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PERCEIVED QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS

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Introduction. Quality is crucial for education as competition in the education services market is steadily intensifying. The critical attitude of participants in education requires improving the quality of work of educational organizations, their effectiveness and efficiency. Those educational organizations wishing to maintain or improve their position in the market are forced to work intensively to improve their work and increase their responsiveness to the needs of users. Secondary schools need to be aware that the ultimate arbiter of quality of the educational services they provide are stakeholders (parents) as one of primary customers of educational services.

Aim and tasks. The objective of the study is to determine the dimensions of the expected and perceived quality of educational services from parents' perspective and to identify if they coincide with the dimensions in the classical gap model. Qualitative research that provides insight into the perspectives of parents on the quality of educational services and their understanding of the quality concepts was conducted.

Results. Based on the results of preliminary qualitative research, we have drawn up dimensions of perceived and expected quality of educational services: environment, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The dimensions obtained through the focus group discussion of parents correspond to the dimensions in the classical GAP Model of Service Quality. Elements of assessment of parents' expectations and perception of the quality of educational services are considered (dimensions, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy).

Conclusions. The objective of this study was to identify the expectations and perceptions of parents as primary customers of educational services. The insight into the perspectives of parents on the quality of educational services and their understanding of the quality concepts was obtained with qualitative. Further on the dimensions of the expected and perceived quality of educational services from parents' perspective were identified. It was confirmed that the dimensions identified in this research coincide with the dimensions in the classical gap model. Based on the results of the parents' focus group and the original SERVQUAL instrument the questionnaire was designed and used in further research.

Keywords: management, education, services, perceived quality, stakeholders

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УПРАВЛІННЯ ЯКІСТЮ ОСВІТНІХ ПОСЛУГ З ТОЧКИ ЗОРУ БАТЬКІВ ЯК ЗАЦІКАВЛЕНИХ СТОРИН

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Вступ. Якість має вирішальне значення для освіти, оскільки конкуренція на ринку освітніх послуг неухильно посилюється. Критичне ставлення учасників освітнього процесу вимагає підвищення якості роботи закладів освіти, їх ефективності і результативності. Організації освіти, які хочуть зберегти або поліпшити свої позиції на ринку, змушені інтенсивно працювати над вдосконаленням своєї роботи, підвищенням оперативності реагування на потреби користувачів. Середні школи повинні усвідомлювати, що кінцевим арбітром якості надаваних ними освітніх послуг є зацікавлені сторони (батьки) як один з основних споживачів освітніх послуг.

Мета і завдання. Мета дослідження - визначити розміри очікуваного і сприйманого якості освітніх послуг з точки зору батьків і визначити, чи збігаються вони з вимірами класичної моделі розриву. Проведено якісне дослідження, яке дає уявлення про перспективи батьків щодо якості освітніх послуг і їх розумінні концепцій якості.

Результати. На основі результатів попереднього якісного дослідження ми визначили параметри сприйманого і очікуваної якості освітніх послуг: середа, надійність, чуйність, впевненість і емпатія. Отримані в ході обговорення в фокус-групах вимірювання відповідають вимірам класичної GAP-моделі якості послуг. Розглянуто елементи оцінки очікувань батьків як стейкхолдерів і сприйняття якості освітніх послуг (вимірювання, відчутність, надійність, чуйність, впевненість, співчуття).

Висновки. Метою даного дослідження було виявлення очікувань і сприйняття батьків як основних споживачів освітніх послуг. Якісно було отримано уявлення про перспективи батьків щодо якості освітніх послуг і їх розуміння понять якості. Далі були визначені аспекти очікуваного і сприйманого якості освітніх послуг з точки зору батьків. Було підтверджено, що аспекти, визначені в даному дослідженні, збігаються з параметрами класичної моделі розриву. На основі результатів фокус-групи батьків і оригінального інструменту SERVQUAL була розроблена анкета, яка була використана в подальших дослідженнях.

Ключові слова: управління, освіта, послуги, передбачувана якість, стейкхолдери.

