

## **A Cross National Comparison of College Student Perceptions and Preferences for Instructional Orientations**

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*In this cross national study, 846 university students' preferences and perceptions of two instructional orientations--Student as Product and Student as Customer--were contrasted. Students from Argentina, West Indies, Canada, Egypt and the US were included. Overall, academic major, gender, and age were not significantly related to student preferences and perceptions of their educational experience. The results indicate that students from the Western Hemisphere share many educational preferences and perceptions for the two instructional orientations not shared by Egyptian students. However, students from all five countries were in agreement that their instructors did not treat them as customer.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since higher education is a type of service delivery system, it must address the question: Can higher education be a standardized service or does it need to be differentiated? If college students' needs are similar, education can be standardized; but if college students living in different countries have different needs, education would need to be differentiated to address those various needs. Although the urgency to answer this question has intensified as the frequency of exchange programs for both faculty and students increases, it has rarely been a focus of research (Niehoff, Turnley, Yen & Sheu, 2001).

This question reflects the ongoing debate between two opposing global perspectives. One global perspective is represented by Levitt (1983) who maintained that technology is causing people throughout the world to have a commonality of preferences--meaning they desire the same products and lifestyles. The internet has mitigated the effects of spatial distances and facilitated communication, particularly among young people who use social networking. In this global, homogenous market, we would expect college students' needs and expectations to be similar and therefore, that the educational experience could be similar throughout the world. The opposing world view posits that national cultural values differences result in different preferences and needs. This perspective is supported by Hofstede (1984, 2001) whose research shows that national cultures differ on values such as power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. According to this perspective, we would expect college students from different countries to vary in their educational preferences and concurrently for faculty in different countries to have varied educational orientations.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to our understanding of whether the educational experience for college students is differentiated by country and whether college students from different countries have similar or dissimilar instructional preferences and perceptions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Culture, the set of ideas, beliefs, assumptions, and norms widely shared by a group of people guides behavior and is passed on from one generation to the next (Goodenough, 1973; Brislin, 1993). School cultural values reflect educators' values and expectations and those of the dominant majority group in the nation (Hofstede, 1986). The cultural compatibility perspective suggests that schools should be culturally compatible with the students they serve (Tharp, Dalton and Yamauchi, 1994). Since different cultures have different values and goals, we might expect to find this reflected in the classroom as Hofstede suggested in a 1986 article titled, *Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning*, Yamauchi (1998) described the situation in the following manner: "When teachers enter the classroom, they do so with cultural orientations and expectations which reflect their own or adopted usually mainstream culture" (p.189). She recognized that students from cultures with different individualism/collectivism values from their instructors would not have their needs or expectations met. She suggested various classroom accommodations that would increase classroom cultural compatibility for these students. In a similar fashion Ceppi's (1997) cultural assimilator technique, developed to aid European American teachers in adjusting their teaching orientation to the needs of more collectivistic Hawaiian students, recognizes the impact of cultural value differences on the educational experience. If we consider cultural values to be the overriding determinant of educational instruction differences, demographic variables such as age and gender would not be expected to influence educational preferences unless certain cultural values impacted those variables differently.

Cross national comparisons of college students' educational experience are few, but those that do exist tend to support the idea that the educational experience is a differentiated rather than standardized service. Mai (2005)'s comparison of postgraduate students in the UK and US revealed that US students were more satisfied than UK students. Home country students were significantly more satisfied than overseas (exchange) students. Overall impression of education quality and overall impression of the school were important predictors of overall satisfaction. Overall impression of education quality was closely correlated with lecturer's expertise on the subject area and interest in the subject, as well as the quality and accessibility of the IT facilities, as well as the belief that a degree will further careers. Mai noted that it is difficult to evaluate the influence of culture on these findings. However, these results suggest that student preferences regarding their educational experience differ from country to country.

