Applying the Marketing Concept to School Management in Zimbabwe

Maxwell Musingafi[1]   Shupikai Zebron[2]   Florence Chimbwanda[3]   Lilian Chaminuka[4]
1.Zimbabwe Open University, Department of Development Studies, Masvingo Regional Campus.
2.Zimbabwe Open University, Department of Counselling, Mashonaland West Regional Campus
3.Zimbabwe Open University, Department of Department of Agriculture, Masvingo Regional Campus
4.Zimbabwe Open University, Department of Counselling, Harare Regional Campus
*Email of corresponding author: mmusingafi@gmail.com

Abstract
This conceptual paper examines the application of the marketing concept to school educational management. It views the school system as a business, interacting with both external and internal customers as its primary constituents. It seeks to highlight the ways in which an education institution can operate at higher efficiency by adapting the marketing concept. By applying traditional marketing concepts, this paper addresses the ways in which a school satisfies its students. At a time when school fees is at an all-time high in Zimbabwe, it is important for schools to re-think their value proposition and to re-assess whether they are adequately preparing their students with the skills and confidence to enter higher education and the workplace. It is important for them to approach this problem from the perspective of the students.
Keywords: marketing concept, school management, customers, students, business

1.   Introduction

A recent trend in the education systems throughout the world (Zimbabwe included) is an emphasis on business management and concepts. According to Murinda and Gasva (2013: 131), 'marketing principles the world over are gaining acceptance and adoption in government departments and educational institutions'. They argue that the reason for this state of affairs is what they call 'clear resonance of educational objectives and the marketing philosophy'. For them marketing is relevant to the management of educational institutions for the following reasons: marketing believes that the customer is the basis of all organisational activities; educational institutions are service providers; and marketing knowledge is also useful to teachers and students. This paper looks at the relevance of the marketing concept in school management using this line of argument as given by Murinda and Gasva (2013). It however starts by giving an overview of the marketing concept to put the discussion into its proper context.

The overall aim of this paper is to contribute a theoretical framework that will help towards the management of schools in Zimbabwe. The paper aims at enlarging considerably the knowledge base and understanding of the school management concepts.

2.   Definition of Terms

Marketing: Marketing is defined as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (American Marketing Association, 2007). Kotler and Armstrong (2008) also defined marketing as the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return. Marketing is thus 'an organizational effort to create and retain profitable customers through positive relationship building between the organisation and its internal as well as external customers in a socially responsible manner'.

Marketing concept: The marketing concept was first defined as "a way of thinking; a management philosophy guiding an organization's overall activities (affecting) all the efforts of the organization, not just its marketing activities" (Dibb, Simkin, Pride and Ferrell, 1997). The current thinking summarises the marketing concept as follows: the organisation concerned bases all its activities on the satisfaction of needs and wants of targeted customers rather than its products, technology or production processes (Kotler, 2000).

Need: A human need is a state of deprivation of some basic satisfaction. People require food, clothing, shelter, safety, belonging, and esteem. These needs are not created by society or by marketers. They exist in the very texture of human biology and the human condition (Kotler, 2000).

Wants: These are desires for specific satisfiers of needs. Although people's needs are few, their wants are many. They are continually shaped and reshaped by social forces and institutions, including churches, schools, families and business corporations (Kotler, 2000).

Management: Management is a matching process (IPMZ, 1996). It involves the alignment of resources to meet organizational objectives (Musingafi, 2013). Traditionally the process involves planning, organizing, leading and controlling as illustrated (IPMZ, 1996).

3.   An Overview of Marketing Concepts

The discipline of marketing has two main schools of thought, where marketing is considered as either a function or a philosophy. As a function marketing is seen as a sub-discipline of management and thus represented as a department alongside other departments (Finance, Human Resources, and so on) in organisations. The marketing concept considers marketing as a philosophy rather than a function. The concept represents business thinking that has evolved through production philosophy; product philosophy; selling philosophy; marketing philosophy; societal marketing philosophy; and the holistic marketing philosophy (Keelson, 2012).

The production philosophy is premised on the assumption that consumers will favour product that are available and highly affordable (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2009), the production philosophy assumes that consumers are mostly interested in product availability at low prices. In this sense, management should focus on improving production and distribution efficiency. This is what guided Henry Ford's whole philosophy of perfecting the production of the Model T so that its cost could be reduced and more people could afford it (Pride and Ferrell, 2008).

The product philosophy assumes that consumers will prefer product based on its quality, performance and innovative features (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Since the company has the great knowledge and skill in making the product, it also assumes it knows what is best for the consumer. The product concept compelled companies to ensure improving product quality, and introduce new features to enhance product performance without consulting the customer to find his or her view on these product features.

