

**PUBLIC MANAGEMENT
AND ADMINISTRATION STUDIES.
SHOULD WE INCLUDE MARKETING
IN OUR CURRICULA?**

José L. VÁZQUEZ

Professor, Faculty of Economic and Entrepreneurial Sciences, University of León, Spain

Dan LAZAR

Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Pablo GUTIÉRREZ

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economic and Entrepreneurial Sciences, University of León, Spain

José L. PLACER

Professor, Faculty of Economic and Entrepreneurial Sciences, University of León, Spain

*As a consequence of continuous adaptation of public institutions to requirements of framing where they perform day by day, Public Management and Administration is behaving once and again as a “**reinvented**” discipline, aiming a new kind of rational, innovative public entities that focus their activities towards an effective achievement of their intended results and benefits. Concepts such as those of “**efficiency**”, “**effectiveness**”, “**responsibility**”, “**organizational culture**”, etc. are now not only applied to business disciplines, but also to Public Management and Administration.*

*At this point, Marketing has proved to be an useful subject in PMA curricula, not only being in demand by students and syllabi designers, but also by experts in the public field. However, applying marketing techniques and procedures in the same way as used in private business is clearly nonsense. We must consider a proper “**public marketing**” or “**public sector marketing**” development.*

In this paper we debate on these issues, as well as present an overview into the situation of Spanish public universities offering PMA studies, just when they are facing the Bologna adaptation requirements. As a conclusion, some comments for reflection are suggested.

*Transylvanian Review
of Administrative Sciences,
17 E/2006, pp. 99-106*

1. Introduction:

In recent years Public Management and Administration is behaving once and again as a “*reinvented*” discipline, quite a number of practical issues walking (should we say “*running*”?) ahead of academics’ development and/or adaptation of theoretical concepts and contents (e.g., increasing publicity volumes from public institutions, info and complaints services for citizens, etc.). Not only public enterprises but also Administrations act less and less as “*public donors*”, performing like guided by some criteria that were traditionally considered to be suitable –if not exclusive– for private companies (especially in case of developed countries). A new kind of rational, innovative public entities is nowadays on the ground, focusing their activities towards an effective achievement of their intended results and benefits (even profit).

An adequate management style and systematic procedures turn out to be masterpieces in all this building, thus allowing a Public Management and Administration as a result of a challenge between “*traditional*” public and private cultures. It can be stated that the “*new*” PMA is then located in a meeting point for different languages and traditions (1): Commercial Management, Marketing and Organizational Sciences, on one hand; Administrative and Political Sciences, on the other one. At this point, a three-stage sequence can be established (2).

So, as an impulsive consequence of firstly enthusiastic purposes, applying managerial techniques and procedures in public institutions just in the same way as they were used in the private business soon resulted in a kind of madness, or even nonsense (even when arousing the interest of public officials: “*all this could be a good idea to develop, but not in my administration...*”), soon becoming a discarded option. As a reactive turn back, the new ideas were then diluted in those bureaucratic procedures proper of “*old*” administrations, so coming into a null improvement of the Administrative Science; of course, a regressive situation.

Finally, as a third alternative, it was concluded the necessity of a specific and coherent conceptual structure, based in former contributions and experiences either from public and private fields. Regardless their source, techniques and procedures should be adapted to the requirements of the new framing for public activity. Concepts such as those of “*efficiency*”, “*effectiveness*”, “*responsibility*”, “*organizational culture*”, etc. could be applied either to public or private agents, all of them fully applicable to Public Management and Administration.

An adequate application of the so intended approach will allow reporting on reality and evolution of public sector practice, just as deepening and developing the management concept itself. At the time, not only those in responsibility positions in public enterprises or Administrations, but also private managers will obtain useful lessons from evolution and experience in the public field. The final goal is not other but aiming the constitution of a coherent and reasoned framing for public performance.

