

The Need for an International Universal Curriculum

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Introduction

In the 1960's, when I obtained my first degree there was little need or interest in international work or studies. Only a few universities offered courses related to regional studies and few students knew or even contemplated having an international focus in their careers. Today, it is a different story. We now use such terms as globalization, and internationalization in daily conversation. The news now focuses on events happening around the world and how they affect our daily lives. Students no longer have the choice whether they want to work in a global environment. Even if they never leave Japan, their careers will be influenced by global activities.

Tertiary institutions, like their students, no longer have a choice in regard to internationalizing their curriculum. In this paper, I will suggest ways in which tertiary institutions can plan and strengthen their international strategies as well as present means to measure and evaluate the degree of internationalization achieved.

Is Internationalizing the Curriculum Relevant for All Faculties?

In the past, certain faculties were more attuned to internationalizing their curriculum. Geography, Anthropology, Sociology and Business were easily drawn to this new development because of their focus of study, the growth of international trade and interest in different ethnic groups. The basic sciences were slower to grasp its significance but as Fredrick H. Home points out "Science - the study of natural phenomena - is necessarily international, indeed universal. Scientists, on the other hand are not necessarily internationalists." (Home 1988: 24) In his paper, "Future scientists: An international perspective," he presents two points. First, is the critical importance of international education for future scientists and the growth of international activity and collaboration. He gives the example of the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize in physics for development of super-conducting materials, where interest was initiated at an international conference in Sicily, but required international work exchanges and access to open world-wide publications by researchers at IBM labs in Zurich, a Chinese materials scientist in Beijing, and an American Professor to get results. Today similar international conferences and collaborative initiatives are being done in regard to such diverse studies as the depletion of the rainforest, global epidemics such as Aids and global warming. Second, he points out that "interrelationships among all areas of

science, technology, national defense, financial security, and foreign policy have increased in number and complexity so much, that a significant change in any one area quickly affects all others” but few scientists know anything about different cultures, global issues or foreign languages and politicians and other world leaders often know little about science. (Home 1988: 25) The field of Engineering has fared a little better. I remember the difficulty of trying to entice Engineering students to take language courses in the 1980’s and advising a number of practicing Engineers to consider taking MBA courses. Now there are special MBA programs designed for Engineers, and with the growth of large international engineering companies the need for learning a foreign language does not seem so far fetched. Business courses have also increased their focus on international studies. Many universities now offer specially designed course such as doing business in specific countries, areas or sectors (Doing Business in Asia, Marketing in Islamic Countries). They have also incorporated language learning and cultural studies as part of their core curriculum. The number of overseas internships or study abroad opportunities has also increased. Specialized International MBA’s such as those offered at The American Graduate School of International Business, and INSEAD continue to grow and attract students from around the world.

In the past, students chose international and cross-faculty courses based solely on personal interest. Today, all students should and need to be encouraged to widen their fields of interest. They should not only become familiar with the world, it’s peoples and its countries but also gain a wider interest in various fields of study in which developments are now taking place. Imagine a mathematician, who never learned to use a computer; a businessman who has not heard of the World Trade Organization or an environmentalist who does not know about the World Conference of Sustainable Development.

Our world is not only getting smaller creating the need to know and interact with its many people but also more interrelated, creating the need for a more liberal education and expansion of interdisciplinary studies.

Following is a discussion of why our education must change to become more international and have more interdisciplinary focused. Specific reference to business related studies will be made.

How Did We Get This Way?

In the past 100 years we have seen a remarkable change in how we live and who and how we interact with others. In the past we were isolated by physical, political, cultural, linguistic, and time barriers. Today, we can and do interact with anyone, anywhere, at any time. In the world of business, we have gone from product based, ethnocentric domestic firms to multi-national globally focused enterprises interacting continuously around the world through a plethora of products and services and enterprises. Today corporations and even many small businesses must use global strategies if they want to survive. This is not a new trend, for as Rugman pointed out as far back as 1981, the world was dominated by 200 multinational enterprises with the majority coming from the United States (70), Europe (60) or Japan (40) (Rugman 1981). In the past, we dressed, ate, talked, lived and worked, guided and controlled by local conditions. Today, we share our clothing, eating, and lifestyle and some of our customs with people throughout the world. How did this happen?

At the turn of the century the world suddenly became much smaller. The growth of transportation and communication systems meant that people were no longer isolated. They could communicate and transverse the world in record time. The opportunity to travel, trade and explore the world was greatly increased. With the First World War we discovered that politics and national security had worldwide effects. After the war, focus was placed on repairing the damages and the development of new unique products and making use of new technology. Companies operated primarily on an ethnocentric or domestic level. The growth of unique products and the lack on foreign competition made the need for cultural differences almost irrelevant. When products were exported they were not altered and each country started to develop its own unique style of business. In time, with the growth of capitalism and in order to keep industry growing, a market orientation developed. Products were now modified to meet client's needs and foreign market demands. The growth of producing goods in factories worldwide resulted in a need for country representatives who to modify their management style and product lines. Cultural differences began to be important in design and marketing. Managers became more attuned to functioning in different countries and accessing and exploiting local resources. By the 1980s global competition had increased, with many industries and companies producing similar products, and competition was based on price. The importance of product differentiation and cultural differences decreased. Markets were now worldwide with focus on engineering process, international sourcing and the benefits of economy of scale. McDonaldization was in its hay day. Many believe that we are now in a phase where quality, low cost and increased services have become the most important components for economic growth. Products are now being tailored to discrete market niches and companies are now coping with mass customerization and drawing on world wide sources and strategic thinking, resulting in a need for understanding specific clients' needs, quick reaction to changing trends and low-cost services. Focus is now on responsive design and quick low-cost production. Cultural and international awareness have become important due to the need to manage cross-cultural interactions, multinational teams, and global alliances. Business and industry are now effected by a variety of global forces as has been seen in the world-wide effects of the Oil Crisis, the Asian Financial Crises and the effects of September 11 and the sluggish American economy. In other words companies and individuals must extend their thinking from one-to-one relationships to multiple relationships patterns, involving multi-tasked complex interactions, using knowledge gained from a wide variety of fields. Lane and DiStefano give the following example:

A marketing manager in South America is required to understand Latin Culture and speak Spanish and Portuguese, deal with R&D in Japan, Europe and North America, provide customer information and get updates on new products, as well as discuss product problems with manufacturers in Southeast Asia and send potential solutions to Eastern Europe. (Lane and DiStefano 1992: 50)

Today's business graduates must brace themselves for working in diverse business settings, which combine knowledge of business methods, cultural sensitivity, creativity, and multi-functional skills. They must also be able to access a wide variety of

information and sift through it to find relevant material. They must be open to new ideas and willing to explore new fields of knowledge some of which have not as yet been developed.

The International/Universal Curriculum

Our aim is to develop a curriculum and patterns of studies for our students, that will prepare them for the world in which they will live and work, but a world that is changing every day. It is a world that for many of us is still new and strange. It is a world that we are still trying to understand: a world full of technology and scientific advances that become obsolete before we have had time to understand them or form customs, rules and systems for their use.

Acceptance of change and sensitivity to other cultures is dependent on one's own sense of identity and self-confidence. It is therefore important for students to be taught aspects of their own cultural background, and individual attributes. They must become aware of their own strengths and limitations and have practice in interacting with others. They must be able to have a firm grounding in a variety of subjects and fields and have the ability to access the every changing and immense volume of information now available through the Internet. No longer is the main focus to acquire huge volumes of memorized information; rather it is the ability to access pertinent information quickly, think globally, and react strategically, while working in a uncertain environment. No longer is success based solely on what you know; more and more it is based on what you can find out. Added to this we must remove the fear of learning mathematics and languages, encourage interaction with foreigners, and install acceptance of ambiguity. It should be noted that not all graduates must become international experts, but all students must have a working knowledge of international issues and an approach to understanding the interdependence of countries and the people of the world. Likewise not all students must become experts in scientific, technical, or other specific fields of study, but they should be aware of the basic concepts and developments in these fields of study. However, the problem is many teachers have never learned to deal with the problems our students are now facing, and there therefore needs to be a change not only in the curriculum but also in how we teach and possibly who is teaching.

Many tertiary institutions have accepted the need to internationalize their curriculum; however it is difficult to ascertain how truly international the curriculum is and determine practical strategies to initiate new initiatives. The following check points are intended to be used as a guideline to determine how integrated or widespread the international activities are through out the campus. They can also be used as a guide for increasing the extent of international exposure of students and staff.

The following points have been based on my experience in directing international programs in Canada and Indonesia as well the knowledge I gained while introducing an International Office to a Canadian College. Many of these ideas are due to conversations with internationally active professionals and visits to internationally committed tertiary institutions.

Checkpoints for an International/Universal Curriculum.

I have divided the checkpoints into three aspects: (a) teaching and the curriculum, (b) research and (c) community service but interaction and exchange between these divisions should be encouraged.

A. Teaching and the curriculum

Institutes must provide for international and multi-cultural examples in core subjects. Courses should be taught in a global context. Whenever possible, international examples should be given to supplement understanding and a wider interest in the world. This can be done by:

- Having guest speakers from other countries (or other fields) become an integral part of the course. This including examinations, questions and assignments.
- Having foreign students or internationally experienced students supply and exchange information and examples relevant to the course.
- Include articles, case studies or other written material published in other countries
- Facilitate visiting lectures to participate in existing courses or develop short terms courses.
- Reward teaching excellence and facilitating the concept of teacher as manager of the learning environment.
- Assess opportunities for integrating international, cultural, comparative and/or cross-disciplinary perspectives or issues.

Integrating international activities (i.e. research, development projects, institutional exchanges and training) into teaching/learning experiences can be done by:

- Encouraging course lecturers and students to spend time in other countries through special scholarships and activities.
- Facilitating short-term study periods abroad for students and teaching staff.
- Providing opportunities for students and teachers to study or teach abroad through exchange programs and cooperative programming.
- Increasing the impact of international development projects on curriculum development and research.

Student's intellectual frontiers can be widened by offering courses beyond their specific chosen field of study. This can be done by developing different courses dealing with specific international and comparative topics. Some of the best courses, I took as an undergraduate had global themes such as: World Religions or World Literature. Global theme courses could include: Countries of the World, or Famous people from around the World. Courses could give overviews of specific areas of study: A survey of the world's languages. Aspects of doing business around the world, Recent developments in science and technology, etc.

There is also a need to develop schools/departments which offer programs which are designed for specific international content (Asia Pacific Studies) and/or overseas or industry based placement with specific companies or organizations. One

Canadian university developed a program directly linked to an internship with the World Bank. This could be extended to develop training programs especially designed for world based organizations, such as the Development Banks, the UN, World Health and other International NGO's. Similar programs could deal with specific business sectors such as the Auto Industry or Currency Trading. Co-operative links could be formed with industries that already offer training to new personal like P&G.

Strangely, in almost every industry or business entity, one of the main problems identified is difficulty with communication. Yet language and communication departments suffer a degree of neglect or aspects of lower prestige than many other university departments. Language and communication programs also need to be revised to increase the breadth, depth and access to a variety of programs. Although language fluency is very important, not all students must become fluent in a foreign language, so a variety of options can be presented:

- Encourage language learning by offering a wide variety of language courses.
- Integrate foreign language learning with subject matter such as Business English or Media English.
- Offer special courses that focus on negotiation, presentation, discussion skills, networking, how to running meetings, translation and interpretation training
- Offer joint programs integrating subject matter and language understanding such as adjunct based courses.
- Offer courses that stress clear communication including letter, report and proposal writing.
- Increase student's awareness, interest and flexibility to languages and cultural diversity by offering course dealing with World Languages (or more specialized courses like Tonal Languages or Asian Languages), communication skills such as Turn-taking analysis and the courses based on the work done by Edward Hall in the Silent Language.
- Reduce fear of language learning by offering options that focus both on the culture and the language of specific areas or people.

We also need to encourage a universal curriculum and integrate studies so that teaching is done by people with real work experience and students are not tied to a strict and often limited courses of study.

- Encourage collaborative research by students and faculty members
- Recruit teachers from a wide variety of countries and professions, and giving credit for work and country experience.
- Hire lecturers with mixed competencies - i.e. Language and Business, Engineering and MBA.
- Encourage professors to act as managers of learning. One of the best courses I took at Thunderbird was not taught by the Professor in charge, but by a number of acting and retired CEO's.
- Development of courses where fieldwork, conference attendance and internship are integral components.
- Facilitate the development of temporary placement or observation assignments in the field, by professors in order to keep them abreast of changes in employment

and work skills needed. In some colleges in Canada, teaching staff are required to spend time in industry in order to keep abreast of the changes taking place in industry and commerce.

B. Internationalization and Research

Research is a common measure of an institution's excellence. Scholars should therefore be encouraged and supported to participate in international conferences, publish in international publications, apply for international grants, engage in international collaborative research, and study international business and entities. This can be done by:

- Encouraging graduate students to seek fellowships abroad as part of their course of study.
- Recruiting faculty from abroad for either short-term or permanent status
- Encouraging the exchange of graduate students from abroad to partake of research studies at the institution.
- Actively recruiting retired internationalists to take part in team-teaching assignments or to hold special credit giving seminars.
- Providing information on world-wide research sources of funding to support scholarship
- Disseminating information on opportunities for researchers in other countries.
- Participating in international funding projects done by local industry, government agents (ODA) or such institutions at the World Bank or IMF.
- Giving seed money for travel which will enable researchers to meet face-to-face with potential collaborators in other countries or prepare joint project proposals in order to increase the number of partners involved in international research projects.
- Participating in bilateral or multilateral ODA projects.
- Providing adequate support and encouragement from the central office for researchers preparing proposals for external funding.
- Organizing high-level conferences, which expose students and staff to international work and raise the profile of the university.
- Encouraging publication in a wide variety of popular and academic, journals and magazines.
- Doing comparative studies of other international institutions. This should include how other institutions are managed and marketed, and what services are offered at student offices.
- Because of the multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary aspects of international development, and environmental projects; researchers should be brought together from different academic backgrounds to build teams when studying international problems.
- Encouraging retirees from other countries and visiting diplomats or business people to be integrated into research and teaching activities.
- Maintaining good relations at the institutional level with funding agencies and potential collaborators.

C. Community

This applies to all persons and organizations outside the university or college with which the institute comes in contact. In the past, this meant the local community where the university was located. Today the community has increased to include institutions, and organizations farther a field. Relations with the community may include the following::

- Liaison with local community organizations and activities can enrich the cultural life of the community where the institution is located. This includes: engaging in community celebrations such as international festivals, opening special lectures by distinguished visitors to the public, offering lectures by international staff and students, and facilitate international services such as translation and interpreting services.
- Students and staff volunteers can assist Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) with domestic and international development programs.
- Professional organizations, non-governmental organizations or international student organizations such as AIESEC involved with international activities.
- Private sector companies involved in international initiatives on or off campus. The university can invite company representatives to serve on advisory boards to act as counselors on kinds of knowledge and skills graduates needed. They can also permit students and staff to do research, participate in their internal training programs and give scholarships and encourage to faculty and students.
- Relevant government departments such as the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Embassies can help the university and college through offering opportunities for graduate employment and observation assignments and the exchange of government experts. They can also counsel faculty on the shifting patterns and opportunities in trade, commerce, and industry.
- Agreements with other faculties, colleges or institutions involved in collaborative international activities. This includes developing active international agreements/linkages, which include: student/faculty and staff (individuals involved in different aspects of administration such as student offices) exchanges, joint research, publications, conferences and workshops and clear and easy exchange of credits. During my term as Director of International Education at Red River College, I had the opportunity to visit many tertiary institutions outside Canada. They readily shared information on linkages they had formed with other institutions around the world, often showing me long lists of institutions they were linked with, however, for the most part these agreements were only paper based and little activity took place.
- Active Alumni who are living abroad can benefit an institution by increasing international contact.

Conclusion

Measuring the degree and success of internationalization is an important and difficult task. The quantity of international learning and experience, the degree and depth of international relationships, and collaborations, are at least as important as the knowledge and skills taught in classroom settings. The challenge is to create a supportive culture and environment for the integration of international dimensions to the teaching, research and community of the institution. Our aim is to educate students to have a sense of openness, a willingness and ability to explore new worlds. We accept the notion that there are many different ways to do things, and change and uncertainty are components of to-days reality. David Imig put it this way.

International education cannot be the accumulated of a body of facts alone. It must somehow foster the acquisition of confidence and easy open-mindedness to variations in culture and social patterns and behavior and values. What is necessary is the creation of an intellectual and emotional receptivity, which permits communication and human transactions to occur between and among people. (David Imig, cited in Dale 1988: 17).

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