CREATIVE PEDAGOGY IN MARKETING FOR ATTAINING
CONSTITUENT NEED-BASED EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Proper evaluation of pedagogical effectiveness requires a clear understanding of the objectives of education and a systematic plan for empirically testing the attainment of those objectives using a variety of teaching methods. This paper reports survey findings regarding employer and recent graduate perceptions of appropriate learning objectives, establishes the importance of clearly defining objectives when designing educational techniques, and outlines a research agenda for better evaluation of marketing pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

A major responsibility of Schools of Business is to deliver high quality education to students that is relevant to both the needs of future employers and the personal/professional development of the student. Beyond the recruitment, selection, and retention of a capable student population, five primary tools for fulfilling this responsibility can be identified. These are: 1) the design of curricula, 2) the procurement and maintenance of technical infrastructure for delivery of those curricula, 3) the hiring, allocation, and development of qualified and capable faculty to effect their delivery, 4) the creation and application of effective pedagogy for meeting the educational objectives of the institution and its constituents, and 5) the systematic assessment of educational outcomes to monitor progress. Four of these five resource tools for achieving educational objectives are typically managed at the Departmental, College, or Institutional level through either its administration and/or through committees comprised of faculty. The development of effective pedagogical techniques, however, continues to be the primary responsibility of individual faculty though efforts are often made to provide resources to assist them.

For this reason, marketing (and other business) educators need to actively seek, apply, and develop useful pedagogical techniques which serve to achieve educational objectives and which efficiently utilize the resources of the school and its students. This paper is intended to assist marketing faculty in systematically organizing the search, selection, and design of pedagogy for attaining educational objectives. Toward accomplishing this, the paper is organized in four sections. First, a typology of educational objectives for business schools is presented. This typology is the product of a constituent-based research effort at a large midwestern university which sought to identify the educational needs of business students from the perspectives of both employers and recent alumni. In the second section, an assessment of the relationship between several pedagogical techniques and the identified educational objectives is addressed. The third section describes a marketing channels strategy simulation exercise aimed at the educational objective of creativity. This serves as a case example of pedagogical design. Finally, a suggested research program for continuously assessing the contribution of competing pedagogical techniques to the various educational objectives is outlined.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

A research effort to identify the educational objectives of schools of business was conducted during the Fall of 1993. Although much of this effort was aimed at identifying the strengths/weaknesses of the subject institution, the initial portion was designed to identify specific knowledge, skills, and competencies deemed necessary for successful on-the-job performance for graduating students. Two sets of respondents returned surveys. These included employer representatives who hire graduates from the college (n=50) and recently graduated alumni (ie. those who had graduated in the past 5 years, n=176). The top ten skills or competencies based on each set of respondents' perceived importance ratings are displayed in Table I. These were ordered from a total of 43 competencies included in the surveys.

TABLE I
Importance Ranking of Skills/Competencies
Required of Business Graduates

Employer Rankings

1. Takes initiative
2. Learns from mistakes
3. Interacts well with others
4. Adapts to change
5. Completes tasks on time
6. Listens well to others
7. Employs sound logic
8. Works well in groups
9. Anticipates possible problems
10. Deals well with unstructured situations

Recent Alumni Rankings

1. Interacts well with others
2. Performs job duties with minimum supervision
3. Listens well to others
4. Completes tasks on time
5. Takes initiative
6. Learns from mistakes
7. Develops alternatives for decision making
8. Adapts to change
9. Deals well with difficult people
10. Employs sound logic

The rankings are striking in their similarity and suggest that there is an identifiable set of key competencies which colleges of business should target as educational objectives if they wish to meet the employment needs of these comprised of constituents. An interdisciplinary faculty committee analyzed the responses. Additionally, they reviewed similar research and identified five critical areas for targeting educational efforts. These critical areas or "key competencies" are presented and defined in Table II.

The key competencies identified in Table II are similar to those developed at The University of Central Florida in their recent restructuring of the curriculum. Competencies targeted in their efforts included creativity, adaptiveness, communication, and teamwork. Together with the current research results, it is apparent that employers are looking for business colleges to provide more than technological competence in a subject area. In addition to technical competence, employers are seeking prospective employees who can effectively communicate in dynamic environments involving team settings, and who exhibit creativity. Despite these requirements, many colleges continue to place most emphasis on developing technological competence and have yet to develop curricula or pedagogies for properly addressing all of the needs expressed by employers and recent alumni. Only recently has the problem of developing creativity been addressed in the Marketing Education literature (Ramocki 1994).

