The BSc. Management (Marketing) programme at The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados: Focusing on student feedback to improve service quality and student satisfaction

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The aim of this research was to evaluate the Bachelor of Science (BSc.) Management (Marketing) programme determining how it could be improved to satisfy its primary customer, the student. A focus group was conducted to gather the students’ feelings about the programme. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the programme facilitators to determine what improvements they wished to see within the programme. It was recognised that students preferred practical methods of learning to theoretical and were motivated by the completion of authentic projects that allowed them to make a contribution to society. It is hoped that implementation of the recommendations of this research will not only increase student satisfaction and the quality of the programme but will positively benefit The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados and the business community.

Key words: student feedback, improvement, service quality, higher education, student satisfaction, authentic projects, focus group.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine what elements of the Bachelor of Science (BSc.) Management (Marketing) programme at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill, Barbados, could be improved to be aligned with student feedback, thereby improving student satisfaction and service quality. The research focused on reviewing the Marketing programme through obtaining qualitative student feedback. The information gathered through this research was then used to build an action plan to implement the changes suggested by students in order to better meet their needs and hopefully increase the students’ satisfaction with the programme as well as to improve the service quality. The qualitative student feedback, therefore, focuses on determining what about the current programmes could be improved as well as any elements of the programme that students felt could be excluded. As a result, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

• What improvements would students welcome to the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme and why?
• What elements of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme did students perceive to be of no benefit to their development and why?
To what extent do students feel prepared for the next step in their academic or career plan at the end of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme?

Although this research seeks to align the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme with student feedback, it must be acknowledged that students are not the only stakeholders in the delivery of higher education services. Other stakeholders in the provision of higher education services include each programme’s facilitators such as lecturers and prospective employers. It was therefore necessary to garner feedback not only the students but from these stakeholders of the programme. To this end, the review also seeks to answer two more questions:

- What improvements or changes do the programme facilitators deem necessary for the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme and why?
- To what extent do the facilitators of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme concur with the student feedback collected?

Overview of the programme

The BSc. Management (Marketing) programme at UWI, Cave Hill, is currently being offered by the Department of Management Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences. This programme allows students to obtain a Management degree with a concentration in Marketing. The programme’s goal is to develop a UWI graduate who can function in any marketing related role in a Caribbean firm supervised by a marketing executive. To successfully meet this goal, the programme must endeavour to develop students who are:

- critical and creative thinkers
- problem solvers
- knowledgeable and informed
- effective communicators
- team players
- IT skilled and information literate
- socially and culturally responsible
- innovative and entrepreneurial
- appreciative of the financial implications of their actions
- appreciative of the need for international expansion and development in the region

In order to complete this programme students must complete five marketing courses during the second and third year of their degree namely: Marketing Management, International Marketing Management, Marketing Research, Consumer Behaviour and Integrated Marketing Communications. Collectively these courses seek to develop the skills necessary to be successful in a marketing
related role in a Caribbean firm. This specialised programme was first offered in the 2009-2010 academic year and as the University continues to strive to be a centre for excellence it is beneficial to the department to review the programme while it is still in its infancy. Additionally, the increasing number of students entering the programme each year has made it necessary to ensure that the programme meets the needs of the students as well as internal and external stakeholders of the programme.

**Literature review**

*Feedback*

“Increasingly, higher education institutions are realizing that higher education could be regarded as a business-like service industry and they are beginning to focus more on meeting or exceeding the needs of their students” (Thorsten, Fuß & Gläser-Zikuda, 2010, p.106). In order to achieve this goal, knowing what students need, want or expect becomes exceedingly important. This knowledge can be and is obtained through student feedback. Gibson (2010) argues that student feedback is also important as it provides students with opportunities to provide advice in a manner that can increase student retention and improve the academic programme, while Leckey and Neill (2001) state that as delivering quality becomes more important to higher education, so does the role student feedback plays in delivering quality. The focus has now become the need to satisfy the most crucial consumer of higher education services, which is the student.

