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Driving in the Passing Lane or Straight Into a Dead End?
- Options an Caveats of Using ICT Tools in the Internationalization of Business Education

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization – the last decades’ buzzword – has become a commonplace to business practitioners, researchers and politicians across the globe. However, globalization is not a platitude, its implications are more than manifest in several respects. Some figures may illustrate the ongoing process of economic intertwining. Since the end of World War II, worldwide trade has grown tremendously reaching a value of approx. € 5.5 trillion per year. Surveys of the world’s most successful companies show that these firms generate over 50% of their revenues in markets other than their domestic one. In addition, they operate in at least 50 countries (Anonymous 1998). Even industries, such as public utilities companies, or economies such as the U.S., which have been predominantly national in scope until recently, rely on business opportunities outside their home market (Keegan and Schlegelmilch 2001).

This shift towards worldwide business activities requires different skills and know-how from a globally successful manager in the future. This called for a re-direction of university curricula to prepare young management talent for the global workplace (Albers-Miller et al. 2000; Bailey 1995; Rugman and Stanbury 1992). Many business schools responded to these trends by internationalizing their education programs (Abboushi et al. 1999; Cavusgil 1993; El Kahal 1998). Increasingly, they offer an extended range of internationally oriented course contents, invite international guest lecturers, take their students on international field trips or encourage them to spend some time abroad in form of internships or exchange semesters. These initiatives not only provide students with theoretical knowledge on international business-related aspects. The contact with the host cultural enables students at the same time to increase their sensitivity towards cultural similarities and differences and enhance their competencies of dealing with culturally overlapping situations. This combination of cognitive and affective skills is deemed crucial to their success in the global workplace (Holzmüller 1997; Richards 1997).

Nevertheless, recent studies pointed out that business leaders still are not satisfied with the skills of students leaving business schools (e.g., Lundstrom et al. 1996; Webb et al. 1999). Reportedly, 95% of recently hired graduates needed additional training before being sent off on their first international assignment (Burton 1990). One conclusion, which is drawn from these dissatisfying results, is that new ways of teaching international business-related topics may be called for. In this context, introducing technology, such as e-mail, Internet, videoconferencing etc., to the educational setting has been coined “wave of the future” which
is suitable to enhance educational experiences of students. Subsequently, the value of these tools to teaching and learning has attracted considerable interest from educators (Grineski 1999; Phillips and Horton 1998).

This paper aims at shedding light on different options these new ICT tools offer to internationalize business school curricula and student experiences and what kind of effects on the learning experience may be expected. In a critical reflection, we attempt to evaluate benefits as well as potential downsides that ICT tools may have on student internationalization. The importance of internationalization in the educational context is reviewed and the tools used to date to achieve this effort are presented. Then we outline four theses which take a critical look at the role of ICT in the internationalizing students’ cognitive and affective skills. Finally, implications for the future of international business education and potential research avenues are presented.

**CONTENT AND WAYS OF INTERNATIONALIZING BUSINESS EDUCATION**

As demonstrated above, globalization has become a reality which requires answers from the business world as well as from educators. Particularly, universities and educational institutions, which tout themselves of educating the business leaders of the future, feel an increasing pressure to react to the demands of globalization. This raises the question of what skills will be required from internationally active manager of tomorrow.

Generally speaking, the main differences between domestic and international trade can be delineated along two interrelated dimensions: the different environmental conditions which govern economic activities in another cultural context and the complexity of management decisions and decision-making processes, as the number of actively served markets increases (e.g., Bartlett and Ghoshal 1992; Mendenhall et al. 1995). Markets differ according to physical (e.g., topography, climate), socio-cultural (e.g., religion, family patterns, norms and values), technical (e.g., standards, infrastructure), economic (e.g., economic system, purchasing power, level of competition) and political/legal frameworks (e.g., political stability, legal system). These differences confront international managers with a unique business environment in each market, they are dealing with. With the number of international markets increasing, the simultaneity of decision-making processes and the specific
environmental settings render business tasks extremely complex and demanding. At the same time, international business decisions are the result of interaction and communication between managers and teams of different cultural backgrounds either on a personal basis or via written media, which makes them specifically prone to “communicative turbulence” such as misunderstandings or personal conflicts. In order to deal with these culturally overlapping situations adequately, affective skills such as intercultural communication and leadership skills, foreign language capabilities and an overall global orientation will become indispensable (Adler 1997; Usunier 1996; Webb et al. 1999).

In the following, we provide a framework which displays a hierarchy of key competencies deemed critical for internationally successful managers. Subsequently, the different levels of know-how are then linked to the current practices of internationalizing a university’s business curriculum. Their merits and deficits in reaching educational goals will be evaluated.