Introduction. Quality is crucial for education as competition in the education services market is steadily intensifying. The critical attitude of students and their parents requires improving the quality of work of secondary schools. Those schools wishing to maintain or improve their position in the market are forced to work intensively to improve their work and increase their responsiveness to the needs of customer. Schools need to be aware that the ultimate arbiter of quality is always an individual who, from a subjective perspective, compares his perception of services and the result of services with his expectations from a subjective perspective. Authors suggests that customer do not perceive quality in an unidimensional way. The research of Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry [1] has identified five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible, along with the scale developed to measure them, SERVQUAL.

Customers of educational services form a complex group into which we classify customers into primary, secondary and tertiary customer. Primary customers of secondary schools are students, their parents and employees of the school. Barnes [2] stresses that “in today’s competitive environment, parents and other taxpayers ultimately determine how and whether schools stay in business. They are the purchasers of educational services for our youth. By definition, then, they are our primary costumers”.

The objectives of the research presented in this paper are: to determine the factors that influence the perceived quality of educational services by parents and to find out if they correspond to dimensions in SERVQUAL questionnaire.

Analysis recent research and publications. The quality of services is one of the biggest challenges facing service organizations, including secondary schools.

In defining the quality of educational services, it is necessary to consider both, objective quality related to the management aspect as well as subjective quality related to the customers aspect and based on subjective perceptions of the service experienced [3].

While objective quality is defined by the relatively easy-to-measure excellence of a phenomenon, happening or thing in relation to a given standard and focused on factors that can be accurately measured, subjective quality is the result of a human subjective response to phenomena, events, or things and it varies from individual to individual. It is related to the perceptions of individual service customer which cannot be measured so easily. At the end of the 20th century, after heated debate over whether quality control techniques applicable to tangible products based on the definition of quality as conforming to specifications, new concepts of service quality were developed, based on the belief that the quality of services could only be evaluated by customer [1]. Defining quality as meeting or exceeding customer expectations is the most complex definition of quality and therefore difficult to measure.

When evaluating the quality of services, service customer relies on different dimensions (criteria) that relate to the characteristics of the services and are part of the quality of the services or define its level and content. Dimensions are often reciprocal and interconnected, which means that one can be improved at the expense of the other.

Depending on the objectivity of quality measurement, we distinguish between hard or tangible dimensions, which are measured objectively, and soft, intangible dimensions, which can only be subjectively evaluated. Defining quality as meeting or exceeding the expectations of customer of educational services also enables quality researchers to integrate the soft elements of perceived quality, such as responsiveness, reliability, trust, and customer orientation, which are critical to the customer in their quality assessment [1].

Reliability of the service is reflected in the ability of the school to deliver the promised service. Reliable, regular and accurate service delivery is critical to a customer perception of quality, no matter what services the organization offers, notes Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler [3]. Reliability and accuracy in the provision of services also applies to every individual employed by the school.

Teachers who miss (or are late for) classes, parents' meetings, etc. do not stick to deadlines, e.g. when returning corrected papers, they certainly do not contribute to a better perception of the quality of the school as a whole.

Organizations are perceived as quality if employees are ready to help customers and to provide prompt service [3]. The school's responsiveness is reflected in the organization's ongoing willingness to consider the needs and expectations of customer. Responsiveness applies not only to the school as a whole, but to every individual: a teacher, professional, managerial or administrative employee. The more the school meets the expectations and needs of its customer, the better the quality will be. However, since schools have many different customers and their needs and expectations differ, it is unjustified to expect that the school (or its employees) can equally meet the expectations of all. The management of the school must be careful that meeting the needs of one would not be to the detriment of the other. However, because of the limited resources at its disposal, it will have to pay the utmost attention to the needs and expectations of those who are most important to it, the students and their parents.

The role and contribution of educational process providers (teachers, lecturers, laboratory assistants, etc.) as the most important part of the educational service is of great importance for the perception of the quality of educational services. The confidence dimension in perceiving the quality of an educational service depends primarily on the ability of the employees to communicate with the customer, it is related to their credibility and responsibility and to the ability to instil confidence [3]. Service providers must be appropriately trained for their work. The management of the school should be aware that by encouraging employees for further education and training, their competences are increased and personal and professional growth is achieved, and thus the perceived quality of customer of educational services is improved.

