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[J. Prakash]

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Email: [editor@ijsrp.org](mailto:editor@ijsrp.org)

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# Scholarship of the Marketing Discipline and Profession in Kenya

Osman Wechuli Chesula\*

\* Department of Business, Raf International University

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**Abstract-** The purpose of this paper was to critically examine the scholarship of the marketing discipline and profession in Kenya. The paper empirically analyses secondary literature and scholarly articles related to scholarship in the marketing field. From the results, it is clear that several challenges are facing marketing scholarship in the country. Specifically, the declining number of marketing scholars and lecturers mainly attributed to leaning institutions concentrating on research and neglecting the teaching aspect. The results provided are not exhaustive and therefore there is need for further research preferably primary descriptive study on the subject in order to shed more light.

**Index Terms-** Scholarship, Practice, Teaching, Research

## I. INTRODUCTION

In order to understand scholarship in marketing, we start by discussing the different fields in marketing as observed by (Johnson, 2020). The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communication, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” Many fields overlap into different categories. According to Iñaki (2002) the scope of marketing is unquestionably broad. Often included are diverse subject areas such as consumer behaviour, pricing, purchasing, sales management, product management, marketing communications, comparative marketing, social marketing, the efficiency/ productivity of marketing systems, marketing ethics, the role of marketing in economic development, packaging, channels of distribution, relationship marketing, marketing research, societal issues in marketing, retailing, wholesaling, the social responsibility of marketing, international marketing, brand equity, commodity marketing, and physical distribution. Centobelli, Cerchione, and Esposito (2017) noted that not all writers would include all of the topics under the marketing caption. However, majority would disagree as to which topics should be excluded.

Scholarship in marketing field is an area that is gaining attention due to the declining number of scholars and professionals in the field over the years. This paper therefore looks at the scholarship of marketing discipline in Kenya and makes recommendations for future improvements.

## II. SCHOLARSHIP OF THE MARKETING DISCIPLINE

Marketing as a field of study requires that academicians balance three important elements, research, teaching and service to the academy. The focus on each of these important segments of academics is relative and will always depend on one’s institution or academic regulatory bodies (Obilo & Alford, 2015). For example, in Kenya, the Commission for university education (CUE) has put a general guideline on priority areas for academic staff in public universities with professors being required to do more research and less teaching while junior academic staff like lecturers doing more teaching than research.

**Table 1: CUE summary of relative Weighted Points for different cadre of Academic staff**

Areas of contribution	Relative Weighted points			
	Lecturer/ Research Fellow	Senior Lecturer/ Senior Research Fellow	Associate professor	Professor
Research and publications	40	50	60	65
Teaching and instruction	30	25	20	15
Professional/Consulting/Industry	-	10	10	10

Administration/Responsibility	20	10	05	05
Community Engagement/Other contributions	10	05	05	05
<b>Total score</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: (Commission for University Education, 2014)

It should however be noted that the guidelines have since been nullified a court ruling which concluded that not all stakeholder were consulted (Wanzala, 2019). Research on training doctoral marketing students to teach has bemoaned the lack of formal training in graduate programs. Marketing discipline in particular has always fallen short of ensuring quality teaching in business schools (Roach, Milkman, & McCoy, 2014). Obilo and Alford (2015) while examining the academic discipline of marketing noted that there had been a lot of emphasis on research in the expense of teaching. According to Johnston, Milkman, and McCoy (2013) faculty members are being pressurized to do research and publish in top academic journals. This has also been the case in Kenya where the over emphasis on research has created an academic gap with the relative number of graduates in marketing dropping according to reports of most universities. Doctoral program in Marketing has also not been a success story in Kenya and other parts of the world. This is evident by an examination of US doctoral education in marketing by Griffith (1997) who discovered that there has not been enough focus on training marketing doctoral candidates as educators since teaching has been reduced to secondary endeavor. In Kenya the evidence of few PhD holders in marketing is seen when some universities due to scarcity are forced to borrow or outsource lecturers from other universities or even the few in corporate world. This though the considerations are more economic it goes against the general trend in other fields where scarcity in number of lecturers has been more about availability of capital for recruitments rather than availability of qualified lecturers to be recruited.

