

## Delivery of Introductory Marketing Education

ELMAR Contribution by J. Scott Armstrong

October 2, 2003

---

Three options were proposed for introductory marketing: 1) many small sections, 2) many large sections, and 3) large sections plus recitations. Strategy #2 is the least expensive for the school. It is also less expensive for students, as it makes it easier to avoid preparing for and attending class.

Another important criterion is learning. Each of the three alternatives involves learning in groups. Zajonc (1965), reviewing studies on rats and students, found that learning is inhibited in the presence of others. He concluded that “students should study alone” (he provided no advice for the rats). A meta-analysis of 241 studies by Bond and Titus (1983) also concluded that the presence of others inhibits learning. Tough (1993), using in-depth interviews, found that adults have great difficulty describing any important things that they learned in groups.

Research shows that class size does not affect learning. In fact, going to class is not related to learning. In a study involving 30,000 students in the U.K., Attiyeh and Lumsden (1972), used before and after tests for semester-long courses in economics; attendance at lectures was unrelated to learning skills. (Interestingly, they also found that students who rated their teachers *poorly* learned more.)

There are other alternatives for designing introductory marketing courses – such as using video-taped lectures. This allows you to have the most entertaining lecturer for all sections, and you can run the same tape for years. It also allows those interested in learning to do so, while those not interested can get the feeling that they are meeting the expectations of teachers and parents as they listen to entertaining lectures (or play computer games during the lectures). For another alternative, what about the old English system where students learn on their own (using books, video tapes, exercises, discussions, etc.) and meet with teachers to review their progress?

If we were currently successful at helping people learn, one might be cautious about trying other approaches. We do not have to worry about that. Hunt, Chonko and Wood’s (1986) study showed that marketing majors performed no better in marketing jobs than those who had no formal education in marketing; this finding is consistent with research findings from other fields (e.g., Berg 1970). This might be partly due to a lack of content: Armstrong and Schultz (1993) showed that principles of marketing textbooks contain no principles. More generally, Pfeffer and Fong (2002) concluded that an MBA provides no value added.

If our current strategies do not aid learning, why not experiment with alternative approaches? The University of Chicago gained publicity for its innovative LEAD program, and Pfeffer and Fong (2002) describe experiments at a few business schools. On the whole, however, business school experiments related to learning are rare. What do you think accounts for this lack of experimentation? You might start by considering how many deans, program directors, or department heads you know who are interested in experimentation on learning. I met one, and he had a major influence on my approach to teaching.

### References

- Armstrong, J. Scott & Randall L. Schultz (1993), “Principles Involving Marketing Policies: An Empirical Assessment,” *Marketing Letters*, 4:3, 253-265. (Full text at <http://jscottarmstrong.com>)
- Attiyeh, Richard & K. G. Lumsden (1972), “Some Modern Myths in Teaching Economics,” *American Economic Review*, 42, 429-433.
- Berg, Ivar (1970), *Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery*. New York: Praeger.
- Bond, C. F. & L.J. Titus (1983), “Social Facilitation: A Meta-analysis of 241 Studies,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 94, 265-292.

Hunt, Shelby D., Lawrence B. Chonko & Van R. Wood (1986), "Marketing Education and Marketing Success: Are they Related?" *Journal of Marketing Education*, 6 (Summer), 2-13.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey & Christina T. Fong (2002), "The End of Business Schools? Less Success than Meets the Eye," *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 1, 78-95.

Tough, Allen (1982), *Intentional Changes*. Chicago: Follet.

Zajonc, Robert B. (1965), "Social Facilitation," *Science*, 149 (July 16), 269-274.