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Need for International Business Concepts in the Curriculum

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Abstract

With the continued increase in international business, business education has an obligation to reflect this trend. There are two methods for incorporating international business concepts into the curriculum: infusion and creation. Ideally, this obligation would be completed with a standalone course in international business. However, it can also be accomplished through incorporating international business concepts into current curriculum. Business programs need to include international aspects into the curriculum to help the students understand the economy in which they live.

Introduction

In our global economy International Business courses are essential in preparing students for future success. Courses in International Business often include topics such as: Foundations of International Business, Global Business Environment, International Business Communication, Global Business Ethics and Social Responsibility, Organizational Structures for International Business Activities, International Trade, International Management, International Marketing, and International Finance (National

Business Education Association, 2007). The standards for these unit topics include a vast amount of information; information that could be incorporated into the existing core business courses. “International business is an area of the business education curriculum that commands center stage in today’s global economy” (National Business Education Association, 2001, p. 94).

As business relationships increase with international partners, businesses want employees who have an understanding of international concepts at all levels, from the receptionist to the CEO. An International Business course provides students a basic understanding of international business concepts that employers need from secondary graduates. It also prepares students entering post secondary education by providing them with a base understanding of international business concepts paving the way for future growth in this topic. Policy Statement 83 notes a call for action of business educators, “we believe that education for and about business must assist learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary to function successfully in the global business and economic environment” (Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education, 2008).

Businesses want to employ graduates who have a certain level of competence concerning international business affairs and who have the ability to relate to other workers in different parts of the world. Employees need to understand differences in time zones and the impact on business functions, understand global currencies, and global measurement systems. Employees need to be ready to work in a global economy and they need to be able to communicate across cultures. It is our responsibility as educators to see that students are graduating with a certain level of competence in international business.

Students need to be aware of the trends and affairs in the international economy. “Because economic interdependence is not commonplace, students must be prepared to live and work in a system that facilitates global business activities” (Dlabay, 2003, p. 251). Today’s global economy does not allow room for isolation, which has created a demand for all graduates to be informed about international business affairs. Look at the market today and the cost of oil. Oil prices increase and the pocketbooks of the consumer tighten to make ends meet; oil prices decrease and consumers have a little more money to spend in different sectors of the economy. Along with oil

prices, students can study the impact of terrorism on international business. An understanding of how terrorism impacts all areas of business including travel, production resources obtainment, or demand for goods and services. Students need to be aware of how business activities around the globe can affect their current business situation.

Business educators need to stress the importance of understanding international business. Educators need to provide students with the skills for lifelong employability in a global market. To accomplish this, business educators should infuse international concepts into all subject areas across the curriculum and at all levels of education.

There are two methods to helping students develop an understanding of international business concepts in the classroom: infusion and creation. Infusion integrates the international business concepts and standards into existing courses. Creation develops a standalone International Business course. Either method helps students develop a greater understanding of international business concepts; helping them to survive in the global economy.

Infusion Method

The simplest form of incorporating international business concepts into the curriculum is by using the infusion method. The infusion method focuses on incorporating principal international business concepts into the existing business curriculum. This method is best suited for programs that are unable to expand and create a standalone International Business course.

The infusion method helps to eliminate the duplication of content previously covered in other courses. Infusing international material can be done at any level, for any course. Elementary level educators introduce the topics of international careers, time zones, monetary systems, government structures, and verbal and nonverbal communication. Middle school educators can expand upon the elementary curriculum in communication skills, ethics and social responsibility, levels of economic development, and the trade regions. Secondary educators can continue by covering the impact of international business on the economy, business travel, cultural influences on business, and international marketing strategies. International business can be incorporated into university courses as well. A United States publication, the *National Standards for Business Education*, provides a standard for all levels of education relation to International Business. This is a great resource when looking for information to infuse material into the

current curriculum. Infusion allows teachers to use international business concepts when and where they feel it is necessary. It forces the teacher to look into international business affairs to find current information that is relevant to the topic at hand.

“In order for business students to be globally aware and best prepared for the future workplace, international topics must be integrated into the business curriculum” (Crews & Stitt-Gohdes, 2003). In a Marketing course, students can compare differences in marketing strategies used in various countries. In a Finance course, students can analyze the impact of foreign markets in comparison to their domestic markets. Business Communication courses can cover an international aspect of communication. An Ethics course can cover ethics and social responsibility at the international level. Lesson ideas are numerous.

With the increase in globalization, the core business classes should have an international component included. Courses that do not currently cover international topics should infuse international business concepts. All courses need to update the content that is gathered from international sources regularly due to the rate the global economy is changing and incorporate the content into the curriculum.

Creation Method

The second method pertaining to international business concepts is the creation of a new course. This is the ideal option because the course is created to teach the concepts specific to international business and the global economy. This method is best suited for programs that can afford, in every aspect, to expand and create a new course.

A course in International Business can go further into international business content than the core business courses. This course allows students to expand their understanding of the base level business concepts at the international level. Students also learn advanced concepts specific to the international business level. The International Business Standards focus on

- Raising awareness of the interrelatedness of one country’s political policies and economic practices on another;
- Learning to improve international business relations through appropriate communications strategies;
- Understanding the global business environment, the interconnectedness of cultural, political, legal, economic, and ethical systems;

- Exploring basic concepts underlying international finance, management, marketing, and trade relations;
- Identifying forms of business ownership and international business opportunities

Business education programs have an obligation to meet the need of the global economy and provide students with an understanding of international business as it relates to their future. A standalone course provides the greatest opportunity to reach these needs.

The depth of an International Business course is far greater than what can be covered in the core business courses. Teachers have an opportunity to expand on the material and go deeper into the content, allowing for a greater understanding of the subject matter. Examples include the United States trade policy, legal issues regarding trade, social responsibility of local operations overseas, and the impact of geography. International Business is a course that incorporates all aspects of business at an international level, which meets the needs of the economy for globally informed citizens.

In Closing

International Business is a course that should stand alone from the other business courses if there is room within the department for expansion. The concepts need to be studied and be investigated in depth, which may be more difficult in the core business courses. However, if there are limited resources, international business concepts can be infused into the core business courses. The core business courses should incorporate international material into the curriculum even if a stand-alone International Business course exists in the program.

“The presence of the global marketplace and the subsequent need for international business education are evident in the products Americans buy, in the companies where people work, and in the cross-cultural interactions that occur daily” (Dlabay, 2003, p. 251). The complex environment of today’s business world requires all graduates to have an understanding of the global economy. The economy demands knowledge in international affairs by citizens at every level, and schools need to meet this need.

Business educators need to reach the students prior to the media’s influence on international business. The media has highlighted and even exaggerated the potentially negative effects of globalization (Cardon, 2007). Business educators need to help students remove the veil of secrecy or

confusion that may be in front of international business and the global economy. As seen in today's economy, "students need to understand how one phenomenon creates another and how one event starts a ripple effect throughout the world" (National Business Education Association, 2007, p. 100).

International business is a reality. The global economy is not disappearing. Educators need to embrace it. Students need to study and understand it. The global economy is now, and needs to be taught to all students around the world.

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