

**THE USE OF A GLOBAL BUSINESS PRACTICUM IN PROMOTING
INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCE**

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Abstract

Higher levels of education for international business require that students experience what it is like to work in another country. One way to meet this need is through a business practicum, in which students work on a project assigned by a sponsoring company. A business practicum abroad provides an opportunity for students to apply business principles while they learn about the decision-making process and work environment in another country. This paper reports the results of a collaborative practicum between universities in the United States and Croatia. The practicum achieves several goals on the part of students, faculty, the universities and the government of Croatia.

Key words:

Business education
Education policy
Croatia
MBA program
Curriculum
Americans abroad
Exchange program
International

Introduction

Effective education for international business involves three levels: awareness, understanding and competence. The most basic level, awareness, is the most easily achieved, usually by infusion of international elements into academic disciplines. More advanced levels – understanding and competence – are more difficult to achieve because they require some degree of exposure to other cultures and institutions. It has been a challenge for US-based business schools to provide understanding and competence in global education because of the time and expense of taking students outside the US.

One method of promoting understanding and competence has been the use of a work-directed team project in a foreign country, in which a team of students acts as consultants for a business. For many years academic institutions have used team-oriented domestic work projects as a vehicle for allowing students to implement business principles learned in the classroom. Recently, some universities have begun to offer projects abroad so that students are exposed to another country's business principles, culture and institutions.

A project abroad has been shown to be an effective method of education as part of active learning. In active learning the emphasis shifts from teaching to learning as students develop skills in thinking critically, teamwork, problem solving and communication. In an international setting, active learning adds the dimension of learning about international business. Students learn to adapt to a different culture, work ethic and behavior.

This paper describes a collaborative effort between a US-based graduate school of business and a Croatia-based economics school to provide students from both universities with an opportunity to conduct a real-world project. The collaboration is

modeled after the practicum used in medical schools – an opportunity to practice skills learned in the classroom by applying them to living situations. In the first section we discuss the need for travel abroad as a method for promoting understanding and competence in international business education. Next, we discuss the use of work-directed teams in providing an opportunity for students to apply principles learned in the classroom to an actual business situation and introduce the concept of a business practicum. In the subsequent section we extend the business practicum model into an international setting by describing the collaboration between universities in the US and Croatia. Finally, we provide some lessons learned through the collaboration and evaluate the success of the practicum according to the four stakeholders – students, faculty, the universities and the government of Croatia.

Developing Global Competence

The goal of international education is to develop executives prepared to make decisions in a world that is no longer limited by borders and nationalities. International education can be thought of as a spectrum of three concepts: awareness, understanding and competence (Kedia and Cornwell, 1994). As the curriculum moves from awareness to competence the level of knowledge and ability to function internationally increase, but so does the amount of resources required to provide that knowledge and ability. Global competence is the most advanced level of international mindset, but requires that students work in a different country so that when they graduate they have a more advanced knowledge of culture, institutions and business practices. According to Kedia and Cornwell, global awareness can be attained through domestic study and exposure to international students in a domestic setting. Global understanding can be enhanced when students travel abroad for language or study-abroad programs, but to achieve competence a student must actually work in another country.

When students have awareness, they know that decisions they make as managers have an impact internationally (Kedia and Harveston, 1998). Students with understanding are able to act upon their knowledge of the differences between cultures. When students develop competence, they can work in an international setting, including use of the language.

Nash (1997) describes roles that students, faculty and universities ought to play in globalizing the curriculum. One of his suggestions for promoting international understanding is for universities to offer travel abroad in the form of one- or two-week trips. In a well-publicized indictment of such study trips, Mangan (1997) says that the typical two-week trip has marginal educational benefit and amounts to little more than glorified sight seeing. Muuka, Harrison and Hassan (1999) counter by arguing that lectures, on-site industry visits and cultural excursions “serve many useful educational purposes” (p. 241). Furthermore, even short visits help students understand the “intricacies of international business through exposure to foreign cultures and business practices” (p. 241). Two-week study abroad trips expose students to many of the basic principles of international business highlighted by Aggarwal (1989): exchange rates; restrictions on cross-border flows of people and merchandise; and the legal, cultural, political and economic differences resulting from operating in two or more environments. We contend that short trips can be coupled with consulting projects to provide students with sufficient international exposure to move from awareness to understanding.

