



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Australasian Marketing Journal

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ausmj](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ausmj)

## A scholarship approach to embedding creativity and sustainability in Marketing Principles curriculum

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 30 January 2018

Revised 6 May 2018

Accepted 6 May 2018

Available online xxx

### ABSTRACT

In business, creativity and innovation can be the difference between success and failure, especially in a world challenged by sustainability issues. Yet creativity and sustainability are rarely discussed with students and seldom appear as part of the formal material in tertiary marketing studies, certainly at the introductory level. This article reports on a curriculum initiative which sought to address this gap in the context of a first-year undergraduate Marketing Principles, multi-cohort course. To help warrant the rigour of the initiative, drawing on the literature, a six-step scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) theoretical framework was used to describe the initiative, and to determine its effectiveness. The investigation was informed by a multi-method study comprising descriptive analysis of 323 students' performance scores, content analysis of 59 student groups' preliminary marketing plans, descriptive analysis of 113 students' attitudes (survey), and content analysis of 35 students' post-assessment reflections. The results indicate that sustainability-oriented creativity can be successfully taught and assessed in large, first-year marketing cohorts, provided the curriculum is scaffolded and the teaching team is 'on-board'. Further, viewing teaching and learning initiatives through the SoTL lens is a valuable way for scholarly academics to enhance their intellectual contributions to their schools, to improve student learning experience and outcomes and to help the business school faculty, as well as the marketing discipline.

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### Introduction

If teaching involves a scholarly process aimed at making learning possible, it follows that the scholarship of teaching is about making transparent, for public scrutiny, how learning has been made possible.

(Trigwell, 2012, p. 254)

It is widely recognised that the competitive global knowledge economy the knowledge and skills of a nation's people will determine a country's wellbeing, and the need to enhance the quality of learning and teaching is quite urgent. This has been driving a growing interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in higher education, as is evidenced by numerous educational journals and conferences, graduate certificates in higher education and national SoTL programs around the world (Prosser, 2008). Despite this endorsement, SoTL is marginalised in most universities because of the emphasis on teaching over learning, conceptual confusion as to what it is, as well as the difficulty in operationalising it (Boshier and Huang, 2008). This indicates why SoTL has been described as a form of 'troublesome knowledge' (Manarin and Abrahamson, 2016) and its relevance has been questioned, given that

it appears to be more popular among academic development and support staff than among faculty members (Tight, 2018).

Within the marketing education literature some authors report that marketing educators are comfortable with critical assessment of marketing curricula and practices (Caterall et al., 2002). Yet few published marketing education articles explicitly refer to SoTL or apply a SoTL approach. Three review studies investigated the nature and prevalence of SoTL within the marketing discipline in terms of publications in the discipline's two primary education-related journals – Journal of Marketing Education (JME) and Marketing Education Review (MER): McIntyre and Tanner (2004) reviewed 439 articles published between 1990 and 1999; Abernethy and Padgett (2011) reviewed 467 articles published between 2000 and 2009. Using content analysis, both studies categorised the papers into 33 categories. Papers dealing with SoTL were not identified as a separate category; the category most consistent with SoTL referred to in the studies is arguably 'curriculum issues (e.g. what courses belong in a marketing or business major)'. In this category the proportion of studies has declined from 13% (57) in 1990–1999 to 5% (24) in 2000–2009. In a more recent review study of Gray et al. (2012) reduced the topic areas identified by McIntyre and Tanner (2004) and Abernethy and Padgett (2011) "to a more manageable set of potential categories" (p. 218), in order to facilitate cross-era comparisons. They extended the review period, and

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.05.005>

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Please cite this article as: T. von der Heidt, A scholarship approach to embedding creativity and sustainability in Marketing Principles curriculum, Australasian Marketing Journal (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.05.005>

reviewed articles 802 published in JME between 1979 and 2012. Their revised categorisation covered nine main categories (assessment, career development, course management, ethics, experiential learning, higher level thinking, international, marketing mix and technology). As with the two prior reviews, Gray's et al. (2012) review did not identify SoTL as a category or subcategory; the subcategory 'curriculum redesign reviews' comes closest. In the period 1970 to 2012 less than 5% of JME papers (36) related to this subcategory. The dearth of SoTL-related publications in JME and MER supports the finding of Mentzer and Schumann (2006) that "relatively little attention has been devoted to this vital topic in marketing" (p. 179). The dominant SoTL discourse appears in the general education literature, which most marketing academicians tend not to follow (Albers-Miller et al., 2001).