Another study examining the same cultural variables was conducted by Neihoff, Turnley, Yen, and Sheu (2001). These researchers explored cultural differences in terms of individualism, power distance and short/long term orientation. Their comparison of educational expectations of US and Taiwanese college students majoring in business administration showed that the US and Taiwanese scores were significantly different. For example, Taiwanese students were more accepting of group assignments than

US students. The authors interpreted this finding as a reflection of higher collectivism in the Chinese culture than in the US culture. Taiwanese students were more likely to believe that a student should never question a grade and were more inclined to prefer mandatory class attendance than US students. These findings were taken as a gauge of relative power distance. The higher scores indicated that the Taiwanese had greater power distance than the US students. Finally, the finding that US students preferred practical classroom experiences while the Taiwanese students preferred a theoretical focus was interpreted as a manifestation of the short term orientation, characteristic of the US culture, and the long term orientation characteristic of the Chinese culture.

Obermiller, Fleenor, and Raven (2005) delineated two nonexclusive instructional orientations: the Student as Product Orientation and the Student as Customer Orientation. In the Product Orientation, faculty are focused on the satisfaction of society. The goal is to produce students with knowledge/skills to become productive employees/citizens. In this orientation, faculty believe they know what is best for students. In the Customer Orientation, faculty are focused on student satisfaction; faculty design courses to be responsive to student needs and wants. Their goal is to be responsive to student demands. Included in the Obermiller et al. study questioning whether college students are products or customers was a comparison of US and European (French) college students and faculty. The investigators found that the European students differed significantly from US students, regardless of whether the US students were from a state or private university, in terms of the perceptions of Customer Orientation and preference for Product Orientation. The European students had significantly lower perceptions of Customer Orientation and lower preferences for Product Orientation than US students. Moreover, college students in Obermiller study agreed they received less Customer Orientation than they preferred; the opposite was true of faculty who preferred the Product Orientation. Students' preferences for the two orientations were similar whereas faculty had a higher preference for the Product Orientation. The study revealed no gender differences and no differences between students majoring in Business and those majoring in Arts & Sciences. However, students in those majors differed significantly from students majoring in Law or Engineering; they had a higher preference for the Customer Orientation.

## **METHOD**

The aim of this research was to conduct a cross national comparison of college students' perceptions and preferences for two instructional orientations. The two non-exclusive orientations are "Students as Customers" and "Students as Products." While there are a few studies supporting the perspective that differences do exist by country due to differing national values, a strong argument can be made for the idea that education is becoming a standardized product and that college students are similar in their preferences because of globalization, particularly in the area of communication. Given the preliminary nature of this research, we posed research questions rather than hypotheses.

*Research Question 1: Do college students from different countries have different perceptions of university teaching orientations?*

*Research Question 2: Do college students from different countries have different preferences for university teaching orientations?*

*Research Question 3: Are there differences between the perceptions and preferences of students from the same country?*

## **Procedure**

Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of demographic, open ended questions, and Likert scale items designed to quantify the attitudes, perceptions and preferences of college students toward their university educational experience. In this study only the demographic questions and Likert scaled questions relating to Customer and Product Orientations were analyzed. The scales examining

faculty instructional orientation were originally developed by Oberville et al. (2005). There are four items for each of four scales: Perception of Customer Orientation (C), Preferences for Customer Orientation (CP), Perception of Product Orientation (P), and Preference for Product Orientation (PP). A copy of these items can be found in the Appendix. Items C1,2,3,8 address perceptions of the Customer Orientation; C4,5,6,7, preferences for the Customer Orientation; P1,2,3,4, perceptions of the Product Orientation; P5,6,7,8, preferences for the Product Orientation. The items gauged to what extent the respondents believed the orientation existed in their schools and their preference for the orientation.

A sample of convenience based on a referral sampling procedure was used. University students from countries differing in terms of location, ethnicity and culture were selected. The countries included: Barbados, part of the West Indies (hereafter referred to as the West Indies) (Caribbean), Argentina (South America), Egypt (Mideast), French speaking Canada (North America), and the US (North America). The questionnaire was administered during classes or via email.

### **Analyses**

Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. In most countries only students majoring in business were included. In countries where arts and science students were included as respondents, we compared business and non business students and found no significant differences between the two groups so they were combined in the subsequent analyses. Data were analyzed using SPSS: analyses included descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVAs and Tukey post hoc tests of significance.

