

# Contributing factors to marketing educators' teaching performance: insights from executive postgraduate programmes in Brazil

Alexandre Borba Salvador

*Department of Marketing, Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing – ESPM,  
São Paulo, Brazil*

Mariana Bassi-Suter

*Department of Marketing and International Business, TBS Business School,  
Toulouse, France, and*

Nicola Forsdike

*School for Business and Society, University of York, York, UK*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to understand how marketing faculty become reference-educators of business executives by exploring the factors that contribute to their teaching performance.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Exploratory qualitative research, using in-depth interviews in which the object of the study was the marketing educator, based on three Brazilian business schools.

**Findings** – The teaching performance depends on the teaching practice, which is influenced by technical knowledge, pedagogical factors and personal features. The development of a practitioner-educator is a complex process that arises from both formal and informal learning.

**Research limitations/implications** – Deepens the understanding of marketing educators' individual factors, proposing a model to expand the knowledge of the factors shaping a reference-educator.

**Practical implications** – Raises awareness among managers of Higher Education institutions of the relevance of the development of its educators considering not only pedagogical skills but also marketing and social skills.

**Social implications** – Improvements in education generate a positive contribution to society. Better marketing educators may result in better professionals, which could, ultimately, generate more benefits both for corporations and for society.

**Originality/value** – Existing literature has neglected the understanding of how marketing educators' individual factors may impact on good teaching to create a well-rounded practitioner-educator. This study seeks to address that gap by exploring how marketing faculty, especially practitioners of marketing, become reference-educators, that is, educators identified as exemplars of good practice by their students and peers.

**Keywords** Practitioner educator, Marketing education, Executive education, Experiential learning

**Paper type** Research paper



## Introduction

This paper seeks to explore the factors that contribute to the teaching performance of university educators of business executives. In particular, it investigates practitioner-educators teaching marketing to executives in MBA programmes.

Employers seek executives who have both specialized technical and general management skills, including communication, complex problem-solving and creativity (Finch, Nadeau & O'Reilly, 2013; Muff, 2013). These skills are needed to meet the challenge of changing markets and an evolution in business thinking. Consumers are no longer considered unequal partners to be exploited in the short term but as human beings in social contexts. This has led businesses to change their approach to a holistic one, which focuses on developing long-term relationships (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2017).

The Marketing area stands out in this context. The professionals working in this field are responsible for understanding markets, elaborating the value proposition and communicating with society. This understanding is directly influenced by changes in social and business environments. Blending hard and soft skills helps these professionals to achieve higher levels of personal fulfilment, career success and work performance (Bacon, 2017; Finch, Nadeau, & O'Reilly, 2013; Kerr & Kelly, 2017; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017; Schlee & Karns, 2017). Business schools also update to reflect these changing demands, leading to a constant updating of the skills of academic staff (Bacellar & Ikeda, 2011; Crittenden, 2022; Finch, Nadeau & O'Reilly, 2013).

The discussion about the demands on business schools to form field-ready professionals is not new (David, David & David, 2011; Bacon & Stewart, 2022; Dickinson, Herbst & O'Shaughnessy, 1983; Hunt, 1994; Wood & Cruz, 2014), yet it is an important one and deserves further attention. The student enrolled on a postgraduation course (*lato sensu*) is already involved in executive life. This student is more concerned with updating and applying knowledge in practice and disregards schools and teachers that do not suit their needs (David, David & David, 2011; Gallagher, 2016). The profile of such students demands different skills from the lecturer. At the same time, course structures and learning methodologies are changing to accommodate greater emphasis on practical applications of theoretical concepts (Bendle, Bagga & Nastasoju, 2019; David, David & David, 2011), while new technologies are facilitating changes to traditional teaching methods. In this context, practitioner-educators play a pivotal role as they are able to "catch up with what is going on in marketing" (Crittenden, 2022, p. 3) and develop that with students. In addition, they bring legitimacy to the teaching and learning process as they interact with various types of learning environments (e.g. university classes and everyday business routines) (Endres, Chowdhury, Frye & Hurtubis, 2009; Sebastianelli, Swift & Tamimi, 2015).

These environmental changes have implications for those who teach MBA courses. Yet to date, there has been little exploration of how practitioner-educators develop good teaching in response to these. This article seeks to address that gap by exploring how practitioners of marketing become reference-educators, that is, educators identified as exemplars of good practice by their students and peers.

Drawing on existing pedagogical literature on teaching executive students, we first seek to understand what is already known about factors contributing to the performance of good teaching. Using the medium of in-depth interviews, we then explore factors which impact the teaching performance of reference practitioner-educators. We bring all these factors together in a model which illustrates the complexity and richness of the practice of practitioner-educators.

Our research provides evidence to fulfil the following research questions:

*RQ1.* What factors underpin the performance of marketing reference-educators in their teaching of executives studying business at postgraduate level?

RQ2. How do these factors come together to form the approach of marketing reference-educators?

Our study contributes to the scholarship of marketing education by taking an innovative perspective which links key influential themes (Donthu, Kumar, Mills & Pattnaik, 2021) in this field of research – for example, teaching techniques (Bendle, Bagga & Nastasoiu, 2019; David, David & David, 2011), students' evaluation of teaching (SET) (Estelami, 2015; Reisenwitz, 2016; Stroebe, 2016), experiential learning (Ewing & Ewing, 2017; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli & Sharma, 2014) and personal factors (Fitzgerald, Anderson & Thompson, 2015; Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012) – but looking at the educators' features in this process. Our findings suggest that educators will benefit from embracing a practitioner approach and recognizing the importance of professional knowledge in conducting marketing activities (Gross & Laamanen, 2018). The study also provides further evidence on the body of knowledge concerning the features of marketing faculty and its connection to performance (Tashchian, Kalamas Hedden & Forrester, 2022). The empirical material in this article focuses on teaching staff in Brazil, in line with the call from previous studies to conduct marketing education research in emerging markets (Clarke & Flaherty, 2003; Teklehaimanot, Ingenbleek, Tessema & van Trijp, 2017).

