept brought the customer to the center of the relationship, promoting the identification of solutions and reconfiguration of services based on a deep understanding of the customer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000). Relationship marketing allowed providers to become more knowledgeable about customers' needs, facilitating customization; however, the services to be provided remained the primary focus of organizations.

In the early 2000s, companies faced a massive change from a company-centered perspective influenced by customers' needs, to a perspective focused on the co-development of personalized experiences. Vargo and Lusch (2008) state that "value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary", and "the enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions". Thus, the role of companies changed, and they now face the challenge of facilitating value creation, co-creating value with customers through the exchange of information and experiences (Grönroos 2011).

Under this new reality, providers are expected to co-create services and products in collaboration with their customers (Echeverri & Skalen 2011), and the offer is likely to increasingly become a process into which customers can immerse themselves and can provide input (Firat & Venkatesh 1993). In addition, the perceived roles and responsibilities of both marketers and customers are broadened under the value creation perspective, and value takes on a much broader meaning, including not only the exchange value but also, for example, value in use (Sheth & Uslay 2007), which increases the focus on the whole experience.

In this new logic, customers' skills, competence and culture play a fundamental role, and the interactions between customers and the service provider during the whole process become more important than the transaction itself (Vargo & Luch 2004). Cooperation³ and customer education⁴ became extremely important for the success of the outcome, achieved through customer participation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000; Grönroos 2011).

Customer participation has been studied throughout the decades to provide a better understanding of how companies can attain better results through higher productivity and how customers can attain higher satisfaction (Bendapudi & Leone 2003; Mills & Moberg 1982; Mills et al. 1983; Fitzsimmons 1985; Bowers et al. 1990; Song & Adams 1993). More knowledgeable customers were considered capable of increasing the quality of the interaction, getting more involved, reducing costs and increasing their satisfaction (Bowers et al. 1990; Kelley et al. 1990). Training customers to use service innovations, acquire knowledge about the process and know how to use the service responsibly was mentioned by some researchers as crucial to the success of implementations and to consequent increases in productivity (Lovelock & Young 1979; Mills & Moberg 1982; Fitzsimmons 1985; Bowers et al. 1990). The initial emphasis was on training customers to actively contribute to the process, not on empowering them to impact strategic decisions.

Nevertheless, customers, and consequently market relationships, have changed throughout the decades, and customer participation gained a social dimension because customers are no longer prepared to accept experiences developed only by companies; they want to shape those experiences themselves, counting also on experts and other customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000). In addition, the emergent idea that the product is subordinate to the experience and that customers judge products not by their features but by the degree to which a product or service delivers experiences they desire (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000) changed the way the customer's role as partial employee was addressed; in addition, study and application of customer participation took on a broader perspective (Firat et al. 1995; Firat & Venkatesh 1995).

Customer participation through the co-creation of value perspective became a way to achieve stronger relationships (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000), and strategies such as "customerization", which permits the sale of a product before it is produced, became sources

³ Cooperation occurs when both customers and companies work together to achieve mutual goals (Anderson et al. 1990)

⁴ Customer education refers to offering information and shaping customer expectations (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000)

of competitive advantage, creating opportunities for customers, individually and collectively, to influence companies' policies and strategies (Wind & Rangaswamy 2001).

In the HEI context, the co-creation of value perspective relies on the learning process. Students are active participants in the process and co-creators of knowledge rather than recipients of information as they were under the traditional teaching model (Brambilla & Damacena 2012; NG & Forbes 2008; Barr & Tagg 1995). This change in educational perspective can be equated with what has happened in the healthcare context, in which patients' education evolved from compliance-oriented instruction to an empowerment approach, which sought to increase patient autonomy (Feste & Anderson 1995). The medical literature helped marketers and researchers to start understanding how patient competence awareness is also essential for enabling patients to make informed choices in the current health care market (Ouschan et al. 2000). The health care industry reinforced the idea that customer empowerment is crucial to enhance involvement, especially in cases that call for preventive behavior (Roth 1994). The health care studies related to the goal of customer empowerment can be extremely relevant for services managers and for advances in marketing research, including relevant insights for the current discussion.

2.2 The Higher Education System

HEIs serve multiple customers including students, parents, employees, and society (Marzo et al. 2007; Chung & McLarney 2000). In the context of higher education, the facilitation of learning is an intangible and interactive exercise developed by students and professors; and, in this relationship, students are one of the most important stakeholders, receiving the focus of the current study.

According to Barr and Tagg (1995), HEIs have undergone a challenge to shift from an instruction to a learning paradigm during the last decades. In the instruction paradigm, the school aims to provide instruction, i.e., to teach, taking responsibility for the quality of the lectures and talks. Conversely, in the learning paradigm, the school's mission is to produce learning, and the students are the co-producers of learning and must take responsibility for that learning. Both agents are responsible for the outcome and neither of them has total control of the process (Barr & Tagg 1995). Educational institutions must enable empowered students to be at the center of the education process and must adopt a customer-oriented perspective (Kindlein & Schwaiger 2015). Students must be empowered to co-create learning experiences and knowledge.

In the learning paradigm, the student – that is, the learner – is considered to be at the center of education, and for this reason, many researchers refer to this paradigm as learner-centered education (Webber 2012). However, significant debate continues about whether and how universities adopt learner-centered education and how they can encourage students to engage in the co-creation of knowledge.

This changing servicescape is providing opportunities and challenges for students and HEIs to re-model their relationship. HEIs need to understand the implications of value creation in this context, and many questions have arisen in the process. What is value creation from the point of view of HEIs' stakeholders? What are the expectations of service users? What is the “product” that HEIs are offering? The expected result is the re-definition of the relationship between HEIs and students (Chalcraft 2015). Fleishman mentions that the degree of co-creation in HEIs might range from low-level co-creation (consumption) to medium-level co-creation (collaboration) to high-level co-creation (co-design), depending on the context or student characteristics, and HEIs may take these differences into consideration (Fleischman et al. 2015).

Advancing this debate and deepening the understanding of students' participation and empowerment concepts in the higher education context is the goal of the current study.

2.3 Customer Participation

Customer participation in the service industry is the degree to which the customer is involved in producing and delivering the service, and it can reach different magnitudes. The level of customer participation required in a service experience varies across services (Bitner et al. 1997; Bowen 1990; Dabholkar 1990). In some situations, customers have essential production roles that, if not fulfilled, will affect the nature of the service outcome. All forms of education, training and health maintenance fit this profile (Bitner et al. 1997).

Bendapudi and Leone (2003) present a summarized chronological review of the literature on customer participation, showing the evolution of this concept in the market. Table 1 shows our updated version of their chronological review.

The review shows how customer participation evolved from a point at which customers could customize some products and services or cooperate with companies, aiming to increase productivity, to a buyer-centric model in which customers take an active role, aiming to impact a company's strategy and decisions. Studies around the 1980s and 1990s regarded customers as a company's partial employees and companies prepared these

customers to assume some roles in the delivery or production process (Lovelock & Young 1979; Fitzsimmons 1985; Mills & Moberg 1982; Mills et al. 1983). This customer/company interaction was believed to increase customer involvement and consequently customer satisfaction with the outcome. The result was also expected to be positive for companies because customer involvement usually leads to an increase in productivity and higher profit.

The postmodern perspective brought new insights to this relationship, and customer participation attained a more strategic role, according to some studies around the year 2000. Companies aiming to differentiate their offer adopted a buyer-centric model in which customers need not only to participate but also to feel active in the production process so that the customer experience can achieve a higher value through co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Customers should now be prepared to participate more actively and influence companies' strategies. Concepts such as co-creation and customer empowerment became more frequent in the marketing literature (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000) and needed to be incorporated in the customer participation discussion.

In studies focused on KIBS, customer participation refers to the customer's willingness to offer constructive feedback, comply with rules, follow providers' instructions, provide inputs and make joint decisions during the service delivery (Santos & Spring 2015; Dellande et al. 2004; Yim et al. 2012; Eisingerich et al. 2013). Customer motivation is mentioned as one of the enablers of customer participation, together with expertise and role clarity (Bettencourt et al. 2002; LengnickHall 1996; Mills & Morris 1986; Dellande et al. 2004). If customers have unclear knowledge about their roles (Bettencourt et al. 2002; LengnickHall 1996; Mills & Morris 1986), do not know the tasks they have to execute, and do not know their responsibilities (Dellande et al 2004), they may be limited in their ability to participate. In addition, customers need to be motivated to participate from the beginning (Dellande et al 2004). HIEs can also leverage student participation through these mechanisms.

Table 1- A chronological review of the literature on customer participation

Author	Focus	Nature of study	Findings and conclusions
Lovelock and Young 1979	Consequences of customer participation in production of services	Conceptual	Customers can be a source of productivity gains.
Mills and Moberg 1982	Organizational technology needed to manage the services sector as opposed to the goods sector	Conceptual	One key difference between the two sectors is the customer/client's role in the production process. Customers can contribute to increased productivity in services and must be prepared.
Mills, Chase and Marguiles 1983	Managing the customer/client as a	Conceptual	Greater customer involvement in the production process can be a source of

	partial employee to increase system productivity		productivity gains. Customer input needs to be monitored and assessed the same way as regular employee input.
Fitzsimmons 1985	The consequences of customer participation on service sector productivity	Conceptual	Customer participation may yield greater service sector productivity. Technological innovations depend on customers' acceptance and training for usage.
Czepiel 1990	The nature of the service encounter	Conceptual	Customer participation in the production process may affect customer satisfaction.
Bowen 1990	Taxonomy of services based on customer participation	Empirical	Participation is meaningful for describing services. It may be possible to segment customers on the basis of their willingness to participate in service creation.
Bowers, Martin and Luker 1990	Treating employees as customers and customers as employees	Conceptual	Treating employees as customers through internal marketing and customers as employees through training and reward systems enhances productivity.
Kelley, Donnelly and Skinner 1990	Managing customer roles when customers participate in service production and delivery	Conceptual	Customers may be managed as partial employees when participating in service production and delivery by focusing on customers' technical and functional quality input to the process. Customer socialization is a method used to manage the behavior of customers.
Dabholkar 1990	Customer participation to enhance service quality perceptions	Conceptual	Customer participation may influence perceptions of quality.
Firat and Venkatesh 1993	The reversal of consumption and production roles	Conceptual	Among the postmodern conditions discussed is the reversal of consumption and production as customers take on more active roles in production.
Song and Adams 1993	Customer participation in production and delivery as opportunities for differentiation	Conceptual	Customer participation should not always be examined merely as a cost-minimization problem. Instead, firms can examine opportunities for differentiating their market offering by heightening or lessening customers' participation in the production and delivery of products.
Firat and Venkatesh 1995	The distinction between the customer perspectives of modernism and postmodernism	Conceptual	The modernist perspective confines the customer by arguing for the "privileging" of production over consumption. Postmodernism provides a basis for understanding a greater customer role in production as well as consumption.
Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh 1995	A postmodern perspective of customer as customizer and producer	Conceptual	As customers have become customizers, marketing organizations' offerings will increasingly become processes rather than finished products. Customers who are integrated into the production systems will need to be conceptualized as producers.
Hult and Lukas 1995	Customer participation in health care	Conceptual	Classifying health care tasks in terms of customer participation and the complexity of the task has important implications for marketing the services.
Lengnick-Hall 1996	Customer contributions to quality	Conceptual	Customers influence quality through their roles: as resources, as co-producers, as buyers, as users, and as product. Garnering customer talents in these roles can yield competitive advantages.

Raaij and Pruyn 1998	Customer control and its impact on judgments of service validity and reliability	Conceptual	Customers may perceive more or less sense of control in three stages in the service relationship: input, throughput, and output. The greater the sense of control, the more customers will feel responsibility for and satisfaction with the service.
Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000	Coopting customer competence	Conceptual	The role of customers is changing from passive audience to active co-creators of experience. Customer competence can leverage a company's competitive advantage.
Wind and Rangaswamy 2001	Customerization: The next revolution in mass customization	Conceptual	In the digital marketplace, customers are becoming active participants in product development, purchasing, and consumption. Firms must become customer centric and adopt "customerization" to add value.
Lee and Koh 2001	Empowerment, as distinguished from similar constructs	Conceptual	The definition of empowerment has to integrate aspects of both behavior and perception. It can be defined as the psychological state of a subordinate perceiving the four dimensions of meaningfulness, competence, self-determination and impact and is affected by empowering behaviors of the supervisor.
Dellande, Gilly and Graham 2004	How to gain consumer compliance with the directives of health care providers	Empirical	Specific customer attributes were identified that promote or lead to acting or complying (role clarity, ability, and motivation).
Auh, Bell, McLeod and Shih 2007	Co-production and loyalty in financial services	Empirical	The link between co-production and customer loyalty was investigated in the financial services context, supported by an investigation in the medical context.
Cova and Dalli 2009	Emphasis in the sociocultural dimension of customer participation	Conceptual	Customers work and are active in the value creation process. Customers work to feel satisfied and socially recognized; they do not necessarily obtain economic benefits.
Chan, Yim and Lam 2010	Customer participation in value creation, and satisfaction for customers and employees in a professional financial service	Empirical	Customer participation increases economic and relational value, but it also leads to a shift in power, consequently increasing employees' stress. Cultural value has a moderating effect on the relationship between customer participation and value creation.
Echeverri and Skalen 2011	Value formation as not only associated with value co-creation but also with value co-destruction	Empirical	Qualitative empirical study of the practice of provider/customer interactions from the employee perspective. Practices were identified that lead to the co-creation and co-destruction of value when interaction occurs. Value is bidirectional.
Yim, Chan, Kimmy and Simon 2012	Customer participation as not the sole key to customer satisfaction; the importance of value co-creation	Empirical	Customers and employees with more confidence in their capabilities to participate in the service co-creation process perceive more value from customer participation, feel more comfortable, and are more willing to put more effort into overcoming difficulties or obstacles encountered than those with low self-efficacy.
Eisingerich and Merlo 2013	Customer participation (i.e., customers' willingness to provide the firm with constructive feedback and suggestions)	Empirical	Customer participation is another form of spontaneous and cooperative customer behavior that can ensure that satisfied customers continue spending or buying from a service firm.