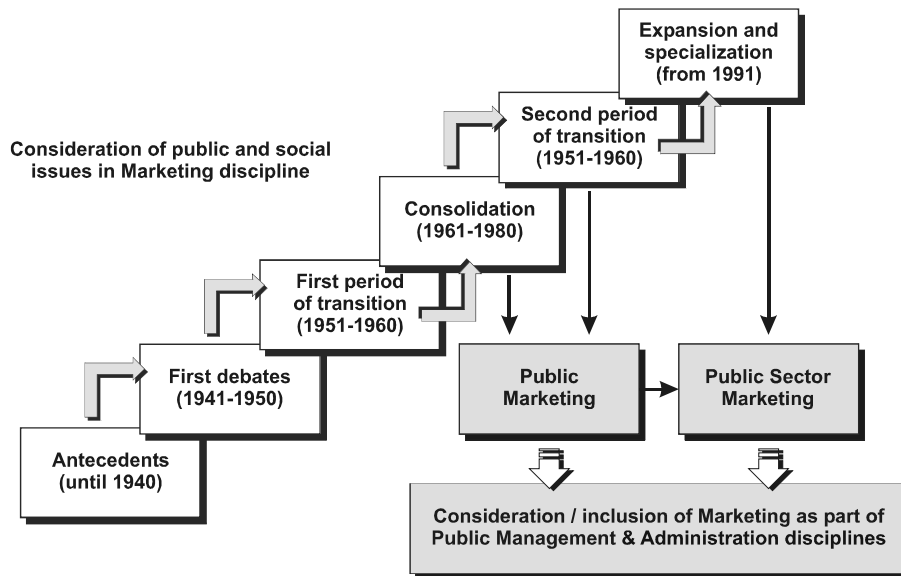
2. Some remarks on public and social dimensions in marketing field:

Some different points of view remain, however, once the required adaptation of techniques and procedures has been stated. Discrepancies are not only at the proper way for adaptation, but in some concrete cases also in the background, when arguing even about the possibility itself of making the adaptation.

Marketing has undoubtedly been one of most controversial subjects at this point, as clearly originated (as practice and as academic discipline also) in private business practice. Nevertheless, and in some sense, public and social dimensions have ever been considered between marketing postulates. To be precise, and considering a “*formal*” structure for evolution of marketing discipline (3), at a first moment (*antecedents* stage, aprox. until 1940 –see Figure 1–) both issues were implicitly included as part of public and social policies surrounding and influencing markets, as well as when studying the public role in exchange regulation and facilitation (aiming benefits for whole community). Then, in a second stage (*first debates*, aprox. 1940’s) there was a clear turn back, only a few opinions intending

a broader scope for marketing than business. Public and social issues were not but secondarily considered, as mere parts of most relevant interest topics for Economy at every moment.

The third stage of this sequence (*first period of transition*, 1950's) was even worse, as the consolidation of a central core of marketing knowledge (business marketing) reduced the relative importance of public and social dimensions. The real change came later (*consolidation*, 1960's and 1970's), when supporters of broadening the concept of marketing became a majority, and traditional paradigms were fragmented, thus giving a chance for social, public and macro marketing (4).



Source: Based on Vázquez (2004: 12).

Figure 1: Evolution of consideration of public and social issues in marketing discipline.

In a fifth stage (*second period of transition*, 1980's) a further fragmentation gave way to some specialized non-business marketing branches: social, non-profit, public, and political/electoral. This approach was systematically reflected in main manuals (new or updated editions) by that time, as well as in papers in newborn publications in the 80's and 90's (5).

Finally, in a period of *expansion and specialization* (from 1991 on) a specific infrastructure is being consolidated (increasing in number of devoted journals and publications, a number of contributions in specialized or general marketing events, establishment of associations or sections in academia, etc.), meanwhile more and more specialization in public and non-profit fields leads even to posit the question on the risk of an excessive micro fragmentation.

