

EXPLORING MARKETING STRATEGIES USED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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Abstract: *This paper provides a systematic review of the literature on strategies adopted in different educational systems from a marketing perspective. The study focuses on identifying the main directions addressed by researchers on educational marketing. The results contribute to determining existing gaps in the field of education and outlining future research directions that could eliminate some of the limitations of the research carried out and to identifying proposals for marketing strategies and specific actions to align educational services with the principles of social sustainability.*

Key words: *social sustainability, educational marketing, strategies, educational system, research directions*

1. Introduction

The intense concern for children's school education is evident among researchers, and the literature abounds with numerous studies focusing on different aspects of this field.

Exploring aspects such as access to education (distances and how children travel to school/kindergarten), their learning environment (school climate, provision of utilities and teaching materials, classroom layout), psycho-social climate (attitudes of teachers and peers towards the child), school performance, family context (material conditions, children's involvement in household activities and so on), school drop-out, adults' involvement in the educational process and their educational aspirations for their children can have a positive impact on the development and implementation of effective educational strategies (Zancajo, 2018) and the promotion of the principles of inclusive and quality education for all children.

The absence of a marketing vision in schools can lead to the development of educational strategies that aim to achieve certain objectives but do not relate them to

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the specifics and needs of the target market. This shortcoming can lead to ineffective results with significant impact, especially for pupils from vulnerable groups.

The aim of the study is to analyse researchers' concerns and identify those educational strategies that can be considered as benchmarks for the development of the education system. (Veloso et al., 2013)

Research focused on assessing how marketing mechanisms used by institutions in different education systems are implemented in practice (Matos et al., 2020) will highlight several factors that can contribute to reducing barriers to access to education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and ensuring access and equal opportunities for all children to quality education in line with current education policies and strategies.

2. Methodology

The analysis aims to present the current state of knowledge and to highlight the key theoretical aspects from a marketing perspective applicable to the field of education based on the main achievements of researchers in this field. To carry out the research, the following objectives were established: (O1) Analysis of the strategies in the development of the educational system in the European Union, (O2) Identification of the main issues addressed by researchers from the perspective of educational marketing, (O3) Comparative analysis of scientific research directions on different continents, (O4) Identification of research methods, sampling methods and analysis of marketing data used by researchers and identification of future research directions in order to improve strategies in the Romanian educational system.

For this study, approximately 60 bibliographic sources were consulted, consisting of the most cited scientific publications published between 2012 and 2020 in international databases, papers presented at international conferences on education, various articles and books in the field of research studied.

3. Results and Discussions

Objective 1. Analysis of strategies in the development of the education system in the European Union

At European Union level, education has made significant progress, with the different orientations of education policies implemented over time shown in Figure 2. There has been an evolution from a vision focused on the elimination of illiteracy to education policies now focused on the development of quality education. The specific objectives pursued are: increasing the competitiveness of education, increasing the number of children participating in early education, preventing and reducing early school leaving. These goals underline the importance of investing in education and reveal the long-term benefits for both individuals and society as a whole.

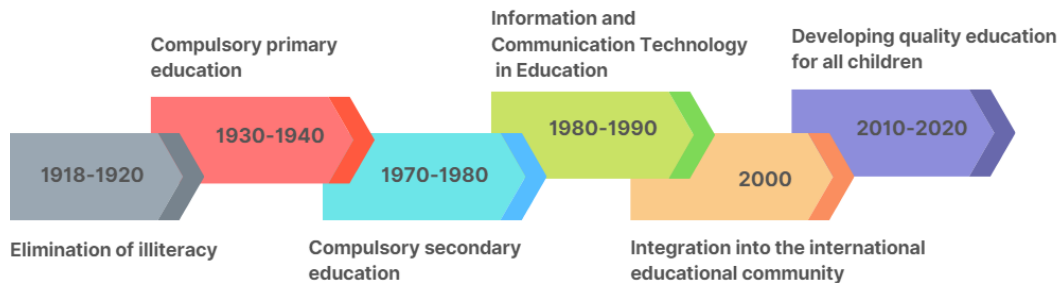


Fig. 1. *The evolution of strategies in the development of the education system in the EU*

According to the studies analysed, an extra year of school brings significant benefits. In terms of impact on the individual: it ensures the acquisition of essential knowledge, values and skills, thus providing a foundation for professional success. In terms of impact on society: increased employment opportunities and diversification of career choices; 8-9% increase in income in society; 8% reduction in risk of health problems (Figure 2).

