

PHD OR MARKETING EXPERIENCE: WHAT DO THE STUDENTS WANT?

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, there has been a movement towards requiring the PhD in marketing as a minimal criteria for teaching, irrespective of a prospective teacher's work experience. As reflected by AACSB preferences, there has also been a shift towards regarding research more important than vocational experience. In the past, business schools and colleges would hire MBAs with practical experience as instructors. This is seldom done today. It is now assumed that even a professor at a college level should have the same PhD as a professor training advanced graduate students. Historically, many, including William James, have expressed their opposition to using the PhD as a "union card" needed for college teachers. It was felt that the pressures to publish would only result in "junk" research, while time constraints would weaken classroom performances. What has been missing in these discussions is what the students think. Do students want their marketing professors to have the appropriate degree, or do they want professors with the appropriate experience? If given a choice, which would they choose?

Methodology

There were 149 students (76 or 51% women) that participated in the study. The participants were all students in four sections of consumer behavior. The major factors of interest were the work experience of a faculty member and the degree held (MBA, PhD in Sociology, PhD in Marketing). The sex and the major of the respondent were added to the analysis as a control for additional variation. These were

combined in a 3 X 3 X 2 X 2 factorial design. Each student was presented with a description of a marketing faculty member in one of the nine instructor conditions.

Results and Conclusions

Work experience was highly significant for both the perception of teacher effectiveness and teacher knowledge. There were no significant interaction effects, implying that both sexes and differing majors had the same perceptions, and that they saw the effects of work experience independent of the degree their professor held.

The results strongly imply that given a choice between appropriate academic degrees and work experience, the students prefer work experience. Almost unanimously, they would choose an MBA with work experience over a PhD in marketing with little work experience. This response was overwhelming. It is also directly at odds with current administrative and hiring practices. Whether students hold these perceptions because of experience in the classroom or through a sense of the ironic (imagine hiring a flight instructor who had never flown a plane), was not investigated. Some have suggested that using the marketing PhD as the one criteria for teaching may be a mistake that limits students' exposure to working professionals, and at the same time limits the cross-fertilization that may come from instructors with other terminal degrees. The author argues that the criteria for teachers should not be a terminal degree but marketing related work experience and a degree relevant to marketing education.