Empathy is defined as the caring, personal attention that the firm provides its customers [3]. Customer of educational services differ from one another so their needs and expectations. Students and their parents expect the teacher to understand their desires, needs, and expectations. In solving their problems, they want and expect the personal attention of the teacher and other employees.

The intangibility of educational services makes it difficult for customer to assess their quality, so it is up to the school provider to add tangibles or physical support to the intangible. In schools, these may be: the physical environment of the school in which the services are carried out (building, playgrounds, premises, special classrooms, equipment), service providers (teachers, professionals and administrative workers of the school, other employees), printed and electronic publications of the school (materials for the participants, presentations of the school and projects taking place within the educational organization, etc.) Because customer often make inferences about the quality of educational services based on physical evidence, schools use them to enhance the image.

For the success of the school, it is essential to constantly and systematically monitor the expectations, requirements and wishes of service customer regarding the expected level of services and on the other hand what level of offered educational services are actually perceived by customer.

There are numerous ways of measuring the quality of services in the professional literature, which is a consequence of the great heterogeneity of services. Individual authors sought to provide service providers with tools in the form of service quality models that could set standards and measure customer service expectations and perceptions of service quality. Analyzing the various models for assessing the quality of services, we found that, given the above assumptions, the gap model of the authors Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry [1] is the most appropriate model for assessing the quality of educational services in secondary schools.

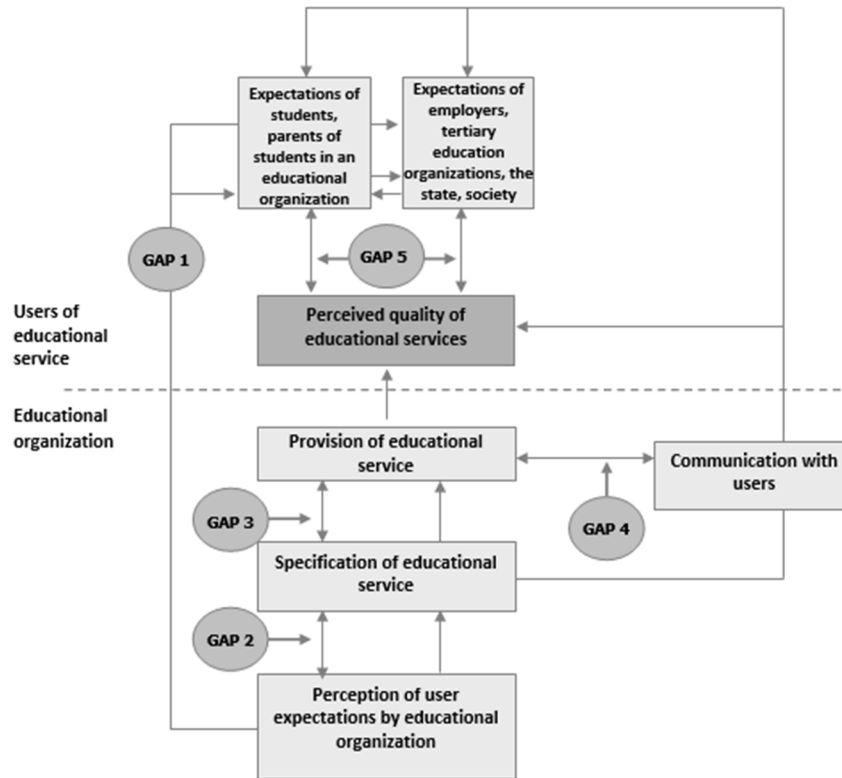


Fig. 1. Model for assessing the quality of educational services in secondary schools
 Source: [4, 5]

The model (Figure 1) is designed to measure the difference between the quality of service experienced and perceived by different customer of educational services, with the quality of service expected. The gap we get when comparing is a measure of the quality of service. In order for a school to improve the quality of their services, it must reduce or close the gap between customer' expectations and perceptions regarding services. This, fifth gap decreases, if school succeeds in narrowing or closing the other four gaps that arise in the school, namely the gap:

Between the expectations of the customer of the service and the perception of those expectations by the management of the school. In fact, the school does not know the expectations of all its customer (primary, secondary, tertiary),

Which results from improperly set standards of quality of educational service by the management of the school. While a school may even know the expectations of customer, it does not take this into account when setting service standards.