### Literature review

This section aims to review existing literature on those factors of teaching which form a reference-educator for executive students. Firstly, we discuss the context of teaching executive students, factors in teaching marketing and the way business schools keep track of educators' teaching performance. Then, we identify those pedagogical factors that support a good teaching performance. We also delve into subject knowledge and other factors that contribute to forming reference practitioner-educators and provide a summary of the factors identified by previous studies (Table 1).

#### *Context: teaching executive students in Brazil*

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Education (2023), specialist courses were created in Brazil in the 1960s to formalize professional training that completes undergraduate studies. The *lato sensu* postgraduation course encompasses specialist courses and is regulated by the Ministry of Education. Teaching staff must be composed of specialists with proven technical capacity, and at least 50% of these must have a master's or doctoral degree obtained in *stricto sensu* (research-oriented) postgraduate programmes (Brazilian Ministry of Education, 2023).

The profile of students enrolled in postgraduation courses (*lato sensu*) differs from that of undergraduates, as the former are already involved in executive life and are more concerned with updating and applying knowledge in practice. The fact that these students are also practitioners leads to a requirement for different skills from the educator, and postgraduate students do not appreciate schools and teachers that are misaligned with their needs (David, David & David, 2011; Gallagher, 2016).

Executives bring to the classroom a wealth of real-world experience of marketing and other business problems, often at senior level. Students with work experience have different attitudes from those with none (Ewing & Ewing, 2017). Experienced professionals entering postgraduate education expect to take part in discussions mediated by the educator, in which they bring together theory and their real-world issues (Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2013; Sebastianelli, Swift & Tamimi, 2015). Their ability to act as agents of their own learning tends to improve their efficiency compared with less experienced students through

**Table 1.**  
Exploring educator factors influencing the teaching performance

Authors	Pedagogical factors	Subject knowledge	Other factors
Masetto (1998) Morin (2000)	Skills in the pedagogical area The blind spots of knowledge; the principles of pertinent knowledge; teaching the human condition; teaching identity with the earth; confronting uncertainties	Skills in the specific area	Skills in the political area Teaching understanding; the ethics of humankind
Tardif (2000) Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet, (2002) Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, (2012) Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione, (2013)	Knowing how to do Pedagogical knowledge; didactic knowledge Didactic knowledge Pedagogical qualification	Knowing Knowledge from specific academic areas Mastery over the content that is taught Academic qualification; professional qualification	Knowing how to be Experiential knowledge Experiential knowledge
Placco and Almeida (2014)	Professional knowledge; pedagogical knowledge; curricular knowledge	Disciplinary knowledge; curricular knowledge	Experiential knowledge
Machado (2016a, 2016b)	Mediation; storytelling	Weaving; mapping	Authority; tolerance

Source: Authors (2022)

sensitization, mobilization and engagement (Bittencourt, 2016; Sebastianelli, Swift & Tamimi, 2012; Sebastianelli et al., 2015).

Marketing students are seeking to learn beyond just “knowing” and are looking to develop the knowledge of “how to do” and “how to be” (Tardif, 2000). Marketing educators need to be able not only to convey technical knowledge but also know-how, including interpersonal skills and self-knowledge, to enable it to be applied practically (Tardif, 2000). Educators should encourage executive students to reflect on ordinary, local and also specific marketing activities underpinning their day-by-day practices (Gross & Laamanen, 2018).

Hence, business schools and marketing educators need to be able to deliver on this or lose relevance for students (David, David & David, 2011; Gallagher, 2016; Kinchin, Lygo-Baker & Hay, 2008). To understand and track whether students are interested/engaged with their educators, as well as measure the educators' effectiveness (Estelami, 2015; Reisenwitz, 2016; Stroebe, 2016; Tashchian, Kalamas Hedden & Forrester, 2022), academic institutions from the higher level (HEI) and particularly business schools, use assessments done by students (student evaluations of teaching effectiveness – SET). SET are primary data evaluations obtained through the use of a form which students can fill out, with the objective of evaluating the teaching performance from their perspective (Guolla, 1999). Its main use is to support the educator's continuing development based on the evaluation of the service offered by him/her, but they are also used as criteria to implement meritocracy in HEI (Estelami, 2015; Guolla, 1999; Reisenwitz, 2016; Tashchian, Kalamas Hedden & Forrester, 2022).

### *Pedagogical factors in teaching*

If teaching makes no sense without learning, then pedagogy, the study of the principles and techniques of teaching (Placco & Almeida, 2014), becomes a crucial factor in teaching performance. To use a pedagogical approach in one's teaching is to be aware of the unfinished nature of the student, to respect their autonomy, to be humble, to be curious and

to be certain that change is possible (Morin, 2000; Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012). It is to be aware of the context of an individual student.

Learning could be seen as a collaborative process in which educators respond to the needs of individual students, re-negotiating control of the learning process and sharing responsibility for that with students (Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014). This demands that educators demonstrate tolerance for individual differences, learn to adjust their teaching styles to individuals and develop skills such as storytelling and facilitation (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014; Machado, 2016b).

When teaching individuals with real-world experience, educators must recognize, understand and respect the prior knowledge of their students (Knowles, 1973; Machado, 2011). Whereas traditionally, educators have played the role of knowledge providers, the development of know-how requires the co-creation of knowledge between student and educator (Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009; Haynes, 2022; Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012). In some schools, the client-server perspective of the relationship between students and educators in the education process is identified, considering aspects such as different final goals, including student satisfaction, student learning or student learning sensation (Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009; Bacon, 2016; Endres, Chowdhury, Frye & Hurtubis, 2009; Gross & Laamanen, 2022).

The performance of the teacher is influenced by the appreciation of the student's central role in the learning process. In this environment, the marketing educator works as a content curator and facilitator of the learning process, acting as a coach, evaluator/assessor, expert and facilitator (Bittencourt, 2016; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014). This learner-based approach to education (Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009; Haynes, 2022; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014) empowers students (Haynes, 2022), placing a greater emphasis on the transformation of the student and calling for new teaching and learning strategies and methods (Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009; Haynes, 2022; Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014).

