**Market Orientation in Universities:
A comparative study of two national higher education systems**

Abstract

Purpose: the reported study tested (1) whether there are significant differences between the two countries, in terms of perceptions of market orientation (MO) in higher education (HE), (2) which MO dimensions (student; competition; intra-functional) indicate more positive attitudes and whether the differences are significant; and (3) the reliability of the instrument for using a larger sample of respondents internationally.

Method: A comparative (online) survey of 68 academics in England and Israel has been conducted during the academic year of 2007. The MO questionnaire used comprises 32 factor items rated on a six-point scale, categorised using three headings: market (student-customer) orientation; competitor orientation; and inter-functional coordination.

Findings: Overall, academics in both countries indicated that their HE institution is oriented towards meeting students' needs and desires, and cares for students' well-being, teaching and learning. In addition, our respondents alluded to their contribution to internal marketing, i.e., to the promotion of their university through their own work tasks and performances.

Practical implications: The meeting of student needs, and a student centred approach can be an institutional mission, as well as a government driven initiative imposed on universities through the introduction of a market.

Originality/value of paper: As MO frequently underpins the development and implementation of successful organisation-environment relationships, the current paper is a first attempt to trace the contextual determinants of this orientation by comparing its frequencies and elements in two different HE system.

Keywords: Market orientation, educational marketing, Higher education marketing, relationship marketing, international differences.

Type of paper: Empirical study

Introduction

The higher education market is now well established as a global phenomenon, especially in the major-English speaking nations: Canada, the US, Australia and the UK (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003), where marketisation policies have been gradually introduced (Jongbloed, 2003). Following the marketisation and deregulation of universities in the UK (Middleton, 1996; Gibbs, 2001; Taylor, 2003) many universities are now applying marketing theories and concepts that have been successful in the business world to the HE context in an effort to gain a larger share of the international market (Hemsley-Brown et al. 2006). It is widely assumed that in the context of increasing competition, higher education institutions need to market themselves more explicitly.

A crucial element in the marketing of HE institutions is based on a relationship marketing (RM) approach, which is characterised as helping to develop and foster interactions between the organisation and its customers (Brown et al., 1994). This approach emphasises the importance of developing a customer- i.e. student-driven organisational culture, and focuses on the quality of the service (Narver & Slater, 1990).

Above all, however, the RM approach commences with a commitment to marketing orientation (MO), which is a set of beliefs that puts customers' – students' – interests first, in order to gain a competitive edge in the highly competitive global environment. MO frequently underpins the development and implementation of successful relationship marketing strategies in any organisation (Helfert, Ritter, & Walter, 2002). If a HE institution can develop or improve its degree of MO, then it should also be able to achieve improved levels of RM.

This paper presents analysis of data gathered from an international study that compared the degree of MO in two universities, one in Israel and one in England, two countries that have experienced different HE policies in recent years. Thus, England has established international markets in HE although marketisation is at a relatively early stage (with undergraduate fees currently capped); in Israel there is no national Quality Assurance Agency and every institution of HE has its own declared policy aims, and is therefore still largely autonomous.

A published paper (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2007) previously presented the Marketing Orientation Inventory for use in educational institutions, and the pilot study findings (based on data from two countries) were later presented at the *Academy of Marketing* Conference, Budapest, (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2007). Data and findings from a study with a larger sample are presented in this paper.

As there is already some empirical evidence for the positive impact of MO on industrial and service organisations (e.g. Cervera, Molla, & Sanchez, 2001; Guo, 2002), it seems of high value to examine the degree of MO in HEIs in general and in different national HE systems, in particular because this kind of comparison could provide some clues about the relationship between market-oriented HE policies and the incorporation of MO in academic settings. Besides, whereas past research on MO found that it is positively correlated with innovation, excellence, employees' high levels of satisfaction and commitment, customers' satisfaction, and brand loyalty (Pulendran, Speed, & Widing, 2003), HEIs have long been accused of neglecting these important issues. Understanding the context of MO within HEIs is, therefore, the first stage in attempting to increase this orientation in HE systems.

