

Part I

Theoretical underpinnings

1 A broad overview of education marketing

Lenin might be an unexpected start to a book on marketing higher education, yet his works identify a major reason for the wholesale embrace of marketing by higher education. In a direct reference to Lenin's analysis of the privilege of the ruling class, and drawing upon it as a metaphor for university rectors, Lobkowitz (1983: 31) argues that universities have the tendency to be 'quickly overcome by the spirit of the age', that is, the spirit of consumerism. As today, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were imbued with a civic notion of utility. Universities began to open faculties and offer degrees in subjects such as engineering, chemistry and physics. These faculties and institutions certainly produced knowledge and innovation as well as new and radical perspectives on society, created and maintained in the service of the economy and functioning as the technological underpinning of industrial capitalism. It is here that we find the locus of the seemingly timeless 'crisis of the university', one that is still with us today. As Lobkowitz concludes, the persistent argument over the question of the purpose of universities stems from this basic philosophical contradiction. Should they produce wisdom or utility? Can and should they do both?

Universities not only express intellectual and scientific values directly through their mission of teaching and research, but also embody in their practice powerful organizational, instrumental values, and wider social and cultural values. As Bridges (2006) observes, these practices have already changed and still are changing radically and rapidly in most sites of higher education. For many years the university has struggled, hidden or diverted attention away from its role in a post-modern society. As the market has enframed and swept almost all before it, the university – or at least the traditional European university – has avoided clarity in its mission. It has managed, mainly through the luxury of state funding, to resist attempts to resolve the potential philosophical contradiction of whether it should produce wisdom or utility. Yet universities, it seems, are ever more reluctant to acknowledge these essential value structures. Scott et al. argue that

'scientific values are emphasized at the expense of more open-ended "intellectual" values; instrumental values, through which universities can demonstrate their utility, are fore-grounded at the expense of more critical.' Furthermore, 'universities now seem to wish to be regarded as technically contrived "service" organizations that willingly accept whatever values their key stakeholders (notably government and industry) seek to impose' (Scott et al. 2004).

The arguments are made stronger by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which, in its 2002 educational sector newsletter, spoke of 'Higher Education for Sale'. This theme, used by Symes (1998) and by Ball (2004), identified commodification fetish as a global issue which may well be unsuited to developed countries and even dangerous for developing countries. Further warnings are made by Naidoo (2007) when she concludes that commercial forces worldwide have propelled universities to function less as institutions, with social, cultural and indeed intellectual objectives, and more as producers of commodities that can be sold on the international marketplace.

The debate was recently legitimized in the UK by the 2003 White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DFES 2003) where much of the rhetoric has been on fees, their pricing and, since their announcement, bursaries. This debate has helped to gauge the elasticity of price and the degree of flexibility that institutions have in guiding their institution through the pricing mechanism. Pricing of goods for immediate consumption, for example cars, refrigerators and chocolate bars, is different from pricing services delivering an outcome created by the consumer and provider sometime in the uncertainty of the future. Purchasing such a service is an investment or a gamble and may be perceived in terms of behavioural transformation rather than price. This is closer to the discourse of the UK government when it argues the benefit of higher education in terms of internal, personal or social rate of return on higher education, but this is not the primary discourse in the market or, indeed of the government. The presentation of fees and bursaries has generally been represented, by hedonistic images of consuming an education product in comfortable environments designed to evoke immediacy of benefit: it is a marketing approach which justifies the fees by converting education into utility, and then into something that money can buy.

In this *Zeitgeist*, the university has had to embrace the technologies of the market and consumerism; strategic planning with its emphasis on mission, vision and value, matching resources to opportunities and of course marketing. In a comprehensive review of the marketing of higher education in a globalized context, Helmsley-Brown and Oplatka (2007) identified an array of marketing tools and approaches applied to the market of higher education yet found that there is still research to be done to explore these

models in context (2007: 364) which suggests at least a divergence from business applications. It is a world where the economy is not synchronized to a temporality that allows for learning, and the universities have turned their backs on a major part of what they used to be about: the inculcation of a capacity for critical thought through reflection and deliberation. There is just no time between the demands of the curriculum, assessment, enjoyment and economic work to do so. Student lives risk being untouched by their exchanges with the academy as they progress rapidly through their programmes. Of course, such responses to consumerism will not be uniform across the field of higher education. As Naidoo and Jamasian observe:

Universities that are in the upper levels of the hierarchy with high levels of academic, reputation and financial capital are likely to draw on superior resources to engage in practices intent on conserving the academic principles structuring the field of education, thereby maintaining their dominant position.