![Figure 1: Levels of Knowledge transferred in International Business Education](image-url)

While the dividing line between domestic trade and international business activities is vanishing, profound know-how in functional areas will undoubtedly be as important as in the national business context. Therefore, the lowest level of international business education should encompass a solid management and business administration background covering the know-how necessary to run business operations regardless of specific country contexts. This first level focuses on business fundamentals, such as defining business objectives, designing suitable strategies as well as implementing planning and controlling tools. This stage
represents the core foundation for managing a company, without specifically considering international dimensions of different corporate tasks.

The next level encompasses – cognitive - skills that are specifically targeted to the requirements of the international business arena. Exemplary, the knowledge acquired may cover aspects such as macro-economic issues affecting international business activities, governmental influences, regionalization of trade, as well as business-related topics such as standardizing or differentiating the international marketing mix, international corporate finance and taxation issues or human resources management across borders, to only name a few. At the same time, methodological know-how, such as how to gather necessary information or how to coordinate and cooperate within an international organization appear important at this stage.

Finally, at the top level of international core management competencies, non-cognitive skills should be covered in order to deal effectively with culturally overlapping situations. In particular, competencies as to how to understand and anticipate communication patterns and expectations from foreign partners and means to react effectively for both parties may be mentioned in this context. This implies that students are not only familiar with specific facts related to a culture (e.g. history, social characteristics) and overt social behavior (e.g. rituals, norms, interaction techniques), but develop cultural sensitivity in a reflective and also affective way. In other words, students should be trained to increase cultural sensitivity, which finally allows them to open up to new cultures, to develop adequate empathy for a host culture and to accept cultural differences not only cognitively, but also emotionally. Thus, the general cultural competency with respect to goal oriented interaction with people from foreign cultures should be enhanced.

As the internationalization of business curricula at universities is progressing rapidly, different tools and ways to implement international aspects in higher education have evolved. Based on the levels of knowledge deemed relevant to international management, we investigate in the following how effective the different tools are with respect to the level of knowledge they promote. The typology outlined below takes the perspective of participating students and their exposure to cross-cultural business issues. It elucidates which options students willing to internationalize may choose from. At this point, it has to be noted that this typology does not attempt to be exhaustive and/or without intertwining. We do acknowledge the fact that overlaps between categories and combinations of different tools may exist. Overall, we distinguish between five broad categories of tools to internationalize students’
learning experiences: (a) the infusion of international business topics into the regular coursework at the home institution, (b) the enrollment into locally offered business programs of foreign universities, (c) study abroad programs, (d) individual semester or year abroad and (e) truly international business programs

(a) The infusion of international business topics into the regular coursework at the home institution

Introducing international elements to regular business courses represents the easiest way of internationalizing a university curriculum. A wide range of different activities may be applicable such as inviting international guest speakers, introducing international topics to lectures, using international case studies, group projects, simulations or living cases.

Inviting international managers or researchers offers various benefits to internationalizing a lecture. They are not only able to share their experiences and knowledge on selected international business topics with students. In contrast to learning from international textbooks, external experts represent highly credible role models and thus facilitate learning tremendously (Gaugler 1994). Along those lines, the design of courses with specifically international content, the integration of internationally oriented case studies or group projects on international issues may serve similar purposes. Case studies where students encounter simplified, “real-life” business situations are well suited to help them experience the complexity of international management decisions (e.g., Kerin and Peterson 1998; Zentes and Swoboda 2000). Group projects on international issues take the learning experience one step beyond. In addition to enhancing theoretical knowledge, students train their teamwork and leadership skills during group work. Team-based learning is recognized as a means of simulating the work environment and refining skills (Krishnan and Porter 1998).

Another opportunity to promote international issues in the classroom are simulation games such as INTOPIA (Thorelli et al. 1994) or FINS (Moxon 1996). They are particularly well suited to demonstrate the complexity of international business transactions. Not only do they provide a very comprehensive picture of relevant international management decisions, they also depict the market place’s complexity by adding different competitors, governmental influences, social and cultural effects etc. So-called living case studies synthesize the positive outcomes of using international case studies, group projects and simulations on international topics. A living case experience incorporates traditional components of case studies with the
unique aspect of working in real-time with an existing organization. The distinguishing feature of a living case is the present nature of the problems and opportunities, as opposed to a summary and analysis of past decisions that often characterize conventional case studies. In cooperation with an existing company, students have to work on an actual business problem the firm is currently facing in one of its international markets. Topics may take several forms such as international market entry decisions and strategies, human resource management issues or international financial aspects. Such a project brings students even closer to the “real-world” international business environment, where wide-ranging decisions need to be made quickly and often with incomplete information available (Thorne-LeClair and Stöttinger 1999).