Kwok, Arpan and Folks (1993) say that curriculum internationalization is a key component of business school internationalization. Curriculum internationalization can be achieved by adding international dimensions to existing courses; by offering an introductory international business course; by offering specialized international courses in disciplines; and by incorporating non-business courses such as history, language and geography. They say that the most effective way to deepen students’ understanding of

international business is to offer out-of-country experiences. These can be exchange programs, in which students attend a partner university in another country, or internships, in which students work abroad. Kwok, Arpan and Folks' survey revealed that although 33% of the universities in their sample offered foreign internships, only 2% of undergraduate and 3% of master's level students took advantage of them. Although Kwok, Arpan and Folks do not offer an explanation for these low levels of participation, we think they may be due to the cost of internships to both the university and the student. It appears that a more cost-effective method must be found to give the benefits of an out-of-country experience to a greater percentage of students.

Another direction for achieving internationalization is through study-abroad programs (SAP), in which students live in another country for a period of time. In discussing the implementation of SAPs, Henthorne, Miller and Hudson (2001) point out that students benefit from extensive exposure to a different culture, its history and its institutions. Douglas and Jones-Ridders (2001) examine the effect of SAPs on students' global perspectives. Not surprisingly, they discover that students participating in SAPs develop greater world-mindedness compared to students without international experience. We point out that world-mindedness is part of global awareness, which is not the same as global competence. Moreover, we believe that because SAPs do not involve work, students do not experience the business culture and decision-making processes of another country, so SAPs are not as valuable as international work experience.

An international skill set requires cultural sensitivity, leadership and the ability to manage communication and innovation (Kedia, Harveston and Bhagat, 2001). Clearly, these advanced managerial skills cannot be attained in the absence of work experience in another country. Kedia, Harveston and Bhagat say that overseas trips and SAPs can

help develop global understanding. An unfortunate fact pointed out in Kwok, Arpan and Folks' research is that SAPs do not achieve a high level of student participation.

In summary, developing competence in international education requires contact with people in a working environment outside one's native country. It would be best if students were able to work for several months in another country, but this may not be feasible or possible. In the absence of work experience or an opportunity to study abroad for an extended period, a study trip of shorter duration may be an alternative because students still are exposed to aspects of international business beyond what they can experience domestically.

Work Directed Teams

Work-directed team projects, in which students work on a project proposed by a sponsoring company, have been used as a means of imparting international principles for more than two decades. Such projects have had a variety of names in the literature, such as client-sponsored projects (Frear and Metcalf, 1988), commissioned projects (Shi and Siu, 2001) and practica (Kedia and Harveston, 1998). As early as 1980 Richardson and Raveed describe the use of client-sponsored research projects in the form of 'live cases' as a means of allowing students to work on new product introductions for actual companies. Frear and Metcalf expand the concept by incorporating international aspects into research projects in order to help students "acquire an understanding of another country's cultural, political, and economic environments" (Frear and Metcalf, 1988, p. 23). Unfortunately, the international project was done in a domestic classroom so that students did not benefit from direct exposure to another country's culture, political or economic environments. The projects enhanced the students' international awareness but not necessarily their understanding or competence.