The table 2 below was developed from respective university official graduation lists indicates that in the last two years only 17 people have graduated with doctoral degrees in marketing from the four big public universities in Kenya. This is a clear indication that very few students are undertaking marketing as an area of specialization in Kenyan Universities as compared to other areas like Finance, Strategic management and Supply chain management a trend also observed by

**Table 2: Doctoral graduants in marketing over the last four graduation ceremonies from the four big public universities.**

	University of Nairobi (59 <sup>th</sup> - 62 <sup>nd</sup> Graduation)	Moi University (36 <sup>th</sup> - 39 <sup>th</sup> Graduation)	Kenyatta University (44 <sup>th</sup> - 47 <sup>th</sup> Graduation)	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (31 <sup>st</sup> - 34 <sup>th</sup> Graduation)	Totals
2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019 graduation ceremony	1	4	0	0	5
1 <sup>st</sup> 2019 graduation ceremony	0	0	1	1	2
2 <sup>nd</sup> 2018 graduation ceremony	2	1	0	3	6
1 <sup>st</sup> 2018 graduation ceremony	2	0	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: Author, 2020

The success of scholarship in marketing lies in the training of more doctoral students who could become future professors to continue training in the field (Johnston, Milkman, & McCoy, 2012; Lusch, 1982). Most countries have marketing doctoral curricula's that do not emphasize teaching skills as one of the units for doctoral programs. Other countries should emulate the US where standards for accrediting doctoral programs includes preparation for teaching responsibilities in higher education for those students who expect to enter teaching careers as one of the goals normally included in a doctoral program. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) which is one of the doctoral studies accrediting bodies in US has set standards which require faculty to emphasize teaching effectiveness in their careers including making learning and pedagogical contributions to remain academically qualified (Asmawi & Sujanto, 2018; Goulet, Lopes, & White, 2016).

Despite of the above underpinnings, research is quite essential for any academic field including marketing and in my opinion all the facets of scholarship should be given equal priority. The advocates of marketing as a science like Bartels pointed out that without research the marketing discipline cannot grow beyond theory. Johnston et al. (2013). Research brings out the scientific element of marketing scholarship. According to Levy (2018) marketing should be viewed as a science that has its applications. Levy uses the academic tree metaphor to demonstrate his view. The root of the academic tree is the research and doctoral programs, the trunk is the masters carrying the direction to the world of action and the most visible part is the foliage and leaves where undergraduate programs and service to the public provides knowledge to the everyday work life.

### III. CHALLENGES OF SCHOLARSHIP IN MARKETING DISCIPLINE

#### A. Motivation

Motivation is a very important component in any profession. Many scholars are tempted to conclude that most professionals with marketing major have not been compensated adequately compared to other disciplines. Bacon (2017) in his work, "Revisiting the Relationship Between Marketing Education and Marketing Career Success" noted that an undergraduate degree in marketing was positively related to income in marketing jobs, but surprisingly, respondents with some non-marketing majors earned about the same as marketing majors in marketing jobs. Satisfaction with a marketing career was not significantly related to academic major. The income regression model explained 30% of the variance in marketing income, but also indicates that most of the variance in marketing success is not explained by education. It's in our opinion that this is also the case in Kenya. Most of the marketing office holders in many Kenyan organizations are not marketers by profession. This disadvantages the genuine marketers who have gone through the lengthy academic ladder.

#### B. Cheating

Cheating or what other scholars refer to as academic dishonesty has been a major impediment in the growth of marketing academia just like any other field of study. Beckman, Lam, and Khare (2017) postulated that cheating is the biggest problem in higher education. Marketing academic and non-academic articles, thesis and dissertation plagiarism is on the rise but can't be detected easily since, determining how many students and scholars cheat is difficult to figure out precisely as most data comes through self-reporting, and it is likely that students and scholars do not want to advertise their cheating, making measurement difficult. Whitley (1998) reviewed 46 studies conducted from 1970 to 1996; the range of the number of students engaging in academic dishonesty was from 9% to 95% across the different samples. The mean across the samples was 70.4%. This mean is similar to the number found by Kidwell, Wozniak, and Laurel in their 2003 study, where students self-reported any academic dishonest activity that they had participated in more than once (Miller, Murdock, & Grotewiel, 2017; Shin, Aiken, & Aleccia, 2017). According to that measure 74.5% of students are cheaters. Those who only cheated once were not included because they are less of a threat to the academic community. Furthermore, students also reported to more frequently cheating in forms that they considered less serious such as collaboration and plagiarism of small excerpts (Josien & Broderick, 2013). The advance in technology, and the increase in online class offerings, has created new ways to engage in academic dishonesty for potential cheaters (Cole, Swartz, & Shelley, 2017; Farisi, 2013).

#### C. Cultural differences

Another factor posing a big challenge to the scholarship in marketing is cultural differences. At the highest level of education, most Kenyan students are getting scholarships to study in other parts of the world. Likewise, some foreign students are also coming to study in Kenyan universities this poses a danger of conflicting cultural practices that also affect academics. A good example to note is where due to their culture, many Chinese students appear to embrace the tradition of rote learning with heavy emphasis on professorial lecture and do not view classroom discussion and interaction as an important component of learning (Keith & Simmers, 2013). Another major cultural factor that is affecting marketing scholarship is the individualistic tendency that was previously only exhibited by scholars from western countries and now being experienced globally (Keith, 2013). Due to competition for recognition, power among other factors scholars in marketing academia are not supporting each other as required. For example, they are concentrating on individual research that could have otherwise been better handled in groups (Gill, 2017; Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne, & Shultz II, 2015).

