IT'S TIME TO CHART THE FUTURE OF MARKETING EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Marketing education is facing increasing criticism from a variety of constituency groups. Practitioners question the relevance of the marketing curriculum and academic research. Public policy-makers are concerned about issues such as the cost of operating a university and productivity of faculty. Students are deciding to major in other fields where there is a better chance of getting a job. Environmental trends are having an impact on the structure of marketing education. The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact that criticism and environmental trends will have for the future of marketing education.

INTRODUCTION

Business education, and marketing education specifically, is under assault from a variety of interested groups (Cannon and Sheth 1994). Business practitioners are seriously questioning the relevance of the marketing curriculum. As an example, Wolter (1992) suggested the marketing curriculum emphasizes the development of analytical skills over people skills - speaking, manners, business dress and self-esteem and individual improvement. The marketing curriculum also has been criticized as not focusing enough on job training as is the focus of other professional programs (e.g., nursing) (Scribner 1993).

Public policy-makers are concerned about cost of operating public colleges and universities and the productivity of faculty. Since 1990 the tuition at public institutions has risen at a rate of three times the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Conversely, tuition at private institutions rose only twice as fast as the CPI (Miller 1994). Furthermore, there is a growing public perception that faculty do not teach enough classes and the emphasis on research over teaching needs to be re-examined. In an attempt to address the public's concerns several colleges and universities have implemented new performance standards. Total Quality Management (TQM) is becoming used to assess performance by focusing on the academic process of teaching, research and learning (Dorris and Teeter 1994). TQM is now being implemented by a number of universities including Michigan, Oregon State, Penn State, Colorado State and Kansas.

Students are selecting majors other than marketing where the prospects of getting a job after graduation are much brighter. Rotfeld (1995; 1993) argued the drop in the number of students majoring in marketing is due to the fact that a very low percentage of marketing graduates actually land marketing jobs. In addition, many marketing jobs do not require a marketing degree. Stera et al. (1994) found that marketing positions were at best, near the middle of a distribution of prestige ratings for various occupations. Conclusion--if marketing positions are not prestigious, students will not be attracted to the marketing major.

Through this criticism, marketing educators have begun to search for ways to adapt their programs to what constituency groups will demand in the future. At stake is the long-term structure and role of marketing education. The purpose of this paper is to explore the effect that this criticism, coupled with current environmental trends, will have on the future of marketing education.

CRITICISMS OF MARKETING EDUCATION

There seems to be an endless list of problems faced by marketing education. Berry (1993) identified four broad categories of criticism that require the attention of marketing educators: relevancy, versatility, accountability and globalism. Although these are presented as criticisms, they could be viewed as opportunities as well. Relevancy cuts across much of what marketing educators do. It encompasses the marketing curriculum, academic research, marketing faculty and the service educators provide to business and society.

There exists a real question of whether marketing curricula have remained current with the fast pace of business change. In a world of business accustomed to a quick response to a changing environment, the time it takes to change an academic curriculum may equate to the passage of geologic time. Part of the delay in responding to new trends in marketing is the course approval process instituted by many colleges and universities. Other reasons include the time it takes for a faculty member to develop expertise in an area and the fact that few teaching materials exist in new areas of marketing which serves as a reason not to innovate.
A second issue related to the relevance of marketing education is academic research. Whether the research done in marketing academia is relevant to real world marketing practitioners is a question that many critics ask. To address this concern, Stanton (1988) recommended that academic research needs to emphasize the generation of new concepts and ideas in addition to empirical studies designed to disprove hypotheses. Furthermore, Berry (1993) suggested academic research needs to be directed toward business managers rather than other marketing professors.

The relevance of the preparation of marketing faculty also is questioned. Rudolph (1995) argued most marketing professors lack practical experience in business, do not serve as marketing consultants and are not involved in actual marketing activities. If true, a basic question must be asked, "How can a faculty member teach inexperienced students how to be effective marketers when the faculty member has not stepped outside the classroom himself/herself?"

The second category of criticism is versatility. The demographics of most colleges and universities has changed dramatically over the past decade. While the student population becomes more diverse in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, marketing faculty have remained relatively homogeneous (mostly male and caucasian). This has created a challenge for faculty to teach students with potentially different learning styles. Versatility also relates to the use of emerging teaching technologies. Ten years ago, color acetates were the extent of marketing textbook supplements. Today, not only are videotapes available, but multimedia software for class presentations supplement many marketing textbooks.

Accountability is the third category of criticism and it is fast becoming a household word on college campuses. Traditional methods of evaluating faculty performance are argued to be archaic. Productivity, a word borrowed from industry, is being applied as a measure of teaching, research and service (Gilmore and To 1992). Value analysis also is being used by government entities to determine if federally funded educational programs are adding value to society.

The final category of criticism is globalism. Berry (1993) related globalism to the need for the marketing curriculum and academic research to incorporate global perspectives. The global emphasis will continue in the future. However, Stanton (1988) suggested the curriculum needs to guard against becoming too broad and needs to return to courses such as personal selling, sales management and retailing.