This places a responsibility on the educator to respond to individuals by adjusting teaching to learning styles, taking into account the prior knowledge of their students and creating transformative and emancipatory educational spaces (Bhogal-Nair, 2022). Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma (2014) identified nine learning styles: initiating, experiencing, imagining, reflecting, analyzing, thinking, deciding, acting and balancing. To support these and facilitate the movement of students through the learning cycle, educators facilitate, act as subject experts, set performance standards, evaluate performance against those and coach (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014). Thus, good educators acquire a repertoire of styles that can be deployed according to a specific context and specific students. While Kolb's work has been subject to criticism (see, e.g. Klein, McCall, Austin & Piterman, 2007; Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer & Bjork, 2008), its value lies not in scientifically classifying students into categories but in making educators aware that students are not all the same and crucially, may respond to different teaching styles in different ways.

In summary, it is important that marketing educators participate in pedagogical training (Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione, 2013; Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet, 2002) and have hands-on experience – know “how to do” (Tardif, 2000). The combination of these should lead the educator to develop pedagogical skills (Masetto, 1998; Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet, 2002; Placco & Almeida, 2014). Through knowledge, experience, mediation and storytelling (Machado, 2016a, 2016b), the educator should be able to identify blind spots of knowledge from students' perspectives; practise principles of pertinent knowledge; and teach social and environmental conditions and confront uncertainties (Morin, 2000).

#### *Subject (technical) knowledge in teaching*

There is a tendency to assume that university educators are familiar with the subject matter they are teaching (Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione, 2013). However, marketing practice is dynamic

and academic research often lags some way behind it. As highlighted by Richers (1994), Hunt (1994), de Ruyter et al. (2022) and Crittenden (2022), it has been a challenge for marketing education to keep up with rapidly evolving practice. While academic researchers have deep scientific knowledge of their subjects, it is less clear whether this is in line with contemporary practice in the real business world. Where scientific knowledge lags behind this, teaching based on it has little utility, diffusing out of date knowledge (Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione, 2013).

This is not to imply that research-led teaching has no value, but since the end of the 20th century, digital technology has been transforming business to the extent that many strongly held and commonly taught theories no longer fully explain marketing practice or the context in which marketers are operating. Technological and behavioural evolution is, at the same time, both the cause and consequence of new marketing practices (Finch, Nadeau & O'Reilly, 2013; Kerr & Kelly, 2017; Schlee & Karns, 2017). To deliver its full potential, research-led teaching needs to go beyond the straight transmission of academic knowledge to teaching students "how to learn" (Joseph-Richard & Jessop, 2020, p. 855), encouraging them to apply theory to practical problems and to explore different interpretations and solutions.

Typically, many marketing educators in Brazil will have begun their careers as good graduate students, encouraged by their professors to undertake postgraduate studies before becoming teaching assistants. Others begin work in business before orientating their profession more towards teaching in universities or come from different technical disciplines such as Engineering, Psychology or Economics (Bacellar & Ikeda, 2011).

In addition, most educators will retain some form of professional activity outside of business schools as a way of augmenting their income, staying in touch with the outside world (Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012, Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione, 2013), developing knowledge and developing skills in a specific area within the marketing field (Masetto, 1998; Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet, 2002). As such, they have a good grounding in academic principles (Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012; Placco & Almeida, 2014) and approaches, but their knowledge is augmented by lived experience (Tardif, 2000), ultimately leading them to master the content they teach (Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012).

#### *Other factors in teaching*

There is some evidence as to the attitudes of educators to their work and the context of that work impact on teaching performance (Fitzgerald, Anderson & Thompson, 2015; Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012). Educators' knowledge is temporal, acquired and shaped in practice, and its development is affected by the scope of an individual's career path. Knowledge is plural and heterogeneous, drawn from different sources. It is shaped by, and shapes, the individual's progress towards social, cognitive and collective goals and is personalized and situated, influenced by the life background and the context in which an individual both gains and deploys it (Bittencourt, 2016; Placco & Almeida, 2014; Tardif, 2000).

Educators may also be influenced by their vision of education, whether they view it as something to which every citizen has right of access or as a commodity with a high commercial value which is bought and sold (Bittencourt, 2016; Knowles, 1973; Machado, 2016a, 2016b; Miranda, Casa Nova & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012; Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione, 2013). Educators can also be shaped by their skills in politics (Masetto, 1998) and the ethics of humankind (Morin, 2000), requiring from them the ability to find balance between authority and tolerance (Machado, 2016a, 2016b). Teaching is also influenced by the factors that lead an educator into teaching, including role models that influence them and the value they place on teaching (Machado, 2016a). Educators' concerns for the professional futures of their students are an additional influencing factor (Bacellar & Ikeda,

2011; David, David & David, 2011; Finch, Nadeau & O'Reilly, 2013; Muff, 2013). Finally, the relationship between educator and student and the degree to which the objectives of both converge also has an impact on the learning process (Machado, 2016a). Table 1 presents a summary of the factors identified in the literature that may influence teaching performance.

**Method**

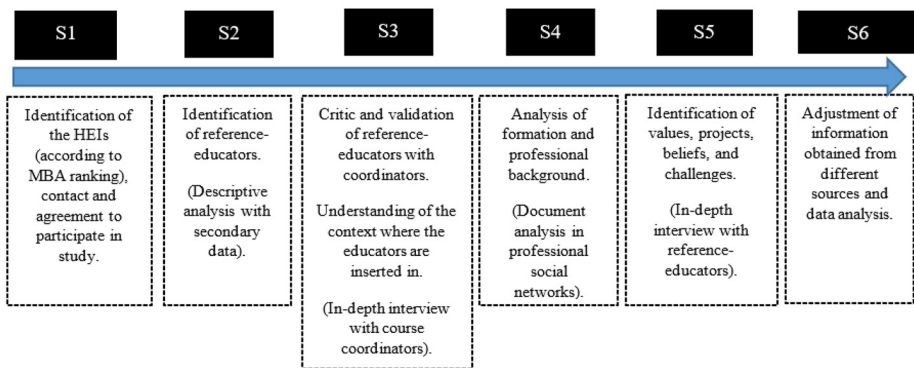
Given the nature of the research question, the study takes the form of exploratory, qualitative research using in-depth interviews to generate “rich” data (Mayring, 2014; Myers, 2013). Background data was gathered from secondary sources, including quantitative student evaluations and curriculum analyses available through professional social media networks and other online sources. The analytical process comprised document analysis, analysis of in-depth interviews with coordinators and educators, content analysis and qualitative analysis of content (Bardin, 2009; Mayring, 2014).

