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ANTECEDENTS OF CRM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

DR. NARINDER TANWAR

ASST. PROFESSOR

B S ANANGPURIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

FARIDABAD

ABSTRACT

Higher education today is undergoing a more radical transformation than perhaps any other aspect of our culture. Educational institutions worldwide are undergoing fundamental shifts in how they operate and interact with their "customers": students, alumni, faculty members, and staff members. The quality of knowledge generated with higher education institutions and its availability to wider economy is becoming increasingly critical to national competitiveness. New technology based tools for gathering and disseminating knowledge have become central element of today's education. Technological, economic, sociological, and governmental forces are altering education dramatically, impacting its institutions, teachers, students, funding sources, and basic function in society. To unlock potential and helping talented people to gain advanced training whatever their background requires customer-centric approach to education. The paper describes the various antecedents of customer relationship management in higher education. The author also conducted a survey of two types of respondents to support the literature and findings of the same have been presented here.

KEYWORDS

Antecedents, customer, higher education, relationship, market orientation.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Customer relationship management (CRM) is all about satisfying and retaining the customer by providing the perquisites he/she desires for. Academic institutions are themselves not different from any other organizations. Whether they are government owned or self-financed private institutions; almost all educational institutions focus on not only to impart state-of-the-art education to their students, but also have to maintain relations with their working staff, administrators, companies, vendors and with their primary customers - students. CRM plays an increasingly important role in maintaining such relationships in these organizations.

Even though successful completion and enhancement of students' education are the reasons for existence of higher educational institutions, college administrators tend to focus disproportionately more time on programs for attracting and admitting students. Thereafter satisfying the admitted students is much more important for retention and relationship management.

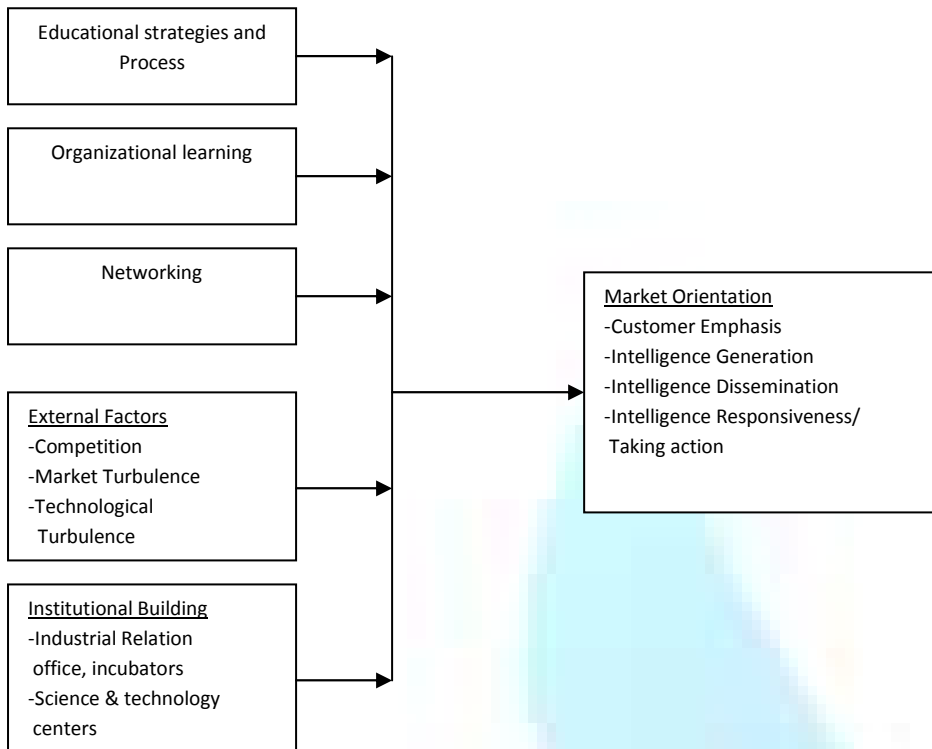
ANTECEDENTS OF CRM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section has focused on the antecedents of market orientation and specifically identifies the principal types of internal and external factors that affect the extent to which a higher education institution is able successfully to achieve market orientation and thus effectively manage the relationships with students. The aim purpose of this part is to develop, identify and review the principle antecedents/determinants that foster or discourage market orientation in higher education institute. Slater and Narver (1995) argue that institutions should aim instead to become learning-oriented if they are to compete successfully in the long run. However, given that a "market orientation is the principle cultural foundation of the learning organization." Indeed Slater and Narver (1995) state that market orientation is inherently a learning orientation. Building upon this line of argument, Sinkula, Baker, and Noordewier (1997) call for research that explores further the relationships between learning orientation, market orientation and organizational performance (Farrell, 2000).