### **RESULTS**

Eight hundred forty six respondents were included in the study: 240 from Argentina, 165 from Canada, 51 from Egypt, 246 from the US, and 144 from the West Indies. The average age of the respondents was 23. Additional descriptive statistics and averages for the four scales are presented in Table 1. In the initial analyses the reliability of the four scales was tested. The Cronbach Alphas were .87 for Perception of Customer Orientation scale, .89 for Preference for Customer Orientation scale, .89 for Perception of Product Orientation scale, and .91 for Preference for Product Orientation scale.

Overall we found that neither age nor academic major were linked to perceptions or preferences for instructional orientation. There were a few significant differences by gender within some countries. US women had a higher preference for the Customer Orientation than male students ( $F=4.95$ ,  $p=.03$ ). Canadian women perceived more Product Orientation than Canadian males ( $F=5.67$ ,  $p=.02$ ) and West Indies women had a higher preference for the Product Orientation than men,  $F=8.59$ ,  $p=.00$ .

The results from the ANOVAs revealed no significant difference at  $p<.05$  between countries when the perception of Customer Orientation scale was used as the dependent variable. All five countries formed a homogeneous group in their perception of the use of Customer Orientation by their instructors. The countries' mean scores were below 3 indicating that the students did not perceive that they were treated as customers by their instructors. This similarity among countries was not evident when the other three scales were set as the dependent variable. There were significant differences at the  $p<.05$  level between countries when perception of Product Orientation, preference for Product Orientation and preference for Customer Orientation were set as dependent variables. To determine how the countries differed, we ran post hoc Tukey tests of significance for each of the three scales. The results are shown in Tables 2, 3, 4. All countries except Egypt had similar mean scores on the perceptions of Product Orientation scale (Table 2). Mean scores in all countries except Egypt were over 3.00 indicating they agreed that they were being treated as "products". Egyptian students, however, strongly disagreed with statements about the prevalence of the Product Orientation in their educational experience. The Egyptian mean score was 2.3 indicating that the students did not perceive that they were being treated as "products."

**TABLE 1  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON AGE, GENDER, AND SCALE AVERAGES**

Country	Gender	Count	Ave Age	Ave		Ave	
				C & CP	P & PP	P & PP	CP
Argentina	Female	120	21.7	2.5	3.1	3.3	3.6
	Male	120	21.8	2.7	2.9	3.5	3.6
Argentina Total		240	21.8	2.6	3.0	3.4	3.6
Egypt	Female	29	20.3	2.7	2.4	2.2	4.2
	Male	22	21.3	3.4	3.6	2.5	3.9
Egypt Total		51	20.7	3.3	3.4	2.3	4.1
West Indies	Female	117	25	2.5	3.9	3.1	3.8
	Male	27	24.8	2.6	3.7	3.4	3.2
West Indies Total		144	25	2.5	3.9	3.2	3.7
United States	Female	119	24	2.9	3.7	3.4	3.4
	Male	127	24.8	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.5
United States Total		246	24.4	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.4
Canada	Female	76	21.2	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.5
	Male	89	22.7	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.3
Canada Total		165	22	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.4
Grand Total		846	23.1	2.9	3.3	3.3	3.6

**TABLE 2  
COUNTRY DIFFERENCES USING PERCEPTION OF  
“STUDENT AS PRODUCT” ORIENTATION**

Ave P		Tukey HSD	
Country	N	Subset	
		1	2
Egypt	51	2.324	
West Indies	144		3.177
Argentina	240		3.389
US	246		3.459
Canada	165		3.500
Sig.		1.0	0.055

Table 3 shows the results of the comparison of student preferences for the Customer Orientation across countries. The Egyptian student mean score differed significantly from all other student group mean scores except Canada's. With a mean score of 2.90 the Egyptian group indicated that they did not prefer to be treated as customers. While Canadian students were similar to Egyptian students, they were

not dissimilar to the US, West Indies, or Argentinean students who had mean scores in the 3s, signaling a preference for the Customer Orientation.

In terms of student preference for the Product Orientation, the West Indies was similar to all other countries (Table 4). Students from all the countries agreed that they prefer a Product Orientation. Egyptian students, however, had a significantly stronger preference for the Product Orientation; their mean score was 4.07.