Respondents were drawn from the reference-educators teaching on-site (presential) courses identified in three top-ranking business schools in Brazil. The first of these was created in 1980 by professors from the Management department of the University of Sao Paulo. The second was founded in 1944 with the objective of providing qualified personnel for public and private management and administrative roles in Brazil. The third was founded in 1951 by a group of advertisers and media entrepreneurs with a vision of creating a business school by the market and for the market.

Figure 1 illustrates the six-stage process that was followed to select the respondents, collect data and undertake analysis.

Step 1 (S1). Identification of potential participating educators (professors) teaching marketing on presential courses at institutions among the best performing business schools, as ranked in the MBA guide to courses in marketing listed in the “O Estado de Sao Paulo” newspaper (Guia do MBA, 2017), the premier ranking publication for HEIs in Brazil. This criterion led us to shortlist and invite professors from four elite schools to participate. Three schools agreed to take part.

Step 2 (S2). Individual marketing educators within the three participating schools were identified using the criteria of those receiving above-average evaluation scores from students. Thirty-three individuals were identified as potential reference-educators of whom 11 agreed to take part in the study.



**Figure 1.**  
Field research structure

Source: Authors (2022)

Step 3 (S3). In-depth interviews were carried out with four programme leaders/coordinators from the participating institutions using a semi-structured approach (Flick, 2004). The aim of the interviews was to first validate the identification of the marketing reference-educators (MRE), and second to understand the context in which the individuals taught. This covered, for example, information on school and course structures, hiring policies, opportunities for career evolution and the procedures involved in teaching activity.

Step 4 (S4). Data was collected on the professional background and formation of the reference-educators using the Lattes platform (the official digital platform for the academic profiles and research outputs of researchers working in Brazil) and LinkedIn. A content analysis was carried out to organize and systemize data into three categories, namely, academic formation, professional formation and publications in academic journals. Figure 2 illustrates the results of this, bringing together the data collected on the qualification of the potential reference-educator through the interviews with the course coordinators/programme managers and secondary data.

Step 5 (S5). In-depth interviews were carried out with the 11 MRE that agreed to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews took place between February and November 2018. The research protocol for the interviews included a script with questions based on themes (see Table 1) that emerged from the literature review (Mayring, 2014), including technical, pedagogical and other factors.

Interviews covered, for example, the pedagogical approach and subject matter knowledge of respondents and explored their personal characteristics and attitudes to teaching. The interviews were recorded and transcribed (comprising 1,003 min and 263 transcription pages), with respondent confidentiality assured through the use of coding. Figure 3 presents the validation board (Telles, 2001), highlighting the search for more than one evidence source, wherever possible, for each investigation point.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Academic Formation	Specialization	Digital Media (SENAC)		Statistics (FEA/USP)	Strategic Organization Management (Uninove)	Finances (FACESP)	Executive Development (Wharton School)	Corporate Administration (FCAV)	Marketing (ESPM)	Psychology	Direct Marketing (ABMED)	Third Sector (FGV)	
	Specialization	Online tutor training			MBA specialization (NPG)	Controlling (FACESP)	Advisor formation (IBGC)	Planning and Management in Marketing (CUNSA)				Management (FEI)	
	Specialization											Sustainability (FDC)	
	MBA			MBA (FGV)		Corporate Finance (USP)			MBA Marketing (ESPM)				
	MBA					International Executive (FGV)							
	Master's degree	MKT discipline as a special student	Communication Sciences (ECA/USP)	Business Administration (FEA/USP)	Business Administration (Uninove)	Accounting Sciences (PUC)	Business Administration (PUC)	Business Administration (USCS)	Sociology (PUC)	Business Administration (PUC)	Business Administration (FEA/USP)	Strategy and Sustainability (PUC)	
	Doctor's degree		Communication Sciences (ECA/USP)	Business Administration (FEA/USP)	Administration, Communication and Education (Unimarc)	Ongoing			Social Sciences (PUC)		Business Administration (FEA/USP)		
	Others						Scientific Initiation						
	Professional Activity	Years as executive			6	yes	27	21	20	12	25	yes	13
		Years as consultant	9	40	14	19			3	14	1	yes	9
Years as educator		6	43	7	20	13	3	7	22	18	13	6	
Only teaching now		No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Professional activity besides teaching		Consultant	Consultant	Consultant	Consultant	Consultant	Advisor	Consultant	Consultant	Consultant	Academic manager / Consultant	Sustainability Coordinator / Consultant	
Academic Production	Paper publication		Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes		Yes	Yes	
	Paper publication (in the last 5 years)			Yes	Yes						Yes	Yes	
	Academic Congress Participation		Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Books and book chapters		Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Coordination	Coordinator's validation as a reference	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
	Transcribed pages	18	30	19	12	24	31	23	35	24	30	17	
	Interview time (minutes)	70	140	90	26	75	111	83	162	76	107	63	

Source: Authors (2022) based on data

Figure 2. Marketing educators' formation based on social networks data and in-depth interviews

