



EDUCATIONAL MARKETING IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: AN ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL, AND AXIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS FROM THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine educational marketing in school management through the perspective of the philosophy of science, encompassing the dimensions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The study employed a qualitative approach with a library research design combined with philosophical-conceptual analysis. The research data were sourced from primary and secondary literature in the form of classic and recent books, articles from accredited and internationally reputable national journals, and policy documents relevant to educational marketing and school management. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of concept reduction, thematic categorization, philosophical interpretation, and argumentative synthesis. The results of the study indicate that ontologically, educational marketing is an integral part of the nature of school management as a public service institution oriented towards social and humanitarian missions. Epistemologically, educational marketing is built on the integration of theory, empirical data, and practical experience in school management, explained scientifically and reflectively. Meanwhile, axiologically, educational marketing demands the application of ethical values, honesty, social responsibility, and an orientation towards mutual education. The integration of these three dimensions emphasizes the importance of developing meaningful, ethical, and sustainable educational marketing.

Keywords: *educational marketing, philosophy of science, ontology, epistemology, axiology*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji marketing pendidikan dalam pengelolaan sekolah melalui perspektif filsafat ilmu, yang meliputi dimensi ontologi, epistemologi, dan aksiologi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kepustakaan (*library research*) yang dipadukan dengan analisis filosofis-konseptual. Data penelitian bersumber dari literatur primer dan sekunder berupa buku-buku klasik dan mutakhir, artikel jurnal nasional terakreditasi dan internasional bereputasi, serta dokumen kebijakan yang relevan dengan marketing pendidikan dan manajemen sekolah. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi konsep, kategorisasi tematik, interpretasi filosofis, dan sintesis argumentatif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa secara ontologis marketing pendidikan merupakan bagian integral dari hakikat pengelolaan sekolah sebagai lembaga pelayanan publik yang berorientasi pada misi sosial dan kemanusiaan. Secara epistemologis, marketing pendidikan dibangun atas integrasi teori, data empiris, dan pengalaman praktis pengelolaan sekolah yang dianalisis secara ilmiah dan reflektif. Sementara itu, secara aksiologis, marketing pendidikan menuntut penerapan nilai etika, kejujuran, tanggung jawab sosial, dan orientasi pada mutu pendidikan. Integrasi ketiga dimensi tersebut menegaskan pentingnya pengembangan marketing pendidikan yang bermakna, beretika, dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: marketing pendidikan, filsafat ilmu, ontologi, epistemologi, aksiologi

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization, advances in information technology, and the increasing public awareness of educational quality have intensified competition among educational institutions. Schools are no longer

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required merely to deliver high-quality internal learning processes, but are also expected to continuously build a positive institutional image and maintain public trust [1]. In an increasingly critical and well-informed society, parents and prospective students have broad access to educational information; consequently, decisions in selecting schools are no longer based solely on academic considerations, but also on reputation, values, and the quality of services offered [2]. This condition positions educational marketing as a strategic instrument in modern school management, serving to systematically and responsibly communicate the vision, mission, and distinctive advantages of educational services to the public [3].

Educational marketing essentially represents a process of managing relationships between schools and society through the communication of information, values, and the strengths of the educational services provided. Through educational marketing, schools seek to establish mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders, including students, parents, and the wider community [4]. However, in practice, educational marketing is often narrowly interpreted as mere promotional activities, such as advertising, brochures, and the publication of student admissions. This overly pragmatic and transactional approach risks shifting the orientation of education away from humanization and public service toward the commodification of education, where school success is measured narrowly by enrollment numbers or financial indicators alone [5].

As both a scholarly and managerial practice, educational marketing should be grounded in a strong conceptual and philosophical foundation in order to avoid deviating from the fundamental purposes of education. The philosophy of science plays a crucial role in providing a reflective framework concerning the nature of reality (ontology), the ways in which knowledge is acquired and validated (epistemology), and the values and objectives (axiology) underlying a scientific practice. By employing a philosophy of science framework, educational marketing can be understood more deeply as a scientific practice that is oriented not only toward strategic effectiveness, but also toward the meaning and values of education itself. Without a clear philosophical foundation, educational marketing risks losing its normative direction and conflicting with the fundamental mission of education as a process of humanization [6].

