Quality of Marketing Education and the Performance of Marketing Graduates in Nigeria: Need for Theory-Practice Synergy

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Abstract

This study surveyed the views of marketing educators, practitioners and graduating students over the increasing gap between marketing theory and practice in Nigeria which has led to the displacement of marketing graduates from marketing positions in many companies across various industries. The survey research design was adopted while a convenience sample size of 180 respondents was used. The respondents were drawn from Marketing lecturers and students in tertiary institutions offering Marketing in the South-east and South-south, as well as industry managers. The study revealed that the level of synergy between marketing theory and practice in Nigeria was poor which results in poor performance of marketing graduates and that the quality of marketing education and methods adopted in teaching the subject matter have high impact on graduates' performance. It was recommended among others that tertiary institutions offering marketing should seek strong linkage, relationship and knowledge coalition with industry players and employers of labour and that NUC, NIMN and institutional authorities should put an eagle eye on the quality of lecturers, materials and learning environment in order to boost the quality and relevance of marketing education.

Keywords: Marketing Education, Theory, Practice, Synergy

1. Introduction

Marketing in Nigeria is growing in principle (theory), practice and professionalism. In principle, an increasing number of tertiary institutions (federal, state and private universities and polytechnics) offer marketing as a full-fledged discipline. This is against the sole offer by University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus in 1972 (Okpara, 2012). In practice, the intensity of competition in virtually all sectors of the economy has positioned marketing as an inevitable functional unit in profit-oriented and non profit-oriented organizations. The horn of marketing has been raised high in the activities of such professional bodies such as National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria, Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, etc. This accounts for the increasing number of marketing graduates and professionals certificated annually. Marketing according to Pride and Ferrel (1985) consists of individual and organizational activities aimed at facilitating and expediting exchanges within a set of dynamic environmental factors. Marketing functions can be performed at the micro and macro levels. The micro functions which are performed within the organizational setting include the following: marketing research, product planning and management, price management, distribution management, sales forecasting, training of sales personnel, market planning, after sales services etc, Anyanwu, (2000). Also, Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim and Nkamnebe (2007) recognized three sub-sections of the macro functions of marketing as merchandising (buying, selling, standardization, grading), physical distribution 'transportation, storage) and auxiliary functions (market information, risk bearing and financing).

In view of these functions, and the science/art debate about marketing, Anyanwu (2000) suggests that marketing should better be seen as a practice and its qualified members regarded as marketing practitioners. To achieve this, the call for theory-practice synergy is therefore imperative. Marketing theory emphasis the knowing and the academic side while marketing practice or art emphasizes the doing rather than the knowing. In Nigeria today, Marketing is offered in many tertiary institutions (Universities; private, federal and state, polytechnics of all kinds, colleges of education, etc.). Graduates of marketing come in different categories in Nigeria depending on the certificate obtained. There are National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), Post Graduate Diploma (PGD), Master of Business Administration in Marketing (MBA), Master of Science in Marketing (M.Sc.)and Doctoral Degrees (Ph.D.).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a mismatch in the number of marketing graduates produced and the number of marketing jobs secured by marketing graduates in Nigeria. From the etymological meaning of the subject matter, marketing is more of a practice (art) than theory (Anyanwu, 2003; Okpara, 2012; Pearce & Bonner, 2007). Kotler and Keller (2007) also assert that there has been a constant tension between the formulation side of marketing and the creative side. Marketing educators place too much emphasis on purely academic and theorizing issues, yet our discipline is fundamentally applied. This lopsided and imbalanced training to marketing graduates has led to the performance of marketing functions by non-marketing graduates in leading organizations in Nigeria. This is simply because most marketing graduates are academically sound, but worth very little in practical relevance which is the basic skill employers look out for. Observations show that over 65% of marketing managers in banking, transportation, telecommunication, manufacturing, insurance, pharmaceutical and hotel services are non-marketing graduates. It is embarrassing to note that it has become a culture in most organizations to leave marketing vacancies open for graduates in all disciplines. To worsen it, most graduates, in many instances can hardly justify their certificates in practice when employed. In many tertiary institutions, little or no attention is paid to the practical aspect. In today's globally competitive knowledge economy, organizations favour graduates that can produce results in the market place. Hence, there is the need to update marketing curricula to capture the existing practical gap. Clark (2001) suggested that university departments will need to change their curricula every two or three years in order to ensure that the content of their teaching reflects the rapid advancing frontiers of scientific knowledge. It is therefore worrisome to note that marketing education has been rated far below expectations in Nigeria when evaluated in terms of labour market absorption and employers assessment of graduates' performance vis-a-vis other graduates. More, reviewed literature shows an obvious lack of recent empirical studies on the link between marketing theory and practice in Nigeria. This study was therefore conducted to find out reasons accounting for the widening gap between marketing theory and marketing practice represented by the teaming number of marketing graduates and the very little number of these graduates securing and occupying sensitive marketing positions in leading industries. To achieve this, the following research questions were raised:

(1)Does the quality of marketing education influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations?

(2)To what extent do the teaching methods adopted by tertiary institutions in teaching marketing influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations?

(3)To what extent does the quality of lecturers influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations?

(4)To what extent does the quality of learning environment influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations?

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The figure below shows a conceptual model of synergy between marketing theory and marketing practice:
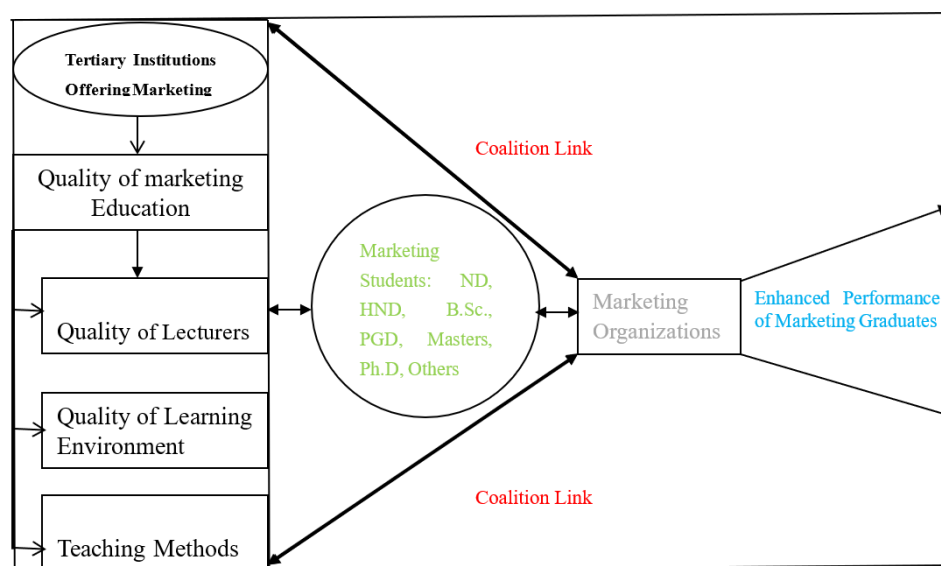

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Theory-Practice Synergy in Marketing Education

Source: Researchers' View (2018).

2. Review of Related Literature

Studies have been carried out on the relationship between the quality of education (quality of teachers, quality of learning environment, and method of teaching) and the performance of students. Few researchers have also considered the effect of education quality on the employability of graduates of the system. As observed by Tebabal and Kahssay (2011), the primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to bring a fundamental change in the learner. To facilitate practice of knowledge transmission, teachers are expected to apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit specific objectives and level exit outcomes (Gayanpfu, 2013). Again, Adunola (2011) maintains that teachers need to be conversant with the numerous teaching strategies that take recognition of the complexity of the concepts to be covered. To prepare students of marketing to be employable in the information technology oriented and highly competitive sectors of the global economy, there is the need to align the teaching methods, the teaching environment and the quality of lecturers with global best practices.