To enrich these tools additionally, educators may want to attract international students to such courses or projects. Their participation adds insight from peers with a different cultural background and may help simulate culturally overlapping situations during course work, as they occur in the international business arena. At this point, it has to be noted that the underlying purpose of attracting international students is not to integrate them better into the host culture, but to facilitate cross-cultural interaction in the classroom for local students (Ryland 1992; Schoell 1991).

When it comes to evaluating the skills and competencies acquired through these means of internationalization, it is mainly know-how on the first and second level of the international key competencies pyramid, i.e. knowledge on core business principles and international topics. Students build on their business administration fundamentals and acquire deeper insight in cross-national corporate issues. Also, they may obtain first hand feedback from internationally active researchers and practitioners as well as their fellow students from abroad. Higher level competence, such as cross-national management skills and competencies are only transferred to a very limited extent - at best, through communication and cooperation with their international student peers. However, these skills are not developed or trained for systematically. Thus, the learning experience at the highest level depends more or less on situational factors, such as students’ prior experience or their individual openness for “side benefits” such as non-cognitive skills.
(b) The enrollment into locally offered business programs of foreign universities

Another way for students to expose themselves to international business education is by enrolling in locally offered programs of foreign universities, such as Webster University with campus locations in Vienna, London, Leiden, Geneva and Shanghai, Stanford University’s location in Berlin or the University of Chicago campus in Barcelona, to only name a few. In this case, the curriculum is usually designed in close connection with the foreign university’s – mostly Anglo-American - standards in business education. The student body for such programs is catered predominantly within a local market and is thus culturally more or less homogenous. However, the majority of faculty originates from a different – in many cases Anglo-American – cultural context.

As with the infusion of international business topics in the current course program, the learning experience within local programs of foreign universities takes place to a large extent at the first and second level, the coverage of business basics and specific international topics. In contrast to the tools outlined under alternative (a), these programs differ with respect to the degree of international exposure, which is considerably larger, as they are usually of longer duration. Within this extended time frame, students are permanently confronted with faculty from a foreign cultural background, who bring their teaching practices and experience to the local students. While such programs rely most commonly on the different tools to infuse international topics to the business curriculum presented under alternative (a), their specific merits to internationalizing student experiences lie specifically in the duration and the more extensive contact with representatives of different cultural backgrounds.

(c) Study Abroad Programs

Another way to internationalize students is to expose them to different cultures through study abroad programs. In contrast to the tools presented so far, where students remain within their local cultural context, study abroad programs allow them to experience different places and cultures away from home. Study abroad programs may take different forms and shapes, usually designed around the specific requirements that the regular business program represents. Most commonly, the time that students and faculty spend abroad ranges from one to four weeks due to time and financial constraints.

As to the locations visited, study abroad programs may be designed as single-location tours taking place in a single city for the entire period or as multi-location stays with a permanent
stay in one location and travel to multiple destination (Duke 2000). The purpose of staying at a single location rather than changing places is to enable students to feel comfortable in another culture and to increase their confidence about being successful in global business (Brokaw 1996). The learning activities in which students are engaged during their stay abroad may range from lectures and tests, to company visits, journal writing, treasure hunts or group projects, to name a few (Duke 2000). In addition, the role of faculty and their position in the overall curriculum may vary. Faculty may be engaged in form of classroom instructor, tour director, mentor, parent and facilities manager (Johnson and Mader 1992; Schuster et al. 1998). Moreover, study abroad programs may provide students with rewards in from of course grades or special credit for their national curriculum. In some cases, the international setting is used simply to teach conventional courses for full credit towards the degree (Duke 2000). Sometimes, the trip is integral part of a regular course at the home institutions to introduce the concepts and culture being explored (Brokaw 1996).

Contrary to “international” activities in the home context, students are forced to expose themselves to intercultural interactions during a study abroad trip and make “real life” experiences. Therefore, this tool fosters not only second-level, but also third-level knowledge development. The demands on the students’ cultural sensitivity, on their ability to cope with ambiguous situations and to manage cultural differences are much higher than in the artificially created setting in the home environment. In most cases, study abroad trips take place within a group of students and faculty who stem from the same cultural background. In that way, participants are still strongly related to their home environment. Consequently, they are less forced to fully immerse themselves in the local culture and to engage in social interactions with locals. Also, the rather limited time spent abroad may reduce the need to cope with difficult culturally overlapping situations (Marks and DeDee 1995).