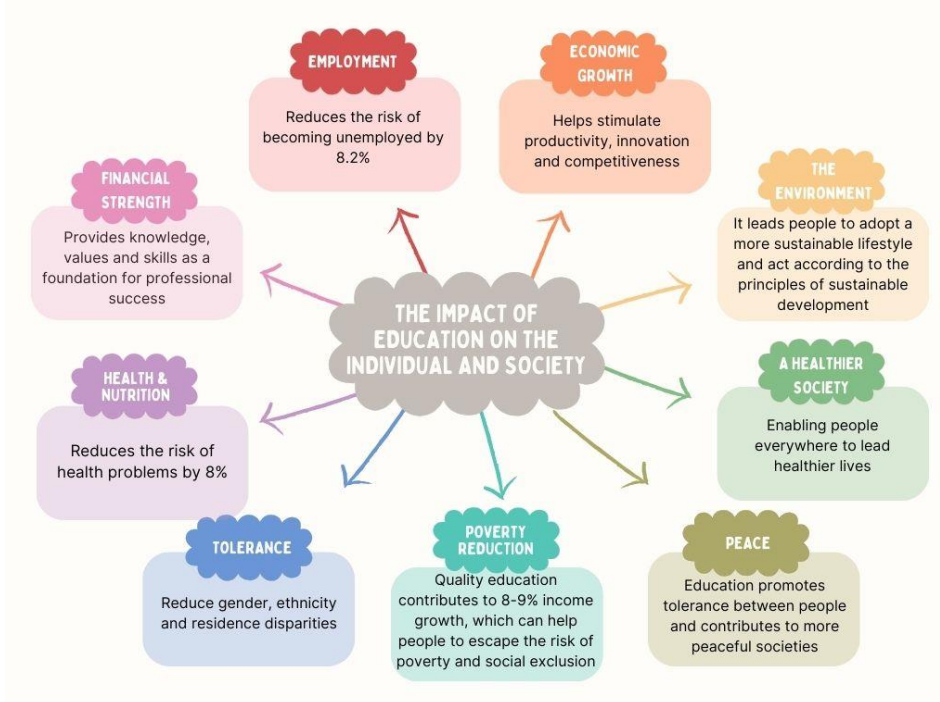


Fig. 2. *The benefits of an extra year of school*

Source: designed by the author based on data from Unesco and Unicef studies (2015 - 2020)

Objective 2. *Identify the main issues addressed by researchers from an educational marketing perspective*

The main issues addressed by researchers from an educational marketing perspective focus on: access to education, the environment in which schooling takes place, school outcomes and performance, family context, school drop-out and adult involvement in the education process.

The findings of the studies reviewed suggest various solutions for improving educational strategies. Educational programmes providing financial incentives can have a major impact on enrolment, participation and progress or achievement of primary school children. (Bauchet et al., 2018) The learner's voice is critical and the use of video/audio diaries can encourage them to speak freely about their experiences. Getting regular feedback from students about their school experiences is essential, with the iPad being a recommended tool for accessing children's 'thoughts' (Jorgensen et al., 2017).

Programs such as "Conjoint behavioral consultation" or "Teachers and parents as partners" are models of prevention and problem-solving, where parents, teachers and other professionals (psychologist, school counselor) work as partners and share responsibility for positive and consistent promotion related to the child's academic, behavioral and social-emotional development and academic achievement. (Sheridan et. Al, 2017) To improve the quality of public education, initiatives are needed to establish networks of partnerships between schools. (Liu, 2018) Recent policy and academic voices support the importance of a holistic approach to the concept of 'sustainable development' (Sinakou et. Al, 2018) There is a strong correlation between rural students' acceptance of ICT use for educational purposes and access to technology, social influence, performance expectations. Environmental quality can affect children's health, comfort and performance. Many studies have investigated whether the indoor environment is conducive to learning in terms of existing conditions (heating, facilities), but lighting, ventilation methods and wall design and colouring seem to be important impact factors that have not yet been analysed (Bluyssen et al., 2018).

