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Empowerment from a “student as customer” perspective: Literature review and development of a framework in the context of higher education

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Following an intense literature research, and including results from a qualitative study with 24 graduate and post-graduate students from 14 different universities, this paper systematically discusses the topic of student empowerment within the context of higher education. The underlying perspective is that of students as customers. The article presents a simple and robust framework, which includes eight antecedents of student empowerment, the construct itself and potential outcomes for students, lecturers and institutions, and concludes with a proposal for further research within at least four distinctive areas.

Aufbauend auf einer intensiven Literaturrecherche und einer qualitativen Studie unter 24 Studierenden von 14 verschiedenen Hochschulen diskutiert der vorliegende Beitrag das Thema der Stärkung und Aktivierung von Studierenden im Kontext der Hochschullehre. Hierbei wird eine Perspektive eingenommen, die den Studierenden als Kunden betrachtet. Im Zentrum der Ausarbeitung steht ein einfacher, aber robuster Bezugsrahmen mit acht Bedingungsfaktoren, dem Konstrukt selbst sowie möglichen positiven und negativen Auswirkungen für Studierende, Lehrende und die beteiligten Institutionen. Der Beitrag schließt mit einem Vorschlag für vier Forschungsfelder, die in diesem Kontext besondere Relevanz besitzen.

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1. Students as Co-Producers of teaching

During the winter semester of 2016, one of the authors of this article taught a research methodology course at his university. He decided not to use any slides but to assign a single topic to the students: The development of a framework of student empowerment in the context of higher education. He provided the students with a general introduction to the topic, and formulated five project phases with different milestones and concrete deadlines, which they were required to obtain via a learning platform used at the author's institution. The students could interact electronically with the lecturer at all times during the course of the assignment, and received immediate feedback on their interim results, both face-to-face and in an online forum. But they had to find ways to make their respective tasks successful.

What are the characteristics of this innovative teaching format? The roles of lecturers and students are changing, as teachers are starting to empower their students to take more responsibility for their learning processes and outputs. Students, or better yet, co-creators, can play an active role in this teaching and learning process, whilst deciding on different options, organizing their own learning speed and allocation of time, learning independently of educational institutions, and becoming responsible for the learning content. Hence, a lecturer's role changes from that of a teacher to a facilitator.

For many years universities, and by extension Marketing lecturers worldwide, have started to discuss, test and implement alternative teaching formats, whilst studying organizations that employ a higher level of student participation. E-Learning and massive open online courses (MOOCs) (e.g., Kop 2011; Rodriguez 2012), research- and project-based learning (Thomas 2000; Wagner 2014) or flipped classroom (e.g., Bishop/Vlerager 2013) are selected approaches and buzzwords, which are resident within the current discussion.

These above-mentioned innovative approaches empower students, and the classical model changes from a sender-oriented approach to a student-oriented or collaborative approach. Advocates of the higher student empowerment stance mention a higher level of (intrinsic) learning motivation and satisfaction, improvement of skills instead of learning outdated factual knowledge and sustainable learning outcomes as potential advantages of this method. Conversely, opponents list arguments as being a loss of control, problems with laziness and self-motivation, a lack of presence, the challenge to find a balance between being overworked and under-challenged, dissatisfaction and the risk of negative word-of-mouth about the professor and/or the institution.

Hence, this paper systematically discusses the concept of "teaching by empowerment" in higher education, specifically considering the Marketing and Brand Management courses at universities. By doing so, it is firstly intended to contribute to the growing debate around solid and up-to-date academic instruction. Secondly, and maybe even more important, the article also contributes to the further understanding of the more general field of customer empowerment. Not only because students, in many cases, pay tuition fees and therefore, expect value for money (Budd 2016; Turkyilmaz/Temizer/Oztekin 2016), but also because education can be regarded as a service provision (Tohidi/Jabbari 2012), students can be seen as customers (e.g., Hoffman/Kretovics 2004; Mark 2013; Marzo/Pedraja/Rivera 2007; Pitman 2016) who,

comparable to empowered customers in product development processes, may co-create the design of lectures and other learning experiences and their delivery (Mark 2013; Prentice/Han/Li 2016). This perspective corresponds to the view of Hilbert, Schönbrunn, and Schmode (2007) who claim that students see themselves as customers who purchase education services from competing providers.