Based on an instrument developed by the authors to measure perceptions of MO in universities, distributed by email to faculties in both universities, the reported study

tested (1) whether there are significant differences between the two countries, in terms of perceptions of MO in HE, (2) which MO dimensions (student; competition; intra-functional) indicate more positive attitudes and whether the differences are significant; and (3) the reliability of the instrument for using a larger sample of respondents internationally.

MO: A Key Element in Marketing the HE institution

Many managers today recognise that the ability to succeed in the marketplace requires more than just sales techniques – customers rarely respond to sales pitch, but rather they want their circumstances to be acknowledged and their needs to be satisfied. Hence, business and service organisations seek to achieve a competitive advantage in their dynamic environments, at least in part, by being market-driven, i.e., by anticipating, understanding and responding to the preferences and behaviours of customers (Jaworski & Kohli, & Sahay, 2000).

The marketing literature is replete with definitions and perspectives of MO, yet there is much agreement about the key concepts (Helfert et al., 2002; Narver & Slater, 1990). At the core of this concept is the significance of customer orientation.

Accordingly, customers' needs, desires and particular circumstances e.g. lifestyles ought to be the main focus of the market-oriented organisation. In this sense, MO is the degree to which an organisation generates and uses intelligence about the current and future needs of customers; develops a strategy to satisfy these needs; and implements that strategy to meet those needs and wants.

MO takes into account the influence of competitors and incorporates inter-functional coordination. It encourages the generation of intelligence – or the use of data about competitors, and integrated cross-functional processes, in addition to the execution of a strategic organisational response to market opportunities. All these activities are

directed towards creating and satisfying customers through continuous needs-assessment.

MO is a set of beliefs that puts customers' interests first, but at the same time raises the HEI's awareness of the need to obtain information about competitors and establish cross-departmental activities to satisfy customers' needs, in order to gain a competitive edge in the turbulent, competitive environment. Based on the works of Narver and Slater (1994) and Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown (2007) the following three related components of MO are suggested, and are underpinned by shared values and beliefs, which may help HEIs administrators, managers and faculties to understand the HEI and its environment, and may also provide them with norms for behaviour. The present study focuses on MO at a faculty level and comprises three dimensions:

(a) *Customer orientation*: Faculties are assumed to understand the HEIs' targets market thoroughly, and be capable of creating and providing superior value, over time. A faculty that subscribes to this approach in practice would collect information about the environment which students inhabit (e.g. lifestyle factors); would adapt teaching methods to accommodate students' particular needs; and would be attentive and responsive to their interests and points of view. Through this approach, it would then be possible to be more innovative and implement improvements for future students based on their anticipated needs.

(b) *Competitor orientation*: The HEI and Faculty managers who aim to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the capabilities and potential, of competing HEIs, seem to internalise this element of MO. Awareness of the importance of competitor activity and the monitoring of developments in competing HEIs can have a positive impact on decision-making, particularly through the development of initiatives: the development of additional services for students.

(c) *Inter-functional coordination*: The core belief which needs to be shared by all members of the HEI is that creating superior value for target customers is very significant for the success of a HEI in a competitive marketplace. This can only be achieved, however, through the integration and coordination of the HEI's resources. Attracting student-customers and sustaining recruitment should not be solely the responsibility of faculty management, but is the responsibility of everyone in the university community. Faculties should have full access to information about the competition: the market environment, the community and so forth in order to achieve this.

The first two elements of MO indicate a relative emphasis on collecting and processing information pertaining to customer preferences and competitor capabilities, respectively. The third element encompasses the coordinated and integrated application of organisational resources to synthesise and disseminate market intelligence, in order to put processes in place to build and maintain strong relationships with customers. It is the aim of this study to check the extent to which every element appears in the two chosen countries. The contexts of HE in each country is discussed in the following sections.

