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**Key Issues in Marketing Education: the marketign educators'
view**

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Key Issues in Marketing Education: The Marketing Educators' View

Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to report the views of UK marketing educators about critical issues in teaching and learning of university-level marketing education, and to compare these views with the views of other stakeholder groups.

Methodology

An online survey was administered to members of the UK Academy of Marketing; 51 completed, usable questionnaires were returned.

Findings

Respondents believe that teaching international students, plagiarism and providing feedback to students are the three top priority issues in teaching and learning. Perhaps surprisingly, e-learning and the use of virtual learning environments are considered to be relatively low priority issues.

Research limitations/implications

The low response rate is a limitation of the study. The study detected some interesting differences of opinion between marketing academics and Deans of business schools, between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities, and between Professors/Readers and those in lecturing positions. The sample size achieved in the study means that these findings can only be tentative, and it would be valuable to investigate them further in a larger study.

Originality/value

The study is unique in examining the views of university-level marketing educators about teaching and learning issues. University marketing educators are an important stakeholder in the marketing education process.

Keywords: Marketing education; Active learning; Plagiarism

Key Issues in Marketing Education: The Marketing Educators' View

Introduction

University marketing educators play an important role in the education of the next generation of marketing professionals. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, 23,190 students were studying marketing at UK universities in 2007/8 (HESA 2010); each year around 8,000 marketing students graduate from British universities, many of them destined for a marketing career. Marketing educators are in a position to influence future generations of marketing practitioners. Consequently, their views on matters to do with teaching and learning are of importance to the profession.

Previous studies have provided a number of interesting insights into the views of marketing educators and their students about the marketing education process. These studies have examined such issues as the key activities undertaken by marketing academics and their views about the key issues in marketing education (Baker & Erdogan, 2000; Polonsky & Mankelow 2000; Hetzel 2000), the views of marketing educators about the balance between teaching marketing skills and teaching critical thinking skills (Ackerman, Gross & Perner 2003), and the views of marketing students about which teaching approaches are most effective in marketing education (Karns 1993, 2000). Additionally, there is a tradition of reflective literature, written by very experienced marketing scholars, which provides profound insights into the marketing education process based on experience and philosophical or pedagogic literature (Chonko 2004, 2007; Cunningham 1995, 1999; Schibrowsky, Peltier & Boyt 2002). The majority of this literature originates from the USA. In addition, in a rapidly changing technological and educational environment, there is a risk that studies that are only a few years old may be seriously dated (Smart, Kelley & Conant 2003).

In this article we report on an empirical study of UK marketing academics conducted in 2009, which was designed to measure attitudes towards 14 key issues in teaching and learning. The study employed a questionnaire that had previously been used in a study of UK business school Deans and with school 'key contacts' of the Business, Management, Accounting & Finance subject centre of the Higher Education Academy (BMAF). This makes direct comparison with these groups possible. In addition, some comparisons are possible between this study and prior studies of marketing educator and marketing student views about the key issues in marketing education. Such comparisons are limited because different research instruments were used, but provide some interesting insights nevertheless.

The following section briefly reviews prior literature that has investigated marketing educator (and student) views about teaching and learning. Subsequently, the approach used to gather empirical data for this study is described. There follows a description of the results of the survey, and an analysis of the comparisons between these results and the results of prior studies. The concluding section considers the implications of the study for research and practice in the field of marketing education.

University-level marketing education: educator & student views

General discussions of what should be included in the university-level marketing curriculum have addressed the question of the appropriate fundamental approach to marketing education (Cunningham 1995, 1999; Schibrowsky, Peltier & Boyt 2002). Schibrowsky et al (2002) outlined three alternative philosophies for a marketing education: the liberal arts school, the professional school, and the vocational school. They were in agreement with Cunningham (1995, 1999) that it is the ‘professional school approach’ to which marketing educators should aspire. While the goal of the liberal arts approach is to teach students *about* marketing, and the goal of the vocational approach is to teach students specific skills to make them ready for entry-level positions in marketing, the goal of the professional school approach is to *prepare* students for a career in marketing. Consequently, while the curriculum in a vocational school concentrates on how to complete specific marketing tasks, in a professional school the curriculum concentrates on human skills, decision-making, and synthesising and analysing information in order to deal with complex issues and make informed judgements (Schibrowsky et al 2002).