Following an intense literature research, the following section defines the term empowerment, and differentiates it from related topics. Hereafter, the article presents a simple and robust framework, which includes antecedents of student empowerment, the construct itself and potential outcomes. This latter section is also based on a literature review, and includes results from a qualitative study. The article concludes with a short summary and a proposal for further research in this respect.

2. General framework and literature review

Generally, when analyzing and measuring constructs such as trust (Selnes 1998), brand love (Carroll/Ahuvia, 2006) or empowerment (Sparrowe 1994), three levels of distinction become relevant: firstly, the antecedents of the construct should be outlined; secondly, the construct itself should be clearly defined, and in the context of theoretical constructs such as empowerment, a valid and usable operationalization should be developed; and thirdly, the effects of the construct on other constructs or on performance measures, should be discussed. This three part-framework comprises the article's presentation, and is the basis for the student empowerment framework, which is offered in section 3.5.

The article begins with a review of literature, which covers the topic of empowerment. A systematic literature review (Hiebl 2012, pp. 50–51) was conducted, which included a keyword search in the following ten databases: EBSCO Business Source Premier; Elsevier Science Direct; Emerald; Google Scholar; JSTOR; SAGE Journals; Scopus; Springer Link; Wiley Online Library; and WISO. The literature was broadly analyzed by reading the respective abstracts. Literature that was not considered to be relevant or scientific (e.g., newspaper articles, Bachelor theses, etc.) was excluded. Due to the large number of articles that dealt with the research topic, the researchers decided to exclude all non-English contributions, as well as all publications that had been published before 2008. A total of 76 articles were consulted and analyzed for this research study's purpose. The following five areas of interest were extracted and placed on an Excel spreadsheet:

- Antecedents for customer empowerment and related concepts;
- Definitions of customer empowerment and related concepts;
- Outcomes of customer empowerment and related concepts;
- Key findings of the article; and
- Theories and models that were used in the article.

The literature review identified several antecedents of customer empowerment, which can be classified as **technological, social** and **psychological antecedents**. The technological environment, the rise of the World Wide Web, and interactive, mobile technologies, has led to the common understanding that customers are a valuable resource in a company's value creating processes (Agrawal/Rahman 2015, p. 154;

Bilgram/Fueller/Rapp 2013, p. 42; Fisher/Smith 2011, p. 338; Gamble/Gilmore 2013, p. 1860; Labrecque et al. 2013, pp. 257–259; Lorenzo-Romero/Constantinides/Brünink 2014, p. 384). In fact, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have led to a shift in power from organizations to consumers (Piller/Vossen/Ihl 2012, p. 9), and have enabled new forms of collaboration between them (Füller et al. 2009, pp. 72–73). This so-called “paradigm shift” has opened doors to a new world, where technologies push towards collaboration and where companies learn from consumers (Greer/Lei 2012, p. 64). It has become apparent on various platforms and in communities that modern consumers are in search of a positive sense of being and identification, and meaningful experiences with others (Tiu Wright et al. 2006, p. 20). Empowerment and co-creation, in collaboration with others, provide consumers with an opportunity to fulfil their social needs (Mendes-Filho/Tan/Milne 2010, p. 456), while they see brands as a “shared cultural property” that belong more to them than to the companies that own them (Cova/Dalli 2009, p. 317).

In addition to those technological and social changes, individual customer needs are becoming increasingly heterogenic, which leads to a higher demand for customized products and forces companies to individualize their offerings (Franke/Keinz/Steiger 2009, p. 103; Greer/Lei 2012, p. 68; Pranić/Roehl 2013, p. 3; Sesselmann 2015, p. 1). This, *inter alia*, leads to a broader range of product and service variations (Fuchs/Prandelli/Schreier 2010, p. 66), and assigns a high degree of decisional control over value creating processes such as the design of the product, to the consumer (Franke/Schreier/Kaiser 2010, p. 138). Moreover, modern-day consumers have a higher need for transparency, while they want to play a greater role in the process of value creation (Hoyer et al. 2010, p. 283), and want to have free access to information that was previously kept from them (Brodie et al. 2013, p. 8). They increasingly search for moments of thrill, enjoyment and fun (Agrawal/Rahman 2015, p. 144), seek new experiences and ways to proudly express themselves (Xie/Bagozzi/Troye 2008, p. 111), and have a hedonic desire for a better product (Roberts/Hughes/Kertbo 2014, p. 164). This forces them to actively engage with the company’s information and communication platforms.

