

**Stakeholder Satisfaction Driven Quality Management in Higher Education**

How the voice of stakeholders can be considered to improve Quality Management Systems of Higher Education Institutions

Gdańsk, 2025

# SUMMARY

# Abstract

# INTRODUCTION [10-15]

## Background on Higher Education Management (JPSZ) [2-3]

In a modern, super quickly evolving economy, knowledge and scientific development play a key role (cf. Castro Laszlo & Laszlo, 2002). Therefore results of the work of higher education institutions (HEI) become a key determinant of the widely perceived success in the modern economy, serving as a driving force for economic development (cf. Puente et al., 2021). In this context, universities play significant role due to their impact on innovations commercialised with technology industries. As it can be observed that “higher education is a reflection of the social, scientific, technical, and economic potential of any country” (Grudowski, 2020), then finding effective solutions for quality management systems of HEI seems to be all the more critical. How challenging it may be is reflected in opinions that “the search for solutions concerning organisation and management (…) is an endless story” (Leja & Pawlak, 2021).

For a better understanding of management challenges for universities, it is important to refer to their historical evolution background. Universities underwent transformations, starting from the 12th century, induced by both external conditions (varying influences of secular and ecclesiastical authorities, technological changes, politics and demographics) and new ideas emerging among the elites or those working at universities. Brief summary of main stages of universities evolution has been presented in the Table 1.

Table 1 Trends in Changes in European Universities from the Middle Ages to the Present

| **Time Period** | **Description of the Main Trends in Changes in European Universities** |
| --- | --- |
| 12th century | Emerging organizations originating from associations of teachers and students forming in cities independently of monastic schools. A key facilitating factor was urbanization. |
| 13th century | The establishment and support of universities by the ruling authorities. |
| 14th century | Increased professionalization and secularization of society, leading to a growing demand for education. Enhanced employment opportunities through education resulted in an increase in the number of students. |
| 15th century | Rulers began to recognize the potential of an educated workforce and provided greater support for the education of an ever-increasing number of students. |
| 16th century | A saturation of the market with graduates led to rising unemployment among educated individuals. There emerged a perceived threat to aristocratic dominance from educated individuals originating from lower social strata. |
| 17th century | The aristocratization of education through the limitation of scholarships for poorer students and an increased emphasis on the socializing role of education. |
| 18th century | A heightened demand for education in new disciplines, fueled by technological advancements and changes in state organization. This period also saw the deconfessionalization of universities and their increased subordination to state authorities. |
| 19th century | The state-supported implementation of the university model as formulated by Kant and realized through the Humboldt model, with research becoming the dominant focus. |
| First quarter of the 20th century | The flourishing of the liberal university model, inspired by non-German concepts of academic freedom in teaching and research, led to the idea of *Lehr- und Lernfreiheit*. |
| Second quarter of the 20th century | The influence of socialist totalitarian regimes led to the subordination of universities to the state, with research increasingly commissioned by the state to support prevailing ideologies. |
| Third quarter of the 20th century | A post-war return to pre-war university ideals, though implemented under the new conditions of rapid technological development and the marketization of education. |
| Fourth quarter of the 20th century | The internationalization of universities, education, and science, supported by state and international regulations. |

Source: (Cwynar, 2005; De Ridder-Symoens, 2020; Kim, 2009; Leja, 2011; Szefler, 2024)

It’s worth noting that the stages of universities’ evolution described briefly in Table 1 show an increasing speed of modifications of concepts for the role of HEI, especially in the 20th century. What is not presented in this simplified form is the fact that a number of these changes were happening in parallel in different regions of the world. The most significant parallel development of universities is between the English-American private universities market and continental European universities, with public universities being impacted by governments. While for private universities, cooperation with business became quite natural and the range of it developed significantly at the same time, public universities in Europe were enhancing more the area of research and teaching that serves society. While these different concepts of what university should be existed together multiple globalisation processes led to the emergence of the concept of triple helix to describe modern economies where universities, businesses and governments cooperate in a mutually reinforcing system. Nevertheless, one of the most important objectives remains preparing the student for future independence. As Geitz and de Geus write “(...) an important goal of higher education is to support students to exercise control over their own learning and to help them develop skills and learn strategies to take the lead. It should aim to educate students in such a way that they become self-regulative learners, resulting in a lifelong, sustainable impact on their personal and professional development” (Geitz & de Geus, 2019, p. 2). This reality coexists with a high recognition of the academic culture which has roots in the medieval universities’ predecessors even from the 12th century. Some the most important manifestations of the academic culture is “ commitment to collegiality coupled with autonomy” and “emphasis on peer review and individual specialization” (Austin, 1990, p. 65). Topic of organisational culture is discussed in more depth in section 3.4.

Given the considerations outlined above, it can be noticed that from a management perspective, HEIs differ from traditional business organisations. They need to consider both business and government relations, but it’s also necessary to cooperate with other universities with which they compete. Overall environment of the university relations seems to be very complex. The most significant parties that HEIs’ managers need to consider are presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1 The University’s Relational Environment

Source: (Leja, 2019, p. 13; Szefler, 2024)

Despite numerous groups that need to be considered, another complexity from a management perspective is the high impact of prestige economy within the academic motivations mix (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011, p. 400), which leads to a preference for prestige-maximisation over profit-maximisation (Tayar & Jack, 2013, p. 154). Also, universities provide a long-term “production” cycle, as either research or teaching results are not fully predictable, as they have a strong human factor. Because of it, any improvement activities will “require a ‘can-do’ attitude and a creative and flexible approach to defining goals and refining working practices” (Newby, 1999, p. 266).

The authors of this study propose to include a set of stakeholder management tools within quality management systems to support continuous improvement processes in the environment of higher education institutions. The role of stakeholders for HEIs will be discussed in a more detailed way in the following subsection.

## The Role of Stakeholders in Higher Education (JPSZ) [2-3]

In today’s rapidly changing economic and academic environment, the role of stakeholders has become increasingly vital to the governance, performance, and quality assurance of higher education institutions. These institutions are intricately woven into a complex ecosystem of relationships which are related to various obligations and expectations. In some cases, these expectations may become mutually incompatible. From the management of the HEI perspective, understanding at least the main groups that are crucial for shaping the quality of the institution’s services becomes almost mandatory. The importance of that is even stronger because of the specificity of higher education and scientific services, where various groups are shaping the quality, and at the same time, the other various groups are perceiving it and assessing. Moreover, the environment of these complex relations is not static. It evolves, expressing multiple social, economic and technological changes.

The most commonly recognised stakeholder groups of universities are students and overall university employees. They together form a community that can be perceived as a university. As the services of HEI are so much intangible, it could exist without any infrastructure, but cannot without students and teachers who are scientists. This understanding has its roots in the traditional model of the university as a place for sharing and acquiring scientific knowledge. It’s also important to emphasise that nowadays university employees are not only academics but also all administrative and supportive staff, who deliver a crucial contribution to the quality of the institutions’ overall services. Students, after graduation, become alumni, and then they gain the opportunity to verify their skills and competence in real life. This process may lead to a change in their perception of the quality of the university services. Good education and great skills bring value not only to former students but also to the businesses they contribute to. As such, another important stakeholder group are employers. In the scientific environment, any progress comes through creativity, critical inquiry, and peer verification. These processes cannot be fully effective without established cooperation with scientists from other institutions worldwide. From this perspective, other HEIs – even competitors – become stakeholders as potential partners in collaboration. Sometimes it comes in the form of bilateral cooperation or broader networks and consortia involving multiple institutions. Universities possess significant potential to have a great impact on society. That’s why, for most of their history, universities have been of great interest to authorities and policymakers. This attention may be an expression of the overall society’s interests, but sometimes, especially for public universities, it entails regulatory oversight aligned with the priorities of funders.