**d) Individual Semester or Year Abroad**

Another, even more complex and demanding way for students to internationalize their experience is to engage in an extended stay abroad for an entire term, semester or year abroad. These offers – mostly taken advantage of by student individuals – work as cooperative agreements between the home university and educational institutions worldwide. They may be shaped as bilateral agreements or as more formalized multiple-party initiatives, such as the
ERASMUS initiative within the European Union or CEMS program operated jointly by leading European business schools.

The past decades have witnessed significant growth in the number of students pursuing academic programs in countries other than their own. International student flows across national boundaries increased from approximately 400,000 in 1970 to over 1 million in 1986 and most likely even more accelerated until today. It may be assumed that business students account for the largest contingency of international student exchange, as their future work life requires a high degree of internationalization from them (Paige 1990, p.162f; UNESCO 1988).

In contrast to other forms of international contacts, participating in an individual student exchange implies a total immersion into the host culture which may be very rewarding, however also extremely stressful at times. The sojourner is very intensively and frequently in contact with people of the host culture (Cushner 1994; Grove 1989). International students differ from their local peers in many ways, as they bring in their own cultural background in terms of different values, beliefs, behavioral patterns and thinking. The more these patterns differ from the host country, the more inevitable are communication and interaction clashes. As a result, international students frequently display different degrees of frustration, anxiety, uncertainty, homesickness or depression (Paige 1990). Often, the stay abroad develops into a critical life-time experience which gains in importance, the larger the socio-cultural distance between home and host country is (Khan 1988). Students who are willing to acculturate themselves in the new environment often find it difficult to balance the new experiences with their own cultural identity. Fears exist that one might become multicultural and marginal by now being fully integrated into the new culture and not completely accepted by the home culture after a longer period of staying abroad (Adler 1976).

While an extended stay abroad poses heavy demands on the individual student, the learning experience may be judged much higher than with the other forms of internationalization presented so far. The development of knowledge goes beyond the acquisition of cognitive skills in business fundamentals and international business topics. It increases the student’s non-cognitive, affective skills to deal with culturally overlapping situations. The knowledge development may be based on experiential learning through every-day contact with people in the host culture. However, learning may also be facilitated more systematically through specific preparatory programs prior to leaving for the new environment or during the stay
abroad by means of tailored coaching initiatives (Bittner and Reisch 1994; Landis and Bhagat 1996).

(e) Truly International Business Programs

For students, who wish to internationalize, truly international business programs, such as an International MBA program, represent the most multi-faceted international learning experience. These programs, such as the International MBA program by the Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien and the University of South Carolina or the Master of International Management for Latin America, which is awarded by Thunderbird and the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), are usually operated jointly from different universities at different locations. Their intention is to attract students with an extensive – preferably international – professional background. At the same time, these institutions try to establish a good mix of students with different cultural backgrounds to avoid the dominance of certain nationalities. Also, they employ faculty with different cultural backgrounds.

This alternative represents the most complex form of internationalizing students, by combining aspects of the different options presented so far. Beside international contents in the curriculum, students are exposed to intercultural communications not only with faculty, but also the local population in the different locations. As the student body is culturally heterogeneous, participants cannot rely on being embedded in a familiar cultural context. Rather, they have to expose themselves to different cultural contexts.

The adjustment in the new cultural environment may be particularly difficult and stressful for students with extensive business experience. Trying to cope with a different cultural environment may be disturbing for these older students, who have reached a certain professional position in their home country and are accustomed to functioning effectively under these conditions. Also, the confrontation with a new education system in terms of learning styles and administrative procedures often leads to strong distress (Adler 1976). Nevertheless, taking part in an international MBA program offers the largest variety of learning experiences, both on the cognitive and affective skills level.

In summary, students seeking international experience are nowadays provided with a large range of options to choose from. Depending on their learning intentions and audacity to expose themselves to foreign environments, they may select from the different alternatives.
outlined above. To facilitate the decision-making process, we aimed at pointing to the
different skills levels trained under each alternative. In this context, it has to be noted,
however, that empirical confirmation for these assumptions is still largely missing. To date,
no empirical studies have attempted to compare the effects of different types of international
business education on the cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural competence of business
students.

CONTRIBUTION OF ICT TO INTERNATIONALIZING BUSINESS EDUCATION

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have not only revolutionized the way
companies are doing business, where value creation is increasingly based on the
implementation of ICT and touches virtually every corporate activity (e.g., Blili and Raymond
1993; Green and Ruhleder 1995; Landry 2000; Werbach 2000). Within real time, ICT tools
such as the Internet, e-mail or mobile phones, to only name a few deliver information to the
most remote places on the planet. Communication from nearly anywhere in the world has
become reality.