Santos and Spring 2015	Customers' ability levels and willingness to participate as a segmentation criteria for KIBS providers	Empirical	Certain conditions must be in place for customers to participate in the delivery of knowledge-intensive, customized services, such as KIBS. Customers need to be clear about their roles, know the tasks they have to execute, and know their responsibilities.
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Source: Developed by the authors, based on Bendapudi & Leone (2003) and other studies

Student participation can be characterized as occurring during a service provision in which both provider and customer performance affect the service outcome (Auh et al. 2007; Bitner et al. 1997). The concept of participation can be thought of as having three broad dimensions: information sharing, personal interaction and responsible behavior between the two parties (Ennew & Martin 1999).

2.4 Customer Empowerment

“Empowerment is a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to matters of social policy and social change” (Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988). Empowerment is a multilevel construct that may be applied to organizations, communities and social policies (Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988); however, the customer empowerment I mention in this study refers to the application of this construct at the level of the individual. Empowerment at the individual level, also known as psychological empowerment, can be described as the connection between a sense of personal competence, a desire for action, and a willingness to take action in the public domain (Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988); it “includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfill the goals” (Zimmerman 1995). This study focuses in a specific situation of psychological empowerment, namely customer empowerment.

It is important to mention that the definition of psychological empowerment has evolved over the years, especially after Conger and Kanungo (1988) started to criticize the use of the term as authority delegation and defend its use as a motivational construct. The authority delegation view considered simply the transfer of power; this view was restricted to the behavior of the superiors delegating power and did not consider that the subordinate needs to be enabled to successfully develop the task (Lee & Koh 2001).

Despite the increased need to comprehend customer empowerment so that companies can differentiate and co-create more value during the whole customer experience, there is a lack of service marketing frameworks on customer empowerment. However, relevant medical

literature on patient empowerment (Ouschan et al. 2000) addresses customer empowerment in a specific context. Patient empowerment clearly presents a suitable starting point for learning about customer empowerment because it is not only a topic relevant to marketers in a position to help doctors empower their patients but also offers a perspective on how professional service providers in high customer-contact services, including banking, tourism, education and other services involving complex or long-term relationships, can empower customers in service encounters (Ouschan et al. 2000).

The health care industry is an example of how customer participation occurs and how customer empowerment has developed over the years. Customers in the health care system are currently characterized as actors in the network, just as the health care providers. All participants are considered to exercise their control, power and influence over the network, and they base their activities on direct or indirect control over resources, with control also being a function of knowledge (Hult & Lukas 1995).

However, the relationship is not restricted to an increase in customer power and control; health care providers and patients have engaged in a joint effort to create value in the exchange process. In health care services, to obtain quality, value, and performance levels that are acceptable to all involved actors, it is essential that the patients participate in the decision-making process (Hult & Lukas 1995). Customer empowerment has to permeate all processes in the health care industry and is crucial to a positive outcome.

In the medical literature, patient empowerment is defined as a process designed to educate patients so that they can develop skills, attitudes and self-awareness to effectively assume responsibility for their health-related decisions (Feste & Anderson 1995); both patients and doctors share responsibility for the treatment and outcome, and patient education is essential to the process.

The manner of educating patients also changed following the changes in the environment. The traditional programs do not prepare the patient sufficiently to assume an active role. “A compliance-oriented health education program is designed to reduce patient autonomy and freedom of choice. In contrast, the empowerment approach to health education seeks to increase patient autonomy and expand freedom of choice” (Feste & Anderson 1995). In a traditional health care program based on compliance-oriented education, patients receive information about how to carry out prescribed recommendations. Conversely, in the empowerment approach, patients are prepared to act as equal and autonomous members of their healthcare team; they learn enough about their disease and gain self-awareness about

their health values, needs and goals. Recommendations are tailored to the patient's life rather than the reverse (Feste & Anderson 1995).

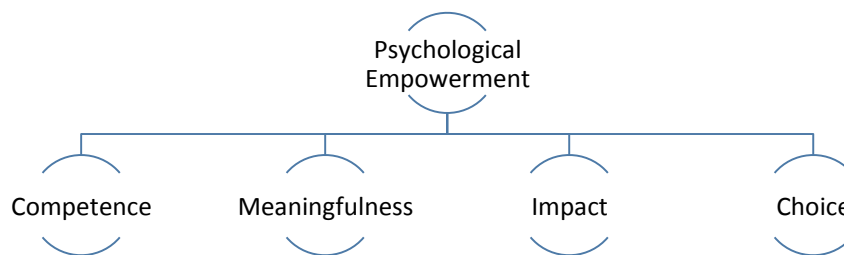
Zimmerman (1990) argues that psychological empowerment is an open-ended construct because it varies depending on the person, on the context and possibly over time (Zimmerman 1995). The author proposes that psychological empowerment is composed of intrapersonal, interactional and behavioral components; these components merge to form a picture of a person who believes that he or she has the capability to influence a given context, understanding how the system works in that context and engaging in behaviors to exert control in that context (Zimmerman 1995). According to Zimmerman (1995), the main point is that empowerment is a multidimensional construct and its components should be jointly identified and analyzed for a true understanding and measurement of empowerment. In his study, Zimmerman tested components of psychological empowerment in a voluntary service organization, and he reinforced the importance of adapting the variables for studies in other services.

Considering the customer's new role as a partial employee, I also gained insights from organizational behavior literature because the customer/company relationship can be considered similar to the employee/company relationship in certain ways. In organizational behavior literature, Conger and Kanungo borrowed some concepts from psychology and defined empowerment as a motivational construct meaning to enable rather than simply to delegate (Conger & Kanungo 1988). Thomas and Velthouse, Lee and Koh, and Kirkman and Rosen built on Conger and Kanungo's work on psychological empowerment and affirmed the definitions of Zimmerman (1990) and Seibert et al. (2011); they concluded that empowerment is a second-order multidimensional construct composed of four dimensions: impact, self-efficacy/competence, meaningfulness, and choice/self-determination (Thomas & Velthouse 1990; Lee & Koh 2001; Kirkman & Rosen 1999) (See Figure 1). Impact refers to a behavior that makes a difference in terms of accomplishing the task. Competence refers to the personal skills for developing the task. Meaningfulness refers to the value of the task in relation to the individual's own ideals. Choice involves responsibility for the person's actions (Thomas & Velthouse 1990).

Some contextual and individual characteristics were identified as the antecedents of psychological empowerment; moreover, attitudinal and behavioral consequences were defined as outcomes of the construct (Seibert et al. 2011). Maynard et al. (2012) reinforced the idea that empowerment is a second-order construct and confirmed its antecedents and

outcomes. The described studies focused on employee psychological empowerment, but they can be extended to customer psychological empowerment especially because I am considering that customers are taking the role of partial employees. Also supporting this approach is Garbarino and Johnson's (1999) application of models from organization theory to define the nature of customers' commitment to organizations.

Figure 1 – Empowerment Dimensions



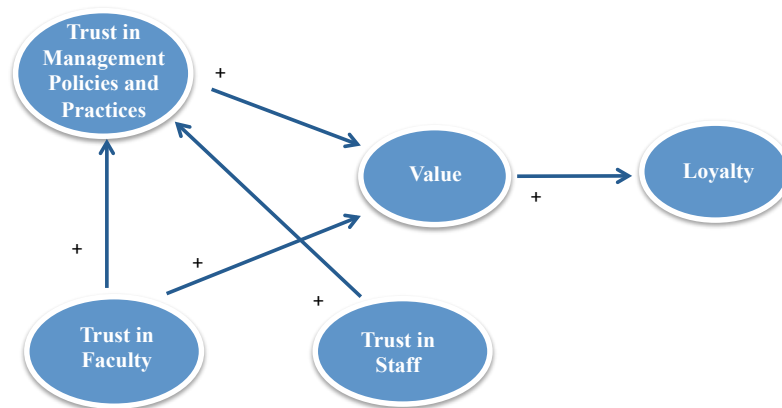
Source: Based on Thomas & Velthouse (1990)

2.5 Highly Relational Services - Proposed Framework

Following the market changes, the expectation is not only that customers' roles change but also that changes occur in how customers evaluate services and in their behavioral attitudes towards these services. The new market dynamics increased the challenge for researchers and managers to understand and manage how customer participation influences customers service evaluation and behavioral intention (Czepiel 1990; Raaij & Pruyn 1998; Cronin et al. 2000).

The understanding of student motivation to participate in his/her educational experience and the effects of students' interactions with the institutions on their behavioral intentions are relevant to the HEI context (NG & Forbes 2008; Brambilla & Damacena 2012). In the higher education literature, studies of student loyalty to HEIs analyze trust as an antecedent of the service evaluation that influences students' loyalty (Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002; Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota 2010; Sampaio et al. 2012). In education, perceived value is shown to be a better predictor of service evaluation than satisfaction, mediating the relationship between trust and loyalty, as illustrated in Figure 2 (Sirdeshmukh et al 2002; Sampaio et al 2012; Carvalho & de Oliveira Mota 2010).

Figure 2– Value Mediating Trust and Loyalty in HEI Context



Source: Sampaio et al (2012)

However, beyond the fact that the effects of customers' own performances on service evaluation are extremely relevant in services that are interactive, because customer performance is a variable affecting the outcome (Czepiel 1990), the current models that explain students' perceived value and loyalty do not consider student participation as an antecedent of service evaluation, and indirectly of behavioral intention. An additional contribution of this study, it is the proposal of a theory-based framework in which student participation positively affects student behavioral intention toward the institution, and student empowerment is an allied mechanism to leverage student participation effect.

Cronin et al. (2000) validated a holistic model of service evaluation affecting customer behavioral intention, but the customer participation construct was not mentioned in their research. The role of customer participation in service evaluation and behavioral intention in HEI context must be considered. Cova and Dalli (2009) argue that an increase in customer involvement in service production and/or delivery leads to a higher perceived value. More committed individuals will be more involved in their roles and consequently more efficient. Moreover, the involvement and identification with the role impact customers' expectations and satisfaction; more involved customers will identify more with the partial employee role and will consequently be more satisfied (Kelley et al. 1990).

Chan et al. (2010) proved in an empirical study in a high credence service that customer participation increases economic and relational value, consequently increasing customer satisfaction. They confirmed that customer participation leads to higher customer satisfaction through an increase in economic and relational value. The questionnaires were applied in two different cultures so that a cultural moderator could be analyzed, and the answers were based

on respondents' opinions. Based on these theoretical discussions, customer participation is proposed to positively affect behavioral intention. And, despite the relevance of important mediators, such as service evaluators (satisfaction, service quality, perceived value), the intention here is propose a reflection related to the effect of customer participation in the outcome behavioral intention, through the following proposition:

P1: Customer Participation positively influences the Behavioral Intention

In highly relational services, customer empowerment is proposed to leverage the customer participation effect because customer participation is intrinsic to the context and customer performance is one of the variables affecting service evaluation (Czepiel 1990). Patients, for example, can participate in the process at different levels (Hult & Lukas 1995), and to obtain higher quality, value, and performance levels, they must develop the skills, attitudes and self-awareness needed to effectively assume responsibility for their health-related decisions (Feste & Anderson 1995). An empowered patient leverages the service performance. Customer empowerment is expected to modify the relationship between customer participation and service evaluation, consequently influencing behavioral intention in highly relational service context. In contrast to the great majority of research focused on understanding antecedents and affective reactions to psychological empowerment, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) investigated psychological empowerment as a moderator of the relationship between perceived over qualification and performance outcome (Maynard et al. 2012).

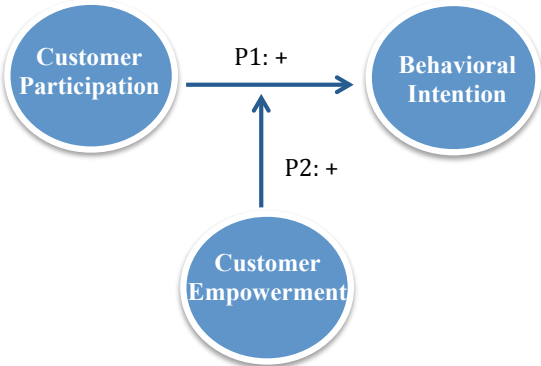
The theoretical discussion reinforces that customer empowerment leverages the effect of customer participation on customers' behavioral intention in a highly relational service context according to the following proposition:

P2: The degree of perceived Customer Psychological Empowerment positively influences the relationship between Customer Participation and Behavioral Intention

Student participation and empowerment are mechanisms with a relevant, positive impact on behavioral intention and on the co-creation of more valuable experiences for all involved actors. Considering these insights, a framework is proposed as an additional contribution of the study, to the literature on services marketing and Figure 3 depicts the proposed relationships. The framework illustrates how the concepts are expected to affect

behavioral intention according to a theoretical background. I also must mention the existence of the antecedents of customer participation – motivation, role clarity and expertise, despite they are not represented here.

Figure 3 –The Proposed Moderating Effect of Psychological Empowerment in Service Provision



Source: Developed by the author

3 Methodology

The research involved the qualitative analysis of the phenomenon. There was a need for a more consistent understanding of the phenomenon and a tailored definition of customer participation and empowerment concepts, particularly considering the higher education context. A qualitative investigation was essential to support the phenomenon occurrence in the educational environment. Student participation and student empowerment were theoretically introduced, and empirically described through a deep understanding of the phenomenon in the field. The qualitative investigation led to the description of the phenomenon occurrence in the educational environment, as well as the identification of its specificities, such as the applicability of the theory driven concepts and also some of their relationships.