Kedia and Harveston (1998) propose that business schools become more like medical schools by integrating teaching, research and practice. They argue that team projects provide a vehicle for applying international business principles much like a medical practicum, while enabling students to learn and develop skills in international business. Furthermore, work-directed teams are student-centered rather than faculty-centered in that they focus on student learning rather than faculty imparting knowledge. Students encounter problems that tend to be more interdisciplinary, falling outside the boundaries of traditional academic departments. Work projects also focus on application rather than theory, forcing students to apply what they have learned in the classroom. Kedia and Harveston support the contention that overseas trips help students achieve international understanding. The most advanced level of international education, global competence, can be achieved when students are able to live and work in another culture. We point out that work projects abroad enable students to work and live briefly in another country, so may be a way to move toward competence.

In an article about short overseas programs, Sarathy (1990) describes an exchange program between Northeastern University in the US and Ecole Supérieur de Commerce, Reims, France. The major team feature of the collaboration is that students work in multi-cultural teams to insure that students are exposed to work habits from other countries. However, students work on a term paper and presentations rather than on a business problem, so they do not benefit from learning how to apply theoretical principles to business situations. Sarathy says that a more advanced step is to organize overseas business internships that would give students the experience of working in a foreign environment. We contend that a business practicum helps realize this goal, albeit for a shorter period of time than an internship.

Saben (2000) reviews work-directed projects in a marketing class at Duquesne University in the US. Because the project is oriented toward an actual business problem

and a business executive leads students through the process, students gain insight into the application of business principles as well as an awareness of global business. Unfortunately, the course is taught domestically so students do not necessarily develop understanding or competence.

Shi and Siu (2001) discuss commissioned business projects in Hong Kong as part of the action learning approach. The advantages of these projects are that students gain practical knowledge, a deeper understanding of business skills, and an increased ability to integrate knowledge from diverse sources. Shi and Siu argue that these projects ought to be an integral part of the curriculum because they allow students to apply what they are learning. We argue that by extending commissioned projects to the international arena, there is the advantage of providing students with work experience or exposure to students and executives from another country.

Action learning means involving students directly in the learning process and causing them to reflect on what they are learning. It includes interactive learning, cooperative learning, case-based learning, problem-based learning, and other pedagogical techniques that encourage students to analyze and think critically, solve problems, communicate, synthesize and integrate knowledge from various disciplines. Faculty members often act as consultants; they use these active learning techniques to accommodate students' diverse talents and ways of thinking (Kolb, 1984).

We conclude that work-directed teams represent a viable method for imparting skills that students cannot effectively practice in class, so they move beyond accumulation of knowledge. The work effort focuses on application of business principles rather than development of theory. The projects frequently require an interdisciplinary approach, forcing students to think and act outside the bounds of narrow disciplinary constraints. When the work-directed team is global, the skills include communication, management and coordination across cultures. As we show in the next

section, collaborations with students from foreign universities can enhance the learning experience.

Global Business Practicum

Since 1991, the graduate school of business at Rollins College in the US has offered a course called Global Business Practicum. Teams of MBA students travel abroad to work on a business problem proposed by a sponsoring company and with the coordination (but not the direction) of a faculty member. Some of these practica have been in developing countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America. Students receive academic credit for the course and the sponsoring organization receives a written and oral final report addressing the problem presented in the agreement.

Students have consulted with many different entities, including banks, manufacturing companies, governments, private schools, professional practices, tourist organizations and hospitals. Projects have included preparation of feasibility studies, financial analyses, marketing plans, business plans, seminars and social programs. The primary benefit from the student's point of view is the opportunity to apply principles learned in the classroom to a live business problem. They become consultants. Students also benefit from interaction with foreign managers and executives and the exposure to a foreign culture, and quickly become aware of the difficulty American business executives encounter when working in a country whose language, culture and business practices they do not understand.

Since the academic year 1999/2000, the Faculty of Economics and Tourism (FET) in Pula, Croatia has actively participated in a global practicum in which students from FET collaborate with students from the graduate school of business of Rollins College. The practicum is titled "Collaborative Student and Faculty Experiential Exchange" and was initially supported in part by a grant from the Fulbright Foundation.

