Abstract: With increased adoption of e-learning in higher education (both teacher initiated and institutionally mandated), the ways in which academic work is conducted and academic identities developed and sustained are undergoing change. In this paper we explore online marketing education from the perspective of teaching expertise; how this expertise is changing in an online environment and what impacts these changes may have on teacher identity. Drawing on a diverse range of literature encompassing identity, expertise and online learning, as well as our own experience as marketing educators we highlight three aspects of expertise that contribute to a refashioning of teaching expertise in an online environment. These are (1) curating subject content, (2) designing assessment for co-creation of knowledge, and (3) creating teacher presence online. Each of these can potentially involve shifting academic identities as provide opportunities for new and creative ways to engage in marketing education. Brief descriptions of how they may be enacted in a marketing education context are provided.
Online marketing education and the refashioning of teaching expertise

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Introduction

Much has been written about online education from an instructional design perspective (for example Clark & Mayer, 2011; Vai & Sosulski, 2011; Smith, 2008). There are comprehensive guidelines on design and presentation of online material - why to make particular choices rather than other choices in an effort to promote student learning. Instructional design texts have a useful role to play in helping to develop capabilities of marketing academics to engage in the transition to online education. However, in this paper we go down a different path and explore online marketing education from the perspective of teaching expertise; how this expertise is changing in an online environment and what impacts these changes may have on teacher identity.

With increased adoption of e-learning in higher education (both teacher initiated and institutionally mandated), the ways in which academic work is conducted and academic identities developed and sustained are undergoing change. Digital technology continues to evolve rapidly and the increased capacity for communication it affords is continuing to create an environment where academics are being challenged to rethink their roles and responsibilities as teachers.

Considerable attention has been given to the impacts on academic identity associated with changes in the higher education environment over recent decades (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Henkel, 2000; Barnett and di Napoli, 2008; Whitchurch, 2008). It is argued by McInnis (2011) that the core elements that sustain academic identities are (1) being an authority in a field of study and (2) being able to conduct work with a very high level of personal control. He suggests that the proliferation of new information technologies is perhaps the most striking example of pressure on academic identities in terms of their authority and autonomy in the workplace.

Caution is needed however to avoid overstating the trends assumed to be undermining traditional forms of academic identity. There is also evidence that academics exhibit resilience and are crafting and re-crafting their identities in response to changing conditions (Kolsaker, 2008). This is consistent with a contemporary perspective of identity (following Giddens, 1991) that conceptualises identity as a process - a lifelong learning project that involves an ongoing process of fashioning and refashioning. As academics in higher education (regardless of their formal role) move across different working spaces, tasks and relationships they foreground different aspects of their identity (Henkel, 2000) constructing an academic identity that is dynamic, multiple and provisional rather than fixed and unitary (Tennant, McMullen & Kaczynski 2010).

An important aspect of the negotiation of identity is reflexivity. This capacity for reflexivity, a capacity for self and social questioning is critical for engaging with change and shaping as well as being shaped by change (Edwards, Ranson & Strain, 2002).

Teaching expertise is closely linked to identity and can be conceptualised in a more complex way than the attainment of discipline knowledge and experience of teaching over an extended period as highlighted by Tennant et al. (2010):
Developing teaching expertise is not simply a matter of acquiring new skills and knowledge—it is about taking up new identities, new ways of understanding and conducting oneself (p. 40).

Thus we can consider teaching practice as being in a state of constant refashioning—both responding to and shaping our interactions with students and the broader learning and teaching environment. At the core of expertise must be the capacity to transform and change the very conception of ‘expertise’ in response to altered teaching conditions. Thus expertise, like learning, needs to be conceptualised as process rather than a point of attainment—something that is constantly being worked upon (Tennant et al. 2010).

This refashioning of teaching expertise, we argue, is precisely what we observe marketing academics doing, to a greater or lesser extent, in response to the increasing delivery of marketing education online. Marketing academics can go beyond simply reacting to change. By exercising agency and being open to the idea of refashioning their expertise they can engage with change and understand how they see themselves as a teacher and how this is changing. They can engage in new practices aligned with these evolving identities. However, it is worth noting that teacher identity is not just a matter of personal choice. It is always subject to affirmation by others—by students, other academics and one’s institution.

Specifically, as this paper unfolds, we examine three key aspects of teaching expertise in an online environment and illustrate how these can be enacted in a marketing context. The three areas of focus are:

1. Curating subject content
2. Designing assessment for co-creation of knowledge
3. Creating teacher presence online

Curating subject content

With the increasing expansion of the Internet into everyday life, users’ roles are changing from mere consumers or recipients of information to active content creators under the more socially connected Web 2.0. Aligned with these changes is the issue of information saturation and the need to assess quality of both web content and web producers (Delich, Kelly & McIntosh, 2008).

A concept coming into its own to deal with these two challenges is the idea of content curation. The term content curation is being used in a variety of contexts to mean:

‘the act of researching, finding, filtering, editing and collecting valuable resources into meaningful collections … to help a specific group of people make sense/learn or be updated on a specific topic’ (Good, 2012).

A crucial dimension of this definition is the need to ‘make sense’ of the collection. Weisgerber & Butler (2012) support this idea by viewing this process of editorialising—introducing, contextualising, summarising and importantly, providing a personal perspective. A collection of digital assets without interpretation becomes merely the act of aggregating content without adding value or insight into the collection.
Curation provides a useful way for marketing academics to think about the changing role of the subject expert and what it means to be a subject expert in an online environment. Rather than being transmitters of subject knowledge, academics can now add value through the selection, assortment, interpretation and presentation of a wide variety of resources that support desired student learning outcomes.

