

# STUDENTS' EVALUATION FOR MARKET ORIENTATION: EVIDENCE FROM EGYPTIAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aimed at revisiting the market orientation philosophy, through examining the impact of organizational culture on market orientation within Egyptian business schools. Data were gathered from 46 informants in three business schools in Egypt. The informal and implicit nature of the marketing phenomena under investigation and the need to gain scientific insight into them called for using Grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory analysis helped to identify three distinct models in higher education in Egypt. The models show distinct ways in which organizational culture affect market orientation mechanism, which capitalizes on students' evaluation to fulfill the strategic agenda of business schools within their operating marketing environment.*

**JEL:** M31, 120, 123

**KEYWORDS:** Market Orientation, Organizational Culture, Students' Evaluation, Egyptian Higher Education

## INTRODUCTION

The business schools sector is caught up in a web of competitive forces, with market orientation being not merely an essential drive for securing competitive advantage but even a key to survival (Starkey and Nick, 2008). The customer orientation paradigm points to the importance of becoming "customer-centric" in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, because this will lead to better value creation and increase the firm's "profit" performance (Deshpandé et al., 1993; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Homburg et al., 2000; McNaughton et al., 2001; Tajeddini et al., 2006). The market orientation literature, however, focuses on consumer products in commercial organizations and hence market orientation in higher education (henceforth HE) has not so far received adequate attention (e.g., Siu and Wilson, 1998), perhaps because of the notion that market orientation in the sense that "the customer is always right" is not appropriate to HE and would clearly be corrosive to the educational process (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). In this context, the notion of "the customer is always right" might not hold in all situations; it is better for HE institutions to be less-customer centered in some aspects of the learning process in order to produce better outcomes (Steinman et al., 2000; White, 2007).

Therefore, this research extends the marketing literature examining the validity of some of the traditional parts of marketing theory and such accepted business practices as market orientation in specific contexts, notably HE/business schools. Specifically, using a ground theory approach, this research focuses on identifying the extent/level of market orientation adopted by business schools (i.e., the extent to which they use students' evaluation to generate, disseminate and respond to students' feedback) and on examining the role of the underlying organizational forces (i.e., organizational culture) in explaining the specific level of market orientation adopted by these schools. The paper is organized as follows: first, a synthesis of various areas of the marketing concepts and arenas that the research stems from; i.e., market orientation in HE, organizational culture and students' evaluation. Then, the empirical nature of the research is defended, followed by a rationale for using the grounded theory approach. Finally, the results, discussion and suggestions for future research are presented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Market Orientation of Business Schools: Implications of Organizational Culture for Market Orientation

Market orientation is usually defined as the process of generating and disseminating market intelligence for the purpose of creating superior buyer value (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). There are three components of market orientation: (1) customer orientation, (2) competitor orientation and (3) inter-functional coordination. Customer orientation represents a relative emphasis on collecting and processing the information which pertains to customer preferences (Slater and Narver, 1994).

Advocates of market orientation argue that students should be treated like any other purchasers of goods and services because they pay an increasing proportion of their education costs (e.g., Bejou, 2005) while at the same time the demand increases to enhance and ensure consistent quality standards (e.g., Rapert et al., 2004; Clayson, 2009; Clayson and Haley, 2005). Yet opponents of the ‘customer’ concept argue that students do not pay the full cost of their education and they are not “purchasing” a qualification per se (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). Moreover students are not the only customers of HE; there are other groups who might be assumed to have entitlements, including future employers, the government, families and society in general (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). In addition, the quality of education declines instead of rising every time students choose the easiest programs and courses with soft assessments; conversely they may punish academically demanding staff through critical feedback. (e.g., Clayson and Haley, 2005). However, empirical evidence suggests that, contrary to these claims, there is a positive association between student workload and student evaluation of teaching; students do not reward with high evaluation results those teachers who give them relatively low workloads (Marsh and Roche 2000) or unjustifiably good grades (Eagle and Brennan, 2007).