More than 30 FET and 25 Rollins students and faculty have participated in the program during the three years it has been in effect. A common characteristic of Pula and Winter Park is tourism. Pula is a tourist resort on the Adriatic Sea; Winter Park is adjacent to Orlando, one of the world's major tourist attractions and the site of numerous theme parks. Students usually work on projects relating to tourism. The program consists of two parts: 1) Rollins College students enroll in the Global Business Practicum course and travel to Pula accompanied by a professor, to work with Croatian students on a project for a Croatian client, and 2) students and faculty from FET travel to Winter Park to study and observe tourism.

For the Collaborative Student and Faculty Experiential Exchange, the host university houses the visiting students with local families. In Croatia the host usually is the family of the Croatian student working on the project. Living with a host family adds a personal dimension to the experience of living in another country, keeps students out of hotels, and immerses them in the family lives of their teammates. American students develop an understanding of life in Croatia, of the differences between generations raised under communism or under capitalism, and of the language difficulties in a foreign country. (Fortunately, most young Croatians speak English as a second or third language; not many US students speak Croatian.) Students and faculty from FET in turn live with host families in the US when they visit Winter Park. Living with a host family not only enhances the educational mission, it also leads to close friendships between guests and hosts.

The Global Business Practicum offers numerous desirable features that meet several of the goals described in the previous section:

- Because it is a consulting project, the practicum is learning-centered, forcing students to use many of the skills of action learning such as critical thinking, communication, problem solving and synthesis.

- Because the consulting project cuts across disciplinary lines, students must utilize interdisciplinary problem-solving skills.
- Because it involves work, the practicum goes beyond a two-week tour of a country with company visits as the focus.
- Because students work outside of the United States, they are exposed to business practices and decision processes of another country.
- Because the out-of-country time is two weeks, the practicum is more cost-effective than an internship, while achieving many of the same objectives.
- The practicum has the unanticipated result of furthering a goal of the government of Croatia to modernize the system of higher education.

Educational Reform in Croatia

Although there are many forces working to reform education in Croatia, there is no doubt that the Collaborative Student and Faculty Experiential Exchange has made a significant contribution toward the goal of reform. As in other Eastern European countries, centralized control, pedantic pedagogy, absence of autonomy and lack of funding have typified Croatia's higher education system. A common characteristic of higher education in planned economies was that the system was geared toward producing a predetermined number of graduates with training specified by the government (Woodard, 2002). Because government ministries were (and continue to be) the main source of financing for higher education, centralized control permeated the system. Individual universities were left with little autonomy and little authority to make decisions independent of the ministry. This bred a culture of lack of innovation and risk-taking (Ledic, Rafajac and Kovac, 1999).

The classroom environment continued the tradition of centralized control. Most classes were directive rather than participative. Professors lectured and students listened passively when they attended at all. The emphasis was on memorization rather than on developing skills in critical thinking, independence of thought and an ability to deal with differing points of view (Bollag, 1996).

Tuition is rarely charged for university education in Croatia, leaving the ministry as the sole source of financing. Because higher education has not been spared from the lack of financial resources facing Eastern European countries, this has led to buildings needing repair, lack of modern equipment and libraries, and low salaries (Bollag, 1999).

The Ministry of Science, Education and Technology in Croatia has recognized many of these deficiencies and has initiated efforts to reform higher education such as encouraging alternative pedagogical approaches, disseminating the use of technology and empowering local universities to be creative within the general educational policy of the government (Krbec, 2001). The Ministry funds a significant portion of the cost for students and faculty from FET when they travel to the United States. The Ministry also has encouraged FET to develop a master's program in business, which is leading to a more innovative curriculum, modernization of teaching styles and more widespread use of technology.