(2005: 271)

In elite universities and departments around the world, students are least likely to push for changes because they understand that the combination of the university and the subject has a high exchange value in the external job market. By contrast, students studying loosely framed subjects in less prestigious universities are more likely to exert pressure on the faculty for change, and the faculty is more likely to be receptive. What this means is that the consequences of consumerism are likely to be felt more strongly at the more vulnerable institutions which admit students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the long run, the fad will fade; the new programmes will siphon resources from the core mission, and the university's identity may grow murky. In contrast, the case of New York University (NYU) is an example of educational values predominating in the repositioning of the university. The campus was beautified, new facilities created, academic programmes and teaching strengthened, faculty appointments held to high standards and a solid marketing-and-communications effort was created to support it all. So, what of marketing?

Certainly, in this sense marketing has been recognized to be more than just advertising and selling. But do we know enough about learners' desires and aspirations to benefit from the utilitarian notion within marketing theory to explore and understand learners' requirements under the rubric of consumption? In a competitive environment, any increase in professionalism ought to be beneficial but, if those efforts are misinformed by a metaphor of the market and developed under a 'philosophy of doing business' (Lafferty and Hult 2001), perhaps no progress can be made. All the above examples certainly share this theoretical underpinning, where a marketing precedent is followed and contextualized, without necessarily

questioning its transferability or considering a better way to enable society to emancipate, to liberate and to allow higher education to flourish.

Education markets

Educational institutions are rapidly identifying themselves, both conceptually and in their discourse, as agents of national and international markets (Williams 1997). This is indicative of a general shift from a social policy that construed higher education as a 'public good' to one which is an extension of self-interested economic policy. However, while we acknowledge the influence of market forces, whether the structure of higher education should be a quasi-market, state-controlled or a directed response to competitive forces is not our concern. What we attempt in this work is to look at how marketing reflects these market forces and then to consider an alternative conceptualization which does not deny institutional rivalry, but sees it directed systematically by the players to secure primary benefit for the learner. This shift is associated with, but not fully explained by, a move from transactional, product-based market orientations to relationships based on long-term, symbiotic learning partnerships.

In traditional marketing texts and those on higher education marketing there is still an assumption that appropriate marketing can resolve the financial and competitive crisis that the sector faces, and appropriate marketing in this sense means identifying the audiences as consumers. This approach requires education to become a product delivered by service providers, a prerequisite which has not gone uncontested. Indeed, the extensive literature on models of students as consumers (summarized well by Eagle and Brennan 2007), indicates that such a standpoint is hastened by the adoption of fees. It encourages students to demand more for their money, either by virtue of an institution's reputation to secure the student an advantage in the job market or by the exchange value of their degree. Such models are, of course, countered and Clayson and Haley (2005), from the more developed fees market of the USA, and Lipsett (2005) and Waterhouse (2002) from the UK, argue for a partnership approach to learning where the student is one of several partners in the creation of education.

In this neo-liberal ideology of the market, we propose a different conception of the role of institutional engagement with the market. This is revealed in detail in Chapter 3. To emphasize education rather than the market we call it '**pro-educating**', a term derived from the desire to promote education for what it can contribute to society. We define pro-educating as:

The mutually beneficial development of informed learning systems within which the development of relationships increases the opportunity for well-being and in which a duty of respect is owed and an obligation of fairness assumed.

In a recent article, Maringe (2005a) suggests that current university marketing lacks an appropriate contextualization, is poorly organized and coordinated, is largely responsive rather than strategic and that its application lacks formal operational guidelines. The CORD model, standing for Contextualization, Organization and co-ordination, Research and Development, provides a framework for raising the profile, the strategic focus and for developing a home-grown educational marketing philosophy.

Contextualization is a process that requires universities to understand in a more intimate way both the internal and external environments in which they intend to develop their curriculum. Organization and team building ensure that the marketing function becomes a grassroots process involving a diverse range of university staff. Researching the marketing interface allows developers to employ a variety of marketing techniques that enable the developers to devise a curriculum which not only reflects the needs and wants of potential customers, but can also make a valid claim for inclusion and incorporation in the new educational environment. The development phase encompasses a well-rehearsed cycle of curriculum development which includes trials and evaluation as integral aspects of the development process. As long as universities see themselves as either research centres or teaching academies, and fail to realize that ultimately these processes cannot be separated since they both contribute to curriculum development, the prospect of identifying with their core business will remain elusive.