Higher Education in the UK

There are approximately 325 HE institutions in the UK including universities, colleges of higher education and further education colleges that offer HE courses (UCAS, 2008). (This figure includes all types of institutions offering HE; the Sherpa organisation (2008) states that there are 170 universities in the UK, 150 of which took part in the annual National Student Survey of final year undergraduates) UK universities tend to target three broad market segments, namely, national 18-19 year old school leavers; local mature students, and international students (Veloutsou, *et al.*,

2005). International students are of particular importance as they provide a major stream of income for the universities (Russell, 2005) aside from government funding. The interest in marketing within the HE sector in the UK largely results from first, concerns over recruitment in UK universities particularly at post graduate level, and an endeavour to seek other sources of revenue (Tao, 2005). Second, the concern in the UK over financial constraints imposed on universities by central government policies and third, the additional difficulty of falling rolls (Kinnell, 1989) has resulted in many UK universities facing the same challenges: having to compete for students in a fierce marketplace (Veloutsou, *et al.*, 2005). In addition to these concerns, at undergraduate level The National Student Survey (NSS) introduced in 2005, now directly affects university league tables in the UK and therefore the emphasis on responding to student needs, and on gaining good scores for the teaching and learning aspects of the HE experience, have rapidly become more important than ever for all universities (Hemsley-Brown and Kolsaker-Jacob, 2008).

Furthermore, for around two decades, the British government has been actively encouraging education institutions to recruit international students, who provide a substantial boost to the national economy. A year-on-year growth in the number of enrolled HE international students in the UK increased from 2.5 per cent between 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 and 5 per cent between 2000/2001 and 2001/2002. In June 1999, the UK Government launched an initiative to attract an additional 50,000 international students to UK higher education by 2005 and to win market share from its major competitors identified as the US and Australia (Russell, 2005). According to Gordon Brown's budget speech in 2006 there was an aim to sign new education partnerships with India, Russia, South Africa and China to treble education exports and make Britain more attractive to overseas students (*Guardian Unlimited*, 2006).

The UK Government is also committed to widening participation in higher education and to achieve fair access to HE by putting in place a more competitive market to encourage universities to open their doors to all those who could benefit. In England, the Government plan is to achieve a 50% participation rate of 18-30 year olds in higher education by 2010 (HEA, 2008). The costs of this exercise mean that universities are becoming more market oriented, and more student focused particularly since the introduction of tuition fees. The introduction of undergraduate tuition fees has contributed to a growing number of students taking a consumer-like approach to their time at university. In England, 94% of higher education institutions are charging the full £3,000 higher level fee. Investment in financial support for students from low incomes and other underrepresented groups is estimated to reach nearly £350m by 2010, which is over 25% of the additional income raised by higher level fees (DfES, 2007). From the end of 2008, universities are in receipt of tuition-fee revenues from three consecutive cohorts of undergraduate students. For larger universities, this will amount to over £50 million in income direct from students – money that can be used to enhance services, invest in facilities and support social inclusion (Hemsley-Brown and Kolsaker-Jacob, 2008). The market in higher education in the UK, particularly England has therefore been enhanced considerably over the past three years, causing a substantial change of culture towards a more market driven culture. The market is expected to continue to grow in response to changing student demand, and to respond to the diversity of market (*Universities UK*, 2008).

Higher education in Israel

The HE system of Israel is relatively young, beginning in 1925, the times of the British Mandate in Palestine, subsequent to the establishment of the Hebrew

University of Jerusalem and the Technion in Haifa, both were strongly influenced by the Germanic tradition of HE. After the establishment of the state of Israel, the increase in population, as well as economic and social developments, led to a demand for HE and, in response, five new universities were established during the 1950s and 1960s, two in the centre, one in the North, and one in the South. A decade later the Open University was founded.

During the 1990s there was an additional stage of development and diversification in the HE system, when the 10th amendment to the Council for Higher Education (CHE) Law made possible the opening of various academic colleges: general colleges, technological colleges, and colleges devoted to one profession or discipline (e.g. teacher training colleges). This policy change was partially a response to the increasing demand for HE due to growth in high school graduates and the anticipated wave of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Yogev, 2007). A further innovation was the introduction of the extra-budgetary status: some of the new colleges are not publicly supported or budgeted by and government or State agency. One unexpected result of this amendment was the greater involvement of a large number of universities that formed partnerships with private colleges and educational entrepreneurs in Israel in order to respond to the demand in what was, for overseas providers, a 'free' market (Lieven & Martin, 2006). Due to critical reports and public concern against the low quality of many partnerships, the government of Israel responded in 1998 by amending the 1958 CHE Law, thereby significantly reducing the number of foreign operators, and imposing restrictive practices in the bureaucratic procedures involved in applying for a license (Lieven & martin, 2006). This legislation was followed by a decline in the numbers overseas providers in Israel.