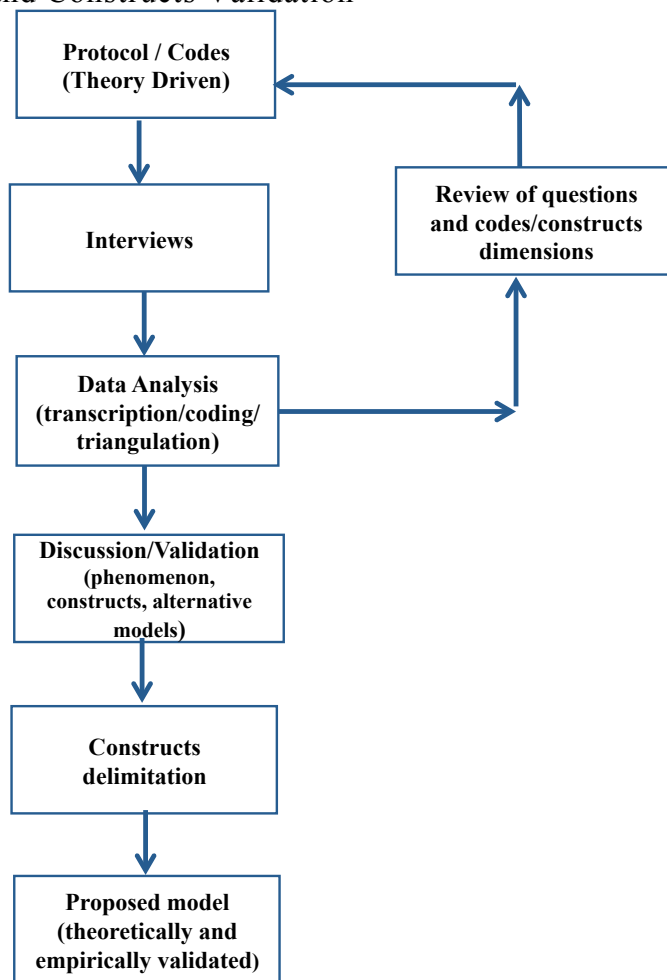
I worked on a theory-driven qualitative study with the intention to gain more explanatory inputs to the context (Miles et al. 2014). The focus was to explore the meaning and the level of students' participation and empowerment concepts in the higher education context. One mechanism adopted in the interviews, for example, was to identify their initiatives to increase student's participation and empowerment in higher education courses. The qualitative research aimed to promote a better understanding of the phenomenon through the lens of the respondent in his/her specific context, so that these insights could be aggregated to offer a more complete perspective and to provide a way to understand potential differences related to specific characteristics of students or institutions (Belk et al. 2013). I intended to explore the phenomenon's occurrence in the specific environment, and deepen the understanding of how institutions plan an environment promising student participation and empowerment, so that the constructs and their levels could be detailed and defined.

Furthermore, the insights permitted the identification of which instruments and methodologies institutions and faculty members adopt with the aim of enhancing student participation and empowerment. Webber, for example, defends learner-centered assessments as a strong tool to help learner-centered adoption by educational institutions (Webber 2012). A more contemporary definition defends the idea that assessments must be seen as activities designed primarily to foster student learning and not as a way to evaluate students' comprehension of factual knowledge, being coherent with a more learner-centered perspective. Then, assessment practices are often labeled "learner-centered assessment" techniques, and the current research explored, for example, if and how this approach is

adopted in the investigated institutions as a way to promote learner-centered educational initiatives.

As I explained before, I guided and framed the analysis by pre-existing ideas and concepts. I deduced particular explanations from general theories and the qualitative phase aimed to check whether the circumstances I observed actually corresponded (Gibbs 2007). However, I kept an open mind to new insights that may have influenced the research, leading to changes and adaptations of the general theories to the specific investigated context. See Figure 4 for the structure of activities developed in the research.

Figure 4 - Model and Constructs Validation



Source: Developed by the author

3.1 Data Collection

The in-depth interview facilitated the co-construction of the understanding on the topic of interest and was appropriate to generate narratives related to the specific research question (Crabtree & Miller 1999). Possibly there was information that the respondents may

would not be able to articulate, but that could be shared with the interviewer in the conversations during the interviews (Belk et al. 2013).

Since I know what was the phenomenon I was aiming to understand/evaluate, prior instrumentation were recommended (Miles et al. 2014) and the interviews were conducted following a protocol (Belk et al. 2013). I proposed the interview questions aiming to cover aspects related to all categories that I intended to investigate. The protocol was composed of questions that seek to elicit understanding of the conditions and initiatives of institutions so that a learner-centered perspective can be adopted, as well as, student participation and empowerment can be developed. Despite the protocol, a conversation with the interviewer was encouraged, not a question-and-answer session (Fischer et al. 2014). The protocol was prepared with a set of topics instead of a set of questions (Belk et al. 2013), as it can be seen at Appendix 1, and additional topics were introduced during the conversations depending on specific issues that appeared during the interviews and were specific to the interviewee role in the institution. Interviews lasted around 60 minutes and I did all interviews, transcription and data analysis.

The interview is a discursive method that through a communicative format aims to promote knowledge about the institution being studied (Denzin 2001). The conversations were also captured through field notes. I took notes mainly in the field or immediately after, in order to record key words, phrases and actions undertaken by the respondents (Gibbs 2007). I converted the field notes into expanded write-ups (Miles et al. 2014). Moreover, I recorded the interviews, asking prior permission of the interviewees. And afterwards, I transcribed the audio recording into text (Miles et al. 2014). I also collected observations related, for example, to school installations or extra materials, such as school manuals and guidelines, and this information contribute to the analysis. I analyzed the data simultaneously with the data collection, so that I could evaluate and adapt the interview strategy and protocol when needed (Miles et al. 2014). Inputs from the field contributed to the adoption of a more comprehensive approach during interviews. The adoption of different research procedures for data collection (field notes, audio recording, extra materials collected, observations) promoted the triangulation of data, through the acquisition of different views and leading to a more accurate understanding of the subject (Gibbs 2007), consequently increasing the credibility of the data (Saldana 2011).

During the interviews respondents shared different materials with me, such as: examples of Professors' performance evaluation forms; internal documents mentioning the

expected students' competences to be developed during the course; school journal with initiatives on learning methods. In addition, sometimes I could navigate through the school internal website in which students can access the course curriculum, register for classes, access suggested extra-curricular activities or communicate with professors through internal webmail. One professor showed me photos on her mobile phone of students developing a group presentation in class (a dynamic activity), and we could talk about the experience using the photos.

Moreover, observations were also made about school installations allowing some investigation of, for example: if classroom's layouts encouraged interactions and discussions, if professors' office layout encourages them to interact among themselves and with other department professors.

The research agreement document was prepared and I collected the consent of respondents before the beginning of each interview. The document, which can be accessed at Appendix 2, defines the kind of data collected, that all information are confidential/anonymous, and that I would send participants a final research analysis document if they so desire. I mentioned the benefits for participants on my first contact with them, and in this case it involved not only the subsequently documented findings and suggestions, but also the overview of the top institutions' situation regarding the considered topic.

3.2 Institutions and Respondents Profile

I took the first interviews in each school with the School Dean, since he/she is responsible for defining the school's policies and guidelines to the faculty, being the most knowledgeable about the initiatives and incentives related to the phenomenon of interest (Fischer et al. 2014). I interviewed the Schools' Deans of the selected schools with the purpose of obtaining their perceptions of school values, challenges and initiatives promoted in the learning environment that can contribute to a learner-centered adoption and to the development of student participation and empowerment.

Furthermore, I interviewed Program Directors, Associate Directors and Professors pointed out by Schools' Deans. Since the business courses are composed of different subjects, which have their specific characteristics, I talked to professors from different subject areas, such as marketing, operations, information technology, human resources, for example. I was guided by the principle of "theoretical saturation" (Fischer et al. 2014); that is, when the

analyses of additional interviews stop to provide new theoretical insights, I ceased the addition of new interviews in that school.

An initial sample of 25 institutions was selected, from which I intended to investigate some of them. I selected these schools aiming to maximize the richness of information, and the selection was purposeful, not random. In addition, I tried to reduce cultural and regional influences, since the in-depth interview focus is on individuals' relations to that context and not on learning about the cultural context (Crabtree & Miller 1999). Then, I based the initial sample selection on secondary data from the 2012 census and on the grades from ENADE⁵ according to the process detailed below.

The data from the Brazilian higher education census shows that from the 2,416 institutions that participated in the 2012 census, 87.4% are private institutions, of which 48.5% are located in the southeast region (INEP 2014). Moreover, a study showed higher dropout rates for private institutions than for public institutions, on average, from 2006 to 2010 (23.4% versus 11.7%). This data was based on a sample composed of 1,396 institutions, 87.6% of which were private schools (Silva & Sauaia 2014). Aiming to reduce regional and cultural differences, I selected private institutions from the southeast, because of the highest concentration, to constitute the initial sample for this research. To select the schools and fields of study to be investigated, the ENADE students' grades for each school were assessed. I started the study with schools with the highest grades in ENADE, since these institutions should be the ones to have more initiatives related to student participation and student empowerment. If student participation and student empowerment generate higher value creation, it is expected that they also generate positive outcomes; then, it is expected that students of schools adopting these mechanisms may perform better in exams such as ENADE.

The ENADE grades from 2010, 2011 and 2012 were considered, since the test is applied to groups depending on the course and each course is evaluated every three years. The highest number of institutions is from business courses (11%) and this was the chosen field to be evaluated (the field with the second highest participation was engineering, with 8%). The private institutions, located in the southeast, with higher education in business are concentrated in the State of São Paulo-SP (55%), and 20% of institutions from SP are located in the city of São Paulo, which will be the focus of the research. Then, 25 private schools of business, located in the city of São Paulo, with the highest grades in ENADE, were selected

⁵ ENADE is an annual score provided to each institution based on students' grade in a test

as an initial sample; see Table 2. Institutions that had fewer than 100 students taking the exam were eliminated from the sample.

Table 2 – Initial Sample of HEIs in São Paulo

	ENADE Year	Institution	Number of Students in the Exam	Grades	Grade Range
1	2012	INSPER INSTITUTO DE ENSINO E PESQUISA	156	4.42	5
2	2012	CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO FECAP	288	4.20	5
3	2012	UNIVERSIDADE PRESBITERIANA MACKENZIE	831	3.89	4
4	2012	UNIVERSIDADE PAULISTA	1035	3.39	4
5	2012	ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO	432	3.38	4
6	2012	ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE PROPAGANDA E MARKETING	310	2.49	3
7	2012	CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO SENAC	128	2.36	3
8	2012	UNIVERSIDADE SÃO JUDAS TADEU	790	2.35	3
9	2012	CENTRO UNIV.FUND. EDUC. INACIANA PE SABÓIA DE MEDEIROS	125	2.28	3
10	2012	PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DE SÃO PAULO	703	2.16	3
11	2012	UNIVERSIDADE ANHEMBI MORUMBI	697	2.13	3
12	2012	FACULDADE INTEGRAL CANTAREIRA	126	2.03	3
13	2012	FACULDADE CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE	161	1.94	2
14	2012	UNIVERSIDADE CAMILO CASTELO BRANCO	135	1.91	2
15	2012	Centro Universitário Estácio Radial de São Paulo - Estácio UNIRADIAL	286	1.89	2
16	2012	UNIVERSIDADE BANDEIRANTE ANHANGUERA	250	1.80	2
17	2012	CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO SÃO CAMILO	155	1.76	2
18	2012	FAC. DE ADM. DA FUNDAÇÃO ARMANDO ALVARES PENTEADO	244	1.71	2
19	2012	FACULDADES INTEGRADAS RIO BRANCO	96	1.68	2
20	2012	CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO SANT'ANNA	323	1.68	2
21	2012	FACULDADE SUMARÉ	307	1.64	2
22	2012	UNIVERSIDADE DE MOGI DAS CRUZES	366	1.62	2
23	2012	UNIVERSIDADE NOVE DE JULHO	1576	1.62	2
24	2012	CENTRO UNIVERSITÁRIO ÍTALO-BRASILEIRO	283	1.62	2
25	2012	UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTO AMARO	847	1.61	2

Source: Developed by the author

I got in contact with six schools of the initial sample and I got access to interview the School Dean of three of them.

I first focused on leading schools⁶ so that I could describe the phenomenon of interest – student participation and student empowerment – because I expected to find more initiatives related to phenomenon in the top schools. After I finished the analysis of the two leading schools, I included one mass-market school⁷ in the analysis with the intention to verify the findings related to the definitions of the constructs and also to possible find differences related to school or students profile.

Two leading business schools in São Paulo were evaluated in this study. The first school is among the most traditional schools in São Paulo, founded more than 60 years ago, with around 2000 students. The second case is based on a school with a more recent business course but not least traditional school, and around 7.000 students. The third school is a mass-

⁶ Leading schools were identified as attracting students with strong academic background and their students are usually full-time students until they begin their internships

⁷ The mass-market institutions main goal is not to educate the elite of the country, but to provide qualification for the mass market, proving the opportunity for their students to get professional and social development. Their students are usually younger workers, they need to work during the day and they usually study at night

market oriented school and has around 12.000 students. In the mass-market school, I interviewed only the School Dean.

My first interview was always with the School Dean. School values, principles and guidelines were discussed, and at the end of the interview, I asked for the recommendation of Program Directors, Associate Directors and Professors to whom I could talk more about the topics we discussed. I also asked for the recommendation of professionals from different departments so that I could get diversity in the sample. The snowball sampling was also used here (Miles et al. 2014), because I sometimes asked these interviewed professionals for contacts of other Professors, and I ceased the interviews based on principle of theoretical saturation.

I interviewed educators among Schools' Deans, Program Directors, Associate Directors, and Professors, totalizing fifteen interviewees, 14 hours and 35 minutes of interviews, and 102 pages of transcribed material. See interviewees' profile on **Error! Reference source not found.** Table 3.