In Kenya, just like many other countries, language barrier has been a major impediment for the development of marketing discipline. For example, many students who perceive English as a second language, the English-speaking classroom may be a challenge. Their lack of language fluency as well as the unique nomenclature used in a quantitative marketing research class may leave international students feeling overwhelmed, frustrated and discouraged. A blended classroom environment where some interactions are internet-based may be more suited to the success of students whose native language is not English. One such group may be Chinese students. According to Tee Ng and Tan (2010), classroom involvement is important for Chinese students to build interpersonal skills, generate new ideas, foster creativity and encourage creative thinking.

#### D. Technically savvy generation

To add on, dealing with technically savvy generation is a big challenge to marketing researchers, teachers and consultants. Teaching a new technically savvy generation requires innovation in learning delivery modes (Aviles & Eastman, 2012). New learning environment should be active, collaborative, experiential, team based and as self-paced as possible. These techno savvy students need time to reflect on the information and to determine why it should matter to them. Online learning is one such delivery mode that facilitates a learning environment any time, any place where students can access instructional material in small chunks on their terms and can replay portions as needed, something not possible in a live classroom (Aviles & Eastman, 2014). Online learning also offers access to websites, videos, recorded guest lectures, Wikis, blogs, virtual marketplaces and online communities, all within the students comfort zone (Collins & Halverson, 2018; Rennie & Morrison, 2013).

#### E. Marketing scholarship regulation

Lastly, the issue of marketing scholarship regulation has not been emphasized by governments. In Kenya, unlike the accounting scholars who are required to be members of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya (ICPAK) before they can seek

employment in academic institutions including lecturing, the marketing scholars are not given such conditions. For marketing professionals in Kenya to start or do business, offer marketing services, or be recognized for their contribution in the marketing field, they are not required to be members of Marketing society of Kenya (MSK). It has severally been said that anyone can be a marketer as it is believed to be a profession with no requirements and thereby leading to the rise of so many unqualified practitioners. In the event, that a non-registered marketer does anything damaging to the profession, then no recourse can be sought as they are not bound by the association's code of ethics. Even for those registered with the society, they are not completely bound to its standards as expulsion from the association does not lead to exclusion from advancement opportunities such as getting employment or contracts or any legal action (Munene, 2014; Mwaura & Bula, 2017).

Proponents of regulations hold that it is the only way of bringing order and control within a diverse field like marketing. Some support full control through legislations that criminalize any violations while others propose partial control either through self-regulations or a combination of both self-regulations and legislations. Concerns have been raised on each set of regulation but what marketing practitioners and professionals are grappling with are the challenges of the overall regulations in the field. To start with, The mere fact academics or policymakers claim that well intentioned regulation will protect consumers does not mean it actually will do so (Koopman, Mitchell, & Thierer, 2014). Historical analysis of marketing regulation demonstrates, in practice, regulation does not always live up to the normative goals of those who seek it in the "public interest." This danger was well understood by one of the original exponents of the public interest theory of regulation Arthur C. Pigou in 1920 (Koopman et al., 2014).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Data on scholarship of marketing discipline especially in Kenya is very scanty. None the less, it is quite evident that marketing professionals have been declining locally based on prior research findings on the subject. This is attributed to a number of scholarly challenges among them learning institutions prioritizing research in the expense of teaching. It is therefore important to balance all the facets of marketing profession in order not to limit marketing and render it ineffective in the future. It is also important to note that marketing scholarship scope is quite diverse and that's why it is being treated as a science and can also contribute to the development of other fields and supporting the society at large.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for marketing profession to attract more students, measures in law should be taken to ensure that it is mandatory for any lecturer or practitioner in marketing is approved by one regulatory body, preferably the marketing society of Kenya. This will ensure that the body keeps track of its members and protects their interests including their jobs. In addition, the government and all relevant stakeholders should relook into university curriculums with the aim of ensuring that for the advancement of knowledge and research, teaching Pedagogy is part of the doctoral training process. Lastly, Further research on the subject should be encouraged for the benefit of knowledge and scholarship.

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#### AUTHOR

**First Author** – Osman Wechuli Chesula, Lecturer, Raf International University; [cowechuli@gmail.com](mailto:cowechuli@gmail.com).

**Correspondence Author** – Osman Wechuli Chesula, [cowechuli@gmail.com](mailto:cowechuli@gmail.com), [o.chesula@riu.ac.ke](mailto:o.chesula@riu.ac.ke), +254722291073.