Fakhry et al. (1999) cited institution-building as an appropriate approach for restructuring higher education to make the transition to a market economy. They address this from the perspective of institution-building, viewing enhanced cooperation with and between educational institutes and establishing centers to deliver education and research outreaches as aspects of organizational development that precondition it for success.

In relation to institutional entrepreneurship and building market-oriented institutions in higher education, Kozeracki (1998) noted that the switch to a more entrepreneurial market-oriented way of operating – of being innovative, responsive to the market and of finding new ways to make money – began in the business world and is now spreading to the non-profit sector, including academia. The approach taken by universities generally focuses on generating revenue through research collaborations with government and industry. The types of organizations that have existed for this purpose include: (1) licensing and partnering offices, to assist faculty members and the universities in obtaining patents, trading licenses and seeking commercial outlets for their research; (2) small business development centers, to provide technical assistance for new business start-ups or technical support in management, new product development and process innovation to existing companies; (3) research and technology centers, which stimulate research and technology transfer in a particular area of technology, usually under a joint university-industry umbrella; (4) business incubators, which provide facilities and/or services to multiple businesses in a related field of technology; and (5) investment/endowment offices, which invest the university's financial resources in start-up companies or spin-off enterprises based upon university generated technology. In accordance with their impacts of establishing an industrial relations office mentioned above, incubators and science and technology centers are investigated. Taylor and Fransman (2004) when exploring the role of higher education institutions as agents of development and social change, focus on capacity development through curriculum development and facilitating the development learning and cooperation through networking. Finally, since higher education is organized around a matrix of relationships that are political, bureaucratic, collegial and increasingly economic (Kozeracki, 1998). As Fakhry et al. (1999) asserted the external environment in which organization operate in highly complex and extremely volatile. As a result, these external environmental factors are perhaps even more influential in determining the level of market orientation (Wood and Bhuian, 1993). Hence, Sisodia and Wolfe (2000) argued that market turbulence, technological turbulence, the degree of competition and the general economy all interact in a complex manner that can have an enormous impact on market orientation in higher education. Competition, market turbulence and technology can be consider as the main external factors, that have an influence on determining the level of market orientation of higher education. Figure 1.1 displays the framework of market orientation, which is divided into two parts.

FIGURE 1.1: ANTECEDENTS OF CRM AND MARKET ORIENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



Source: Wood and Bhuian (1993), Zebal (2003)

The first part of the figure presents the antecedents/ determinants/ barriers/ predictors/ conditions that influence the various customer relationship management practices and the level of market orientation; the second part shows the market orientation and its components to implement CRM practices more effectively. Market orientation lies at the core of this framework and this, involves customer emphasis, intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and intelligence responsiveness or taking action. The figure shows that the CRM strategies of an institution are determined by several internal and external factors. It indicates that organizational learning, educational strategies and process, networking, establishing an industrial relation office, incubators and a science and technology park are all internal factors or internal antecedents. Factors pertaining to competition, market turbulence and technological turbulence are external factors or external antecedents.

RESULTS OF SURVEY

From the literature review and discussion with experts in the field different antecedents of customer relationship management and market orientation in higher education have been identified and presented before the respondents to indicate their opinions. Two sets of questionnaires were prepared one for students and another one for directors/administrators. The questionnaires related to students (N=400) and director/administrators (N=40) were put forwarded to respondents of different management institutes and observations are presented in Table 1.1.

To fulfill the objectives of the study both descriptive as well as inferential statistical techniques were applied. In the descriptive, Means and Standard Deviation were calculated and to test the significance level of the difference between the Means of the criterion variables Mann-Whitney Test and Karl Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation were applied.