Exploring results of the literature analysis in a quest to **understand and define customer empowerment**, it is clear that there is some overlapping between this construct and other similar constructs such as prosuming (Xie et al. 2008), co-design (Steen/Manschot/Koning 2011), involvement (Liu/Lu/Wei 2014), customer engagement (Brodie et al. 2013; Brodie et al. 2011; Jaakkola/Alexander 2014) and customer participation (Bharti/Agrawal/Sharma 2014; Ngo/O'Cass 2013). It appears that the construct co-creation, in particular, is often used in the context of empowerment which, therefore, necessitates differentiation between the two. Whereas many authors describe empowerment as a more personal experience and subjective state of mind, co-creation is usually seen as an active and intended integration of the customer into the company’s value chain. Table 1 below provides an overview of the different perspectives on both constructs and their characteristics.

Empowerment	Co-Creation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjective experience (Hunter/Garnefeld 2008, p. 2) • Perceived influence (Füller et al. 2009, p. 78) • Change in consumer's ability (Hunter/Garnefeld 2008, p. 2) • Sense of control (Fuchs et al. 2010, pp. 65–66) • Dynamic process (Labrecque et al. 2013, p. 258) • A mental state (Prentice et al. 2016, p. 36) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-producing value offerings (Romero/Molina 2009, p. 403) • A collaborative new product development activity (Hoyer et al. 2010, p. 283) • Process of joint value creation (Heidenreich, et al. 2015, p. 280; Pongsakornrungsilp/Schroeder 2011, p. 305) • Creative cooperation (Steen et al. 2011, p. 53) • Social collaboration process (Piller et al. 2012, p. 7) • Active Involvement (Lorenzo-Romero et al. 2014, p. 383) • Joint collaborative activities (Bharti et al. 2014, pp. 414–415)

Table 1 Perspectives on empowerment and co-creation

The literature review shows that customer empowerment is not predominantly seen as an objective result that occurs when a company hands over decision powers to consumers, even if some authors interpret empowerment as a firm's strategy (Fuchs et al. 2010, pp. 65–66). On the contrary, empowerment can be interpreted as a personal feeling that results from the perception that a company decides to give up its control. This view contains an additional, interesting perspective, namely that empowerment is not an absolute, but a relative parameter, and that people feel more or less empowered. Furthermore, the state of empowerment is not a stable state or characteristic, but a changing psychological state over time. In close alignment with Hunter and Garnefeld (2008, p. 2), this leads to the following definition: Empowerment is a change in the perceived ability of the customer to intentionally produce desired outcomes, and prevent undesired ones.

The construct empowerment and its measurement have been applied to various groups such as consumers (e.g., Hunter/Garnefeld 2008; Füller et al. 2009), employees (e.g., Ugboro 2006), patients (e.g., Anderson et al. 2000) and citizens (e.g., Speer/Peterson 2000).

Analyzing the **potential outcomes of customer empowerment**, the literature review outlined the existence of positive outcomes for both companies and consumers, but also showed negative consequences that might exist. Considering the benefits for companies, it can be argued that the integration of customers into formerly internal processes enables firms to improve their competitiveness (Cova/Dalli 2009, p. 326), and to render multiple competitive advantages into effect (Cui/Wu 2016, p. 2; Payne/Storbacka/Frow 2008, p. 85). Customer empowerment may positively influence a company's customer intimacy (Romero/Molina 2009, p. 406) and innovativeness, and since innovative firms generally show higher profits and market shares and enjoy a higher probability to survive in the markets (Foss/Laursen/Pedersen 2011, p. 981), empowering customers may help to achieve better financial results. In line with this idea, Sesselmann (2015, p. 15), Franke et al. (2010, p. 125) and Hunter and Garnefeld (2008, p. 2) claim that product customization results in consumers' significantly higher willingness to pay. Fuchs et al. (2010, p. 65) propose that companies that involve their customers develop better products and services at a lower cost and

risk (see also Hassan 2008, p. 53; Prentice et al. 2016, p. 37). Ngo and O'Cass (2013, p. 1136) also perceive lower costs as being a positive outcome of customer empowerment, while Hippel, Ogawa, and Jong (2011, pp. 11–12) support this idea by arguing that customer empowerment enables companies to raise their success ratio when introducing new products, which helps them to save money. Kayeser Fatima and Abdur Razzaque (2013, p. 453) confirm the objective of risk reduction that goes along with initiatives that empower customers. Overall, the close relationship between customers and companies that accompany customer empowerment may even improve the company's responsiveness, help to reduce time-to-market, and hence, contribute to a higher market share (Lau 2011, p. 914).