Researchers use a number of methods to gather student feedback including: focus groups, structured interviews, student-staff consultative committees and post-course briefings (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998; King, Morrison, Reed, & Stachow, 1999; Telford & Masson, 2005). However, from the research it has been observed that questionnaires/surveys are the method most often used to obtain student feedback (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998; Thorsten, Fuß & Gläser-Zikuda, 2010). Harvey (2003) also states that feedback from students has two main functions:

- Internal information to guide improvement
- External information for potential students and other stakeholders, including accountability and compliance requirement

Moreover, a reoccurring theme appears throughout the literature; that is the importance of not only putting the student feedback received into action but ensuring that students are made aware that their feedback has been implemented (Harvey, 2003; Leckey & Neill, 2001; King, Morrison, Reed, & Stachow, 1999). If students do not see any action resulting from their feedback, they may become sceptical and unwilling to participate further (Leckey & Neill, 2001). This is illustrated by Nair, Bennett and Mertova (2010) who state that through an intensive effort to continually inform students of changes made to programmes as a result of
their feedback they created a more trusting student body, who continued to provide feedback knowing that staff would act on their suggestions.

Harvey (2003) emphasises that for the views of students to be effective in quality improvement, data collected must be transformed into information that can be used within an institution to effect change. Harvey (2003) states that “to make an effective contribution to internal improvement processes, views of students need to be integrated into a regular and continuous cycle of analysis, reporting, action and feedback” (p.4). For this to take place, the institution must put in place a system that supports the satisfaction cycle demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1. The satisfaction cycle (adapted from Harvey, 2003)](image)

Furthermore, according to Harvey (2003), for this to happen it requires that the institution has in place a system for:

- identifying and delegating responsibility for action
- encouraging ownership of plans of action
- accountability for action taken or not taken
- feedback to generators of the data
- committing appropriate resources
Satisfaction

There has been some debate as to exactly what satisfaction is, but according to Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2006) customer satisfaction is the relationship between customer expectations and their evaluation of a product or service. Additionally, Oliver (1999) states that satisfaction occurs when a consumer has been pleasurably fulfilled and senses that the use of the product or service meets their goals, wants or desires. More specifically to educational services, student satisfaction is determined throughout a student’s educational experience and is based on their subjective evaluation of all of their experiences and results throughout their campus life (Thorsten, Fuß & Gläser-Zikuda, 2010).

Student satisfaction has become increasingly important to students and universities. It is of great importance to students because of the role that education plays in their lives (Thorsten, Fuß & Gläser-Zikuda, 2010), determining their further career or academic path. This means that, in order to be successful, students must make a significant investment of intellect, time and application. Moreover, universities are realising the benefits of satisfied students, as they are not only likely to complete their programme at the university but continue to support the institution after graduation (Gibson, 2010). Thorsten, Fuß and Gläser-Zikuda (2010) state that satisfied students also positively affect student motivation and fundraising. Furthermore, Douglas, McClelland and Davies (2008) assert that keeping continually satisfied customers results in customer loyalty. Customer loyalty can then have a positive impact on customer behaviour such as “the intent to study at a higher level within the same institution, how frequently and recently a student used ancillary services,...student retention, and lastly willingness to recommend the institution to friends, neighbors and fellow employees” (Douglas, McClelland, & Davies, 2008, pp.21-22).

The increased interest in student satisfaction has led to a number of academics exploring the factors that lead to student satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In a meta-analysis of factors deemed to be most important to student satisfaction in higher education, Gibson (2010) found that the most important contributor to student satisfaction is the attributes of the academic programme, which include: the curriculum, quality of teaching and if students achieve their initial goals.