Nevertheless, this simplistic and polarized perspective of market orientation is not appropriate in a complex service such as HE, where academic rather than commercial values are dominant and there are many stakeholders dissimilar in their needs and interests. Marketing theory and practice can provide more complex conceptions of the customers and ways of responding to them in their academic context. Thus, we need to revisit the market orientation paradigm as it applies to this field to examine the notion of “the customer is always right” in terms of identifying how business schools determine who the “customer” is, what is “right” and when is “always.”

Central to market orientation effectiveness is the matter of organizational culture (Piercy, 1990; Siu and Wilson, 1998). Organization culture affects market orientation; this culture is a mix of values, beliefs, assumptions and expectations held in common by members of a particular group and used by them as behavior and problem-solving cues (Hodge and Anthony, 1988); i.e., to determine what information is acquired, disseminated and acted on and more importantly, how such information is interpreted to infer implications for future organizational actions (Baker and Sinkula, 1999). Furthermore, market orientation reflects an organization-level culture and a set of shared values and beliefs about putting the customer first in business planning (Deshpandé, 1999). Nevertheless, market orientation literature has paid little attention to empirically investigating the specific organizational structures and cultures which facilitate customer orientation (Homburg et al., 2000). Therefore, this study will examine the role of organizational culture in seeking to explain the specific level of market orientation adopted by business schools.

### Students’ Evaluation as Marketing Knowledge

The original purpose of students’ evaluation was to provide feedback to the instructor with a view to improving his/her teaching (Lill, 1979). However, the use of students’ evaluation to provide market information and feedback is becoming increasingly evident (Gursoy and Umbreit, 2009). Students’ evaluation can provide valuable information about the discrepancy between students’ experiences and

their expectations. More importantly, it provides information about the interaction between service provider and recipients and the fulfillment of promises to customers. This information is of special importance in service contexts such as HE, because they determine service quality and long-term relationships, as indicated by the “services marketing” and “relationship marketing” paradigms (e.g., Siu and Wilson, 1998).

In addition, the mechanism by which students’ evaluation are gathered, disseminated and responded to (e.g., curriculum development, course design, selection of faculty) by the parties responsible represents the three separate elements of market orientation: generation, dissemination and responsiveness (Stewart, 1991; Mahrous et al., 2010). Therefore, this research will examine the extent/level of market orientation adopted by business schools through analyzing the extent of their use of students’ evaluation to generate, disseminate and respond to students’ feedback

## **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

### Data

The perceived role of students as active customers is quite a recent phenomenon that has emerged only in the past decade in Egypt in general and in business schools sector in particular (Mahrous and Anis, 2010). This change was due to: (1) the globalization and deregulation of HE in Egypt; (2) the economic liberalization and reforms leading to increased pressure to enhance the quality of educational services; and (3) drastic changes in customer bases accompanied by an increased reliance on marketing knowledge as a source of competitive advantage in HE (Mahrous et al., 2010). Accordingly, the current landscape of Egyptian HE from a student’s customer recognition standpoint contains four main kinds of business school:

- (1) Private Egyptian Universities, which rely for their main source of income on students and their fees;
- (2) Internationally affiliated Universities which recognize students as customers due to their international heritage and are under market pressures to manage them as a major source of revenue and a platform for an international image;
- (3) Public schools with programs which have opened up to internationalization and competitiveness mainly through adopting the English language as the world-wide language of business. They are striving to adapt business curriculums oriented to international standards, with the appropriate teaching methods and assessment mechanisms. The programs of such schools’ always exhibited various levels of reluctance and determination to consider students as customers for the sake of social compliance, economic efficiency and international recognition; and
- (4) Public business schools with programs which have remained local as regards the national/social/political agenda in scope, language and staff/student ratio, following policies which recognized students not as customers but as an unsought demand.