There are no guarantees that this model will solve all the problems related to higher education marketing. However, it is certain that as long as we base our developments on imported wisdom, and as long as higher education does not identify its core business of curriculum development, it will be difficult to adopt the marketing orientation which it so badly needs. The CORD model thus represents an attempt to address the crisis that higher education marketing faces today.

The learner rather than customer approach encourages an overall goal for the marketing system to engage in collaborative resource allocation instead of divisive market-driven competition. Zineldin (1998) has developed a business model where business, let alone state-sponsored education, need not be viewed through the metaphor of war but can be viewed, in his words, 'as debate, co-operation and peace' (1998: 1139). In the social context, the market orientation debate has reduced trust in higher education, polarized the value of the reputation of institutions and damaged the collective perception of the level of the awards achieved by students. It has been

dominated by a search for external accountability of standards, cast doubts on their validity and has fostered an unstable perception of the higher education sector where self-trust and validation once held sway, and in some institutions still do.

In response, the cornerstone of most marketing planning has been the 'four Ps' and the concept's expansion as an alliterative device. This has been a source of concern for some time, with Duncan arguing forcefully for us to challenge what he calls the 'tacit acceptance of the "Kotlerian thing", otherwise, it will insidiously continue to prevail and its prescriptions continue to be assiduously misapplied to education' (1989: 183). Bruner (1988) made an attempt at the time to confront the worth of this conceptualization of marketing in the context of education and replaced it with Concept, Cost, Channel and Communication variables. Still affirming the utilitarian notion of consumer maximization, there was a delay of more than a decade before Wasmer et al. (1997) felt that 'this approach better fits the situation found in higher education, in part due to its avoidance of the negative connotations associated with the for-profit, tangible, product orientation of the four P's'. There is, for instance, real debate on the use of the client/customer metaphor when it comes to assessment. For an interesting discussion of this point and other related issues, see Coates (1998). What is really needed is not the re-conceptualization of learners as anything other than what they are, but respect for what they want to be. This labelling is part of the institutions' own struggle for identity, manifested in their products and services. The shift in focus must be accompanied by a desire for greater understanding of the learner as part of their learning networks and communities. We identify three foci for such a re-conceptualization. These are: (1) learners' 'existential trust' in the learning process; and (2) learners' temporality, both of which could be applied to other interested parties in the higher education system. The third is learners' self-confidence as a learner and a practitioner.

The book's structure

Part I of this book deals with the broad theoretical issues regarding marketing; Part II focuses on more practical issues of implementation. The book differs from others on marketing for we perceive a problem using market-derived techniques used to promote education as we believe education has, or could have, different values to the market. Furthermore, we are not sure we can divorce the two. In what follows we discuss the issues of our notion of pro-educating and its development.

Having set out our position in this introductory chapter, we proceed in Chapter 2 to develop the argument further by addressing commodification and the service provider. In Chapter 3, we present an outline of our model of

pro-educating, in Chapter 4, we take the students' perspective, and in Chapter 5, we discuss strategy issues in order to prepare the way for more practical work. This completes Part I.

Part II begins by considering the institution's position in the marketplace, going on to deal with internationalization (Chapter 7), fundraising (Chapter 8), pricing (Chapter 9), reputation (Chapter 10) and enrolment (Chapter 11), before concluding with the role of marketing in Chapter 12.

We recognize that no book as slim as this can act as a manual to marketing, nor has it been our intention to burden readers with yet another. We have attempted, therefore, to raise issues that we feel are important to embrace in the development of higher education in ways that harness marketing, rather than allow marketing to enslave higher education. We hope this approach offers insight to practitioners as well as academe. Moreover, we hope our argument offers those who work in higher education a different way of looking at marketing and its application to higher education. We do this considering the marketing literature while maintaining an approach from the educationalist perspective. Our approach is not cynical of existing marketing; it is questioning. We are advocates of marketing providing it services the needs of higher education. This of course makes our task more difficult, as the role of higher education might not be obvious to all stakeholders. Certainly, public good seems to have lost its primary appeal, to be replaced by individual personal benefit. We do not claim this is solely due to marketing, but perceive that its techniques have a case to answer. In this book we hope to investigate this in order that marketing's benefits to the promotion of the education that institutions have to offer can be maximized.