Services

Services can be defined as deeds, efforts, or performances and have four unique characteristics: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability (Hoffman & Bateson, 2011). It can be argued that intangibility is the most distinguishing characteristic of services as this is what prevents services from being sensed in the same way as goods. Inseparability, on the other hand, is the characteristic of services which describes the inability of the customer to separate the service provider and in most cases other customers from their service experience. The characteristic, heterogeneity exists as a result of the fact that most services are provided by one person to another which results in a variation of consistency
from one service experience to another. The final characteristic of services, perishability, says that services cannot be stored for later use or inventoried. On examining higher education services, it becomes apparent that they have several service characteristics: intangibility, perishability and inseparability (Shank, Hayes, & Walker, 1996).

Although service quality and customer satisfaction have certain things in common, it is generally believed that satisfaction is a broader concept, while service quality is more focused on the dimensions of service (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2006). Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler assert that service quality is only one component that leads to customer satisfaction. Further, Aldridge and Rowley (1998) assert that quality can be distinguished from satisfaction because quality is a general attitude while satisfaction is associated with each specific transaction.

In examining service quality as it relates to higher education services, Harvey and Green (1993) state that there is “no single correct definition of quality, but rather quality should be seen as a ‘stakeholder-relative’ concept” (cited in Clewes, 2003, p.71). Indeed Telford and Masson (2005) confirmed this through an examination of the congruence of the quality values held by the students, the teaching staff and the university senior management at the Napier University Business School, Edinburgh. Their research indicates that students are more concerned with the effect their qualifications will have on their chosen careers while senior management and teaching staff are primarily concerned with the lecturer’s commitment to the learning programme.

Relating literature to this research project

It is evident from the literature that for improvement within higher education programmes to be effective there must first be a method to gather student feedback, which allows programme facilitators to know and understand what factors affect and increase student satisfaction. Secondly, there must be an understanding throughout the institution of the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction in higher education. Thirdly, there should also be support from the institution to implement the recommendations and actions suggested by researchers as a result of the students’ expressed opinions. Finally, there must be an effective method for communicating all the actions which were implemented as a result of students’ feedback to students in order to encourage continual feedback and improvement.

This research therefore seeks to take that first step toward quality improvement of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme by examining student feedback through qualitative research. This method of research was specifically chosen as Aldridge and Rowley, in their 1998 study suggested that by starting the process with focus groups, researchers allow students to identify the issues of import to them rather than using a general scale. It is therefore assumed that through the careful analysis of the results and the development and implementation of actions based on the feedback received, the research will comply with the satisfaction cycle. It is also assumed that after the implementation of these
actions and the implementation of further student research that the researcher will observe an improvement in service quality and student satisfaction.

Methodology

Harvey (2003) states that programme-level surveys tend to focus on the teaching and learning, course organisations and programme-specific learning resources. He also recommends that it is better to gather programme-level specific information through qualitative feedback such as focus groups if it is required for improvement purposes. This research, therefore, focuses on a programme level satisfaction 'survey' to provide internal information to guide improvement of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme. Qualitative research is an in depth research method which seeks to discover the reasons for a situation determining feelings and motivations of the persons involved in the research. This research seeks to determine students' feelings about the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme, determining what they wish to see improve and change and why they feel that way. Qualitative research is therefore the best method for this exploration, allowing the researcher the flexibility to follow ideas that may arise and to thoroughly explore the students' feelings. The student feedback was gathered through the use of a focus group which was conducted using a semi-structured format to allow the researcher the opportunity to explore students' responses.

This research also sought to garner feedback from the programme facilitators, to determine what improvements or changes they deemed necessary for the programme as well as the extent to which their feedback concurred with the student feedback. In order to generate the thoughts and feelings of the programme facilitators another qualitative research method was used - unstructured interview. Interviews seek to explore a particular topic through discussion. Two interviews were conducted with programme facilitators, one before the focus group session conducted with students and one immediately following the focus group session.

