

GAPS IN MARKETING: CHALLENGES FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION IN THE WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COMMERCE CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT: *This study evaluated the concepts of commerce and marketing, the bases of, and dynamic phases of marketing and advanced rationale for integrating additional contents of marketing in the West African senior secondary school commerce curriculum. Topical elements in the existing West African senior secondary school commerce curriculum were identified for the proposed integration as a way of renewal of the curriculum to meet new challenges facing the learners in the emerging business economy of West Africa. Hence in the light of the existing relationship between commerce and marketing and the changes in the relatively new business worlds, it has become imperative to inject some additional contents of marketing into the existing commerce curriculum in the West African Senior Secondary Schools (WASSS). However, marketing as a discipline is needed to be accorded the right recognition and approved as a stand-alone subject in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).*

KEYWORDS: Business economy, Business Education, Commerce curriculum, Marketing, West Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Commerce is the study of economic activities of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services aimed at satisfying human wants and an attempt to earn a living (Anyaele, 2008). It also includes all other activities that aid services and as well make mass distribution possible via trade facilitation. Commercial occupation therefore covers the producers of the raw materials, the processes of turning raw materials into semi or finished goods through manufacturing and the distribution of the finished products to the ultimate or final consumers. Marketing, according to Achumba (2006), has been defined in several ways by different authorities. Despite the schools of thought, there are two distinct concepts that emerge from the definitions. One of them believes that marketing is a societal activity. Another is the view of marketing as the execution of those business functions that direct the flow of goods and services from the producer to the consumer. This description connotes that marketing is used to describe collectively those dynamic business functions or activities that are directly concerned with the demand stimulating and demand fulfilling functions of the business enterprise.

However, this description evaluates marketing from the distribution point of view, which is just an aspect of marketing tools. Perhaps, it was the inadequacy noticed in the earlier description that prompted the American Marketing Association (AMA) to further define marketing as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational goals. Perception of

marketing as a process implies that the activity goes beyond a single transaction. In a nutshell, the aim is to develop ties and relationship that require the maintenance of mutual benefits (AMA, 2009).

Of equal importance was the need to broaden marketing understanding beyond national borders to include the world. Based on this consideration, marketing is explained as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create and sustain exchanges that satisfy individual, organisational, and societal goals in the systemic context of a global environment. (AMA, 2009). Meanwhile, Kotler & Armstrong (2006) refers to marketing as the human activity directed at satisfying the needs and wants through exchange process. This implies that any human activity that is directed at satisfying needs and wants through exchange process is a marketing activity. On the other hand, Kotler & Keller (2006) remarks that marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creation and exchange of products and value with others.

Commerce and Marketing

Commerce and marketing shares broadly similar characteristics with respect to their dynamic nature, thematic focus on human-environmental relationships; humans in society as the primary unit of analysis, and goals and objectives. First, commerce and marketing are dynamic in nature because they both study human consumption patterns from different perspectives. This explains why management sciences, which business administration and its subsidiary- marketing constitutes a part, are referred to as the management and structure of business in commerce curriculum (West African Examination Council [WAEC], 2014).

Second, the central organising theme of human-environmental relationships helps commerce and marketing experts to organise different facets of human-environmental relationships, such as economic, socio-cultural and psychological dimensions around this theme to explain how humans in society influence their environment and how they are also influenced by their environment (Okunloye, 2006). Third, humans (consumers/producers or buyers/sellers) in society as the basic unit of analysis are shared by commerce and marketing. The gregarious nature of humans as social beings is responsible for their living in societies at domestic or international scene. These humans are inevitably involved in the multi-faceted relationships of buying, selling, distribution, and market competition as individuals and groups.

Fourth, commerce and marketing share broadly similar goals and objectives that engender the satisfaction of human needs and wants through exchange process. Commerce is aimed at equipping individuals with the basic skills, knowledge and competence required to appreciate the importance of commercial activities and their relationships with other aspects of production (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2010). Meanwhile, the primary focus of marketing is to enhance the identification, anticipation and satisfaction of consumer needs at a satisfactory benefit (National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria [NIMN], 2014). This benefit may be in financial terms and other non-financial terms that generate same satisfactory utility to both the consumer and the marketer.