**Figure 3.**  
Validation board of  
the study

Conceptual model	Question and objective	Evidence source		Collection method		Analysis	
		Main	Secondary	Main Evidence	Complementary Evidence	Main Evidence	Complementary Evidence
<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <b>Pedagogical factors</b>                      Teaching formation and experience                      Didactic resources                 </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <b>Technical factors</b>                      Marketing formation                      Managerial experience                 </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <b>Other factors</b>                      Vision as an educator                      Values / Projects                      Relationship with students                 </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">↓</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px;"> <b>Teaching performance</b> </div>	Question: how do the different factors contribute to the educators' performance in Marketing executive postgraduate courses? Objective: Propose a conceptual model to organize knowledge, identifying, understanding and mapping the contribution of different factors to the educators' performance in Marketing executive postgraduate courses.	Lattes / Linked In	Statement	Document research	In-depth interview	Content analysis	Qualitative content analysis
		Statement	-	In-depth interview	-	Qualitative content analysis	-
		Lattes / Linked In	Statement	Document research	In-depth interview	Qualitative content analysis	-
		Lattes / Linked In	Statement	Document research	In-depth interview	Content analysis	Qualitative content analysis
		Lattes / Linked In	Statement	Document research	In-depth interview	Content analysis	Qualitative content analysis
		Statement	-	In-depth interview	-	Qualitative content analysis	-
		Statement	Performance research	In-depth interview	Document analysis	Qualitative content analysis	Descriptive analysis
		Performance research	Coordinator's statement	Document research	In-depth interview	Descriptive analysis	Qualitative content analysis

**Source:** Authors (2022) based on Telles (2001)

Step 6 (S6). All data, whether drawn from interviews, documentary sources or internet platforms, were analysed as a single data set using ATLAS.ti software. A qualitative content analysis method (Mayring, 2014) was used in which initial categories were created using an a priori approach drawing on themes from existing theory. These included, for example, academic background, including subcategories such as level of degree (whether graduate or postgraduate). Professional activity was also identified a priori, with subcategories such as marketing practitioner and educator. In practice, it was found that the a priori themes did not cover all the emerging findings, and new subcategories were created (Mayring, 2014).

Based on the analysis, a conceptual model was developed. The process for this was in accordance with de Aguiar and Correia's (2013) methodology for the development of concept maps and was used to organize knowledge as to which factors contribute to teaching performance. Cmap Tools (Cmap Tools, 2019) were used to develop the model.

### Findings and interpretation

#### *Pedagogical factors contributing to teaching performance*

A number of pedagogical factors were found to be important in developing teaching performance. The majority, although not all, of MRE cited formal training courses as fundamental to the development of their teaching, in line with the arguments of Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione (2013), Placco & Almeida (2014) and Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet (2002). The importance of experiential learning – learning from practice – was also highlighted as supporting the formation of their teaching style and approach, for example, in working as assistant teachers and or bringing training practices developed in their business leadership roles into the classroom.

Our findings reinforce arguments from Tardif (2000) and Placco & Almeida (2014) regarding the relevance of professional knowledge and knowing how to do. Two out of 11 MRE had experience teaching in postgraduation *stricto sensu* and six out of 11 had experience in undergraduate courses, suggesting no or low correlation. Considering the labour contract, five out of 11 were hired as permanent professors, and six were hired as

independent service providers (hourly professors teaching specific modules). All the MRE interviewed for the study had or had had other professional occupations in addition to teaching. However, their performance as educators was heavily influenced by the professionalization of their teaching. Being professional educators requires them to use a repertoire of teaching skills built through professional experience, self-development and academic or non-academic research (Placco & Almeida, 2014; Machado, 2016a, 2016b). Marketing educators challenged students, encouraging them, for example, to develop their own learning by applying theoretical concepts to real-world contexts or working through problem-based examples.

MREs also required interpersonal skills to handle difficult situations in the classroom, in line with Morin's (2000) statements. MREs placed themselves among students while retaining the authority of the educator's role, helping students to identify specific contexts and to understand how these linked to general, theoretical perspectives. While some recognized that contemporary discourses in pedagogy position the role of the teacher as more of a facilitator, mentor or coach, they took responsibility for defining teaching and learning objectives and strategies, methods and techniques. The delivery of teaching might be student-led, but the framing within which it is delivered remains very much designed by teachers – this reinforces findings from Masetto (1998), Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet (2002) and Miranda, Casa Nova, and Cornacchione Júnior (2012) regarding the need for pedagogical and didactical skills:

Then I remember a sociologist from the Sorbonne, once giving a lecture, she said: “the student himself expects you to be the teacher, you are the theatre director, you are the king of that room, you are the one who reigns, you encourage them to build, because today education is not something they receive and simply go and apply in another environment. So, if you want to provoke, if you want to inspire, you have to see the practical result of where that inspiration is going but it comes from you. You have to be the Teacher” (Professor 8, 18th June, 2018).

All the respondent MREs viewed their role as facilitating the learning of students who are themselves citizens and developing professionals (Machado, 2016a; Machado, 2016b). The data gathered from educators show, in line with statements from Machado (2016a, 2016b) and Morin (2000), that for educators, their focus lies not on transmitting knowledge but on developing skills that will fit students to take their role in society as well as within their organizations. They recognize the need to understand the existing knowledge held by students and to be empathetic to students in the current moment, being sensitive to their motivations, limitations and anxieties. In response, the methods used by educators to support learning evolve constantly. The MRE described themselves as using a mix of different strategies and techniques for teaching and learning (Pimenta, Anastasiou, & Cavallet, 2002). At the core lies the traditional lecture, or a lecture with some space for dialogue. These are complemented by a range of active learning activities such as the application of exercises, discussion of case studies and the undertaking of practical projects. Problems, projects and context-based case studies may be presented to students as “challenges”, using language contemporary with students' experience to increase their engagement.

Yet while MRE have already changed their practice, they feel under pressure to do more. This pressure is coming not from students but from their schools, who are keen to see them adopt interactive IT-enabled tools in class. While the adoption of more active methods of teaching by the reference-educators has led to increased student satisfaction, reference-educators seem to be sceptical about the effectiveness of using interactive technology in teaching, being uncertain as to whether it represents a genuinely positive contribution to student learning or whether it is just a short-lived fashion. It is the interaction that is important, not the delivery mechanism. Reference-educators are not unwilling to adopt new

technologies but will adopt such changes only if they can see that it genuinely contributes to learning.