Participants

Participants were divided into two groups, one group of students and another of programme facilitators. The first group included eight students of the Department of Management Studies. Three participants had completed the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme that semester while one participant had completed the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme in the previous semester. One participant had only that semester studied the programme and had completed all but one of the Marketing courses. Three participants were in the process of completing the programme and would complete in the following academic year. Three of the participants were male while five were female. It should also be noted that seven of the participants were full time students. The second group of participants included the lecturers of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme. The marketing concentration courses currently offered in this programme are taught by three members of the Department of Management Studies (including the researcher).
Focus group

Students of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme were invited to a focus group session via e-learning using an invitation as well as via telephone and personal email. Former students of the programme were contacted via telephone or personal email and invited to the focus group session. The session was conducted by two lecturers within the programme at the beginning of the summer for approximately an hour and a half; the researcher fulfilled the role of moderator while the second lecturer filled the role of research assistant and took notes. It should also be noted that this session was recorded for later transcription and analysis. Students were initially briefed by the researcher who indicated to them that the session was about obtaining their general and honest feedback on the programme with the view to improving it, and they were also reassured that despite the audio taping any feedback they provided would be anonymous. The session was then conducted using the questions within the focus group guide demonstrated in Figure 2. These questions sought to generate the students' feelings as they related specifically to the courses they had completed, any changes and/or improvements they wished to see made to the programme, as well as how they generally felt about the programme and if it met their expectations of a marketing programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Related focus group questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>What improvements would students welcome to the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme and why?</td>
<td>What courses need to be more useful?</td>
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<td>What courses would you like to see added to the programme?</td>
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<td>How do you think the programme can be improved?</td>
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<td>What elements of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme did students perceive to be of no benefit to their development and why?</td>
<td>What problems did you have with the programme?</td>
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<td>What courses would you like to see excluded from the programme?</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent do students feel prepared for the next step in their academic or career plan at the end of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme?</td>
<td>What is your next step; further study or work?</td>
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<td>How prepared do you feel for that next step?</td>
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<td>Do you think that you can do the jobs that you have been applying for?</td>
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<td>What about the work or job arena scares you?</td>
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<td>If already working; do you feel more/better prepared for your work?</td>
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Figure 2. Research questions and focus group questions

Unstructured interview

Programme facilitators were invited to a relaxed session at the end of the academic year, away from the campus for the first unstructured interview. Invitees were asked to personally reflect on the academic year prior to the session and to have any suggestions for improvement of the programme ready for discussion among the group. During the sessions facilitators were then asked questions and encouraged
to discuss the general performance of the students within each of the courses administered; any changes they deemed necessary to their specific courses and/or the programme, as well their personal reflections on the year. The researcher assumed the role of moderator and note-taker in this session which lasted approximately an hour. The second unstructured interview with programme facilitators was conducted a week after the focus group session, allowing the researcher time to amass the findings into a document itemising all suggestions made by the students and all the feedback obtained during that session. This document was circulated, each item was discussed and a course of action determined. Similarly to the first interview, this interview was held away from campus in a relaxed setting allowing individuals to be more forthcoming.

Data analysis

The data gathered from the focus group session was analysed using thematic analysis which “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.6). Through the use of thematic analysis, the researcher sought to give a thorough account of the theme that was predominately discussed during the focus group session. To complete this analysis, the researcher first transcribed the focus group responses, before coding the themes generated and analysing the data.

Research limitations

The research conducted may be impacted by a number of limitations. By only conducting one focus group session, the findings will not benefit from comparison and confirmation of the information collected. Additionally, the research may also lack the objectivity of an independent researcher who has no prior relationship with the students as two of the programme facilitators were the moderator and research assistant of the focus group session. As previously indicated, the research may also be limited by the sample of students as the number of participants interviewed may not be representative of the population being examined therefore impacting the reliability of the research. Furthermore, seven of the participants were full time students of the programme, which may introduce a bias to the information collected and may not adequately reflect the opinions of the part time students on the programme.
Results

Student feedback

Research question one: What improvements would students welcome to the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme and why?