Previous studies indicate that research on educational marketing tends to focus predominantly on technical and empirical aspects, such as the effectiveness of marketing strategies, educational customer satisfaction, and the enhancement of school competitiveness within the educational market [7], [8]. Although these studies make important contributions to the development of school management, their approaches are generally pragmatic in nature and pay limited attention to the philosophical dimensions underlying educational marketing practices. Studies that explicitly integrate educational marketing with a philosophy of science perspective remain relatively scarce, particularly in the context of managing schools as value-laden public service institutions.

Based on these conditions, this article seeks to address the existing research gap by analyzing educational marketing in school management through the lens of the philosophy of science, encompassing ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of educational marketing, the sources and validity of its knowledge, and the values and objectives that should be upheld in educational marketing practices. Accordingly, this study is not merely descriptive, but also reflective and critical of contemporary educational marketing practices.

The purpose of this article is to philosophically examine educational marketing practices in school management and to formulate conceptual implications for the development of value-oriented, ethical, and humanistic school management. Through this study, it is expected that a conceptual framework can be developed to serve as a foundation for school administrators in designing and implementing meaningful, ethical, and sustainable educational marketing strategies, in alignment with the fundamental goals of education and the demands of modern society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Educational Marketing

Educational marketing has emerged as a strategic approach in the management of educational institutions in response to increasing competition, marketization, and stakeholder demands. Kotler and Fox [9] and Tarso et al. [10] define educational marketing as a systematic process through which educational institutions analyze, plan, implement, and control programs designed to create exchanges of value with target markets in order to achieve institutional goals. In this sense, educational marketing is not limited to promotional

activities, but encompasses broader strategic dimensions such as market analysis, service quality development, relationship management, and institutional positioning. Subsequent studies emphasize that effective educational marketing contributes to institutional sustainability, competitive advantage, and public trust, particularly in environments where parents and students behave as informed consumers of educational services [11].

However, critical scholars argue that the application of marketing principles in education must be approached cautiously, as education differs fundamentally from commercial services. Siswanto [12] notes that an uncritical adoption of business-oriented marketing risks reducing education to a commodity and marginalizing its moral and social purposes. Therefore, contemporary educational marketing literature increasingly highlights ethical considerations, value-based communication, and stakeholder engagement as essential components of responsible marketing practices. Educational marketing is thus conceptualized not merely as a tool for enrollment growth, but as a relational and value-driven process aligned with the educational mission and societal responsibilities of schools [13].

2.2. Philosophy of Science

The philosophy of science provides a foundational framework for understanding how knowledge is constructed, validated, and applied within scientific and scholarly practices. According to Nyoman [14], philosophy of science examines the fundamental assumptions underlying scientific inquiry, including questions about reality, knowledge, and values. In the context of social sciences and education, philosophy of science plays a crucial role in clarifying paradigmatic orientations, methodological choices, and the normative implications of research and practice. Abidah et al. [15] emphasizes that philosophical assumptions influence how researchers define problems, select methods, and interpret findings, making philosophical reflection an integral component of rigorous academic inquiry.

In educational studies, philosophy of science is particularly relevant due to the value-laden and normative nature of education itself. Educational practices, including management and marketing, are not value-neutral activities but are shaped by ethical commitments, cultural contexts, and social purposes. As argued by Guba and Lincoln [16], understanding the philosophical foundations of inquiry enables scholars to critically assess dominant paradigms and explore alternative ways of knowing. Consequently, integrating philosophy of science into educational research allows for more reflective, critical, and ethically grounded analyses, especially when examining managerial practices such as educational marketing that intersect with public values and human development.

2.3. Ontology

Ontology refers to the philosophical study of the nature of reality and existence, addressing questions about what is real and what entities can be said to exist. In the philosophy of science, ontology concerns the assumptions researchers make about the nature of social and educational phenomena. Pisony [17] explains that ontological positions range from objectivism, which assumes that reality exists independently of human perception, to constructivism, which views reality as socially constructed through human interaction. In educational contexts, ontological assumptions shape how institutions, learners, and practices such as educational marketing are understood and conceptualized.