**TABLE 3**  
**COUNTRY DIFFERENCES USING PREFERENCE FOR**  
**“STUDENT AS CUSTOMER” ORIENTATION**

Ave CP		Tukey HSD	
Country	N	Subset	
		1	2
Argentina	240		3.300
Canada	165	3.290	3.290
US	246		3.550
West Indies	144		3.580
Egypt	51	2.900	
Sig.		0.06	0.29

**TABLE 4**  
**COUNTRY DIFFERENCES USING PREFERENCE FOR**  
**“STUDENT AS PRODUCT” ORIENTATION**

Ave PP		Tukey HSD	
Country	N	Subset	
		1	2
Canada	165	3.359	
US	246	3.438	
Argentina	240	3.629	
West Indies	144	3.697	3.698
Egypt	51		4.074
Sig.		0.112	0.058

Table 5 contains the results of within country comparisons of preferences for Customer vs. Product Orientation, perceptions of Customer vs. Product Orientation, and perceptions vs. preferences for the two orientations. Students from all countries except Egypt perceived more Product Orientation than Customer Orientation. Egyptian students perceived a stronger Customer Orientation than Product Orientation. Only Argentina had significantly higher preferences for Product versus Customer Orientation and only Egypt had significantly higher preferences for Customer versus Product Orientation. Canadian, US, and West Indies students did not prefer one orientation more than the other. Students from Argentina, Egypt and the West Indies preferred more of the Product Orientation than they perceived in their educational experience. However, the US and Canadian student perceptions and preferences for the Product Orientation were in synch. Students from all countries except Egypt wanted more of the Customer Orientation than they perceived in their educational experience.

**TABLE 5**  
**T-TESTS: COMPARISONS OF PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES BY COUNTRY**

Country	Mean	Std.Dev.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Int of the Difference		t	df	Sig.
				Upper	Lower			
<b>P and C: comparison of perceptions of two orientations</b>								
Argentina	-0.54	1.28	0.08	-0.70	-0.38	-6.57	239	0.000
Canada	-0.68	1.43	0.11	-0.90	0.46	-6.13	164	0.000
Egypt	0.66	1.30	0.18	0.29	1.02	3.61	50	0.001
US	-0.58	1.43	0.09	-0.76	-0.40	-6.32	245	0.000
West Indies	-0.48	1.41	0.12	-0.71	-0.25	-4.07	143	0.000
<b>PP and CP: comparison of preferences for two orientations</b>								
Argentina	0.30	1.63	0.11	-0.51	-0.10	-2.88	239	0.004
Canada	-0.07	1.63	0.13	-0.32	0.18	-0.53	164	0.595
Egypt	-1.17	1.62	0.23	-1.63	-0.72	-5.16	50	0.000
US	0.11	1.55	0.10	-0.09	0.30	1.08	245	0.282
West Indies	-0.12	1.54	0.13	-0.38	0.13	-0.96	143	0.339
<b>P and PP: comparison of perception and preference for the Product Orientation</b>								
Argentina	-0.24	1.32	0.09	-0.41	-0.07	-2.82	239	0.005
Canada	-0.14	1.01	0.08	-0.01	0.30	1.80	164	0.075
Egypt	-1.75	0.94	0.13	-2.01	-1.49	-13.34	50	0.000
US	-0.02	0.98	0.06	-0.10	0.14	0.34	245	0.736
West Indies	-0.52	1.53	0.13	-0.77	-0.27	-4.08	143	0.000
<b>C and CP: comparison of perception and preference for the Customer Orientation</b>								
Argentina	-0.48	1.10	0.07	-0.62	-0.34	-6.73	239	0.000
Canada	-0.47	1.24	0.10	-0.66	-0.28	-4.93	164	0.000
Egypt	0.08	0.91	0.13	-0.18	0.33	0.62	50	0.541
US	-0.66	1.31	0.08	-0.83	-0.50	-7.94	245	0.000
West Indies	-0.87	1.40	0.12	-1.10	-0.64	-7.51	143	0.000

## DISCUSSION

The results help to answer the three research questions we posed at the start of this study:

*Question 1: Do college students from different countries have similar perceptions of college teaching orientations?* We learned that students from the five countries have similar perceptions of Customer Orientation. They agreed that they were not treated as customers in their educational settings. Students from Argentina, Canada, US, and West Indies had similar perceptions of Product Orientation. They perceived that they were treated as Products. Only Egyptian students reported that they were not treated as products. Within-country comparisons showed that the difference between perceptions of Customer Orientation and Product Orientation was significant. In all countries, except Egypt, students perceived they were more likely to be treated as products rather than as customers in the classroom. In Egypt they did not perceive that either orientation characterized their educational experience. They perceived the absence of the Product Orientation was significantly greater than the absence of the Customer Orientation.