As demonstrated in Figure 2, to ascertain students’ thoughts and feelings on this they were asked how they generally felt about the programme; what courses they would like to see added to the programme, and how they thought the programme could be improved. A number of interesting and insightful suggestions were made by the participants of the focus group. The first suggestion was the inclusion of more marketing courses to the programme. Four participants were interested in completing further marketing courses such as tourism marketing and services marketing which are already offered by the Department of Management Studies but are not included in their current programme. One participant also suggested that internet marketing be included although this course is not currently offered by the Department of Management Studies.

The second suggestion for improvement of the programme was more exposure to business professionals who work in marketing every day and can give students, according to participant J, “…a real life understanding of how marketing is really done…to come and give some sort of testimonial just for us to gain knowledge and understanding.” This suggestion was supported by four participants, and participant D specifically suggested “…I would more go for that for Integrated Marketing Communications and probably the International Marketing Management, based on the projects that we did.”

Thirdly, five of the students suggested that more authentic projects be included in the coursework in each of the marketing courses. The completion of authentic projects that will be implemented by companies after their development provides students with more motivation. Participant S illustrated this point by stating, “our company was actually interested, she was hands on and whenever we wanted something we went back to her and at the end she wanted to use our project. So it felt like you were doing something for someone, I got a little drive …” This was further illustrated when participant A stated “…I think I liked Marketing Research because it was a real project and I think you had in the back of your mind that you were doing something for somebody else rather than just for yourself.” Immediately following participant A’s comment participant D tacked on “rather than just a grade.”

In discussing the development of authentic projects four participants agreed that the development of a competition among student groups where all groups would compete to develop an integrated marketing communications plan for one company who would then implement the winning team’s plan would be a welcome addition to the programme. Participant B suggested that the department “try to get some sort of partnership or agreement with companies and actually have them come into the classroom and say okay we want a campaign done and actually use the ideas that would be good.” This competition would not only present them
with an authentic project but it would also provide students with the opportunity to have experience which they could add to their resumes. As stated by participant B, “…what would make us feel a lot better is that what we do in these courses we are actually putting stuff on resumes based on work we have done in the course.” This was echoed by participant D who stated “So it is nothing that is going to be made up or make believe just for a grade this is going to be a campaign that is going to be implemented. That is going to be placed on their curriculum vitae at the end of the day.”

Finally, seven of the eight participants would welcome the addition of an internship programme to the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme. Participant A bluntly declared “I think it should have an internship”, while participant B concurred by stating “… I was just about to say to do actual real work.” An internship programme was suggested for a variety of reasons, firstly because it would provide students with more practical experience as said by participant B, “…we have the knowledge, it’s just if we had more practice.” Secondly, internship was suggested because as stated by participant D, “…the thing about internships is that if you go there and you really work and impress people that could be your future job.”

Of note, was one participant’s suggestion that all courses be assessed using 60% coursework and 40% final examination, rather than 40% coursework and 60% final examination, because as stated by that participant “you learn more during the semester doing the actual projects rather than in the exam.” There was a general murmur of agreement, but students appeared reluctant to express this desire.

Research question two: What elements of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme did students perceive to be of no benefit to them and why?

Participants commented on the following questions: what problems they had with the programme and what courses they would like to see excluded from the programme. Students’ comments in this area were related to both the marketing elements of the programme and the other management courses which make up the programme. First, four participants believed that Business, Government and Society should be excluded from the programme, while one participant thought that Productions and Operations Management and Financial Management should be excluded from the programme.