The expansion of the system seems to answer the increasing needs of the market, especially on the undergraduate level and the professional master programs (e.g. MBA, educational management). Sara Guri-Rosneblit (1996), one of the consistent critics of the traditional system has argued:

HE in Israel in the last 15 years has gradually moved from a highly selective, elite and research-oriented system to a mass HE system in which academic tertiary education is perceived by many as a right rather than a privilege" (p.336).

Yet, the policy introduced in early 1990s which favoured the accreditation of undergraduate studies at new and upgraded colleges resulted in a sharp decline in the numbers of university applicants and university freshmen (Yogev, 2007). Despite this the demand for HE has proven to be one of the highest per capita in the world (Geva-May, 2001), the CHE's decision to freeze the growth of university freshmen and to penalise, from a budgetary point of view, universities growing beyond their scheduled freshmen intake, brought about some financial problems in the old universities and calls for governmental intervention to 'save' the HE system.

Today, the HE system in Israel comprises 8 universities, twenty-seven academic institutions that are not universities, twenty-seven academic institutions for the training of teachers, and a number of academic programs at regional colleges, for which universities are academically responsible. This structure, according to Yogev (2007), generated a stratified system, which is divided into two groups of institutions: The three old, elite universities which are highly selective and well-known for striving to achieve academic excellence (The Hebrew University, the Technion, and Tel Aviv University), and the new, sometimes peripheral universities founded in late 1960s and during 1970s (Haifa University, Bar Ilan University, and Ben Gurion University). The non-university institutions are at the bottom of the hierarchy.

In 2005, the total number of students excluding those from the Open University reached 205,149, with 82,139 students in colleges (including teacher training academic colleges) and 123,010 students in universities (Undergraduate – 76,815; Masters, 35,020, PhD, 9,835, and Diploma, 1,340). The main source of students is high school matriculation graduates, students who have succeeded in pre-academic programs, and new immigrants. The total of tenured track university faculty was 4,949 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

For the purposes of this study, some words on the CHE are warranted. The CHE began to operate as an advisory committee entrusted to counsel the government on the development and funding on HE, following the Council for HE Law 1958 and is a statutory body recognised for all obligations, rights and legal action. The council is a public body of academics and community leaders appointed by the president of Israel. HE is under the direct jurisdiction of the CHE, which is the sole responsible for accrediting and authorising institutions of HE to award degrees. It is this jurisdiction which distinguishes the HE system from the post-secondary education system which does not lead to an academic degree. The chairman is ex-officio, the minister of education, and the council is composed of 19-24 members personally appointed by the President of the state on the recommendation of the government. Their term of appointment is five years.

The institutions of HE are autonomous in the conduct of their academic and administrative affairs within the framework of their budgets. Most of them are supported by public funds, which account for well over two-third for their total recurrent budgets, which the tuition and student fees cover about 20 per cent. The main powers of the CHE are to grant an institution permission to open an institution of HE and to maintain it, but the final decision is of the government. It also has the

authority to grant accreditation to an institution as an institution of HE, and to authorise an accredited institution to award academic degrees. In addition, through its executive arm – the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC), it is also responsible for funding and planning. The functions of PBC are to propose the regular budget and the development budget for HE, while taking into consideration the needs of society and the State, while safeguarding academic freedom and assuring the advancement of research and learning. It is also responsible for the promotion of efficiency in the institutions of HE and for the coordination among them (CHE, 2006).

