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**Marketing Academics in Austria,
Germany and Switzerland:
Humboldt's Ideals Give Way to
Performance Pressure**

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In many countries, the system of business education at universities and colleges has been an important topic of public scrutiny and discussion. Universities in German speaking countries and regions are no exception. Critical statements range from a lack of practical relevance in teaching and research to the need to increase research output. This paper aims to investigate how marketing faculty deal with such pressures. Based on a census of all German speaking marketing professors at German, Swiss, and Austrian universities and polytechnics, the analysis probes the status-quo and satisfaction with the current work environment. The paper concludes with suggestions for improving the working conditions of German speaking marketing academics and identifies some promising future research avenues.

Keywords: Business education – job satisfaction – academic career

Introduction

In many countries, the system of business education at universities and colleges has been an important topic of public scrutiny and discussion. Particularly in German-speaking countries, where university education is primarily government-funded, substantial reforms are vigorously demanded and partly already under way. Besides changes in the organisational and financial framework, new approaches to teaching and researching business practices are key issues in the ongoing discussion. Differences between the Anglo-American and the German speaking university systems frequently lead to misunderstandings when demands for change are articulated. Variances in the organisational structure, cultural aspects and career patterns provide additional challenges for reformers. Increasingly, academics in Austria, Germany and Switzerland are intertwined in a unique balancing act, attempting to equalise the systemic differences for the sake of international compatibility while operating in a distinct legal, cultural and social

environment.

Academic faculty have come under pressure as the personification of academic education and research. The critique is multifold and does not spare marketing academics. When it comes to academic research in marketing, critics – even from within the profession – are quick to point to the lack of practical relevance. Statements such as “In the history of most professions, practice has run ahead of theory” (O’Driscoll & Murray, 1998, p. 391) also find wide-spread agreement among German speaking practitioners. And even some marketing professors have remarked that the gap between the business community’s expectations and the scientific answers produced in academic research appears to widen rather than to decrease (Dichtl, 1989). Moreover, universities are accused of offering a breeding ground for research ghettos, where researchers keep themselves and their students busy with questions bare of any relevance to business reality (Conant, 1996; Henke et al., 1988; Tietz, 1993). As a result, it has been argued that the influence of decision oriented marketing research on practice has been comparatively limited over the past 20 years (Simon, 1986).

Another area of condemnation is the alleged lack of practical relevance in teaching. An argument frequently put forward is the absence of faculty’s “real-life” business experience. If educators cannot call on their own practical experience, it is argued, they most likely hold distorted perceptions of the demands in today’s business environment (Borin & Watkins, 1998; Häfner, 1998; Polonsky & Waller, 1998). Companies are already seeking new answers to their educational needs by promoting the idea of so-called corporate universities. Experts believe that the number of corporate universities might outgrow traditional institutions by 2010 and dramatically change the rules for competition in tertiary education (Meister, 1998; Moore, 1997).

Additional pressure comes from the business schools’ key financier: the national and state governments. They concede to the business community’s demands for more practice-oriented education and put pressure on academic faculty to achieve these goals. However, at the same time, the demands on research output are raised. Research serves both as an institutional and individual performance measure (Cave et al., 1991; Macharzina & Oesterle, 1994). Following the motto “publish or perish”, the number of publications required for career advancement is constantly increasing (Diamantopoulos, 1996) and this holds both in the Anglo-American system as well as in the German speaking university environments. To make matters worse, growing demands placed on faculty are accompanied by decreasing financial and personnel resources. While enrollment continues to rise, limited financial resources are unable to provide adequate support for research activities and for personnel (Consemüller, 1999; Scholl, 1998; Seicht, 1998). Recruiting motivated and qualified junior faculty might become a real challenge for

business schools in the near future (Krüger, 1996). Never before it appears, have academics in German speaking universities and polytechnics been further away from Humboldt's (Deiters, 1967; Höllinger & Schwanke, 1988) educational ideals than today.

Career Patterns in the German University System

Looking at the German university system, some idiosyncrasies further contribute to the aforementioned pressures. A typical marketing academic in a German speaking country starts his/her career shortly after the diploma-studies (Diplomstudium), which typically take some five years to complete and are comparable with a combined B.Sc. and M.Sc. degree. Usually only a small number of qualified and motivated "magistri" or "Diplomkaufleute" can be offered an entry level job in an academic department. Often "their Professor" invites them specifically to apply for a position and to work on their Ph.D. While the work environment often provides a stimulating background for the exchange of ideas and research plans, a clearly structured Ph.D. program is hardly ever available. Instead, the system relies heavily on personal mentoring by more senior academics in the department and on professors who lead the group. Lecturing responsibility also starts early in the career. And since pre-packaged course material and teaching manuals in German are seldom available, junior faculty tend to spend a significant time with course preparation.

