

Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 9, 1982

INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: BUILDING BRIDGES

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ABSTRACT

International management can be an exciting, stimulating area of study. To be so, the student needs to experience the sights, sounds, and the smells of international operations. The sight of 30,000 people working in one location along the Rhine River is impressive. The sound of forges hammering metal soon to be part of a textile production plant is loud. The odor of wool going through various washing stages is unforgettable. Add to this the opportunity to discuss immediately these events with the people responsible for the planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, and directing of these operations and learning is meaningful.

THE CHALLENGE

The call has gone out from many groups for a serious response to internationalizing the business curriculum. Studies by a presidential commission and individual academicians point to the need for colleges and universities to extend and improve their curricula in meeting the growing needs in foreign languages and international business. This paper presents a model developed at The College of Charleston designed to bridge the gap between concepts and experience in international management. To share this approach and receive feedback from our colleagues is our intention.

THE SETTING

The college of Charleston is an old (211 years) liberal arts-oriented college of 5,000 students in Charleston, South Carolina. A two-year language requirement is part of every majors curriculum. An important port city, Charleston is exposed to many international aspects--commerce and cultural. The majority of students come from South Carolina and plan to pursue their career within the region.

A decisive factor in developing the two courses which constitute the design was the dynamic economic changes taking place within the state. In addition, the College promotes and supports the idea of innovation within the curriculum, particularly in Maymester (a three week period in May when students can take one course only) and summer sessions.

THE MODEL

The international management experience consists of two courses:

1. The New South Carolina: Industrial Development--Foreign and Domestic. Taught each Maymester.
2. International Management: A Comparative Approach. A study abroad program taught every other year during Summer Term I in Western Europe.

Objectives: To increase awareness and understanding of the international aspects of the economic base within the United States and particularly South Carolina.

To introduce students to the dynamic industrial environment through field trips.

To motivate students to view language requirements as a valuable tool for future career interests.

To create positive interpersonal relationships among business executives, students and faculty.

To observe and examine managerial styles, techniques, philosophies, and decision-making practices.

To reinforce previous learning experiences in management and business administration.

The New South Carolina course consists of five days in the classroom (8:30 a to 12 noon) with lectures on the changing economic scene by professors and guest lecturers from the South Carolina State Development Board, the U.S. Commerce Department, the South Carolina State Technical Education System, and the South Carolina State Ports Authority. During the following two weeks, nine visitations are made to sites within the state.

Robert Bosch U. S. (German), Charleston
Cummins Engine Co. (U.S.), Charleston
Mobay Chemical Co. (German), Charleston
Santee River Wool Combing (French), Jamestown
Hoeschst Fibers (German), Spartanburg
Milliken and Co. (U.S.), Spartanburg
Lockwood Greene Engineers (U.S.), Spartanburg
Wheel Truing Tool Co. (Belgium), Columbia
Carolina Trade Zone (#21, U.S.), Summerville

Visitations include an orientation, observations of operations, and a discussion period between top officers of the company and the students.

The study abroad course (22 days in 1979, 17 days in 1981) takes place in Western Europe at the headquarters of international firms--most of which have extensive investments and/or operations in South Carolina.

Hoechst AG, Frankfurt, West Germany
Robert Bosch GMBH, Stuttgart, West Germany
Bayer AG, Laverkusen, West Germany
Sandoz, Basel, Switzerland
Nouvelle Societe de Construction Mecanique, Guebwiller, France
Piper Heidsieck, Reims, France
Perinage Amedee, Lille, France
Etablissements Fabry, Lille, France
Diamant Boart, Brussels, Belgium

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Visitations include orientations, observations of various operations, discussion with top management, and usually an opportunity to socialize with personnel from various levels at lunches and/or dinners hosted by the companies. In addition, students have time to sightsee in such cities as Paris, Cologne, Frankfurt, Brussels, and Brugge, Belgium. Various individuals have held receptions in their homes for the group during the two tours. These particular occasions are not only a welcome break from the rigorous schedule, but enlightening relative to the cultural aspects of Western European work and leisure.

PEDAGOGY

Non-traditional approaches to a subject bring with them difficulties in structuring an evaluation process. Maymester (the three week course in South Carolina) is closer to a traditional classroom situation than the study abroad program but has some extenuating circumstances relative to a textbook and examination. When visiting industrial sites, it was decided students should have a preconceived or structured checklist to aid in observation and discussions. Thus, the first week of class is aimed at developing that checklist of what to look for and what to aim for through discussion with management personnel. This gives the student a basis for quickly seeing the differences in management styles, techniques- and decision criteria used for coming to South Carolina for foreign firms or staying in South Carolina as is the case with established local firms. Instead of a text, a list of readings have been gathered over the past few years which specifically address the growth and change in the South Carolina economic environment. A daily journal is required; this plus notes and readings creates the basis for a final written evaluation.

The approach to the study abroad course offers other challenges as pedagogical technique. A series of pre-departure seminars are conducted to introduce the concepts (readings), format of visitations, schedule of events, and the rigors and fun of traveling in a foreign country. Experienced personnel from our International Studies Office and local travel agents support in those areas of their expertise. A research paper is assigned to each student--of their choice--to be completed upon return to the United States. To prepare the student for gathering information while on visitations, the instructors suggest additional readings and alert the student to watch for particular operations within specific companies. Suggestions are also made about areas of questions to use during discussion periods. A daily journal during travel is required. Upon returning to campus, students will use the library for secondary resources to support their personal observations and information gathering while in the field. Topics written about by students:

Co determination
German, French, and American Apprenticeship Approaches
Training & Development in the U.S. and Western Europe
Transportation
Safety Measures on Western Europe
The making of a Manager: U.S. Versus Western Europe
The Long-Term Philosophies of European Managers
The Role of Unions and the Extent of Social Programs in Western Europe
Women in Management in Europe--Where are They?

RESULTS

After completing two offerings in both courses of the international model, a few conclusions can be stated--by both faculty and students. We, as faculty, believe we are on the right track. The combination of in-state and study abroad programs has provided us the valuable relationships with industrial sector for continued research and resources for the

entire department. Knowledge gained through this experience has contributed greatly to our classroom performance in other areas of the curriculum. Contacts made us more valuable as advisors to students pursuing a degree in business or economics. These additions to our course offerings enrich our total program. The language department is more willing to incorporate some of our student's desires and needs into their upper division courses. And, we have managed to keep our "global perspective active in an environment which at times promotes a more provincial" character.

Students have shared, among others, the following with us:

The New South Carolina should be required for all business and economic majors.

I recognize the need for flexibility and adaptability.

I realize the importance of learning other languages.

I want a career in international business.

I have gained respect for the view that the world is not one of absolutes, but rather a world of various shades of gray.

Lets do it again!

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