Rationale for Integration of Marketing in Business Education

Business education has been variously defined by many authors just as there are many schools of thought. Business education is generally defined as that aspect of total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in business world

as a producer and or as a consumer of goods and services that business offers. Filani (2006) defines business education as consisting of the total activity that is planned, organized and developed in favour of the preparation of youths for responsible participation in the community. Azuka (2003) refers to business education as a programme of studies which aims at creating awareness in business occupation, preparing people to become better citizens and consumer of goods and services, and as well preparing them to be become informed business educators. Ulinfun (1986) is of the opinion that business education is an education for and about business or training in business establishment, clerical occupations and business policy analysis. The view portrays business education as a training that gives occupational identity. However, another school of thought referred to business education as a phrase of general education.

Moreover, according to Nolan & Malsbury (1998) as cited in Egbe (2008), business education comprises of those business courses such a book-keeping, typewriting, shorthand and general business among others. It is against this backdrop that Osuala (2004) emphasizes that business education encompasses several business areas to select from and such selection should take into consideration the ability of the student to excel. According to Agbionu (2008), business education is the post-secondary education in subjects like accounting, marketing, office administration, banking and finance. For the purpose of this paper, emphasis shall be made on the rationale that necessitate the integration of marketing into business education curriculum in general and commerce curriculum in particular.

Business education is a model and strand of purpose of commercial curriculum aimed at developing vocational skills and competencies required for the performance of basic business jobs such as book keeping, salesmanship, taking simple administrative decisions, etc. Business education further promotes economic growth and development which is dependent upon the calibre of manpower in the country. It provides the learners with a good understanding of the functions of the various sectors or components of the economy; and the ability to choose among the competitive alternatives. Business education also creates awareness on the nature of business and its role in the development of the relationship between work and self-survival.

To achieve the noble objectives of business education highlighted above, incorporation of marketing into the curriculum of the subject matter becomes essentially imperative. The literature, suggests that marketing as a dynamic business function enhances corporate goodwill (Balmer & Gray, 2003) and organisational efficiency. However, marketing enhances product branding and market competitiveness (Fill, 2009). It further promotes customer satisfaction and loyalty (Helm, 2007). Although it should be noted that marketing is dynamic in applications and practices bearing in mind that marketing as an eclectic discipline that depends heavily on social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. This makes its approach basic to the successful implementation of virtually all business philosophies. Therefore, the role of marketing in any business endeavour cannot be underemphasized because it is the means through which all daily business transactions and activities are undertaken (Jobber, 2001).

Importantly, integration of marketing in commerce curriculum in West African Senior Secondary schools is not a matter of choice but an act of necessity, especially in this contemporary regime of fairer trade in goods and services via liberalization and global market deregulation. This will go a long way in enhancing intellectual sophistication in the West African business environment, and as well promote qualitative learning that can engender stronger business acumen among the youths and young school leavers in the West African sub-region

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with the tradition in curriculum development, when the societal milieu and the challenges facing the learners change, it becomes imperative to rework some aspects of the curriculum for the purpose of curriculum renewal or reform to make the curriculum fit the learner (Okunloye, 2006). Hence in the light of the existing relationship between commerce and marketing and the changes in the relatively new business worlds, it has become imperative to inject some additional contents of marketing into the existing commerce curriculum in the West African Senior Secondary Schools (WASSS). However, marketing as a discipline is needed to be accorded the right recognition and approved as a stand-alone subject in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

Accordingly, the following areas of integration of marketing into the WASSS's commerce curriculum are proposed. First, other contemporary marketing mix variables should be added to the traditional 4ps of marketing. For the avoidance of doubt, additional variables such as people, process and physical evidence are needed to be integrated under marketing mix in the WASSS III syllabus. Secondly, other promotional tools need to be added to the existing tools that comprise of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations. To effect this change, promotional tools such as direct marketing and online promotion among others are needed to be integrated under marketing promotion in the WASSS III syllabus. Thirdly, consumer behaviour needs to be integrated vis-à-vis consumer protection and sovereignty in the WASSS III syllabus. Fourthly, market positioning needs to be integrated via-a-vis market segmentation in the WASSS III syllabus.

Finally, basic marketing plan and elements of e-marking also need to be incorporated into the scheme of work in the WASSS syllabus. It is hoped that these innovations in commerce syllabus will equip learners with adequate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of eclectic marketing science for effective customer relations in a highly competitive and globalized business world.

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