Within such a complex environment, the traditional quality assurance approach appears to be insufficient. Focusing solely on internal compliance and performance may lead to adhering to perfect internal procedures that are no longer relevant. It may also cause the emergence of a perception of reality which is far from facts. Therefore, applying principles of Total Quality Management appears to be appropriate. These are customer focus, fact-based management, human-oriented management and continuous improvement. These principles will be discussed in more detail in subsection 4.1. With regard to HEIs, it is challenging to determine a consistent definition of the customer, which often leads to issues with the application of the TQM systems and practices (cf. Owlia & Aspinwall, 1997, p. 529; Vijaya Sunder, 2016, p. 162). Although TQM has a proven track record of many successful applications in a wide range of businesses, there is very limited evidence of analogical in HEIs. There are several reasons identified in the literature on the topic, and one of them is the ambiguity surrounding the definition of customer. In the context of universities, it seems to be more natural to adopt the concept of stakeholders instead and apply insights from the stakeholder management theory in order to strengthen quality management processes of HEIs. One of the pioneers of that theoretical foundation is Robert Edward Freeman, who defined in 1984 the *Stakeholder Management Capability* (Zakhem, 2008). According to Freeman “an organization which understands its stakeholder map and the stakes of each group, which has organizational processes to take these groups and their stakes into account routinely as part of the standard operating procedures of the organization and which implements a set of transactions or bargains to balance the interests of these stakeholders to achieve the organization’s purpose, would be said to have high (or superior) stakeholders management capability” (Freeman, 2010). This approach is reflected in the normative quality system, based on the TQM foundations, related to managing educational institutions, which is the ISO 21001:2018 standard. One example is requirement 4.2 *Understanding the needs and expectations of interested* parties, which states that: “the organization shall determine: a) the interested parties that are relevant to the EOMS (Educational Organisation Management System); b) the relevant requirements of these interested parties” (ISO 21001, 2018). Much research shows that organisations which listen and adapt to their stakeholders’ feedback tend to increase their legitimacy, trust and relevance, which positively impact their business results (cf. Freeman et al., 2010; Kennon et al., 2009). This is achieved through the improving quality of the organisation’s services.

Given the above, for higher education institutions, it appears undeniable that continuous improvement of quality cannot occur without a high level of stakeholder management practices. As with modern quality management systems requirements and stakeholder management practices, the key responsibilities are within the leadership of the organisation. These are managers who shape the organisation’s quality culture that might support successful quality improvements for various stakeholders. More on this topic will be discussed in subsection 3.4. However, a good quality culture is the core of a healthy and successful organisation, the inherent part of any improvement is the effective feedback and measurement of improvements. For so complex services such as those offered by universities, measuring quality for their interested groups remains a significant challenge, as it is not easy to determine how well the organisation is satisfying the requirements of its stakeholders.

## Importance of Stakeholders Satisfaction (JPSZ) [2-3]

The concept of measuring satisfaction originates from the well-grounded research on organisational performance. In the field of service quality, customer satisfaction has become one of the primary measures. Many of these indicators are based on customers’ overall perception of how well the organisation serves them. According to research by Iacobucci et al. and Spreng and MacKoy, there is a correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction (cf. Iacobucci et al., 1995, pp. 280–281; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996, pp. 203–204). Furthermore, there are widely used measures like the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) and Net Promoter Score (NPS), which assess the overall customer satisfaction. These are applied as high-level indexes that can serve as a general overall trend indicator inspiring more detailed research on the quality level and enabling more consistent improvements design.

Perception of quality has a strong theoretical and practical background in the field of quality sciences. Several of the most recognised service quality models lead to the conclusion that consumers’ perception of quality is the central factor integrating many other detailed quality-related measures. One of the foundations for this idea is found in the work of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, who created the service quality model (SERVQUAL) which emphasises the meaning of measuring the gap between expected service and perceived service (cf. Parasuraman et al., 1985, p. 44; Stoma, 2012, p. 65). As a result of the popularity of SERVQUAL much research has been conducted and other parameters added in order to better understand different factors’ impact on the service quality and their mutual relations. One example of these enhanced service quality models is the integrated service quality model proposed by Gummesson, presented in the Figure 2.

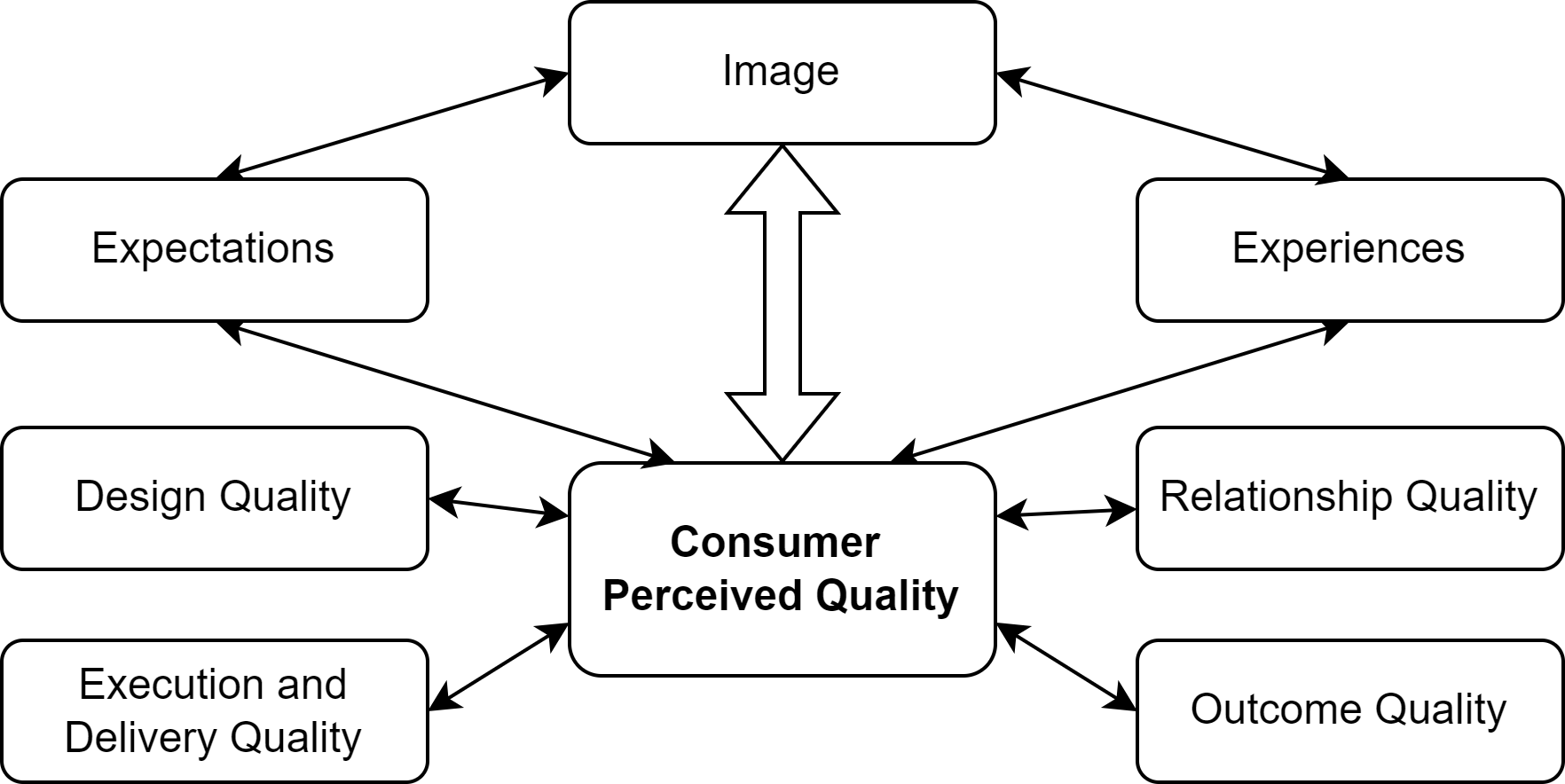


Figure 2 Integrated service quality model 4Q

Source: own compilation based on (Gummesson, 2008; Stoma, 2012, p. 53; Szefler, 2024)

Gummesson’s model of service quality emphasises the role of relationships, which, in a more complex service outcome receivers environment, can be linked to concepts developed in stakeholder management theory. This aspect appears to be especially important considering the conditions of the higher education institutions. The model proposed by Spreng and MacKoy (1996), presented in the Figure 3, adds important elements such as desires and expectations, which are essential when addressing the complexities of measuring HEIs’ stakeholder satisfaction and attempts to understand factors shaping its levels.