In execution, occurs when service providers do not comply with the service delivery specification, but the performance of the service in accordance with the specification is not in itself guaranteed.

Between the provision of the service and the communication of the school with the customer of the service. The gap can occur both internally (primary customer, especially employees and trainees, do not know exactly what the school expects of them), as well as external communication (the organization promises an educational service that employees of the school are not ready or able to deliver). Authors do not agree who are the customers of educational services and who actually benefits from education.

March and Simon [6] consider that participants in an educational organization are all individuals, groups and organizations that have an interest in the educational organization and are capable of influencing it. Macbeth [7] notes that everyone who benefits from education is a customer and customers can be classified into four groups: students, parents, school owners (authorities or private

individuals) and society. Davies and Ellison [8] divide educational service customers into internal customers such as participants, parents, teachers and other employees of the educational organization, government representatives, regular visitors and volunteers, and external customers such as former and future education participants and their parents, future employees, local government, trade and industry, local representatives of the Ministry of Education and other educational organizations.

Customers of educational services form a complex group into which, according to the importance of each subgroup for the educational organization, it is possible to classify customers into primary, secondary and tertiary customer. The primary customer of educational services includes those who directly participate in the implementation of the educational service and by their presence allow the service to be performed at all, employees of the educational organization and participants of educational services, and parents or guardians of the educational participants. While the group of secondary customers of educational services includes employers, educational organizations in the field of tertiary education and organizations requesting educational services, the group of tertiary customers includes the labour market, the state and society as a whole.

According to Petch [7] the real customers of educational organisations are parents. Trnavčević and Grom [9] state that "parents are the most important customers of the school in addition to the students". Parents usually choose the school according to the information they have available

Bridges [10] emphasizes that the role of parents in the education process is large and multifaceted. Parents provide support to the school in implementing the education process, e.g. support the implementation of rules of conduct and behaviour at school, support activities and events at school, participate in the parents' council, contribute to school funds, etc. The most controversial is the role of parents as co-educators. The school is rarely prepared to partner with parents in this area, as the profession is one that is hard to give up. In fact, parents are not

partner with educational organizations, but are placed in the position of customers and only marginal supporters of education.

The truth is, point out, that many children would find it easier to develop their intellectual abilities if the position of parents in the educational process were a partnership and if all three partners accepted the same responsibility for achievement [9].

Schools need the support of parents both in the implementation of the curricula and in the implementation and adherence to the school's house rules. In certain cases, without their consent, a particular service cannot be provided (e.g. consent for a student to participate in an excursion, attendance at the process of imposing an educational measure, etc.). Parents often financially or professionally support activities carried out by a school. In some schools, parents participate not only with the class teacher, the leadership, the parent councils and the parents' club, but with the whole teacher assembly, participate in classes, mentor different circles, and attend school trips.

Educational services are very complex and parents have expectations for their schools that are often not clearly understood. The school management need to know what the parents, their customers, want. Regular measurement and appraisal of parents' expectations and perceptions will help schools to improve the quality of services provided.

Aim and tasks. Qualitative research is by its nature investigative and depth-oriented. It is primarily used to obtain in-depth information about a particular phenomenon, since the phenomenon, in this study parents' expectations about quality of educational services, must first be understood, but then it can be measured. In this sense, emphasizes Kolar [11], each research is qualitative and then quantitative.

The purpose of qualitative research can be defined as: providing insight into the perspectives of different groups of primary customers of educational services on the quality of educational services and their understanding of the concepts and their effects. The specific objectives of qualitative research are to:

– Identify the expectations and perceptions of parents as primary customers of educational services.

– Determine the dimensions of the expected and perceived quality of educational services from parents' perspective.

– Identify if the dimensions of the expected and perceived quality of parents coincide with the dimensions in the classical gap model.