TABLE 1.1: ANTECEDENTS OF CRM IN HIGHER INSTITUTES

S. No.	Variables	Mean Scores (N=400)	Std. Dev. Value (N=400)	Mean Scores (N=40)	Std. Dev. Value (N=40)
1	Learning Approaches	4.01	0.215	4.09	0.186
2	Qualified and Experienced Faculty	4.01	0.377	3.95	0.293
3	Soft skills development activities	3.87	0.682	3.95	0.661
4	Student support services	3.74	0.709	3.70	0.821
5	Training & Placement	3.91	0.197	3.77	0.395
6	Infrastructural Facilities	3.84	0.654	3.85	0.749
7	Well placed IT requirements	3.35	1.092	3.59	1.132

Note: Std. Dev. indicates Standard Deviation Value
N indicates total number of respondents

Source: Computed on the basis of Field Data

The results of the table indicates that according to the responses of students (N=400) learning approaches (Mean = 4.01, Std. Dev. = 0.215), qualified and experienced faculty (Mean = 4.01, Std. Dev. = 0.377), Training and placement (Mean = 3.91, Std. Dev. = 0.197) have been more value by the respondents in comparison to other antecedents and determinants such as, soft skills development activities (Mean = 3.87, Std. Dev. = 0.682), infrastructural facilities (Mean = 3.84, Std. Dev. = 0.654), student support services (Mean = 3.74, Std. Dev. = 0.709), and well placed IT requirements (Mean = 3.35, Std. Dev. = 1.092). The results of standard deviation values indicate that except well placed IT requirements (1.092) the respondents are very much consistent in their opinions.

The results of the table also indicates the responses of directors/administrators (N=40) about the various antecedents and determinants of CRM in management education and as per their responses learning approaches (Mean = 4.09, Std. Dev. = 0.186), qualified and experienced faculty (Mean = 3.95, Std. Dev. = 0.293), and soft skills development activities (Mean = 3.95, Std. Dev. = 0.661) have been given more value in comparison to infrastructural facilities (Mean = 3.84, Std. Dev. = 0.749), training and placement (Mean = 3.77, Std. Dev. = 0.395), student support services (Mean = 3.74, Std. Dev. = 0.821), and well placed IT requirements (Mean = 3.59, Std. Dev. = 1.132). As far as the standard deviation values are concerned, it is evident that in most of cases, the respondents are consistent in their opinions about the different antecedents and determinates of CRM in management education.

For testing the difference level of the mean criterion in the responses of the students (N=400) and directors/administrators (N=40) about the antecedents and determinants of CRM management institutes Mann-Whitney Test was applied. High value (Mann-Whitney Test Value closer to 1.000) indicates that there is not any significant difference between the opinions of both of the respondents (Students and Directors/Administrators) while less value indicates (Mann-Whitney Test Value closer to 0.000) that there is a significant difference between the opinions of respondents (Table 1.2).

TABLE 1.2: RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE RESPONSES OF RESPONDENTS ABOUT ANTECEDENTS OF CRM IN HIGHER INSTITUTES

S. No.	Variables	Mean Scores (N=400)	Mean Scores (N=40)	Significance level of Mann Whitney Test
1	Learning Approaches	4.01	4.09	0.862 **
2	Qualified and Experienced Faculty	4.01	3.95	0.723 **
3	Soft skills development activities	3.87	3.95	0.589 **
4	Student support services	3.74	3.70	0.887 **
5	Training & Placement	3.91	3.77	0.679 **
6	Infrastructural Facilities	3.84	3.85	0.716 **
7	Well placed IT requirements	3.35	3.59	0.441*

Note: *, ** indicate Mann-Whitney Test value is significant at 5% and 1% respectively.

Source: Computed on the basis of Field Data

The test results indicate that offering key learning facilities to students (0.862), arrangement of qualified and experienced faculty (0.723), conducting activities which enhance soft-skills of students (0.589), providing different support services to students (0.887), making required efforts for training and placement of students (0.679), fulfilling infrastructural requirements which support other activities (0.716), and well placed information technology requirement (0.441), have been identified as the key antecedents and determinants of customer relationship management in management institutes and Mann-Whitney Test value indicates that both the respondents are having similar opinion about these key dimensions.

CONCLUSION

It is highly important to understand that implementation of customer relationship management practices do not enable a quick win. It is a long-term approach that has to be adopted at a strategic level. Whilst the value of customer relationship management has been identified by management institutes, they are yet to look at the bigger picture and understand all of associated benefits that would enable their business strategies to be successful. Those responsible for delivery are perhaps the most informed about these strategic benefits yet the transformation is long-drawn-out process.

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