To sum up, then, there is no national Quality Assurance Agency in Israel and every institution of HE has its own declared policy aims (e.g., number of Undergraduate students, research, faculty qualification, publications). Yet, the PBC has its own criteria for budgeting (e.g., the amount of research funds endowed to faculty, number of PhD students), and the CHE is entitled to evaluate current programs in terms of curriculum, faculty, student outcomes, student-staff ration and the like). Geva-May (2001) found that a major indicator for efficiency is considered student population growth and enlargement of faculty, research output, and the ability to affect student growth by answering market needs. Note that despite the freedom of individual HE institutions to determine the balance between teaching and research, the PBC's 'productivity' formula, in which the PBC evaluates the scope and quality of research, is used to determine budgetary allocation.

Methodology

In pursuit of the research answers, the authors conducted a comparative (online) survey of academics in England and Israel during the academic year of 2007.

Criteria for the selection of participants. The researchers contacted a stratified random sample of academics (based on faculty staff lists) by email from within one UK

university and one Israeli university, asking them to complete an on-line questionnaire. Ethical approval was granted as required by the English University and access to email lists was easily available. Following analysis of the pilot study data (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2007) sample size calculations indicated that the minimum sample size for the study should be 50 participants: the final sample for this study was 68. The researchers sought to collect more than 50 completed questionnaires, and then cleaned the data by excluding questionnaires with incomplete responses. Several academics embarked on the survey but stopped part of the way through, and these were discarded before the analysis. All institutions and individuals remain anonymous as required by the Ethics Committee of the English university. Ethical protocol dictates that subsequent publications would not give names of institutions or individuals involved. Participation by individual respondents was voluntary.

Research design and methods. As the theoretical introduction of this paper shows, the theory of MO has three components; customer (student) orientation (SO), competitor orientation (CO), and inter-functional coordination (IFC) (Narver & Slater, 1990; Helfert, Ritter, & Walter, 2002). Semantic differential multiple-item scales were constructed to measure these components, and results of a pilot have already been presented to an international conference. The MO questionnaire comprises 32 factor items rated on a six-point scale, categorised using three headings: market (student-customer) orientation; competitor orientation; and inter-functional coordination. Tests to measure the reliability of these three constructs and the whole questionnaire were conducted during the pilot stage. The pilot study provides evidence that the constructs are reliable, with Cronbach Alpha scores above .8: Total Market Orientation (32 items), 0.92; Customer Orientation (18 Items), 0.832; Competition

Orientation (6 Items) 0.842; and Intra-functional Orientation (8 Items), .816.

Summative scores and mean scores were calculated for each respondent for each component and are used for hypothesis testing.

The researchers avoided using the word “market” or “marketing” in the questionnaire itself because it has other connotations and associations for the respondents. The word marketing is often assumed by those who do not study marketing to mean “selling” and “advertising” and could mislead the respondents. The online survey therefore, uses the phrases “International HE Survey” and focuses on “Student Orientation” rather than “market orientation”. The items are drawn from factors identified in the literature on theories of market orientation.

The instrument was written in English and not translated into Hebrew, because Israeli academics are familiar with English, and conduct much of their academic work and publications in English. Anonymity was assured and participation was voluntary in both countries. SPSS software is used for analysis, and data were downloaded as an Excel file from the web-based on-line survey website.

Analysis of data. The achieved useable sample for further analysis is 68 questionnaires: 36 from England and 32 from Israel. Email links to the online survey questionnaire were sent to all social science academics from both universities, and one reminder was sent. The majority of academics were from Education Studies and Business Management: 38 are male and 30 are female. The authors acknowledge that the final sample is not large, but is nonetheless sufficient for conducting a study – Pallant (2005) argues the 30 respondents in each group (in this case England /Israel) is sufficient and the pilot study (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2007) indicated that based on sample size calculations 50 respondents would be the minimum sample size needed for further research. The following research hypotheses were formulated:

H₁ – Academics from a university in Israel and academics from a university in England show differences in perceptions of the market orientation of their university.

H₂ – There is a difference between the mean scores academics award for the three components of MO (showing academics are more positive about one/two components of MO than other components)

In order to verify the constructed hypotheses and because of the character of the research, we analysed results using SPSS Version 15 for Windows.