*Question 2: Do college students from different countries have similar preferences for college teaching orientations?* The findings indicate that students from the five countries have similar preferences for Product Orientation, but different preferences for Customer Orientation. All student groups agreed that they want the Product Orientation. The Egyptian students voiced the strongest preference for the Product Orientation. All student groups except the Egyptian group agreed that they want the Customer Orientation. The Egyptian students did not want instructors to adopt the Customer Orientation. The US, Canadian, Argentine and West Indies students' preferences for the two orientations were similar. They wanted both orientations used equally. However, while the Egyptian students strongly preferred the Product Orientation, they did not want the Customer Orientation used in their education.

*Question 3: Are there differences between the perceptions and preferences of students from the same country?* In the comparisons of perceptions and preferences for the Argentina and the West Indies samples, there were significant differences indicating a mismatch between perceptions and preferences. Students in the two countries wanted instructors to use more of each orientation. In the US and Canadian comparisons, there was no significant difference between perceptions and preferences for the Product Orientation. Their perceptions and preferences for this orientation were aligned. There was, however, a significant difference between perceptions and preferences for the Customer Orientation. This difference showed that the US and Canadian students wanted more of the Customer Orientation than they were receiving. The Egyptians students held an opposite point of view. There was no significant difference between their perceptions and preferences for a Customer Orientation. They did not perceive they were treated as customers and did not want to be. However, there was a significant difference between their perception and preference for the Product Orientation. While the mean score indicated that they agreed that their instructors were using the Product Orientation, their preference score for the Product Orientation was significantly higher.

The results from this study appear to be in opposition to some commonly held ideas about college students attitudes toward higher education. Reflection on earlier empirical studies relating to the perceptions and preferences of college student reveals that the results from this study are congruent with some but not all prior research findings. Across all countries in this study, students' preference for the Product Orientation was greater than their preference for the Customer Orientation. The finding runs counter to the notion that college students are not capable of evaluating their educational experience and do not realize until years later how valuable a class was. This idea may stem from the belief that since students represent consumers of professional services they may not have the knowledge or skill to evaluate the service (Mason, Mayer and Ezell, 1994). The results of this study support the idea that students have some ability to grasp the long term view and understand that they need to develop the skills that will enable them to contribute to society and business.

These findings in the study show a pattern of similarity between students in Argentina, Canada and the US. This pattern of similarity is at odds with Mai's (2005), Neihoff et al.'s (2001), and Oberville et al.'s (2005) conclusion that students differ by country of origin. It may be important to note that Mai and Neihoff were not studying instructional orientation. Only Oberville et al. contrasted student perceptions and preferences for the two instructional orientations; they found a significant difference between US and European students. The absence of a European country in the set of countries which constituted the homogenous group in our study may explain the lack of alignment in the two studies.

The fact that none of the students perceived that they were treated as customers indicates that instructors are not "buying into" the service marketing perspective captured by Desai, Damewood and Jones' (2001) statement: "It is assumed that a customer orientation (or market orientation) model puts the students' needs and wants at the center of teaching plans and that such responsiveness is compatible with sound educational principles" (p.137). During a time when student satisfaction is often the basis for the teacher evaluations used in tenure and merit considerations, the significant gap found in this study between perception and preference for the Customer Orientation is problematic for college faculty. Their students are likely to be dissatisfied if their perceptions of their educational experience do not match their preferences or expectations.

