The Domains of Undergraduate International Business and International Management Courses in Accredited Schools of Business

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ABSTRACT. This study compared undergraduate international business and international management course syllabi from 190 management departments at accredited U.S. business schools. Comparisons revealed considerable overlap in topic areas in the two courses. The findings indicate the need for greater domain clarity and differentiation in objectives, topic areas covered, and textbooks used. Domain clarification could lead to more truthful representation of the two courses, better training and disciplinary grounding of course instructors, more appropriate hosting of the courses in business school departments, and enhanced skill-sets among students in these courses. Finally, clear domain definitions are necessary for reliability and validity in international business research. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <htps://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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79



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Recognizing the need for individuals who can think and act appropriately in the global business environment, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business accreditation standards require that undergraduate curricula include an international component. The standard does not specify how participating schools are to achieve this objective, but Kwok and Arpan (1994) reported three major approaches to internationalizing business school curricula: (1) infusing international business content into existing courses, (2) requiring all students to take one general international business course in the major field (or selecting one course from a menu of functional-area international courses), and (3) requiring one or more non-business international courses. They noted an increase in the number of schools requiring international courses, whether or not they attempted to infuse an international approach into other courses. Fleming, Shooshtari and Wallwork (1993) found that most internationalization efforts in AACSB schools were focused on specific functional area international courses.

Some business school undergraduate curricula thus include a general course in international business, others offer international courses in the various functional areas of business, and some offer both the general international business and the function-area international course. In cases where both international business and international management courses are options, differentiating the domains of the two courses is important but may be somewhat difficult since there is some confusion regarding the appropriate domains of international business (IB) and international management (IM).

Holt (1998, p. 6) notes the difference between the two domains: "International management is concerned with ownership and management of assets and operations beyond the borders of one's home county," whereas international business "addresses the entire subject of international business, which involves trade, finance, marketing, and economics of cross-border commerce." Thus, international business is the broader domain, and international management focuses on the management functions in a cross-cultural environment. However, anecdotal evidence led us to believe this distinction between international management and international business is blurred by academicians, with courses called "international management" and those called



"international business" not always consistent and distinctive in the types of material included.

This lack of domain distinction is problematic for at least three reasons. First, there is the issue of "truth in advertising." For students, faculty, curriculum oversight bodies and accrediting agencies, the lack of clear domains for the two courses can create confusion; what is advertised in course catalogues and what is delivered according to course syllabi may not be congruent. Domain staffing in the two areas also calls for different skill sets. Someone who is qualified to teach international management may not have the knowledge base to teach international business, and vice versa. Second, the seriousness of this issue is intensified when transfer credit is requested. If a student has taken international business at one university and transfers the course to a second university where the domain for a similarly-named course is different, that student may find himself inadequately prepared for advanced courses. Concepts covered in the prerequisite at the second university (either IB or IM) may be incorrectly assumed to be part of the students' knowledge base. Finally, domain confusion may create problems in IB and IM research since it is impossible to establish validity and reliability in research without basic definitional clarity.

We therefore undertook an exploratory study to determine similarities and differences in the two courses among AACSB-accredited schools in the United States. Our research question is: What differences exist between international business and international management courses in the following areas: teaching methods, grading policies, course objectives, and topic areas covered. We also examined differences in textbooks used in the two courses. This paper reports results of a survey of syllabi used in undergraduate courses in international business and international management offered by AACSB-accredited U.S. colleges and universities.

METHODS

Data Collection

Using the 1999 membership directory of the International Association for Management Education (formerly known as the AACSB), we identified chairpersons of 314 university management departments. Institutions were telephoned to verify that the chair listed in the directory was the current person in that position. We then mailed letters with re-



turn envelopes to the management department chairs asking the following questions:

- 1. Do you offer an undergraduate course in *international business* in your management department?
- 2. Is there an undergraduate course in *international business* offered in another department in your business school or college (*not* a functional area course, such as international accounting, but a general international business course)?
- 3. Do you offer an undergraduate course in *international management?*
- 4. Do you offer any other undergraduate international courses in management, such as international human resource management?

