

Implications and capitalization of educational marketing activities

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Abstract

In educational marketing, teachers should be concerned with the development of methodological skills such as: the proper use of concepts like educational marketing, educational needs, analysis of needs, educational market, customers, offers, services, educational demand; applying concepts as part of educational activities; manifesting a creative methodological conduct on the educational level. Among the core competencies an educational marketing specialist should possess there is the development of psycho-social skills such as: training their capacity to adapt quickly to changes of social nature; identifying the dynamics and trends on the labor market, and their correlation with the education process; developing effective strategies for school-family partnership; collaboration with parents/the community for the purpose of achieving a genuine partnership in education

Key words: *organizational management, educational marketing, marketing policies, educational marketing strategies*

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Introduction

Educational marketing has as its objective the development of strategies that correlate schools with the general interests of the community to which they belong and with society in general by the free, wholesome and harmonious development of human individuality, training an autonomous personality and assuming a system of values that are necessary for personal fulfillment and development, in order to develop entrepreneurship, active civic participation, social inclusion and employability.

Usefulness of educational marketing operations

The educational marketing of an educational establishment involves prospecting society's requirements, investigating the needs of target population, seeking to adapt the educational establishment to the requirements of a continuously evolving society and the ongoing assessment of the educational offer.

Educational marketing activity starts by setting up S. M.A. R. T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-scaled) objectives, studying the educational market and tendering educational services anchored in socio-economic reality.

Schools carry out their activity in a continuously evolving environment and to adapt to it the institution is forced to study it; schools' marketing activity is conducted within this context, the relationship between various forces takes place between school and consumers of education (main beneficiaries), families of education subjects, the community and society in general.

In depth research of the target public involves analyzing the demographic and social structure, the economic situation of subjects' families as well as their level of training and research of their needs, interests and motivations of community members that are part of the target population. Educational marketing promotion policy must take account of these characteristics and their attitude in relation to the education supply of the institution and must be in

accordance with religious and cultural traditions of the target population (see the example of Burkha in France)

The design of the educational service/ product is based on the various information collected from studies, statistical reports, specialized publications and then by direct research and analyzing the needs of potential beneficiaries.

Depending on the vision of the institution's management, it creates products/educational services to be aimed at one of the educational market segments.

The segment of "intellectuals" is composed of a group of target population characterized by a high education level, and usually, not very high income. Trained individuals are more demanding in respect of the educational services and products they purchase and the educational institution must offer detailed information about the services they offer.

At the same time, to persons who are part of the "traders", characterized by a high level of education and high income, consisting of small-scale producers, small traders and civil servants, the institution is forced to offer related services apart from educational services, such as accommodation services, catering or cooked meals and transportation from home to school.

Investigating the needs and demands of potential consumers of education which are part of educational market segments mentioned above implies knowledge of the representations they have about educational services.

Devising the educational offer must consider meeting these needs and requirements, and knowing its comprising elements: the influential factors, the territorial distribution of potential beneficiaries, the quality of the services offered by competing educational establishments as well as the likely effect the bids from competitors have on their own educational offerings.

Consumers of educational products/ services have certain expectations from the educational institution according to their personal characteristics, for example the level of income at their disposal, and they will choose a specific program of studies considering the auxiliary services: transportation according

to the distance to educational facility, their time or the offers of competing educational establishments.

In the educational organization, the tactics and tools through which the marketing policy shall be carried out have become indispensable for obtaining quality services that would lead to a high degree of satisfaction among primary consumers of education as well as for society in general; it is for this reason that drawing up an educational marketing plan is essential in order to achieve optimum operation of an educational establishment.

Steps in educational marketing activity

The first step in carrying out educational marketing operations is to know consumer requirements, because the starting point is meeting the needs of the primary beneficiaries of the education system and acquiring fame for the educational institution in question. Without an analysis of consumers' actual needs, the educational institution may not be able to devise a relevant educational offer and the future effects of the education consumption cannot be evaluated. Consumers' perception of education and their personal expectations lie at the base of educational marketing strategies to ensure the prestige of an educational offer that harmonizes the recipients' needs and requirements.

Researching the educational needs and behavior of the primary, secondary and tertiary beneficiaries of the education system (pupils, students, families of direct beneficiaries, the community in general), the characteristics that influence consumer behavior, the influence of cultural, social, personal and psychological factors, and the post-acquisition behavior lead to recognizing the need and determining the expectations of potential beneficiaries.

Defining the educational offer and the analysis of products/services provided by the education institution is carried out referring constantly to consumer requirements and to the offer of competing institutions that aim at the same target population and that are trying to attract consumers with their offers.