2.1 Empirical Review

In a study involving 109 students, Gayanpfu (2013) observed that there is a significant relationship between teaching methods and students academic performance. This is also supported by the empirical studies of Adunola (2011), Tebabal and Kahssey (2011), Luntanya (2014) and Harvey (2005). Above all, Trant (2012) in his study that involved Vietnamese higher students found that a positive relationship exists between teaching systems and the issue of graduate employability. However, Nazi and Can (2010) discovered in a study involving two groups of accounting students that there was no significant difference in the performance of students who were taught the subject matter using different approaches.

The quality of teachers (lecturers) has been found to have significant effect on the performance of students and their career prospects. Harvey (2005) noted that the nature of teaching and learning practices should aim at developing students to be effective workers. Trant (2012) observed that the main driver of the variation in students learning at school is the quality of the lecturer. Luntanya (2014) asserts that the quality of an education cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. Higgin (2015) observed that students placed with high-performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with low-performing teachers. Finally, a number of scholars have found strong relationship between learning environment and quality of graduates produced. The studies of Higgin (2015) Kamaraddin and Kamarazaman (2001) confirm this. However, Lawrence (2012) found no relationship between the two in his study. From these reviewed literatures, the following research hypotheses were derived:

H$_{01}$:   The quality of marketing education does not influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations.

H$_{02}$:   The teaching methods adopted by tertiary institutions in teaching marketing do not influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations.

H$_{03}$:   The quality of lecturers does influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations.

H$_{04}$:   The quality of learning environment does influence the performance of marketing graduates in organizations.

3. Research Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in this study with the questionnaire, oral interview and observation used in eliciting needed data. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to a randomly selected sample size of 180 respondents conveniently determined for the study. This number was made up of marketing educators, marketing final year students drawn from ten tertiary institutions offering marketing as well as industrial managers from banking, hospitality, transport, insurance, pharmaceutical and telecommunication organizations within the South-East and South-South states. The hypotheses stated in this study were tested using One Sample t-test in the SPSS version 21. T-test is based on t-distribution and is considered an appropriate tool for finding the significance of a sample mean in case of small sample when population variance is unknown (Kothari, 2012). The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbatch Alpha test which showed a correlation value of 0.72, 0.79, 0.81 and 0.76 respectively for the four variables; quality of marketing education, teaching method, quality of lecturers and quality of learning environment. The content and face validity of the instrument were determined by expert opinion.

3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

All the collected data were analyzed using simple percentages and tables.

Table 1. Administration and Retrieval of Questionnaire

Group	No. Issued	No. Retrieved/ Used	Percentage Retrieved
Educators	60	52	87%
Students (final year)	60	56	93%
Industry Managers	60	43	72%
Total	180	151	84%

Table 1 above shows that 60 copies of the questionnaire were administered on each of the three groups, 52 (87%), 56(93%) and 43(72%) were retrieved from marketing educators, marketing final year students and industrial managers respectively. In all, a total of 151 representing (84%) of the 180 copies distributed were retrieved.

Table 2. Analysis of Demographic Variables,

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Sex:		
Male	83	54.97
Female	68	45.03
Marital Status:		
Married	71	47,02
Single	80	52.98
Educational Background:		
Olevel (final years)	60	37,09
ND	15	10.00
HND	20	13.00
B.Sc	12	8.00
Masters and above	48	31.79
Age Bracket:		
18-30	62	41.06
31-40	32	21.19
41-50	35	23.18
51 and above	22	14.57

To be analyzed here are the age; sex, marital status and educational background of respondents.

