

CLASS SIZE AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE FIELD OF MARKETING

Kent Byus, New Mexico State University, P.O. Box 30001, Dept 5280, Las Cruces, NM 88003
Gerald Hampton, New Mexico State University, P.O. Box 30001, Dept. 5280, Las Cruces, NM 88003
Eric R. Pratt, New Mexico State University, P.O. Box 30001, Dept. 5280, Las Cruces, NM 88003

ABSTRACT

Ongoing assessment of both student learning and the learning environment is becoming more critical in meeting student expectations about the learning experience in higher education. Within the dynamic of cognitive experience are both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Although there are several potentially significant relationships which must be examined to fully comprehend the complexities of the cognitive process, this paper will limit its scope to an analysis of two factors. First, what is the academic implication of a student's attitudes about marketing, and second, how does class size impact the cognitive experience of the student of marketing?

The importance of a positive attitude to the student's quest for academic excellence is beyond reasonable or logical reproach. It is incumbent upon the marketing educator to identify and utilize the some form of attitude assessment to benefit today's marketing student.

Research dealing with the impact of class size on the student's attitude toward a subject has found that departments within an institution differ significantly on overall student ratings of instruction, with class size affecting all levels of instruction. Few studies exist that specifically address factors that influence the successful study of marketing.

This research was conducted using two principles of marketing classes during a single semester. The classes were conducted by the same instructor, and were approximately the same size classes in excess of 100 students. A questionnaire administered to the students during the first week and final week of the semester concerned their attitudes about the field of marketing. In addition, the questionnaire asked the students about their experience with, and attitudes toward large classes. All responses on the questionnaires were kept anonymous. Some important demographic findings included:

a) 53.4% male.

b) Approximately 80% business majors; 8.5% marketing majors.

c) 75% were Juniors or Seniors.

d) 58.4% employed.

e) 98.9% full-time students.

f) 5.6% African American, 2.2% Asian, 3.4% Native American, 39.9 Hispanic, and the remainder being White (non-Hispanic).

g) 93.8% had never before taken a class with over 100 students in size. Only 2.3% had taken a class as large as the class where this survey was conducted.

Most students in these classes had a favorable attitude about marketing. It is not surprising that marketing has a generally favorable image among students majoring in business. However, the students believe that a role of marketing is to get consumers to purchase goods even if they do not need them, and believe that marketing is a contributor to higher prices. Somewhat in contradiction to the above results, students do not believe that marketing makes people materialistic. Concerning marketing's reputation, students did agree that marketing has a good reputation and/or high prestige among students in general.

The study showed that the student's attitudes about class size did not change after spending a semester in a large class. The results are not surprising. Students have been conditioned to dislike large classes. Although attitudes toward large classes remained negative, this did not appear to impact how attitudes toward marketing changed. So while students may not like large classes, a large class size did not appear to harm their ability to understand the course material.

This research indicates that in spite of students having a negative attitude toward a large class, they still appreciate the study of marketing. Marketing educators, finding themselves with declining budgets, may have to resort to using larger principles of marketing classes. These large classes need not be a deterrent to learning. New teaching techniques (team teaching, group assignments, etc.) may make large classes just as acceptable to the students as smaller classes.