From an ontological perspective, educational marketing can be viewed not merely as a technical managerial activity, but as a social and relational phenomenon embedded in cultural, institutional, and moral realities. Schools are not simply service providers operating in a market, but social institutions with formative roles in shaping individuals and communities. Therefore, an ontological analysis of educational marketing highlights the need to recognize schools as value-oriented organizations and educational services as meaningful social practices rather than purely economic transactions [18]. This ontological stance challenges reductionist views of marketing and reinforces the understanding of education as a complex, multidimensional reality.

2.4. Epistemology

Epistemology concerns the nature, sources, and validity of knowledge, addressing questions about how knowledge is produced and justified. In educational research, epistemological assumptions influence what is considered legitimate knowledge and how understanding is generated. According to Cohen [19], positivist epistemologies prioritize empirical measurement and generalization, while interpretivist and constructivist epistemologies emphasize meaning-making, context, and subjective understanding. These epistemological

orientations are particularly significant in qualitative and conceptual studies that seek to explore values, meanings, and practices rather than causal relationships.

In the study of educational marketing, epistemology plays a critical role in determining how marketing knowledge is derived and applied. Much of the existing literature relies on managerial and empirical frameworks borrowed from business disciplines, which may not fully capture the educational context. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka [20] argue for a more interpretive and critical epistemological approach that acknowledges the socially constructed nature of educational markets and stakeholder perceptions. By adopting such an epistemological stance, educational marketing research can move beyond technical effectiveness toward a deeper understanding of how marketing practices are experienced, interpreted, and justified within educational communities.

2.5. Axiology

Axiology is the branch of philosophy concerned with values, ethics, and purposes, examining what ought to be valued in human action and inquiry. In the philosophy of science, axiology addresses the role of values in shaping research goals, processes, and outcomes. Contrary to the notion of value-free science, many scholars argue that social and educational research is inherently value-laden, as it involves normative judgments about what is desirable, beneficial, or just [21]. In education, axiological considerations are particularly salient due to the moral and ethical responsibilities of educational institutions.

Within the context of educational marketing, axiology raises critical questions about the ethical implications and value orientations of marketing practices. Marketing strategies that prioritize competition, image, and enrollment growth may conflict with educational values such as equity, inclusion, and human development if not guided by ethical principles. Therefore, scholars emphasize the need for value-based educational marketing that aligns promotional activities with the moral purposes of education and the well-being of learners [22]. An axiological framework thus ensures that educational marketing serves not only institutional interests, but also broader societal and humanistic goals.

3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design integrated with philosophical–conceptual analysis. This approach was selected because the research objective does not focus on measuring empirical variables, but rather on developing an in-depth understanding of the concepts, meanings, and philosophical foundations of educational marketing in school management. The analysis is conducted using a philosophy of science framework encompassing ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions in order to examine the nature, sources of knowledge, and values and purposes underlying educational marketing practices. The literature review involves an examination of classical and contemporary books, accredited national and reputable international journal articles, as well as policy documents relevant to educational marketing and school management [23].

The data sources consist of primary and secondary literature selected purposively based on their relevance and scholarly credibility. Primary sources include seminal works on educational marketing and educational philosophy, such as Kotler and Fox [9] and Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka [24], while secondary sources comprise Scopus-indexed journal articles and other supporting references. Data analysis is conducted through stages of conceptual reduction, thematic categorization, philosophical interpretation, and argumentative synthesis to produce a systematic and coherent understanding. The trustworthiness of the analysis is ensured through logical consistency, accuracy of referencing, and theoretical triangulation, thereby ensuring that the findings possess conceptual validity and are academically defensible [25].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Educational Marketing from an Ontological Perspective

From an ontological perspective, educational marketing is understood as an inherent component of the nature of school management as a public service institution endowed with social and moral mandates. Schools are not merely administrative organizations responsible for implementing curricula and learning activities, but social institutions entrusted with the mission of educating society and shaping individuals who are knowledgeable, ethical, and competitive [26]. Therefore, the existence of educational marketing must be situated within a framework of high-quality, equitable, and sustainable educational services, rather than within a purely profit-oriented paradigm. Ontologically, educational marketing does not function as an

isolated managerial activity, but is substantively integrated with the fundamental purpose of education as a process of humanization and civilization building [9].