Table 3 – Interviewees' Profile

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Role at the Institution</i>	<i>Age</i>	Research Area
A A	School Dean/Professor	65	Operations
A B	Associate Director/Professor	42	Statistics
A C	Program Director/Professor	54	Statistics
A D	Professor	38	Marketing
A E	Associate Director/Professor	37	Statistics
A F	Program Director/Professor	62	Statistics
A G	Professor	55	Human Resources
A H	Associate Director/Professor	68	Social Sciences
B A	School Dean/Professor	45	Quantitative Methods
B B	Program Director/Professor	37	Operations
B C	Associate Director/Professor	49	Human Resources
B D	Associate Director/Professor	39	Marketing
B E	Associate Director/Professor	58	Marketing
B F	Associate Director/Professor	53	Operations
C A	School Dean/Professor	46	Marketing

Source: Developed by the author

3.3 Data Analysis Method

Data coding contributed to the better understanding of the investigated phenomenon, and, in addition, to the future development of an adapted survey instrument, which can be applied in a potential quantitative research phase. I used Hyper Research software version 3.7.3 for data manipulation and analysis. Since the current research was theory driven, I proposed codes and categories before the interviews started. However, because it was important to be open to new findings that could enhance the study, I revised these codes and

categories, together with the protocol, after each interview in a continuous process of adaptation (Figure).

I derived the initial categories from the dimensions of customer participation and empowerment constructs, guiding our initial coding process. Each category was composed of codes, which I proposed based on theoretical findings. The initial and complementary codes are detailed in Table 4. Codes included after the empirical investigation are highlighted in gray.

Table 4 – Protocol Categories and Codes

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Dimensions / Categories</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Dimensions Source</i>
Empowerment	Meaningfulness	Shared values/principles Initiatives to promote hands-on activities Start from the problem Interdisciplinary Connection with practice Professors' autonomy and guidelines/training Students' short-term goals Departmentalization	Thomas & Velthouse (1990) School documents – students' competencies to be developed during the course Visits to schools - observation of offices and classrooms
	Competence	Student competence development Main competences developed Student competence evaluation Learning process evaluation Internationalization Leadership skills Entrepreneurship skills Humanistic development Teamwork Critical reasoning skills Overview of the business	Thomas & Velthouse (1990) School documents – students' competencies to be developed during the course
	Self-determination/choices	Guidelines about curriculum Optional, extra-curricular activities Presence in class Electives classes Not proactive Regulations of HEIs/MEC Rules Extra-curricular activities	Thomas & Velthouse (1990) Internal website – access to extra-curricular activities, course curriculum
	Impact on school decisions	Initiatives to promote student involvement Students' contributions to school Students' autonomy Professor as facilitator in class Students' contributions in class Passivity of students Slowness of changes Nothing gets changed – students' perception Teaching methods innovation Feedback about classes Job market contribution No impact on curriculum development	Thomas & Velthouse (1990) Internal website – access to extra-curricular activities, course curriculum Professors' Evaluation form School journal with initiatives on learning methods

Student participation	Information sharing	Sharing of practical information Feedback from students Informal information exchange Channels of communication Departmentalization Institutional communication Hierarchy/bureaucracy	Ennew and Martin (1999) Schools' internal websites School documents – students' competencies to be developed during the course
	Responsible behavior	Initiatives to promote student responsibility Students' responsibilities Professors' evaluation Disciplinary commission Professors' guidelines Students' immature behavior Students as victims Role as protagonist Professors' responsibilities Professor as facilitator Paternalist society	Ennew and Martin (1999) Professors' evaluation forms
	Personal interaction	Closeness to students Availability inside classroom Availability outside classroom Closeness to School Dean Closeness to Program /Associate Directors Class representatives	Ennew and Martin (1999) Visits to schools - observation of offices and classrooms

Source: Developed by the author

During the interviews, and data analysis, I confirmed the construct dimensions, but adapted the codes, what influenced the final definition of student participation and empowerment in the educational environment. After the transcription, the codification process started based on theory-driven codes; but after each interview analysis, new codes were incorporated to the code list.

In terms of adjustments of the Protocol, I added together the initial questions about opportunities and challenges (questions 3 and 4) and moved them to the end of the interview, because the interviewees started talking about competence development as soon as they started to talk about school values and principles. I included questions related to student profile and students' attitudes toward their academic development, (highlighted in gray in Appendix 1) in the discussion and brought insights about generational and cultural issues that permeate the academic environment. The new codes refined the understanding of the constructs, and some codes also focused on students' opportunity to contribute to school, but it became very clear that students' impact occurs currently in class, so the discussions were focused on understanding students' influence in this environment.

The analysis and refinement of constructs permitted that the dimensions of the constructs were detailed and defined in the HEI context, as presented in the next section.

4 Results

In this section, the constructs are described based on the findings of the empirical research. The empirical investigation allowed the clarification of how student participation and student empowerment are encouraged by Brazilian HEIs according to Schools' Deans, Program Directors, Associate Directors and Professors' points of view. The dimensions of these constructs were described based on in-depth interviews with specialists in the schools.

4.1 Student Participation

During the interviews, some initiatives to promote personal interaction and information sharing were mentioned as extremely relevant mechanisms so that a trustful relationship can be constructed between students and professors during classes, consequently leading to a positive influence on the learning experience.

One of the first initiatives observed is the promotion of informal feedback opportunities, encouraging discussion in class: *"Today I opened a discussion because there was a group that was involved in another activity, I interrupted the class and asked them what was happening [...] asking them to bring the issue to the class."* *"And this is a continuous process [...] to create an environment in which giving feedback is not a problem. To keep an environment of mutual respect and dialog [...]"* (A_G).

Another initiative identified is that professors believe it is important to get closer to students, especially outside classes. Personal interaction between students and professors was mentioned as an important mechanism to reduce potential generational differences, contributing to creating a more trustful relationship between them: *"I think it is a challenge to keep the connection with students despite the generational difference [...] I always want to understand what motivates them [...]"* (A_G). *"Our students interact with our professors outside classes. In this place (an outside area), for example, it is very common to see students and professors talking to each other"* (B_B).

A very remarkable and successful example of how this closer relationship can lead to a more trustful relationship was mentioned by one of our interviewees: *"When I created my Facebook page and accepted some students as Facebook friends [...] this contributed to my work in the classroom since they started to see me as a person like them [...] I got closer to students without losing the respectful relationship [...]"* *"To know students' names helps a lot as well. They know I care about them, I know about their internship experiences, for example; before the beginning of each class I usually talk to some of them about how are things going [...]. This makes a difference in the relationship [...]"* *"And I think that this is*

exchange... they trust me” (A_D). In this example, information sharing and personal interaction are leading to a more trustful relationship and positive behavioral intentions.

In the schools investigated, despite all these initiatives aiming to increase information sharing and personal interaction between professors and students, institutional communication faces challenges related to bureaucracy, especially in connection with the size of the schools. Institutional communication is revealed to be more inefficient than communication between professors and students in class: *“this is a problem [...] the daily basis of communication, notes, reminders, e-mails [...]; students get so many e-mails that they do not read all of them [...]” (A_F).* In all of the schools, there are class representatives elected to participate in meetings with Program and Associate Directors to discuss class-specific demands: *“We created the class representative role [...]. We (Program and Associate Directors) have monthly meetings with the class representatives [...]” (A_H).* However, the class representative needs to mobilize the community to get involved in discussing and negotiating the demands, but this mobilization sometimes does not happen: *“students do not always organize themselves to have a representative that defends their interests, instead of talking on his/her own behalf” (A_F).* In addition, Program Directors, Associate Directors and professors need to develop a trustful relationship with class representatives, otherwise they can create many problems that affect other students as well: *“[...] then you have to trust the class representative, because if you have a uncooperative class representative sometimes you will have problems with the class” (C_A).* I concluded that information sharing and personal interaction are encouraged and reinforced between professors and students in these schools; but there are still a lot of barriers to them permeating the relationship between students and other members of the institution, such as Program and Associate Directors or Schools’ Deans.

Another important component of customer participation, as presented by Ennew and Martin (1999), which I also could validate as significant for the educational environment, is responsible behavior. However, I can understand that there is an unbalance in the responsibilities in the HEI context; institutions have been considered more responsible for students’ education than students themselves. Cultural issues are mentioned as a barrier to radical changes in the way in which the Brazilian educational system operates. The expected responsible behavior for each player was understood and analyzed below, so that future studies can evaluate this component according to the context.

Professors are stated as facilitators of the learning process: *“if you put yourself in a position of knowing everything it is not going to work well. If you put yourself in position of a*

facilitator [...] then you get in” (B_D). “It is important that I have a student that looks for knowledge. And I am a facilitator” (B_A). Nevertheless, despite the fact that faculty members’ goal is not knowledge transference, but acting as a facilitator so that students can develop their competences, faculty members and institutions have the responsibility to ensure that students develop their competences. Both students and professors are responsible for successful participation: “You say that the student has to have the same involvement, that the professor is a facilitator, then everyone is responsible. There is no (knowledge) transference, cool, I believe in that too; but if you get to the end of the course and half of the class did not read the textbook or did not participate in the discussions? How to share responsibilities between everyone? Because, then, the responsibility will be assigned to the professor [...]” (A_D).

On the other hand, students are also responsible for getting the credentials. Students need to show that they are prepared and have gotten specific knowledge in the area: *“I would say [...] students have to demonstrate they got some specific knowledge [...] if you want a certificate that you know how to develop a program in JAVA, you have to know how to develop a program in JAVA” (A_C). One professor mentioned a very representative example of how she works to develop students’ responsible behavior during her classes: “She (the student) was angry because she revealed her product idea in class and her competitors imitated her idea, she was upset with me (the professor) because I did not intercede for her benefit. I (professor) said: What should I do? It is your company, it is your strategy, and it is your information. Then, she (student) had like a real experience. I believe these little events make a difference in getting them to be responsible for their decisions and actions (in the future)” (B_C).*

Responsible behavior may be the most conflicting component of student participation. The schools examined demonstrated themselves as very responsible, not only following all guidelines of the Education Department in Brazil (MEC), but also looking to develop their classes according the norms of the best business schools in the world. The evaluation of students and professors follows strict rules. On the other hand, faculty members do not believe that the majority of students act with responsible behavior: *“I believe we live in a paternalist society” (B_B).*

The institutions have initiatives aiming to help students develop more responsible behavior related to their educational activities, as for example when parents come to school asking for their sons/daughters’ grades and the school demands the presence of the students so

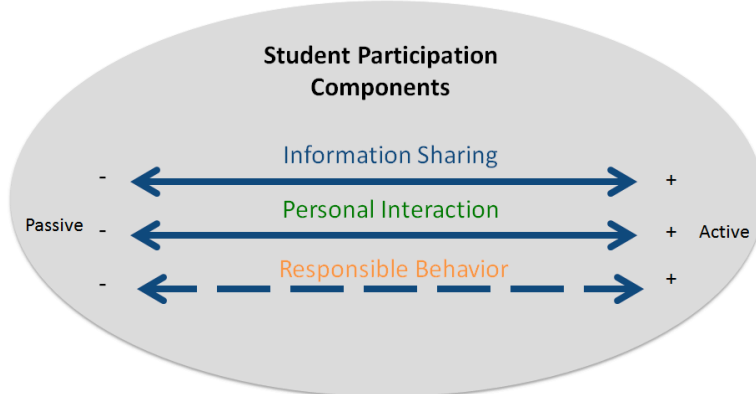
that the discussion can proceed: *“sir, you have to involve your son/daughter in this process, you have to bring him/her here” (A_H)*. Another example is when students claim that professors gave them bad grades and Program and Associate Directors are very strong in clarifying who is responsible for the grades: *“There is not the option of claiming about Professor x or z. The responsibility for getting approved or not approved is yours (students)” (B_B)*. There are initiatives in class concerning the development of students’ responsible behavior, but it seems that there is a cultural barrier that limits this progress. *“Our students (in Brazil) are not used to looking for knowledge by themselves [...]” (B_D)*. Students are used to blaming professors or institutions for their failures: *“[...] after exams, students complain that they did not get that content in class [...]” (C_A)*.

Through the interviews and deep analysis of the context, I was able to verify and validate that information sharing and personal interaction among students and professors are reinforcing mechanisms that permeate the routine of the institutions aiming to develop students’ competences and not only to transfer knowledge. These mechanisms permeate the values, speeches and actions of all faculty members, Program Directors, Associate Directors, and Schools’ Deans of the analyzed institutions. These mechanisms are established in classes, through faculty members, and aligned with schools’ proposals for developing leaders. When I evaluated institutional initiatives, I found out that despite the fact that Schools’ Deans assume the importance of keeping personal interaction and information sharing with students as a way to know their demands and feedback, this is not an everyday practice due to the institutions’ size and the current bureaucracy related to that. So, student participation appears to occur more during knowledge construction in class, but not during curriculum planning or when institutional decisions are made, for example. Responsible behavior is the third component of student participation. Responsibilities were identified to be unbalanced in the relationship, because institutions assume much more responsibility for the educational process than students, which seems to be related to a cultural issue. Initiatives to increase the responsible behavior of students have been considered important so that the student protagonist role can take place in the educational context and they have been part of mechanisms adopted by the investigated institutions. However, on this front the challenges and resistances are higher. These findings are resumed in Appendix 3.

Based on the foregoing discussion, I confirmed that three dimensions comprise students’ participation – information sharing, personal interaction, and responsible behavior – and these dimensions can now be precisely measured. Figure 5 represents these dimensions

and, despite the fact that participation is intrinsic to this context, the level of student participation can vary from a more passive student to a more active student, depending on how the dimensions are developed in class. The dashed line represents the dimension in which schools' initiatives are not so strong – students' responsible behavior.