Due to their specific advantages, such as cost and time efficiency, world-wide reach and
flexible implementation into business curricula, ICT have made significant inroads into
university classrooms as well (Behnke 1995; Freeman and Soete 1990). Based on Ronchetto’s
et al. (1992) definition of multimedia, we understand ICT teaching tools to be a combination
or integration of electronic, video, audio, computer and/or web-based technologies.

In the educational context, ICT tools open up new forms of long distance interaction, which
are deemed to foster more efficient communication. Thus, they have strong potential to
promote the internationalization of business education. From the current perspective, we see
manifold applications where ICT contributes to that goal. In order to structure the field, we
distinguish between situations, where students stay in their home country and others, where
they go abroad to internationalize (see Figure 2)
In the case of internationalizing the business education *within a country*, we see at least three ways how the ICT may contribute. (a) The new technologies can be used to increase the international focus of traditional business courses. Educators can use tools such as the Internet to access up-to-date information from distant locations, they may discuss their teaching approaches or exchange information with international colleagues in the same field over e-mail within real time. Along those lines, students are also enabled to use the new technologies to accomplish class assignments in a truly international way, by collecting data from foreign markets online. (b) ICT tools like the Internet or video conferencing may be used to develop new class formats. Only recently, business student groups from four different universities (HEC Paris, WUT Warsaw, ESADE Barcelona and WU Vienna) were brought together in a virtual classroom over internet-operated videoconferencing to solve an international business case. Each session was chaired by a professor from one of the schools facilitating the discussion process in real time. Another option may be a course design, where student populations from two or more countries are invited and allowed to compete against each other in cross-national business simulations. Communication between the international student teams is most commonly facilitated through e-mail debates (Alon and Cannon 2000; Kim and Wood 1993). Similarly, course designs may incorporate work in multicultural teams – facilitated through ICT – and final meetings of participating students in the target area. (international project seminars combined with field trips), (c) one last option of using the new ICT tools to internationalize business education without leaving the home country would be to incorporate foreign long distance learning programs. ICT based courses offered through, for example, the University of Arizona or the Open University, may enhance the international focus within the regular business school curriculum.
When students seek international experience *abroad*, ICT may enhance this process in different ways. What applies to a certain extent to study abroad trips, is even more relevant to terms, semesters or study years abroad. When we follow the life cycle of a lengthier stay abroad, we can identify at least three different phases, where ICT may be implemented fruitfully: (a) in the preparation phase before leaving the country, the new technologies allow for very careful preparation in advance. Over the Internet, students may retrieve information on the country/culture of interest as detailed and customized as individually needed. Thus, students get a much clearer picture of what to expect and how to prepare for the stay abroad. The new tools might even be used to establish contacts with student organizations, faculty of host university, etc. and build friendships in the target country prior to departure.

(b) During the time abroad, ICT tools allow foreign students to tie back to knowledge obtained in the home culture. The Internet, for example, enables them to go back to local websites in order to retrieve local publications, data sets, company/country information etc. However, the significance of this effect will largely depend on the stage of development of the foreign student’s home country. For European or Japanese students going to the U.S., this will definitely be an important aspect, as it renders them a valuable resource in group assignments and project work. It may even allow to compensate for a lack in language proficiency and thus contribute to the synergy between local and foreign students (Ryland 1992).

(c) In the repatriation phase, this knowledge transfer will work vice versa. The strain of carrying class notes, books and paper back home with them made students often reluctant to return this paper-based knowledge to their home country. By means of the new technologies, it is possible to store a much larger amount of information on electronic media or using electronic file transfer, which facilitates the transfer to the home university. In addition, a lengthier stay abroad has most likely increased the student’s skills to access and retrieve information over the Internet in the host country. After returning back home, this expertise may be used to search for information in foreign countries more effectively. Apart from these benefits for the student’s immediate work, ICT tools such as e-mail allows them to maintain the social network developed in the host environment more efficiently than in the old days of letter writing or phone calls.

As outlined above, ICT has contributed significantly to the quality and degree of internationalization of students and university curricula. Although, generally speaking, the prevailing literature judges these influences very positively, we would like shed light on
potential downsides of the technological revolution and its impact on internationalization. In the following, we develop three propositions that are supposed to take a look at the other side of the coin. While the positive effects of ICT in the educational context have increasingly been researched empirically, the disadvantages still lack substantial empirical investigation. Therefore, these propositions may be understood thought provoking, rather than as empirically derived facts.

