

## Chapter 4

# Fostering a Global Mind: Challenges and Best Practices in Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

*Globalization is reshaping twenty-first century business practices, and pedagogies of business education must adapt to provide an emphasis on cross-cultural understanding and its impact on business decision making, along with fostering skills for cultural sensitivity. The growing popularity of short-term study abroad and faculty-led immersion offer scholars and educators a new opportunity to study the impact of cross-cultural experiential learning practices on fostering cross-cultural competency among business students. This chapter will review literature describing the theoretical processes or models by which students develop intercultural competence, particularly with respect to faculty-led, short-term study immersion programs, and outline a series of best practices for designing, measuring, and implementing such programs in higher education. Finally, the chapter will conclude with brief recommendations for future research.*

### INTRODUCTION

Globalization is reshaping 21<sup>st</sup> century business practices, and pedagogies of business education must adapt to provide an emphasis on cross-cultural understanding and its impact on business decision making, along with fostering skills for cultural sensitivity. In addition to providing students with in-depth business knowledge, business education must now also develop managerial competency, the ability to cope with uncertainty and conflict, a willingness to embrace and integrate diverse perspectives, as well as competence in developing and maintaining good interpersonal relations, all in the context of a multi-culture environment.

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With respect to international business management, embracing the cultural diversity of the country may or may not bring success, but not doing so will surely increase the chances of stagnation or failure (Bhatt, 2014). “Cross-cultural challenges in international business management” is now a topic of significant research in scholarly journals and organizational white papers. There are numerous examples of business failures, stagnation, or failure of joint ventures resulting from management’s inability to recognize cross-cultural challenges and tackle them appropriately. Educators in international business programs must take note of these examples, and reconceive of how we introduce “best practices” in cross-cultural international business management into our curriculum.

The growing popularity of short-term study abroad and faculty-led immersion offer scholars and educators a new opportunity to study the impact of cross-cultural experiential learning practices on fostering cross-cultural competency among business students. Cross-cultural experiential learning occurs when students are provided opportunities to learn with and from people and/or places of cultures different from their own. Studies have shown that while experiences abroad have an obvious impact on students’ cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills, they do not necessarily or automatically help to develop deeper levels of intercultural competence (Root & Ngampornchai, 2012). Immersion into a culture alone, without framing or guidance, will likely not increase cultural competence.

More recent research has indicated that the role of the faculty-leader and framed experiential learning opportunities are just as important in creating meaningful cross-cultural learning for students. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, globally-focused projects with students from another country or culture, study abroad, faculty-led trips to a foreign country, service learning activities with people from a different culture, online intercultural courses (COIL) and more. These experiential learning activities can build a range of cross-cultural skills, such as cultural self-awareness, cultural worldview and knowledge, effective communications, and other skills.

Given the significance of intercultural competence and multicultural learning to business education, this chapter will review literature describing the theoretical processes or models by which students develop intercultural competence and multicultural learning skills, particularly with respect to faculty-led, short-term study immersion programs. Based on this literature, it will outline a series of best practices for designing, measuring, and implementing such programs in higher education business and management programs, and discuss the challenges of assessment and verifying that students are developing according to any of the dominant models. Finally, the chapter will conclude with brief recommendations for future research.

Before reviewing the models and methods noted above, it is important to offer a working definition of what intercultural competence means for business education. As Klemp stated, “Competence can be measured. But its measurement depends first on its definition” (as cited in Deardorff, 2006, p. 242). Identifying a precise definition is problematic, as discussed later in the chapter. But for the purposes of the discussion specific to this chapter, the culture in “intercultural competence” pertains primarily to national culture rather than company culture, professional culture, regional culture, or other cultural aspects such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation. No doubt, reducing the term “culture” to national culture is a limited and limiting view (Lovitt, 1999), but this decision reflects the thrust of current intercultural business education textbook coverage and class instruction. Many will agree that this focus needs to be broadened, but that is a topic for other research.

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