Figure 5 – Student Participation Dimensions

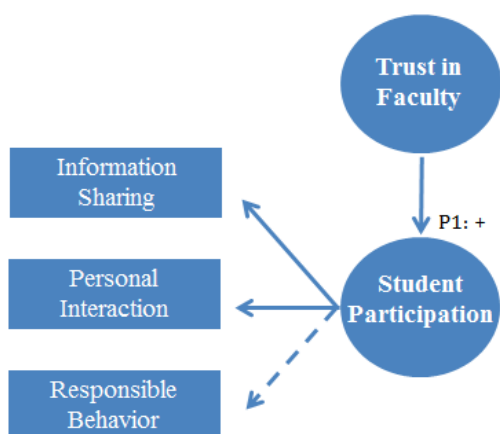


Source: Developed by the author

Moreover, a trustful relationship among students and professors appears to be essential for students' positive behavioral intentions to occur. A trustful relationship seems to be based on personal interaction and information sharing and to be antecedent to student participation. Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002), Carvalho and Oliveira Mota (2010), and Sampaio et al. (2012) consider trust as an antecedent of value - a strong predictor of service evaluation. It is important to highlight that in the current research I did not interview students, and this may be the reason why the dimension of trust I captured is only trust in faculty members, different from the other studies mentioned that captured trust in staff and trust in management, policies and practices. Based on these discussions, I advanced the following proposition, which is presented in Figure 6:

P1: Trust in Faculty Members positively influences Student Participation

Figure 6 – Trust in Faculty as Antecedent of Student Participation



Source: Developed by the author

4.2 Empowerment

In the schools investigated, initiatives to promote students' empowerment so that they can have autonomy and can be protagonists of their education were mentioned. There are initiatives associated with the promotion of competence development, the meaningfulness of the educational experience, the autonomy to make choices, and opportunities to have an impact on their educational process.

Competence development and meaningfulness permeate the values, guidelines, and principles of the schools. Students can also greatly influence the educational experience, because the class environment is affected by students' involvement. Students' impact is important to class performance because depending on their involvement and commitment; the professor does not achieve his/her purpose for the activity. Professors can plan the class with the best methodologies, but if students are not motivated and engaged in the proposal, it will be very difficult to develop knowledge.

The most challenging goal is to give students choices to make during their academic life. As mentioned, cultural barriers and legal norms may explain some of the difficulties that institutions face in letting students participate in making choices during the academic process. Despite that, institutions have developed some mechanisms so that students can exercise the possibility of choosing their academic path. Students usually can choose some of the disciplines in which they have more interest, the electives; they also can choose themes for their final work for graduation, for example. These are controlled choices that institutions allow the students to make, accepting some flexibility in the curriculum and in the experience.

Below, I present evidence of how competences are developed with meaningfulness, and how opportunities are created to enable students to have an impact on their educational process and make choices in the schools examined.

Competence

Competence development involves, among other aspects, leadership abilities, ethical attitudes, verbal communication, writing and reporting skills, problem solving, and critical reasoning development. The top schools are developing their pedagogical proposals not focused on content knowledge or transference, but focused on competences and skills that students need to develop through content discussion so that they can become professionals ready to assume leadership positions. Schools are not focused only on content transference, and their thoughts reflect the importance of a diverse range of competences.

Managers have to dominate in technical competences at the beginning of their careers, but later on, if they want to succeed, they will be required, for example, to manage teams, to have a more holistic view of problems, and these challenges demand more humanistic competences. *“I believe we educate students who understand business, who need to know not only about making estimates, but also about the impacts (of decisions) on the business, they need to have an overview of the business, of the different departments and their connections, of how to generate a sale [...], to think about 2/3/5 years from now. They have to think strategically” (A_D).*

“The undergraduate students have two competences to develop. The technical competences [...] appreciated at the beginning of their career [...] and the soft skills, like leadership skills, holistic overview of problems fostered by experiences and by a humanistic education, a characteristic of this school curriculum [...] characteristics that are expressed later in career development [...] This is a characteristic of this school curriculum; it has a deep humanistic education distributed along the course [...].” “One of our goals in the course is student competence in making decisions with ethical standards, etc.” (A_A).

This view should permeate the classes. Professors of statistics, for example, reinforce the importance of combining technical competences with competences related to analytical and critical thinking to identify causes and possible associations among phenomena. *“(In statistics class) There are some competences that are intangible [...]. We want to develop statistical reasoning that is not simply doing the math [...]. The student has to think statistically, being able to recognize random phenomena [...] what is cause and what is*

association [...] to recognize that there is variability in the world and we can quantify this variability [...]" (B_A). There is a great deal of available data in companies' databases, but it is very important that students are prepared to identify when they should apply a specific method to evaluate some of the data, and also how to combine the knowledge they have from different fields of study to better solve a problem considering more than one perspective. "It is one of the goals, the ability to use quantitative methods when needed and apply critical reasoning. It is also a goal [...] across all classes, the ability to recover humanistic knowledge when solving a company problem" (A_F).

Other important competence is teamwork, which is developed through hands-on activities in class, a practice also mentioned by interviewees. "Usually in all classes we have teamwork. In my discipline for example, quantitative methods [...], they have theory in class, practical class in the laboratory, aiming to develop competence in, for example, writing good reports [...]. And the course ends with a final team project. Students do the research, apply the techniques learned, present the work, they do like a consulting job. They practice what they are learning. This is a competence developed by the students" (B_A).

In addition, students need to be protagonists of their lives and they need to become entrepreneurs. "One competence is entrepreneurship. This is in the genesis. It is something we have worked on a lot, that the student can be a protagonist of his/her knowledge [...] and also of his/her actions and academic life." (B_A). "I am going through a change as a professor [...] you need to create an environment in which the student recognizes that he/she needs to learn how to learn and he/she does not need just to acquire the content [...], besides, the content evolves constantly in our area [...]" (A_E).

Moreover, learner-centered assessment techniques have been adopted as mechanisms to stimulate students' learning process (Webber 2012). There are some significant examples of how competences are developed during an assessment process: "There are classes in which there is a project during the course, there are no exams, there is a project that they (students) will prepare and present during the semester [...]. Professors can decide the best way to assess (students' knowledge development) [...]" (B_D). "My assessments are never only to memorize concepts [...] for example [...] develop a script of how you (student) would help a friend to develop his brand: what questions would you ask him? [...]" (A_D). Professors are also stimulated to develop learning and assessment techniques that can incorporate differences among student profiles, so that everyone can get the best of the

learning process. *“There are students who learn better by hearing, [...] others learn better by doing [...] you need to have a more holistic view of the assessment process” (C_A).*

When necessary, professors are guided to develop students’ competences, giving them opportunities to recover from their academic gaps through a varied number of meaningful and hands-on activities. *“And you try to promote some extra-curricular activities, for example, monitoring, class tutoring, support for distance learning, so that these students can develop competences aiming to reduce their academic gaps [...]” (C_A).*

Meaningfulness

Another component that was mentioned and is very relevant is the meaningfulness of the educational experience. Students are considered to be worried about their current needs and not about their future demands and because of that, they seem to look for content that connects with practical experiences. *“The young do not have the patience to accumulate knowledge if they do not see an immediate application for that knowledge. This was always a characteristic more associated with adults, but it is becoming more present in the young too, you know [...] to study ‘just in time’ and not ‘just in case.’ The connection with hands-on application is important [...]” (A_G).*

Professors are given autonomy to develop their classes according to the class profile and market demands. They have autonomy to adopt the strategies and methodologies that they believe are the best to work with each significant subject. They mentioned some mechanisms, for example: talking about the problem before talking about the theory; talking about examples students are involved with; organizing a visit to a company so that students can have real experiences before they learn about theory; promoting hands-on activities.

“It makes more sense when you start from the problem and not from the technique, especially because the problem can involve more than one discipline to be solved” (A_F).

“How to introduce theory in class [...]. I started talking about a band or soccer team, they (students) participated, then I introduced the theory behind it” (A_D).

“I gave homework [...] they had to visit a company to be able to do the homework [...]. After that, they had a different relationship with the subject and regretted they did not put so much effort in in class before [...]. The idea is to give the homework at the beginning of the class and theory at the end. After the homework, they got more interested (in the class), but before that they spent a lot of class time talking on their Whatsapp [...]” (B_F).

“We developed an exercise in which they could differentiate their performance as teams, groups [...]. I told them: this is a leadership exercise. You need to experience this, because someday you will be in a company leading a presentation, a group [...]. They led all the presentations” (B_C).

Professors have autonomy to work with their classes, but they frequently receive guidelines to act according to the institution’s values and policies and receive support to apply the most successful methodologies for educational purposes: *“[...] every six months we do workshops for the professors. They can suggest themes, but typically the department organizes the agenda” (A_C).* *“[...] we can bring proposals, but we also have proposals that the internal ‘Development Center of Teaching and Learning’ brings to us, we have to participate in at least 3 activities per semester [...].” (A_E).* *“At the beginning of every semester, there is a week in which professors receive training [...] in new techniques [...], we discuss methodologies [...].” (B_E).*

On the other hand, there are some critics of aligning guidelines among classes. Departmentalization is still current in schools. *“I have seen lots of professors taking the same training in design thinking, then [...] I imagine if every week one of them decides to apply that in class [...].” (A_D).* *“the governance by departments makes alignment difficult [...].” (A_E).* *“We have a structure by departments [...] each department protects itself, fights for more influence [...].” (A_A).* *“we had a group of professors that exchanged materials [...] but there are professors who do not exchange [...].” (B_D).*

Impact

Students’ impact in institutional issues appears to be surrounded by opportunities for improvement, especially due to slowness in changing the process. Changes in the curriculum and syllabus, for example, involve a slow and bureaucratic process. In addition, official class and faculty evaluation occurs usually at the end of the semester and adaptations considering students’ opinions can be promoted only in future classes. Some professors open discussions and promote opportunities for intermediate feedback and discussions in class; this helps to improve personal interaction between professors and students, but not the perception of influencing institutional change. *“We cannot start changing, you can imagine, you can’t get a transatlantic liner and change its course at once, you have lots of students and students with the old curriculum get upset, we have to take it slowly” (F_NB).* *“Nothing gets solved for them (students), because they have already done that (class, for example), but if they know the*

number of problems that happened in the past and due to students' feedback these problems were solved, they would not say that. They only have a picture of the moment. It is difficult to explain to them, we talk to them but they keep the impression that we do not listen to them" (F_NB).

Students' feedback is collected mainly through class evaluation or through contact with Program and Associate Directors. However, they did not participate in academic curriculum development. They are asked for feedback and their opinion about classes they have taken, but not asked to discuss future changes together with members of the school. *"We did a survey (with students) to know what they think about this new class" (B_D). "I was thinking [...] whether he/she (the student) actually participates (in the development of the curriculum). Actually, I do not think they participate in the development of the academic project, maybe indirectly [...], but [...] not together with us (in the discussions) [...]" (B_D).*

The job market is a very representative stakeholder that seems to have an impact on educational guidelines in schools. *"For example, this happened with the project management class, [...] the market demanded project management competence and then the class was developed [...]" (B_B).*

On the other hand, in schools looking for competence development and meaningfulness, students need to be mobilized to have a positive impact on their knowledge development during class. Students actually are stimulated to affect their educational process: *"Starting from a subject I develop a game [...], we played the game in class, so that they could experience the difference between a group, a team [...] we play [...]. I have pictures here (she showed me pictures). The results were fantastic" (B_C).*

Choices

The protagonist role and autonomy development in higher education are considered crucial to the development of a student-centered learning experience focused on competence development and not on knowledge transference. However, as mentioned before, institutions face many challenges, and maybe cultural barriers, when looking to increase students' autonomy: *"And according to this paradigm you have a society that needs to be tutored by the government [...]. It is not proactive" (B_A). "Students are not used to looking for content proactively, they want to get everything organized and prearranged from the professor [...]. The culture of our students needs to change so that protagonist role can happen" (B_D).*

Schools have initiatives aiming to increase students' protagonist role, and the most mentioned initiative is the possibility of choosing among elective classes and extracurricular activities to personalize their curricula according to their interests and particular needs: *"In this change (curricular change that happened in the school), students chose their classes, they became an individual in the process. They were reactive. One competence is to be the protagonist of their actions, to be responsible for their actions"* (B_A).

"Students can choose different specialization areas [...] and then, they have a number of classes that are compulsory in that area and in addition they can also choose other complementary classes to customize their interest." *"There is an aspect of student autonomy in our course that I believe is very strong"* (A_A).

Other initiatives are related to extracurricular activities, such as entities: *"I believe that students' responsible behavior is more intensively developed through extracurricular activities, and not in curricular activities, as for example in the company managed by students to provide consulting services, in the internship, and so on. We need to leverage on these experiences to explore, support and develop students' potential for autonomy"* (A_C).

Despite these initiatives to promote students' autonomy through choice, compulsory classes are still the majority of a student's curriculum; autonomy is limited and managed with the aim to promote choices without compromising knowledge construction development. Institutions have responsibilities in the educational process and autonomy has to be developed without compromising students' progress in compulsory curricular activities.

More radical changes/initiatives are difficult to implement, not only due to cultural issues, but also due to MEC norms: *"our first great concern is the MEC educational guidelines. I need to propose an educational project aligned to the national guidelines directive for the business administration courses. We cannot do anything different from that"* (B_B).

I conclude that schools have discussed and implemented plenty of initiatives to develop students' meaningfulness, competences, and opportunities for making choices and have an impact on their educational process, components of students' empowerment. However, there are limitations to this process, especially related to the choices and impact that students can exercise, and these limitations are related to institutions' responsibilities to all stakeholders involved in the process (government, parents, society). In addition, the mechanisms of students' empowerment were all observed to be possible to develop in class.

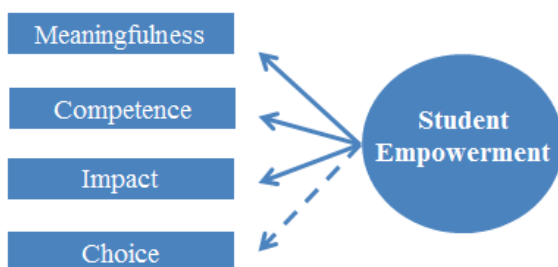
So, the great challenge seems to be to keep faculty members prepared and give them autonomy to apply the appropriate instruments in class.

In terms of institutional decisions and influences, students' representatives can participate in some of the school forums and discussions, but I could not find any evidence of empowerment in these domains. Schools are very hierarchical and regulated institutions and students have little participation and no influence in institutional decisions.