Subsequently, Ackerman, Gross & Perner (2003) addressed the contention that university marketing curricula are orientated too much towards the straightforward application of ‘tools’, and fail to give students the critical thinking skills that employers want. In particular, the question they addressed was how to educate students so that they were ready to think critically about the future of the organisation, rather than simply to deploy a range of tools to analyse the past. The two key themes that emerged from their qualitative study with marketing educators were ‘student potential’ and ‘curriculum issues’. Within the theme of student potential there were three major issues: whether students are capable of handling ‘real-world problems’, whether it is possible to teach creativity, and whether it is possible to teach critical thinking skills. Within the curriculum, asking students to develop a marketing plan was regarded as a good method of developing the desired critical thinking abilities, but marketing educators were concerned about the time taken up by this approach to learning, and were unsure about how students would react – for example, might students respond negatively to learning methods that made greater intellectual demands? In the quantitative phase of this study, Ackerman et al (2003) found that employers were more sceptical than students or marketing educators about the potential among students for creativity and critical thinking.

In an engaging polemic, Chonko (2004) wondered whether marketing educators were sometimes guilty of using quackery in their pedagogic practice. By analogy with the medical field, where quackery is defined as the use of medical techniques which have no scientific support and which patients are not qualified to evaluate, he defined quackery as educational methods that are not scientifically evaluated and about which students are unable to exercise reasoned judgement. The purpose of his work was to assess whether educational quackery might be one reason for the complaints that marketing graduates are poorly prepared for employment, and that because of grade inflation students obtain university qualifications without achieving the academic standards of previous generations. Chonko (2004, p6) expressed the implications for marketing educators bluntly: “Faced with pressures for success and the prospects of hard work as a means toward a strong educational foundation, it seems that many students prefer to seek out any class that offers the hope of a passing grade for minimal effort. And they find them!” A particular concern raised by Chonko is that educators may engage students in active learning methods for invalid reasons – for example, because students find such methods more congenial and are therefore inclined to give more positive feedback about the educational experience regardless of how much has been learned.

A substantial amount is known about what *students* think about the educational techniques used by marketing educators. Notably, Karns (1993, 2005) has conducted two surveys, separated by roughly a decade, of marketing students in the USA, to discover their perceptions of different learning methods. Karns (2005) argued that understanding student perceptions of learning methods is both of interest and of practical value to marketing educators, since student perceptions will affect their responsiveness to the different approaches. He found that marketing students evaluate learning methods on the three dimensions ‘enjoyable’, ‘challenging’ and ‘real world’. Karns’s (2005) results for marketing student perceptions of learning activity effectiveness and preference are shown in Table 1. It is notable that while students perceive some active-learning methods such as internships and student-operated businesses as both effective and preferred, conventional passive-learning methods such as lectures and essay tests also score highly for both effectiveness and preference. The e-learning techniques mentioned in the study (online discussion and course website) did not score highly for effectiveness of preference.

Activity	Effectiveness	Preference
Internship	6.78	7.44
Class discussion	6.73	7.27
Case analysis	4.55	6.58
Live-case project	5.43	6.58
Student-operated businesses	5.37	6.57
Lecture	5.43	6.28
Essay test	5.10	6.20
Field trip	6.88	6.20
Homework	4.57	6.10
Student presentations	4.43	6.05
Guest speaker	6.24	6.01
Case/business plan competitions	5.06	6.00
Simulation game	5.61	5.99

Multiple-choice test	7.04	5.99
Term paper	2.88	5.93
Film/video	6.10	5.73
Text/readings	3.29	5.64
Role playing	4.78	5.62
Course Web site	5.18	4.99
Online discussion	4.47	4.39
Diary	4.18	4.35
Effectiveness and preference are mean scores for the student sample. Scales were anchored by 1(not preferred, not effective) and 9 (preferred, effective).		