The varying levels of practice between these different types of business school with regard to incorporating and responding to students’ perceptions and feedback would provide a rich empirical context in which to describe the discrepancies controlling the influence of organizational culture on a market orientation which used students’ evaluation as marketing information. This research will draw on three business schools in Egyptian HE; the business school of a leading private university, that of a market leader international university and that of a pioneer public university because of their pioneering and largely leading role in their respective categories. Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics of the sample.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

	Public University	Private University	International university
<b>Age</b>			
Mean (SD) years	50.2 (4.2)	44.8 (4.6)	43.4 (4.8)
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	4 (21%)	5 (33%)	5 (42%)
Male	15 (79%)	10 (67%)	7 (58%)
<b>Nationality</b>			
Egyptians	16 (84%)	13 (86%)	9 (75%)
Non-Egyptians	3 (16%)	2 (14%)	3 (25%)
<b>Job Title</b>			
Head of Academic Departments	3 (15%)	2 (13%)	2 (16%)
Deans	1 (8%)	1 (6%)	1 (8%)
Vice Deans	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
Directors of Academic Programs	6 (31%)	5 (34%)	4 (34%)
Students' Representatives	3 (15%)	4 (27%)	2 (17%)
Other (e.g., Faculty Boards' members)	4 (21%)	3 (20%)	2 (17%)

*This table shows the characteristics of the sample in the three business schools under examination. All numbers indicate frequency and percentages, except for age; numbers represent means and standard deviations*

## METHODOLOGY

*Rationale:* Grounded theory was selected for a number of reasons which are related to the essence of the marketing phenomena under investigation, such as the following: (1) organization culture originated from norms, traditions and pre-held dispositions and beliefs, which are usually insufficiently expressed in written and verbal documentation. Organizational culture is more probably reflected and communicated in a set of explicit and implicit rituals, symbolic signals, manipulations and image positioning (Schein, 1996); and (2) market orientation involves a considerable number of knowledge-based stereotypes, informal learning, the symbolic use of information and incorporations of market information into the organizational pursuits of customer orientation and accordingly how it influences the overall management of market performance (Voon, 2007; Bell et al., 2002). Clearly, the use of positivistic methodologies would not provide a description of the flows and behavioral impacts of the streams of marketing knowledge circulating within the system of knowledge management for market orientation. Therefore, there is a need for appropriate and rigorous qualitative investigations, for example, the grounded theory approach, to identify and develop the implications of organizational culture for market orientation within the context of HE.

*Field data collection:* The data were collected by individual thematic interviews and complemented by participant observations at meetings (e.g., staff-student course review meetings, instructor review committee, etc.) and the analysis of documents (e.g., students' evaluation forms and transcripts of course/program review meetings). A total of 46 informants were interviewed over a period of 3 months. The informants represented all the schools under study and different levels of their hierarchy. The themes guiding the 1- to 2-hour interviews were: (1) the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of the academic institution concerning the phenomena under study; (2) the level of each element of marketing orientation: the level of information generation (the amount and regularity of using students' evaluation as market-generated information); dissemination (the number and type of parties to which information is disseminated and whether there is a formal and specific agenda for communicating students' evaluation to each party); and response (whether the parties respond to information generated and disseminated, the magnitude and immediacy of their response and the measurement of its impact).

Although the themes guided the interviews, the interviewer did not ask exactly the same questions each time. In this way, each successive interview was used to expand knowledge (Silverman, 2000; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). After each interview, the interviewer summarized the emerging themes and these

summaries served as a basis for the reformulation and development of questions and testing of the emerging hypothesis. All the interviews were recorded and detailed notes were taken throughout.