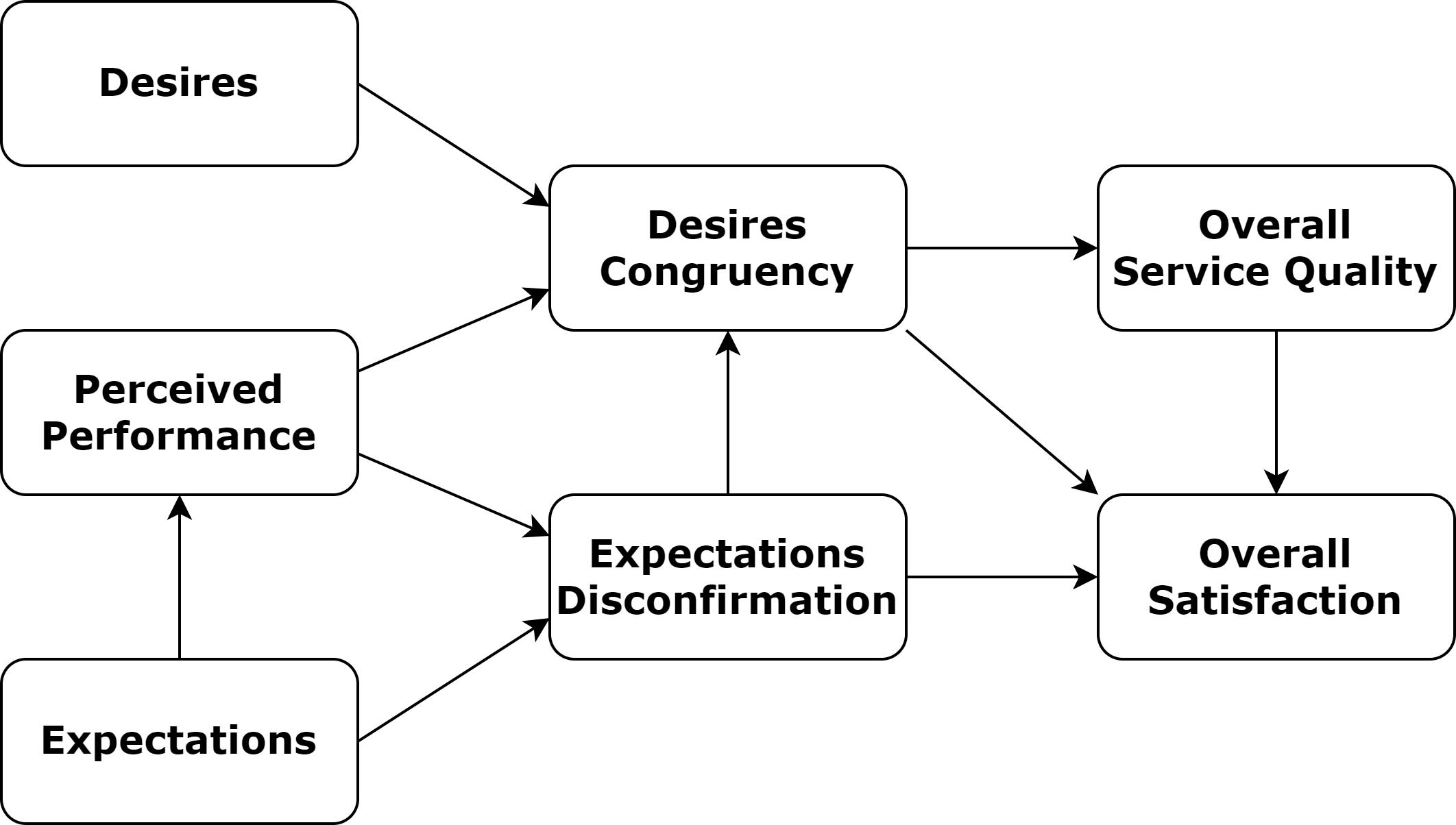


Figure 3 Satisfaction-Service Quality Model

Source: (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996, p. 203)

Similarly to customer satisfaction, comparable concepts can be applied to stakeholders’ satisfaction measures, allowing for the inclusion of voices from a much broader range of interested groups beyond just clients (users / consumers) of the organisation’s products. While this type of research might be more complex and challenging, the idea stems from the same roots and aims to develop an index that captures the overall impact of various factors shaping the organisation’s stakeholders’ satisfaction as the key aggregated indicator of the organisation’s performance. Another key reason why stakeholder satisfaction is especially relevant for universities is its impact on the perceived reputation (cf. Mendoza-Villafaina & López-Mosquera, 2024; Qazi et al., 2022). In the context of the HEI market, institutional reputation is a very important measure of both academic standing and scientific impact. This likely explains why the mechanisms of the prestige economy rules (see subsection 1.1) exert such an influence on the institutional behaviour. This reinforces the role of stakeholder satisfaction as a natural and essential performance measure for universities. As an aggregated high-level indicator, it needs to be used as a foundation for further research and organisational learning on the important factors driving the long-term stakeholder satisfaction. It is worth emphasising the importance of adopting a long-term perspective. Since HEIs “products” are the result of long-term processes, the only appropriate perspective for management and improvements efforts assessment is the long-term. This adds an additional layer of complexity and challenges to quality management, making the art of managing HEIs even more demanding.

## Overview of Quality Management in Higher Education (PGR)

## Objectives and Structure of the Monograph (PGR)

# Understanding Stakeholder Satisfaction in Higher Education [25-30]

Many classical management concepts focus on understanding the organisation and its behaviours to support management capabilities (cf. Hollander et al., 1973). This chapter will present a wide background showing how to better understand stakeholders of HEIs and their satisfaction. This will constitute the fundamentals for the successful implementation of the stakeholder satisfaction-driven quality management processes. As a first step, the authors will propose a definition of higher education stakeholders that will be put in a historical context compliant with stakeholder management and quality management theories. The next step will be the presentation of the multiple research studies on different possible stakeholder groups for HEIs, with the theoretical suggestions for the most important of them. After that, the focus of this work will be put on ways to determine expectations and needs of those key stakeholder groups and methods of measuring their satisfaction in the context of wider research on relations between satisfaction indexes and other stakeholders’ related measures.

## Definition of Stakeholders in Higher Education (JPSZ) [7-8]

Higher‑education institutions warrant particular attention. As public or publicly funded entities, they perform a unique societal role: their service quality impacts numerous social groups and underpins a modern economy (Leja, 2003, p. 5). Yet quality depends on multiple stakeholder groups. Universities typically precede entry into the workforce, imparting advanced knowledge and skills to many individuals (Czarnik & Turek, 2014, p. 31). Stakeholders include not only students and funding bodies, but also faculty—whose own scholarly standing benefits from students’ achievements—and employers who will later draw upon graduates’ capabilities. Hence, in higher education “perceived quality is the outcome of recipient satisfaction” (Athiyaman, 1997), and more than one recipient group evaluates service outcomes.