Source: based on Karns (2005), Table 4.

Research method

The study sought to ascertain the perceptions of the most important learning and teaching issues facing marketing academics and the support available for learning and teaching provided within the business school or department. All UK Academy of Marketing (AM) members on the email list in January 2009 were invited to take part in the survey using an online survey administration service. Members were encouraged to distribute the survey to marketing colleagues within their institution for completion whether or not they were members of AM. Two reminder emails were sent following initial distribution. The questionnaire largely replicated that used in a survey previously undertaken by Business, Management, Accounting and Finance Network within the Higher Education Academy (BMAF), the results of which were published in summer 2007 (BMAF 2007). Respondents were asked to rate the importance of fourteen teaching and learning on a five-point scale (not important at all [1], not very important [2], of some concern [3], quite important[4], very important [5]). A key difference between the BMAF 2007 and the AM/BMAF 2009 survey was that marketing colleagues were invited to make additional qualitative comments to explain their rating of the relative importance of each aspect of learning and teaching.

Table 1 provides a summary of the respondents' characteristics. An effective sample of 51 was achieved. Given the disappointing overall sample size, both the post-1992 and the pre-1992 universities were reasonably well-represented. Similarly, although the overall sample size is small, the representation of different academic job roles is reasonably well-balanced. The members of the 'other' category for job role were largely marketing educators who had moved into administrative or managerial roles, with job titles such as 'Director of Research', 'Director of MBA Programmes', 'Director of Programmes', and 'Course Director'.

Table 2: Characteristics of respondents

Type of HE Institution	Number	Per cent
Post-1992 university	29	57
Pre-1992 university	18	35
Other	4	8
Total	51	100
Job role of respondent		
Professor/Reader	11	22
Lecturer/Senior/Principal	27	53
Other	13	25
Total	51	100

Findings

Table 3: Key Learning and Teaching Issues Identified by Marketing Academics 2009

Issue	Very Important	Quite Important	Rating Average
Teaching International Students	32	15	4.53
Plagiarism	32	14	4.49
Providing timely and good quality feedback on assessment	32	12	4.49
Relating research to teaching	19	20	4.06
Designing creative assessment	21	15	4.04
Achieving active learning	20	16	4.04
Teaching large groups	19	16	3.92
Work based learning	13	20	3.75
Addressing Issues of recruitment and retention	19	11	3.82
Using virtual learning environments	7	21	3.57
Using e-learning	10	17	3.61
Widening Participation	12	12	3.57
Finding reliable evidence-based evaluation to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning interventions	11	10	3.35
Introducing Personal Development Planning	10	7	3.10

Table 3 summarises the answers to the questions about 14 key teaching and learning issues, showing the percentage of respondents answering very or quite important, and the mean score for each variable on the 5-point scale (a higher score indicates greater importance).

Key Learning and Teaching Issues

The key issues facing marketing academics are: teaching international students; plagiarism; providing timely and good quality feedback on assessment; relating research to teaching; designing creative assessment; achieving active learning; and teaching large groups. Given the rapid growth of international students who are studying marketing, particularly at postgraduate level (international students on marketing programmes rose from approximately 1000 in 1996/7 to just under 6000 in 2006/07 (HESA 2010)) it is not surprising that *teaching international students* is the most highly rated factor (4.53). The *teaching of large groups* (3.92) reflects the ‘massification’ of business related HE in general and the rise in marketing students particularly at undergraduate level (from 6000 in 1996/97 to just over 15,000 in 2007/8 (HESA 2010)) in particular.

Qualitative comments suggest that the key issues identified are largely inter-related. For example, some comments link *achieving active learning* (4.04) to the issue of *teaching large groups* which inhibits interactive learning. For example:

- “[active learning is] difficult with large class sizes”
- “We all teach big groups but how do you make them feel valued and ensure two-way communication beyond the simplistic?”
- “Student engagement is a big issue”
- “Typical lecture size is 150 students and seminar groups are 20 ... we are told this will rise to 30. This is madness and inhibits discussion”.