From a consumer perspective, engagement and active participation allow customers to individualize the offering, to adapt it to their preferences and, therefore, to design products and services that better meet their personal needs et al. 2012, p. 181). This may also provide fulfillment of hedonic (Lorenzo-Romero et al. 2014, p. 386) and social (Jaakkola/Alexander 2014, p. 8) needs; for example, when customers enjoy the feeling of belonging to a community (Xie et al. 2008, p. 111). The fact that consumers gain control over these value creating processes (Talonen et al. 2016, p. 3) may also lead to a better quality of products (Fuchs/Schreier 2011, p. 18; Steen et al. 2011, p. 54) and, therefore, higher overall satisfaction (Baumann/Le Meunier-FitzHugh 2015, p. 309; Bharti et al. 2014, p. 415; Heidenreich et al. 2015, p. 280), positive word-of-mouth (Kayeser Fatima/Abdur Razzaque 2013, p. 454; Son et al. 2012, p. 181), higher trust (Romero/Molina 2011, p. 14) and increased loyalty (Arora et al. 2008, p. 316; Brodie et al. 2011, 253; Brodie et al. 2013, p. 8; Dijk/Antonides/Schillewaert 2014, p. 3; Fuchs/Schreier 2011, p. 19; Hollebeek 2013, p. 17).

In respect of negative outcomes, it should be said that a high degree of empowerment may cause a high degree of dissatisfaction in case of service or product failure (Heidenreich et al. 2015, p. 279). This could lead to negative word-of-mouth (McShane/Sabadoz 2015, p. 544). Furthermore, the empowerment of consumers could increase complexity (Hoyer et al. 2010, p. 293) and effect loss of control (Jaakkola/Alexander 2014, p. 31). The latter could lead to the loss of know-how; for example, when experienced and active consumers quit their participation on electronic platforms. An additional possible risk is that customers might demand high economic rewards in return for their engagement and co-creation efforts (Greer/Lei 2012, p. 74).

3. Student empowerment

3.1 Methodology

This article sought to adapt general insights about empowerment to the context of higher education. Firstly, in order to do this, a total of 22 articles that had been identified during the literature review phase and that explicitly contained keywords, which refer to the higher education segment, were analyzed. This sample of references was added to often-cited, older specialized references ("closed-circle approach"). Secondly, qualitative interviews were conducted with 24 graduate and post-graduate students from 14 different institutions, studying a broad variety of subjects. Their ages

ranged between 21 and 30, and they had been studying between 1 and 5 years. An overview of the study's participants is given in table 2.

Studies	University	Degree	Semester	Age
Business Administration	Berlin School of Economics and Law	Bachelor	8	26
Business Management and Logistics	Dresden University of Applied Sciences	Master	3	24
Media and Communication Management	Fresenius University of Applied Sciences München	Bachelor	4	22
Water & Environmental Engineering	Hamburg University of Technology	Master	5	27
Media- and Industrial Psychology	HMKW University of Applied Sciences Berlin	Bachelor	4	21
Business Management	Koblenz University of Applied Sciences	Master	2	23
Architecture	Koblenz University of Applied Sciences	Bachelor	3	22
Industrial Engineering	Koblenz University of Applied Sciences	Bachelor	1	21
Social Work	Koblenz University of Applied Sciences	Bachelor	5	26
Business Mathematics	Koblenz University of Applied Sciences (Remagen)	Bachelor	5	22
Sports Sciences	Köln University of Applied Sciences	Bachelor	8	27
Value Chain Management	Technical University Chemnitz	Master	3	25
Mechanical Engineering	Technical University Kaiserslautern	Bachelor	5	23
Agricultural Crop Sciences	University Bonn	Master	1	25
International Business	University Hannover	Bachelor	9	25
Teaching Degree	University Heidelberg	Other	10	26
Physics	University Heidelberg	Bachelor	7	22
Teaching Degree	University Koblenz	Bachelor	8	23
Teaching Degree	University Koblenz	Master	5	30
Information Management	University Koblenz	Bachelor	5	21
Management & Psychology	University Koblenz	Bachelor	6	25
Primary School Pedagogy	University Koblenz	Master	2	24
Applied Mathematics	University Trier	Master	3	26
Psychology	University Trier	Master	1	27

Table 2 Overview of the study's participants

An interview guideline was used, which was pre-tested and improved in advance. The central goal of the interviews was to obtain students' views of their empowerment experiences. The general concept of empowerment was explained to them at the beginning of the interviews, and the interview guideline's central question was: "In what situations at your institution did you feel empowered?" The results of the interviews were interpreted with the help of the software MAXQDA. Upon analyzing the

24 interviews, 460 text passages were identified as being relevant and were coded, using 9 codes and 17 sub codes.