Information necessary to define the structure of educational offers can be obtained from primary sources (on-the-spot investigations, studies, reports, documentation, summary, statistics) as well as from secondary sources such as mass-media. Using this information we can master the dimensions of the educational offer within a specified time period, assessments based on established standards are possible, and comparisons may take place on or via social media.

The educational offer also depends on the geographical area in which the direct beneficiaries live, with certain characteristics, aspirations, mentalities, education consumption habits, so we shall not propose a course of maritime diving in a mountain area.

The analysis of the methods used to promote the educational offer in mass media is of major importance in achieving the educational marketing activities; the means of mass media are increasingly fierce but they also have the potential to reach all consumers and impact the public image of the educational service, i.e. how they are qualified by the educational market segments.

The educational organization's management grants an increased attention to the monitoring and evaluation process of the product/services provided by an educational establishment and to the process of educational marketing in order to resolve any problems which may arise in the course of conducting activities.

In conclusion, the achievement of educational marketing policy involves a complex of activities grouped around the product/service provided, the price of education/ tuition, placing it as high as possible in terms of the actual needs of the direct beneficiaries, and the promotion, established under the name "marketing mix, the 4 P's, to which, in the educational field the Personnel Policy was added.

Educational marketing plan

Marketing plan is a defining element of the educational policy. It shall be devised in the light of the objectives of an education institution at a certain time.

Marketing plans are operational when they include a series of actions taken by the institution designed to achieve specific objectives such as introducing a new educational program of study on the market.

Depending on their duration, we have:

- *Short term* marketing plans (usually over the length of a school year);
- *Medium term* marketing plans (spanning over a school year or an entire cycle of education);
- *Long term* marketing plans (over 5 years).

Devising a market plan follows along a series of eight stages:

Analysis of the existing situation is carried out by researching the education organization's environment, the needs of potential beneficiaries and ways to meet these needs and requirements. General information on current activity and the resources of the institution is presented, thus achieving a S. W. O.T. analysis by analyzing internal and external environment factors influencing that institution's activities. The strengths of the education establishment shall be developed (own resources, educational partners, instructors, the prestige of the establishment) and the weaknesses shall be reduced. Opportunities and threats are dependent on external P. E. S. T. factors (Political, Economical, Social and Technological) as presented in Chapter III. (sub-section 3.1). Show results of previous or corresponding projects.

Setting marketing objectives kicks off with choosing the purpose of the plan (the desire to bring to the attention of a consumer the educational product/service offered by the educational institution or providing a new program of studies). The general objective is designed according to the particular resources of the education institution as well as in the light of strategies prevailing on the educational market. It must be in a position to express a desired behavior of the target population or a change in the image of a school unit (an increase in the number of applicants enrolled in an educational program, improving the institution's public image in the local community). Specific objectives are directly measurable and are in accordance with the

general objective (What is the number of students you wish to enroll by the end of the year ?). A timetable of the activities shall be also carried out.

Identifying target population (public) is done by choosing the segment/s of the educational market that the product/service is addressed to. A description of the target population is made according to variables like age, sex, income, education level, ethnicity with a preview of the benefits brought by the product/service in the lives of beneficiaries and the difficulties or motives making the target group unlikely to choose the product/service offered by the institution.

Determining the desired position on the educational market, the reason why the consumer of educational services chooses the provided service, showing the differences and advantages of the service as compared to competing offers.

The marketing mix contains strategies on the product/service, price/tuition, placement policy and personnel policy. The product/service is described in detail (name, characteristics, quality). The charges or tuition fees shall be presented in detail, including the deadlines for the installments to be paid. Placement refers to the description of lecture rooms location, the contact details (telephone, fax, e-mail address) as well as the transportation to/ from the facilities. Promotion means the way through which the message reaches the consumer and convinces them to purchase the product/service previously described, therefore the communication strategy used must be described and the messages well as the delivery channels need to be presented.

Appraisal of the plan will be carried out by analyzing quantity indicators (for example: number of applicants enrolled in a training program, the number of leaflets printed and distributed).

Development of the budget plan is done by estimating the expenditures or savings and the revenue corresponding to all actions taken by the school. The necessary and available financial resources for the achievement of the objectives of the marketing plan are being analyzed, such as additional costs

related to the development of an educational product or the promotion channels, the development and dissemination of promotional messages.

Implementation of the marketing plan involves stating the persons in charge the examination of its completion.



Figure no. 1. The graph of a marketing plan

The marketing plan helps to formulate solutions to the problems encountered by the establishment of education in its activities with respect to the changes in the structure of the environment in which the institution operates.

The marketing plan represents a guidebook which draws the guidelines which the institution of education must follow in order to meet their strategic objectives.

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