These collective participants—**stakeholders**—both enable and benefit from university activities. To clarify who these stakeholders are or may be, we must examine the evolution of the stakeholder concept and its various definitions. This precision is essential for operationalising “university stakeholders.”

The English term “stakeholder” first appeared in the early eighteenth century to denote a person who “holds a stake” in a wager (Ramirez, 1999, p. 101). However, in management scholarship it emerged only in 1963, in a Stanford Research Institute report (Szymaniec‑Mlicka, 2016, p. 310), where stakeholders were defined as “those groups without whose support the organisation will cease to exist” (Freeman, 2010, p. 31). Freeman’s original typology included “shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, lenders and the community” (Freeman, 2010, p. 32). Freeman—and also Andriof and Waddock—trace the historical roots of stakeholder thinking to Adam Smith (eighteenth century), and to Berle and Means as well as Chester Barnard (first half of the twentieth century) (Andriof & Waddock, 2017; Freeman, 2010, p. 32).

Contemporary stakeholder theory in management has been shaped by four research streams: corporate planning, systems theory, corporate social responsibility and organisational theory (Freeman & McVea, 2001). The influence of these streams on the evolution of the stakeholder concept is summarised in Table 46.

**Table 46. Evolution of the Stakeholder Concept – Influence of Various Research Domains**

| **Research Domain** | **Influences on the Definition of “Stakeholder”** |
| --- | --- |
| **Corporate Planning**<br/>(corporate planning) | The firm plans with regard to its specific resources and environment, so both historical data and forecasts become essential planning inputs. Satisfaction metrics begin to emerge for those groups without whose support the firm cannot survive, although analyses of these groups’ potential behaviours are carried out only at a very general level.<br/>**Key insight:** The role of stakeholders’ interests (benefits) in corporate development is recognised. |
| **Systems Theory**<br/>(systems theory) | The firm is viewed as a discrete system interacting with its external environment. C. W. Churchman: “A social system should serve its clients,” and in a corporate context these clients include employees, shareholders and other interested societal groups.<br/>R. L. Ackoff: “Objectivity is a social result of interaction within a large group of people,” and collective perceptions of what constitutes objective truth influence the organisation. He therefore advocates interactive planning. |
| **Corporate Social Responsibility**<br/>(CSR) | Stakeholder analysis frames these groups as potential constraints on the firm. CSR is often portrayed as a “luxury add‑on” for wealthy companies—a form of insurance against losses rather than a core strategic contribution.<br/>– In 1970, M. Friedman argued that social‑benefit actions can yield long‑term payoffs.<br/>– H. Mintzberg’s 1980s research found a positive correlation between CSR activities and higher stock valuations.<br/>– In the 1980s, W. C. Frederick introduced the transition from CSR1 (Corporate Social Responsibility) to CSR2 (Corporate Social Responsiveness).<br/>– P. F. Drucker noted that motivations for CSR vary, citing examples of philanthropists such as A. Carnegie and J. Rosenwald. |
| **Organisational Theory**<br/>(theory of organization) | P. Selznick defined an organisation as “the arrangement of personnel to support goal achievement through the allocation of functions and responsibilities,” embedded within an environment of interacting groups.<br/>He described the tensions between owners and various constituencies seeking to influence organisational action. |
| **Motivation Theories**<br/>(motivation theories) | **Theory X:** Personnel seek to participate in decision‑making and assume responsibility.<br/>**Theory Y:** “Lifetime employment” systems create conditions for complex, specialised production. |
| **Political Theories**<br/>(political theories) | **Fiduciary‑Responsibility Principle:** Managers owe duties not only to owners (shareholders) but also to other stakeholder groups and to society at large. |

*Source: author’s synthesis based on Andriof & Waddock (2017); Atherton et al. (2011); Drucker (1984); Freeman (2010); Friedman (1970); Jackson (1982); Keremidchiev (2021); Mintzberg (1983); Selznick (1948); Zucker (1987).*

From approximately the mid‑twentieth century onward, management research and analysis have highlighted the significance of a firm’s external environment for its development and the reciprocal relationships between various stakeholder groups and the enterprise. Recognising that obligations extend beyond owners (stockholders) naturally led to the identification of analogies and generalisable management principles, irrespective of industry or organisation type. Early stakeholder definitions therefore emphasised those groups with the greatest potential influence on the firm. Initially, scholars tended to broaden the semantic scope of “customer,” before adopting the term “stake”—emphasising the vested interest that underpins relationships between the organisation and specific groups.

Today’s literature contains numerous stakeholder definitions, each emphasising different relational dimensions. S. Miles’s comprehensive review distilled four primary classes of stakeholder definitions. Most existing definitions can be mapped—either to one class or to a combination—among these four:

* **Influencer:** Individuals or groups capable of affecting organisational actions and actively pursuing that influence.
* **Claimant:** Individuals or groups who hold a claim on the organisation and pursue it, yet lack the power to guarantee managerial recognition of that claim.
* **Collaborator:** Individuals or groups who cooperate with the organisation without seeking to influence it.
* **Recipient:** Individuals or groups who are passive recipients of the organisation’s outputs.

Selected definitions of the stakeholder concept—chosen for their representative diversity—are presented in Table 47 in chronological order, with each definition assigned to the classes identified by S. Miles.

**Table 47. Selected Definitions of “Stakeholders” in Management Literature (Chronological Order)  
Assigned to Definition Classes per S. Miles [W = Influencer; R = Claimant; K = Collaborator; O = Recipient]**

| **Author (Year)** | **Class [W, R, K, O]** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SRI (1963)** | W‑K | Groups without whose support the organisation will cease to exist. |
| **Rhenman (1964)** | R‑O | An individual or group that has some interest (≪Interessent≫) in the organisation—one of the earliest terms, reflecting the notion of “interest.” |
| **Freeman (1984)** | W‑O | All persons and groups influenced by the organisation or who can influence the achievement of its objectives. |
| **Freeman (1984)** | W‑O | Anything that influences the organisation or is influenced by it. |
| **Carroll (1989)** | R | Individuals or groups with whom the organisation interacts and who have a “stake” or legitimate interest in the firm—also described as a “claim,” “interest,” or “right.” |
| **Hill & Jones (1992)** | R‑K | Entities that have a legitimate claim on the organisation—established through an exchange relationship. |
| **Nutt & Backhoff (1992)** | W‑O | All parties that will be affected by or will affect the organisation’s strategy. |
| **Carson (1993)** | O | Those significantly affected (influenced) by the organisation’s actions. |
| **Clarkson (1994)** | W | An invested stakeholder: someone who has some control over the organisation’s activities. |
| **Clarkson (1994)** | K‑O | Those who bear some form of risk as a result of having invested valuable human or financial capital in the organisation. |
| **Freeman (1994)** | K | Participants in the human process of joint value creation. |
| **Clarkson (1994)** | O | Those exposed to risk as a result of the organisation’s activities. |
| **Bryson (1995)** | R‑O | Any group or organisation that can demand attention, resources or outputs from the focal organisation—or that can be affected by its results. |
| **Clarkson (1995)** | W‑R‑K‑O | **Primary stakeholders**: Those without whose ongoing involvement the organisation cannot survive as an economic entity. |
| **Secondary stakeholders**: Those who influence or are influenced by the organisation but who do not engage in transactions with it and whose absence would not threaten its survival—yet who may still cause significant harm. |  |  |
| **Donaldson & Preston (1995)** | W‑R‑K‑O | Persons or groups with legitimate interests in the procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity—identified via their investments in the organisation, regardless of whether the organisation reciprocates functional interests. |
| **Starik (1995)** | W‑R‑K‑O | Any naturally occurring entity. |
| **Jones (1995)** | W‑R | An organisation is characterised by relationships with many groups and individuals (“stakeholders”), each of which has the power to affect or share in the firm’s outcomes. |
| **Murphy et al. (1997)** | W‑R‑K | Stakeholder groups that have a vital stake (interest) in the firm’s activities—without their sanction and support, the business would cease to exist. |
| **Nuti (1997)** | R‑K‑O | Holders of legitimate stakes or interests in the organisation’s activities, either directly through market transactions or indirectly via exposure to external effects. |
| **Clarkson (1998)** | R‑O | Individuals or entities that have a stake, something to gain or lose, from the organisation’s actions. |
| **Eden & Ackermann (1998)** | R‑K | People or small groups with the power and authority to respond, negotiate and shape the organisation’s strategic future. |
| **Burrows J. (1999)** | R | Persons or groups who believe the university (organisation) has an obligation to them and who act accordingly. |
| *(In higher‑education contexts this is often expressed as a “stakeholder community.”)* |  |  |
| **Post et al. (2002)** | W‑K‑O | Individuals and entities that voluntarily or involuntarily contribute to the organisation’s capacity to create wealth and undertake activities, thus becoming potential beneficiaries and/or risk bearers. |
| **Heugens & van Oosterhout (2002)** | W‑R‑K‑O | Contractual obligations, because they: |