For each question, respondents were asked to provide a *yes* or *no* answer, and for each *yes*, the respondent was requested to enclose a copy or copies of the appropriate syllabi. We also asked for copies of all syllabi if more than one instructor at the institution taught each course. Three weeks after the original mailing, we sent a follow-up reminder to non-respondents. At the end of the data collection period, 190 chairs had responded to the four questions (a 60.51 percent response rate).

Data Analysis

Using the tables of contents of several international business and international management texts, we created lists of possible topic areas and objectives for the two courses. Then, proceeding inductively, we formed broad categories using the wording in the IB and IM syllabi. We looked for recurring regularities in the data, which we sorted into categories characterized by internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Similarly, we generated lists of teaching methods and grading policies. These procedures followed the Glasser and Strauss (1967) process for "discovery of grounded theory," an appropriate strategy for exploratory research (Van Maanen, 1983). Using this methodology, we developed coding categories for *teaching methods*, *grading policies*, *course objectives* and *topic areas covered*. Within each broad category, specific items pertaining to detailed topics were identified. (The list of these broad categories and sub-topics is provided in Appendix A.)

The coders, student assistants under the supervision of the authors, then examined each syllabus to determine whether every item was or



was not included in the syllabus. Thus, descriptions of methods, grading, objectives and topics were scrutinized to determine which items were explicitly mentioned in the syllabus being examined. Items present were coded 1, and their absence was indicated by 0. In cases where these broad categories were not addressed in the syllabus, the data were treated as missing.

As is evident from Appendix A, syllabi contents were classified into twelve different pedagogical approaches within teaching methods (ranging from lectures to virtual online classroom discussions/sessions), nine grading policies (ranging from exams to field work), fifteen separate sets of course objectives (ranging from gaining an understanding of the impact of globalization to overcoming ethnocentric approaches to management), and twenty-eight different topic areas (ranging from the economic environment of international business to managing change). Each of the 191 syllabi received (99 in international business and 92 in international management) was content analyzed. This procedure was conducted so as to ensure conformity with previously conducted practices (see Currall, Hammer, Baggett and Doniger, 1999; Krippendorff, 1981). We then ran cross-tab comparisons between the international business and international management courses, with corresponding chi-square values to test for statistical significance, for each of the identified items within the four broad categories of *teaching* methods, grading policies, objectives, and topic areas covered. Since the collected data were nominal, the resulting chi-square tests indicate only whether the tested variable (in each test) is independent of the categories used (IB and IM), and does not convey any possible inferences regarding the strength or form of the association between the two sets of variables.

RESULTS

Management department chairs reported 82 courses in international business housed in management departments and 57 IB courses in other departments within their business colleges. International management courses were offered by 106 of the management departments responding, and forty-one reported offering other courses in international management beyond the basic IM course. Respondents enclosed 99 international business syllabi and 92 international management syllabi.



Teaching Methods

The results of the comparisons of teaching methods between international business and international management courses are provided in

A priori we had no theoretical reason to expect specific pedagogical differences between IB and IM courses. Lectures were clearly the preferred mode of instruction across both types of courses with over 98 percent of the surveyed syllabi indicating the use of lectures as a pedagogical method. Role playing and the use of cases were the other two popular teaching methods used in the surveyed sample. By contrast, interviews with international managers and foreign nationals, multi- media supplements, virtual online classroom discussions/ sessions and guest lectures were employed relatively less frequently in both IB and IM courses. By contrast, both group projects and group activities were used more often in international management courses than in IB.