Public sector marketing or marketing in the public sector?

Meanwhile above sequence was taking place, a parallel debate allows us to consider up to four categories in public marketing definitions (6). A first group of "wide" definitions think any public activity as potential application field for public marketing, either activities only by Administrations (7) or by any public institution/organism –public enterprises included– (8).

A second group of definitions prefer a more "restricted" application field, considering only activities by public Administrations, either implicit (9) or explicitly (10) excluding performance activities of public enterprises in markets (under a competence framing).

The third of these categories is devoted to include a small number of scientific (some times "scientificist") and mostly hard-to-understand definitions (as that of the "positive catalyst" by Coffman

[11]). And finally, a group of “*atypical*” definitions try to identify public marketing with the goal of real satisfaction of citizens’ needs (12), either alone or together to final aim of strategic survival of public institutions (13), etc.

After assessing the content of definitions in all four categories, we can conclude that (2):

a) Any activity by any public institution or public organism could be considered in a certain sense –more or less properly, but that’s not here the question– to be a kind of “*product*” aiming somebody’s benefit after exchange; thus being a potential marketing activity (14).

b) However, applying marketing techniques and procedures in public Administrations and/or public organizations does not necessarily imply that public marketing is being applied. As in some other number of occasions when talking on marketing, we can –and must– consider wide and strict senses for applied concepts.

c) As a consequence, we could talk, on one hand, about *public marketing* in a strict or proper sense, i.e., as nearly synonymous of *public sector marketing* (or even *public Administration marketing*); on the other hand, a wider *marketing in the public sector* would include any kind of marketing (internal, service...) when applied in public field, regardless its public character or not.

3. Marketing in Public Management and Administration curricula.

An overview into the Spanish situation when facing the Bologna Process:

At the moment, universities in UE countries are facing decisive challenges when adapting to guidelines from the so-called Bologna Process. This is, of course, the situation in Spain, where changes affect public and private universities, but they –as in other neighbour countries in the area– demonstrate to be even greater in the case of the public higher educational institutions (people seeming to be more used to do things out of habit, suggested pre-adaptive changes seeming to have been delayed, etc.). At any case, as the change situation it supposes, the Bologna Process might be considered not but a chance for updating and improvement.

In the concrete case of Public Management and Administration degrees, the experienced evolution of the contextual framing points clearly –as previously advanced– at the convenience of including marketing disciplines in academic curricula. Moreover, survey results that use to be published at the beginning of every academic year support this evidence (15). Not only students and those responsible for curricula designing, but also experienced professionals seem to be looking forward to a real interface between “*complementary worlds*” of business and public institutions, as well as “*an improvement in professionals’ skills as managers in order to contribute to an updated and more clear Public Administration*” (16).

Nevertheless, the fact is that practice is far away from desired situation. Nowadays, 28 faculties/schools belonging to 24 Spanish public universities include a “*short*” degree or diploma (studies being structured in three academic years) on Public Management and Administration as part of their academic offer (see Table 1).

However, an overview into the contents in syllabi (Table 1 and Figure 2) shows that only 17 of them (i.e., 60.71 %) include a marketing discipline either as compulsory or elective subject in students’ curricula. Remaining 11 syllabi (39.29 %) only consider the chance to include marketing as part of academic background as FCC subject (“*free curricular choice*” –in Spanish LEC or “*libre elección curricular*”–). At this point, it seems not to be any clear relationship between the “*orientation*” or “*profile*” of the concrete academic center (ranging from the only one specifically devoted to Public Management and Administration studies to those devoted to Law, Economics, etc., as indicated in the footnote to Table 1) and the fact of including or not a marketing discipline as part of the curricula, even when it could be expected to be a positive relationship between an “*economic*” (business and management) profile and marketing consideration. What is more, to be precise, the three centres were

marketing is considered to be a compulsory subject show much more a “Law” than an “Economics” profile (Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology in the Complutense University of Madrid, Faculty of Law in the University of León, and Faculty of Law and Social Sciences in the Rey Juan Carlos University), and another Faculty of Law (in the University of Murcia) is the only one of 14 centres with marketing as an elective subject but where students are “strongly suggested” to take it. Only one University School is specifically devoted to Public Management and Administration studies (Pompeu Fabra University at Campus of Manresa).