CAVEATS OF ICT’S IMPACT ON STUDENT AND BUSINESS CURRICULA’S INTERNATIONALIZATION - THE DARK SIDE OF THE COIN?

As pointed out in the previous section, ICT has contributed significantly to the quality and degree of internationalization of university curricula. While, in general, the prevailing literature judges this influences very positively, we take a different perspective of the technological revolution and its impact on internationalization. Therefore, the propositions outlined in the following should alert administrators and educators in international business programs and increase their sensibility with respect to the dark side of technological progress. Since the propositions are to a large extent based on anecdotal evidence, we also hope to stimulate scholarly work in that area of international education. Future research has to prove the legitimacy of our assumptions.

Following the different forms of international education taking place in the home country or abroad (see Figure 2), we identify alternative – less optimistic – effects of ICT on international education. To reduce complexity, we focus on the cross-cultural competence of international business students (see Figure 1), since these cognitive and affective skills are judged crucial for their educational progress and future career. Consequently, Proposition 1 deals with educational situations that use ICT in a home country context, whereas Propositions 2 to 4 focus on immediate exposure to one or more host cultures, as is the case in student exchange, study abroad and truly international business programs.
Proposition 1: ICT allow only virtual and/or non-authentic cultural exposure and, thus, lead to limited cross-cultural competence

In “internationalized” traditional business courses as well as new class formats and even in imported programs, the exposure to foreign cultures takes place under specific technical restrictions. It is highly questionable whether the use of the Internet to retrieve information from a different culture, the interaction with people from another culture only via ICT tools or the use of a distant learning program increases the cultural competence of business students. There is empirical evidence that e-mail debates organized for students from different countries lead to higher cultural sensitivity (Fritz 1995). However, whether this actually contributes to increased competence on the behavioral level, is highly questionable. There is no doubt that ICT tools are highly instrumental in the internationalization process of education. It may be argued, however, that this internationalization is rather simplistic and naive and that students involved obtain most likely a limited and biased impression of a specific foreign culture that way. Moreover, if students are not aware of this possible gap, they might feel satisfied with their educational achievements and find themselves in a false sense of security, although they lack considerable skills with respect to cultural interaction.

Beside the negative consequences outlined above, this somewhat “pseudo”-internationalization through using ICT may backfire even more. Students and educators may even refrain from immersing themselves more extensively in other cultural contexts through an stay abroad, as they subjectively feel well prepared for the challenges of the global business arena obtained through their “crash course” in the home environment. So in certain cases, ICT use might even provoke the perception of being culturally immersed, while staying in the well-know home environment.

When it comes to future research on this issue, scholars should focus on what kind of impact ICT has on the different forms of internationalization students and curricula. In this context, special attention has to be devoted not only on the cognitive, but also on the affective facets of cultural competence enhanced through this educational process. Valuable input may also come from investigating the consequences of cultural exposure achieved through applying ICT. Once, empirical evidence is put forward that the use of ICT hampers or fosters additional activities towards more cultural exposure, this will help to do justice to its use in the international educational process. As such, educators would be able to unveil false.
attributions with respect to the level of actual cultural immersion and help them counteract inaccurate images or stereotypes of certain cultures.

Proposition 2: ICT inhibits students’ cultural immersion in the host country

Today’s students are extremely skillful in using ICT for their personal communication and information needs. Already at home, they establish contacts with local and virtual peers over the Internet or via e-mail. They read online journals and watch satellite TV. What may have positive effects on their international orientation at home, may keep them away from immersing themselves into the host culture. As the Internet, e-mail or other communication technologies facilitate a quick and inexpensive information exchange with the home country, students may have less inclination to cope with the host culture. While physically they may have left their home country, they are still virtually and psychologically attached to it through ICT. In short, they use the familiar ICT tools to maintain their well-established connections. Therefore, they do not feel the need anymore to expose themselves to the tedious contacts with locals.

The general criticism against ICT applies to student interactions just as much. As Opaschowski (1994) has put it: “Mass media and ICT brings foreign worlds much closer, while at the same time our neighbor moves farther away, like the inhabitant of a foreign world.” This may hold true for international students too, as they bring a remote world – their home country – to their current location, while disregarding the contact with their “neighboring” fellow local students. They sacrifice virtual reality at the expense of the real outside world with its social network (Doering 1997). As a result, students may develop feelings of loneliness and isolation (Sinhart-Pallin 1990). Face-to-face communications are reduced to an absolute minimum and are replaced by artificial acquaintances and friendships. The natural communication environment is replaced by virtual communities, contacts become ubiquitous without substantiality (Mettler-Meilbom 1996).