* are based on some form of mutual agreement;
* aim to achieve mutual benefits or prevent harm;
* comprise a set of mutually recognised future rights and duties, either implied or specified in the contract terms. |  
  | **Johnson & Scholes (2002)** | W‑O | Persons or groups that the organisation depends on to achieve its own objectives, and upon whom the organisation depends in return. |  
  | **Phillips et al. (2003)** | W | Those who can help or hinder the organisation in achieving its objectives. |  
  | **Phillips (2003)** | R | Those to whom the organisation has moral obligations. |  
  | **Lea (2004)** | O | Those directly affected (influenced) by the organisation’s actions. |  
  | **Bourne (2005)** | W‑R‑K‑O | Persons or groups that have an interest or some form of rights or ownership in the project (organisation), who may contribute knowledge or support, or who may influence or be influenced by the endeavour. |  
  | **Lamberg et al. (2008)** | W‑R‑O | Based on explicit or presumed agreements about mutually recognised rights and duties, aimed at achieving mutual benefits or preventing harm. |  
  | **Fassin (2009)** | W‑R | A stakeholder is anyone with a stake in the organisation analogous to a shareholder’s stake. |  
  | **ISO 26000:2010** | W‑R‑O | Individuals or groups interested in the organisation’s decisions or activities. |  
  | **Eskerod & Huemann (2013)** | O | Interested in (having a stake in) or constrained by the organisation. |

*Source: author’s synthesis based on Bryson (2004); Donaldson & Preston (1995, p. 67); Eskerod et al. (2015); Freeman & McVea (2001); Jastrzębska (2016); Leja (2011); McGrath & Whitty (2017); Miles (2017); Neave (2002, p. 20); Szymaniec‑Mlicka (2016, p. 310).*

The definitions in Table 47 have been formulated by the author of this work so as to emphasise their generality. In other words, wherever the original author referred to a “company” or “enterprise,” we have captured the essence of “stakeholder” via the broader term “organisation.” Most of the definitions in Table 47, directly or indirectly, recognise both individuals and groups as stakeholders. Moreover, they vary in the granularity with which they characterise organisational relationships: some definitions are so broad that they encompass the full range of possible stakeholder roles, while others—by specifying particular traits—effectively narrow the concept’s scope.

Nonetheless, S. Miles’s classification highlights the core dimensions of stakeholder–organisation relationships: the capacity to influence the organisation, the existence of various types of claims, cooperative engagement, and the role of passive recipients of organisational outputs. A historical review of these definitions shows that the major phase of their development occurred in the late twentieth century, when highly elaborated, wide‑spectrum definitions emerged (e.g. Clarkson; Donaldson & Preston). It was also at that time that stakeholder definitions began to appear in the higher‑education context (e.g. Burrows).

The diversity and breadth of these definitions is striking: some focus narrowly on a single stakeholder dimension, while others are so expansive as to be difficult to apply in practice (e.g. Starik). Classifying definitions according to Miles’s schema aids in identifying which aspects each one emphasises. This analysis will inform a precise, context‑appropriate understanding of “stakeholder” for the remainder of this study—a crucial task, given the considerable variation among existing definitions. Otherwise, further descriptions and analyses run the risk of ambiguity. Indeed, differences in how stakeholders are defined reflect underlying theoretical divergences regarding their role in management. The principal types of stakeholder theory are summarised in Table 48.

**Table 48. Types of Stakeholder Theories**

| **Type of Theory** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **1. Descriptive (empirical)** | Theories describing certain empirical behaviors of companies and/or managers (managerialism, organizational psychology/sociology). They refer only to the behavior of managers and organizations (organization theory, decision theory). |
| **2. Instrumental** | Theories indicating that specific outcomes are more likely to be achieved if companies or managers act in certain ways. Analyses of competitive behaviors referencing relationships, transactions, and relational contracts (social network theories, transaction cost theory). |
| **3. Normative** | Theories establishing certain norms, indicating that companies or managers *should* act in a specific way. Analyses may concern: system-oriented principles (e.g., utilitarianism, libertarianism, social contract theories), organization-oriented principles (e.g., principal-agent theory), and ethical system-oriented principles (social contract and categorical imperative theories). |
| **4. Managerial** | Theories defining the area of stakeholder management. Not only descriptions of existing situations or causal predictions, but also recommendations regarding attitudes, structures, and practices. The key element is simultaneously addressing the interests of all significant stakeholders, both in shaping organizational structures and policies as well as in making specific decisions. This requirement applies to everyone influencing organizational policy, not just managers—also shareholders, government representatives, etc. Managers are not the only ones entitled to control and manage the organization (possibility of empowering teams). This stakeholder-focused awareness does not solve the issue of long-term stakeholder identification or assessing their relevance to the organization. These theories emphasize that not all stakeholders (regardless of how they are identified) should be equally involved in all processes and decisions. |
| **5. Metaphorical (narrative)** | Metaphorical (narrative) theories that use metaphors to describe how stakeholders create and exchange value. The unit of analysis is participants in organizational processes. This approach tends to focus on stories rather than theoretical constructions. |

**Source:** Own elaboration based on Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Marcinkowska, 2011; Nita, 2016

The author of this work aligns most closely with managerial theories. This is due primarily to the practical implications and conclusions they offer for managing quality at universities. Just as defining the client is crucial for quality management in general, recognizing key stakeholder groups is essential for quality management at a university. The next step, and also the goal of such analysis, is to implement actions that lead to better (more optimal) inclusion of the needs of various stakeholder groups in university operations.

Considering the specific nature of universities and the context of quality management, stakeholders can be defined as: **individuals or groups interested in the high quality of a university’s outcomes**. This definition allows for the recognition of many groups as potential stakeholders, depending on their relationship with the university. This includes not only those who influence the university or make claims on it, but also those who receive something from it. It may be less clear whether collaborators with the university are stakeholders under this definition, but if we consider the outcomes of such collaborations as university outcomes, then all collaborators—even those lacking other stakeholder attributes—can still be considered stakeholders.

