Students Behaving Badly:
The Jaystudent

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Abstract

Critical incident technique is a procedure that facilitates the collection of narratives about a specific experience. It is useful when researching a new phenomenon and has proven useful when solving practical problems. Within Higher Education there is a phenomenon that has emerged as a problem for some lecturing staff, whereby some students have a tendency to disrupt teaching and learning within the classroom context. A much under researched area is the influence of customers' behaviours on other customers' perceptions of service quality. Within the context of higher education it is this gap that this paper aims to address.

The aim of this paper is to investigate what students perceive to be disruptive within the classroom setting in higher education and how it should be managed.

Critical Incident Technique was used to gather primary data. An evaluation of the results was supported by a review of the very limited literature to determine the scope of the issue. Conclusions were then drawn regarding the various proposed methods of dealing with the situation. Of the 100 CIT questionnaires circulated to students a total of 62 were returned, most of which were usable. Other students can impact on the student experience with the overarching reason for disruption identified as noise, mainly from other students using their cell phones or talking to each other. In general the behaviour was not dealt with adequately by the tutor. The consensus amongst student respondents was that disruptive students should be asked to behave or leave the classroom.

The research involved only one school in one university and as such may not reflect the rest of the higher education community, however there is anecdotal evidence to indicate that it may. This paper is one of few to investigate disruptive students within HE.

Keywords
students; disruption; classroom; behaviour; management

1. Introduction

Increased customer satisfaction generally arises out of good service quality (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000). However, customers are co-producers in a service setting (Huang, 2008), and can impact on their own experience and customer satisfaction, as well as others (Tax et al., 2006). The quality of the encounter is essential in the overall impression and evaluation of the quality of the service experience (Lewis, 1989).

Customers become loyal following a satisfactory prior experience, which leads to the development of a relationship between the consumer and provider (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998) and thus to profitability (Kelly, 2009). Interaction between customers can adversely impact the service experience and the customer's evaluation of that experience (His-Jui Wu, 2007). Failure experiences are the most powerful negative incidents customers experience within services (Hastie and Park, 1986 and Taylor, 1991). If not dealt with correctly, these negative experiences can lead to dissatisfaction and disloyalty (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Bolton and Drew, 1991; Fornell, 1992).

Consumers act as co-producers in a service environment (Huang, 2008), not only do they influence their own quality experience to some extent but also impact other customers' satisfaction (Tax et al.,2006). 'Acceptable' behaviour varies according to different service industries; consumer demographics may also have a relative effect on misbehaviours; variances in behaviour may alter in accordance to the individuals, cultures, context and also geographical locations (Fullerton et al., 1997). This means that behaviours some consumers deem acceptable, others could consider to be morally wrong (Fisk et al., 2010). Fisk et al (2010) suggested that consumers are challenging to predict. It appears that there may be toxic students within Higher Education. These are students that behave within the classroom in such a way that it can impede the teaching and learning processes. There are a number of inappropriate behaviours that can manifest within the classroom setting and also a number of methods employed to deal with them. Such adverse behaviour prevents both the tutor from teaching and the student from learning.

Customers who violate the generally accepted norms of conduct in consumption situations have been defined as misbehaving customers (Fullerton & Punj, 1997). Examples of consumer misbehaviours include: disturbing others with loud noise/voices, using phone during services, cutting in the queue, smoking in non-smoking area, shouting, screaming, being aggressive, rude, drunk (Huang, 2008); verbal/ physical abuse, theft, creating a cost/loss, vandalism (Huefner & Hunt, 2000); making a legitimate complaint, switching providers, or exiting (Drennan et al., 2007). Consumer misbehaviour has become problematic in several service industries and it is becoming unacceptable as service providers aim to reduce any negative incidents that could potentially arise. Such negative behaviour from customers weakens other customers' satisfaction (Martin, 1996).

Service recovery has gained significant attention in recent years in relation to adhering to customers' increasing expectations; it is stated that service failures are inevitable however dissatisfied customers are not (Michel, 2001). Research suggests that customers' emotional responses to service failures do actually influence their personal recovery effort evaluations and satisfaction judgements (Smith & Bolton, 2002). Service recovery strategies influence the responses of consumers to service failures (Keefe et al., 2007). Often recovery procedures if organised and efficient can effectively turn a negative experience into a positive one; for complaining customers between 50-70 per cent often return to the service provider if their situation is handled and managed successfully (Naylor, 1999).