*Subject (technical) knowledge in teaching performance*

The marketing reference-educator group comprised executives and former executives, consultants and former consultants. Some also held postgraduate masters and/or doctoral degrees. All 11 MREs were professionals with practical experience in marketing, having at some point in their careers worked in specific marketing-related areas such as marketing strategy, marketing communications, digital marketing, customer relationship management and branding. Their practical experience enabled them to develop skills in a specific area of marketing (Masetto, 1998). Before that, it is important to mention that they have built their general marketing knowledge through formal education (Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione, 2013), but they have become recognized experts in their fields through the practical application of that knowledge (Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione, 2013; Placco & Almeida, 2014), leading them to master the content taught (Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012). This was found to be a contributing factor to their teaching performance. Moreover, this practical knowledge continued to be updated as a result of professional experience and self-development:

It is almost as if I said: “Do you know what you want to be? I got there, I was Marketing Director”, so that gives me the authority to talk about the issues. Once, in a class in Santo André, at the end of the class, a student said: “oh, teacher, but that’s not how it works in practice”, then I said: “no? So tell me how it is, because I don’t work with it, I don’t really know how it is”, the class burst out laughing”, the girl said: “no, that’s not what I meant” – [my experience] gives me the authority to speak (Teacher 6, July 5, 2018).

Ten of the 11 MREs held master degrees. Both reference-educators and the programme coordinators saw the work associated with gaining postgraduate masters and doctoral degrees as not only helping individuals to deepen their technical knowledge of their subject but also to develop research skills and the ability to analyse and question empirical data to draw out new theoretical points and concepts. This formation as researchers also played an important role in encouraging individuals to update their technical knowledge constantly through research, with the majority of reference-educators using this to pursue self-development. It was this identity as researchers and the habits thus formed that drove individuals to keep their technical knowledge up to date rather than any requirement to deliver journal articles or new research.

*Personal characteristics as factors in teaching performance*

In line with statements from Masetto (1998), Morin (2000) and Tardif (2000), our findings indicate that beliefs, values and vision are considered important aspects in the performance of the MREs. These included an emphasis on the importance of developing students as professionals and citizens.

“Before anything, we are human beings, we have to think about our neighbours, in the country, before our career, in our family” (Professor 7 May 21, 2018).

The MRE recognized that businesspeople are first members of society and only second professional executives and wished their students to recognize this too. In both cases, this is not just about learning technical “know that” but also about learning “how to be”, reinforcing Tardif’s (2000) arguments.

Our findings reinforce statements from previous studies (Machado, 2016a, 2016b; Morin, 2000; Masetto, 1998) that there is a need, from the reference-educator’s perspective, to

balance the teacher's authority with their respect for their students and their humanity, recognizing the needs of their students as fellow human beings rather than seeing them as receptacles for knowledge. The background lives of educators and their prior experience shape their beliefs, values and vision in regard to teaching. In particular, the reference-educators spoke of their own experience as students, the pleasure they found in studying and the influence of good teachers on that:

I'm seeing in my mind some masters that I met in my life, they are generous, they are kind, there is a difference in kindness and generosity, [. . . . .] they have self-awareness, they have a very keen perception of you. But the most important: they know how to welcome those who want to be welcomed and they know not to suffer for those who do not want to be welcomed (Teacher 9, June 5, 2018).

Role models, as highlighted by [Machado \(2016a\)](#), also emerged as important. Seven out of 11 MRE referred to being inspired by good teachers during their own education, influencing their own teaching style. All respondents spoke of searching for inspiration from other sources for their pedagogical development. These included exchanging experiences with other teachers, borrowing techniques and approaches from the arts (both drama and clowns) and sports (martial arts). Interestingly, the practice and adoption of active methodologies in learning and teaching were drawn more from the external and corporate environment than from the academic one, for example:

The person who made me understand this was Master Chan. He is still a Kung-Fu teacher. He brought Kung Fu to Brazil in the 60's, he is a lovely person, he taught everybody with the same patience and respect for the other [. . .] wow, think about what this guy has done for me, [. . .] he has let me make mistakes, he has offered me challenges, he has offered me the opportunity to learn. And then, after some years, I start to reflect on "how should I teach?" (Professor 9, 5th July 2018).

## Discussion

Teaching executive students demands a different skill set from teaching undergraduates. Our research suggests that the practical experience of our respondents commands respect in the classroom while also endowing them with empathy towards the lived experience of the students, embodying the principles identified by [Knowles \(1973\)](#) and [Machado \(2011\)](#). Their own experience as "good" students ensure they are grounded in academic practice. It enables them to help students identify specific contexts and to understand how these link to general, theoretical perspectives. In this, they appear to embody the concept of a "wayfarer" ([Joseph-Richard & Jessop, 2020](#)), encouraging students to extend the boundaries of their thinking and explore their own business practice in relation to theoretical concepts and theoretical concepts in relation to their own practice. We argue that this is a potentially unique strength of MREs who have their feet in both the world of academia and the world of practice. This is not to say that educators from other backgrounds cannot also use such techniques of co-creating knowledge ([Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009](#); [Haynes, 2022](#); [Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione Júnior, 2012](#)), but practitioners bring additional insights and experiences to enrich this process.

Practical experience on its own, however, does not explain the success of the MRE. Through their interpersonal skills and student-centred approach, they help students make the same journey that they have made from practice-led thinking to theory building, reinforcing pedagogical lessons from [Haynes \(2022\)](#) and [Placco & Almeida \(2014\)](#). We were interested to see that all our respondents actively sought out inspiration from other sources to develop their teaching skills, drawing heavily on the world outside academia. As one might expect, based on the predictions of literature as to what makes for good teaching performance ([Anastasiou, das, & Alves 2009](#); [Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014](#)), a student-centred approach was

adopted by all of the MREs. However, this appears in part to reflect the business and life experience of the marketing educators as much as any deliberate pedagogical outcome. Through their backgrounds, formal training and self-development MRE have developed a rich repertoire of teaching styles (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli & Sharma, 2014; Machado, 2016b), enabling them to adapt to different contexts, whether that be the demands of different subject matter or differences in learning styles between students. Again, this appears to develop partly through formal pedagogical training, as recommended by Miranda, Casa Nova, & Cornacchione, 2013, combined with practical experience (Tardif, 2000) in this case of teaching. Their teaching undergoes continual development, both through specific training and through constant adjustments to their teaching practice made in response to both formal and informal feedback from students and programme coordinators.

Figure 4 below brings together the findings of the study to illustrate how the multiple factors identified work together to influence teaching performance of MRE.