In the preceding section we pointed out areas where the results of this study are in opposition to prevailing views about higher education. Following are aspects of the study which align with what earlier researchers have found. The findings that age and type of academic discipline were not significantly related to preferences and perceptions are in keeping with earlier research (Oberville et al., 2005). In countries where both orientations were perceived to be used by instructors; there was unanimous agreement that the Product Orientation was relatively more dominant than the Customer Orientation. This finding is in line with Oberville et al.'s (2005) research which also found that students perceived that faculty favored the Product Orientation over the Customer Orientation. In four of the five countries studied, the mean score for Product Orientation was significantly higher than the mean score for Customer Orientation. Faculty appear to be more focused on preparing their students to meet society's needs than they are in meeting the students wants and needs. This finding is not surprising since faculty generally feel that they have valuable knowledge and skills to impart to students and aligns with Oberville et al.'s (2005) finding that faculty preferred the Product Orientation more than the Customer Orientation.

Four of the countries had similar preferences for the Customer Orientation. One country had a significantly low preference score for Customer Orientation. This is somewhat similar to an earlier finding that showed US college students with a significantly higher preference for the Customer Orientation than European students (Oberville et al. 2005). In our study no European students were included. However, US college students did have a significantly higher preference for the Customer Orientation than the Mideast students. It should also be noted that none of the other countries in the study showed a significantly higher preference for the Customer Orientation than the US.

In every instance where countries were dissimilar, Egypt was the country that was different. One explanation is the small size of the Egyptian sample. We recognize this is a limitation of the study and makes the findings suspect. Further research with a larger sample is needed to see if the present findings can be replicated. Another explanation for the marked difference between Egyptian students and other college students could be that variations in culture cause difference perceptions and preferences toward instructional orientations. Power distance is one cultural dimension that may influence student perceptions and preferences about their education. Neihoff et al. (2001) alluded to the relevance of this cultural dimension in his comparison of students in the US and Taiwan. He used the variation in power distance to explain why the Taiwanese students were less likely than US students to question a grade. Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of society expect and accept unequal power distribution within a culture. We assume that within a classroom, students are less powerful and hold lower status than their instructors; therefore, a student's belief about power distance is relevant. Egypt's ranking on the cultural dimension, power distance, is vastly different from the rankings of the other four countries: Arabian countries (Egypt would be an example.) 80, Argentina 49, Jamaica (Jamaica is part of the West Indies) 45, US 40, and Canada 39 (Hofstede, 2010; Punnett et al, 2006). The higher number indicates higher power distance and therefore acceptance and expectation that there are different statuses within society where higher status individuals have more power over lower status individuals. Acceptance of status differences may translate into a preference for an instructional orientation in which the teacher is recognized as the expert and the one who should dictate curricula. This would explain why Egyptian students have such a strong preference for the Product Orientation.

The three research questions discussed earlier were posed to help in determining whether higher education should be standardized or differentiated. The results from this study indicate that there are many similarities cross nationally in the perceptions and preferences for the two instructional orientations. Across the five countries in the study, students did not strongly agree that either orientation was employed by their faculty. Moreover, all five countries shared the perception that the Customer Orientation was not used by their instructors. In all the other comparisons, the four countries in the Western Hemisphere were similar even though they differed by language and heritage (Spanish, French, English) and location (South America, Caribbean, North America). These findings support the perspective that the approach to higher education instruction can be standardized to some degree.

Other findings show significant differences between countries indicating that some differentiation may be required in the orientation used by faculty as they move from one country to another. However, the same Mideast country, Egypt, was consistently the one dissimilar from the others.

From this study we learned we were incorrect to pose the question: Should higher education be standardized or differentiated? Our findings revealed that the question should not be stated as an “either” “or” question. A more appropriate wording of the question is: When should higher education be standardized and when does it need to be differentiated?

## LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Further research is needed to overcome the study’s limitations. The Egyptian sample size was low and makes the results suspect. Since the Egyptian group emerged as significantly different from other national groups, it is important to replicate the findings with a larger sample of students. The use of only two instructional orientation foci may also be a limitation. The results showed that students did not strongly agree that either orientation was employed by their faculty. Does this mean that there are other instructional orientations? What other goals could be guiding instruction if not satisfying society (Product Orientation) or students (Customer Orientation)? Further research into instructional orientations is needed since it is questionable whether the Product and Customer orientations adequately capture what is happening in the college classroom.