Objective 3. *Comparative analysis of scientific research directions on different continents*

The findings reveal different approaches depending on the level of development of the education system and the specific problems it faces.

EUROPE - the main issues studied by researchers:

- Access and continuity in the education system;
- Discrimination issues.

In Europe, the main focus is on issues related to access and continuity in education faced by children from disadvantaged groups. The problems identified are not only related to basic education, but also to access to tertiary education for people in rural areas. At the same time, organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF are also drawing the attention of researchers through their studies and educational campaigns.

ASIA - the main issues studied by researchers:

- The relationship between school, family and community as key factors in the educational process;
- Interdependence between health and education.

Content analysis showed that there are different interests in education. Depending on the areas studied, the variety of themes and approaches differs, although certain themes prevail irrespective of the geographical area analysed.

In the context of research on the education system in Asia, the central themes revolve around health, establishing significant connections between health and education.

Emphasis is placed on concerns about the interaction between the school environment, family environment and community as key factors in the educational process. These studies also explore issues related to the level of parents' expectations of their children's education.

AFRICA - main issues studied by researchers:

- Existing access and opportunities (gender differences);
- Costs, effects and outcomes of the education process;
- Interdependence between education, community and health.

Research conducted within the African continent focuses on studying education from the perspective of the different actors involved in influencing the education system, including teachers, students, parents, communities. Particularly notable is the differentiation in gender issues that exist, with a particular focus on fertility, mortality and sexually transmitted diseases.

Predominantly, these studies focus on the problems faced by children before they enter the education system, with an emphasis on the possibilities of access and opportunities available. These are the main contemporary challenge facing the education system. Issues highlighted include the associated costs, impact and learning outcomes. Similar to the situation in Asia, there is a strong link between education, communities and health in this research.

AUSTRALIA - main issues studied by researchers:

- Sustainable education models;
- Use of new technologies in rural areas.

Australia, is a special case because of its distinct priorities in educational content. Here, topics focus less on traditional issues and more on culture, justice and social factors. There has been a strong interest in different educational models and the implementation of new technologies, particularly in rural areas.

LATIN AMERICA - the main aspects studied by researchers:

- Parents and their role in education;
- Educational impact;
- Educational programmes - structure of education;
- Access issues.

In Latin America, parents and their role in education seem to be the strongest dominant theme. The community holds considerable importance, with a particular emphasis on the essential role of the family. There is widespread interest in educational impact assessment, programme and organisational policy issues relating to the structure of education, and access issues. However, despite their presence, gender issues do not appear to be as significant compared to Africa or Europe.

NORTH AMERICA - the main aspects studied by researchers:

- The problem of communication.
- Higher education levels.

In North America, researchers' interests are mainly focused on higher levels of education, with particular emphasis on areas such as engineering and science in rural areas, oriented towards practical applications.

Objective 4. Identify research methods, sampling methods and analysis of marketing data used by researchers

The content analysis conducted highlights a variety of research methods used by researchers, illustrated in Figure 3, with most studies using survey research, semi-structured interviews and experiment.

As sampling methods used can be listed: stratified sampling according to characteristics that could generate differences in school results obtained, such as residence environment, parents' level of education, level of schooling in which the child is enrolled; group sampling (carried out according to the Country → Regions → Localities → Schools → Classes model, in the end all members of the classes included in the sample are surveyed); step sampling (multistage) (Ivan, L. et al., 2012). Among the non-probability methods, purposive sampling and the volunteer method were encountered. Sample sizes ranged from 244 to 450 respondents.