Evaluation of the Collaboration

The collaboration between Rollins College and the Faculty of Economics and Tourism can be evaluated according to four criteria for the four constituencies involved in the collaboration (Exhibit 1). The criteria are fulfillment of the educational mission, globalization, usability and cost. The educational missions of the two universities and the government of Croatia drive the decisions made about programs and curriculum. Two of the strategies of both universities are to internationalize the curriculum and to enhance

the global reputations of the universities. Usability is important because the collaboration is beneficial when it leads to results that can be used by students, faculty and administrators at the universities and the government. Finally, the collaboration must be cost-effective if it is to be viable in the long run and overcome some of the problems associated with international internships. A model that is cost-effective, useful and furthers the institutional mission can be applied at other universities.

The constituents are students, faculty, the educational institutions and the government of Croatia. Each of these constituencies has a different view of the outcome and their evaluations may be different from one another. We evaluated the program through several means, including course evaluation forms for students, discussions with administrators and faculty, and feedback from representatives of the government.

The fundamental criterion is how well the program fulfills the educational mission of that constituent. At the student level the mission is to allow the student to develop skills in critical thinking, to think across disciplinary and national boundaries, and to apply principles learned in the classroom. The educational mission for faculty is to broaden the classroom environment beyond lecturing, to enhance teaching skills and to learn to teach in English. The university's educational mission is to broaden and modernize its curriculum, to develop a degree of autonomy as allowed by the ministry, and to build a quality graduate program by attracting foreign and domestic students. The government through the Ministry of Science is modernizing the higher education system in Croatia in an effort to improve the quality of education.

Globalization is important enough to be considered as a separate criterion even though it is part of the educational mission, because understanding and competence are higher levels of international education. Students and faculty need to gain exposure to other cultures as part of developing global competency. FET wants to become a graduate school capable of attracting students from outside Croatia, but to do so it must

expand its curriculum and encourage alternative pedagogy. The government wants to prepare Croatia to compete globally but to do so it needs to develop a cadre of managers trained in modern management.

One measure of the collaboration's success is whether each of the parties uses what it learns. Students develop a skill set they did not have before, which will enable them to become better managers. Faculty learn new pedagogy that they can use in the classroom. FET can use the collaboration as a recruiting tool in attracting students and faculty. The collaboration benefits the local economy if the results of the projects are implemented by the tourism industry. The government benefits from a paradigm that can be replicated at other universities.

Cost is an important consideration because the goal is to develop a program that can be generalized throughout the curriculum. If the program provides educational benefits that justify its costs, it may be possible to require such experience of all students. The major cost component is travel, including airline flights to the other country and transportation within the country. In-country transportation is especially costly in the US, which does not have the urban concentration typical of European cities. US students participating in the global business practicum are charged the total cost of the trip. Because income levels in Croatia are much lower than those in the US, it is difficult to charge each Croatian student the total cost of a visit to the United States. Some of the cost is financed from in-kind contributions and a grant from the Ministry of Science and was initially underwritten by the grant from the Fulbright Foundation.

	Student	Faculty	University	Government
Educational Mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn to think critically. 2. Gain international competence. 3. Apply business principles. 4. Generalize across disciplinary boundaries. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the learning environment in the school and classroom. 2. Develop skills in teaching. 3. Conduct class in English. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modernize curriculum. 2. Develop autonomy. 3. Attract quality students. 4. Build graduate program. 5. Help ensure a quality program. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modernize Croatia's system of higher education. 2. Improve quality of education. 3. Encourage diversity of pedagogy. 4. Disseminate technological innovation. 5. Decentralize authority.
Globalization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gain cross-cultural exposure. 2. Broaden personal outlook. 3. Understand another culture, people, history, religion, language. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gain cross-cultural exposure. 2. Deepen understanding of theory and practice of business. 3. Understand another economic system. 4. Practice or learn a foreign language. 5. Understand another culture, people, history, religion. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop global reputation. 2. Expand scope of curriculum. 3. Attract foreign students. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare the nation for global competition. 2. Develop cadre of proficient manager.
Usability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop usable skill set. 2. Improve understanding of other cultures. 3. Improve communication skills. 4. Integrate material from variety of courses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand pedagogy skill set. 2. Expand global skill set. 3. Expand relations with business community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruiting tool. 2. Produce better graduates. 3. Attract and retain qualified faculty. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop better-educated citizenry. 2. Improve business climate. 3. Develop curriculum that can be replicated elsewhere. 4. Promote the country's culture and attractions. 5. Develop tourism industry.
Cost	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investment in foreign travel yields once-in-lifetime experience. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unique opportunity. 2. Requires effort and preparation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High value means of achieving educational mission. 2. Improve relations with business community. 3. Opportunity for outside funding. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investment improves global skills of managers. 2. Costs shared by partner university. 3. Significant in-kind support. 4. Bring economic value to the country.