Educational marketing cannot be reduced to purely commercial and transactional promotional activities [27], [28]. A narrow and pragmatic understanding of marketing may lead to the commodification of education, in which schools are treated as business entities prioritizing market logic over educational missions. From an ontological standpoint, educational marketing serves instead as a process of communicating values, vision, and the quality of educational services to the public in an honest, objective, and responsible manner. Hübscher [29] emphasize that marketing in educational institutions aims to build public awareness, understanding, and trust in institutional missions, enabling society to evaluate and select educational institutions based on quality and value alignment rather than mere promotional appeal.

Furthermore, the essence of educational marketing lies in the relationships established between schools and their stakeholders, including students, parents, industry partners, and the broader community. These relationships are reciprocal and sustainable, with schools acting as responsible service providers and society serving as strategic partners as well as social regulators of institutional quality and integrity Kotler and Fox [9]. In this context, educational marketing functions as a mechanism to ensure transparency, public participation, and institutional accountability. Brillianty et al. [30] assert that relationship-oriented educational marketing is more appropriate for educational institutions than transactional approaches, as education is inherently a long-term, trust-based process.

Thus, ontologically, educational marketing must be understood as a strategic instrument for maintaining alignment between school management practices and the fundamental purposes of education. Educational marketing is not an end in itself, but a supporting means for the implementation of meaningful, ethical, and holistic educational processes. This ontological perspective affirms that the success of educational marketing should not be measured solely through quantitative indicators such as enrollment numbers or institutional popularity, but through its contribution to educational quality improvement, social trust, and institutional relevance in addressing societal needs [31].

4.2. Educational Marketing from an Epistemological Perspective

From an epistemological standpoint, educational marketing is grounded in knowledge derived from the integration of multiple disciplines, particularly modern management, services marketing, and educational management. This knowledge does not emerge spontaneously but is constructed through systematic scientific processes, including theoretical inquiry, conceptual model development, and sustained empirical research. Such interdisciplinary integration indicates that educational marketing constitutes an academic field that combines economic rationality, public service principles, and educational objectives [32]. Consequently, educational marketing should not be understood as an intuitive or experience-based practice alone, but as a scholarly practice characterized by structured knowledge, analytical methods, and evaluative frameworks that can be academically tested and refined [33].

In addition to theoretical foundations, the epistemological basis of educational marketing is strengthened by empirical data obtained through evaluations of educational service quality, analyses of community needs and preferences, and stakeholder satisfaction research involving students and parents. Evidence-based approaches enable schools to formulate marketing strategies grounded in real conditions and actual needs rather than speculation. In modern school management, data function as a critical instrument for understanding public perceptions, assessing service effectiveness, and adjusting institutional communication strategies. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka [24] emphasize that decision-making in educational marketing must be based on valid and reliable data to ensure scientific legitimacy and social relevance.

Practical experience in school management also represents a significant source of knowledge in the epistemological construction of educational marketing. Such experience encompasses daily practices of community engagement, implementation of communication strategies, and responses to dynamic social and policy environments. However, from an epistemological perspective, experience is not viewed as independent or purely subjective knowledge. Rather, experience must undergo critical reflection, analysis, and theoretical integration to generate meaningful organizational learning. This dialectical interaction between theory and practice enables educational marketing to evolve as an adaptive and context-sensitive scholarly practice.

Therefore, the epistemology of educational marketing requires a balance between scientific rationality and contextual understanding of school social realities. Scientific rationality provides systematic analytical frameworks and methods, while contextual understanding ensures that marketing strategies remain aligned with societal values, culture, and needs. Suriasumantri [34] and Fitriana et al. [35] asserts that meaningful knowledge is not only capable of explaining reality but also of guiding responsible action. Within this framework, educational marketing is understood as a dynamic, reflective practice that continuously evolves in response to social change, educational quality demands, and public expectations.