For marketing academics there are different ways to aggregate information for subsequent curation. Open Education Resources is one such source, however to date resources for the marketing discipline are underdeveloped. Marketing academics have traditionally accessed resources from textbook publishers sources where these are available and of sufficient quality. The abundance of material now available online creates new possibilities for marketing academics to personally create their own integrated resource sets.

We have used Adobe CAPTIVATE as a tool to bring together video clips, images, music and educator voice over. The voice over serves a number of purposes including: providing context, giving explanation and direction, questioning and stimulating critical reflection. Pauses are inserted in various places to encourage students to reflect on the stimulus presented and consider their own position and the contested positions around the issues in question. This approach can also be used to develop multimedia cases relevant to local conditions and provide contemporary perspectives on emerging areas. To engage in subject curation academics need to enhance their own digital literacy skills or work in teams to develop immersive and visually stimulating subject materials.

**Designing assessment for co-creation of knowledge**

Assessment and its design is a critical aspect of academic work both for its impact on students learning and its central role in accrediting learning. Boud (1988) emphasises that assessment methods and requirements probably have a greater influence on how and what students learn than any other single factor. The power associated with assessment cannot be separated from the academic’s identity as an authority figure. However teachers are not only positioned as judge but also guide and possibly confidant (Tennant et al. 2010).

As cohorts become more diverse as a result of improved access through online education there are increasing demands from students for assessment that is engaging and relevant to their personal experience and/or their workplaces. In addition, government and employers are emphasising the need for ‘work-ready’ graduates. There is greater thought given to the role of assessment in promoting life long learning. Some academics resist these changes due to concerns about the lack of rigour of such assessment and/or their capacity to make judgments on areas of practice outside their expertise.

One way to look differently on assessment and acknowledge the changing identities of both of academics and students is to draw on the concept of “co-creation”. Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) in their seminal work on co-creation, highlight the changing role of consumers from isolated to connected, unaware to informed, from passive to active. They argue that this connected, informed and active consumer is challenging traditions and that companies can no longer operate in the old ways with little input from consumers. They advocate:
‘the co-creation of value through personalised interactions that are meaningful and sensitive to a specific consumer. The co-creation experience (not the offering is the basis of unique value for each individual’ (p. 6).

This sensibility can be enacted in a marketing education context as a means of students’ engagement and design of assessment task with relevance to students. In marketing education, the concept of co-creation has been explored by Baron and Harris (2006). Their focus was on undergraduate marketing students and recognising the limited organizational experience of many marketing students, they propose a revised pedagogical logic for marketing oriented around students personalised networks and first-hand wisdom of being consumers within a particular experience domain.

With postgraduate marketing students employed in marketing or other management positions, the potential for co-creation of knowledge and value adding is greatly enhanced. Figure 1 illustrates a generic framework for authentic assessment that we have been employing across a number of postgraduate marketing subjects for a number of years. Major assessment items are designed so students can utilise their work experience in conjunction with a critical literature review in the relevant topic area (such an market orientation, internal marketing or capacity to innovate) and design a theoretical framework to conduct an audit on their own workplace. Following this audit they will make recommendations for change. Some students have then been given the opportunity to implement the proposed recommendations in their workplaces. This is a powerful assessment that acknowledges the life and work experiences that students bring to postgraduate education but provides an opportunity to disrupt students’ existing patterns of thinking and challenge their interpretations of life and work experience though deep and critical engagement with relevant academic literature. Academics in this situation can be positioned as value facilitators in the value creation process Grönroos (2006) of marketing education.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1: Co-created authentic assessment – Source: Authors 2010**
Creating teacher presence online

Establishing connection with students has long been acknowledged as an important factor in facilitating student learning. Anyone who has taught marketing in a distance education mode will be familiar with the feelings of anxiety and isolation expressed by student studying away from campus. A close and successful face-to-face relationship with students is considered by many academics to be a powerful aspect of their academic identity and a contributing factor in their resistance to e-learning (Hanson 2009).

In his classic text, *Freedom to Learn*, Carl Rogers (1983) highlights the role of relationships in creating a climate that enhances natural potentiality and desire for learning. Several decades on, how do we create these personal relationships in an online environment? What does it mean to communicate vitality, conviction and feeling? What does ‘being there’ with students mean in an online learning environment?

Lehman and Conceição (2010) in their book *Creating a sense of presence in online teaching* describes a sense of presence as ‘being there’ and ‘being together’ with online learners through the learning experience. They suggest that it ‘looks’ and ‘feel’ like:

- Learners are at the centre of course development
- Teachers are accessible to learners and learners to each other
- Technology is transparent in the learning process
- Learners give feedback and help shape the learning environment.

Creating a sense of presence is one of the most challenges aspects of e-learning for marketing academics. We found that the process of subject curation has enabled us to personalize our offerings to students and we have been surprised at how positively students have responded to hearing our voices. But there is still much to do in this area.

Concluding comments

In this paper we have identified and discussed selected aspects of expertise that are in evidence as marketing academics become more deeply engaged in e-learning. Whilst highlighting the possibilities for reshaping expertise we do not intend to down play the challenges these represents to many academics and the significant identity work that is at play. What does it mean for experienced marketing educators to be confronted with new conditions where they feel that much of the expertise they have developed over the years is deemed less relevant?

At an institutional level there is the need for professional development that acknowledges academics’ identities as scholars, educators and professionals and responds accordingly. At an individual level we believe there are many spaces for academics to exert control over their professional work in the online landscape.
References


