

Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 20,1993

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION: IS ENOUGH BEING DONE?

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ABSTRACT

World-wide business operations increasingly require personnel with cross-cultural skills and knowledge of the cultural norms of foreign countries. The extent and nature of baccalaureate business programs in American colleges are examined. The paper argues for the enhancement of cross-cultural business education by increasing the number of international business majors offered at doctorate granting universities.

INTRODUCTION

There is concern about the extent of "internationalization" of business curricula, and the depth of international programs. Among these are concerns that doctoral programs do not prepare graduates to teach international topics and uncertainty as to whether to offer a greater number of international courses or place more emphasis on international issues in all functional offerings.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND FINDINGS

The research described here was to determine the extent to which international business majors are offered by four-year American colleges. From 556 deans or units heads surveyed, 127 responses (64 private, 63 public) were received. Crosstabulated data show twelve international majors offered; eleven were by AACSB-accredited or member schools. Six were at small, private schools with an enrollment of fewer than 5,000 students.

ANOVA under the SAS General Linear Model procedure were used (six variables analyzed) to examine the general state of international business majors being offered. Next, bi-variable predictor models with respective interactions were analyzed to examine the complexities of offerings.

Variables found to be statistically significant predictors of an international business major were: (1) Master's Program, (2) AACSB accreditation, (3) AACSB membership, (4) Geographic location, (5) total Student enrollment and the (6) Number of Majors offered, with the latter having the highest significance ($p=.0001$). One pairwise combination model proved statistically insignificant, Geographic Area and Master's Program.

The presence of an international business major is related to a number of internal variables, but primarily a large number of curriculum majors must be offered before an international business major will be offered.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A finding that only 9.45 percent of respondents offer programs in international business suggests an inadequate level of international business education exists. Second, institutional predictor variables statistically significant to the presence of international business major are: (1) Master's Program, (2) Geographic Location, (3) Total student enrollment, (4) Number of Majors offered, and (5) AACSB Membership. Using these, a profile of institutions offering an International Business major is smaller schools; having a relatively larger number of majors (minimum = six; maximum = 11; modal = 5 schools with nine majors); are likely to be members of AACSB. Geographic Location is also a relevant factor, but requires additional analysis to determine the nature of the relationship.

Third, predictor variables not statistically significant to an international major are whether the institution was Public or Private, and presence of a Doctoral Program. Absence of these variables seem significant in that leadership in the development of International Business education is not being provided by public institutions any more or less than private institutions.

Most significantly, leadership is not being provided by doctoral granting institutions in that they are not offering BS-level international majors any more or less than are schools without a doctoral program. Given concerns about adequacy of doctoral-level preparation for cross-cultural instruction, one might argue that a BS-level international business program, in which doctoral candidates could be given instructional and/or research responsibilities, might provide an excellent vehicle for developing cross-cultural backgrounds of future educators.

Not all doctoral candidates could be given such assignments, but simply interaction with and instruction by faculty having high quality international credentials, would enrich the educational experience, and enhance their own credentials. Synergistic benefits for a doctoral program would be derived from a resource base supporting the undergraduate program and a commitment to an "internationalization" throughout the university.

If forecasts of greater needs for business graduates with cross-cultural skills and if concerns about the slow pace and limited extent of "internationalization" of American business education have merit, it may well be that the best avenue for allaying the concerns and meeting the needs will be the introduction of more baccalaureate level international business programs, particularly at doctorate granting institutions.