In conclusion there is significant research on the topic surrounding customer perceptions and expectations of a service encounter. The management of service quality organisations must implement appropriate mechanisms to measure and monitor the level of the service

being provided to ensure it is what has been promised (Douglas et al., 2009) and upon which consumers have based their perceptions.

The aim of this research is to identify student behaviours that have an impact on students' learning experiences and how they think the behaviour should be managed.

2. Methods

Critical incident technique (CIT) is useful to identify the context of emotionally laden critical events (Chell & Baines, 1998) and is specifically suited to exploring (Hughes, 2007) and to understanding service issues (Gremler, 2004). This method is effective when exploring the underlying reason behind issues (Nyquist et al., 1985). The objective is to gain understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioural elements (Custon Farrero et al., 2005). CIT aims to contribute to improving the understanding of an activity (Bitner & Tetreault, 1990), the reporting of the events that make up a specific experience by the person involved (Custon et al., 2005). CIT is a research method that allows respondents as free a range of responses as possible within an overall research framework (Gabbott & Hogg, 1996). CIT has been most commonly used to research moments of truth (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001). Critical incidents are known as interaction incidents whereby a customer remembers as either a positive or negative experience (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001). The positive critical incidents recalled are termed 'satisfiers', negative incidents are termed 'dissatisfiers' (Cadotte & Turgeon, 1988). This research focused upon negative or "dissatisfier" incidents, particularly those caused by customer misbehaviours, in order to determine their impact on perceptions of service quality and satisfaction.

CIT has been in use since the 1950s and is a well-established method for collecting customer feedback. This qualitative method is not only flexible (Neuhous, 1996) but also enables practical problems to be solved (Kemppainen, 2000) as the method provides a valuable means for service researchers to rigorously study a phenomenon and identify issues not previously considered (Gremler, 2004). The advantages of CIT advocated the justification for use for this research; the method is well suited for use in assessing perceptions of customers from different cultures (Mang & Stauss, 1999). This inductive method does not necessarily require hypotheses as patterns and relationships are formed from the participant responses that allows the creation of concepts and theories (Olsen & Thomasson, 1992), which subsequently provides relevant, unequivocal and concrete information for practical solutions (Stauss, 1993). The questionnaire was designed to enable expressive responses from customers to explore where customer misbehaviour had a negative impact on service quality perception, to detail what happened, how it affected them and what they thought the service provider should have done. For this study 120 CIT questionnaires were given to a random convenience sample of friends, family and work colleagues. Completed questionnaires were collected and the information was progressed by importing it into NVivo for content analysis.

3. Disruptive Students

3.1 Definitions
Within Higher Education there appears to be a scarcity of academic literature on the topic within the HE setting, although there is more, perhaps not surprisingly, on the subject at school levels. Romi (2004) examined school children's attitudes within religious schools. Yet surprisingly it is an issue for some teaching staff at Higher Education level. Surprising

because the students on the whole must have chosen to take part in the HE experience, and moreover invest a large amount of money, therefore why disrupt their own experience? Atherton (2005) stated that for novice teachers particularly, a disruptive student experience can make them leave the profession, this was also found to be the case for Gunter *et al.* (1994) in their research into school children. For more experienced teachers such students can be the bane of their life. More importantly, such behaviour can jeopardise the teaching and learning experience because of the time spent on the problem takes the tutor away from the teaching.

The chronically dissatisfied, disruptive customer (student) can be a drain on resources (Viewpoint, 2005). One university (Roehampton.AC.UK, 2009) listed a number of experiences with disruptive students, such as, mobile phone use, attitude, bullying, talking, punctuality, eating and drinking. Reed and Kirkpatrick (1998) found that in schools misbehaviour might be in the form of talking loudly, calling out, walking around the room, clowning, dawdling and not doing assigned tasks. They said that such behaviour can cause stress for teaching staff and students. They postulated however, that it was a subjective matter and one person's view that behaviour is deemed disruptive may differ from another. From the limited literature there are a number of suggestions to deal with inappropriate behaviour (Table 1) (Morse, 2009; University of Wisconsin, 2009).

Table 1: Disruption and how to act upon such behaviour.

