

CAN TAKING AN IB COURSE CHANGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND WELFARE OF OTHER COUNTRIES?

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ABSTRACT

Americans in general tend to pay less attention to international affairs than their counterparts around the world. Therefore, Americans know much less about international affairs and lack international knowledge than people in other countries (Ivengar & Morin, 2006). As we move to high levels of globalization on all fronts, we must confront our lack of knowledge and how we might remedy this problem. So, we aim to analyze if completion of a course in international business increases students' attention to international affairs and changes students' attitude toward other countries and their welfare. The results suggest that while taking an international business course does increase students' attentiveness on international affairs, students' attitudes towards other countries and their welfare did not significantly change.

INTRODUCTION

With the accelerating pace of globalization, the barriers of global trade have been declining and the world is becoming more interdependent (imf.org, 2008). Global competition is growing with greater intensity. Few companies can avoid global competition; even if they want to stay domestic. In order to compete in this environment, companies need to secure a competent workforce with international knowledge, skill and perspective to succeed in the global environment (Shin, 1997). Cross-culturally competent workers, especially managers, are high in demand (Saghafi, 2001).

In response to the rising opportunities and challenges of globalization, educational institutions recognize the importance of increasing students' ability to be effective in a global economy (Fugate & Jefferson, 2001). The AACSB (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation standards requires schools to "prepare

graduate for careers in the global context" (2003, p. 9). Specifically, 2013 AACSB accreditation standards addressing undergraduate students' learning experiences state that programs should include "skills related to diverse and multicultural work environment (able to work effectively in diverse environment)" and knowledge of "economic, political, regulatory, legal, technological, and social contexts of organizations in a global society" (p. 9). Also, it is recommended that MBA students should have learning experiences related to managing in global context and that specialized master programs should include learning experiences related to "applying specialized knowledge in a global context" (p. 3).

Educational institutions wishing to obtain and remain accredited have embraced this challenge to prepare business students for the international marketplace. Internationalizing the curriculum is seen by many as an effective means to provide students with the competencies required by this changing environment. Particularly in business

schools, the efforts to internationalize the curriculum are intensifying (Saghafi, 2001). One course of action to internationalize the curriculum is to require students to take a global component infused course or international business related course. The assumption is that after completing an international business course, students will gain international knowledge and skill, and broaden their view on global issues. As more colleges of business choose to add international business courses to the curriculum, it is important to understand whether or not taking an International Business course can change the awareness on global issues. Various studies have examined the effects of an internationalized curriculum on students' global perceptions. Most of the previous studies have focused on attitudes toward whether completing an international business (IB) course changed student attitudes regarding international issues. However, these studies have not examined empirically as whether students will pay more attention to international affairs after taking IB course and whether students' attitudes toward other countries and their welfare have been affected by exposure to international business infused courses.

The primary goals of this study are to identify if completing a course in international business increase students' attention to international affairs and if completion of the international business course changes students' attitudes toward other countries' welfare? In part, this paper aims to examine the existing state of the business curriculum internationalization. The paper is organized as follows. The next section will discuss existing literature and research questions are provided. The third section describes the data used in this study. The fourth section explains the results and offers practical implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Anecdotal evidence and findings from academic research demonstrate a lack of knowledge about global issues. For example, Curran, Lyengar, Lund, Salovarra & Moring (2009) found that compared to Europeans, fewer Americans could identify the Taliban even though the United States fought against Taliban in Afghanistan for several years. The lack of attention given to international affairs and lack of knowledge on international affairs is not surprising given that Americans tend to pay less attention to international affairs than their counterparts around the world. Consequently, students in America know very little about international affairs and lack international knowledge compared to people in other countries (Ivengar & Morin, 2006).

Internationally oriented curriculum has become a critical element of business education (Fugate & Jefferson, 2001).

Various studies have examined the impact of internationalization of the business curriculum. Most of the previous research dealing with student attitudes and international business courses has focused on whether students' attitudes toward international issues change after completing an international business course. The results of these studies generally have been positive. Mpoyi & Thomas (2008) found that studying an international business course would increase international related knowledge. Their research also found that an international business course encouraged students to recognize the need to have knowledge on global issues. Thompson (1973) found that students' taking coursework with global content increased their international knowledge and affected their attitude toward globalization and free trade. Walton and Basciano (2006) identified that ethnocentrism is higher for students who did not take an international business course compared to the students who took an IB course. Saghafi (2001) found internationalization of the university curricula created more cross-culturally competent and less ethnocentric students. Margavio, Hignite, Moses, & Margavio (2005) showed that students that took an IB course exhibited more cultural empathy than those who had not had taken an IB course. Others studies found that study abroad programs increase students' intercultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006; Gillespe, 2002; Patterson, 2006; Vande Berg, 2001). Patterson (2006) found that study abroad is better than traditional classroom experience to increase students' intercultural sensitivity.