Secondly, as it relates to the Marketing elements of the programme, Participant D stated, “a general comment about the course is that the subjects are more interesting than the other management subjects for example like the IMC that we did was very practical and hands on so that made it very exciting in a sense.” Despite general satisfaction, five participants found that the International Marketing Management (IMM) course repeated too much information from the International Business course which is currently a pre-requisite and that the information presented within IMM could be assimilated without the International Business background. Participant S first indicated this in saying “I do not think I
learnt much new stuff. Not to sound bad but after doing Marketing Management and International Business it was all like the same thing.” This was further emphasised by participant D who stated that “… it was all repetitive.” These students also stated that the removal of International Business as a pre-requisite of the IMM would allow other students the opportunity to complete more marketing courses or electives that interest them.

**Research question three: To what extent do students feel prepared for the next step in their academic or career plan at the end of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme?**

Five students felt prepared for work and were excited to put what they had learnt to use in business. Despite this enthusiasm, more often than not the jobs they have applied for require them to work unsupervised and students expressed some fear of making errors and working without some form of guidance when they first enter the work arena. As it relates to moving on to completing a master’s programme, four participants did not think that they were fully prepared for that level of degree for two major reasons: they could not properly write a research paper and they felt they needed more practical experience that would be beneficial to them in completing that level of degree.

**Programme facilitator feedback**

**Research question four: What improvements or changes do the programme facilitators deem necessary for the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme?**

The following section will examine the results of the unstructured interview with the programme facilitators, which sought to determine what improvements or changes they thought were necessary for the programme. The first suggestion agreed to by all programme facilitators was ensuring that students completed the Consumer Behavior course before the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) course. The facilitator of the IMC course found that during the last two semesters students performed poorly on the target market analysis element of the course and thought that a better understanding of the consumer should be obtained before trying to develop a communications campaign appropriate for consumers.

The second suggestion was that the International Marketing Management course did not require the prerequisites of International Business and Marketing Management. On this suggestion the facilitators reassessed the learning outcomes they wanted from International Marketing Management and the information would be beneficial to students before they entered the course. It was also determined that this should be discussed with students during the focus group session for confirmation.

Finally it was suggested that the Marketing Management course address more financial elements of marketing and reduce the amount of strategic marketing dealt with during the course. The facilitator of the Marketing Management course
expressed his intention to change the objectives of the course. He indicated that he had already begun to do so and would finalise the few changes necessary to the course to make it speak to the financial implications of marketing, while being less reliant on strategic marketing. This suggestion was agreed by all programme facilitators.

**Research question five: To what extent do the facilitators of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme concur with the student feedback collected?**

After some discussion on the student feedback received, all programme facilitators agreed with many of the students’ suggestions including: the development of an internship programme, the use of more business professionals during the programme, the completion of authentic projects in the coursework of the marketing courses, and the development of a competition. The programme facilitators then spent some time determining how best to implement the changes required to improve the programme and developed an action plan to be presented to the Head of Department for approval.

**Discussion and recommendations**

**Lessons learned from student feedback**

Students are not only motivated to perform by the achievement of good grades during their time at university; they are also motivated by the completion of authentic projects which allow them to make a contribution to companies and other external stakeholders. Furthermore, students are motivated by gaining practical experience of the material they cover which makes the completion of assignments and tasks more exciting and fulfilling. This theme was reiterated throughout the students’ discussion as participants focussed on learning through practice rather than theory and the need for more practical elements in the programme. This call for practice does not only serve as motivation for better performance during the programme, it builds students’ confidence and, in their eyes, makes them more capable and attractive to future employers and ultimately more prepared for their careers.

These lessons concurred with the literature, namely Telford and Masson (2005) who state that “students are primarily interested in a vocationally valuable educational qualification or experience that will help them in their careers” (p.113). Likewise, Gibson (2010) states that educational outcomes such as preparation for the future and skills developed “seem to be more important to business student satisfaction somewhat more than to students in a more general programme” (p.256). The student feedback also provided ideas for how this need for learning through practice could be met such as: the development of more authentic projects including a competition, the inclusion of more business professionals in the form of guest lecturers and to allow for the critique of authentic projects, and, most importantly, the development of an internship programme within the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme.
**Actions developed from student feedback**

Having conducted this research and shared the results with the programme's facilitators, there are a number of recommendations and actions that have been decided upon to improve the current programme. Some of these actions will be implemented immediately (short term actions) and still more will be implemented over time (long term actions).