The findings suggest that the development of a practitioner educator is complex and arises from both formal and informal learning. While the study was exploratory, background factors were remarkably consistent across the MRE. Perhaps not surprisingly, technical knowledge and didactic skills were shown to be key. However, there are some nuances here.

The MREs all possess contextual knowledge, that is, a deep understanding of the real-life business world developed through their previous career experience, in line with Gross and Laamanen (2018, 2022). This informs both their pedagogical and subject knowledge. Through their student-centred teaching practice (Haynes, 2022), enacted through their preparation, material and delivery of classes, engaging students through discussion, their rigorous approach to assessment, always offering their best and bringing maturity and

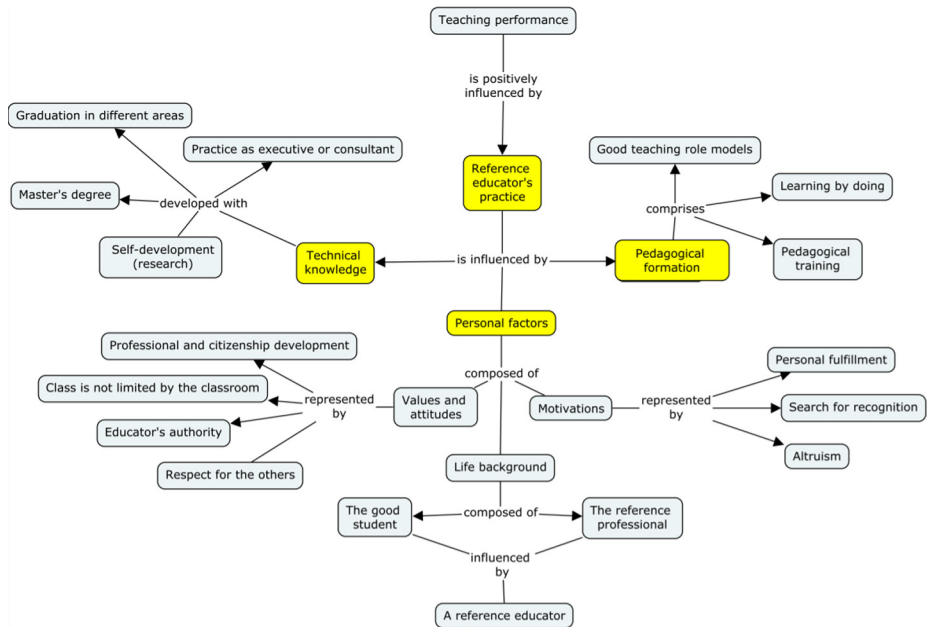


Figure 4.  
Factors influencing  
teaching performance  
of marketing  
reference-educators

Source: Authors (2022) based on data

experience to bear on difficult situations, these educators model citizenship and professionalism for their students.

In developing the model, personal factors influencing teaching performance were divided under the headings of values and attitudes, motivations and the marketing educators' professional backgrounds. The values represent the beliefs that a specific behaviour and action are preferable to an opposite mode (Robbins, 2005). Attitudes are defined as statements which reflect how an individual feels towards something, while motivation may be understood as "the process responsible for the intensity, direction and persistence of one's efforts to achieve a certain goal" (Robbins, 2005, p. 132).

One factor, in particular, emerged in this area and was not clearly identified in the literature, namely, the way in which the MRE perceived their students not as vessels to be filled with knowledge but as fellow citizens. While this links to previous work which considers the concern of educators for the professional futures of their students (Bacellar & Ikeda, 2011; David, David & David, 2011; Finch, Nadeau & O'Reilly, 2013; Muff, 2013), the use of the word "citizen" goes beyond this, being loaded with meaning, implying both rights and responsibilities. In helping students fulfil their potential, the MRE see themselves as playing an active role in helping students learn how to fulfil the various roles they adopt in life, in line, to some extent, with recommendations from Morin (2000).

The institutions employing the MRE deliberately sought out individuals recognized by their peers as having qualities that made them stand out in their profession and potentially fitted them for being not only good practitioners but also good teachers. If, as the exploratory data seems to suggest, these include a concern for wider society, then that is a factor that could be deliberately recruited for.

Based on our findings, we delineated 14 propositions to improve marketing education (Crittenden, 2022) with a focus on the MRE. These propositions indicate the qualities that define an MRE and could potentially be used to aid the recruitment of marketing practitioners into university teaching – it is not guaranteed that all practitioners will have these qualities, and recruiters should be mindful of the elements that go into making an MRE. Table 2 presents the propositions and the evidence to support its reasoning.

### Final considerations

The purpose of this study was to understand how marketing faculty become reference-educators. We explored this gap by identifying the factors that underpin the performance of MRE in their teaching of executives studying business at the postgraduate level and understanding how these factors come together to form the approach of reference-educator in the marketing discipline. Our findings identify that teaching performance depends on teaching practice influenced by technical knowledge, pedagogical factors and personal features and involving a humanistic approach to the educator-student relationship and the professional-citizen balance. We also found that being able to link marketing theory to practice when educating executive students was a core skill of MRE, perhaps one they are uniquely placed to deliver.

Hence, the study contributes to the extant literature on learning and teaching in the marketing field by deepening the understanding of marketing educators' individual factors that can lead to creating a well-rounded practitioner-educator. The findings stress the value of the marketing practitioner educator to HEI, adding to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between marketing faculty status and student evaluations (Tashchian, Kalamas Hedden & Forrester, 2022). The study also contributes to keeping the wheel of marketing education rolling (Crittenden, 2022) by proposing a model and delineating a set of propositions to deepen knowledge of the factors shaping a marketing reference-educator.