Findings from both the literature review, as well as the qualitative study were combined to gain insights into antecedents, the construct and the outcomes of student empowerment in a bid to formulate a preliminary student empowerment framework, which is presented later in the article.

3.2 Antecedents of student empowerment

Research shows that there are multiple drivers of student satisfaction in the context of higher education, and among these are the degree of their engagement and empowerment (Alnawas 2015), which can be described as students' ability to customize their own educational experience (Hoffman/Kretovics 2004). In this context, Kompella (2016) points out that learning management systems can increase student engagement. Additionally, he proposes certain teaching methods such as group activities, adaptive learning and flipped classroom techniques to empower students. This concurs with Thuy's view (2015), who argues that enabling students to give feedback to lecturers could improve their own learning experience. Multiple other measures such as student-designed curricula, student input in policy formulation and student participation in faculty decisions, have been proposed to enhance students' learning experiences (Hrnjic 2016; Mark 2013). These measures also include actions outside of the traditional learning arena, such as a high interaction with students outside the classroom (Ferris 2002).

The qualitative interviews revealed that students regard the (IT-)infrastructure of their institution as a central driver of their empowerment. Online lectures, electronic learning platforms and broad access to literature through the library were frequently mentioned as central technical requirements or preconditions of empowerment. Another driver can be described as students' perceived self-determination; for example, their ability to choose or influence the content of the lectures, the combination of classes, type of assessment (for example, tests or assignments), and overall time schedule of their studies. The possibility to evaluate classes was also perceived as a driver of engagement, as well as the chance to actively participate in the institution's administration by being a member of a student committee. Furthermore, being able to actively contribute to the lectures (e.g., by student centered lecturing or flipped classroom concepts) was perceived to be a driver of student empowerment. Finally, having access to all relevant information was also mentioned.

3.3 The student empowerment construct

In order to systematically discuss empowerment in higher education, a clear definition of the construct student empowerment is necessary. However, it appeared that there is no commonly accepted definition of this construct in the literature. Therefore, bearing in mind that students can be seen as customers (e.g., Mark 2013) who may co-create the design of lectures and other learning experiences, as well as their delivery (Prentice et al. 2016), and based on the study's findings regarding customer empowerment, which were described above, the researchers define student empow-

erment as follows: Student empowerment is a change in the perceived ability of the student to create her or his higher education experience.

To further understand the construct, student empowerment, two references are pivotal. The first is the learner empowerment scale by Frymier, Shulman, and Houser (1996), who developed a scale with three dimensions (impact, meaningfulness, competence) and 35 items, based on two studies. This scale has good psychometric attributes, is often used and cited (e.g., Google Scholar, January 2017: 217 citations), and is applicable to single courses. A second important building block for the understanding of the construct is McQuillan's (2005) argument that there are three layers of student empowerment: academic, political and social empowerment. It is beyond this article to describe these three layers in detail, but this classification pinpoints that student empowerment is not restricted to single courses. The participation in political processes both inside and outside of the university (e.g., projects with an impact on society) are also important layers of student empowerment. However, there was no scale or empirical findings available about this broader view of student empowerment.

3.4 Outcomes of student empowerment

The literature review revealed several positive effects of student empowerment. Higher student empowerment is often associated with a higher level of learning motivation and student satisfaction (Nichols 2006), as well as with better learning outcomes (McQuillan 2005). As a negative consequence of empowerment, it was noted that students can become overwhelmed by possible choices (Schwartz 2004), and could feel that they are being exploited. Cova and Dalli (2009) provide the example of a teacher who organizes an interactive learning experience that may result in poor grades for some students. These students may feel that in spite of them doing all the required work for the course and receiving dissatisfying results, the teacher would still be paid anyway.

Analysis of the qualitative interviews shows that students who sense empowerment feel a high degree of self-actualization and enrichment, satisfaction, motivation, enthusiasm and appreciation. Some even stated that empowerment helps them to achieve better results. A negative outcome was only mentioned once when a student said that he/she feared negative consequences of openly criticizing the institution or certain lecturers.