Table 1: Spanish public universities with a Public Management and Administration Degree.

University (Campus) and Faculty/School ^(*)	Name of the subject	Character	Course	Credits ^(**)
University of Alicante (Alicante) ^L	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
University of Almería (Almería) ^L	Marketing of Public Services	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (2.5/2.0)
Autonomous U. of Barcelona (Barcelona) ^L	Marketing of Public Services	Optative	Indif.	3.0 (1.5/1.5)
University of Burgos (Burgos) ^E	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
University of Cádiz (Algeciras) ^{L,E}	Public Marketing	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
University of Cádiz (Jerez de la Frontera) ^E	Public Marketing	Optative	Indif.	6.0 (4.0/2.0)
Carlos III University (Madrid) ^{S,L}	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
Univ. of Castilla-La Mancha (Albacete) ^L	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
Univ. of Castilla-La Mancha (Toledo) ^{L,S}	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
Complutense Univ. of Madrid (Madrid) ^{P,So}	Public Marketing	Compulsory	3 rd	5.0 (3.0/2.0)
University of Extremadura (Cáceres) ^L	Public Marketing	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
University of Girona (Girona) ^L	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
University of Granada (Melilla) ^{UB}	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
International U. of Catalunya (Barcelona) ^{UB}	Marketing of Public Services	Optative	Indif.	5.0 (3.0/2.0)
University of Jaén (Jaén) ^{Soc,L}	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
Jaume I Univ. of Castellón (Castellón) ^{L,E}	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
University of León (León) ^L	Public Marketing	Compulsory	2 nd	6.0 (4.0/2.0)
University of Málaga (Málaga) ^E	Marketing of Public Services	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
University of Murcia (Murcia) ^L	Marketing of Public Services	Optative ^(**)	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
University of Oviedo (Oviedo) ^E	Social and Services Marketing	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
University of Oviedo (Gijón) ^E	Social and Services Marketing	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
Politechnical Univ. of Valencia (Valencia) ^E	Marketing in Public Sector	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (2.0/2.5)
Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) ^{S,C}	Communication and Public Relationships in Administration	Optative	Indif.	3.0 (2.0/1.0)
Pompeu Fabra University (Manresa) ^{PMA}	Communication and Public Relationships in Administration	Optative	Indif.	3.0 (2.0/1.0)
Rey Juan Carlos University (Madrid) ^{L,S}	Public Marketing	Compulsory	3 rd	5.0 (3.0/2.0)
University of Salamanca (Salamanca) ^L	Marketing	Optative	Indif.	4.5 (3.0/1.5)
University of Vigo (Vigo) ^S	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)
University of Zaragoza (Huesca) ^E	-----	----	----	--- (---/---)

^(*) Legend: PMA: Public Management Administration; L: Law; E: Economics (Management and Business Administration); P: Political Sciences; S: Social Sciences; So: Sociology; UB: University Building (not a concrete school/faculty). One same faculty/school can be devoted to one or two of these specialities, as indicated.

^(**) Total ECTS or equivalent, of which in brackets theoretical/practical distribution of academic charge.

Source: Spanish Ministry on Education and Science [http://www.mec.es/]. Updated at October/2006.