To improve the restrictions imposed through tight government funding, most business professors engage in consulting projects. Earnings from such commercial projects are, on one hand, used to fund research projects and conference visits which otherwise could not have been funded from government sources, and, on the other hand to supplement their income. Young assistants are often involved in such projects and often need to devote considerable time to such activities. Clearly, this helps to build up marketing expertise and establish lively research-practice links for the department as well as overcome the critique of "lack of practical relevance". However, this adds significantly to the tight time budgets of young assistants. The dichotomy of "urgent vs. important" ("urgent" being follow-ups on business projects or seminars, "important" being long-term research projects like international studies or their own dissertation) is often solved by overemphasising urgent topics (Covey et al., 1994). This is why some researchers argue that the completion of the "monolithic" dissertation thesis can be seen as a "formidable act of will" and why it is very difficult to closely compare with researchers who are socialised in the Anglo-American university system. The dimensionality of German university scholars' job-description is "multi-faceted". This argument is put forward when critique

on the lack of international comparable research output or results is heard in public.

Another cornerstone for marketing academics at German-speaking universities is the "Habilitation". After successful completion of their doctoral thesis and in order to receive tenure, or to become full professors, they are required to publish another major contribution in their research discipline, usually as a single-authored book. In contrast to Anglo-American standards, where the number and quality of journal publications is assessed for tenure decisions, the Habilitation is another "monolithic" contribution.

However, recently the future of the Habilitation has been called into question. Some politicians and more academics have suggested to replace the present Habilitation by a so called "Sammelhabilitation". The latter is nothing else but a collection of papers already published in refereed journals and embedded in various introductory, methodological and evaluation comments. Although the academic in question can only compile major publications in a distinctive research stream, the "Sammelhabilitation" clearly brings the system more in line with the Anglo-American practice. Currently, some universities are experimenting with this concept but the majority of professors still argue that a system should not be abolished before a working alternative model has been established. A key concern in this context is the lack of a comprehensive journal ranking which makes quality checks very problematic and prone to subjective decisions. While there will not be a quick solution to the quality measurement issue in the context of scientific contributions, most people agree that the current Habilitation system makes it difficult to directly compare publication output from German-speaking marketing academics with those from the Anglo-American university context.

Research Purpose

This paper aims to investigate how marketing faculty in the German speaking environment deal with the above pressures and provides a contrasting view to the Anglo-American university system. Based on a census of all German speaking marketing professors at German, Swiss, and Austrian universities and polytechnics, the analysis probes the status-quo and satisfaction with the current working conditions. Open statements on the future of universities, the marketing discipline in teaching and in research complement the psychographic and motivational section of the questionnaire. The paper concludes with suggestions for improving the work environment of German speaking marketing academics and identifies some promising future research avenues.

In order to gain comprehensive insights of the academic work

environment, a mail questionnaire containing 31 (partly open-ended) questions was developed. Extensive space was devoted to gathering information on the job portfolio of academics in German-speaking business schools, their career patterns, their embeddedness in the scientific community and their research interests. Data on the faculty's institution, its financial structure and administrative support were also collected. Faculty members were asked to express their opinions on the future of universities in general and the academic marketing profession in particular. Close scrutiny was given to the impact of rising pressures from outside. Finally, well-established scales (Hoffmeyer-Slotnik, 1999) were employed to capture attitudes towards job satisfaction, motivation to perform and innovativeness.

Data collection was carried out through a census of the 380 marketing professors at universities and polytechnics (Fachhochschulen) in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Using the key informant technique, the heads of marketing departments were asked to pass the surveys on to co-workers for completion and return. The first wave of mailings provided a disappointing response rate of only 12.6%. Following a second mailing, the response rate was raised to a total of 31.8% (n = 121). Of the respondents, 93 % work in Germany, 5.2% in Austria and 0.9% in Switzerland.¹

Results

Demographic Characteristics

An initial focus on key demographic variables shows that most German speaking marketing professors are male (86%). On average, they are 44 years old and have held their current position for 8 years. Although the mean extra-university work experience is 9 years, almost half of the respondents worked less than five years in business. Almost all of the respondents made their academic career within the German speaking university system. Only two are holders of "MBA" degrees. The fact that no holder of a doctorate-degree from a foreign country could be identified reveals the somewhat "ethnocentric" orientation in the university system.

