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Innovative Pedagogical Approaches in Teaching International Business

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The practice of international business continues to evolve with the fast-changing global economy. For international business (IB) educators, this implies innovative and dynamic approaches to educating tomorrow's managers and international business leaders. Among other things, business educators need to reflect new realities such as the digital transformation of business and the growing importance of emerging markets to make our teaching relevant, engaging, and innovative. Generation Z students and Millennials know a very different and complex world of multiple consumer personas, digital business models, a variety of portable communication devices, and virtual rather than face-to-face communications. Inevitably, they provide new challenges for international business educators. How can we best connect and communicate with this new generation of students via innovative pedagogical approaches such as the use of flipped classrooms, study-abroad programs, web-based or hybrid learning, and other active learning strategies in the classroom? This question is what motivated us to organize this special issue of JTIB on innovative pedagogical approaches in teaching international business.

The past few decades have witnessed a growing interest of IB faculty in innovative teaching methods, many of which can be broadly termed as active learning approaches (Aggarwal and Goodell 2014; Aggarwal and Wu 2019; Paulson and Faust 1998). Active learning approaches include “anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor’s lecture” (Paulson and Faust 1998, 4). Examples of active teaching approaches include but are not limited to individual or group exercises where students apply course material to solve problems, study abroad programs, flipped classroom approaches, and other experiential learning exercises. Active learning approaches are in contrast to traditional teaching methods

where students first learn the course content via classroom lectures, and then assimilate their learning through assignments (Brame 2013).

Active learning approaches are of particular importance to international business education where the goal of teaching goes beyond concrete facts and concepts and involves transformation of mindsets (Aggarwal and Wu 2019). The complexities involved in IB education require a more interactive approach to teaching than classroom lectures offer. As such, JTIB has devoted several special issues to understanding experiential learning in IB including study abroad programs and the challenges of experiential learning in IB education. In general, there is a consensus in the literature on the benefits of experiential learning methods in IB education (Aggarwal and Goodell 2014). The challenges of implementing experiential learning methods in IB education, however, are also real as these methods can be both time consuming and costly (Aggarwal and Wu 2019). Can experiential learning methods be conducted in a more cost-efficient manner? Can digital technologies help overcome the challenges of experiential learning and provide cost-efficient cultural training to IB students? Are there alternatives to first-hand cultural experience that can increase student engagement in IB education? Papers in this special issue help shed light on these issues.

1. Introducing this issue

The current issue of JTIB consists of five articles that focus on innovative approaches in IB education in the age of digital transformation and fast-paced globalization. In this issue, we highlight the importance of the changing environment of international business and its implications for novel and dynamic approaches to educating tomorrow's international business leaders. Specifically, the special issue focuses on the growing practice of flipped classroom approach for active learning, the use of video case studies and virtual reality as new instructional technologies, and the new approaches to experiential learning in study abroad programs as well as cultural competence training in the digital age.

The first article, titled "The flipped classroom approach for teaching cross-cultural communication to millennials" by Jonna Koponen of University of Eastern Finland applies a flipped classroom (FC) approach to teach cross-cultural communication to millennial international business and sales management students. Using a mixed method approach, they collected data on overall satisfaction, perceptions of elements of an FC course, and perceptions of meaningful learning experiences from students in a master's degree program. The findings show that overall student satisfaction with the FC course was high, and students value the pre-learning materials, in-class meetings, and the instructor's support. In particular, the findings show that students consider interviewing a CEO or international seller and engaging in practical

negotiation exercises to be the most meaningful learning experiences, lending support to the importance of active learning in IB education.

The second article, titled “Interprofessional study abroad: Enhancing social justice and sustainability through shared experiential learning” by Jennifer Harrison and Timothy Palmer of Western Michigan University describes the development, execution, and evaluation of a short-term interprofessional study abroad course that is relatively cost-efficient for undergraduate and graduate students. They explain the details of the short-term interdisciplinary study abroad course on sustainability and social justice taking place in India led by faculty from two departments (business management and social work) at a mid-size public university in the Midwest. They report that in the four years that the short-term study abroad course was offered, a significant number of women, students of color, and students with financial needs have been enrolled. Furthermore, from the end-of-semester student reflection paper, they identify four themes of student learning, which include Interprofessional Learning, personal development, lasting relationships and a call to action.

The third article, titled “Experiential learning in the digital context: An experimental study of online cultural intelligence training” by Laura Kirste and Dirk Holtbrügge of Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg presents and tests an approach to intercultural training by translating experiential learning into a digital context. Drawing on a random sample of 50 participants who were enrolled in a master-level course at a business school in Germany, the study uses experiments to find that their digital intercultural training approach does not significantly improve student cultural intelligence scores. A plausible reason offered was that the training was provided to students who already have relatively high cultural intelligence scores to begin with. Further probes with students via interviews validate this speculation as the majority of respondents stated that they were familiar with the digital training topics. The authors recommend future studies to assess intercultural knowledge of participants before training, identify specific training needs and tailor training contents to meet these needs. Furthermore, interviews with student respondents also reveal that while digital media (e.g. videos) may give participants a more realistic impression of intercultural encounters than traditional lectures or reading texts, it remains a passive tool that may not be able to serve as proxy for concrete cultural experience.