Up to now, we have only very little empirical evidence on the effect of bringing ones own virtual communication and information network into a new social situation that requires acculturation in a host country. Future research should try to clarify the importance and direction of this effect. It is likely that certain variables influence and/or moderate the effect.
The status of the host as well as the home culture, the perceived distance between these cultures, and the individual acculturation stress might be typical examples.

**Proposition 3: ICT increases the ghetto effect of foreign students, while reducing the interaction within the ghetto and with local students**

As business schools, particularly in Europe and Asia, have a longstanding tradition of exchanging individual students from different origins and universities worldwide, they are familiar with the ghetto effect that occurs, as international students find themselves in a similar situation. They share similar experiences of adjusting themselves to a new cultural environment and coping with the challenges attached, such as different bureaucratic systems, different university organization or every-day-life problems such as housing, shopping or entertainment. So far this has led to a group building process among international students, which happened separately from the host country students.

While this ghetto building may not be judged a preferable development, it contributes to the learning experience of international students and eases their social life. Through these groups, they realize that their experiences in the host country are not unique, but shared or experienced by other students as well. Also, they have a chance to get in contact with students from other nations than just from the host country. So while the immersion into the host country culture may be achieved only to a limited extent, the interaction with other international students can partly offset these negative effects.

Again, while this segregation from the local student body might not be desirable and a second best alternative to cultural immersion, it serves several purposes as outlined above. However, these effects are jeopardized through ICT. Particularly, two developments may take place. First, these international student ghettos may not be as interactive any more, because the use of ICT tools covers their individual social needs to a considerable degree. Thus, less time is devoted to face-to-face interaction with peers. The outcome may be a reduced degree of interactivity within the international student community. Second, the psychic distance between the international student group and the locals may increase even more, as ICT links to the home country decrease the need for interaction with local students. Social interaction is derived from e-mail correspondence with colleagues at home and not through the tedious process of getting into contact with local peers.
Future research in this context should try to establish, whether and to what degree this competitive trade-off between ICT usage and the engagement in social activities prone to acculturation stress exists. Potential contributions in this field should elucidate if and to what extent the Internet, e-mail or other ICT tools provide a kind of “culturally safe haven”. Moreover, it should be clarified, whether foreign students turn to this haven, spend considerable time in the virtual world of their home culture and turn their back on the challenges to be faced in the host culture’s real world. Closely related to that question is the investigation of the ultimate consequences of such an emotional escapism: will it definitely lead to less interaction with locals and thus to a lower degree of cultural immersion, or might, on the contrary, the “safe haven” reduce stress and increase the individual’s motivation to explore the host culture? In that case the “portable” individual communication and information network would increase the student’s emotional stability and thus unleash the energy to overcome cultural barriers. It is anticipated that the cultures involved, their degree of difference, personal characteristics and situational aspects are the shaping variables in such a process.

Proposition 4: ICT increases local students’ xenophobia

The widespread use of ICT tools by local students may also lead to less personal interaction between students. This effect could be caused by the fact, for example, Internet usage and communication via e-mail etc. consume more of a student’s given time budget and therefore leave less time for face-to-face interaction. Beside the time aspect, the extensive usage of ICT might lead to individuals’ putting less and less emphasis on personal interaction and communication overall. Exploratory empirical evidence from a large European business school show, that local students are not overly motivated to meet with foreign students. In particular, they try to avoid to be integrated in project teams which include foreign students. The students interviewed substantiate their behavior with time pressure, which does not allow them to spend enough time with established friends, and with greater complexity of cooperation with foreign team members, leading to inefficient processes and hence pressurizing their time budget additionally (Moropulo 2000). In the light of these preliminary results, it is quite obvious that less interest in personal contacts and individual time constraints
caused by the importance and appreciation of new ICT tools will lead to less willingness of local students to engage in interaction with foreign students.

On a more positive note, a stream of research should investigate ICT’s frequently claimed impact on increasing the individual’s worldmindedness. A consequently higher level of worldmindedness should make foreign students more attractive to get in touch and communicate with for local students. Thus, they would more often be approached by local peers and included in social activities. Up to now, we have no indication that the use of the Internet and e-mail really influence worldmindedness. Especially for Internet users from larger industrialized countries like the U.S., Germany, the U.K. or France, it is highly questionable whether the net is widely used for purposes that go beyond national borders. This situation might be different in small or economically less-developed countries. However, both types of countries might not be considered primary targets for internationalizing business education: the former because of their almost “natural” inclination to open up to other countries/cultures due to the geographical and business limits in their home environment, the latter because of a lack of resources. Overall however, we see chances pretty high that the diffusion of ICT among business students will augment their xenophobic tendencies against foreign students rather than promote the opposite.