The table above shows that 83 (55%) and 68 (45%) were males and females respectively. 71(47%) and 80(53%) were married and single respectively. Also, 56(37%), 15(10%), 20(13%), 12(8%) and 48(32%) had Olevel, ND, HND, B.Sc and Masters above respectively. Again, 62(41%), 32(21%), 35(23%) and 22(15%) were in the age brackets of 18-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 57 and above respectively.

Table 3. Rating of the Extent of Synergy between Marketing Theory and Practice in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
Excellent	0	0	0.00
Very good	8	5.30	0.26
Good	26	17.22	0.69
Fair	34	22.52	0.68
Poor	43	28.48	0.57
Very poor	40	26,49	0.26
Total	157	100.00	2.46= POOR

Table 3 analyzed respondents rating of the current synergy between theory and practice in marketing education, none rated it excellent. 8(5%), 26(17%) 34(23%), 43(28%) and 40(26%) rated it very good, good, fair, poor and

very poor respectively. The mean value analysis gave a grand total of 2.46 on a six scale option. This means that the synergy between marketing theory and marketing practice is poor.

Table 4. Rating of the Effect of Quality of Marketing Education on the Performance of Marketing Graduates in the Field

Criteria	VH	H	L	VL	Mean score	Result
Quality of educators	83	57	9	2	3.46	High
Quality of teaching Materials	48	79	16	8	3.10	High
Quality of learning environment	93	44	11	3	3.50''	Very High
Total	224	180	36	13	3.36	High
	49%	40%	8%	3%		

Table 4 shows respondents' rating of the effect of quality of marketing education on the performance of marketing graduates in the industry. The three criteria assessed were the quality of educators with a mean score of 3.46 (High), the quality of teaching materials with a mean score of 3.10 (High) and the quality of learning environment with a mean score of 3.50 (Very High). In all, a total of 224 votes (49%), 180 (40%), 36 (8%) and 13 (3%) were recorded for very high, high, low and very low respectively. The cumulative mean score was 3.36 which means that the quality of marketing education has High effect on graduates performance in the field.

Table 5. Rating of the Impact of Teaching Method Adopted on the Performance of Marketing Graduates.

Options	Very high	High	Low	VL	Mean score	Result
Class room lectures	46	40	48	17	2.76	High
Case Analysis	74	72	5	-	3.46	High
Discussion method	52	56	21	22	2.92	High
Group work	63	48	31	9	3.09	High
Seminars/workshops	88	52	11	-	3.51	Very High
excursions/ Participation	90	61	-	-	3.59	Very
High Industrial Training	56	64	20	11	3.08	High
Total	469	393	136	59	3.21	High
	44%	37%	13%	6%		

The above table shows respondents' rating of the effect of teaching methods on the performance of marketing graduates. Seven methods of teaching marketing as suggested by Kalu, Agu, and Amaechi (2012) were used. The class room lecture method was rated high with a mean score of (2.76%). Case method, discussion method, group work method, and industrial training method were also rated high with mean score average of 3.46, 2.92, 3.09 and 3.08 respectively. Seminar/workshop methods and excursion/participation methods were rated very high with mean score averages of 3.57 and 3.59 respectively. In all, 469 (44%), 393 (37%), 136 (13%), and 59 (6%) rated the impact of teaching method on the performance of marketing graduates very high, high, low and very low respectively. The cumulative mean score average of 3.21 shows that the teaching method has High impact on graduates' performance.

Table 6. Graduates' Performance When Theory-Practice Synergy is neglected

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	7	4.64
High	18	11.92
Low	53	35.10
Very Low	73	48.34
Total	**157**	**100.00**

The table above shows that 7 (5%), 18 (12%), 53 (35%) and 73 (48%), rated performance of students when theory-practice synergy is neglected very high, high, low and very low respectively. When a mean score of 1.72, the result

shows that graduate's performance will be low when theory-practice synergy is neglected in the teaching of marketing.

3.2 Test of Hypotheses

All the stated hypotheses were tested using the student t-test as disclosed.

