

Project Title: The Role of Technology in Enhancing the Competitiveness of Students in International Business

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Abstract

The principal investigators for this project are professors of international business and culture at Illinois State University and we are interested in improving the competitiveness of international business majors in the marketplace. Beginning with the premise that our students face a dual challenge – *i*) little if any first-hand experience in their chosen field, and *ii*) comparatively less functional expertise than students majoring in traditional business disciplines – we believe IB students are at a competitive disadvantage in the workplace. We further believe that, as educators, we are in a position to improve their marketability by developing some of the skills necessary to function in the international arena and also arming them with tools for showcasing their abilities in order to compete in the job market in the first place. We have been experimenting with three pedagogies toward these ends, all of which involve technology (video conferencing, student web projects, and on-line communicating), and they are described in this proposal. We also describe the instruments we will develop to assess the effectiveness of these technologies.

Results

We participated in the regular SoTL meetings during the year and presented the progress of our work at the last meeting during spring semester 2006.

In MQM 349, Business in a Multicultural Environment, we conducted a teleconference with Chuo University in Japan, and students in the INB 190 course, Introduction to International Business, developed web pages that provide information on a foreign country. In addition, we incorporated on-line communication in both classes.

At the start of our project we focused on autonomous learning and wanted to show how the class activities can contribute to self-directed life-long learning. As we went through the project, we focused more on the role of self-directed learning in expatriation. Many of our students hope to work abroad at some time during their careers; therefore, we wanted to connect the concept of autonomous and self-directed learning to expatriate success. We became interested in how our project can contribute to later career success as expatriates.

Outcomes

So far we have two outcomes for our project

1. an article on the teleconference project with Chuo University
Varner, I.I., and Hayashida, H. (2006). The international teleconference as a tool for global education. The Journal of Commerce, Chuo University 47(4), 107-128.
2. a manuscript submitted
Downes, M. and Varner, I. Personality traits as predictors of expatriate effectiveness: a synthesis and reconceptualization. Submitted to Review of Business, 2006.