TABLE 1. Teaching Methods

Method	IE	IB ¹		IM ²	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Lecture	97	2	91	1	.269
Role Playing	78	18	65	26	2.50
Cases	64	31	64	28	.10
Group Activities	47	50	66	26	10.65***
Group Projects	43	53	60	32	7.91**
Individual Projects	47	47	47	45	.02
Multi-Media	26	71	29	62	1.64
Guest Lectures	21	76	13	79	1.81
Interviews	2	95	4	88	.80
Periodicals	46	51	34	58	2.1
Virtual Discussions	15	82	6	85	4.78#

^{*}p < .05



^{**}p < .01 ***p < .001

¹International Business International Management

³Test statistic is chi-squared except when cell counts were less than five, where Fischer's exact test is used.

Grading Policies

The results of the analyses comparing grading policies are provided in Table 2.

Examinations were the most popular modes of assessment, and they were used in almost all IB and IM courses. The next most frequently used evaluative criteria for both courses were class participation and projects/presentations. The two courses differed significantly in the use of only two activities: international management courses utilized projects and peer evaluations more frequently than did international business courses. Overall, peer evaluations, extra credit opportunities and fieldwork assignments were used relatively infrequently as evaluation criteria in both IB and IM courses.

Course Objectives

The results of the analysis pertaining to course objectives are provided in Table 3 below.

IB and IM courses differed significantly in only three of the categories of objectives. IB courses were much more likely to cite understanding the economic dimension and the political/legal dimensions than

TABLE 2. Grading Policies

Activities Graded	IE	IB ¹		IM ²	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Exams	99	0	90	2	2.18
Case Analyses	45	50	47	45	.26
Participation	70	27	72	20	.94
Attendance	39	58	41	51	.37
Projects	66	32	82	10	13.08***
Peer Evaluations	12	86	29	63	10.42***
Extra Credit	6	92	2	90	1.83
Field Work	4	94	5	87	.19



^{*}p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

¹International Business ²International Management

³Test statistic is chi-squared except when cell counts were less than five, where Fischer's exact test is used

were IM courses. IM courses were more likely to focus on developing sensitivity to the influence of culture on management than IB courses, although almost twenty-five percent of the IB courses also included this objective. The course objective most frequently stated for both sets of courses related to *developing the knowledge and skills necessary for managing international operations*.

Neither IB nor IM courses appeared to place an emphasis on *understanding the social or the technological dimensions* of international business. Other objectives that were infrequently cited in syllabi of either course were *improving the ability to think cross-functionally, emphasizing the differences between domestic and international business*

TABLE 3. Objectives

Objectives	IB ¹		IM ²		Statistic ³
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Understand impact of globalization	52	42	41	49	1.75
Gain international operations knowledge and skills	89	5	80	10	2.06
Gain ability to think cross-functionally	26	68	34	56	2.14
Understand economic dimensions	70	24	22	67	45.26***
Understand cultural dimensions	70	24	74	13	3.12#
Understand social dimensions	23	71	19	70	.25
Understand political/legal dimensions	59	34	28	60	18.11***
Understand technological dimensions	13	81	7	82	1.67
Understand cross-cultural business practices	48	46	44	45	.05
Understand differences between domestic/international business	24	70	26	63	.31
Understand role of functional areas	35	59	30	59	.25
Develop skills to manage in other cultures	16	78	23	66	2.12
Develop sensitivity to influence of culture on management	23	70	39	50	8.33*
Overcome ethnocentric approaches to management	3	90	8	80	3.67

[#]p < .10 *p < .05



^{**}p < .01 ***p < .001

¹International Business ²International Management

³Test statistic is chi-squared except when cell counts were less than five, where Fischer's exact test is used.

environments, understanding the role of the different functional areas in conducting international business, developing the knowledge/skills needed to effectively manage in other country cultures and overcoming ethnocentric approaches to management.

While both IB and IM courses appeared not to emphasize developing an awareness and sensitivity to the influence of culture on management practices, IM courses included this objective more frequently than IB courses. Finally, there appeared to be ambivalent emphases in both IB and IM courses on the objectives of gaining an understanding of the impact of globalization and understanding cross-cultural business practices. About half the syllabi in each group included and half did not include these latter two objectives.