Findings

Prior to the presentation of the data gathered through the e-inventory, some background information to provide a profile of the respondents is warranted. Of the 68 respondents, 38 (55.9%) are male and 30 (44.1%) are females, 36 (52.9%) live and work in England, while 32 (47.1%) live and work in Israel. As to years at work, 13 respondents (19.1%) are less than 5 years into their academic career, 11 respondents (16.2%) have worked for 6 to 10 years; 20 (29.4%) for 11 to 20 years; and 24 (35.3%) respondents have worked at their institution for over 20 years.

Forty-four percent of the sample academics are from the Social Sciences, which includes Education, Business and Management, Sociology, and Psychology, but a wide range of disciplines are represented. Just over a quarter of respondents are from the Education discipline (26.5%). Academics in the study, however, work in a wide range of disciplines including: Medicine, History, Architecture, Creative Arts, Mathematics, Computing or related disciplines; Veterinary Science, Physical Sciences, Engineering, and Communications. A normality test was carried out using the total MO score as the dependent variable, and country as a factor. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is 0.2 for both nationalities and therefore we use parametric testing.

Customer orientation items

The construct to measure customer (student) orientation comprises 18 items.

Universities from both of the countries measure student satisfaction every academic year using a module or course evaluation questionnaire – this item gained the highest mean score: 5.2 on a 6 point scale. (This item could have been a Yes or No answer – either the university does measure student satisfaction every year, or it does not, but clearly both universities do conduct student satisfaction evaluation surveys.)

Table 1 Summary of Mean Scores for Customer Orientation Construct items (n=68)

Student (Customer) orientation item	Mean
University measures students' satisfaction every academic year	5.2206
University cares about students' well being	4.3971
University understands the needs of students	4.2941
Complaints by students are dealt with quickly	4.2500
The complaints procedure is easy for students to access	4.2353
The complaints procedure is easy for students to understand.	4.2206
Students are given information that helps them to understand what to expect from this university	4.1471
Staff in this university are eager to support students and go beyond their role definition	4.1029
Students' feedback on their experiences influence the teaching and learning process	4.0294
Staff are attentive to students' concerns	4.0000
We encourage students to offer constructive positive comments	3.9265
Staff are regularly provided with information about students' views and experiences	3.8382
The university understands what kind of teaching and learning the students value most	3.7794
We encourage students to offer constructive negative feedback	3.7647
Responding to students' needs is my major task	3.7447
A good teacher is one whose students are happy as satisfied	3.5941
The university meets and goes beyond the promises it makes to students	3.4194
Senior staff promote the spirit of customer orientation and focus	3.2006

The variations may indicate that a few academics are unsure about this e.g. where the evaluation is carried out by others such as administrators. Academics also believe that

the universities care about the students' well-being (4.4); the university understands the needs of students (4.3) and complaints by students are dealt with quickly (4.2). The lowest mean score was for "promoting the spirit of customer orientation and focus" (3.2) – perhaps colleagues in universities do not believe they are currently doing this very well. A full list of the mean scores for each item is provided in Table 1 .

Competition orientation items

The construct to measure orientation towards competition comprises 6 items and is labelled External Orientation on the on-line survey. Academics from both countries believe that their universities compare favourably with other universities in terms of meeting students' needs (3.97), however, they were modest about this and give a lower score to the statement that "this university understands the needs of students better than other universities" (3.31). In other words, academics believe their own university compares favourably, but they do not claim they are better than competitor universities. A full list of the mean scores for each item in the competition orientation construct is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2 Summary of Mean Scores for Competition Orientation Construct items
(n=68)**

Competition Orientation	Mean
This university compares favourably with other universities in meeting students' needs	3.97
Information about what my colleagues in other universities are doing helps me in my role	3.8824
Senior managers often refer to the actions of other universities	3.6029
The majority of staff take an interest in what's going on in other universities	3.4412
This University usually responds positively to other universities' new initiatives and developments	3.3676
This university understand the needs of students better than other universities	3.31

Intra-functional orientation (Internal Marketing) items

There are 8 items measuring intra-functional orientation, or internal marketing – given the title of “Internal issues” on the questionnaire. This construct attempts to measure academics’ perceptions of their internal mechanisms and whether they focus on student-customers, particularly staff involvement in marketing. The highest mean score is for discussing student concerns, and making improvements (4.1) followed by two items relating to academics’ input into attracting prospective students (4.01) and cooperating to promote the university’s image (3.7) (see Table 3). It is clear from this perhaps that academics do believe they contribute to the internal marketing although they give lower mean scores to market-led curriculum development and initiatives (3.23) and in particular, for the item: “current students are always central to decision-making in this university” (2.97). It seems feasible that academics might not give high ratings to the latter since both universities are research-focused and many of the decisions at the universities would not be based on students’ concerns.