Another important aspect of the study is that students may have different experiences in different classes; I am considering the complete evaluation of their experience during the course, including all classes they have taken and the extracurricular activities in which they have become involved. Before analyzing students' experience evaluation, this assumption needs to be validated and it is very important to identify some individual characteristics that may influence their evaluation, such as whether he/she has to work to pay his/her studies, whether he/she lives with his/her parents, how far he/she lives from school, what is his/her family structure, for example. These characteristics were mentioned as important factors in predicting students' motivation and attitude in class and extracurricular activities during interviews.

The findings of initiatives and barriers to student empowerment are resumed in Appendix 4. Based on the foregoing discussion, I confirmed the four dimensions comprising student empowerment – competence, meaningfulness, impact, and choice – and these dimensions can now be more accurately measured. Figure 7 illustrates these dimensions, the dashed line represents that schools' initiatives in this dimension – choice - is not so strong.

Figure 7 – Dimensions of Student Empowerment



Source: Developed by the author

4.3 Behavioral Intention

Despite this was not the main objective of the study, during the empirical investigation, I found evidences of the effect of student participation on positive behavioral

intention toward the institutions. The behavioral intentions I was interested were related to finishing the course (dropout reduction), which is an issue sometimes in the beginning of the course; and loyalty to the school, which refers to coming back to take other courses or to recommend the university to friends, neighbors or relatives (Carvalho et al. 2010).

It is notorious that information sharing and personal interaction between students and professors create an environment of trust and consequently professors can become facilitators of knowledge construction. *“The professors, they know about the subject, but the knowledge is not enclosed in them. Students have access to all the information. But, [...] how to make information connect with what we are developing in here (competences) requires strong interaction” (B_A)*. Information sharing and personal interaction are mechanisms that permit professors to get closer to students and increase their participation: *“I believe it depends of how you get into the class, how you talk to students, because nowadays it is impossible to know everything [...]. If you have a attitude of knowing everything, it is not going to work” (B_D)*.

Responsible behavior is unbalanced in this relationship in the HEI context. The HEIs consider themselves responsible for students' education; and a high number of students consider institutions and professors responsible for their results. *“I think they just want to finish college [...] I suppose that around 30–40% of students have low-quality work in final graduation projects [...].” (B_E)*. This is mentioned as a cultural problem, which certainly creates a barrier for the adoption of more sophisticated, actively participative initiatives. The lack of students' responsible behavior contributes negatively to a trustful relationship; students demand changes, but they usually do not consider themselves responsible for the changes, they blame professors and the institutions for their problems and difficulties. *“No, this is not going to change, the class representative will go there but nothing will change” “[...] then, they (students) say: ‘but the school does not listen to us’, but they (students) do not use the channels that are available for them to interact with the school” (A_F)*. *“The relationship of a client with the school is a relationship of rights and responsibilities [...]. Some students do not understand that, they believe that the institution does not want to help them [...]. In some schools, students are so protected that the minor criticisms they make of a professor turn into a huge problem. We do not have that in our school” (B_B)*.

The students' attitudes and behavioral intentions change along the course, being meaningfulness a very important ally to this change: *“The relationship with the school changes with time [...] I feel that students consider an achievement to get accepted at a top*

school. However, after they start the program, they claim about excessive class-hours and excessive homework [...], they assume a position of “receiving a service” (A_G). “They are immature when they get into higher education and they get maturity with time; students in the last years of the course realize what matter to them, especially when they are having internship experiences [...]” (B_D).

Professors have initiatives aiming to develop students’ responsible behavior and change some of their attitudes: “A girl with a more authoritarian profile, she controlled the presentation and did not permit anyone else to lead. Then, the other group members got angry. At the end of the presentation, they came to me and said they were upset that the girl did not let them manage the presentation too. I (the professor) said: Why didn’t you interfere? They said: We expected you (the professor) to interfere. Me? (the professor) It is not my problem. You have to solve the problem by yourself. And your grade will be given together with her grade because of that [...]. They did not get a 10.0, despite the great work, because of the lack of teamwork at the presentation” (B_C). However, analyzing the interviews and testimonials, I can say that initiatives focused on developing responsible behavior are not adopted by faculty members as widely as initiatives related to competence development and meaningfulness during class activities.

Meaningfulness and competence development are mechanisms that seem to increase the degree of student participation in class through more positive behavioral intentions related to knowledge construction. “You have to make the student to get interested in your discipline (meaningfulness); to sell to him/her that your discipline is interesting and meaningful to his/her life [...], try different things (methodologies)”(B_D). Students become more pleased; they stop using Whatsapp so much during class, for example, after they experience the real application of the theory being discussed, as mentioned by B_F in his interview “The idea is to give the homework at the beginning of the class and theory at the end. After the homework, they got more interested (in the class)”. This engagement shows that the connection with the professor and the construction of a trustful relationship in class increases the students’ participation in class and competence development through students’ positive behavioral intentions toward the institution, the professor being a facilitator in this process.

Schools are also trying to increase opportunities for students to have an impact on their academic decisions; however, it seems that they have been very cautious in doing that. The first explanation for so much caution is that cultural barriers make it difficult to adopt more radical practices that maybe Brazilian students are not prepared to face. Since students

are still immersed in a “paternalist” society, their choices are limited and guided to reduce any potential harm to their educational development. Choices do not seem to act as a mechanism to leverage student participation or knowledge construction.

In terms of impact on institutional decisions, students give a lot of feedback to professors, Program Directors, Associate Directors, and Schools’ Deans, but the impact of their demands is concentrated on operational issues, *“they are not educational demands, they are more administrative demands” (A_E)*; they do not have an impact on decisions about the curriculum, for example. HEIs look much more to the job market to get inputs to define the curriculum than to students. On the other hand, students have a lot of impact in the class environment; professors mention that their challenges are to keep students interested, motivated, not looking at Whatsapp in class. This is a huge impact; professors are always getting non-verbal feedback from students and looking for the best ways and methodologies to mobilize students in class. *“They do not come to me and tell me (that they are not enjoying the class), but you notice when the student is not paying much attention in your class, when he/she is tired [...] you notice” (B_C)*. The fact that the professor noticed that students were not paying attention influenced his attitude in class; he then changed the dynamics of the class so that the degree of students’ participation could increase. The relationship between students and professors is stronger when professors mobilize students to exercise their influence in class and this impact, if positive, can leverage trustful relations and knowledge construction. *“To me the class is a dialog, it is to be together” (B_C)*. *“The students applauded me at the end of the course [...]. There is something I say that they value a lot. I believe it is the exchange, they trust me [...]. I thank them for the confidence [...].” (A_D)*. Students’ attitudes and involvement in class have impacts on their experiences, personally and academically.

This impact cannot only contribute to increase knowledge construction through a higher degree of student participation, but can also reduce dropout intention, especially in the case of younger workers - students who need to work during the day and they study at night. Younger workers who start higher education sometimes arrive with gaps from high school and need to go through an adaptation process during the first two years. During these years, some schools have worked close to these students, offering help so that they can overcome their gaps and finish the course. In this case, personal interaction to understand the individual needs, information sharing and especially student responsible behavior are crucial so that these students can participate. *“We notice that, [...] you have to receive these students and help them to adapt to the higher education context [...], usually they come from a high school*

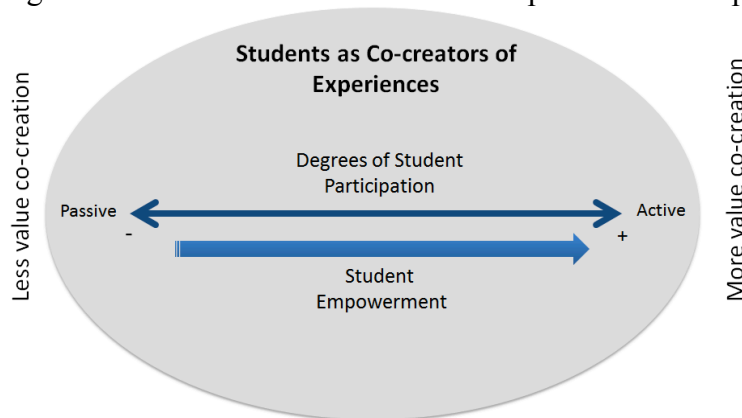
system in which they were automatically approved to next school level.” “All professors that we allocate in first-year classes, we select based on the profile for that job, sometimes he/she is not technically the best, but he/she knows the student, knows how to talk to them [...]” “Then you need to have an inclusive approach, the professor in class (has an inclusive approach) [...]”. “Sometimes when they (students) get into school it is a new world for them, you have to prepare a greeting agenda”. “We know the greatest number of dropouts happens during the first or second years; if he/she goes through these years, usually he/she finishes the course [...]”. “It also depends on how you work with that. If you impose that they have to participate in monitoring, for example, they will not participate, despite their difficulties, then, you have to use an inclusive approach in class [...] (C_A).

Another important contribution of the empirical investigation to HEI context, is that the trust created among the actors – students and professors – seems to have a crucial effect on students’ participation and being also responsible for students positive behavioral intentions toward institutions, consequently creating knowledge and valuable experiences for all involved actors. Value is co-created as a consequence of trust that leads to positive intentions and attitudes; without trust students will not have positive attitudes in class and knowledge construction becomes an unreachable objective. Thus trust in faculty must be considered as an important antecedent when analyzing student participation and empowerment mechanisms.

5 Final Discussion

The service market has changed significantly, with customers playing a more active role as co-creators of value, especially in highly relational services in which customer participation is intrinsic to the context. Customer participation is intrinsic to the process, however it can vary from a more passive to a more active participation level. In this scenario, customer empowerment can become a strong ally to leverage customer participation, leading to even higher service performance, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8 – Levels of Students' Participation and Empowerment



Source: Developed by the author

In addition, customers have moved from the audience to the stage (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000), and the primary role of service providers has become that of facilitator in the value creation process (Gronroos 2011). A lot of customers are looking for more active participation, and institutions need to be able to leverage this customer disposition through empowerment. Customer empowerment implies meaningfulness, competence, impact, and choice – dimensions on which companies must focus when empowering their customers to participate more actively, co-creating more valuable experiences.

Organizational studies brought relevant insights about the fact that empowerment definition has to integrate aspects of both behavior and perception (Lee & Koh 2001). Thus, empowerment does not mean to increase the power of subordinates, but to help them to be aware of their abilities and show these abilities at work (Lee & Koh 2001). In organizational contexts, employees have a subordinated relationship with the institution, what differs from the relationship of students with HEIs. However, the main contribution is based on the fact that empowerment is not a synonymous of authority delegation, but instead, it considers that the subordinate needs to be enabled to successfully develop power (Lee & Koh 2001). The

learner-centered education aims that faculty members help students to be aware of their abilities and develop these abilities during their educational experience, empowering them to be active participants in the process. To develop a close, informal and trustful relationship with students revealed to be the basis for an active participation to occur in class. The meaningfulness and competences' development come as mechanisms that can get the students' participation to the next levels, because students become active participants into their educational experience.

Medical studies also brought relevant insights, especially on how institutions can provide conditions to higher collaboration and cooperation (Ouschan et al. 2000). Patients of chronic diseases are considered responsible for their healthy treatments, similar to students in their educational settings. Medical studies explored how different dimensions can be worked and can contribute to different empowerment levels. These dimensions were explored in HEI context and despite contextual differences; empowerment can increase students' level of participation in the process in a very similar manner. In addition, besides the fact that different levels of empowerment can occur in both contexts, institutions can have initiatives to promote it. Medical studies reinforce the relevance of initiatives developed to increase patients' empowerment, such as enabling patients to make informed choices; a path that HEI must pursue when deliberating about learner-centered education.

The challenge for the HEI context is that all these initiatives to increase the levels of students' participation and empowerment depend on professors' abilities and they are not easily reproduced. Institutions need to have professors who are prepared to work with autonomy in class, and need to guide them according to school principles and values. This mechanism of knowledge creation is aligned with a networked world, in which institutions can establish two-way relationships – professors/students - based on mechanisms for cooperation in knowledge and value creation (Lawer 2005). In the investigated HEIs I analyzed how the resources – faculty members – are prepared to assume leadership positions in dynamic classes by creating trustful relationships with students and promoting opportunities for students' participation and empowerment. The same dynamic may occur in other highly relational services contexts so that customers can co-create value with their service providers, contributing to keep high the motivation of all actors involved.

It is also important to reinforce that the study focused on exploring student participation and empowerment in the class context. The relationship that students have with the school as an institution is different from the relationship they have with professors in

class; and the focus was on the class context. There are empirical evidences that institutions know they need to pursue a new model of education and interaction with their stakeholders, especially students; however, bureaucracy and hierarchical structures act as barriers to this advance. Otherwise, lots of initiatives are current leading to changes in class, step by step. This study explored these initiatives that are being responsible for a gradual, but significant change in the Brazilian educational experience.

Student participation is intrinsic to HEI context, because students must come to class and participate in their educational process, however, this participation can vary from a more passive to a more active participation depending on the levels of information sharing and personal interaction they have with professors, and on the responsible behavior both parts assume in the relationship. Additionally, student empowerment is a mechanism that professors have adopted to influence the degree of student participation through meaningfulness, competence awareness, opportunities to have an impact on their educational process, and less frequent, opportunities to make choices. After empirical investigation, theoretical dimensions initially proposed to investigate the constructs were corroborated and, the constructs were defined and delineated in the HEI context.

The description of student participation in HEIs context reflects the relevance of three dimensions – information sharing, personal interaction and responsible behavior. In the Brazilian context, responsible behavior is the weakest dimension in the construct, because the responsibilities are unbalanced between students and professors. The main reasons identified were cultural issues and local regulation. The same phenomenon happens with student empowerment, in which four dimensions were described as important, however, one of them – choice – has not been encouraged for the same reasons mentioned before.