Descriptive information on the average work responsibilities for professors shows that some 51 hours are devoted to university work during teaching periods and 44 hours during student holidays. The institutions of

¹The original address-base contained Full Professors only. In fact, to the best of our knowledge, there is no data base listing *all* marketing academics in German speaking countries. In an attempt to obtain responses from academics of other ranks, the Full Professors – who are often head of departments or institutes – were asked to pass on additional copies of the questionnaire if other marketing colleagues worked with them. This explains why 76% of respondents were Full Professors, but only 2% Associate Professors and 22% Assistant Professors.

the responding professors were predominantly publicly financed (92%). However, this picture changes considerably when the sources of research funding are addressed. Here, government funding accounts for only 26%. In fact, most German speaking marketing professors draw their research funds from private sources or research bodies outside the universities (81%).

Academic Work Responsibilities

A large section of the questionnaire was devoted to the different areas of responsibility academics are engaged in. A clear distinction was drawn between teaching periods and off-teaching periods. During teaching sessions, faculty members devote a substantial part of their time (49%) to preparing and teaching courses and supervising student projects. Administrative duties take up 14% of their time, while only 18% is devoted to research. Finally, 8% of their time goes into consulting and executive training. During "off-season", the situation changes considerably: typically, research activities take up 32% and consulting and executive training almost 17% of a marketing professor's time. The rest is equally divided between course preparation and administrative work, which interestingly remains at the same level over the year.

Table 1. Responsibilities During Teaching Periods and Off-Teaching Periods

	During teaching periods	"Off-season"
Administration	14.1 %	11.7 %
Consulting and Executive training	8.1 %	16.9 %
Coping with new Developments in the Domain	7.6 %	12.4 %
Research and Publication	18.3 %	32.3 %
Teaching	29.2 %	1.3 %
Supervising Masters Students	9.8 %	8.5 %
Preparation	11.1 %	12.8 %
Other	1.8 %	3.8 %
	100.0 %	100.0 %

Given the frequently stated reproach that marketing professors lack business involvement, the results provide a different picture. In the light of the considerable amount of time devoted to consulting and executive training,

the links to “business reality” appear to be very substantial. This finding was validated by the categorisation of open-ended questions on “future trends in marketing”, both in theory as well as in marketing practice. Respondents indicated that the globalisation of business, global marketing and information technology, internet and electronic commerce were the most promising topics where substantial advances in the body of knowledge could be made. This appears to be a rather market-oriented approach in the selection of research fields. Obviously, the consulting and executive training endeavours are quite successful as well. The marketing professors pointed out that consulting contributes, on average, 13% to their total salary. However, the range is considerable: a minority of marketing professors (less than 15%) earn some 70% of their income through consulting. There is also a high awareness of the importance of practical relevance. Indeed, 32% of the marketing professors ranked “relevance to business reality and practice” as the most pressing problem in business education.

Publication output

As to their scientific output, marketing professors were asked to indicate their total number of publications in different categories. Table 2 provides an overview:

Table 2: Types and Numbers of Publications

Publications	Individually Authored			Co-authored		
	Mean	Range	% of resp. publishing in this category	Mean	Range	% of resp. publishing in this category
Books written	1.97	1 - 20	70.1	1.35	1 - 7	47.0
Books edited	0.99	1 - 30	14.5	1.29	1 - 41	29.1
Refereed book chapters	3.17	1 - 70	35.0	1.09	1 - 20	24.8
Non-refereed book chapters	3.55	1 - 51	38.5	1.75	1 - 25	27.4
Refereed journal articles	5.57	1 - 84	47.0	3.19	1 - 35	35.9
Non-refereed journal articles	8.06	1 - 60	57.3	2.63	1 - 34	38.5
Conference papers in proceedings	2.04	1 - 21	38.5	0.90	1 - 30	17.9
Conference paper delivered but not	1.95	1 - 50	17.4	1.32	1 - 100	5.1