Results. There are more qualitative research methods, and according to many authors [12-15], focus groups and in-depth interviews are the two most commonly known methods in marketing research. According to Churchill and Brown [16], focus groups have proven to be an extremely productive technique for market research, especially when providing background information, gaining customers' impressions, obtaining the information needed to

formulate questionnaires and hypothesizing, which is later tested through quantitative research. Malhotra, Nunan and Birks [12] consider that the key strengths of focus groups over other methods are, in particular, greater breadth of information, greater involvement of members, spontaneity, specialization and flexibility.

Focus groups were used to explore the views of primary customer, parents, towards the quality of educational services and to define roughly the selection of possible dimensions of the quality of educational services [17]. Discussion was conducted in two focus groups. The first focus group, consisting of four parents, was experimental and served primarily to test the setting of the interview and to seek ideas for creating a topic guide for the formal focus group of parents. The list of issues, or topic guide was developed (Fig. 2).

Hello. Thank you to come. The content of the conversation will be a topic with which you have all the experience in one way or another. We will talk about the quality of educational services. The talk will take about an hour and a half.

Before we start the conversation, I would like to introduce you to some of the basic rules of this conversation. Although we are in the school, there are no right and wrong answers this time. Only your opinions count. I ask that all of you participate in the conversation, so that we try not to talk one over the other.

I would like to talk more about the environment at school. Think about what kind of environment a school should have. Think of the classrooms, the gym, the library, the hallways, the canteen, the toilets... Think of the different extracurricular activities your kids are involved in.

- *What should be the premises of the school for well-being? Does it matter how big these rooms are, what kind of walls they are...? Does it matter what the furniture and equipment of the school premises is like? What should be the equipment of classrooms, hallways, gym, library ...?*
- *What do you think about teaching equipment in school? Do you think teaching equipment is needed? What teaching equipment do you want?*

Try to remember what you felt when you were in school and collecting information about schools.

- *What was the information material you received on the information days? Were you satisfied with the information contained in the material ...? Were you satisfied with the format of the material...? What was the material that attracted you most...? Did something bother you, didn't you like it ...?*
- *What information material would you like to receive before your child enrol in school? Did you find the publications, web sites, etc ... more appropriate?*

Now I would like to discuss in more detail the staff you contact at school (school management, social worker, librarian, administrative staff, janitor, security guard, etc.).

- *What do you expect from school staff?*
- *Remember your favourite teacher at school. How is it different or different from other teachers ...? In what way does he stand out or stand out from other teachers....? What do you like best about him / her ...?*
- *What do you expect from the classroom teacher?*
- *In your opinion, what could teachers do to make students less absent from teaching?*
- *How do you expect employees to respond when you want to talk to them?*
- *What bothers you most about the school staff?*

... to look at the quality of educational services a little differently: Suppose that the Minister of Education would put you at the forefront of a group that would set standards for what a quality school should look like. I ask everyone to think and write down what I would suggest for such standards. (Wait, write on the board, sort by relevance.)

And another question: What do you think the schools will be like, for example? 50 years?

Fig. 2. Parents' focus group topic guide

Source: Own research

The formal focus group had twelve parents, nine women and three men, from four different schools. Discussion in the focus group lasted hour and a half and was recorded. Discussions in the parent focus group were conducted in four thematic sections: parents' expectations and perceptions of the environment, classroom equipment and information materials, and

parents' expectations and perceptions of school employees

Parents' perceptions and expectations about the quality of educational services found in Fig. 3 and 4 are sorted by service quality dimensions as suggested by the authors of the classic gap model: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Discussion	Dimensions
<p>"School should only provide morning classes"</p> <p>"Keep the rooms bright, friendly"</p> <p>"Students should have gym in some other location just exceptionally, for example in the pool"</p> <p>"There should be a canteen in the school"</p> <p>"All schools include subjects in leaflets although they are the same everywhere. Why they do not explain what are specifics..."</p>	Tangibles
<p>"Predicted grading is much less stressful for children and parents"</p> <p>"If the student apologizes for not being prepared, then the teacher should consider it"</p>	Reliability
<p>"If the changes at school are affecting children, it is right that the school informs us"</p> <p>"The school should follow the parents' initiatives regarding the individual teachers, the schedule etc."</p> <p>"In the case of disagreements between students and individual teachers, I expect the classroom teacher and the headmaster to be included"</p>	Responsiveness
<p>"I expect the school to have professional and pedagogically trained teachers"</p> <p>"If a child has problems with any subject, I expect the teacher to help"</p> <p>"When I call the class teacher for problems, he should take the time needed"</p>	Assurance
<p>"It has happened to me many times that the class teacher wanted to deal with me briefly"</p> <p>"Sometimes they explain to us at parental meetings as if we had never gone to school ourselves"</p> <p>"It is right that we have the opportunity to call the class teacher at any time"</p>	Empathy

