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## **Emerging Issues of Management Education in the 21st Century**

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## Emerging Issues of Management Education in the 21st Century

### Comments

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**EMERGING ISSUES OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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**ABSTRACT**

There is a need for the development of international course material studying corporations outside of the United States. The development of these materials is going to require new forms of cooperation between universities and corporations. Little research exists which examines whether practitioners read, understand, or use the material contained in academic journals. This paper examines the relationship between universities and corporations by reporting the results of a study which surveyed executives about their relationship with academic research. The paper then discusses methodologies for improving collaboration between the two constituencies and offers suggestions for the development of international course materials.

**EMERGING ISSUES OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

There is an increasing need for international course material for faculty teaching in business schools that offer their programs in multiple countries. There are over 12,600 business schools worldwide. Five hundred ninety-six of them are AACSB accredited. These 596 schools are located in 37 different countries. The largest number, 476, are located in the United States. An increasing number of American business schools offer the MBA and other graduate programs in other countries (O'Neill, 2010; Dew, 2010). While other models exist, in the United States, the predominant model involves American faculty going overseas to teach business classes in English.

As more universities include global studies in their curricula, study abroad or international exchange programs are often utilized to provide students first-hand foreign business and cultural knowledge (Brookshire & Stoll, 2009). Even the United States House and Senate have recognized the need for students to study in foreign countries. Senator Paul Simon founded the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation. The goal of this foundation is to help one million undergraduates study abroad over the next ten years. In the House of Representatives, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011 to support Paul Simon's foundation was introduced in 2009 (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, 2009). The increase in these types of programs and the growth of universities offering MBA programs in other countries has led to a need for business course materials that detail the organizations and companies of the host countries where the programs are taught. Students enrolled in these programs are asking their American university professors for course material and cases that relate to their specific countries, geographical regions, and emerging economies. Studies have shown that a large percentage of academics are not equipped to integrate an international component into their curricula (Bond, Qian & Huang 2003; Fischer 2007; Lieberman 2005).

Despite the presence of "global" business textbooks, there is surprisingly little country specific material for university professors teaching outside their home country. A recent example of this challenge was experienced by one of the authors when she participated in her University's joint degree program in Prague. She was unable to find a European focused Organizational Behavior textbook to use in class, much less a textbook with Eastern European company examples. The students perceived their economy as being very different from American and Western European countries and both the students and the dean of the university requested company examples that focused on Prague and that city's emerging economy.

Developing global course material is going to require new forms of cooperation between universities and corporations. It will be the responsibility of universities to create opportunities for faculty to develop these resources and provide them with rewards for developing the resources. Universities will need to be innovative in order to entice faculty to develop course material suitable across cultures when teaching in global business programs. Currently, many business school faculty are not rewarded for preparing teaching materials such as cases or textbooks. In actuality, the majority of faculty are encouraged to solely focus on publishing research in top level academic journals. Universities will also need to understand that these types of global course materials are going to require faculty collaborating with faculty in other countries, but also with practitioners from other cultures.

Even before the rise in international business programs, one of the most frequently cited refrains in both the academic and practitioner literatures was the call for greater collaboration between the world of business and the halls of academia (Miles, 1996). The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between universities and corporations, to discuss several methodologies for improving collaboration between the two constituencies and to offer suggestions for the development of course materials that reflect the host country's cultures and norms.

### **EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND CORPORATIONS**

Criticisms from the business community suggest that organizations are not completely satisfied with the research universities generate (Elliott, Goodwin, & Goodwin, 1994; Goldberg, 1996). Managers have long complained that academic research is pretentious, inaccessible, and irrelevant (Aldag, 1997; Goldberg, 1996). It has been difficult to determine the research questions that are of interest to senior level managers and which would allow them to perform their jobs more effectively (Aldag, 1997; Beyer, 1997). This might be due to a lack of understanding on both the part of practitioners and academics. Practitioners may not recognize the contributions that researchers can make to corporations, and academics may not understand the complexities of practitioners' jobs and the organizational situations they face. As little research exists which examines whether practitioners read, understand, or use the material contained in academic journals, the study in this paper was conducted to fill this gap.

Using the Society for Human Resource Management's mailing list, human resource management executives were surveyed about their relationship with academic research. A six page questionnaire was mailed to 7,661 human resource management executives throughout the United States. Over one thousand were returned for a response rate of 11.5%. Executives were asked specific and open ended questions about several areas of HR practice and education. One area of the survey addressed whether practitioners read academic journals, if they found academic research relevant to their work, and whether they utilized this research in their work.

Results revealed that 22% never use academic research in conducting Human Resource Management activities, while 69% sometimes use it, and 9% frequently use it. Seventeen percent said they found academic research not at all relevant, 73% found academic research somewhat relevant, and 10% said it was very relevant to performing their jobs.

The second portion of the survey asked the respondents about specific journals such as those of the Academy of Management, *Organizational Dynamics*, and *Harvard Business Review* and whether they read and/or subscribed to these journals. *Harvard Business Review* and *Workforce* received the highest ratings for reading frequency and the Academy of Management journals received the lowest ratings. It should be noted no journal received over a 2 point rating on a scale from one to four with one being never read and four being always read. Twenty percent of the respondents subscribed to *Workforce*, 13% subscribed to *Harvard Business Review*, and 12.7% subscribed to *Training & Development*. The journals of the Academy of Management had subscription rates ranging from .7 to 1.3%. Of course, since the sample was drawn from the SHRM mailing list respondents received *HR Magazine* as part of their membership benefits.

The third section of the survey queried respondents on the professional associations they belong to and the professional conferences they attend. Respondents indicated they were members of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), and the American Management Association (AMA). None of the respondents mentioned being a member of the Academy of Management. Respondents reported that they do attend the professional conferences sponsored by these organizations (SHRM, ASTD, & AMA). No respondents listed the annual meetings of the Academy of Management as a conference they annually attend.

These results reveal that practitioners are not reading academic research, nor do they believe that academic research has relevance to their jobs. These findings need to be updated given the global nature of business, the presence of cross cultural teaching programs, and students' demands for immediate applicability and global real world relevance. The growth of these programs offers academics and practitioners several methodologies for improving collaboration between academics and practitioners. It also offers faculty the opportunity to expand their curriculum to encompass international course material that is targeted to specific countries, regions, and emerging economies.

## METHODOLOGIES FOR IMPROVING COLLABORATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

**Advisory Boards.** An advisory board of practitioners can be established to give advice and counsel on matching a program's curriculum to organizational and industry needs; to act as a sounding board for curriculum planning; and to be a voice for the university in its efforts to collaborate with organizations. Additionally, advisory board members could collaborate with faculty in preparing international cases based on their own corporate experiences. With the emergence of global programs, it would be ideal to assemble an advisory board that includes practitioners from different countries. These executives could contribute important cultural information and current business concerns facing their country and international region. Technology improvements in video conferencing (e.g. "face time" on the iPhone 4) could easily facilitate the inclusion of executives from other countries.

**Executive in Residence Program.** Executive in residence programs offer business school faculty and students the opportunity to collaborate intensively with business executives in an academic setting (Building Relationships with Business Leaders, 2011). Senior executives with international experience can provide faculty with personal, culturally relevant information to aid in the creation of course materials for use in cross-cultural education. Programs can be developed wherein these executives guest lecture, teach their own courses, and are available for consultation and coaching. There are a few well known instances of executives in residence at universities, including Andy Grove at Stanford, Jack Welch at MIT (Corporate Icon Jack Welch to teach at MIT Sloan, 2011), and Oprah Winfrey at Northwestern University (Professor Oprah, 1999). Students would benefit from taking select classes with senior executives.

**Faculty in Residence<sup>1</sup>.** Another opportunity for collaboration between organizations and universities exists when companies create positions and short term assignments for university professors in their organizations. Distinct from consulting projects, these positions focus on problem solving and gathering information from corporations that could be included in business school curricula. International employers could offer internships or short-term positions to faculty which would provide hands-on exposure to business issues in other cultural settings. This would enrich their understanding of the risks and rewards of doing business in other countries and regions of the world. Faculty could be expected to return to the classroom with a store house of business examples to enhance their lectures and to return to their research with research questions that reflect their own interests, and the needs of managers and organizations in a host of countries. By expanding these programs internationally, faculty could accept assignments within corporations across the globe.

**Creative and Nontraditional Partnerships.** Professors can partner with senior executives on a quid-pro-quo basis, offering them access to faculty expertise in return for access to their organization. By partnering with senior executives from countries other than their own, professors will gain useful knowledge for their international management courses and for when they teach cohorts of international students living and working outside of the United States. Through this type of collaboration, closer relationships between academia and practitioners can be forged.

One example of this type of collaboration is the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) research project. GLOBE is an international project with a large number of people studying organizational cultures and organizational leadership in over 50 countries (Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Luque, & House, 2006). This type of research should lead to prime material for the development of international course material targeted to students enrolled in business programs outside of a university's home campus.

## DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL / CULTURALLY RELEVANT COURSE MATERIAL

**Service Learning.** Service learning assignments are being used in universities as one way to have students work directly with organizations, not for profits, and non governmental organizations to impact the social ills confronting society. Service learning provides a unique way to develop course material that is internationally and culturally relevant in today's global environment. Many universities encourage their students to participate in international service learning projects such as "Alternative Spring Break", which gives students the opportunity to benefit society by participating in community service over their spring break (Alternative Spring Break 2012). Service learning

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty in residence programs as defined in this paper do not refer to university programs where faculty live on campus in residence halls.

may also be used to emphasize the importance of not for profit organizations both domestically and internationally. Such experiences can be life changing for students at any age, but especially those in the early stages of their career.

Service learning is a valuable tool for creating international course material. Service learning projects completed outside the students' home country immerse students into the global societal environment in which organizations operate. Such experiences serve to remind students that the organizations they work in are members of the local community, the home country, and the international arena. Participating in international service learning projects may help students to visualize the impact that organizations can have on the global community, and their role in promoting social responsibility worldwide. International service learning projects are congruent with the recent trend of organizations encouraging their employees to participate in community service projects and allowing employees to take sabbaticals to perform volunteer work in other countries. Many firms have recognized the motivational benefits of allowing employees to participate in community service projects. Organizations that allow their employees to participate in community service projects may experience an enhanced organizational image, increased employee commitment, improved motivation by providing employees with a break from the stresses of the workplace, and opportunities for building their self esteem (Oldenburg, 1995).

Universities need to provide their students with opportunities to participate in international, as well as domestic, service learning projects. Students report that these types of volunteer and service learning opportunities provide them with exposure to real world problems and the nonprofit agencies that are working to solve these problems.

International Internships. Internships are valuable learning experiences from both an academic as well as a real world perspective. While internships are more commonly associated with undergraduate students seeking to gain some much needed work experience in their chosen field, graduate students can also benefit from thoughtfully structured internship experiences. One of the primary benefits that students receive from internships is the opportunity to apply the theoretical concepts and knowledge they have learned in the classroom to solving practical work problems in an organizational setting.

Internships allow students to participate firsthand in "live" work situations rather than studying case studies secondhand. Internships can be viewed as long term intensive experiential exercises. These work experiences allow students the opportunity to gain knowledge and awareness of a specific organizational situation. Students can then draw on these experiences at later stages of their work histories.

Internships allow students to explore their work preferences and test out different career opportunities. Many students are able to validate their chosen field of study and early occupational choices through internship experiences. It is also possible for students to learn that the industry, company, or occupation they were once attracted to is no longer the right fit for them. Such self and occupational insights are especially valuable for students considering accepting international assignments and positions in multinational corporations where promotion opportunities are likely to require acceptance of an international assignment.

Professors and universities also gain many benefits from facilitating international internship opportunities for their students. Companies that sponsor internships with specific universities may be more likely to engage in on campus recruiting at those universities. Universities may also broaden their curricula by offering unique internship opportunities that allow students to study topics and issues that would not be covered in a traditional classroom setting or for which they do not have specific faculty expertise. Finally, the ability to offer students unique internship experiences may bring enhanced visibility to a university, allowing it to differentiate itself from other schools, and affording it a competitive advantage over similar programs.

Companies that sponsor internships accrue several benefits. Most obviously, companies are able to hire bright, well-trained students to work in their organizations. These students are able to use their university training and expertise to help companies solve work problems, conduct special projects, and/or assist busy professionals with their own work demands. Internships allow companies to offer future applicants extremely realistic job previews about what it is like to perform a certain job, to work in a specific company, and to be part of an industry. Internships allow organizations to engage in image advertising, to introduce themselves in the job marketplace, and to enhance their company's reputation on campus.

Internships allow both universities and businesses the opportunity to create a viable working partnership with benefits to all participants. Internships may also serve as a unique way of developing culturally relevant course material if students are encouraged to seek out and accept internships in international countries. Students' experiences in international companies can provide the raw material for a wealth of teaching material with an international focus. Students who participate in international internships may return from their experience more likely to accept international work assignments, to accept a job with an international firm, and to apply to graduate programs outside of the United States. International internships provide students with exposure to the challenges and

opportunities in today's global marketplace. International internships may foster the development of global competencies and provide returning interns with a competitive advantage in the labor market. International career experiences will be invaluable for competing in today's global marketplace where career success and advancement is likely to be dependent on having international experience and knowledge. (Krell, 2010).

**International Case Studies.** Case studies have long been utilized as a valuable teaching methodology in business schools and other professional programs. Some of the benefits of using case studies include learning from the past, the opportunity to explore an issue or a problem in depth, and the development of critical thinking skills as students are challenged to solve case problems while working with incomplete information. On the other hand, utilizing case studies present some challenges for the professor. It may be difficult to find well written, interesting case studies; they are often expensive to assign; they are sometimes out of date or obsolete; and it is not practical to assign the same cases year after year. Perhaps most notably, case studies describe past situations about companies that are not likely to be familiar to students, or set in their own business community. Most business students would prefer to analyze and discuss the problems currently facing either their own company or businesses in their local community.

These problems are exacerbated when teaching internationally. The dearth of timely, international teaching cases is frustrating for both professors and students (Krell, 2010). The recent rescue of the Chilean miners is a stellar case study of leadership, teams, crisis management, international cooperation, and several other concepts taught in management and organizational behavior classes. The mining accident, the survival skills of the men, and the subsequent rescue present faculty with the opportunity to develop a myriad of cases based on this situation. The challenge for faculty is gaining access to the individuals, the companies, and the countries that were part of this dramatic story.

**Practitioner Action Centered Research.** Live case histories may be created through practitioner centered action research and may offer some solutions to the deficiencies of written case studies. Practitioner centered action research is an innovative method for preparing students for the changing world of work and for developing international course material. Practitioner centered action research involves an ongoing relationship between a university professor and one or more management practitioners. Practitioner centered action research allows professors and universities to build long term relationships with companies and executives in their communities. It provides students an unvarnished glimpse inside major corporations, and provides businesses with current expertise in solving their problems. Practitioner centered action research may be better suited than case studies for illustrating certain management topics (e.g. change). This form of participant observer research allows students to see how companies are adjusting to the rapid changes in the business environment and allows them to see the necessity of changing course midstream.

Practitioner centered action research involves analyzing live business case studies for course assignments. These types of long-term projects allow practitioners and students to participate in a form of action research that is focused on an actual situation and to experience the real time changes in the internal and external environments that the organization faces. Several types of assignments may be designed around practitioner centered action research. Such projects may become the basis for a midterm or final exam; a term paper; or a group presentation. Students may be asked to provide consultative services to the organization. This can benefit the company and provide students with the opportunity to apply the theories and concepts they have studied in the classroom to a real work situation.

Practitioner centered action research may also involve a member of the local business community visiting a business class several times over the semester or the academic year. In some cases, the visits may extend across several semesters. Unlike one-time guest lectures, multiple visits provide students with the opportunity to follow the development of an organizational problem, as well as a company's attempts to remedy the situation over time. Students receive a greater depth of understanding about an organizational situation by hearing a series of presentations as compared to a one shot presentation by a guest lecturer. Practitioner centered action research is much more salient to students since executives make the presentations from local companies whose businesses are well known to the students.

While logistically more challenging, action research conducted in an international context offers myriad benefits to students. Students would be exposed to business practices in different countries, as well as cultural differences in the ways that international businesses apply the problem solving and decision making processes.

Brookshire (Brookshire & Stoll, 2009) used a live reporter/observer in his course to give his students international experience without traveling. The opportunity to have a reporter/observer in another country willing to engage with a classroom allows students to explore another country in-depth without leaving the classroom. Technology such as online chatting, e-mail video, and audio conferencing gives students the opportunity to ask

questions and direct the experience through the reporter/observer. The knowledge obtained through this practitioner centered action research would provide much needed material for developing international course material.

### CONCLUSIONS

The need for international, culturally relevant course material is becoming more urgent. The next generation of students will be more internationally savvy. They will take courses online, virtually sitting next to students from other countries (O'Neil, 2010). Universities and organizations will continue to place a growing emphasis on global education, including offering American business programs to students in other countries. These trends suggest that there may be a need for standardization (or harmonization) of international curricula in business schools world-wide. Organizations often exert pressure on accrediting agencies to standardize the content of business school curricula (Dew, 2010). Students may call for an international business school accreditation agency which will allow them to work in multiple countries with their degrees (O'Neil, 2010). An important element of standardization may be to have the United Nations involved in the effort. There may be a need for the United Nations to form a project focusing on producing global education course work just as the UN has organized the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). The goal of the PRME is to promote management education and research globally focusing specifically on ethics and corporate social responsibility. (Alcaraz & Thiruvattal, 2010).

Each of the innovative methodologies discussed in this paper offers unique opportunities for closing the gap between academics and organizations and for developing international course material that targets the specific needs of international students completing an American business degree in their home country, and in the future, addresses the needs of American students completing business degrees overseas.

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