However, some studies offered different outcomes. Brasfield, McCoy, & Reed (2011) found that while students gained international knowledge after taking an International Business course, no change was observed on student's attitude towards other nations. In their study, they examined the effects of global business curriculum on student attitudes. After completion of the course, students indicated that they were more likely to invest in foreign countries and were willing to do business with foreign businesses. Students' view on globalization became more positive but their attitudes toward other cultures and social lives did not change.

However, few researchers have examined whether students show more concern about international issues and care more about the welfare of other countries. To offer additional insight into the effectiveness of IB courses, this research is based on the following premises. Because international business courses cover issues such as cultural, political, economic, and legal issues across many countries, it is likely that students will develop interest in current events and become more attentive to the international news. Also, students will have more concern for other countries and their people. Therefore, we suggest that tak-

ing an IB course will increase students' interests in international affairs, and increase their tendencies to follow what's going on outside of the United States. In addition, we further suggest that this exposure to the global environment and cultural differences may help to shift students' views from not only just accepting their own country's well-being but also be concerned about well-being of people living in other countries as well. Below are the two research questions we examine in this study.

- R1: Does taking an International Business course increase a student's interest in international affairs?
- R2: Does taking an International Business course increase a student's concern for other countries and their welfare?

METHOD

The authors carried out the research at an AACSB accredited college of business in one university, in which students are required to take an introduction to international business course during their sophomore year. The content covered in the course includes globalization and international institutions, differences in political economies, cultural differences, ethics in international business, theories of international trade, the political economy of international trade, foreign direct investments, the foreign exchange market, the international monetary system, the strategy of international business, and the complexities of entering foreign markets.

Participants

Students were emailed a link to an online survey at the beginning of the semester and again towards the end of the semester. The pre-course survey and the post-course survey had the same set of questions and aimed to identify if students' attitude towards global awareness and internationalism had changed because of their exposure to the topics covered in the International Business course. The survey was collected in the fall of 2012 and in the spring of 2013. While 150 students took the pre-survey, only 121 students took the post-survey. As a result the final sample in this study is 121 with total responses being 242 (including time 1 and time 2).

From the 121 participants who responded to both the pre-course and post-course surveys, about 39% of the students are male and the rest of the students (61%) are female. Roughly, 15% (19/121) of the students surveyed responded that they had lived in other countries. However, interestingly more than 50% of the students (66/121, 54.5%) noted they had traveled to another country, while others responded that they had not. While 30% of the respondents reported to speak a foreign language, 44% reported

that they have close friends from other countries. The majority of the students have had at least one class with an international faculty member at some point in their college career. Also a majority of the respondents were between the ages of 19 and 23. The average age of the respondents was 21.5 years (*s.d.* 3.16).

Measures

The authors developed a survey (see Appendix) to request demographic information and responses to 12 statements presented in a Likert-type seven-point scale. The statements were written to determine whether the international business course changed students' attitudes toward other countries' welfare and concern for international affairs. For the first research question, four items were used to measure the change in the students' attentiveness to international affairs. A factor analysis using principal components with Varimax rotation yielded one factor with eigenvalues over 2.0. A reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's alpha of 0.9.

For the second research question, a measure of internationalism was used to assess the concern for other countries' welfare. Kosterman and Feshback (1989) define internationalism as "international sharing and welfare, and reflects an empathy for the peoples of other countries" (p. 271). Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, and Melwar (2001) also suggest that "internationalism focuses on one's concern about other nations' welfare." It is considered as a more active attitude than cultural openness, which is considered as a reactive experience and reception or no refusal of foreign culture and people (Sharma, et al., 1995). Sharma et al. (1995) found that internationalism was negatively related to consumer ethnocentric tendencies. Their finding is consistent with the results of Baughn and Yaprak (1996) who found that consumers with a higher degree of internationalism are less likely to have economic nationalism. Internationalism was measured by using Kosterman and Feshbach's (1989) eight-item scale (Cronbach's alpha = .85) which included statements such as "If necessary we ought to be willing to lower our standard of living to cooperate with other countries in getting an equal standard for every person in the world". Data analysis and results are explained next.