Fig. 3. Elements of evaluation of parents' expectations of the quality of educational services

Source: Own research

Parents' expectations and perceptions of the school environment are quite different compared to students or teachers. Parents are aware that students spend a lot of time at school, so they expect the environment to be modern, attractive, and the spaces in which students move are functional, bright, welcoming, in short, to make them feel good. They are also critical of school equipment as they believe it should be comfortable, usable and above all modern. Parents expect teaching equipment to be up-to-date, accessible in every classroom, and work flawlessly. When asked about information materials, parents answered that information materials differed across schools on the

information days, and the necessary information was also obtained from other sources. Parents expect information material that will give them enough information to make their choices.

Parents expect the school staff to be polite and kind, to keep their promises, to have a keen interest in solving their problems and, above all, to the problems of the students and to make them available to parents. It can be seen from the discussion that parents expect the school management to inform them consistently and in a timely manner of changes affecting children that they are ready to listen to their initiatives. Parents expect the school to have properly trained staff.

Discussion	Dimensions
"School is like it was twenty-seven years ago when I graduated" "As if time had stopped 30 years ago" "The elementary school my son attended was much better equipped"	Tangibles
"Daughter says teachers don't always stick to the test schedule" "When my daughter had health problems, the class teacher was very understanding"	Reliability
"We get updates on school happenings several times a year" "We always agree with the sports coordinator how the son will perform his duties" "In the event of a syringe, the classmate should inform us immediately and not wait for hours of work" "When asked why they had replaced their math teacher twice in their daughter's class, we still didn't get the answer"	Responsiveness
"External examination results show that teachers know what they are doing" "My daughter says that if she listens at school, she already learns almost everything" "Class teacher is always ready to talk"	Assurance
"It is good that we have the opportunity to speak with each teacher individually" "That the school would so often invite parents to different events (picnic, cultural events ...), it was neither at the elementary school nor at ... where the daughter goes" "I can also call the class teacher by phone outside of the scheduled hours"	Empathy

Fig. 4. Elements of evaluation of parents' perceptions of the quality of educational services
Source: Own research

Based on the results of preliminary qualitative research, we have drawn up the following list of dimensions of perceived and expected quality of educational services: environment, reliability, responsiveness, trust and empathy. The dimensions of perceived and expected quality of educational services obtained through the focus group discussion of students and parents correspond to the dimensions in the classical gap model of the authors Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Berry [1].

Particular attention was paid to the definition and operationalization of the concepts to measure parents' expectations and perceptions covered by the model. This is necessary because of their similarities and overlaps, but also because of the more valid conclusions provided by a quality measuring instrument. With each concept statements which defined it are listed.

Tangibles are defined as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. Tangibles provide physical representations or images of the service that customers, stress Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler [2]. Customers respond to the physical environment cognitively, emotionally as well as physically, and these responses influence their behaviour. The perception of the physical environment

influences the parents' confidence in the employees, the services they provide and, last but not least, the educational organization as such. In the case of educational services, we consider the environmental dimension: the external environment (building, environment...), the internal environment (equipment, accessories, markings...) and other tangible elements (information material, reports, brochures...). We defined the environment with the following five statements:

The premises of the school should be tidy and attractive.

The equipment of classrooms, gyms, sports fields should be modern and comfortable.

Teaching aids (computers, smart boards...) should be up-to-date and always work.

The school is expected to have facilities and equipment for extracurricular activities.

The school should have attractive and interesting information material (information for students, parents, etc.), a website.