Topic Areas Covered

The results of the analyses concerning topic areas covered in the two sets of courses are provided in Table 4 below.

Unlike previously discussed dimensions, there appeared to be major differences between IB and IM courses in *topic areas covered*. The economic and political environments of international business were covered in more IB courses. Cultural environment was a topic in both courses, with only one IM syllabus failing to list the topic, while 8.6 percent of IB syllabi failed to include the topic. However, the social and technological environments of international business were covered in a small percentage of both courses, 16 percent of IB courses and 18 percent of IM courses.

IB courses were more likely to include the following topics: economic environment, political environment, international trade theory, international monetary system, foreign direct investment, balance of payments/foreign exchange, regional trade blocks, accounting and tax issues, finance in international business, and marketing issues. However, some of the IM course syllabi also included these topics. In fact, more IM syllabi indicated coverage of the political environment than did those that omitted this topic.

IM courses were more likely to cover the cultural environment, international communication, international negotiations, management practices in specific countries, organizing for international business, international human resource management, ethics and social responsibility, leadership and motivation, and managing change. However, as in the case of the topics discussed in the previous paragraph, although IM courses were more likely to cover these topics, they were covered in



TABLE 4. Topic Areas Covered

Topic	IB ¹		IM ²		Statistic ³
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Economic Environment	81	13	31	49	42.37***
Cultural Environment	85	8	79	1	4.71*
Social Environment	32	61	36	44	2.02
Political Environment	87	6	45	32	31.08***
Technological Environ.	15	78	14	63	1.33
International Trade Theory	71	17	20	59	51.46***
Int. Monetary System	52	41	6	73	44.60***
Foreign Direct Investment	67	24	15	64	50.56***
BOP/Foreign Exchange	72	20	14	65	62.31***
International Communication	4	89	47	32	62.38***
International Negotiations	15	79	48	31	37.21***
Strategic Planning	64	29	53	26	.06
Regional/Trade Blocks	46	40	9	70	32.84***
Country Risk Assessment	21	72	23	56	.96
Specific Countries' Practices	24	69	42	37	13.52***
Organizing for IB	51	42	64	15	13.21***
Controlling for IB	25	68	29	50	1.92
Accounting/Tax in IB	28	65	5	75	17.69***
Finance for IB	54	39	11	68	35.40***
HRM in IB	59	33	63	16	5.93*
Information Systems for IB	6	87	2	77	1.48
Marketing in IB	63	30	14	65	43.22***
Operations in IB	32	61	18	60	2.63
International Labor Relations	16	77	19	60	1.24
Ethics/Social Responsibility	21	72	43	36	18.55***
Leadership and Motivation	2	91	40	39	54.40***
Managing Change	4	88	15	64	10.09**

[#]p < .10 *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

¹International Business ²International Management ³Test statistic is chi-squared except when cell counts were less than five, where Fischer's exact test is used.

some of the IB courses as well. For example, 85 out of 99 IB syllabi indicated coverage of cultural environment.

Relatively few course syllabi in either IB or IM indicated coverage of the social environment, technological environment, country risk assessment, information systems for international business, operations, and international labor relations. Finally, most syllabi in both IB and IM indicated that courses covered the cultural environment (although IM courses were statistically more likely to cover this topic) and most included strategic planning as a topic.

Textbooks

Based on the syllabi we received, we tabulated the most frequently used textbooks in the two courses. The most popular international business textbooks in our sample were those authored by Daniels and Radebaugh (1998), Ball and McCulloch (1997), Hill (1994) and Griffin and Pustay (1996). Hodgetts and Luthans (1997) and Deresky (1997) were the most popular international management texts in our sample. All the popular IB texts included the words "international business" in their titles and the popular IM text titles included both "international management" and "culture." Ostensibly, these categorizations would have been based on disciplinary domain boundaries and topic coverage. However, in the case of the most popular textbooks like Daniels and Radebaugh, Ball and McCulloch, Hill (all IB texts), and Hodgetts and Luthans (in IM), there appeared to be crossovers with some instructors in both IM and IB utilizing the text intended for the other course as the primary text. We did not analyze whether, in these crossover instances, the instructors restricted their topic coverage from the assigned text to only those topics that fell within the domain of that particular course.

DISCUSSION

Our sample of 190 management department chairs in AACSB accredited undergraduate business schools reported international management courses in 106 management departments and 82 courses in international business, with 57 IB courses taught in their institutions but in departments other than management. Forty-one department chairs reported offering additional courses in international management. To compare IB and IM course objectives and topics covered, we content analyzed 99 IB syllabi and 92 IM syllabi returned by the respondents.



We had no reason to expect differences in teaching methods and grading policies between IM and IB courses. However, we found that IM courses were more likely to employ group activities and projects than IB courses. Although neither type of course was likely to use online discussions, more IB courses employed this method. The course syllabi did not indicate any other differences in teaching methods employed, with lectures reportedly used in virtually all the courses.

Similarly, there was no a priori reason to expect differences in grading policies in the two types of courses. However, projects and peer evaluations were used more frequently in IM than in IB courses. The most frequently used assessment method in both courses was examinations. One possible explanation for differences found in teaching methods and grading policies is that management professors may be more likely to use behavioral methods such as group activities and projects; more than half of the IB courses in our sample (57 out of 99) were taught in departments other than management.

In course objectives, IB courses more frequently emphasized understanding economic and political/legal dimensions of the environment. IM course objectives more frequently included developing sensitivity to the influence of culture on management and were marginally more likely to include emphasizing cultural dimensions of international business. These differences in objectives are consistent with the domain definitions of IB and IM quoted earlier. Behavioral and cognitive objectives like *improving the ability to think cross-functionally, developing the knowledge/skills to manage effectively in other country cultures*, and *overcoming ethnocentric approaches to management* were not present in most syllabi in either course. Perhaps some of the above behavioral and cognitive objectives can be adequately accomplished only in more specialized courses, rather than in broad overview courses such as IB and IM.

Although the data show many differences in topic areas covered in the two courses, it is evident that there is considerable overlap as well. IB's domain is broader than that of IM. It includes trade theory, finance, international monetary system, FDI, BOP, foreign exchange, accounting and tax issues, marketing, and trading blocks—all of which were more likely to be mentioned as topics in the IB syllabi. But, surprisingly, some of these topics were included in the syllabi of the IM courses as well. On the other hand, human resource management, ethics and social responsibility, leadership and motivation, managing change, organizing for international business, international communication and negotiations, variations in doing business in specific countries—all were statistically more likely to be topics in IM. However, some IB course



syllabi also referenced these topics. In fact, a large proportion of IB courses included coverage of human resource management, cultural environments, and organizing for international business.

We therefore must conclude that there is a good deal of confusion and/or overlap between the two types of courses. This creates problems in terms of accurate representation of courses to students and others, a problem that is exacerbated if transfer credit is requested or if the course is a prerequisite to an advanced course.

We speculate that part of the domain overlap and confusion may be related to staffing issues for the two types of courses. In the face of unclear domain definition, faculty are likely to teach those topics with which they feel most comfortable. Since books with titles that include "international business" are used in courses called international management, and those with titles that include "international management" are used in courses called international business, it is hardly surprising that domain confusion exists. We suggest the following actions as first steps toward clarifying the nature of the courses offered:

- 1. Make text selection consistent with the advertised course title.
- 2. In institutions that offer undergraduate courses in both IB and IM, conduct reviews of course offerings to ensure the unique content of the two courses and determine the appropriate overlap.
- 3. Encourage dialogue among those who teach IM and IB regarding the appropriate domains. Those interested in pedagogy could initiate discussions of the issue at conferences. Professional organizations (such as the International Management Division of the Academy of Management and the Academy of International Business and their regional associations, and the International Management Development Association) would be appropriate forums for such discussions.
- 4. Encourage textbook authors and publishers to ensure care in delineating the domains of their IM and IB books.