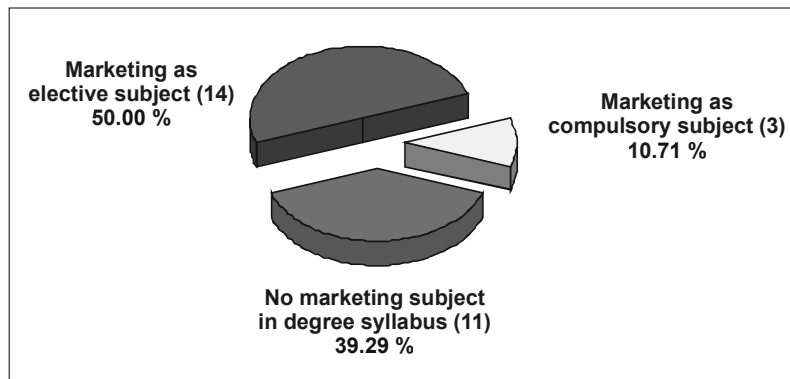


Figure 2: Inclusion or not and compulsory/elective character of marketing subjects in Public Management and Administration Degree syllabi.

Going deeply into the orientation and the characteristics of these subjects (Table 1 and Figure 3), we find that “*Public Marketing*” and “*Public Sector Marketing*” are most preferred denominations when a marketing discipline is considered (to be precise, in 6 of 17 cases –35.29 %–, and 5 of 17 cases –29.41 %–, respectively). That, together with the punctual –but more accurate– name of “*Marketing in the Public Sector*”, results into a 70.58 % of nomenclatures according to above mentioned “*restrictive*” definitions.

Much more curious because of the terminology and the specificity of the academic contents are those two subjects which are named “*Communication and Public Relationships in Public Administration*”. Both of them belonging to the academic offer by the University Pompeu Fabra, whereas in one case this name would merely derive from the title of the centre (Faculty of Social and Communication Sciences), in the other one it seems to be a (rational) question of analogy between two syllabi in a same University (and curiously we are referring to the above mentioned only existing specific University School in Public Management and Administration).

Finally, three of the subjects are marketing disciplines, but not public marketing. That’s the case of the two ones on “*Social and Services Marketing*”, and the one on –simply– “*Marketing*”.

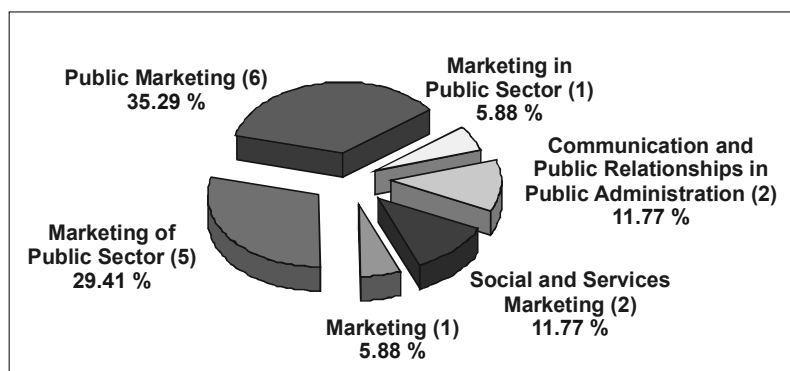


Figure 3: Denomination of marketing subject (if so) in Public Management and Administration Degree syllabi.

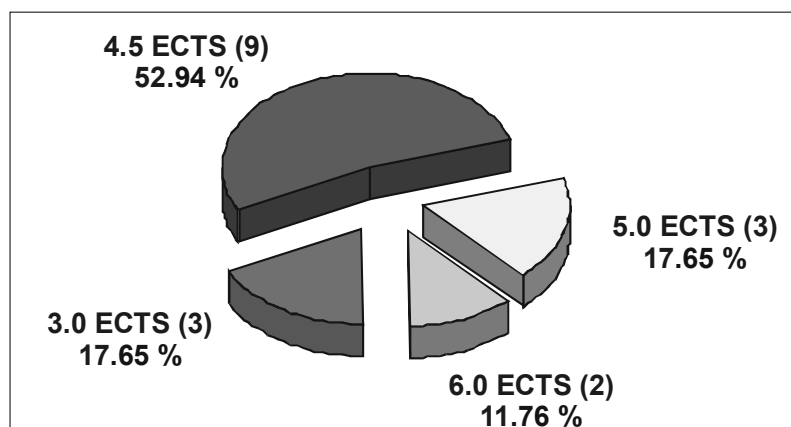


Figure 4: Academic charge (ECTS) of marketing subject (if so) in Public Management and Administration Degree syllabi.