The *reliability* of the service delivery is reflected in the ability of the educational service provider to deliver the promised service [1]. Reliable, regular and accurate delivery of educational services is crucial to the parents' perception of quality, and the characteristics listed also apply to every individual employed by a school.

Reliability was measured in the instrument with three statements:

Teachers and other employees are expected to keep their promises.

Teachers are expected to stick to agreed deadlines (tests, marking ...).

Employees should show great interest in solving the problems of students/parents.

The school's *responsiveness* is reflected in the organization's continued willingness to consider the needs and expectations of parents. It applies not only to the school as a whole, but to every individual employed by an organization: a teacher, professional, managerial or administrative worker. However, since schools have many different customer' and their needs and expectations differ, it is, of course, unjustified to expect that the educational organization (or its employees) could equally meet the expectations of all. However, because of the limited resources at its disposal, it will have to pay the utmost attention to the needs and expectations of those who are most important to it, that is, the participants in education and their parents. To measure the responsiveness of school, we formulated the following four statements:

The school should immediately inform the students/parents about changes, innovations.

The school should be prepared to take the initiatives of parents (electives, extracurricular activities...).

Teachers should always be ready to help parents.

Teachers should always listen to the complaints of the parents.

The dimension of *assurance* in the perception of the service quality depends mainly on the ability of the employees to communicate with their customers, it is related to their credibility and responsibility and to the ability to instill confidence [2]. Educational service providers must be appropriately qualified for their work, as they are also more motivated to work. The management of the school should encourage the employees in education, personal and professional growth, which will increase their competence and thus improve the perception of the quality of parents'. We defined assurance with five statements:

The school is supposed to have employees the students/parents are supposed to trust.

Teachers should have sufficient knowledge to teach the subject matter in a professional and understandable way.

Teachers should organize the lessons well and make them interesting.

Teachers should always come prepared to class.

Teachers are supposed to be polite and friendly, even when overwhelmed.

Empathy is the dimension of the perceived quality of educational service that relates to the diligence and personal attention that an organization provides to its customers. Education participants and their parents expect the teacher and other professionals to understand their needs, desires, and expectations. In solving their problems, they want and expect the personal attention of the teacher and other employees. For the success of the school, it is essential to constantly and systematically monitor the expectations, demands and wishes of service parents regarding the expected level of service and what level of educational services offered are actually perceived by parents. The following five statements were formulated to measure the orientation towards users of educational services:

Teachers should pay attention to each parent separately.

Teachers should have a good attitude towards parents.

Employees are supposed encourage parents to regularly participate with the school (parent meetings, classes, meetings, etc.)

Employee-parent cooperation is correct and professional.

Parents should have a constant opportunity to speak with teachers, other professionals and management.

The parent questionnaire contains 22 statements that relate to the fundamental dimensions of the quality of educational services: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. It summarizes the definition of each of the concepts and lists the statements by which it was operationalized. In doing so, we used a Likert scale that requires respondents to choose the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements made [12]: from "strongly agree" on the one hand to "disagree" on the other.

A seven-point Likert scale was chosen because more categories increase the reliability of the scales [16]. The questionnaire consists of three parts: in the first part, the parents answer questions about their expectations regarding the educational service or what kind of service the organization should offer, and in the second part, they assess their perceptions of the specific educational organization. Before the first and second parts of the questionnaire, brief instructions that inform the respondent of how to solve the questionnaire are placed. In the third part which is placed at the end of questionnaire there are three general questions related to the gender, age and level of education of the respondent. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires in four different secondary schools.

Conclusions. The ultimate arbiter of quality of the educational services they provide are primary customers of educational services students and their parents.

The objective of this study was to identify the expectations and perceptions of parents as primary customers of educational services. The insight into the perspectives of parents on the quality of educational services and their understanding of the quality concepts was obtained with qualitative research which is by its nature investigative and depth-oriented. Further on the dimensions of the expected and perceived quality of educational services from parents' perspective were identified. It was confirmed that the dimensions of expectations and perceptions of quality of parental education services identified in this research coincide with the dimensions in the classical gap model.

Based on the results of the parents' focus group and the original SERVQUAL instrument the questionnaire was designed and used in further research.

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