TABLE II
Key Competencies for Business Graduates

Skill	Comment	Examples
Technical Competence	Includes knowledge of relevant sciences and humanities materials on which business administration is based.	Computer software Managerial theories Marketing theories Research methodology Social Science theories
Adaptability to Change	Skills for accepting and and exploiting the dynamics of the business environment.	Mind-set for the analysis and identification of social changes that create business opportunities
Communication Skill	Includes both oral and written skills and may be interpreted as an applied form of technical competence which has been singled out as especially important.	Persuasion Report writing Public speaking Business letter writing
Creativity	The essence of managerial activity is the conception of future business activities. In marketing, this involves envisioning future exchange.	New exchange opportunities Creative problem solving New product/service development
Teamwork Capability	Increasingly, the importance of interpersonal influence skill in a team setting rather than a command oriented managerial style is desired.	Adaptive leadership Motivation of reluctant team members organizing to reach a goal Interpretation of group tasks Evaluation and feedback of group performance

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEDAGOGY AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A major area of study in the field of Marketing Education is the correspondence between pedagogical techniques and educational success. Recent examples include the assessment of large-scale simulation effectiveness in marketing education (Alpert 1993), comparison of simulation methods with alternatives such as case study (Laughlin and Hite 1993; Butler, Markulis, and Strang, 1988), and even assessment of the pedagogical value of music videos (Shank, Young, and Lynch, 1992). Most of these efforts have addressed technological or conceptual innovation in pedagogy, with less emphasis on the evaluation of standard pedagogical techniques.

Consistent with the theory of strategy we often teach, it is suggested that a more systematic approach to the development of marketing pedagogy be adopted. A strategic orientation would include consideration of the objectives, evaluation of the environments, and skillful

application of resources toward attaining objectives within the context of dynamic environments. For this reason, an ongoing assessment of pedagogical techniques and their suitability for attaining educational objectives is recommended.

GOAL ORIENTATION IMPORTANCE IN THE TEACHING OF CREATIVITY: A CASE EXAMPLE IN DEVELOPING PEDAGOGY

We have suggested that maintaining focus on the educational objectives is required for the development of educational efficacy. One area where the development of teaching techniques is very new is creativity (Ramocki 1994). Based on an extensive review of literature in the area of creativity, Ramocki (1994) identifies seven constructs for developing individual creativity. Consistent with these constructs, several tactics are derived which include emphasis on intrinsic motivation, creation of a supportive environment, appreciation of the creative process -- not just the result, nonjudgemental feedback, minimal time pressures, the assumption of real risk regarding successful accomplishment, and the encouragement of interdisciplinary (whole knowledge) approaches.

Examination of these suggestions against alternative pedagogy choices yields insight regarding promising methods for teaching creativity. Experiential methods such as role playing and simulation gaming provide maximum opportunity for realistic risk assumption. Motivational methods for the activity should emphasize intrinsic qualities (for example -- providing minimum value bonus credit as opposed to evaluation heavily weighted with regard to overall course performance), include support for the evaluation of the creative process as well as outcomes, and include time constraints which are not burdensome. Under these conditions, the exercise could be predicted to be superior to alternative pedagogical choices for stimulating creative learning.

An exercise seeking to encourage creative strategy development for negotiated exchange in marketing channels was created using this analytical process. In the initial exercise, 30 students were seated in a matrix consisting of 6 rows and 5 columns. Each column served as an exchange channel in the exercise. The student at the back of the column was given 10 product cards. The student at the front of each column was given $200 in play money in $5 increments and all other members were given $50 in play money in $5 increments. Players were given 15 minutes to make exchanges at whatever

exchange rates they determined to be appropriate with the objective of maximizing their own value by the end of the simulation. The two constraints placed on the process was that members could only exchange with the person(s) immediately adjacent to them and that to be eligible to receive any points, the individual must possess both product and money at the end of the exchange period.

The initial exercise provides the context for developing creative strategy, but does not meet all of the conditions outlined by Ramocki because it includes time constraints and competition. Following the game portion, the students are organized by row to develop creative strategic orientations for playing the game. Emphasis is placed on accepting ideas to provide a supportive creative environment no matter how unused they initially appear. Efforts are also made to remove time constraints and encourage an ongoing creative strategy process relating not only to the current exercise, but to other strategic settings as well.

Clearly, the problem of evaluating the effectiveness of this pedagogy toward the development of creativity remains. Initial observation of student feedback indicates that they think they experienced a positive contribution to creativity, had an enjoyable experience, and felt a sense of accomplishment. These observations, however, are casual and a much more rigorous assessment of pedagogical value is warranted.

A RESEARCH AGENDA

Marketing Education researchers have periodically examined the relationship between pedagogy and educational effectiveness. The theory within which this examination is conducted holds that differing educational methods have variable impact on the attainment of educational objectives. Although this intuitively sensible notion holds promise 1) for the development of useful pedagogy, 2) for efficient coordination with curriculum requirements, and 3) for the effective application of scarce faculty and supporting resources, the discipline has yet to realize its potential. To realize that potential, investigation of the contribution of various teaching techniques to the attainment of the relevant educational objectives should incorporate the systematic approach outlined above.

A comprehensive and systematic approach to the evaluation of the effectiveness of pedagogical techniques toward attaining learning objectives would include the

following steps. First, clear definition of the learning objective should be generated and theoretical implications regarding the link between teaching technique and the attainment of that objective should be generated. Next, the design of teaching techniques which would theoretically be superior should be generated. Third, appropriately designed experiments testing the effectiveness of teaching techniques across the objectives should be conducted. Evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching techniques would include consideration of both attainment of teaching objectives and the efficient utilization of educational resources.

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