*Analysis.* An inductive analysis of the data was conducted following the basic principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The main aim was to generate a descriptive theory of the dominant organizational culture present in the schools and to formulate a preliminary hypothesis on the way in which students' evaluation could enhance market orientation within these cultures. Using the "open coding" procedure, the data were categorized into concepts that were suggested by the data rather than imposed from outside (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Once all the data were examined, the concepts were organized by themes, which became candidates for a set of stable and integrative categories. The properties and dimensions of each possible category were identified. The identification of integrative themes within each division and comparisons between divisions often required further analysis of the transcriptions. This iteration between data and concepts ended when "theoretical saturation" was reached; no new or relevant data emerged and each category was well-developed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Seale, 1999). In the light of the iterative process, three categories were identified. These categories were validated by comparing them with the information obtained through: (1) participant observations at the sites of the business schools (i.e., the authors were present at the three business schools during 90 interview days and attended 11 meetings); (3) analyses of documents; and (4) cross-checking the validity of the choice of categories with nine selected informants. Two further procedures ensured that the data analysis was not entirely subjective: (1) during data analysis the authors had many hours of detailed discussions with two colleagues about the cultural models; and (2) a random sample of the collected individual interview data was blindly reanalyzed. The discussion confirmed the validity of categories and the first and second analyses corresponded to each other.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As a result of the iterative process, three marketing organizational cultures were identified and distinguished as belonging to the following categories. The first two categories represent the organizational culture levels of Schein's organizational model (1990, 1996): tacit assumptions, values and a third one showing how the core values are translated in practice.

*Tacit assumptions:* Long held beliefs about the core tasks and values of the organization and its employees within foreseeable time horizons.

*Core values:* Firmly adopted principles on how to respond pro-actively to these assumptions with grand marketing strategic initiatives.

*Strategic practices:* representing the "output" and manifested behaviors and practices of a specific culture.

In the light of these three categories, the study identified three main models for devising an organizational culture to manage a market orientation mechanism that capitalizes on students' evaluation as set out in Table 2.

### Case A – Compromiser

Case A is a pioneer leading public business school that offers programs in English language and adopts international business curriculums and mechanism for using students' evaluation.

*The implications of the tacit assumptions for market orientation;* The assumption of the compromiser is that students can be considered as customers only in the programs where students pay market-based tuition fees and students' evaluation are conducted. This contingent approach of perceiving students as

customers is derived from their leading heritage of academic excellence accompanied by their social mandate, with its consequent monopolistic power. In contrast, in other programs where no formal evaluation by students is sought, the decision is due to the long standing monopolistic belief of the organization that students can never be customers. In such a situation, the employees – either academic faculty or administrative staff – of these fee-paying programs are not often oriented towards satisfying students. The compromiser’s employees’ orientation seems to depend on the power of the actors and other contingent circumstances. According to this unique approach to students as possible customers, the compromisers’ perception of orientation towards profitability ranges from believing that ‘students can be a source of profitability’ to ‘students should not be a source of profitability’.

Table 2: Management of Students’ Evaluation: Evidence from Three Egyptian Business Schools A, B, and C

	<b>Case A Compromiser</b>	<b>Case B Globalizer</b>	<b>Case C Customizer</b>
<b>Tacit assumptions</b>	- The customer is always right if s/he is a customer	- The customer is always right as long as s/he is a global customer	- The customer is always right as long as s/he is profitable
<b>Core values</b>	(Make both ends meet)	(Look globally appease locally)	(Keep customers happy)
- Generation	- Interruptible (i.e., limited, circumstantial & prolonged)	- sustained (i.e., selective, influential & regular)	- perpetuated (i.e., comprehensive, dominant & continuous)
- Dissemination	- manipulated (i.e., information asymmetry, lean toward formal & action contingent)	- relevant (i.e., selective sharing, formal & loose action justified)	- overwhelming (i.e., all-sharing formal & cohesive action imposed)
- Response	- Unpredictable (i.e., stochastic, lagging & symbolic)	- Proportionate (i.e., indiscriminant, quick & effective)	indiscriminate (i.e., Selective, timely conducive)
<b>Strategic Practices</b>			
- Line of Business	- undifferentiated - order qualifier-quality	- differentiated - order winner-quality	- focused - tailored quality
- Resources	slack	upgraded	plentiful
- Perceptions of stakeholders	public image	global image	target market image
- Past performance	efficiency	effectiveness	adaptability