This approach is in line with the practices of modern science and higher education, where collaboration, especially international, is highly valued. Within the managerial stakeholder theory stream, this definition could be expanded to include “**significant from the perspective of organizational management**.” This addition emphasizes the need for those managing the organization to continuously analyze the full spectrum of potential stakeholders in order to identify those that are most important for managerial decision-making.

In this context, it's worth examining the key factors influencing stakeholder management capability—a concept introduced into the literature by Freeman in 1984 (Freeman, 2010; Zakhem, 2008), one of the pioneers in stakeholder research. According to him, stakeholder management capability is expressed through the ability to apply three stages of stakeholder analysis and then implement the conclusions. These stages are defined as:

1. Identification and understanding of who the organization’s stakeholders are and what their interests are.
2. Identification and understanding of which organizational processes directly or indirectly affect stakeholder relationship management and whether those processes are adequately matched to the current state of the stakeholder and process map in the organization.
3. Identification and understanding of transactions (exchanges) and negotiations (bargaining) with stakeholders, and whether these processes are appropriate to the requirements arising from the current state of the stakeholder and process map (cf. Freeman, 2010, p. 53).

According to Freeman, effective implementation of the conclusions from these analyses results in organizations with high stakeholder management capability that:

1. Design and implement communication processes with multiple stakeholders;
2. Openly negotiate with stakeholders on key issues and strive for voluntary win-win agreements;
3. Generalize the marketing approach to serve many stakeholders—particularly investing significantly (including attention) in understanding stakeholder needs, using, for instance, marketing research tools and techniques to segment and understand the multidimensional nature of stakeholder groups;
4. Involve boundary spanners (opinion leaders) in strategy formulation;
5. Are proactive—anticipate stakeholder concerns and try to influence the stakeholder environment;
6. Allocate resources in ways consistent with stakeholder concerns;
7. “Think” in terms of serving stakeholders (cf. Freeman, 2010; Zakhem, 2008).

The above list is a partially original compilation based on Freeman’s propositions from 1984. In the original, the first six statements relate to organizations, while the last concerns managers. However, based on the quality management philosophy described in subsection 1.4, one can argue that just as customer focus should be a trait of the entire organization, a high stakeholder management capability should also be a trait organization-wide—not just among managers. Of course, it is expected that managers, in their leadership roles, should embody and demonstrate this attitude first and foremost to serve as role models.

After 1989, the client-oriented approach became popular in Poland’s business activities. Over time, this approach also began to be used in public institutions. While identifying the client in public administration is not difficult (Bobińska, 2012; Lisowska & Ziemiński, 2012), the commonly equated role of the student with a client proved insufficient in universities (Pawlikowski, 2010). Thus, stakeholder groups are defined for universities.

The stakeholder concept not only partially derives from (cf. Table 46) but is also widely used in the field of social responsibility, where the inclusion of social interests from various stakeholder groups is promoted (Carroll, 1979). In management sciences, stakeholder management is discussed, highlighting the approach of identifying social issues relevant to the business (Clarkson, 1995, p. 103). Mitchell et al. identified seven types of stakeholder groups based on three core characteristics: **power**, **legitimacy**, and **urgency** (Mitchell et al., 1997):

* **Power** refers to a stakeholder’s ability to effectively influence the institution’s actions in line with their expectations—"the ability to affect the behavior of others" (Karwacka, 2011).
* **Legitimacy** refers to relationships with the institution that result in legal, customary, or moral rights or obligations.
* **Urgency** refers to how quickly institutional leadership responds to stakeholder needs, especially when: (1) the relationship or demand is time-sensitive, and (2) it is important or critical to the stakeholder.

Based on these characteristics, Mitchell et al. define the following stakeholder groups:

1. **Dormant** – has power only
2. **Discretionary** – has legitimacy only
3. **Demanding** – has urgency only
4. **Dominant** – has power and legitimacy
5. **Dependent** – has legitimacy and urgency
6. **Dangerous** – has power and urgency
7. **Definitive** – has all three: power, legitimacy, and urgency
8. **Non-stakeholder** – lacks power, legitimacy, and urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997)

A stakeholder analysis tool based on this typology (cf. Table 49) can help clearly plan actions regarding various identified potential stakeholder groups. While Mitchell et al. propose excluding those who lack all three attributes from being considered stakeholders, based on earlier theoretical analyses, such groups should rather be labeled as *irrelevant stakeholders* from the perspective of management—not *non-stakeholders*. Therefore, in the presented stakeholder typology—aligned with the managerial stakeholder theory approach—this type is termed *irrelevant*, leaving room for assigning potentially relevant stakeholder groups to this category based on specific organizational and situational analysis.

**Table 49. Stakeholder Typology According to Mitchell et al.**

| **Stakeholder Type** | **Power [1 – present; 0 – absent]** | **Legitimacy [1 – present; 0 – absent]** | **Urgency [1 – present; 0 – absent]** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Dormant | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. Discretionary | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. Demanding | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 4. Dominant | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. Dependent | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 6. Dangerous | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 7. Definitive | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 8. Insignificant | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Source: Own elaboration based on Grudowski and Szefler, 2015a; Karwacka, 2011; Mitchell et al., 1997*

## Key Stakeholder Groups for HEI (JPSZ) [7-8]

After discussing various definitions and characteristics of stakeholders that allow for classifying certain groups by classes (see Table 47) or types (see Table 49), it is worth analyzing what specific examples of groups are identified in the subject literature as stakeholders of various organizations in the context of universities in Poland. A particularly relevant reference in this context is the study by R. Quezada (2011), who, based on selected classical (1984–2001) and extended (2002–2006) stakeholder typologies, developed a list later used in research aimed at identifying specific stakeholder groups for selected Spanish universities. This list includes the following groups:

1. Employees
2. Clients, consumers, or users
3. Shareholders, owners
4. National or regional government
5. Suppliers and distributors
6. Local community
7. Trade unions
8. Creditors or investors
9. Non-profit organizations
10. Non-governmental organizations
11. Regulatory bodies, public administration
12. Business partners
13. Competitors
14. Media
15. Management, board
16. Natural environment
17. Political parties
18. Future generations
19. Professional associations
20. Customer associations  
    (Quezada, 2011)

Based on a broader literature review, it can be stated that although this list is already quite long, it is not exhaustive. It is also noticeable that the list does not reflect the specific characteristics of universities, despite having been used in research conducted for this type of organization. The category "Clients, consumers, or users" in particular draws attention, as in the context of a university it is not entirely clear which specific groups this category encompasses. Many works in the literature also propose various forms of stakeholder group categorization for higher education institutions, which can be useful in the process of identifying not only specific groups but also the similarities and differences between them. An example of a set of stakeholder groups identified based on literature, taking into account the specific nature of universities, along with assigned sample stakeholder categories, is presented in **Table 50**.