Rule: At *0.05* level of significance and an appropriate degree of freedom, if the critical value of t is less than the calculated value of t and the Alpha (0.05) is greater than the p-value, **reject H_0** and **accept H_I.** The table below shows the results of the four tested hypotheses:

Table 7. Results of Tested Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Source of Date	T-Cal	P-Values	DF	T-Critical	Decision
One	Table 4	3.593	0.004	11	2.201	Reject Null
Two	Table 4	3.222	0.015	7	2.365	Reject Null
Three	Table 4	3.124	0.017	7	2.365	Reject Null
Four	Table 5	6.639	0.000	27	2.012	Reject Null

The test was calculated at an alpha level of 0.05 which was compared with the p-value (sig. 2 tailed).

3.3 Summary of Findings

The following key findings were made in the course of this study:

(1) The study discovered that the level of synergy between marketing theory and practice in Nigerian tertiary institutions was rated poor. The theory-practice gap leads to very poor performance of marketing graduates in the marketplace.

(2) The study also revealed, from the tested hypotheses, that the quality of marketing education represented by the quality of educators (lecturers), quality of teaching materials (textbooks, teaching aids such as technological facilities etc) and quality of learning environment have high impact on the performance of marketing graduates. In contrast, most of the institutions have very poor learning environment. This is in line with the findings of Gayanpfu (2013), Adunola (2011), Tebabal and Kahssay (2011), Luntanya (2014), Harvey (2005) and Trant (2012), while it contradicts Nazi and Can (2010) findings.

(3) It was also revealed, from the fourth hypothesis tested, that the teaching method adopted in the teaching of marketing affects performance of marketing graduates to a high extent. The teaching dimensions examined were classroom lecture method, case method, decision method, group work method, seminar/workshop, excursion/participation as well as industrial training methods. However, the impact of seminar/workshop and excursion methods was rated very high on graduates' performance. Nevertheless, classroom lecture accounts for over 80% of the teaching methods presently adopted in tertiary institutions. Most of the institutions have scrapped the industrial training programme while excursions were never in the curricular of most marketing departments. Higgin (2015) and Kamaraddin and Kamarazama (2001) assertions are in line with these findings while the assertion of Lawrence (2012) negates it.

4. Conclusion

There is an urgent need to rethink, redirect and reposition the quality of marketing education in Nigeria by ensuring that the gap existing between theory and practice is bridged. When this is achieved, marketing graduates will be sought-after products in the labour market in view of the important position marketing occupies as a functional unit in an organization.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, we recommend as follows:

(1) That tertiary institutions offering marketing should seek strong linkage, relationship and knowledge coalition with industry players and employers of labour. This will help to identify the modern complementary skills which marketing graduates are expected to possess. Efforts should be made to update the syllabus to include such practical aspects of marketing that will help to build the creative, communication, organizational, interpersonal and reflective skills of the graduates. Our new model can serve as a guide.

(2) To boost the quality and relevance of marketing education in Nigeria, NUC, NIMN and institutional authorities should put an eagle eye on the quality of lecturers, materials and learning environment in our

tertiary institutions. This view is in line with the assertions of Hunt (1994), Dimas et al (2011), Harvey et al (1993), Layland (2012) and Williams et al (2003), that there is the need to assess, evaluate, implement, adapt and assimilate teaching methods, learning activities, institutional materials, resources and technologies to strengthen the effectiveness and quality of education to match institutional studies with the problems of the labour market.

(3)   Efforts should be made to allocate reasonable credit load and pay serious attention to such practical methods of marketing education as case analysis, seminars, workshop, industrial training, project research, group work, discussions etc. This will help in monitoring students' progress and performance with a view to proffering timely corrective measures before graduation.

(4)   Also, employers of labour should provide receptive and friendly atmosphere to students who wish to update their knowledge in the industry through researches, industrial training etc. This will help to reduce the cost of retraining after employment.

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