The selling philosophy came after the product era. Its emphasis was to create a department to solely responsible for the sale of the organisation's product; while the rest of the company could be left to concentrate on producing the goods (Perreault and McCarthy, 1999). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), the orientation of the selling concept was that the company can sell any product it produces with the use of marketing techniques, such as advertising and personal selling. The concept assumes that 'consumers are unlikely to buy the product unless they are aggressively persuaded to do so' (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2009). Most organisations practice the selling concept when they have over capacity. Their aim is to sell what they make rather than make what the market wants. Such marketing carries high risks.

The marketing philosophy assumes that the starting point for any marketing process is the customer needs and wants, and no longer the aggressive selling. The key assumption underlying the marketing philosophy is that "a market should make what it can sell, instead of trying to sell what it has made" (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2009). The marketing concept focuses on the needs and wants of the buyer rather than the needs of the seller and the product. As noted by McKitterick (1958), the principal task of marketing is not just persuading the customer to buy, but also to provide the needs of the customer at the right quantity and quality. These views are consistent with an earlier proposition by Shaw (1912:736), who noted: 'goods are being made to satisfy rather than to sell'. Shaw (1912:708) also remarked, 'today the more progressive business man is searching out the unconscious needs of the consumer, and is then producing the goods to gratify them.' Recently, Kotler and Armstrong (2008) noted: 'The marketing concept takes an 'outside-in' perspective. The marketing concept starts with a well-defined market, focuses on customer needs, and integrates all the marketing activities that affect the customers. In turn, it yields profits by creating lasting relationship with the right customers based on customer value satisfaction'.

The marketing concept recognizes that the organisation's knowledge and skill in designing products may not always be meeting the needs of customers. Keith (1960), observed that "our attention has shifted from problems of production to problems of marketing, from the product we can make to the product the customers want us to make, from company itself to the market place". He also recognizes that even a good sales department cannot sell every product that does not meet consumers' needs. When customers have many choices, they will choose the one that best meets their needs. This is expressed in Levitt (1960) who made a clear distinction between the selling and the marketing orientation. According to him selling focuses on the needs of the seller; marketing on the needs of the buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller's need to convert his product into cash; marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming it. This philosophy is what is expected of organisations today to be market oriented and reap business success.

The marketing concept has since evolved into societal marketing concept, green marketing and the holistic marketing concept. The societal marketing concept holds that the organization should determine the needs, wants, and interests of target markets. It should then deliver superior value to customers in a way that maintain or improves the consumer's and the society's well-being. The societal marketing concepts asks if the firm that senses, serves, and satisfies individual wants is always doing what is best for consumers and society in the long run. It finds out that the pure marketing concept overlooks possible conflicts between consumer short run wants and consumer long run welfare.

4.   Relevance of the Marketing Concept in School Management

This paper now uses Murinda and Gasva's (2013) three pillar argument to measure the relevance of the marketing concept in school management. They argue that marketing believes that the customer is the basis of all organisational activities; educational institutions are service providers; and marketing knowledge is also useful to teachers and students.

4.1 The customer is basis of all organisational activities

The changes in today's educational environment are rapidly apparent: changing technology, changing students, changing student needs, changing community needs, and increased accountability to both students and the public. With these changes the need for marketing at educational institutions grows increasingly important. In fact, because of all these developments today, there is need for greater attention to the customer than ever before to ensure organisational success. These rapid changes translate into intense competition for students in schools and thus only those schools with a reputation of focusing on the customer (students, parents, suppliers, etc.) will survive the intense competition (Murinda and Gasva, 2013). Thus schools should adopt the marketing concept for their long term survival. In terms of being competitive, Hanley (1989) and Smith (1984) suggest that educational institutions which have invested in the marketing concept have not been disappointed.

Competition among educational institutions for students and the development and enhancement of alumni relations are two areas in educational institution setting where the marketing concept is often seen in practice. To broaden the application of the marketing concept, universities are beginning to use marketing research to learn more about potential students and then target them through improved databases and promotional methods. Alumni satisfaction is another research programme being used to determine dominant factors in the needs of students. In addition, parents, employers, and other friends of the university can be expected to be included in the future assessment of student needs.

Image and reputation have increasingly become the basis for differentiation among educational institutions, especially at tertiary education level. Programmes can be matched by competitors; and all campuses have cute students and green grass and trees. But image and reputation are different. They are tough to match. They provide a way to develop and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. Image is the product sold to the customer: students, employers, parents, and alumni. A college or university's reputation is based largely on the image it projects in the minds of its publics. "There is no top ten, really. Image and reputation are what are important, and these are interchanged," (Justiz, et al, 1986).