Then, if considering ECTS as measure for relative importance in the whole academic charge of the degree, it is here where we can notice a major disparity between syllabi, either in the whole number of ECTS (see Table 1 and Figure 4) or in the distribution of this total figure in terms of theoretical/practical credits (Table 1).

Whereas 9 of analyzed subjects (52.94 %) have an academic charge equivalent to 4.5 ECTS, 3 of them respond to 3.0 and 5.0 ECTS (17.65 % in both cases), and remaining 2 (11.76 %) are the biggest ones due to their 6.0 ECTS equivalence. It seems to be a certain positive relationship between the compulsory character of a subject and its greater ECTS charge, but not definitive.

It is more or less the same in case of distribution between theoretical and practical contents on total ECTS academic charge, situations ranging from the one punctual case where practical formation is emphasized (Polytechnic University of Valencia) to a similarly sporadic equality (Autonomous University of Barcelona) and a vast majority of cases where theoretical contents are stressed in different proportions. All this results in an average relative distribution close to 2/1 between theoretical and practical contents on total ECTS academic charge (62.55 % and 37.45 % to be precise, as shown in Figure 5).

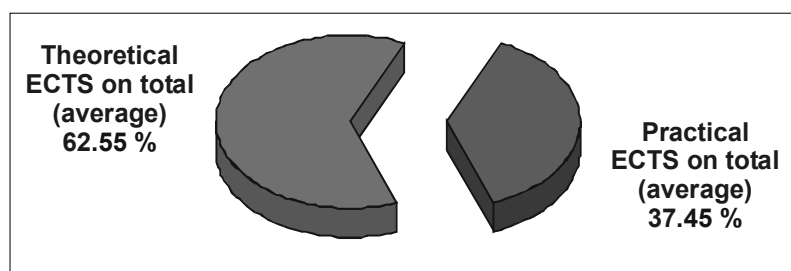


Figure 5: Average distribution of academic charge (theoretical/practical) of marketing subject (if so) in Public Management Degree syllabi.

4. As a conclusion, some comments for reflection:

More than conclusions in a proper sense, some comments for reflection arise from previous pages. So, firstly, modern public universities must be conscious on the real necessity of updating any educational program according to framing evolution and society requirements at any moment. This is, of course, applies to studies on Public Management and Administration, even more when public sector, in general, and more specifically Administrations are adapting themselves to new performance circumstances.

At intending such a kind of improvement in PMA studies, marketing seems to be not only a controversial but also a key subject. Nevertheless, intending marketing techniques and procedures in Administrations as used in business is not only useless, but even nonsense. What is more, in despite of its origin as business discipline, marketing science has ever considered social and public issues, nowadays existing specific and complete developments on these topics.

Facing Bologna requirements could be considered an opportunity in order to include public marketing in PMA curricula. However, current situations in universities offering this degree are very different. As an illustrative example, an overview on syllabi of Spanish public universities shows that only 60.71 % include marketing as compulsory or elective subject in students' curricula, a 70.58 % of them properly offering "public marketing" or "public sector marketing". On average, it uses to be an elective subject, with an academic charge equivalent to 4.5 ECTS, stressing theoretical contents much more than practical issues.

Thus, and following experts' advice (as well as students' and those responsible for curricula designing), proved marketing usefulness in Administration justifies a general inclusion of marketing contents in PMA curricula, at least as elective subject, and ever according to requirements of society.

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