Surprisingly, researchers' discussions around the outcomes of student empowerment are often limited to outcomes on the part of the students. Nevertheless, it is clear that positive and negative outcomes could also be detected on the part of lecturers and institutions (Thousand/Villa/Nevin 2002). For example, less repetitive and boring work could be a positive outcome for lecturers, while a negative outcome may be that more time may be required for the preparation of lectures. In terms of the institution, empowered students could positively contribute to the university's reputation but in a negative light, these students could have higher expectations that the university would have to meet. Alnawas (2015) and Alnawas and Phillips (2014) are two sources that should be considered in this regard.

3.5 Preliminary student empowerment framework

Based on the general framework (antecedents, construct, and outcomes), the general and specialized literature on student empowerment, as well as the results of the qualitative study, figure 1 summarizes the study's findings.

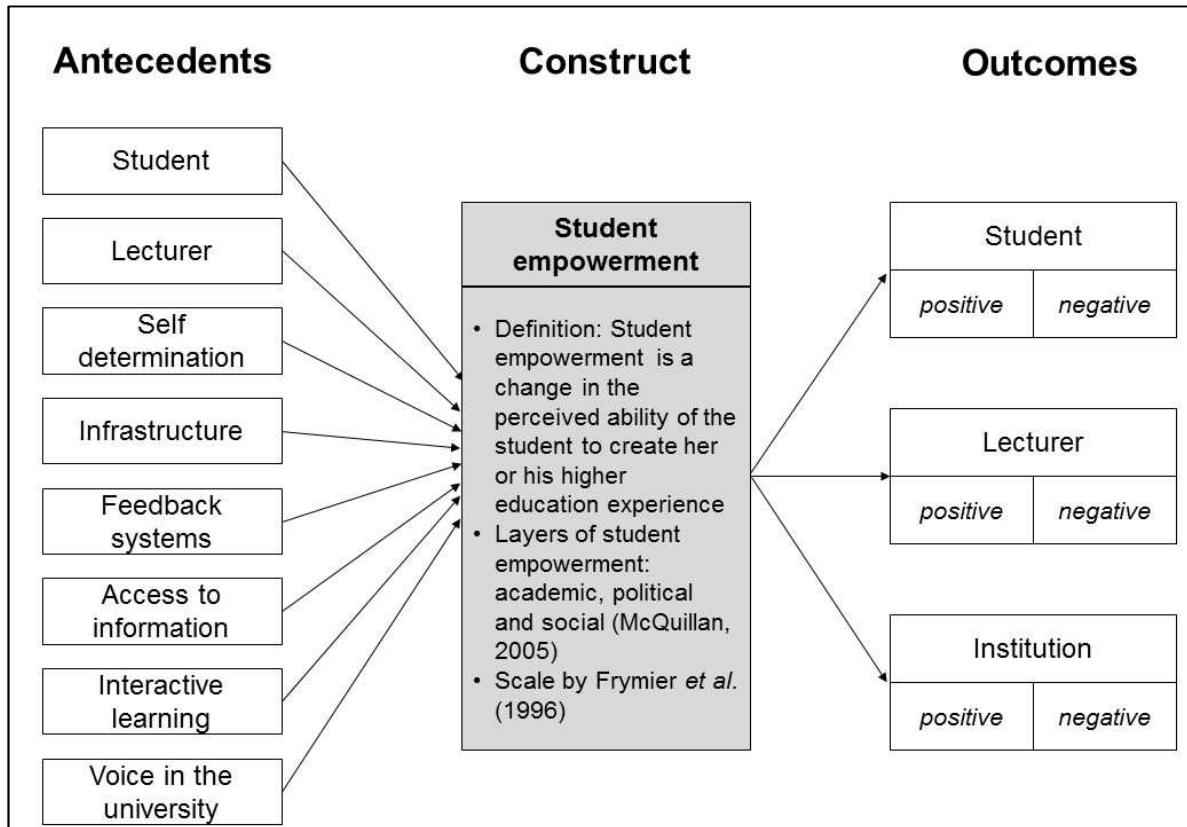


Figure 1 Student Empowerment Framework

Firstly, the above framework offers a definition of student empowerment, provides an established scale and broadens the construct by differentiation of three layers (academic, political and social empowerment). Secondly, the framework identifies eight different groups of antecedents: (1) student (e.g., previous knowledge, learner type, cultural background); (2) lecturer (e.g., personality, knowledge of teaching techniques); (3) self-determination (e.g., time, content, combination of courses, type of assessments, place); (4) infrastructure (e.g., digital infrastructure, access to the library); (5) feedback systems (e.g., existence, type, consequences); (6) access to information (e.g., transparency of grading, access to learning material in time); (7) interactive learning (e.g., group dynamic, implementation of interactive learning formats); and (8) voice in the university (e.g., participation and impact on the political decision process). Thirdly, the framework determines three categories of outcomes: (1) student related outcomes (positive: e.g., satisfaction, motivation, learning success, grades; negative: e.g., excessive demands, disorientation, laziness); (2) lecturer related outcomes (positive: e.g., motivation, satisfaction; negative: e.g., loss of control, uncertainty, fear of feedback); and (3) outcomes related to the institution (positive: e.g., increase of reputation, negative: e.g., loss of reputation).

4. Conclusions

4.1 Summary

Political initiatives, technological solutions and changes in student behavior lead to new thinking and implementations in higher education. All the discussed teaching innovations are characterized by a change in the lecturer-student-relationship from a sender oriented approach to a more co-creator- and collaboration-mode. The transition phase is characterized by student empowerment. Hence, the article transfers the general empowerment construct to the higher education context. Based on the general framework, which comprises antecedents, construct and outcomes, the article examined both general and topic-specific literature, and integrated this with results from a qualitative study amongst students.

The derived framework presented eight groups of antecedents (student, lecturer, self-determination, infrastructure, feedback systems, access to information, interactive learning, voice in the university), as well as three aspects of the construct student empowerment (definition, layers, measurement scale), and three groups of potential outcomes (student, lecturer, institution).