Issue	Suggested Action
Mobile Telephone and Lap Tops	Make clear at the start of lectures that they should be switched off.
Lateness	Agree a protocol for late arrivals for both staff and students. Reinforce it through posters.
General disruption	Establish ground rules; avoid being defensive; learn to read the class; confront disruption; locate people that can help; talk to the student who may not realise they are being disruptive; warn the student that there actions may have consequences; report the problem.
Yelling	Inform the Student Services Department
Being overly argumentative	
Using inappropriate language	Inform the student that their behaviour should cease
Threatening behaviour	Call the University Police
Passing notes	Stand next to the offender
Monopolizing discussions	Change your teaching style

Atherton (2005) suggested a 6-step method of handling inappropriate behaviour which is to: (i) Calm down; (ii) Reflect and diagnose; (iii) Itemise the problematic behaviour(s); (iv) Develop strategies to handle them; (v) Implement the strategies; and (vi) Reflect and evaluate, but only change them in the light of clear and consistent contrary evidence. Sorcinelli (1994) recommended that teachers create a constructive classroom environment and deal with any troublesome behaviour by talking. Gunter *et al.* (1994) found that some teachers indulge in avoidance or escaping behaviour as a way of dealing with adverse behaviours, which they say is sometime beneficial as it avoids any conflicts. However, CTE (2009) argued that it is necessary to confront disruptive dynamics by referring to ground rules, call attention to behaviour, redirect the interaction, and confront the student outside the class.

In a survey conducted by Seidman (2012) it was found that disruptive behaviour amongst students was a major learning inhibitor and is not dealt with effectively by the learning organisations. Two categories of disruption were identified, *i.e.* covert and overt. Teaching staff are not trained to handle the problem. A number of causes of disruption in the classroom had been identified within the literature such as substance abuse (Kuhlenshmidt and Layne, 1999) and environmental factors (*ibid*).

Sun and Shek (2012) defined misbehaviour as 'rule-breaking, violating implicit norms, being inappropriate and upsetting teaching and learning', page 2. Their research also highlighted cultural differences, *i.e.* depending on which country had varying definitions of what constituted misbehaviour.

4. Method

A total of 100 one-page questionnaires was distributed to Liverpool Business School students during core classes to obtain the optimum amount of responses. Of those, 62 completed questionnaires were returned and found to be usable. Making sense of qualitative data is a difficult and often time-consuming process. However, Critical Incident Technique is a qualitative method that facilitates an interpretive approach in the coding of the data. It is not as restricted as the more traditional survey method, which would be limited by the number and type of questions asked (Saunders et al 2011). Once data is themed and coded it is transformed into quantitative data, which in turn facilitates further analysis. To assess reliability different researchers were used to evaluate whether their observations were similar (researcher triangulation). This is associated with an inductive approach (Saunders et al 2011). In order to avoid the threat of subject bias, care was taken over the design of the questionnaire particularly that it gave an assurance of anonymity to respondents.

The focus of this study was aimed at capturing the voice of the student in order to identify what they deemed disruptive behaviour.

Design of CIT Questionnaire

The CIT questionnaire was purposefully designed to elicit a hand-written account from each student of an incident within the university context. An earlier pilot study had shown that this could take fifteen minutes to produce a rich amount of data from the majority of respondents.

To address some of the concerns within the extant literature about validity and reliability, three judges were used in the content analysis and coding of this qualitative data.

5. Findings

Various forms of disruptive behaviour were identified from the questionnaire responses. These were: (i) talking throughout the lecture; (ii) using mobile telephones; (iii) reading newspapers; and (iv) telling jokes. Likewise, there was a number of ways in which the behaviour impacted on learning, namely;
1. Disturbing other students;
2. Lost the attention of other students;
3. Lost teaching time;

The ways in which to deal with the situation varied and included:
1. Asking them to be quiet;
2. Asking them to leave;
3. Told them to find another session in the future;
4. Asked the class whether the person should leave;

There appears to be a lack of support provided by the School Management. The policy documents offer no guidelines for dealing with such behaviour. The University's post graduate training for teaching staff offers no guidelines or support for this.

6. Conclusions

It is clear from the responses that disruption within the classroom is experienced. However, staff did not appear to deal with the disruption in a consistent manner. Perhaps training on handling disruption should be part of the teacher training syllabus.

This was only a small study involving one school. It is recommended that a further study take place over at least two universities and that teaching staff themselves are asked to provide narratives on incidents and how they felt such occurrences should be dealt with.

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