Limitations

Although we believe our study raises important issues for those concerned with business school curricula, there are a number of limitations that must be acknowledged. First, we have relied on syllabi as our sole source of information about teaching methods, grading policies, course objectives and topics covered. It is, of course, possible that the syllabi are not fair representations of the courses as they are taught. Neverthe-



less, since the syllabus is a contract between the students and the instructor, what the syllabus states is important information.

Other limitations of this study are that the sample is restricted to United States institutions and to undergraduate courses. Generalizing from data on U.S. schools to those in other countries would be inappropriate. From our sample it is also impossible to speculate on the degree to which international issues are integrated into various courses in the curriculum in AACSB accredited schools. Since the accreditation standard does not specify stand-alone international courses, it may be that for some institutions the domain confusion between international business and international management is a moot point.

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APPENDIX A Coding Categories for Content Analyzing IB/IM Syllabi

Teaching Methods (all coded Y/N unless otherwise indicated):

- 1. Lectures
- 2. Role Playing3. Cases
- 4. Group Activities
- 5. Group Projects/Papers
- 6. Individual Projects/Papers
- 7. Multi-Media (including audio-visual) Supplements
- 8. Guest Lectures
- 9. Interviews with International Managers/Foreign Nationals
- 10. Use of International Business Periodicals
- 11. Virtual Online Classroom discussions/sessions
- 12. Other

Grading Policies (coded Y/N unless otherwise indicated):

- 1. Exams
- 2. Case Analyses
- 3. Class Participation
- 4. Attendance
- 5. Projects/Presentations
- 6. Peer Evaluations
- 7. Extra Credit
- 8. Field Work
- 9. Other



APPENDIX A (continued

Objectives (coded Y/N unless otherwise indicated):

- 1. Gaining an understanding of the impact of globalization
- 2. Developing knowledge/skills necessary for managing international operations
- 3. Improving the ability to think cross-functionally Understanding the _____ dimensions of international business:
 - 4. Economic
 - 5. Cultural
 - 6. Social
 - 7. Political/Legal
 - 8. Technological
- 9. Understanding cross-cultural international business practices
- 10. Emphasizing differences between domestic and international business environments
- 11. Understanding the role of the different functional areas in conducting international business
- 12. Developing knowledge/skills needed to effectively manage in other country cultures
- 13. Developing an awareness and sensitivity to the influence of culture on management practices
- 14. Overcoming Ethno-Centric approaches to management
- 15. Other

<u>Topic Areas (coded Y/N unless otherwise indicated):</u>

The Environments of International Business:

- 1. Economic
- 2. Cultural
- 3. Social
- 4. Political/Legal
- 5. Technological
- 6. International Trade Theory
- 7. International Monetary System
- 8. Foreign Direct Investment
- 9. Balance of Payments/Foreign Exchange
- 10. International Communication
- 11. International Negotiations/Diplomacy
- 12. Strategic Planning for International Business
- 13. Trade Blocks/Regional Groupings
- 14. Country Risk Assessment
- 15. Variations in Doing Business in Specific Countries
- 16. Organizing for International Business
- 17. Controlling in International Business



Functional areas in International Business:

- 18. Accounting/Tax

- 18. Accounting/Tax
 19. Finance
 20. Human Resource Management
 21. Information Systems
 22. Marketing
 23. Operations
 24. International Labor Relations
 25. Ethics and Social Responsibility in International Operations
 26. Cross-Cultural Leadership and Motivation
 27. Managing Change
 28. Other



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