**Short term actions**

The following actions have been agreed upon and will be implemented to meet the students' needs:

1. A workshop that will allow students to meet, listen and question marketing professionals, satisfying their need to understand from practising marketers what they do in their day-to-day jobs.

2. The introduction of a project competition that will be implemented in the Integrated Marketing Communications course following the guidelines suggested by the participants of the focus group. As such, all groups will be presented with the same company and material for which they will have to develop an IMC plan, which will be presented to a panel of marketing professionals who will determine the winning project.

3. A change of course requirements such that the prerequisites for International Marketing Management will be changed to prevent the repetition of information and to meet the new learning objectives for the course. It will also be necessary to revise the learning outcomes and course outlines for the courses to which changes are necessary.

**Long term actions**

There are some recommendations that cannot be completed immediately due to the nature of the changes, and these will occur over a three year period, they are:

1. The facilitators have decided to develop an internship programme which will be worth three credits and be a necessary element to complete the BSc. Management (marketing) programme. This internship will provide the students with the opportunities to practise in the field and allow them to build the confidence required to work unsupervised. Additionally, it will present them with the opportunity to place on-the-job training on their resumes, making them more attractive to potential employers.

2. To facilitate the suggestion made by the programme facilitators and confirmed by student feedback, the Department will change the current timing of the Consumer Behavior course, offering it in semester one and
offering the IMC course in semester two to allow students to better perform in the IMC course.

3. Finally, it has been determined that a questionnaire will be developed based on the issues raised by students within the focus group session. This questionnaire will facilitate the receipt of continued student feedback so that the programme is continually reviewed and improved. This method of development was chosen because Leckey and Neill (2001) stress “that too often questionnaires are based on what managers or teachers think are important to students.” (p.25). The department will therefore develop a feedback programme based on the satisfaction cycle demonstrated in Figure 1.

Implications for the institution and wider academic community

Impact on the institution

On implementation of the recommendations detailed in the previous section, it is believed that the Department of Management Studies would not only improve the current BSc. Management (Marketing) programme, but that the Department will also increase the level of student satisfaction within the programme. Moreover it is expected that the Department will benefit from an increased level of interest from the employer community in assisting with the programme. Business professionals will become more involved in the programme as they are requested to be guest lecturers, competition judges and/or providers of internship opportunities. Furthermore, the Department of Management Studies should also benefit from an increased number of students enrolling in the programme as a result of an increased number of recommendations from satisfied students of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme. Additionally, through the development of better student-faculty relationships, former students as they develop in their careers will be more likely to contribute to the further development of the programme through monetary donations or donations of time.

Implications for the wider academic community

Increasingly, businesses require staff who have experience in their chosen field of study, individuals who can ‘hit the ground running’. This study discovered that current students of the BSc. Management (Marketing) programme are nervous about working on their own because they lack the practise necessary to build that confidence. Business programmes need to provide students with not only the theoretical knowledge to be successful in their chosen field but the practical experience. With the addition of practical elements of study to these programmes, students will then be better prepared for the world of work or further academic study.
This study continues to prove that student feedback provides valuable information to all programmes. By following a similar study of student feedback, combined with the thoughts and feelings of faculty delivering the programme to be studied, other higher education institutions and programmes might see improvement in their delivery and increased student satisfaction. Continuous feedback and implementation of the action plans developed in response to student feedback can ensure the delivery of the best programme for the students. Moreover, it will help ensure that the needs of the business community employing students after graduation.

Suggestions for further study
To validate the results obtained in this study, it is suggested that similar focus groups are held using a larger and more representative sample of the student body. It is also suggested that confirmation be made of a change in the level of student satisfaction after the implementation of the recommendations developed.
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References