Table 3 Summary of Mean Scores for Intra-functional (Internal Marketing) Orientation Construct items (n=68)

Intra-functional Orientation	Mean
In meetings we discuss information about students’ concerns in order to make improvements	4.1029
Academics help to attract prospective students	4.0147
Academic staff cooperate to promote the university’s image	3.7059
Administrative staff cooperate to promote the university’s image	3.6863
All faculties and departments contribute to the marketing of the university	3.5672
The guiding light in curriculum development or new initiatives is the demands of the students	3.2374
Marketing information is discussed and shared with academic staff	3.1716
Current students are always central to decision-making in this university	2.9706

Comparison between Israel and England perceptions of MO

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores on the MO items grouped into the three constructs: customer orientation; competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation, as well as for MO as a whole (32 items). There was no significant difference between the two nationality groups in terms of items related to MO as a whole (.46); customer orientation (.29); or intra-functional orientation (.29).

However, the result of the t-test in relation to competitor orientation shows that there is a significant difference between Israel and England. Israeli academics show more positive responses – i.e. more agreement with the statements, and more agreement between respondents. Among academics from England, the responses are less positive and slightly more polarised. There is only a marginal difference – 0.5 is considered significant and score is 0.48 – but nonetheless, the difference is statistically significant. The group statistics for each construct are provided in Table 4.

Table 4 - Group Statistics for Market Orientation

	Country	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total MO	Israel	32	3.8762	.62303	.11014
	England	36	3.7604	.67322	.11220
Customer Orientation	Israel	32	4.1016	.70544	.12470
	England	36	3.9210	.69062	.11510
Competitor orientation	Israel	32	3.7833	.64068	.11326
	England	36	3.4375	.75917	.12653
Intra-Functional	Israel	32	3.4483	.70480	.12459
	England	36	3.6547	.89624	.14937

Following these findings a Mann Whitney test (the non-parametric test used with ordinal data) was conducted to identify the differences between countries for each individual item. The significant difference between Israel and England in terms of Competition Orientation is based on the more positive attitudes of Israel academics regarding the items “The Faculty/School understands the needs of students better than other universities” and “The University as a whole compares favourably with other universities in meeting student needs”. This could be based on the relative market positions of the two universities, but suggests slightly greater confidence in the strengths of their institution in terms of understanding and meeting student needs, among Israeli academics.

One-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between the mean scores for each construct (customer orientation; competitor orientation or Intra-functional orientation). For example – were academics more positive about one of these aspects of MO than the others? The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in the scores for the three different elements of MO. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for “customer orientation” (Mean=4.0, SD=0.69) was significantly different from perceptions of competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation. Student orientation scores are more positive; both competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation are close to the midpoint on the semantic differential scale (3.55 and 3.6 respectively). Academics also believe that the universities care about the students’ well-being (4.4); the university understands the needs of students (4.3) and complaints by students are dealt with quickly (4.2).

Discussion

With two conjectures in mind – that increased inter-institutional competition in the HE sector may result in greater attention to marketing and public relations (Hemsley-Brown et al. 2006), as well as in the development of a student-driven organisational culture in HE institutions (Narver & Slater, 1990) – we compared the extent of MO among academics from two different HE settings. As these two arenas differ in the level of their HE marketization, accountability and privatisation, we postulated that the degree of MO among academics in the two arenas would differ. Put simply, in a highly competitive environment it is likely that the attraction of new student-customers would be the responsibility of every member in the organisation, including academics. They will adopt a customer-oriented viewpoint, and will be engaged in the marketing processes of their institution.