A few gender differences emerged during the analyses, but there was no pattern to them other than the women’s mean scores tended to be higher than the men’s. We do not find enough evidence in these results to suggest that there are systematic gender differences either within or between countries. However, this may be an area which warrants further research.

Another topic that merits further research is delineated in the following question: Do differences in perceptions and preferences influence student satisfaction? In the service marketing literature, education is classified as a type of service directed at people’s minds. Teaching is a type of service delivery with students being co-producers and consumers of educational outputs. As such, students have wants and needs which help to form their expectations. When students perceive those expectations are met, they are satisfied because there is no gap between expectation and perception. In the present study there were significant discrepancies between perceptions and preferences in some countries. Does that mean that students in those countries are less satisfied with their education than other students?

The findings from this study may have implications not only for future research but also for faculty exchange programs. Faculty, particularly those coming to teach in the Western Hemisphere, need to realize that students want to be treated not only as Product, but also as Customer. Furthermore, faculty should recognize that there is no need to “back-off” from the Product Orientation. Students appear to have a strong appreciation for this orientation regardless of where they live. In this respect, college education can be standardized. The only area where faculty should consider taking a different approach would be in the Mideast where there is evidence that students have very strong preferences for Product Orientation and strong preferences against the Customer Orientation.

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## APPENDIX

Below are **TWO CONTRASTING DESCRIPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR/LECTURER ORIENTATION**. Read each and then answer the questions about each orientation using the numbers from the rating scale:

*Strongly disagree*      *Somewhat disagree*      *Neutral*      *Somewhat agree*      *Strongly agree*  
1                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5

### **ORIENTATION I: - The “STUDENTS AS CUSTOMER’ orientation.**

University faculty/instructors/lecturers are oriented toward student satisfaction. They see students as paying customers. Just as with any other business, the goal of a university course is to satisfy its customers. Faculty design their courses to meet the current wants and needs of their students. Dissatisfied students will take their business elsewhere. Students know what they want, and faculty do what they can to make their teaching responsive to student demands.

- \_\_\_ C1. The “students as customers” orientation characterizes teaching at MY SCHOOL.
- \_\_\_ C2. I believe the “students as customers” orientation is the dominant orientation at MY SCHOOL.
- \_\_\_ C3. At MY SCHOOL, one is likely to encounter the “students as customers” orientation in most courses.
- \_\_\_ C4. At MY SCHOOL, the “students as customers” orientation is the appropriate approach to teaching.
- \_\_\_ C5. At MY SCHOOL, professors should have the “students as customers” orientation.
- \_\_\_ C6. I want MY SCHOOL courses to be taught with the “students as customers” orientation.
- \_\_\_ C7. I think teachers at MY SCHOOL should emphasize the “students as customers” orientation.
- \_\_\_ C8. Most instructors/lecturers at MY SCHOOL lean toward the “student as customers” orientation.

### **ORIENTATION II: - The ‘STUDENTS AS PRODUCTS’ orientation**

University faculty are oriented towards the satisfaction of society and its expectations. As a social institution, the goal of the university is to produce graduates with the appropriate knowledge and skills for jobs and for being productive citizens/members of society. Faculty design their courses to meet the long term needs of students and society. If students do not have long term success in society, the school’s reputation suffers. Faculty believe they know what is best for students, and they teach with the students’ best interests in mind.

- \_\_\_ P1. The “students as product” orientation characterizes teaching at MY SCHOOL.
- \_\_\_ P2. I believe the “students as products” orientation is the most dominant orientation at MY SCHOOL.
- \_\_\_ P3. At MY SCHOOL, one is most likely to encounter the “students as products” orientation in most courses.
- \_\_\_ P4. Most faculty at MY SCHOOL lean toward the “students as products” orientation.
- \_\_\_ P5. At MY SCHOOL, the “students as products” orientation is the appropriate approach to teaching.
- \_\_\_ P6. At MY SCHOOL, professors should have the “students as products” orientation.
- \_\_\_ P7. I want MY SCHOOL courses to be taught with the “students as products” orientation
- \_\_\_ P8. I think MY SCHOOL professors should emphasize the “students as products” orientation.

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