Exhibit 1. Criteria for evaluating Rollins / FET collaboration.

Examples of Issues Raised by the Collaboration

The global business practicum at Rollins and the collaboration between Rollins and FET provide numerous illustrations of what can be learned about international business by students participating in work-directed projects. The learning experience is particularly enlightening for US students visiting an Eastern European country emerging from a planned economic system. Sending US students to developing countries is highly beneficial to students and can be valuable to the sponsoring organizations. The collaboration also provides insight into the problems facing the Ministry of Science in Croatia as it attempts to modernize the system of higher education.

The Crummer Graduate School of Business at Rollins College offered the first Global Business Practicum in 1991 with a project at Euro Disney in Paris. Beginning in 1992 faculty and MBA students from Rollins College conducted the first of what would become annual global business practica in Eastern Europe by visiting Bulgaria. In 1999 the focus of the practica shifted to Croatia, leading to the collaboration with the Faculty of Economics and Tourism. Visiting both Bulgaria and Croatia provides an opportunity to compare formerly centrally planned countries and to contrast them with the capitalist system. Moreover, visiting a country over a period of years affords an opportunity to witness economic development as it occurs. In the following sections we provide anecdotes about our experiences with the global business practicum in both countries.

Economic systems

During the Soviet era of central planning, Bulgarian companies were accustomed to setting prices at 20 percent above production cost. After the collapse of the Soviet system, many of these companies lost their captive customers and sales declined. With declining production and high fixed costs, their product cost per unit went up, so in keeping with custom, they raised prices to maintain the 20 percent margin. The student

consultants had to teach management that raising prices reduced demand, so to attract customers the firm should cut costs and lower its prices.

In Bulgaria, the manager of a bank plagued by bad debts explained that the defaults were due to the bank's clients selling products to foreign customers on open account. When the bank's clients could not collect the accounts they had to default on loans to the bank. When students asked why the companies and bank did not use letters of credit, the bank's executives informed them that they did not know what a letter of credit was.

In the case of a Bulgarian manufacturer with four product divisions, our student consultants asked if the company sent representatives to potential customers as part of their marketing program. The president of the company responded that such direct solicitations would not be appropriate. "If they want our products they come to us. It is inappropriate to ask someone to buy our products." The consultants had a hard time explaining that providing potential customers with information about the company's products was a valuable business practice that benefited both the company and the potential customer.

In contrast to the experiences in Bulgaria, students going to Croatia encountered an economy that had a high degree of small-scale free enterprise even during the communist period. In Croatia, students learned about the constraints facing business executives when the state tries to control all aspects of business through laws, regulations, and unimaginable bureaucratic obstacles. Whereas a corporation can be formed in the United States in a week or two, six to nine months is a normal period in Croatia. Simply getting a document notarized can be a burden and is expensive.

In attempting to import a gift of computers for a Croatian university, it was impossible to get a certificate for duty-free import because no Croatian government official could find a law permitting issuance of the certificate. After many delays the

American Embassy in Zagreb located an agreement between the US and Croatia requiring such gifts to be free of duty. When a student showed the agreement to the customs office, the certificate was issued. It was a lesson in the obstacles put in the way of progress by centralized bureaucracies.