in proceedings

Table 3: Operationalizations of Attitudinal Measures

Day to day university business	Performance motivation
<i>Source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 items based on Fischer and Lück (1999; 1972) and Hoffmeyer-Slotnik (1999) <i>Purpose:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "General job satisfaction" and evaluations of day to day university business • Atmospheric aspects at the university • Bureaucracy, publication pressure and institutional issues 	<i>Source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 items from Modick (1977; 1999) <i>Purpose:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items covering the dimensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "future oriented performance motivation" • "performance hindering fear" • "performance fostering tension"
Lecturer/Student Attitudes	Innovativeness
<i>Source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 items based on Kort (1976; 1999) <i>Purpose:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudinal statements on university lecturing • Broad academic knowledge versus job focus • Importance of clarity and semester structure 	<i>Source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 items from Leavitt and Walton (1992; Goldsmith, 1984; 1975) <i>Purpose:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items measuring the personality trait "innovativeness" which is assumed to underlie the adoption of innovations. • Innovators are described as individuals open to new experiences and novel stimuli. Also termed "openness of information processing".
Job satisfaction	Scientific interest
<i>Source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weyer, Hodapp and Neuhäuser (1980) <i>Purpose:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 sub-scales including items, covering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "work and job satisfaction in general", • "Aspects of a positive work environment" • "Work-related pressures and job stress" 	<i>Source:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiesel and Lück (1974; 1999) <i>Purpose:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Items measuring the interest in learning new and challenging things, motivation to participate in education programs and understand complex relationships.

A closer look at the research productivity reveals interesting findings. It was expected that the more time academics devote to research, the higher their

publication output would be. However, grouping the number of publications in low, medium and high numbers and pivoting the data with the categories low-medium research effort and medium-high research effort, did not support this link empirically. Also unexpected: the number of affiliations with professional organisations was found to decrease significantly with career advancement. Obviously, networking through professional organisations is primarily perceived to be helpful during the early stages of an academic career. Related to the professional membership issue, reading patterns, subscription rates of journals and magazines as well as areas of interests were sampled. On average, the respondents receive five journals on the basis of a fully paid subscription. Only one journal or magazine is received as part of an organisational membership or some other contributions, such as being a member of the editorial board. Reading behaviour unsurprisingly centres around teaching assignments and research interests. 15% of the respondents perceive “global/international marketing” to be the most important topic in teaching, and a further 13% view “strategic marketing” as the most important subject for teaching purposes. Interest in “global/international marketing” as a research domain is equally high, followed by interest in marketing communication, distribution, consumer behaviour, services marketing and strategic marketing.

Another part of the survey focused on the respondents’ attitudes towards university life, their day to day business environment and perceptions of performance related aspects. Established scales, as well as abbreviated or slightly adapted versions of established scales were used to measure the constructs. The operationalisations are depicted in Table 3.

In a first step, the dimensionality and reliability of the scales was checked using common factor analysis (Churchill, 1979; Kim & Mueller, 1978). Alpha values ranged from .65 to .84 and were considered acceptable for our research purposes (DeVellis, 1991). Using the “summated scale construction” technique (Hair et al., 1998), factor scores were computed for descriptive purposes (see Table 4).

Table 4: Attitudinal Measures on Academic Business Life

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
Day to day university business	94	1.68	4.16	2.87	.40
Lecturer/student attitudes	117	1.14	3.57	2.43	.44
Job satisfaction	105	2.67	3.56	2.93	.20
Performance motivation	107	1.22	3.78	2.31	.44
Innovativeness	117	1.14	3.14	2.29	.43

Scientific Interest	112	1.00	3.14	2.05	.51
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Looking at the mean-score for “day to day university-business” (scale range from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree) it appears that respondents do not feel overwhelmingly positive about their job. A detailed frequency analysis of the scale items shows that about 45% of respondents feel their universities are not flexible enough to cope with contextual changes and almost 80% think red-tape and office-politics hamper a prosperous research-orientation. The score on “lecturer/student attitudes” is slightly better, leaning towards the positive side of the scale. The single items of the scale demonstrate that university lecturers/professors want to help students to learn the essentials of marketing, both for research and practical marketing purposes. However, while respondents think that using formal degrees in communicating with each other is not necessary, and interaction and discussion in the classroom supports the teaching purposes, they still believe in a clearly structured curriculum which also comprises written final exams.

Our research paid special attention to the dilemma between increasing demands on academics on the one hand, and public criticism on the other hand. It was assumed that this issue would negatively influence job-related attitudes and lead to low job satisfaction rates. This expectation is, indeed, reflected in the relatively low overall job satisfaction score. However the mean score appears to mask contradictory assessment on individual scale items. For example, 88% of the marketing professors state that they have more fun in their job than people in other professions and only about 20% feel bored by their daily business routine.

Almost 80% of the marketing professors also view themselves as striving for higher goals than colleagues in other professions. This aspect is expressed in the positive “performance motivation” score and its individual items. Respondents feel that it is very important to achieve more than others and think they perform better when facing critical situations. In addition, 73% of respondents indicate that they prefer a job with a permanent change of tasks. The “innovativeness” items show that they like to experiment with new situations, take risks and to find novel experiences. Our expectation that a higher weekly work load would result in an increase in perceived stress was not supported by the findings. The majority of respondents indicated that they do not perceive their work as overburdening or stressful.