The lack of publications dealing explicitly with SoTL in marketing education may be in part attributed to an under-emphasis in business schools (possibly in universities at large) of formal pedagogical training of university educators. In its Standard 15 on 'Faculty qualifications and engagement', the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2017 (AACSB) refers to Scholarly Academics (SA) – those who are doctorally qualified and whose sustained engagement activities are academic (research/scholarly). While the AACSB expects SAs to "demonstrate sustained academic and/or professional engagement related to the field of teaching in order to maintain professional qualifications" (p. 45), it does not require SAs to have qualifications in higher education teaching. Rather the standard "provides guidance only; each school should adapt this guidance to its particular situation and mission by developing and implementing criteria that indicate how the school is meeting the spirit and intent of the standard" (pp. 43–44). Basically, each school can develop its own policies related to SA higher education qualifications. While business schools may encourage SAs to undertake higher education qualifications, most usually prescribe initial formal teaching training, typically only to new staff. Such basic pedagogical competence does not sufficiently equip SAs to undertake SoTL effectively. Because marketing scholars often lack specialised teaching qualifications or learning about teaching experiences and limit their exposure to general education literature, they tend to have a poor understanding of the concept of SoTL and how it may be applied to their own field of teaching. This is problematic, particularly in view of a number of factors characterising the modern higher education sector and adding to the challenge of effective SoTL: Rising student expectations of the value of teaching (resulting from higher study fees); teaching issues associated with widening student participation (e.g. higher share of students from lower socio economic backgrounds, international students and part-time students with work commitments); challenges of teaching and learning in the digital age and Web 2.0 world with new communication and interaction capabilities.

Hence, the purpose of this paper is to promote the professional development of marketing educators by demonstrating a scholarship approach to enhancing marketing curriculum. The particular focus is on the Marketing Principles curriculum for undergraduate business students, and ensuring that it provides a diverse first-year student cohort with more contemporary, real world and meaningful learning experiences, namely by introducing creative problem solving for sustainable market offerings to the curriculum. The paper is organised as follows: First, a brief overview of the SoTL process steps and standards is provided. Next, the curriculum initiative and implementation is explained, analysed and evaluated in terms of each of the SoTL process steps. The paper finishes with a discussion of the results of the initiative and the value of adopting a SoTL theoretical lens.

### What is SoTL?

The founding father of scholarship, Boyer (1990), identified four forms (or dimensions) of scholarship: scholarship of discovery (i.e. discipline-based research), of integration (synthesis, i.e. fitting one's own research, and that of others, into larger intellectual patterns), of application (service activities tied to one's professional activity) and of teaching (involving pedagogical learning and research). Boyer envisaged that all four forms would operate in symbiotically to counteract the tendency within universities to separate the scholarly functions (Mentzer and Schumann, 2006). For a detailed account of the origins and meaning of SoTL, the reader is referred to Tight's (2018) recent paper titled 'Tracking the scholarship of teaching and learning', as well as Mentzer and Schumann's (2006) history of modern scholarship and discussion of the four dimensions of scholarship in the marketing education context.

Hence, SoTL goes beyond both excellent teaching (ability to engage students) and scholarly teaching (that which is informed by the new developments in the field and in pedagogy (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999)). While there is continuous debate in universities about the exact definition of SoTL (Glassick, 2000), the emerging view is that SoTL is a distinctive form of research shaped by multi-disciplinary context focus on practice-driven institutional/curricula/classroom inquiries with an explicit transformational agenda (Hubball and Clarke, 2010). The latter point is vital, because, according to Prosser and Trigwell (1999) and Trigwell (2012), SoTL is first about improving student learning and second about scholarship (a systematic, peer-supported, research-like process), both of which ultimately lead to higher quality teaching. As noted by Huber and Morreale (2002), SoTL invites all teaching faculty to treat teaching as a form of inquiry into student learning, to share results of inquiry with colleagues and to critique and build on one another's work.

Of relevance to business schools are the 'Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation' (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2017), in which the AACSB refers to SoTL as 'teaching and learning scholarship'. AACSB Standard 2 (Intellectual contributions, impact and alignment with mission) within its cluster of 'Strategic Management and Innovations' standards presents SoTL as one of three forms of scholarship in the portfolio of intellectual contributions, i.e. "original works intended to advance the theory, practice, and/or teaching of business and management", p. 18. (The other two forms of intellectual contributions are with basic or discovery (discipline-based) scholarship and applied or integration/application scholarship that contributes to and impacts the practice of business.) The AACSB (2017) defines SoTL as scholarship that "develops and advances new understandings, insights, and teaching content and methods that impact learning behavior. Intellectual contributions in this category are normally intended to impact the teaching and/or pedagogy of business" (p. 18).

A range of benefits flow from SoTL to faculty, students and the institution: For instance, it leads to more reflective and informed teaching practice and renews faculty's enthusiasm for teaching; student learning is enhanced through development of innovative teaching methods and attention to outcomes; the institution's reputation is strengthened (Hubball and Clarke, 2010; Iowa State University, 2001). SoTL is also consistent with a range of pedagogical concepts raised in recent marketing education literature, such as master teaching (Smart et al., 2003), the principle of servant teachers as stewards of the teaching and learning environment (Chonko, 2007), metacognition and transfer (Ramocki, 2007), pedagogical competence (Madhavaram and Laverie, 2010) and conscientious reflective practice to grow as an educator (Titus and Gremier, 2010).

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