The use of creative assessment (4.04) to encourage active learning is challenged both by large group sizes and the rising incidence of plagiarism (4.49). Plagiarism is in turn linked to both large group sizes and teaching international students. For example:

- “We have fallen into the habit of using a combination of written assignments/essay and group presentations (partly to cope with the numbers). Whilst not all modules have exams there’s an increasing tendency to use in-class/online tests, partly to reduce marking but also to minimise opportunities for plagiarism”.

Providing timely and good quality feedback is an issue which would appear to be driven by management policy in response to results from the UK’s National Student Survey (a centrally administered questionnaire for final-year undergraduate students designed to measure their attitudes towards the education they have received). Qualitative comments suggest that the issue of feedback is also linked to large class sizes:

- “We have a three week turnaround policy therefore there is the need to balance quality feedback v time”
- “This goes along with large classes sizes – we are trying to develop a standard pro-forma so that feedback can be given mainly by ticking boxes. It is impossible to turn around 300+ scripts in a reasonable time if you are trying to write detailed individual feedback”
- “[feedback is] such an issue from the NSS – students I believe are less concerned if you are upfront about how long it will take”.

Other Learning and Teaching Issues

Qualitative comments suggest that marketing academics often interpret *work based learning* as the development of ‘employability skills’ in marketing typically through the use of placements, live projects, external clients and accreditation of part-time work experience. There is some development toward work based learning in relation to employer based learning

- “We have operated WBL [work based learning] for some years now as an integral part of our FD qualifications”
- “Another centrally led initiative – the university has designed a framework for WBL that can help colleagues make the most of current regs on APL [accredited prior learning] and increase the uptake of WBL programme across the university”.

Qualitative comments tended to suggest that *recruitment* was not considered important because it was not deemed to be an academic responsibility. *Retention* was cited variably as an issue but specifically mentioned in relation to first year undergraduates. Similarly, qualitative comments suggested that *introducing personal development planning* was not an issue which was particularly ‘owned’ by marketing academics. Comments relating to *widening participation* (3.57) also suggested that this was considered to be a non-academic issue. Only a quarter of the respondents directly associated widening participation with learning and teaching.

Comments relating to using virtual learning environments (3.57) varied from the positive, such as “a useful support to teaching”, to negative, for example “their value not seen certainly for undergrads” and the exploration of less traditional VLEs such as “Second Life” was also mentioned. Comments relating to e-learning (3.61) did not necessarily draw a distinction between e-learning and using virtual learning environments and largely concerned its use as a blended learning tool.

Finding reliable evidence-based evaluation to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning interventions did not appear to be well understood and, where it was understood, respondents’ comments suggested that they did not know where to find evidence or how to evaluate its reliability.

Learning and Teaching Support

Respondents were asked to identify the different types of learning and teaching support provided to them by their Business School and/or department. Responses are summarised in Table 4

Table 4: Support for Learning and Teaching Currently Provided By Your Business School/Department

Support Provided	Response Per cent	Response Count
Learning and teaching committee	70.6%	36
Encouraged to undertake learning and teaching development projects	68.6%	35
Head/director of learning and teaching	62.7%	32
Learning and teaching strategy	62.7%	32
Regular workshops and seminars on learning and teaching	62.7%	32
Learning and teaching strategy that is regularly reviewed	58.8%	30
Learning and teaching is regularly reviewed as part of annual individual performance review	49.0%	25
Career track for staff who specialise in learning and teaching matters	39.2%	20
Remission from workload and funding available to support teaching and learning project activity	25.5%	13
Other	13.7%	7
None	3.9%	2

The presence of a teaching and learning committee received the highest response frequency (70.6%) and it is interesting to note that over 60% of respondents reported that formal learning and teaching strategies were in place along with a Head/Director of Learning and Teaching (62.7%). The second highest response count is the encouragement to undertake learning and teaching development projects (68.6%). However, only a quarter (25.5%) of respondents indicated that remission from workload or funding were available to support such projects. The presence of regular workshops and seminars was reported by 62.7% of respondents. Almost half (49%) reported that learning and teaching is regularly reviewed as part of the annual individual performance review and over a third (39.2%) reported that there is a career track for staff who specialise in learning and teaching matters. Other forms of support which were identified included CETLs (Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning), central specialist departments for education development and remission for specialist roles within the School.