*This table shows the three distinct organizational cultures (case A, case B, and case C) identified from analyzing the impact of organizational culture levels (i.e., tacit assumptions, core values, and strategic practices) on market orientation mechanisms that capitalize on students’ evaluation. Each cell in the three cases’ columns describes the organizational culture, the management of students’ evaluation (i.e., how to generate, disseminate and respond to students’ evaluation) and the implications of such culture.*

*The implications of the core values for market orientation.* The generation of students’ evaluation data is circumstantial. This means that market information generated from students’ evaluation could be an important piece of market information for some programs, when socially and politically plausible, for different and changing generic purposes, and using standard templates of one methodology covering only a few aspects of the learning process. At the same time, the evaluation exercise may be merely to produce informal inputs from students for the sake of giving them a limited chance for self-expression.

‘When we started doing students’ evaluation for the English section, we did not have a clear agenda but just imitated the leading internationally-affiliated university in the Egyptian market. Later on, we found such evaluation to be effective in improving the quality of our educational services. This is why we seek to extend this tool to all our programs and make it more and more acceptable by stakeholders.’ (Member of the school’s faculty board) The dissemination of students’ evaluation is manipulated; students’ evaluation are disseminated to a few parties selectively on a sporadic basis without clear reasons that might be discussed formally or informally at the discretion of decision makers who could produce spontaneous actions. The response to students’ evaluation can be described as unpredictable; response can

be made to only a few areas, on usually lagging and rarely sustainable bases, on the smallest possible scale and scope, with a highly centralized authority, and with almost no reporting of impact.

*Strategic practices – top managements' policies for market orientation.* The top management of the compromiser's institution perceives their role in the society as providing HE services to the upper and lower B class, in particular to those who deserve a chance of HE and usually cannot have it for various economic and social reasons. One of the top management leaders of Case A indicated that 'we seek to introduce an education service that appeals to the largest possible sectors of potential students.' Accordingly, the compromisers perceive their stakeholders to be composed of staff, governmental/professional and national accreditation bodies, students, parents and employers. 'We have been saying that the university is its staff and the state is our main beneficiary, to justify the de-optimizing of our students' agenda. Despite the crystal clear evidence that these fallacies were damaging even to the long term interests of the staff and the state, we still come under legislative, social, political and media pressures to keep on doing business as usual and this is why we send mixed signals to students.' (Undergraduate program director) It is in the light of this that the respondents' perceptions and identification of organizational resources to achieve strategic goals and performance control indicators or benchmarks are determined. They perceive the organizational resources needed to accomplish their mission and satisfy stakeholders should be made up of staff quality, government contacts, money, industry links and international contacts, whereas they believe that their performance indicators are in fact their public image, legal compliance, profitability and number of students.

#### Case B – Globalizer

Case B is a leading internationally affiliated business school. The globalizer has been the pioneering and acknowledged market leader in world class internationally accredited business education in Egypt for a century. The business school is both the branding star and the cash cow for the university. Its only serious competitors are another two booming private and public globalizer.

*The implications of the tacit assumptions for market orientation.* The globalizer defines students as important customers. Students are part of a large group of stakeholders. 'Here, the student is the boss. This does not mean that the student is allowed to manipulate the educational process but that the whole educational system is designed and run around his/her best interests. We recognize that there are other equally important stakeholders such as sponsors and employers but our world class experience and standards have taught us that when you pursue the best interest of that one pivotal stakeholder, you automatically optimize the objective function of all other stakeholders and the contrary is not true. We hold this world class definition of students' best interests even higher than students' delight, if we have to.' (Head of Department) 'This is rooted in the school's mission and educational object: to provide high quality education which matches international standards and helps to enhance superior opportunities for their graduates to be internationally employable.' (Head of Department) 'We welcome students who are prepared to survive and capable of it despite the demands of our world class educational standards which help us enjoy a competitive edge in the global labor market.' (Dean)

Therefore, the employees are oriented towards satisfying their students' need to become distinctive graduates after a unique and rich learning experience. Consequently, they perceive students' tuition as a main source of the school's profitability but not as the sole source of its financial sustainability.