The proposed increase of students’ xenophobic tendencies towards foreign students spurs a lot of research questions. First of all, it would be valuable to have more information on the effects of using ICT on individual behavioral patterns, especially how these activities compete with other interests. Also, it would also be helpful to investigate individuals’ motivation to interact with foreign peers in more depth. In this context, the promotion of a large foreign student body by many university administrators need not necessarily increase a school’s attractiveness to local students. Moreover, such campaigns might have to be seen in a different light. If it does increase potential students’ positive feelings for a school, the question remains, how this general preference translates into actual behavior, such as approaching foreign peers, including them into social activities or cooperating with them during lectures, in group projects etc. Particular attention in all the questions raised has to be paid to the fact that countries differ in their attractiveness. To students, some cultures, such as for example the U.S., the U.K. or Germany, appear more sophisticated in terms of their business environment and thus render it more valuable to gain cultural competence in dealing with them than with other countries. Thus, we might get quite contradicting empirical
CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

There are a lot of strong indications that we will see a tremendous increase in the volume of world trade, the amount of foreign direct investment and cross-national mergers and acquisition in the future (e.g., Keegan and Schlegelmilch 2001; Mendenhall et al. 1995), which go beyond the already existing impressive level of economic cross-border transactions. Companies will need more and more employees who are able to act effectively in cross-culturally overlapping situations, to manage economic exchange processes across cultural boundaries and to run companies that literally span the world. Market oriented business schools have to pay attention to this trend and offer more programs focusing on international business. In doing that they will most likely use the new ICT tools to a much larger extent than today.

It goes without saying that international business education has to cover technical content, like concepts and methods relevant to international business operations. Equally important, however, is the delivery of specific social skills, including cognitive as well as affective aspects, which are related to the interaction with people from very diverse national environments. To reach these educational goals, a mix of teaching formats will be used, amongst whom are the provision of real life experiences (study tours, study abroad programs etc.) as well as the use of ICT tools in the field of business. Our paper identified some of the interaction effects between those two fields and identified positive relations, where direct exposure to foreign cultures was positively influenced by ICT, as well as downside effects in the sense that ICT may be counterproductive to the objectives of cultural exposure.

Very little empirical research has been done in that field. So our understanding of these interaction processes is limited. Future research should try to enhance our knowledge of the interplay between the use of technological tools and its effect on cultural exposure within international business education. This would first of all allow administrators and educators involved in such programs to develop more efficient programs, to supervise students in a more effective way and to create substantial synergies between technological advances and
state-of-the-art business. From the perspective of companies engaged in international business, more substantiated insights would help reshape international trainee programs, to restructure the way how foreign assignments are organized, as well as redesign cross-cultural management practices and processes.

A more profound understanding of ICT’s impact on the effects that stem from the use of new ITC tools in situations that require learning about, understanding and adjusting to local cultures might also be valuable for the development of new forms and tools to be used in international business education: virtual reality solutions might bring a completely new dimension to culture training in long distance education; ICT might help to overcome language barriers in international business negotiations; high-speed and high-volume data transfer might lead to unsought ways to handle cross-culturally overlapping interaction situations. In summary, knowledge, which is based on empirical research as outlined above, can serve as a valuable input for customizing technological advancements to the needs of students and educators in international business.


Grineski, Steve (1999), "Questioning the Role of Technology and Higher Education: Why is This the Road Less Traveled?," The Internet and Higher Education, 2 (1), 45-54.


VERZEICHNIS DER BISHER ERSCHIENENEN ARBEITSPAPIERE

Nr. 1 Holzmüller, Hartmut H.; Stöttinger, Barbara: Testing an Export Performance Modell in an International Setting – A Cross-National Comparison between Austria and the U.S., August 2001 (Schutzgebühr € 10,- ).

Nr. 2 Stöttinger, Barbara; Holzmüller, Hartmut H.: International Marketing Managers’ Cultural Sensitivity: Relevance, Training Requirements and an Pragmatic Training Concept, August 2001 (Schutzgebühr € 10,- ).

Nr. 3 Holzmüller, Hartmut H.; Stöttinger, Barbara; Wittkop, Thomas: Driving in the Passing Lane or Straight into a Dead End? – Options and Caveats of Using ICT Tools in the Internationalization of Business Education, August 2001 (Schutzgebühr € 10,- ).
It is highly questionable whether a higher ratio of foreign students in the student population really leads to a higher preference for this school. And if so, how does this general preference relate to behavioral patterns in distinct fields, courses (e.g. group projects) respect to expertise in business and management problems as well as cultural exposure in order to gain in cultural competence.