**Table 50. Selected Examples of University Stakeholders and Categories to Which They May Be Assigned**

| **No.** | **Stakeholders** | **Categories** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Alumni (former students) | Individual donors, suppliers |
| 2 | Regulatory agencies | Government regulators |
| 3 | Employment agencies | “Clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 4 | Analysts | Financial intermediaries |
| 5 | Banks (funding providers) | Financial intermediaries |
| 6 | Technology transfer offices | Knowledge codifiers |
| 7 | Patent office | Knowledge codifiers |
| 8 | Providers of products and services | Suppliers |
| 9 | Food suppliers | Suppliers |
| 10 | Directors | Individual donors |
| 11 | Directors (chancellors) | Management |
| 12 | Deans (and associate deans) | Management |
| 13 | Insurance companies | Suppliers |
| 14 | Foundations | Group or organizational donors; non-governmental regulators; collaborations |
| 15 | Venture capital funds | Knowledge transfer supporters |
| 16 | Business incubators | Knowledge transfer supporters |
| 17 | Other universities and institutes | Suppliers; collaborations |
| 18 | Secondary education institutions | Suppliers |
| 19 | Supporting institutions | Government regulators |
| 20 | Distance higher education institutions | Potential competitors |
| 21 | Chambers of commerce | Communities |
| 22 | Administrative staff | Employees |
| 23 | Research staff | Knowledge providers; employees |
| 24 | Teaching staff | Knowledge providers; employees |
| 25 | Academic staff | Knowledge providers; employees |
| 26 | Accreditation commission | Government regulators |
| 27 | Consortia (partnerships) | Alliances and partnerships |
| 28 | Media | Opinion makers, communities |
| 29 | Fund managers | Financial intermediaries |
| 30 | Ministry of Higher Education and Science | Government regulators |
| 31 | New consortia (partnerships) | Potential competitors |
| 32 | Social security organizations | Government regulators |
| 33 | Support organizers | Co-managing entities |
| 34 | Accreditation bodies | Non-governmental regulators |
| 35 | Tax authorities | Government regulators |
| 36 | State funding agencies | Government regulators |
| 37 | Science or technology parks | Knowledge transfer supporters |
| 38 | Political parties | Government regulators; communities |
| 39 | Joint venture partners | “Clients” (recipients of research service outcomes) |
| 40 | Service partners (service recipients) | “Clients” (recipients of research service outcomes) |
| 41 | Service personnel | Employees |
| 42 | Employers (current and future) | “Clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 43 | Employees | Employees |
| 44 | Public relations professionals | Suppliers |
| 45 | Company training programs (or for companies) | Substitute competition |
| 46 | Private higher education institutions | Direct competition |
| 47 | Utility companies | Suppliers |
| 48 | Industry | Group or organizational donors; knowledge supporters |
| 49 | Friends | Individual donors |
| 50 | Future students | “Clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 51 | Public higher education institutions | Direct competition |
| 52 | Research councils | Group or organizational donors; government regulators |
| 53 | Boards of directors | Co-managing entities |
| 54 | Rectors (and vice-rectors) | Management |
| 55 | Parents | Individual donors |
| 56 | Families of students | “Clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 57 | Government | Co-managing entities |
| 58 | Special interest groups | Communities |
| 59 | Society | Communities |
| 60 | Social funding entities | “Clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 61 | Business community | Communities |
| 62 | Local community (including neighborhoods) | Communities |
| 63 | Sponsors | Co-managing entities |
| 64 | Religious sponsors | Non-governmental regulators |
| 65 | Special purpose companies | Collaborations, “clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 66 | Professional associations | Non-governmental regulators |
| 67 | Students | Knowledge providers; “clients” (recipients of educational service outcomes) |
| 68 | School systems | Communities |
| 69 | Patent offices | Government regulators |
| 70 | Social services | Communities |
| 71 | Central authorities | Co-managing entities; government regulators |
| 72 | Regional/local authorities | Co-managing entities; government regulators |
| 73 | Co-funders of research and educational services | Alliances and partnerships |
| 74 | Institution management board (university council or senate) | Co-managing entities |

**Source**: Own elaboration based on Avcı et al., 2015; Beerkens & Udam, 2017; Burrows, 1999; Gołata & Sojkin, 2020; Lewandowski & Zieliński, 2012; Mainardes et al., 2010; Maric, 2013; Radko, 2022; Slabá, 2015

It is evident that the list of various groups that can be recognized as university stakeholders is quite extensive. This highlights the challenge of accurately identifying stakeholders for a specific organization, but also confirms that such analysis can yield significant benefits by helping to avoid costly errors from overlooking an important group when making decisions. The comprehensive overview of the diversity of potential stakeholders (Table 50) is an original compilation based on works of authors presenting their own syntheses from a broader spectrum of literature. It is worth noting that Burrows' work includes the concept of the "client" in the context of universities. The context in which this term is used resembles the approach previously described in the subsection on quality management systems (subsection 1.3.2), namely expanding the semantic field of the term. For this reason, the present table clarifies the term’s meaning as recipients of educational or research service outcomes.

Among the numerous stakeholder groups relevant to university management, not all hold equal significance. To preliminarily estimate which groups are most relevant in university practice, a literature review study resembling the Systematic Literature Review method was conducted. The goal of this study was to analyze the frequency of mentions of specific university stakeholder groups in titles and abstracts of peer-reviewed academic articles available in a recognized article database. The aim was to identify stakeholder groups of universities most frequently studied in research concerning higher education institutions. An initial study was conducted using the Web of Science database in 2020. Subsequently, due to limitations identified in the first study, an expanded analysis was conducted using the Scopus database in 2023.

In the first stage of the analysis, the research objective was defined as: "to identify examples of university stakeholder groups" and the research question: "Which groups are recognized as university stakeholders?".

In the second stage, literature was searched in the Scopus database. After several query iterations, the results for the following search string were selected for further analysis:

According to the study design, this phrase includes a broad search in titles, abstracts, and keywords across nine statements referring to stakeholders in various types of higher education institutions. Given the study’s focus on social sciences, the search was limited to article topics in social sciences, business, management and accounting, economics, psychology, decision sciences, and multidisciplinary articles. This constraint was intended to eliminate articles from fields that do not consider the stakeholder analysis and identification context. This query yielded 479 results.

In the third stage, the articles on the list were screened and assessed for quality. Exclusion criteria were set, which removed duplicates and non-academic results (e.g., conference materials). After exclusions, the list contained 474 articles. The detailed list is presented in Appendix 5.

In the fourth stage, the frequency of words or phrases referring to various stakeholder groups in the titles and abstracts of the qualified articles was analyzed. First, the frequency of stakeholder-related terms identified in previous literature reviews (see Table 50) was checked in titles and abstracts. Upon confirming that each analyzed phrase appearing in titles also appeared at least equally often in abstracts, only the abstracts were used for detailed frequency analysis. During this detailed analysis, the context in which each phrase appeared was checked to determine whether it referred to university stakeholders. Additionally, new phrases not previously identified were added to the analysis based on their appearance in abstracts. A total of 285 different phrases (words or multi-word expressions) were verified for relevance to the university stakeholder context. A detailed list of analyzed phrases along with the number of unique occurrences in the confirmed context is provided in Appendix 6.

In the fifth stage, the synthesis and summary phase involved assigning appropriate categories to the analyzed phrases to classify them into different stakeholder groups. Then, the number of occurrences of terms referring to each stakeholder group was summed across the set of scientific article abstracts related to university stakeholders. The results of this study are presented in Table 51.

**Table 51. Summary of the frequency of references to university stakeholders in the abstracts of the analyzed scientific articles.**

| **Stakeholder Group** | **Frequency of Occurrence** |
| --- | --- |
| Students | 278 |
| Lecturers/Researchers | 246 |
| University Authorities | 167 |
| Society/Media/External Environment | 92 |
| Government Representatives (Regional and Central) | 92 |
| Employers/Entrepreneurs/Business Representatives | 63 |
| University Administrative Staff | 49 |
| Alumni | 40 |
| Parents/Guardians/Relatives of Students | 24 |
| Partners/Collaborations (Representatives) | 23 |
| University Suppliers | 5 |

**Source:** Own elaboration

It is worth noting that in the categorization phase, university employee groups were separated into academic staff and administrative staff. In some articles, stakeholder references treated these groups collectively (e.g., "staff," "employees"). In such cases, the frequency was evenly distributed across each category to which the term was assigned. A similar situation occurred with terms referring to the "university community" or synonymous expressions. Here, distribution was made across the categories of academic staff and students. A somewhat surprising result is the relatively low ranking of alumni in the specific ranking presented in Table 51.

