

Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 10, 1983

HOW TO INTERNATIONALIZE YOUR CURRICULUM

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The first question to be addressed in the debate over internationalizing the curriculum is, Why should an American collegiate school of business seek to broaden the scope of its coverage in the area of world business?

There are two basic reasons for this undertaking:

First, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has mandated that international business be given increased emphasis by colleges of business that wish to be accredited by this body, and second, modern commerce and international competition dictate that colleges increase their emphasis on world business in an effort to educate their students for the future. The United States can no longer afford to ignore the threats and opportunities that are inherent in world business operations. One need only to recognize the parent country of some of our most widely known brand names (Nestle, Shell, Philips, Datsun, Toyota, Sony, BMW, Honda, Mercedes, Porsché, Hoffman-La Roche, Bayer, BASF, Chanel, Rolex, Seiko, etc.) to realize that the American public is inundated with foreign products, which many consumers may not even realize are owned by foreign corporations.

For many years the United States had minimal interest in international trade because it was largely self-sufficient. This position has changed dramatically over the past ten years. Exports are now a vital concern for the United States as an important source of currency to pay for our increasing import bill. As long as the United States is not self-sufficient in energy production, it will have a large trade deficit. The price of imported oil has recently leveled off, and indeed dropped slightly from the prices paid in early 1981; however, the United States is still paying approximately 1,000 percent more for oil in 1982 than in 1972. This massive import bill cannot be supported without a corresponding increase in exports. Yet, inertia frequently keeps small and medium-sized firms from entering the world arena. Furthermore, a superstitious view of our own inadequacy also inhibits our entry into world markets. Nevertheless, American businesses can be very competitive in world markets, especially in high technology manufacture, food production (a high technology industry in the United States), and in the service sector. Students and executives need to be educated in the techniques of world business. Certainly, Japan has dealt American industrial prestige a serious blow, but we cannot allow ourselves to be excluded in what will surely be a more competitive environment for world business in the future.

As a college of business administration, we must provide our present and future leaders with a better understanding of the truly worldwide marketplace that surrounds us. There are three basic ways to introduce world business into the curriculum:

1. Adding a basic course on international business into the required core that all business majors must take.
2. Internationalizing the entire core curriculum so that students are exposed to world business concepts in all their courses. This approach would allocate a portion of each course to the coverage of international topics. Perhaps 10 to 20 percent of the course coverage might be a typical allocation for international topics.
3. Supplemental and/or experiential techniques for integrating international coverage into the curriculum.

The following discussion deals with the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Adding a course on international business into the into the required core.

This is perhaps the best way to ensure that all students receive relevant information from experts in the international field. The course could be structured to include any mix of material that a college feels it is necessary to present. The assumption is that the course would be staffed by persons with expertise in the international field; thus each student would be exposed to the material from the viewpoint of persons with training and/or expertise in international business. The weaknesses of this approach are related primarily to issues concerning the core curriculum and with the lack of properly trained faculty.

The United States is singularly unprepared to add international classes to the core curriculum because there is a dearth of individuals trained in the international area; this seems to be the most crucial problem that colleges of business will face if they attempt to add a special international business course to the curriculum. The number of students majoring in the international area for their doctorate seems to be increasing in the United States, but not at the level necessary to meet the staffing needs of colleges of business if the addition of a special international business course is widely adopted as the best approach for internationalizing the curriculum. A nationwide shortage has been noted of faculty competent to teach the two most recent additions to the AACSB curriculum (Business Policies and Operations Management). An even greater shortage of faculty qualified to staff the international business addition could be expected.

The second major problem of adding a course in the international business area is the necessity to adjust the required core curriculum. A university could either expand the core to require 3 more hours (assuming the additional course in international business would be a 3 semester-hour course) or it could replace an existing course in the core. Both of these approaches present political problems for a college. International business offerings would have to compete with several other potential courses in any discussion about changing the core. The Inclusion of Operations Management, Business and Society (nr social responsibility/ethical coverage), and various computer related courses would be the chief rivals for consideration by most colleges of business. The resolution of this problem will most likely be determined by the political situation at the individual colleges.

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Internationalizing all the core courses to include a portion of the coverage in each course.

This seems to be the short-term approach that many colleges favor. It is a relatively cheap and painless way to internationalize. It is also likely to fail. The major weakness of this approach is that the college would be asking a large proportion of their faculty to add or explain (in their core courses) content they would not be competent to handle. The use of extensive team teaching in the core course might be a way to provide professionally competent instructors to present and explain the internationally oriented materials. Another way to equip faculty who could professionally augment the core courses would be to offer in-service training of one type or another to the existing faculty. The AACSB is providing two seminars during the summer of 1983 (one in Seattle, Washington and one in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) as in-service training for interested faculty. This is most likely to be the dominant approach of colleges that will attempt to internationalize their curriculum in the near future.

Supplemental and experiential approaches to internationalizing the curriculum.

This approach is at best an adjunct to one of the two methods discussed above. In this approach, the college would begin to expand operations in the international area by actually going into that international area.

Study-abroad programs for business majors have been slow to develop, but they have been making some progress in recent years. These programs might utilize various exchanges of faculty members or students, or they might actually be related to an overseas extension campus for the express purpose of providing a more conducive atmosphere for people interested in the international sector.

We recommend that colleges devote a substantial effort to internationalizing their faculty by enabling them to joint in some of these overseas programs. Once faculty members get involved in an overseas program, they are much more likely to incorporate the information learned into their functional course offerings. This will assist in attempting to internationalize the colleges' curriculum. A traveling seminar where colleges take their own faculty members and students into the international sector is another experiential approach to expanding the coverage of the college. Traveling seminars also help to familiarize the international community with the college. By visiting international agencies and multinational corporations outside the United States, the college can, in essence, bring the mountain to Mohammed. This is certainly one way to impress multinational corporations with the college's faculty and students. The traveling seminar will also help develop contacts for exchange programs and offers opportunity to review possible locations for branch campuses outside the United States.