“Scientific interest” scores were high and a detailed look at the underlying items revealed that there was one single item which systematically lowered the overall “scientific interest” score. Taken collectively, marketing academics perceive themselves to be very interested in learning new things and enjoy identifying the “why” and “how”, i.e. the reasons behind environmental developments.

Subsequently the attitudinal measures were used for testing some propositions, developed in the design stage of the study. Due to space restrictions, the propositions are not discussed in full. Instead, the hypothesised direction of the analysed relationships are indicated using a “+/-” sign in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Correlation of Attitudinal Measures and Hypothesized Directional Relationships

Pearson correlations	Day to day univ. business	Lecturer/ students attitudes	Job satisfaction	Performance motivation	Scientific Interest	Innovativeness
<i>Day to day univ. business</i>	1.000					
<i>Lecturer/ student attitudes</i>	.185 (-)	1.000				
<i>Job satisfaction</i>	-.491 ** (-)	-.015 (+)	1.000			
<i>Performance motivation</i>	-.081 (-)	.109 (+)	-.125	1.000		
<i>Scientific Interest</i>	.118 (+)	.147 (-)	.074 (+)	.286 ** (+)	1.000	
<i>Innovativeness</i>	-.037 (-)	-.004 (-)	.022 (+)	.378** (+)	.512** (+)	1.000

****** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). +/- signs in parentheses indicate hypothesised directions.

By correlating the attitudinal measures above, four out of the fifteen hypothesised relationships could be confirmed (see Table 5). Within the “day to day university business” scale, the items “bureaucracy, publication pressure” and “institutional issues” were very dominant. Therefore, it was not surprising to find a significant negative relationship between “day to day university business” and “job satisfaction”. Positive perceptions of the university work atmosphere correlate highly with job satisfaction. Negative perceptions lead to frustrations within the organisation and a negative feeling of not “having contributed something to the marketing domain”.

Looking at the correlations between “performance motivation” and “scientific interest” suggests that respondents who share a clear scientific interest and a vision of wanting to know the “why” and “how” of marketing related topics, are striving for more performance. The same relationship holds with regard to “innovativeness” and “performance motivation”. Innovative marketing researchers tend to be more motivated to perform than less innovative marketing academics.

Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between “innovativeness”

and “scientific interest”. Respondents who are interested in finding new connections and explanations for marketing problems, are motivated to participate in education programs and develop their knowledge. They also share a common need to find out new relationships and educate themselves to cope with advances in the business realities (see Table 5).

No significant correlations however, could be found for “lecturer/students attitudes” with the other summated-scale measures. While this was surprising at first, the weak operationalisation of the construct and the arbitrary item formulation was considered to be an explanation for the insignificant results.

Implications and Future Research

This paper offers detailed insights into the working conditions and attitudes of marketing professors in German speaking countries. Despite the high pressure from public opinion and government, the picture emerging is quite positive. The often lamented lack of practical relevance did not manifest itself in the faculty’s activity portfolio. Not only do marketing professors spend a considerable amount of time on consulting and training executives, such activities also contribute noticeably to their overall income. Moreover, relevance and contact to practice was ranked among the most important challenges in the future of marketing education. Thus, lack of practical orientation appears to be more of an image problem than a real problem. The high work load consists largely of teaching and administrative tasks (which remain at the same level throughout the year), but is not seen as overburdening. To the contrary and – interestingly enough – despite quite substantial differences to the Anglo-American teaching and research system, job satisfaction is very high.

In the light of public debate and demand for reforms, the positive self-image of business faculty is remarkable. Marketing professors obviously rely less on recognition from their environment, but get extensive intrinsic motivation from their job. Yet, these results leave room for interpretation and call for further research: maybe it is due to academic myopia that academic faculty sees itself more positively than public opinion (Enders & Teichler, 1995). A more in-depth look juxtaposing self and external image may provide interesting insights. Notwithstanding the fact that marketing professors perceive themselves equally prepared and motivated by teaching and research, future investigations may try to identify drivers favouring particularly successful teaching or research careers. Such results could provide valuable information for the career planning of junior faculty. Additional insights may be obtained from analysing career patterns at different stages of career development. The overall positive picture displayed

in the results may be due to the fact that the large majority of respondents were well advanced in their career and mostly tenured.

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