Comparative analysis of respondent categories

Table 5: Differences between types of HE institution

Issue	Type of institution	Mean score
Plagiarism	Post-1992 universities	3.72
	Pre-1992 universities	4.28
Teaching large groups	Post-1992 universities	4.31
	Pre-1992 universities	4.72

Note: Differences between means significant at the 10% level

Table 6: Differences between job roles

Issue	Job role	Mean score
Teaching international students	Professor/Reader	4.91
	Lecturer/Senior/Principal	4.48
Plagiarism	Professor/Reader	4.18
	Lecturer/Senior/Principal	4.67
E-learning	Professor/Reader	3.10
	Lecturer/Senior/Principal	3.59

Note: Differences between means for 'plagiarism' significant at the 5% level, for the other two variables at the 10% level

The survey revealed few significant differences of opinion between respondents from different types of university, or between respondents with different job roles. For most issues there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of respondents from pre- and post-1992 universities, or between the mean scores for Professors/Readers and those in the Lecturer/Senior/Principal grades. The few areas where interesting differences emerged are shown in Tables 5 and 6. The survey provided some evidence (significant at only the 10% level) that the issues of plagiarism and of teaching large groups are considered more important by respondents from pre-1992 universities than by those from the post-1992 sector. Compared to the Lecturer/Senior/Principal grades, Professors and Readers considered teaching international students to be a more important issue, but considered plagiarism and e-learning to be less important issues.

Analysis and discussion

In this section the focus is primarily on two types of comparison, firstly, comparison between the results of the study reported here and a prior study using the same research instrument with business school Deans and BMAF key contacts, and, secondly, comparison with prior studies of the views of British, French and American marketing academics about key issues facing marketing academia. Before addressing these issues, it is interesting to reflect briefly on the comparison between Karns's (2005) findings about marketing student preferences for teaching methods, and the results of the present study of marketing educators' views.

In the present study four issues were directly related to the practice of teaching: achieving active learning (ranked 6th out of 14 issues), work-based learning (8th), virtual learning environments (10th) and e-learning (11th). In comparison, Karns's (2005) survey of American marketing students showed that they believed that work-based learning and active learning methods were both effective and enjoyable, while course websites and online learning methods were considered to be relatively less effective and less enjoyable (refer to Table 1 above for details). For example, active-learning and work-based learning approaches such as 'internship', 'student-operated business', 'live case project' and 'field trip' were all rated highly by students in terms of effectiveness and preference, whereas 'course website' and 'online discussion' were rated poorly by students. With some caveats – since the basis for comparison between these two studies is relatively weak – there is interesting indicative evidence of some congruence between the views of marketing students and educators, that active and work-based learning are higher priorities, while virtual learning environments and e-learning are lower priorities.

Comparison with views of Deans and BMAF key contacts

Table 7: Key teaching and learning issues, ranked by marketing academics, Deans, and BMAF key contacts			
Issues	Ranking by Marketing Academics	Ranking by Business School Deans	Ranking by Business School Key BMAF Contacts
Teaching international students	1	2	2
Plagiarism	2	6	3
Providing timely and good quality feedback on assessment	3	1	1
Relating research to teaching	4	11	10
Designing creative assessment	5	4	4
Achieving active learning	6	3	5
Teaching large groups	7	9	8
Work-based learning	8	10	9
Addressing issues of recruitment and retention	9	5	14
Using virtual learning environments	10	7	7
Using e-learning	11	8	6
Widening participation	12	14	13
Finding reliable evidence-based evaluation to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning interventions	13	13	11
Introducing Personal Development Planning	14	12	12

In a study conducted in 2007, the Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance (BMAF) subject group of the Higher Education Academy investigated the views of business school Deans and of BMAF key contacts in business schools about key teaching and learning issues. The BMAF key contact is a nominated individual in the business school who coordinates communication between the school and the subject centre. The same research instrument was used in that study and in the 2009 survey of UK marketing academics reported here; consequently it is possible to make direct comparisons between the results. Table 7 shows the ranking of the 14 issues by marketing academics, Deans, and BMAF key contacts. The issues

have been ranked in accordance with the percentage of respondents reporting that the issue is considered ‘very’ or ‘quite’ important.

The correlations between the rankings of marketing academics, Deans and key contacts are fairly high, indicating that there is, overall, a reasonable degree of agreement between all three groups on the ranking of key teaching and learning issues. The correlation between the views of Deans and key contacts is the highest (0.78), between marketing academics and key contacts second highest (0.75), and between marketing academics and Deans the lowest (0.71). All three correlations indicate a considerable degree of agreement. However, inspection of Table 7 quickly shows that despite this broad agreement, there is considerable disagreement over specific teaching and learning issues. Issues of notably greater importance to marketing academics than to Deans are ‘relating research to teaching’ and ‘plagiarism’. One issue is of notably less importance to marketing academics than to Deans, namely ‘addressing issues of recruitment and retention’, while the issues of ‘achieving active learning’, ‘e-learning’ and ‘using virtual learning environments’ are considered somewhat less important by marketing academics than Deans.

Comparison with prior studies of marketing educators’ views

Issues identified by UK academics (Baker & Erdogan 2000)	Issues identified by US academic (Polonsky & Mankelov 2000)	Issues identified by French academics (Hetzel 2000)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding/administrati on (declining unit of resource) 2. Personal development 3. Course content/development /delivery 4. Students (academic standard of) 5. Research 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decline in standard of students 2. Performance of administrative staff 3. Flexible delivery 4. Conflicting demands: teaching and research 5. Evaluation/accountabi lity of academic staff 6. Technology 7. More links to practice 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance of administrative staff 2. More links to practice 3. Better recognition of international careers by French institutions 4. Evaluation/accountabi lity of academic staff 5. Better working conditions (insufficient libraries, etc.) 6. Conflicting demands between teaching, administrative work and research

Three studies undertaken in 1999 and reported in 2000 in the Journal of Marketing Management provide a limited basis for comparison with the study reported here, which was administered almost exactly 10 years later. Those prior studies were based on surveys of

marketing academics in the UK (Baker & Erdogan 2000), the USA (Polonsky & Mankelov 2000), and France (Hetzl 2000). The three studies all used very much the same research approach and asked marketing academics for their views on the most pressing issues in marketing theory, in marketing practice, and in marketing academia. It is the latter, pressing issues in marketing academia, which are discussed here; the findings from the three studies reported in 2000 are summarised in Table 8.

The results provide an interesting but limited basis of comparison with the survey reported here. The principal factor limiting the comparison between the present results and the earlier results is that the earlier studies used open questions to elicit marketing academics' views while the present study used a predefined list of issues previously used in a wider study of business academics' views. Consequently, the earlier studies report a wider range of issues affecting the working lives of marketing academics, rather than narrowly focusing on teaching and learning matters. Nevertheless, some interesting comparisons and contrasts emerge.

The issues that have been rated as most important in the 2009 survey of UK marketing academics reported here were generally *not* issues of concern to marketing academics in 1999-2000. Marketing academics in 1999-2000 were generally *not* concerned, for example, about teaching international students, plagiarism, and feedback to students – the top 3 issues in 2009. On the other hand, several of the issues that are regarded as lower priority in the 2009 survey of UK academics are very similar to the 'pressing issues' identified by marketing academics a decade before. Notably, 'technology' and 'flexible delivery' were already concerns for US marketing academics in 1999-2000, and 'evaluation/accountability of academic staff' was a concern to both US and French marketing academics; compare the finding that 21% of UK marketing academics in 2009 considered it 'very' or 'quite' important to find reliable evidence to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning interventions. In addition, the concerns of both UK and US marketing academics in 1999-2000 about 'decline in standard of students' can be seen as an earlier, and perhaps less politically correct version of the 2009 concern with 'widening participation'.

Conclusion

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