Overall, academics in both countries indicated that their HE institution is oriented towards meeting students' needs and desires, and cares for students' well-being, teaching and learning, a stance that is compatible with the common image of the university as a place of student growth and development well-rooted in the historical tradition of the western university (Boyer, 1982). Note, in addition, that our respondents refrained from claiming any competitive edge for their university over other universities, perhaps due to the ethics of education which is inherently against marketing and any notion of inter-institutional competition. This might be related to the academics' commitment and professional ethic in caring for his/her students, in developing skills and competencies, regardless of any inter-institutional competition (Coser, 1971). Thus, in spite of strong inter-institutional competition in HE, the strong professional culture of academics which emphasises pure research, teaching and

customer-care (service) seems to structure the respondents' attitudes towards MO more than any neo-liberal views of HE.

As far as the marketing-like role of the academics is concerned, our respondents alluded to their contribution to internal marketing, i.e., to the promotion of their university through their own work tasks and performances. This sort of data tends to align with school teachers' attitudes towards their role in the marketing of their school (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2004; Oplatka, 2006). Thus, as academics are expected to conduct research, publish, and then convey their knowledge to students through the design of new courses and participating in curricular innovations (Cardozier, 1987; Coser, 1971), our respondents view the effective performance of these tasks as their contribution to their HE institution.

Notably, the academics identify their role in marketing activities as emerging through their obligation to promote effective teaching and conduct high-value research, two traditional aspects of the professoriate (Wolff, 1969). This goes hand-in-hand with one fundamental, essential factor underlying the marketing philosophy: improved performance. It is assumed that educational markets will drive up HEIs performance through competition for students and the quality of teaching and research will be raised (Tooley, 2000; Waldford, 1994).

However, the respondents reject the notion of market-led curriculum development and initiatives, perhaps because this kind of action stands in stark contrast to fundamental beliefs about HE as an arena in which the knowledge is produced for its own sake and for the sake of the society as a whole (Boyer, 1982). Similar to schoolteachers (Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002), they seem to oppose any involvement of academics in direct marketing activities or in commercialise the academic knowledge for external purposes such as the recruitment or retention of students.

What has come to light also is the distinction between English and Israeli academics in respect to marketing and their own role in the process of recruitment and retention of students. Broadly, Israeli academics express more agreement with the statements, and more agreement between respondents, i.e. many of them advocate the role of the university and the faculty in supporting student development, as well as assume that their own university prioritises student needs and concern more than other universities in Israel. This distinction may be accounted for by the position of the Israeli university as a niche university (Yogev, 2007) which pushed its founders in the 1970s to strengthen the student-oriented image in order to attract prospective students rather than attempting to build an image of 'excellence in research' which has long been associated with older universities. This image seems to have been thoroughly internalised given the beliefs of the Israeli respondents in this study.

To sum up, both English and Israeli academics still adhere to traditional conceptualisations of the professoriate according to which a central part of the academic's role is to equip students for the work of inquiry (Boyer, 1982; Veblen, 1971). Thus, whereas more focus is assumed to be given by the contemporary academic to the organisational aspects of the HEI and its outcomes rather than merely to his/her own research and teaching, our respondents challenged this view in relation to marketing and promotion, giving an impression that issues of the HEI as an organisation are not necessarily part of the academic's role.

Implications

The findings from the study indicate that a focus on students' needs (customer orientation) is strong in both institutions, despite the differences in HE marketization in the two countries, and the historical development of HE in the two countries. The meeting of student needs, and a student centred approach can be an institutional

mission, as well as a government drive initiative imposed on universities through the introduction of a market. Secondly, in Israel where there is little pressure on HEIs to be competitive compared with England, academics were more confident in the capabilities of the university to meet student needs effectively compared with competitor universities. Although it would be tempting to imply that the non-competitive environment contributes to this institutional confidence, it is possible that the ethos of the two sample institutions has also contributed to this difference. It is a limitation of this study that only two institutions were sampled and therefore external validity is somewhat low. The findings from the study, however, indicate that first, the instrument or e-inventory for MO is robust enough to justify further research; and secondly that a further study might draw on a larger sample of academics from a sample of universities in different countries.

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