Data Analysis and Discussion

To perform the data analysis on the responses of the subjects from the pre-course survey and post-course survey, T-tests were conducted. T-tests are used to illustrate if significant differences exist between the pre-course and post-course responses of each participant. In this research paper, we specifically aim to analyze if significant differ-

TABLE 1
PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST RESULTS

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair IA1-IA2	-.45	.89	.08	-.60	-.29	-5.58	120	.00**
Pair INT1-INT2	-.06	.69	.06	-.18	.06	-.91	120	.37

** Sig at 0.05 level. IA – International Affairs and INT–Internationalism

ences are present in the participants' attentiveness about international affairs and if there is a significant change in subjects' concern about the welfare of other countries before and after taking an international business course. The results as shown in Table 1 demonstrate that while students' attentiveness over global affairs did improve significantly after taking the course, students' attitude towards the welfare of other countries, defined as Internationalism remained the same with no significant differences noted. Since the significance level of internationalism is greater than 0.05, it can be deduced that although the participants are willing to pay more attention to the global affairs (significance of 0.00) after taking the course, they tend to have the same attitude towards the welfare of the foreign countries.

Although one may expect that taking an IB course may increase a student's concern over international issues or welfare of other countries, the results of this study provide evidence otherwise. The results are consistent with the work of Brasfield, McCoy, & Reed (2011), which identified that while students did gain international knowledge after taking the course, their views on culture and social lives of foreign countries did not change. This finding reinforces that it is difficult to change attitudes of students concerning the welfare of other countries.

Since significant differences exist between time 1 and time 2 for our first research question, we further explored each of the survey questions (see Appendix) on International Affairs to identify if this holds true to every question and not just on aggregate level. Survey questions 1 and 2 emphasized more on whether taking an International Business course made students more interested in accessing and enjoying international news now than before taking the course and if they are more involved in finding out what is happening in the world. The results of this investigation are reported in Table 2 does in fact display that taking an IB course did increase a student's interest in finding out more about the global world. Survey questions 3 and 4 stressed more on whether students are particularly more concerned about global issues now than prior and if they are willing to immerse themselves in other cultural environments. The results clearly illustrate that students are more concerned about the global issues and are interested to be part of the bigger world than they were before taking the international business course.

CONCLUSION

This study does offer support for colleges of business initiatives to offer international business courses as part of the general business curriculum. However, the results

TABLE 2
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ITEM ANALYSIS RESULTS

Items	Pre-Course	Post Course	Difference	Probability
1. I pay attention to international news or what is going on in the world	3.81	4.26	0.45	.00**
2. I enjoy getting news from all over the world	4.18	4.59	0.41	.00**
3. World issues concern me more than the issues of any one country.	3.49	4.04	0.55	.00**
4. I like immersing myself in different cultural environments	4.26	4.46	0.38	.00**

** Sig at 5% level

suggest that taking one IB course did not significantly change the students' views over concerns for the welfare and well-being of other countries. One practical implication that can be taken from this study and other studies on international business education is that to truly prepare students to be global managers and business people, additional efforts are needed. Culture and attitudes are slow to change. Given that the course is only 15 weeks in duration, the fact that some change in student attitudes could be noted is promising. Future research should focus on other opportunities that students may have to increase their global knowledge and experience. It may be suggested that students be exposed to either more international business infused courses or programs such as study abroad or internships in foreign countries. Also, since majority of our participants are under 25 with little work experience, they have limited exposure to the outside world and worldly experiences. Encouraging students to take advantage of global opportunities including working with diverse groups of people may help them develop a more global view of the world and the issues faced by all.

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APPENDIX SURVEY INSTRUMENT	
International Affairs (Yoon et al., 1996)	
1	I pay attention to international news or what is going on in the world
2	I enjoy getting news from all over the world
3	World issues concern me more than the issues of any one country
4	I like immersing myself in different cultural environments
Internationalism (Kosterman & Feshback, 1989)	
5	If necessary, we ought to be willing to lower our standard of living to cooperate with other countries in getting an equal standard for every person
6	The alleviation of poverty in other countries is their problem, not ours
7	America should be more willing to share its wealth with other suffering nations, even if it doesn't necessarily coincide with our political interests
8	We should teach our children to uphold the welfare of all people everywhere even though it may be against the best interests of our own country
9	Children should be educated to be international minded to support any movement, which contributes to the welfare of the world as a whole
10	The agricultural surpluses of all countries should be shared with the "have not's" of the world
11	The position a U.S. citizen takes on an international issue should depend on how much good it does for how many people in the world, regardless of their nation
12	Countries needing our agricultural surpluses should pay for them instead of getting something for nothing