In other cultures, the impact of these dimensions in the construct can be different. Countries such as, France and Norway, with few pupils per teacher, may face a different reality from countries like Brazil, where classes are truly unwieldy leading to losses in the educational outcome (Economist, 2014). A particular example that can be mentioned is the educational context in Finland. In Finland teachers are highly regarded and the very best young people compete for a job as a teacher, they are actually taught how to teach, and, once they start working, their students pay attention and, maybe the most important, work hard (Economist, 2008). In this scenario, responsible behavior dimension can have a stronger influence in the student empowerment construct, the opposite of the observed in Brazilian

context, this should be verified, but reflects that cultural differences can not be underestimated.

Furthermore, the study focused specifically on HEIs, and not on high school courses, for example. The concepts of students' participation and empowerment can be transferred to high school education; however, high school students are too young and still very influenced by their families. During higher education, students are getting more independent and mature; this is not so intense, nor even always happens, in high school context. In high school, maybe parents are stakeholders that cannot be left outside the phenomenon evaluation. The family context may influence the student participation and empowerment substantially. The students' educational context is very influenced by their life cycle period and these differences should be verified.

This study focused on business courses. In other areas of study, such as accounting, for example, the dimensions of student participation should vary in a similar manner; but this statement also needs to be verified. The same should happen when comparing students in first year with students in last year of the business course. However, the student participation level can also vary because of the antecedents of participation – motivation, role clarity and expertise – that may differ from students depending on the course and on the year of graduation. Students of more specific courses or specialization courses can have more clear roles and expectations in the beginning of their courses, what may also influence their initial motivation (higher). Motivation, role clarity and expertise of first year students can be different from last year students. It was not the focus of this study to explore the antecedents of student participation; but it is important to mention that these antecedents are essential to student participation and that when measuring student participation phenomenon, the antecedents of participation should be controlled. Stratifying the sample should be a way to investigate these differences in quantitative studies with students (Bryman & Bell 2003).

A framework was theoretically proposed in the literature review to enhance the understanding, for researchers and managers, of how student empowerment allied to student participation can positively affect behavioral intention in the HEI context. As an additional contribution to the research, students' empowerment and students' participation were mechanisms identified as leading to more positive attitudes in class, which contributes to an environment more favorable to knowledge co-creation and participative behavior in educational experience. For example, when students arrive at HEIs with academic gaps from high school, and this was identified especially in the interview with the mass-market

institution Dean, professors are stimulated and prepared to motivate students to recover from these gaps. In this situation, personal interaction and information sharing appear to be mechanisms encouraged to create a promising environment so that professors can get students' commitment, especially during the first and second years, periods that are crucial to reduce dropout rates. These mechanisms are developed in order to promote a positive behavioral intention that turns into a positive outcome when students believe they will be able to recover from their academic gaps and get involved and more participative. The current study contributes academically to the research on a particular highly relational service - Higher Education - exploring the construct levels in the context and introducing student empowerment as an important allied mechanism to value co-creation. The literature on marketing for higher education and on service marketing should incorporate the customer participation and empowerment mechanisms into the studies investigating service performance and behavioral intention.

In addition, management practices should be more comfortable with consideration of customer participation and empowerment. Managers should address the challenges of dealing with these variables, because participation and empowerment supposes more interaction and challenges for institutions. HEIs, for example, need to have values guiding their faculty members' activities; however, these faculty members must be empowered and autonomous to create and adapt their classes accordingly to their audiences. The principle of value co-creation that aims to generate economic and social benefits for all stakeholders and for society relies in the fact that the actors in the process can be prepared to contribute and cooperate.

Public policies can also benefit from a better understanding of the mechanisms influencing students' behavioral intentions toward educational experience because, for example, more positive behavior can lead to reduced dropout intention and higher quality in the educational process, a trigger for a societal change.

Considering the discussion above, student participation and student empowerment constructs can be measured in a next phase with students in a HEI context. As a second additional contribution, adapted scales are proposed.

5.1 Proposed Student Participation and Student Empowerment Scales

The results of the empirical investigation reported here allowed me to propose adjustments to the measurement scales of concepts customer participation and psychological empowerment for use in the context of HEI. From the scale used by Ennew and Martin (1999)

I propose a scale for student participation and using the Spreitzer's (1997) scale, I propose an adaptation to measure student empowerment.

Ennew and Martin collected data about customer participation from customers' assessments of their own behaviors and their perceptions of their providers' behavior. Respondents were asked to rate 9 aspects of their own behavior and 11 aspects of their perceptions of their providers' behavior toward them. All 20 items were categorized along the three broad dimensions discussed in the literature review and used to guide the data collection in my research - information sharing, responsible behavior and personal interaction. To adapt the scale to the HEI context I got insights from the empirical investigation, especially during the coding and interview analysis process. In addition, I also got insights from other HEIs studies such as the study of Riina & Petri (2015). Riina and Petri's study aimed to find out in which categories of educational experience and to what extent students expect a HEI to be student-customer oriented. The study described the development and validation of the Model of Educational Experiences and the Student-customer Orientation Questionnaire (SCOQ). SCOQ can be accessed in Appendix 5. Next, I present the original Ennew and Martin's scale items compared to the proposed student participation scale items, see Table 5.

Table 5 – Student Participation Proposed Scale

Ennew and Martin – Scale		Proposed Scale
<i>Firm Participation</i>	<i>Provider Participation</i>	<i>Student Participation</i>
<i>Information Sharing</i>	<i>Information Sharing + Personal Interaction</i>	<i>Information Sharing</i>
Warn manager about problems	Bank manager helpful	I talk to professors about issues related to my educational experience, career advice
Discuss excess borrowings	Confident on advice	I discuss with professors possible questions I may have (subject related)
Provide regular information	Trust bank manager	I regularly attend classes
Welcome visits	Bank manager understands small business	I ask professors for information (pe. career advice, content questions) outside class
Find that contact helps	Bank manager satisfies my needs	I always get necessary information from professors for a good progress of the courses
	Bank manager bends the system	I give feedback on what I believe that needs improvement (class, institution)
	Bank manager has sufficient lending authority	I adopt more than one channel of communication available to access professors (pe. personal, e-mail, webclass)
<i>Personal Interaction</i>	<i>Personal Interaction</i>	<i>Personal Interaction</i>
Believe negative information used against me		Professors have a close relationship with students
Intimidated by bank manager		Professors are quite available to assist me with any questions

		I have contact with the professors outside class
		I trust in my professors to ask for educational or career advices
		I feel the professors committed to my educational needs
		I can easily contact the School Dean to discuss my needs
		I can easily contact the Program Director and Associate Dean to discuss my needs
<i>Responsible Behavior</i>	<i>Responsible Behavior</i>	<i>Responsible Behavior</i>
Check bank statements	Bank manager threatens reduced overdraft	I always keep my commitments to the institution
Negotiate charges	Bank manager oversells	I always keep my appointments with professors
	Bank manager overcharges Bank manager dominated by head office	Professors always keep their appointments with me
		I think that working individually at home to prepare for next class is an inseparable part of getting the higher education
		I feel responsible for my education
		I feel professors are responsible for my education

Source: developed by the author

Spreitzer adopted some assumptions to develop her empowerment scale: empowerment is not a enduring personality but a characteristic shaped by a work environment; is a continuous variable; it is not a global variable; and it is specific to a task situation (Spreitzer 1995). I adapted Spreitzer's scale, considering student empowerment as a continuous variable, shaped by the environment and specific to the HEI situation. The insights from the empirical investigation allowed the adaptation of the items, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6 – Student Empowerment Proposed Scale

Spreitzer's Scale	Proposed Scale
<i>Psychological Empowerment</i>	<i>Student Empowerment</i>
<i>Meaningfulness</i>	<i>Meaningfulness</i>
The work I do is very important to me	My learning experience is very important to me
My job activities are personally meaningful to me	The school classes I took were personally meaningful for me
The work I do is meaningful to me	The school activities I participated were personally meaningful to me
	My learning experience is personally meaningful to me
	There is a connection between my learning experiences with the job market demand
	My learning experience prepare me to the job market
	In my opinion bringing examples from real life while teaching a subject is essential

<i>Competence</i>	<i>Competence</i>
I am confident about my ability to do my job	I am confident about my ability to do my school activities
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities	I am self-assured of my capabilities to perform my school activities
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job	I have mastered the skills necessary to perform my activities at school
	I am confident when working in teams during class activities
	I have conquered the skills to work on projects (starting from the problem to offer a solution)
	I felt confident to undertake international experiences
<i>Impact</i>	<i>Impact</i>
My impact on what happens in my department is large	I have influence over what happens in the classroom
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department	I have influence over how things happens in the classroom
I have significant influence over what happens in my department	Classes and activities are dynamic
	I have the chance to give informal feedback to professors
	I have the chance to give formal feedback to professors (school evaluation process)
<i>Choice</i>	<i>Choice</i>
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job	I have autonomy in determining how I organize my classes during the course
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	I can decide on my own how to go about choosing my classes
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job	I have opportunity for independence and freedom in I how to select and organize my class
	I have autonomy to choose extra-curricular activities

Source: developed by the author

5.2 Limitations/Opportunities for Future Research

Related to the results I obtained, I can mention that I focused the research on top schools that are maybe the ones with the best practices in learning practices. I added an additional interview with a mass-market school Dean so that I could validate if the phenomenon also occur in that setting, and it occurs, but a broader investigation could be done with these schools and maybe new considerations would arise.

In addition, an empirical investigation must also be developed with students so that the phenomenon can be described considering their point of view. Students are at the center of the learning process and must be the next focal point of analysis. Interviews with students will provide insights for validation of student participation and empowerment dimensions, corroborating with the findings and possible permitting fine adjustment of the items in the instrument proposed to measure these constructs.

Furthermore, the investigation and comparison of the gaps - what institutions offer as mechanisms of participation and empowerment with what are the students' perceptions of opportunities they have in their institutions - will be of great relevance for the school managers and consequently public policies. A lot of information will be returned to the institutions with possible gaps, and they can work on these gaps to have more efficient initiatives.

Otherwise, students may have different opinions about how they want to participate. I described the institutions' initiatives to promote students' participation and empowerment, but not the current students' aspirations. To explore students' perception of their educational process is crucial to the next step in the process. For example, I included trust in faculty as antecedent of student participation based on interviewees with schools' Deans, Program Directors, Associate Deans and Professors. However, students can also consider "trust in staff" and even "trust in management, policies, and practices" as influencing their service evaluation and behavioral intentions (Sampaio et al. 2012). This is an example of insights that can emerge of interviews with students.

Other limitations and opportunities for future studies are related to the fact that the current research considers only private institutions located in São Paulo. Other studies should evaluate the phenomenon in other locations and also consider public institutions. The analysis of public institutions or institutions of other regions may involve new variables that may influence the proposed relationships and may be carefully evaluated.

Furthermore, the research focus is on the study of higher education; however, the model proposed may be applied to other highly relational services and the results should be evaluated and findings compared.

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7 Appendix

Appendix 1 - Qualitative Research Protocol

This research intends to enhance our knowledge about how schools are dealing with current higher education challenges, especially in management courses. I also aim to learn about what are the most effective school practices to deal with these challenges.

- 1– Can you tell me about your professional experience? How did you start your career and how was your career development until now?
- 2– How you describe this institution in terms of values, principles and reputation? (How are school values developed in class by the faculty?)
- 3– Can you define the strongest qualities of this school and the major opportunities you envision?
- 4– What do you consider to be your biggest challenges as School Dean (faculty) of this institution?
- 5– Can you talk about competences development?
- 6– How is learning development oriented at the school? How do you receive orientation about learning development (faculty-interview)? What do you do about that?
- 7– What is the information flow within the school?
- 8– How do you develop a more responsible attitude among students?
- 9– Can you describe faculty and students' opportunities for interaction?
- 10– When do students have the opportunity to contribute to school learning process development?
- 11– How would you describe your school students' profile? Do you think students' profile have changed along the years?
- 12– Is there anything else you would like to share about the school's challenges or best practices?

Appendix 2 - Agreement Document

The use of all collected information and data will be strictly for academic purposes. The research aims to deep the understanding of higher education challenges and best practices. The study is conducted by Patrícia Silva Monteiro Boaventura, Master's Candidate in Management of Fundação Getúlio Vargas (EAESP), and is supervised by Professor Doctor Eliane Pereira Zamith Brito.

This agreement term guarantees that:

- 1– My participation is voluntary. I am free to abandon the study if and when I desire;
- 2– The confidentiality of my data is guaranteed. My name and personal information that compromise my anonymity will not be published.
- 3– I have the right to be informed about all aspects of the research.

After all the clarification provided, I agree to participate in the research as a volunteer. Any doubts call (11) 98255-8322 or send an e-mail to patboaventura@gmail.com and talk to Patrícia Silva Monteiro Boaventura. The adviser, Professor Doctor Eliane Pereira Zamith Brito, can be contacted through e-mail: eliane.brito@fgv.br.

I want to receive a copy of the final work:

- Yes, e-mail: _____
- No, thank you.

São Paulo, _____ de _____ de _____.