4.2 Educational institutions as service providers

Murinda and Gasva (2013) observe that there are clear and implied strategies for managing service organisations like schools, particularly on how to create the required impressions of excellence in service provision. A service is defined as 'any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything (Kotler, 2009). Its production may or may not be tied to a physical object. The classroom teaching by a teacher is an example of a pure service. The unique characteristics of services require high sensitivity in dealing with the customer aggravating the need for adopting the marketing concept in schools. According to Perreault and McCarthy (1999) these include intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability.

Intangibility refers to the fact that services cannot be seen, tasted, felt, smelt or heard before they are bought. Consumers are, therefore, uncertain of the kind of service they will actually receive. They can only know after the service has been delivered. Inseparability refers to the fact that provision of the service and its consumption cannot be separated. The service is consumed as it is being produced. The service provider cannot be separated from the service that he / she provides. The service thus depends on who is providing it. In school this means that teachers have to be presentable and do their jobs to the satisfaction of the pupils and their parents. Otherwise without these consumers and customers confidence, they will end up without pupils in their classes.

Variability refers to issues of inconsistency. A service varies with who has performed it, where, when and under what circumstances, both mental and physical. In teaching this can be managed by investing more in staff selection and training, standardising service performance and monitoring customer satisfaction using customer suggestions and complaints; and teacher, lesson and modules evaluation by students. Perishability refers to the fact that services cannot be stored for future consumption.

To deal with the above issue schools should provide physical evidence of good service. In schools the school uniform, dressing of staff and their qualifications, general appearance of the school, examinations results and reputation of the school can provide this required physical evidence. Otherwise no one would like to be associated with a dirty school.

4.3 Marketing concept useful to both teachers and students

Murinda and Gasva (2013) argue that the knowledge imparted is also useful to teachers and students. They can

be stimulated to apply it in school income generating projects for the benefit of the school. Thus the marketing concept is a relevant tool to use in the management of schools and other educational institutions, especially in the modern world characterised by volatile and rapid technological changes and competitive environment.

5. Conclusion

This paper argues that the changes in today's educational environment are so rapid (changing technology, changing students, changing student needs, changing community needs, and increased accountability to both students and the public) that the only way out is for schools to adopt the marketing concept. The marketing concept is guided by the belief that organisations (schools) should base all their activities on the needs and wants of their customers. They should invest more in how their customers view their products / services than anything else. For service providers, schools in particular, image and reputation have increasingly become the basis for differentiation. Image is the product sold to the customer: students, employers, parents, and alumni. A school's reputation is based largely on the image it projects in the minds of its publics.

References

American Marketing Association. (1985). AMA Board Approves New Marketing Definition. *Marketing News.*5(1). 10-15

Dibb, S.; Simkin, L.; Pride, W.M. and Ferrell, O.C. (1997).*Marketing: Concepts and Strategies.*(3rd European edition).Boston, MA. Houghton Mifflin.

Drucker, P.F. (1954).*The Practice of Management.* New York. Harper and Row.

Hanley, R. (1989). Rutgers Legacy. *New York Times*.18(1).

IPMZ. 1996. *Management*. Harare: IPMZ.

Justiz, M.J.; Schwab, K.L. and Kameen, M.C. (1986). On the Front Lines: Presidents Build Institutional Image. *Educational Record,* 67(4).24-31.

Keith, R.J. (1960). The Marketing Revolution. *Market.* 24(3): 35-38.

Keelson, A.S. (2012).The Evolution of the Marketing Concepts: Theoretically Different Roads Leading to Practically Same Destination! *Online Journal of Social Sciences Research.*1 (2), pp. 35-41.

Kotler, P. (2000).*Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, and Implementation and Control,*(Millennium Edition). Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

Kotler, P. and Armstrong, G. (2008).*Principles of Marketing.*(12th Edition). Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc.

Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2009).*Marketing Management.* Pearson Education International, London.

Levitt, T. (1960).Marketing Myopia. *Harvard Business Review.* 38(4): 45-56

McKitterick, J.B. (1958). *What is the marketing management concept? The Frontiers of Marketing Thought and Science.* Chicago. American Marketing Association.

Musingafi, M.C.C. (2013). *Integrated Resource Management of Potable Water in Zimbabwe and South Africa: A Comparative Study in Four Local Authorities* .PhD Thesis. North-West University.

Shaw, A.W. (1912).Some problems in market distribution. *Q. J. Econ.* 26(4): 703-724.

Smith, R. (1994).Focus Groups. *Admissions Marketing Report.*9-11.

Schiffmann, L.G. and Kanuk, L.L. (2009).*Consumer Behaviour.* Pearson International Edition, New Jersey.

Perreault, W.D. Jr. and McCarthy, E.J. (1999).*Basic Marketing: A Global Managerial Approach.* New York: Irwin-McGraw Hill.

Pride, G. and Ferrell, O.C.(2008).*Foundations of Marketing* .Houghton Mifflin. Harrow.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: http://www.iiste.org/journals/   All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

Academic conference: http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar