Chapter 4
A Living 'CCC'ase Study:
A Business Focused Action-Learning Project

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the Coglin Clothing Company (CCC), the focus of a multidisciplinary Live/ Living Case Study (LCS) that was developed and introduced at the Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) between 2010-2013. The LCS methodology endeavoured to address educational obstacles that had arisen from EIBT's international student population for whom it was first designed, but were typical problems of 'business education' in general. This work begins by attending to issues such as: generalised problems of the education-experience business-related gap; the benefits of integrating more than one business discipline; the difficulties of handling various and conflicting sources of information; and the indispensability of action learning for deeper comprehension. A LCS was integrated across eight separate courses, including one titled 'Management Principles'. The relevant literature is presented, followed by a discussion of the value of LCSs for acculturating (international) students to 'real-life' business scenarios.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is largely descriptive and presents an innovative, team-based experiential learning project in a business diploma program oriented around a Live/Living Case Study (LCS), otherwise known as a Live Learning Case (LLC) (Škudienė, 2012). The relevant literature is presented first, followed by a discussion of the value of LCSs, and then how a case was used to teach a *Management Principles* course. This work elucidates a resourceful methodology that was implemented within an institution to help deliver a dynamic and real workplace-related business context to build opportunities for diploma-level

pre-university pathway students to creatively engage with contemporary local, national and international affairs before transitioning to mainstream Higher Education (HE) in Australia and then the business world.

The LCS attempted to elevate cultural, educational, linguistic and social collaboration and performance within EIBT to advance knowledge and understanding. The vast majority of students studying a Diploma of Business had/have never had work experience to make better sense of the 'business' curriculum. The LCS offered opportunities to bridge the gap between isolationist classroom talk and simulation of an organisationally problematic action-learning project. The author-practitioners suggest that an LCS approach is adventurous, yet offers great benefits in stimulating discovery and higher-order or deep thinking. While this study advocates the use of a LCS, it is acknowledged there are many 'other' pedagogical approaches appropriate for effective management education. The LCS, however, provided the opportunity to address real-world business engagement often lacking in 'business' graduates (Garvin, 2000). Continuous learning approaches that foster creativity—a forerunner for innovation in business—are imperative in business programs/courses, so that students can develop actual business skills as part of their graduate attributes.

Throughout this chapter, 'international students' or 'students' is specific to individuals enrolled in EIBT on temporary Australian student visas and who are almost exclusively from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB). There are few LCSs at the undergraduate-level as described in this chapter and thus, this work addresses this gap in the literature.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1998, the Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) offers pre-university pathways in the form of a Diploma of Business (DB), Information Technology (DIT) or Engineering (DIPE) with provisional entry into *The University of Adelaide* or the *University of South Australia*. EIBT attracts students early in their education lifecycle and secures their tertiary destination prior to them meeting direct entry requirements (Velliaris, Willis, & Breen, 2015a, 2015b; Velliaris, Willis, & Pierce, 2015). With a 98% international student demographic—the remaining 2% are 'international' students with Australian Permanent Residency (PR)—EIBT lecturers face interconnecting academic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and social challenges.

EIBT international students represent in alphabetical order: Bangladesh; China [mainland, Hong Kong and Macau]; India; Indonesia; Iran; Kenya; Lebanon; Malaysia; Nepal; Nigeria; Oman; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; South Korea; Sri Lanka; Vietnam; and Zimbabwe. EIBT offers a bridge (or 'smooth' pathway) to degree-level studies with a specific focus on the preparation and acculturation of students who are 'lower-level' in terms of their language proficiency and/or previous academic standing. In agreement with Bode (2013, p. 3), pre-university pathways serve to increase student participation and are 'ideally positioned as second chance institutions'.

Diplomas comprise the exact eight courses that constitute the 'first-year' of a Bachelor's degree at the partner university, but on an independent campus with a community of approximately 40 cross-institutional lecturers and 300-400 students between the ages of 17-27 years. First, the diploma leads to nine Bachelor of Business degree programs at *The University of Adelaide* when students achieve an average of 65% (Credit average) across all eight courses (Velliaris, Willis, & Pierce, 2015). Second, the diploma may also lead to 13 Bachelor of Business degree programs at the *University of South Australia*

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