The fourth article, titled “Video case studies in IB teaching: An empirical comparison of academic and student perceptions and expectations” by Hinrich Voss of University of Leeds; Filip De Beule of University of Leuven; Andreja Jaklic of University of Ljubljana; Aleksandra Kania and Katarzyna Mroczek-Dąbrowska of Poznan University of Economics and Business; and Nukhet Vardar of El Izi Communications Consultancy UK Limited examines the

usage and usefulness of video case studies as a new instructional technology in teaching IB. Despite the high demand of digital and technology-rich tools by the millennial and centennial students, authors explain that due to infrastructural and instructional barriers have limited their adoption in IB teaching. Drawing on a global survey of IB scholars and a four-country survey of IB students, they analyze academics' and students' perspectives on technology-rich teaching and whether stand-alone video case studies are an acceptable digital tool for the current student generation. Findings show that while it is not likely that written case studies will be entirely substituted by video cases, they highlight the need to expand the portfolio and proliferation of video cases. Production of contemporary videos that are dedicated to IB content could be the innovative teaching resource required to stay connected with the millennial and centennial students.

The last article, titled "Teaching international business using virtual reality" by Olivia Hernandez-Pozas and Horacio Carreon-Flores of Tecnológico de Monterrey examines virtual reality (VR) as a newer, cheaper and more effective approach to foster development of IB competencies by new generations of students. Authors argue that as technology has progressed from screen-based to sensory-based interfaces, wearable devices, and networked computing including human-computer interaction, students demand more and better use of technology in their courses and classrooms to prepare themselves for the workforce in the digital era. In relation to this, authors present an application of VR in FIT (i.e., Flexibility, Interaction, and Technology), which is a course delivery mode developed in their own institution in 2016. Aiming to build international negotiation competencies in undergraduate students, the School of Business has been teaching a course titled Negotiation and International Commercialization Techniques via the FIT mode. As demonstrated in student feedback, students argue that despite certain technical and logistical problems, the VR project integrated in the course provides an innovative, useful, and a simple yet attractive way of learning.

Taken together, the articles compiled in this special issue provide insights on active learning approaches in IB education. We hope you enjoy reading the issue and are able to apply some of the approaches to your own teaching.

Notes on contributors

M. Billur Akdeniz is an associate professor of marketing at the Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire. She received her Ph.D. in marketing from Michigan State University. Dr. Akdeniz's research encompasses empirical modeling of marketing strategy problems. Her main areas of interest are marketing strategy, new products and innovation, and international marketing. Her research has been published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Product Innovation and Management*, *Marketing Letters*, and *Advances in International Marketing* among others. Dr. Akdeniz is on the editorial board of *Journal of*

the Academy of Marketing Science, Industrial Marketing Management, and Journal of Business Research. Her teaching areas are in marketing analytics, marketing strategy, and international marketing. She is also the recipient of the 2017 Excellence in Teaching Award given by the Paul College of Business Economics at the University of New Hampshire.

Chun Zhang is an associate professor of marketing at the Grossman School of Business, University of Vermont, USA. Her research interests include relationship management challenges between organizations. Her scholarly work has appeared in a number of international business journals including Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of World Business, Journal of International Marketing, International Marketing Review and International Business Review. In addition, Dr. Zhang has published in top-tier supply chain management journals including Journal of Operations Management and MIT Sloan Management Review. In 2008, Dr. Zhang received a Certificate of Recognition from the Michigan State University Broad College of Business in recognition of her contributions to the advancement of international business and innovation research. She is also the winner of 2013 Faculty Research Excellence Award given by the Grossman School of Business at the University of Vermont. Dr. Zhang is on the editorial review board of international business review and industrial marketing management. She has taught international business, international market analysis, marketing management and marketing research.

S. Tamer Cavusgil serves as Executive Director, Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), and Fuller E. Callaway Professorial Chair at Georgia State University. Tamer also serves as a visiting professor at Leeds University Business School and the University of South Australia Business School.

Tamer specializes in the internationalization of the firm, global strategy, emerging markets, and buyer-seller relationships in cross-border business. Tamer has authored more than two dozen books and some 200 refereed journal articles. His work is among the most cited contributions in international business. Various reviews have listed him as one of the most influential and prolific authors in international management. Google citations indicate nearly 40,000 citations as of 2019.

Tamer is the senior author of the leading textbook, *International Business: The New Realities*, with G. Knight and J. Riesenberger (5th Ed., 2020, Pearson).

Tamer founded the *Journal of International Marketing* in 1993 and served as its Editor-in-Chief for the first seven years. Similarly, Tamer introduced the annual book series, *Advances in International Marketing* in 1986 and served as Editor-in-Chief for the first 20 volumes. Most recently, Tamer has helped launch a new business journal, *Rutgers Business Review*, to feature managerially relevant research for business executives. Tamer served as Associate Editor for the *Journal of International Business Studies* and is on the editorial review boards of some dozen professional journals.

Tamer is an elected Fellow of the Academy of International Business (AIB) and served on its Board of Directors.

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