Educational system

Croatian law requires students to have oral examinations at the end of the year, and this is the sole means of evaluating student performance. Examinations or other methods of student assessment can be given during the term but they cannot be included as part of the student's grade for the course. Therefore, many students do not attend classes during the term but focus their preparation for the examination at the end of the year. Faculty members spend an inordinate amount of time on this task because each student must be examined individually. Moreover, students can repeat the examination three times, and many take the first examination without much preparation, just to experience what it is like, knowing that they can return again and again.

Allowing other means of assessment of student performance requires a change in the law on the part of the government. Such a change will encourage faculty to experiment with periodic examinations, class discussions, written and oral presentations and team projects as methods of evaluating students. Students will benefit as the educational experience moves from merely accumulating knowledge toward higher forms of learning such as application and analysis of what they learn.

When the Croatians visit Rollins College one of the requirements is for the students and faculty to attend classes to observe how they are conducted in the US. After the first such experience, FET's dean commented, "we'll have to change some of our teaching approaches." Another group visited an accounting class in which the professor involves students in considerable discussion. Later the group attended an

economics course in which students were making presentations. The Croatian students, who are well trained in economics but rarely speak in class, participated actively in the presentations by asking questions of the presenting team. The professor in charge of the visiting group observed the increased learning that took place with student participation, and by the next year had incorporated some of the techniques in her class.

Use of Technology

Traditionally, education in Croatia has consisted of professors lecturing to a class of students taking notes. The class might or might not require students to have a textbook to study. Cases, class discussions, study groups, and interaction during class are largely nonexistent. When a faculty member from Rollins College visited FET in 1999, FET faculty and students were able to observe the professor accompanying his lectures with a portable projector and laptop computer showing Power Point slides for the class. The class was surprised when the professor asked individual students to respond to a question he posed, then encouraged others to join in the discussion. By the following year, a classroom at FET had been equipped with a computer and ceiling-mounted projector, and students were able to access at least one professor's Power Point presentations on the Internet.

Development of a Graduate Program

In 2002 the Croatian Ministry of Science allowed FET to design a curriculum for an MBA program. The benefit to Croatia will be to develop managers with modern, sophisticated skills. Improved teaching and learning practices are clearly central to the achievement of any reform activity. Faculty must learn to lead discussions rather than lecture, and to have their ideas questioned and challenged without taking offense. If an international student body is desired, classes must be conducted in English, but many of

the existing faculty may not be capable of doing so in a credible manner without additional training. The requirement for individual oral examination might have to be changed.

The curriculum must be expanded and modernized. The curriculum ought to train students in critical thinking skills, teamwork, oral and written communication, as well as applying business principles. FET professors visiting Rollins College have seen the high level of interaction between the business school and the business community, and they realize that such a relationship ought to be cultivated in Pula. The Croatian business community is not accustomed to having a close relationship to academia, nor to providing financial support such as scholarships, internships, and awards for students or professors.

Summary

Work-directed projects such as the global business practicum promote understanding and competence, the higher levels of education in international business. In working on a project students go beyond simply reading and discussing international business; they experience it. They learn skills that take them across disciplines and national boundaries.

Collaborating on a practicum with students from a foreign university is a way to enhance the lessons of international business. Now students learn about different work habits, customs, and attitudes that prevail in the foreign environment and how these differences affect business decisions. The collaboration between Rollins and the Faculty of Economics and Tourism has contributed toward global competence in the students and faculty from both schools.

Such collaboration provides an opportunity for a university to encourage educational innovation and global competence. Both participants – Rollins and FET –

have included in their missions a desire to implement global training into the curriculum. Both universities also encourage broader, innovative pedagogy and want to foster a learning-centered approach to education. The global business practicum helps accomplish those goals.

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