*The implications of the core values for market orientation.* The generation of students' evaluation data can be described as sustained; students' evaluation is an important source of market information that should be regularly generated for all programs at appropriate times for some specific purposes, using viable forms of structured methodology covering vital aspects. 'Students' evaluations are an embedded inheritance from international genesis and affiliation. We seek to capitalize on them to stay abreast of our global image. It takes a great deal of internal communication and decision mechanism to do so.' (Head of Department) The dissemination of information from students' evaluation is relevant in the sense that, information is disseminated to the pre-designated concerned parties at specific times for known reasons

and in appropriate forms. They are and always should be discussed on a regular and formal basis and some action is required from certain parties in response. The response to students' evaluation is proportional because the response is made to selected areas only on a reasonably and contingently basis and on a justified scale and scope. The response is made by regulated empowered staff to customers oriented to global standards, with a reporting impact for far-reaching and radical responses only.

*Strategic practices – top management policies for market orientation.* Since the globalizer is aiming to provide the highest quality education to international standards, it is targeting the affluent social classes: upper and middle A class, in addition to a limited number of talented students in other classes who are globally oriented and quality sensitive. It defines its line of business as a “specialty product seeking to claim a monopolized market” (Dean). Hence, it defines stakeholders as students and international image standards; parents and staff; and employers. Therefore, it believes that the resources needed to achieve its strategic mandate are international market contacts; international standard agencies; funds; staff quality; and governmental contacts. It measures its performance using international recognition, market image, profitability, customers' satisfaction index (CSI), and labor turnover.

*Case C – Customizer:* The customizer is the pioneering and unquestionable quality leader of the private Egyptian universities. The business school is the lifting star of the brand image with a notable profitability mandate through managing economies of scale with above-market fees. Its direct competitors include four public and private quality sensitive business schools.

*The implications of tacit assumptions for market orientation.* The customizer assumes that students are the most important customer because it is operating in a very competitive market that is completely deregulated. This is derived from the customizer's main agenda to offer a competitive profitability level to shareholders. Hence, its employees, both academic faculty and administrative staff, are concerned to be totally oriented and exclusively dedicated to customers' (students') satisfaction. ‘When we hire staff (academics and administrators) we check not only on their specialized aptitudes but also on their attitudes, especially toward students. If we smell any polluted glimpse of the dogma that we are the masters and students are our slaves, we immediately turn such people down. Everyone working at this campus (including owners) must believe firmly that students are our key customers and quality is what they see as quality within tolerable legal and ethical standards’ (Head of Department).