**TRENDS**

In addition to the criticism mentioned in the previous section, several environmental trends are helping to shape marketing education as well. First, university enrollments are projected to expand between 1995 and 2004 as the baby echo generation enters their college years (The Wall Street Journal 1992). The surge in enrollment will be quite different from what was experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. The student population will be more ethnically diverse and have come through a public education system (K-12) that has been severely criticized in its own right. What marketing educators are likely to find is a student population who are less prepared academically and socially for college than those who have come before.

The second major trend is the continual development of technology to facilitate classroom instruction and distance learning. Colleges and universities are now offering courses, and in some cases entire programs, on computer via the internet. Improvements in video technology, together with decreasing costs of the technology, are allowing more institutions to offer user-friendly classes to remote locations or to locations that are traditionally in the service area of another institution. The result of such technological change is that marketing programs will have to compete for students against, not only programs within the university (e.g., communications studies), but with marketing programs at other schools.

Declining education budgets is the third major trend that will impact marketing education. Public institutions are being forced to attract more private funds. For example, an objective of the California State University system (CSU) is that 10% of the operating funds of a school must be raised from outside funding sources. The specter of a future of declining budgets will put pressure on maximizing the use of a finite number of faculty by increasing class size and moving faculty to teach in other areas within the university (e.g., psychology, statistics, etc).

Declining budgets also mean fewer faculty will be hired in the future. The lack of hiring, coupled with the fact that a fairly large proportion of marketing faculty will retire in the very near future, has important consequences for the future of marketing education.
Claxton et al., (1993) reported that almost half of the respondents they surveyed planned to retire no later than 1995. Twenty-one percent planned to retire from academia at or before age 50, roughly the same proportion that planned to retire at age 66 (23%). These results suggest the work environment and working relationships of marketing faculty will significantly change in the future.

Lastly, major curricula changes are on the horizon. Many colleges and universities are questioning the reasoning behind specialized education and beginning to emphasize an interdisciplinary curriculum. Cunningham (1995) suggests business schools can be more interdisciplinary by adopting a model to train business students as used by medical schools. The concept of a "teaching hospital" where business students actually work in various management positions and are held accountable for the consequences of their decisions would have a profound impact on how educators prepare their students for business careers.

THE FUTURE OF MARKETING EDUCATION

Given the criticism and environmental trends taking place, what will marketing education in the year 2005 look like? First, a diverse student population will mean that marketing educators will have to infuse cultural differences to a greater extent than what is being done now into marketing programs and course materials. It is possible that different segments of student learn in varying ways. Issues such as right- and left-brain learning (November 1993) and learning style (Froneczak and Rivale 1991) will be of great concern to marketing educators because students will require varying teaching methodologies, both within and between marketing classes.

Innovations in teaching pedagogy will occur as technology continues to change. A classroom of students who meet at the same time and day during the semester may become a thing of the past. In the future it is possible that students will telecommute to a professor’s office and other students’ homes via two-way interactive video. Successful marketing educators of the future will adapt to new teaching technologies and the challenges they present.

The future also holds that fewer business schools will be needed. The question being asked by public policymakers is whether every campus in a multi-campus public university system needs to offer the same programs. Can costs be reduced by eliminating the duplication of programs and schools? Perhaps this issue is most clearly illustrated when one looks at the CSU. The CSU has 22 campuses, almost all have a business school or business program. Part of the reason why CSU was established was to allow students to get a baccalaureate degree close to their home. However, the historic reason for having so many campuses may no longer valid. Given emerging technologies to deliver programs over long distances and concerns over productivity and efficiency, it is quite possible that schools will be consolidated into only a few campuses.

Fewer schools of business will translate into a reduced need for marketing faculty. Fewer faculty will have an impact on classroom innovation and academic research. Faculty will have to exert greater effort to collaborate with existing faculty across schools of business at different universities rather than collaborate within a specific school of business. In addition, marketing faculty more likely will become business generalists rather than marketing specialists as classes will be taught to a much larger group of students via new technology. Marketing faculty of the future will have to be capable of teaching a wider range of business classes (e.g., finance, human resource management), in addition to a wider range of marketing subjects.

A continued focus on assessment and productivity by university administrators will significantly affect what marketing educators do in the future. Assessment will likely result in the development of new measures of student learning other than a professor's grade distribution. For example, a measure of the value added by the faculty five years after a student graduates may be required. Drives toward increased productivity will likely lead to greater utilization of a campus by implementing classes year-round in the remaining schools of business. This concept has already been adopted by K-12 as an alternative to building more schools. Year-round school has an added benefit of allowing students to complete their degree in a shorter period of time.

Lastly, the end of the tenure system is very possible as further cost controls are implemented. The result of the end of tenure will mean that faculty must continue to sharpen their skills or risk becoming obsolete (and unemployed). However, a consequence of the end of tenure will be a loss of academic freedom and risk-taking.
CONCLUSION

The future of marketing education will be very different from what we know it to be today. Marketing educators must try to predict what the changes will be so that the marketing curriculum will be relevant to students of the future. In terms of forecasting the future, a delphi technique could be used to determine what expert marketing educators see as the shape, form and function of marketing education. It was the intent of this paper to suggest what the future might hold for marketing education and to stimulate marketing educators to begin thinking about how they are going to adapt to the changes and challenges that lay ahead.

REFERENCES


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