Participant Signature

Researcher Signature

Adviser Signature

Appendix 3 – Empirical Evidence of Student Participation Dimensions

	<i>Evidence of Initiatives</i>	<i>Evidence of Barriers</i>
Personal Interaction	<p>Closeness to students</p> <p><i>“I think it is a challenge to keep the connection with students despite the generational difference [...] I always want to understand what motivates them [...]” (A_G).</i></p> <p><i>“When I created my Facebook page and accepted some students as Facebook friends [...] this contributed to my work in the classroom since they started to see me as a person like them [...] I got closer to students without losing the respectful relationship [...]” (A_D).</i></p> <p><i>“Knowing students’ names helps a lot as well. They know I care about them, I know about their internship experiences, for example; before the beginning of each class I usually talk to some of them about how are things going [...]. This makes a difference in the relationship [...].” “And I think that this is exchange... they trust me” (A_D).</i></p> <p>Availability inside/outside class</p> <p><i>“Our students interact with our professors outside classes. In this place (an outside area), for example, it is very common to see students and professors talking to each other” (B_B).</i></p>	
Information Sharing	<p>Feedback</p> <p><i>“Today I opened a discussion because there was a group that was involved in another activity, I interrupted the class and asked them what was happening [...] asking them to bring the issue to the class.” “And this is a continuous process [...] to create a environment in which giving feedback is not a problem. To keep an environment of mutual respect and dialog [...]” (A_G).</i></p>	<p>Institutional communication – bureaucracy</p> <p><i>“this is a problem [...] the daily basis of communication, notes, reminders, e-mails [...]; students get so many e-mails that they do not read all of them [...]” (A_F).</i></p> <p><i>“We created the class representative role [...]. We (Program and Associate Directors) have monthly meetings with the class representatives [...]” (A_H).</i></p> <p><i>“students do not always organize themselves to have a representative that defends their interests, instead of talking on his/her own behalf” (A_F).</i></p> <p><i>“[...] then you have to trust the class representative, because if you have an uncooperative class representative sometimes you will have problems with the class” (C_A).</i></p>

Responsible Behavior	<p>Professor as facilitator <i>“if you put yourself in a position of knowing everything it is not going to work well. If you put yourself in the position of a facilitator [...] then you get in” (B_D).</i></p> <p><i>“It is important that I have a student that looks for knowledge. And I am a facilitator” (B_A).</i></p> <p>Students’ responsibilities <i>“I would say [...] students have to demonstrate they have some specific knowledge [...] if you want a certificate that you know how to develop a program in JAVA, you have to know how to develop a program in JAVA” (A_C).</i></p> <p><i>“She (the student) was angry because she revealed her product idea in class and her competitors imitated her idea, she was upset with me (the professor) because I did not intercede for her benefit. I (professor) said: What should I do? It is your company, it is your strategy, and it is your information. Then, she (student) had like a real experience. I believe these little events make a difference in getting them to be responsible for their decisions and actions (in the future)” (B_C).</i></p>	<p>Professors’ responsibilities <i>“You say that the student has to have the same involvement, that the professor is a facilitator, then everyone is responsible. There is no (knowledge) transference, cool, I believe in that too; but if you get to the end of the course and half of the class did not read the textbook or did not participate in the discussions? How to share responsibilities among everyone? Because, then, the responsibility will be assigned to the professor [...]” (A_D).</i></p> <p>Student as a victim/paternalist society <i>“I believe we live in a paternalist society” (B_B).</i></p> <p><i>“sir, you have to involve your son/daughter in this process, you have to bring him/her here” (A_H).</i></p> <p><i>“There is not the option of claiming about Professor x or z. The responsibility for getting approved or not approved is yours (students)” (B_B).</i></p> <p><i>“Our students (in Brazil) are not used to looking for knowledge by themselves [...]” (B_D).</i></p> <p><i>“[...] after exams, students complain that they did not get that content in class [...]” (C_A).</i></p>
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Source: developed by the author

Appendix 4 - Empirical Evidence of Student Empowerment Dimensions

	<i>Evidence of Initiatives</i>	<i>Evidence of Barriers</i>
<i>Competences</i>	<p>Holistic view/overview of the business <i>“I believe we educate students who understand business, who need to know not only about making estimates, but that also about the impacts (of decisions) on the business, they need to have an overview of the business, of the different departments and their connections, of how to generate a sale [...], to think about 2/3/5 years from now. They have to think strategically” (A_D).</i></p> <p>Leadership skills <i>“The undergraduate students have two competences to develop. The technical competences [...] appreciated at the beginning of their career [...] and the soft skills, like leadership skills, holistic overview of problems fostered by experiences and by a humanistic education, a characteristic of this school curriculum [...] characteristics that are expressed later in career development [...] This is a characteristic of this school curriculum; it has a deep humanistic education distributed along the course [...].” “One of our goals in the course is the students’ competence in making decisions with ethical standards, etc.” (A_A).</i></p> <p>Critical reasoning skills <i>“(In statistics class) There are some competences that are intangible [...]. We want to develop statistical reasoning that is not simply doing the math [...]. The student has to think statistically, to be able to recognize random phenomena [...] what is cause and what is association [...] recognize that there is variability in the world and we can quantify this variability [...].” (B_A).</i></p> <p><i>“It is one of the goals, the ability to use quantitative methods when needed and apply critical reasoning. It is also a goal [...] across all classes, the ability to recover humanistic knowledge when solving a company problem” (A_F).</i></p> <p>Teamwork and hands-on activities <i>“Usually in all classes we have teamwork. My discipline for example, quantitative methods [...], they have theory in class, practical class in the laboratory, aiming to develop competence in, for example, writing good reports [...]. And the course ends with</i></p>	

a final team project. Students do the research, apply the techniques learned, present the work, they do like a consulting job. They practice what they are learning. This is a competence developed by the students.” (B_A).

“And you try to promote some extra-curricular activities, for example, monitoring, class tutoring, support for distance learning, so that these students can develop competences aimed at reducing their academic gaps [...]” (C_A).

Entrepreneurship skills

“One competence is entrepreneurship. This is in its genesis. It is something we have worked on a lot, that the student is a protagonist of his/her knowledge [...] and also of his/her actions and academic life” (B_A).

“I am going through a change as a professor [...] you need to create an environment in which the student recognizes that he/she needs to learn how to learn and he/she does not need just to acquire the content [...], besides, the content evolves constantly in our area [...]” (A_E).

Learner process evaluation

“There are classes in which there is a project during the course, there are no exams, there is a project they (students) will prepare and present during the semester [...]. Professors can decide the best way to access (students’ knowledge development) [...]” (B_D).

“My assessments are never only to memorize concepts [...] for example [...] develop a script for how you (student) would help a friend to develop his brand: what questions would you ask him? [...]” (A_D).

“There are students who learn better by hearing, [...] others learn better by doing... you need to have a more holistic view of the assessment process” (C_A).

Meaningfulness

Start from the problem

“It makes more sense when you start from the problem and not from the technique, especially because the problem can involve more than one discipline to be solved” (A_F).

Connection with practice

“How to introduce theory in class... I started talking about a band or soccer team, they (students) participated, then I

Students’ short-term goal

“The young do not have the patience to accumulate knowledge if they do not see an immediate application for that knowledge. This was always a characteristic more associated with adults, but it is becoming more present in the young too, you know [...] to study ‘just in time’ and not ‘just in case.’ The connection with hands-on

	<p>introduced the theory behind it” (A_D).</p> <p>“I gave homework [...] they had to visit a company to be able to do the homework [...]. After that, they had a different relationship with the subject and regretted they did not put so much effort in in class before [...]. The idea is to give the homework at the beginning of the class and theory at the end. After the homework, they got more interested (in the class), but before that they spent a lot of class time talking on their Whatsapp [...]” (B_F).</p> <p>Hands-on activities</p> <p>“We developed an exercise in which they could differentiate their performance as teams, groups [...]. I told them: this is a leadership exercise. You need to experience this, because someday you will be in a company leading a presentation, a group [...]. They led all the presentation” (B_C).</p> <p>Professors autonomy and guidelines/training</p> <p>“ [...] every six months we do workshops for the professors. They can suggest themes, but typically the department organizes the agenda (A_C)”.</p> <p>“ [...] we can bring proposals, but we also have proposals that the internal “Development Center of Teaching and Learning” bring to us, we have to participate of at least 3 activities per semester... (A_E)”.</p> <p>“In the beginning of every semester, there is a week in which professors receive training [...] new techniques [...], we discuss methodologies [...] (B_E)”</p>	<p>application is important [...]” (A_G).</p> <p>Departmentalization</p> <p>“I have seen lots of professors taking the same training in design thinking, then [...] I imagine if every week one of them decides to apply that in class [...]” (A_D).</p> <p>“the governance by departments makes alignment difficult [...]” (A_E).</p> <p>“We have a structure by departments [...] each department protects itself, fights for more influence [...]” (A_A).</p> <p>“we had a group of professors who exchanged materials [...] but there are professors who do not exchange [...]” (B_D).</p>
Impact	<p>Students’ contribution in class</p> <p>“Starting from a subject I develop a game [...], we played the game in class, so that they could experience the difference between a group, a team [...] we play [...]. I have pictures here (she showed me pictures). The results were fantastic” (B_C).</p> <p>Feedback about classes</p> <p>“We did a survey (with students) to know what they think about this new class” (B_D).</p> <p>Job market contribution</p> <p>“For example, this happened with the project management class, [...] the market demanded project management competence and then the class was developed [...]” (B_B).</p>	<p>The slowness of changes</p> <p>“We cannot start changing, you can imagine, you get a transatlantic liner and change its course at once, you have lots of students and students with the old curriculum get upset, we have to take it slowly” (F_NB).</p> <p>Nothing gets changed – student perception</p> <p>“Nothing gets solved to them (students), because they have already done that (class, for example), but if they know the number of problems that happened in the past and due to students’ feedback these problems were solved, they would not say that.</p>

	<p><i>They only have a picture of the moment. It is difficult to explain to them, we talk to them but they keep the impression that we do not listen to them” (F_NB).</i></p> <p>No impact on curricular development <i>“I was thinking [...] whether he/she (the student) actually participates (in the development of the curriculum. Actually, I do not think they participate in the development of the academic project, maybe indirectly [...], but [...] not together with us (in the discussions) [...]” (B_D).</i></p>
<p><i>Choices</i></p> <p>Elective classes <i>“In this change (curricular change that happened in the school), students chose their classes, they became an individual in the process. They were reactive. One competence is to be a protagonist of their actions, to be responsible for their actions” (AS).</i></p> <p><i>“Students can choose different specialization areas [...] and then, they have a number of classes that are compulsory in that area and in addition they can also choose other complementary classes to customize their interest.” “There is an aspect of student autonomy in our course that I believe is very strong” (A_A).</i></p> <p>Extra-curricular activities <i>“I believe that students’ responsible behavior is more intensively developed through extracurricular activities, and not in curricular activities, as for example in the company managed by students to provide consulting services, in the internship, and so on. We need to leverage on these experiences to explore, support and develop students’ potential for autonomy” (A_C)</i></p>	<p>Not proactive <i>“And according to this paradigm you have a society that needs to be tutored by the government [...]. It is not proactive” (B_A).</i></p> <p><i>“Students are not used to looking for content proactively, they want to get everything organized and prearranged from the professor [...]. The culture of our students needs to change so that protagonist role can happen” (B_D).</i></p> <p>MEC rules <i>“our first great concern is the MEC educational guidelines. I need to propose an educational project aligned to the national guidelines directive for the business administration courses. We cannot do anything different from that” (B_B).</i></p>

Source: developed by the author

Appendix 5 - Student-customer questionnaire (SCOQ)

Category 1: Student feedback – the importance of collecting and acting on students' feedback

1. In my opinion, the school should collect students' feedback on a regular basis (e.g. once per semester/year)
2. I believe that the school should report on the changes that have been introduced based on students' feedback
3. My opinion is that when organizing studies, the school should consider the students' wishes
4. I think that the school should act on students' feedback on their teachers

Category 2: Graduation – the level of strictness which students expect a HEI to employ during student graduation

I think that the graduation requirements of a school should be strict

When I receive a diploma and/or a degree, I'd like to feel that I have worked hard for it

Category 3: Curriculum design – expectations towards who designs the curriculum and the nature of the curriculum (practical vs. theoretical)

7. In my opinion the school should consult their alumni when deciding which subjects should be included in the curriculum
8. In my opinion the school should consult employers when deciding which subjects should be included in the curriculum

Category 4: Communication with service staff – expectations of students towards the study consultants and other bodies responsible for the smooth flow of study-related activities (except classroom activities) in accommodating the students' requests

9. The study department should remind me of things that I have forgotten
10. The study department should solve my problems with a teacher
11. The study department should support me when I have a problem with a deadline

Category 5: Rigor – the lenience or strictness with which students expect the HEI to follow the established rules and regulations

12. I think the school should be strict regarding any deadlines
13. In my opinion, school rules must be the same for everyone to follow

Category 6: Grading – the lenience or strictness with which students expect the teacher to approach the evaluation of various assignments

14. The teacher should justify my grades
15. I think that if a student pays the tuition fee, s(he) should be taught by the teacher as long as it takes for her/him to receive a good grade
16. Getting the best grade must be a hard job
17. If I feel that I deserve a better final grade in a subject at the end of the semester, the teacher should give me another possibility to improve the grade
18. Teachers should grade also my eagerness, not only academic achievements

Category 7: Classroom behaviour – the lenience or strictness with which students expect the teacher to approach students' (mis)behaviour in class

19. If I cheat, there should be negative consequences for me
20. In my opinion, deadlines for a test and homework are very important to follow and no

exceptions must be provided

21. I believe that during a test or exam the teacher should keep a very close watch on the students in case someone is cheating
22. All those student who cannot hand in their assignments in due time should be graded more strictly
23. It is my opinion that plagiarism (using other people's ideas and words and presenting them as your own) should entail negative consequences

Category 8: Classroom studies – convenience and ease of classroom studies

24. In my opinion new material should be presented to students in a previously processed and concise form, e.g. in the form of a course reader or PowerPoint slides
25. It is my opinion that all necessary study material should be made available in the internet for the student to download

Category 9: Individual studies – students' willingness to make academic efforts outside class hours

26. I think that working individually at home to prepare for next class is an inseparable part of getting the higher education
27. I believe that additional reading at home must be made obligatory because knowledge provided in class alone is insufficient to grasp different aspects of the subject
28. If I come to class unprepared, there should be some negative consequences for me

Category 10: Teaching methods – students' expectations concerning teaching methods

29. A class should contain entertaining elements, because then I pay attention
30. If I cannot take interest in a particular subject, it is the teacher's job to inspire and motivate me with different teaching methods

Category 11: Course design – expectations towards who designs the course and the nature of the course (practical vs. theoretical)

31. I think that generally, a course should be practical, not theoretical
32. In today's world, the teaching of theoretical material is outdated at the university
33. I'd like to be taught by people who do business in the field that they teach
34. The teaching of practical material should receive precedence over teaching theoretical material