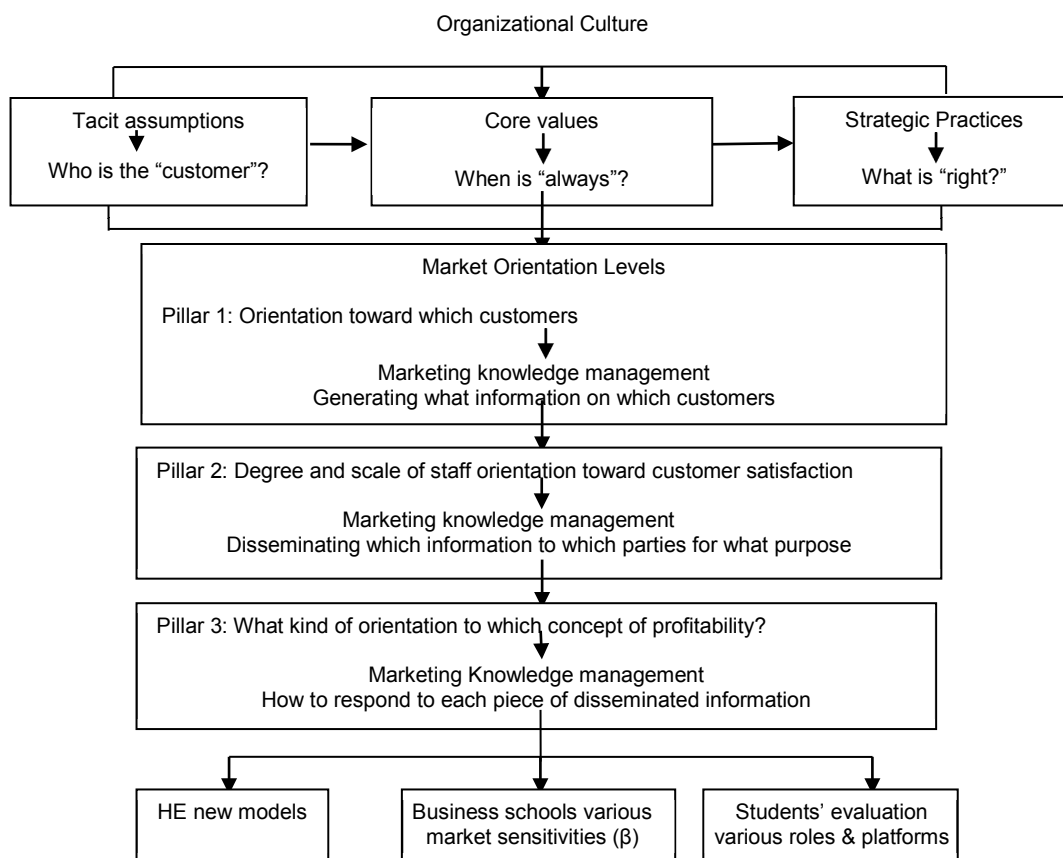
*The implications of core values for market orientation.* The generation of market information from students' evaluation can be described as perpetuated; market information generated by students' evaluation is the most important piece of market information that can be generated for all programs since its inception, for all kinds of purposes using all forms of available methodology and covering all aspects of the learning process. The dissemination of information from students' evaluation can be described as overwhelming; students' evaluation should be disseminated to all parties at all times for all possible reasons in all forms of analysis and should be discussed on an elaborate and deliberate basis in continuous and formal forums, after which some sort of action is expected from all parties. The response to students' evaluation can be described as indiscriminate in the sense that response to information generated by students' evaluation is defined as something which should be made to all areas on an immediate and sustainable basis with the largest possible magnitude and scope through fully empowered staff and customer-oriented governance', then its impact should be systematically reported. ‘Student evaluation is the dogmatic creed for the way we run all our programs. We aim to know how the students feel day by day in so many mutually verifying methods and formally distributed to every academic and administrative sector inside the university, to address all the concerns raised with measurable and influential actions. Everyone is empowered and encouraged to react positively to students' concerns’ (Dean).

*Strategic practices – top management policies for market orientation.* The customizer defines its line of business as providing high quality education to the upper B and lower A classes. They perceive it as providing shopping services in a monopoly market. ‘We concentrate on the upper B class and lower A class students who are keen to get higher quality business education to manage their family businesses or join multinationals operating in Egypt’ (Dean). Accordingly, the customizer assumes that the



stakeholders' group consists of students, parents, staff and national accreditation bodies. Moreover, it believes that the organizational resources needed in this line of business are money, staff, market contacts and governmental contacts. In line with its educational creed and organizational mission, it uses the following performance measures: number of students, overall profitability, customers' satisfaction index, and labor turnover. The foregoing grounded theory results have led to an empirically substantiated model as depicted in Figure 1. The model shows the implications of organizational culture for market orientation mechanisms that capitalize on students' evaluation. It also points out to the three following arguments concerned with answering the major question of whether the customer is always right.