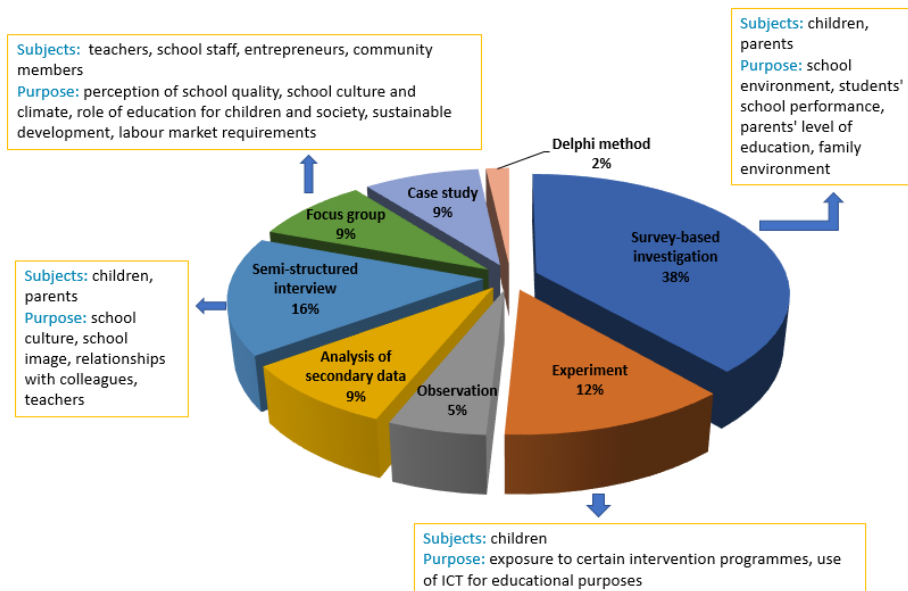


Fig. 3. Research methods used in educational marketing

Analysis of marketing data was carried out using the following methods: Wilcoxon test for differences in children's educational outcomes following participation in an educational programme compared to the previous period; Principal component analysis for interdependencies between several variables, based on which respondents assessed the importance of attributes such as: access to education, school climate, family context, children's involvement in household activities, students' educational outcomes, parents' involvement in school preparation, parents' attitudes towards school education in creating an image of the quality of education. Anova analysis to track average frequency of participation in educational activities by residence; T-Student test to see whether there is a significant difference between boys and girls in absenteeism or to test hypotheses of the form - children whose parents are involved in the educational process perform better compared to those whose parents are detached from this issue.

To model the relationships between variables such as family education and income as important predictors for the decision to drop out of school, Multiple Linear Regression was used, showing that students from low-income families with neither parent having higher education and residents of rural areas face lower probabilities of graduation and at the same time have an increased risk of dropping out of school.

The existence of significant differences between the opinions of different actors involved in education on certain aspects of educational quality was measured with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

The method of correlation analysis (Pearson correlation coefficient) was also applied to test the existence of significant correlations between the perception of the overall image of the school and the evaluation of different aspects of the educational services provided or the perception of the quality of education and the degree of use of digital tools in the educational process.

4. Conclusions

From this analysis we can see the main topics that have been of intense concern to educational researchers. If up to 2015-2016 most of the publications focused on the study of different aspects from a marketing perspective applicable to higher education institutions, education in public institutions in rural or disadvantaged environments, both at pre-school and school level, seems to be currently the subject of considerable interest in the field of educational marketing for researchers around the world.

The analysis leads us to the conclusion that the quality of education depends on a variety of factors, the most important of which are: teacher training, the use of a variety of learner-centred teaching methods, school infrastructure, the use of ICT in the learning process, the provision of school counselling, and the involvement of parents in the educational process. Ensuring quality education for all children requires measures that address all these factors and more.

Therefore, future research should focus particular attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups, who are most affected by a lack of well-trained teachers, inadequate learning materials and inadequate educational infrastructure. It is also crucial to pay attention to investing in early childhood education programmes in low- and middle-income countries in line with their specific needs. This is necessary to identify optimal solutions to minimise and even eliminate the risk of early school leaving, while increasing attendance and promotion in the education system.

The study highlights the need for researchers to pay particular attention to assessing the impact of implementing different educational programmes, with a focus on learner-centredness. It is therefore proposed that future research directions should include analysis of the potential of strategies designed to meet the specific needs of the target groups concerned, evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken and assessment of the institutional competence of educational establishments in providing integrated interventions for children, parents, teachers and schools that ensure the long-term sustainability of interventions in this area.

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