The substantial literature review, the findings of the qualitative study, as well as the student empowerment framework clarified the discussion around student empowerment and pointed out the complexity of teaching innovations with a higher level of student participation in the context of higher education. Hence, this framework can help to objectify the necessary discussion on teaching innovations within the Marketing and Brand Management courses, as well as other fields. Additionally, the framework generally contributes to the empowerment literature in at least three ways: Firstly, it highlights the suitability of a three-level-approach (antecedents, construct definition, effects) when analyzing and measuring the empowerment construct. Secondly, it underlines the necessity to define empowerment as a relative instead of an absolute construct (empowerment as a change in customers' perceived ability to create own experiences). Thirdly, it places emphasis on the need to study empowerment within different target groups (e.g., B-to-B-customers versus B-to-C-customers) instead of analyzing customer empowerment comprehensively.

4.2 Ideas for future research

The research article has introduced a broad field for future research. Firstly, the mentioned scale for the measurement of student empowerment is an extensive scale (35 items), which was developed in the context of the US education system and is limited to single courses. Hence, future research could develop and test a scale for the European or German university context, with a lower number of items and a broader understanding of student empowerment. Such a scale development process should be based on well-proven scale development processes (e.g., Churchill Jr 1979; DeVellis 2017; Gerbing/Anderson 1988; Rossiter 2002), and should consider different universities' characteristics (e.g., private- vs. state-owned universities, different subjects of study, and different sizes of courses). The scale-development process and the test of the measurement instrument could be conducted by a collaboration of researchers from different universities. Additionally, the scale development process

should consider related constructs such as co-creation in order to empirically answer the question around the discriminant validity of the construct student empowerment.

Secondly, relevant research could involve a deeper theoretical analysis and empirical test of potential outcomes. Such a performance view should consider subjective evaluations (e.g., student and lecturer surveys), observations by third-parties (e.g., observation and evaluation by mentors, audit) and objective measurements (e.g., participation level in online systems, grading).

Thirdly, the eight derived groups of antecedents require more focus. In this context, theory-based research could develop concrete hypotheses around their impact on student empowerment and its outcomes. Later, empirically oriented research could test these hypotheses and could try to find robust empirical patterns by using case studies, experiments and replications. Interesting fields for such a deductive-oriented research approach could include questions about the relevance of the national culture of students, or the most effective element of self-determination.

In addition, a change of perspective from student empowerment to the empowerment of the lecturer (e.g., Pearson & Moomaw 2005) could help to understand the phenomenon.

All these ideas and further research could support policy makers, as well as lecturers to change the system and module courses in order to gain positive outcomes for student, lecturer and institution empowerment.

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