Figure 1: The Emerging Grounded Theory-Based Framework



The figure shows the implications of organizational cultures for the pillars of market orientation and strategic practices of business schools

*Argument 1. "Who" is the customer?* Defining the customer depends on the organizations' assumptions about its market, viewed through the lens of its tacit assumptions as expressed by its organizational culture. Then, the organization uses its market orientation to generate information to an extent, which reflects its beliefs about the customers' identity and their importance in relation to other stakeholders. This affects all the aspects of the generation of market information as to what agenda, which methodologies, and how far it extends are attached to each incident in the generation of market information. Conclusively, based on the organizational culture's contingent pursuit of customer orientation and its associated generation of marketing information, it can be safely claimed that various definitions and identifications of the same customers should be in use and there should be no one standard template way to generate information from these customers in essence, form, or even scope. The range is extremely wide, from ultimately prioritized customers to not being a customer at all and from the uninterrupted generation of information about the customer to there being no need to listen to customers all.

*Argument 2. “When is Always?”* The marketing organization’s core values, determining how far the main staff should be oriented and dedicated toward customer satisfaction, are a major determinant of the extent to which the preparation, guidance and mentoring of the staff for this mandate is seen as an investment. Again, this depends on the tacit assumptions about the market and the context as interpreted and stated by the core values. Then, these values have a significant impact on the timing of assistance to the marketing generated information and the time and resources allocated to communicating this information to a specific range (number) of parties and the expectations about for each party is dealing with such information. Accordingly, the dissemination of information does not take one form of intensity, immediacy or crucialness. There are significant variations in the timeliness, scope and expected reactions for each flow of marketing generated information within the various constituencies of market orientation which are mainly guided by the core values of the organizational culture.

*Argument 3. “What is right?”* The core values as reflected by the strategic practices necessitate various response formats that are not essentially related to addressing customers’ disseminated concerns to satisfy best the aspirations of the designated customers. This consideration was found to be largely contingent on the customer’s position and importance in relation to other stakeholders (also identified by tacit assumptions) and communicated through core values. Equally important, the mode of response tends to vary across all the response dimensions (e.g., the areas, immediacy, magnitude and reporting of the impact of the response) according to the availability of organizational resources to respond, the lines of business related to the given customer and the relevance of customer driven performance benchmarks.

Conclusively, the response to customers’ communicated demands is far from a uni-directional, one-sided phenomenon. It can move in various directions: from marketing organizations to customers, between various parties within the marketing organizations, from customers to the marketing organization and to a zero response with no direction at all. Eventually, it can be multi-sided, from totally espousing the side of the customer, or making a variously balanced response to both the side of the customer and the marketing organization, or making exactly a different point outside their equilibrium curve to actually going as far as responding against the customers’ satisfaction either for her/his long/short term well-being, for business standards and norms and/or for branding considerations.

## CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at revisiting the market orientation paradigm as it applies to the field of HE. Specifically, the paper focused on examining the market orientation mechanisms that capitalize on students’ evaluation in Egyptian business schools. Due to the implicit and informal nature of the marketing phenomena under investigation, grounded theory methodology was adopted. The results indicate that the organizational culture has clear implications on how Egyptian business schools manage students’ evaluation to enhance their market orientation. The results also suggest that there is not a simple and polarized application of the market orientation concept in Egyptian HE, but rather, there are nuances of the application of market orientation. This is largely because the organizational culture of the business school leads to different levels of the application of market orientation in terms of determining who the “customer” is, what is “right” and when is “always”. These findings must be interpreted with some limitations in mind. First, the underlying dimensions of market orientation and a knowledge-based management were adopted in their common form, as advocated by Kohli and Jaworski (1990); there are other significant variations and additions to these commonly accepted understandings of market orientation that can also be adopted. Second, students are just one type of stakeholder and their evaluation is only one form of the marketing knowledge that they originate. Third, the HE field in Egypt is a single service industry operating in the cross-cultural context of a single country. Significant variations are very much expected in other service industries within other global markets. Extensions and replications of this research across various industries can be conducted with the same methodology

adopted and an even wider spectrum, relying on the analogy between students' evaluation and other customer-oriented market soundings, such as customers' complaints, reviews, testimonials, recorded sales and customer service calls and protocol analyses of customers' surveys.

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