4.3. Educational Marketing from an Axiological Perspective

From an axiological perspective, educational marketing embodies a set of values that serve as the ethical foundation for school management as a public institution. These values include honesty, social responsibility, justice, and a humanistic orientation that positions students as the central subjects of education. The axiology of educational marketing asserts that all marketing strategies implemented by schools must align with educational values and public interests, rather than being driven solely by institutional gain or market competition. In this context, educational marketing is understood as a moral practice aimed at preserving the dignity of education as a process of human and civilizational development, rather than as a mere economic commodity [24].

The primary objective of educational marketing extends beyond increasing student enrollment or expanding institutional reach to strengthening educational service quality and fostering sustainable public trust. Value-oriented educational marketing encourages schools to uphold academic integrity, service quality consistency, and commitment to holistic student development encompassing cognitive, affective, and social dimensions [36], [37]. From an axiological standpoint, the success of educational marketing is not assessed solely through quantitative outcomes, but through its contribution to learning quality, academic reputation, and social acceptance within the community [33].

Honesty and transparency constitute fundamental principles of ethical educational marketing. Information communicated to the public whether through promotional media or direct engagement must accurately reflect the actual conditions, quality, and capacity of the school. Marketing practices involving exaggerated claims or superficial image-building risk undermining public trust and damaging institutional legitimacy. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka [33] argue that unethical educational marketing practices, such as information manipulation and image exploitation, generate negative long-term consequences, as public trust represents the primary social capital sustaining educational institutions.

Accordingly, the axiology of educational marketing positions values as both the guiding direction and ethical boundary of all marketing practices undertaken by schools. Educational marketing must function as a meaningful and value-driven instrument supporting educational goals and sustainable human development [38], [39]. This perspective underscores that ethics are not merely complementary elements of educational marketing but constitute its core. Without a strong value foundation, educational marketing risks losing moral legitimacy and diverging from the fundamental purpose of education as a process of humanization [36].

4.4. Philosophical Implications of Educational Marketing for School Management

The philosophical implications of this analysis indicate that the management of educational marketing cannot be separated from the philosophy of science as the conceptual framework underlying school managerial practices. Ontologically, school leaders are required to understand educational marketing as a form of public service intrinsically linked to educational missions rather than institutional commercialization. This understanding encourages schools to position marketing as a medium for communicating values, vision, and educational service quality responsibly. Accordingly, marketing strategies must align with educational visions and student development objectives to ensure that marketing practices remain consistent with the humanistic nature of education [40], [41].

From an epistemological perspective, philosophical implications emphasize the importance of data-driven, research-based, and reflective decision-making in educational marketing. School administrators must develop information systems, quality evaluation mechanisms, and systematic data collection processes to understand societal needs and perceptions [42]. This approach enables schools to design rational, contextual, and adaptive marketing strategies. Within modern management frameworks, knowledge-based educational

marketing positions data and research findings as primary foundations for planning and decision-making, thereby reducing subjectivity and speculation in marketing practices.

Meanwhile, the axiological perspective requires that all educational marketing practices be conducted with ethical values and social responsibility as fundamental principles. Schools must ensure that marketing strategies are not only managerially effective and communicative, but also fair, honest, and morally dignified [43], [44]. Marketing practices that disregard ethical considerations risk eroding public trust and institutional legitimacy. Therefore, educational marketing should be positioned as a means of strengthening institutional values and character rather than merely as a competitive tool in educational markets.

Overall, these philosophical implications affirm that ideal educational marketing is grounded in the philosophy of science through the integrated application of ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions within school management practices. Integrating these dimensions enables schools to manage institutions professionally, meaningfully, and sustainably, while maintaining a balance between managerial effectiveness and educational values. This philosophical framework provides a conceptual foundation for developing ethical, humanistic, and socially responsive models of educational marketing relevant to the challenges of global education.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that educational marketing is a philosophically grounded managerial practice inseparable from the nature of education, functioning ontologically as part of the school's public service mission, epistemologically as a data-driven and interdisciplinary scientific practice, and axiologically as a value-based activity grounded in ethics, social responsibility, and holistic student development. The integration of these dimensions positions educational marketing as a strategic instrument for strengthening institutional legitimacy, sustainability, educational quality, public trust, and social relevance. Accordingly, future research should focus on developing and empirically testing value-based educational marketing models in specific school contexts using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to examine their impact on service quality, public trust, and institutional sustainability.

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