Since each identified stakeholder group may exhibit different characteristics in their relationship with the university, it is worth determining these differences. Mitchell’s typology (see Table 49) can be helpful in this regard. Possible classification of each identified group into stakeholder types is presented in Table 52.

**Table 52. Example classification of university stakeholders according to the Mitchell et al. typology.**

| **University Stakeholder Group** | **Type of Stakeholder (Mitchell et al. Typology)** |
| --- | --- |
| Students | Dependent (5) or Demanding (3) |
| Alumni | Discretionary (2) or Dormant (1) |
| Parents/Guardians | Discretionary (2) or Dependent (5) |
| Academic and Research Staff | Dependent (5) or Definitive (7) |
| Local and Central Authorities | Dominant (4), Dangerous (6), or Definitive (7) |
| Administrative Staff | Dependent (5) or Definitive (7) |
| Employers | Discretionary (2), Dormant (1), or Dominant (4) |
| Society | Discretionary (2) or Non-Stakeholder (8) |
| Partnership Representatives | Dependent (5), Discretionary (2), or Non-Stakeholder (8) |
| Suppliers | Dependent (5), Dominant (4), Discretionary (2), or Non-Stakeholder (8) |

**Source:** Own elaboration based on Lewandowski & Zieliński, 2012; Mainardes et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 1997

Determining the type each stakeholder group belongs to is quite a challenging task, as depending on the situation, needs, and possibilities, each group can exhibit traits of more than one type. Hence, Table 52 shows several possible types for each stakeholder group.

Students are a stakeholder group actively participating in the university's day-to-day functioning. This group includes undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and postgraduate students. Sometimes, in comparisons where a university is likened to a manufacturing enterprise, the student is equated with raw material at the start of the production process (Pawlikowski, 2010, p. 14). This approach emphasizes that the output of the educational process, measured in absolute terms, may vary only due to differences in the candidates' predispositions and preparation. However, that’s not the only factor influencing service outcomes. A crucial factor is motivating students to acquire knowledge and skills, which can be shaped by faculty actions and the overall organization of the teaching process, including technical conditions and administrative support. For students, the dominant relational attribute seems to be urgency, placing them in the "demanding" stakeholder type. Upon graduation, former students transition into the alumni group. This role change can significantly affect their expectations regarding educational services and alter their perception of service quality and satisfaction. Alumni form a diverse group, primarily determined by their career path post-graduation. While many university staff are alumni, most maintain limited contact with the university’s daily operations. Therefore, alumni typically possess legitimacy, placing them in the "discretionary" stakeholder type, though some may also be "dormant" due to their potential influence.

Parents or guardians may have different expectations. Despite being highly engaged in their wards' matters, they often have minimal direct influence on university operations. Still, they are significant in shaping public opinion about the university and can articulate expectations, such as effective communication of outcomes (see Wood & Su, 2019). Thus, in private universities, they may be classified as "discretionary" stakeholders, lacking urgency or power but possessing legitimacy.

Academic and research staff significantly shape service quality. Apart from delivering education, they benefit from the university's research infrastructure, support from students and alumni, and development opportunities. They are active participants in university life and possess urgency and legitimacy. Depending on their level of influence (power), they may be "dependent" or "definitive" stakeholders.

Administrative staff are also vital stakeholders. They ensure the smooth operation of non-teaching processes, greatly affecting satisfaction among students, alumni, and academic staff. They also enable regulatory compliance and public communication. Thus, like academic staff, they may be classified as "dependent" or "definitive" stakeholders.

Employers represent a highly diverse group. They may include alumni, staff, government representatives, students, and their families—or be entirely unrelated to a specific institution. From their perspective, competencies of current or future employees are crucial in evaluating educational services. Depending on their influence (e.g., sponsoring programs), employers may possess power and legitimacy, classifying them as "dormant," "discretionary," or "dominant" stakeholders.

Government representatives (central or local) are especially important for public universities. They set operational rules and funding frameworks. This group also includes accreditation agencies like the State Accreditation Committee, which ensure quality compliance. Depending on their level (e.g., ministry vs. regional office), these stakeholders may possess various attributes (power, legitimacy, urgency), and are often "dominant," "dangerous," or "definitive."

Partnerships are vital for modern university development and can include cooperation with other universities, research institutions, businesses, or NGOs. Such partnerships typically exhibit legitimacy, sometimes urgency, but rarely power—placing them in the "dependent" or "discretionary" categories, though some may be considered "non-stakeholders."

Suppliers are a distinct group. Their role varies significantly from other stakeholders. Unlike in manufacturing, where suppliers are crucial, university services often don’t rely as heavily on them—though this can change in IT-related or support systems. Depending on their relationship and negotiation position, suppliers may fall under "dependent," "discretionary," "dominant," or even "non-stakeholder" types, especially if they provide auxiliary services with minimal strategic importance.

Universities also operate within a broader social context involving people who have varying degrees of personal interest in them. This includes media representatives, local communities, and the general public. These stakeholders often form opinions based on media and external communications. Their relationship with the university is likely marked by legitimacy only, placing them in the "discretionary" or "non-stakeholder" types.

As this summary shows, each stakeholder group influences the university differently. An important management feature is that the same person may belong to multiple stakeholder groups, changing how they perceive service quality and satisfaction. This complexity makes stakeholder relationship management particularly challenging. Referring to the Triple Helix concept (see subsection 1.1.2), one might argue that the most important stakeholders today are business (industry) and government. However, such a view is insufficient. As many companies have made stakeholders central to strategy in recent decades (Finch et al., 2013), it's fair to say universities should do the same. As Frederick Laloux states: “We are witnessing the emergence of a new perspective—a stakeholder model—which emphasizes that companies must be accountable not only to investors but also to customers, employees, suppliers, the local community, the environment, and others. Organizational leadership must balance the often conflicting needs of stakeholders so that, in the long term, everyone is satisfied” (Laloux, 2015, p. 267). Thus, universities, given their stakeholder complexity, could pioneer effective stakeholder management models that could later be adapted by other organizations—becoming leaders, not just followers, in this domain.

In stakeholder management, communication tailored to each stakeholder group’s relationship with the university becomes crucial. This is challenging because different groups may have conflicting interests, sometimes even leading to disputes (see Freeman & Reed, 1983, p. 97). Therefore, effective communication strategies must be based on the identification of key stakeholder characteristics and, at times, employ conflict resolution techniques (see Gupta et al., 2011). A broader discussion of stakeholder analysis and communication strategies is provided in the following subsection.

## Expectations and Needs of Stakeholder Groups (JPSZ) [6-7]

## Methods for Measuring Stakeholder Satisfaction (JPSZ) [6-7]

# Foundations of Quality Management [40-60]

## The Concept of Quality (PGR)

## Category of Excellence (PGR)

## The Quality Assurance Approach (PGR)

## Quality Culture (PGR)

# Quality Management Concepts and Methodologies for Higher Education [40-60]

## Total Quality Management (TQM) as the Basis of Improvement (PGR)

## Lean Management (PGR)

## Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma (PGR)

## Normative Management Systems (PGR)

# Applying Quality Management to Enhance Stakeholder Satisfaction [30-40]

## Aligning Quality Management Approaches with Stakeholder Needs (JPSZ) [7-9]

## Integration of Quality Management Systems in Higher Education Institutions (JPSZ) [7-9]

## Stakeholder Satisfaction Driven Quality Management (JPSZ) [12-16]

## Challenges and Best Practices (JPSZ) [5-7]

# Conclusion [10-15]

## Summary of Key Points (JPSZ) [4-6]

## Implications for Higher Education Management (JPSZ) [3-5]

## Recommendations for Future Research (JPSZ) [3-4]

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# Annexes