Results	Propositions
<p>The marketing reference educators (MREs) are student-focussed. They seek to understand the context of the students and their levels of existing knowledge and look to build up the students' skills The MREs have recourse to different teaching methods to encourage different learning styles and help the students achieve set learning objective(s)</p>	<p>P1 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the appreciation of the student's previous experience and knowledge (Knowles, 1973; Machado, 2011) P2 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the recognition and encouragement of different learning styles (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli &amp; Sharma, 2014) P3 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the recognition of skill development as the objective of the learning process (Machado, 2016a, 2016b) P4 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the adaptation of the educator's role according to the defined learning objective (Kolb, Passarelli &amp; Sharma, 2014) P5 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the specific didactic formation (Bittencourt, 2016; Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione Júnior, 2012, Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione, 2013) P6 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by continuing didactic formation (Bacellar &amp; Ikeda, 2011; Bittencourt, 2016; Finch, Nadeau &amp; O'Reilly, 2013; Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione Júnior, 2012, Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione, 2013) P7 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by his/her academic formation (Miranda, Casa Nova, and Cornacchione Júnior, 2012; Placco &amp; Almeida, 2014) P8 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by his/her research activity, with academic research and scientific publications (Bacellar &amp; Ikeda, 2011; Finch, Nadeau &amp; O'Reilly, 2013; Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione, 2013; Placco &amp; Almeida, 2014) P9 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by his/her professional administrative activities out of the university, as executives or consultants (Bacellar &amp; Ikeda, 2011; Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione, 2013) P10 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the view about the educator's role (Miranda, Casa Nova, and Cornacchione Júnior, 2012; Placco &amp; Almeida, 2014) P11 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by personal values, such as respect for other people and their view on citizenship (Miranda, Casa Nova, and Cornacchione Júnior, 2012; Placco &amp; Almeida, 2014) P12 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the educator's life background as a student and as a teacher (Bacellar &amp; Ikeda, 2011; Miranda, Casa Nova, &amp; Cornacchione, 2013) P13 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the adoption of innovative pedagogical technologies (Bittencourt, 2016) P14 – The marketing educator's performance is influenced by the adoption of innovations in the information technology area (Bacellar &amp; Ikeda, 2011; Machado, 2016a)</p>
<p>MREs did not follow a standard path to developing their teaching style, although all had some form of pedagogical training. However, this was blended with other formative factors. Often, they are inspired by other teachers they met when they were students, or others they admire. They also constantly seek for ways to update their knowledge and pedagogical repertoire, although new didactic techniques are applied only if they match the class needs</p>	
<p>Most MREs have as a minimum a master's degree or have already taken some master's degree course subjects It is this formal training in research rather than engagement in research itself which influences the way the RE's update their knowledge by searching for current scientific papers. All MRE's have experience as executives or consultants</p>	
<p>The MREs see themselves as professionals working for the group's learning outcomes, showing authority and values of respect, humility and simplicity, getting involved and giving their best. Their approach can, therefore, be described as influenced by their personal values</p>	
<p>The educators' life backgrounds influence their option for the teaching activity</p>	
<p>The MREs are interested in new pedagogical technologies and information resources, but they state that their adoption should be connected to a need, it should not be used only for being a fashion trend</p>	

Source: Authors

**Table 2.**  
Main results and propositions

These can be further investigated in exploratory and conclusive studies. In addition, a future deepening of the discussion on the perspective of students as service clients and education as a product may generate more understanding of the context of contemporary marketing education and the formation of future professionals, where wider society is the final client from the perspective of reference-educators.

At a practical level, the study findings have implications for the managers of HEIs. For example, coordinators of marketing programmes may wish to influence the hiring process, training and development of pedagogic skills of and by practitioner-educators, particularly at the start of their teaching careers. At the same time, other educators can learn from the practice of the MRE, for example, by setting great value on the central role of the student and by trialling different teaching and learning methods. More than that, the study also highlights the importance of lifelong learning for marketing educators due to the constant evolution of marketing practice, the fluid competitive environment experienced by business schools and world dynamics. Exemplifying this requirement for lifelong learning, the field research was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, online teaching has been widely adopted and accepted, forcing marketing educators to learn new skills to deliver both online and hybrid teaching, at the same time as technology-enabled trends in the market have accelerated, with significant implications for marketing practice. The identification of reference-educators also reinforces a practical and controversial discussion: the use of SET as the main tool for educator allocation could be a major issue in a context where, as in our sample, more than half of reference-educators might be hired as independent services providers, with the “student as client” approach potentially emphasizing short-term values of satisfaction and perceptions of learning to the detriment of the real learning and the society as client approach (Bacon, 2016, 2017).

Regarding wider implications, every improvement in education generates a positive contribution to society. Better marketing educators may result in better professionals, which could generate better problem-solving and planning within business, leading to more efficient action plans, ultimately generating more benefits both for corporations and for society as a whole.

Future studies could be undertaken to test the model statistically and, for example, compare the experience of practitioner-educators in other disciplines, other institutions and other countries. Such studies could also investigate the effect of social distancing, online and hybrid classes on teaching performance, considering technical knowledge, pedagogical formation and personal values. Another avenue of studies could research in depth the differences, skills and challenges faced by educators when teaching at different levels (undergraduate and postgraduate courses). Marketing practitioner-educators clearly bring different things to their teaching from non-practitioners. The MRE in the study were identified as exemplars by their students and institutions. It would be interesting to test whether non-executive students also see practitioners as exemplars, to understand in more depth the value added by the practitioner approach and whether there are elements of that which could be transferred into the teaching of non-practitioners.

Finally, the study presents limitations. We acknowledge that the scope of our study was gathering in-depth data from the educators' perspective. We suggest future studies to uncover the reference-educator through the lens of students. We also encountered specific limitations which are intrinsic to the qualitative approach, such as the number of interviews and the potential weakness around the reliability and representativeness of the sample from which interviews were drawn. This was mitigated by asking three different institutions to identify “good” marketing educators who would form “reference-educators” for this study. As far as possible, we used multiple sources to cross-correlate data.

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*Author's contribution:* Alexandre Salvador, Designed the study, Collected the data, Performed the data analysis. Mariana Bassi Suter, Wrote the paper, Contributed to the data analysis. Nicola Forsdike, Conceived and designed the analysis, Refined the paper.

**Corresponding author**

Mariana Suter can be contacted at: [M.bassi-suter@tbs-education.fr](mailto:M.bassi-suter@tbs-education.fr)

**Associate editor:** Rafaela Cordeiro

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