Training Students for a Globalized Workforce

Aspen D'Costa

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Abstract

There seems to be a great deal of curiosity amongst educators and the general population alike, to find out how much education is necessary in a globalized world (Masschelein, Simons 2002). Students who graduate into today's world, enter an era which is vastly different from what it used to be twenty years ago. The emergence of Asia and globalization of other economies, have brought about 3 billion people competing for jobs in the world. One in five United States (US) jobs is associated with international trade, and since most of the growth is expected to take place in overseas markets, the industry needs a workforce with international competence. According to the Committee for Economic Development, to be successful in the US marketplace, industries are scouting for employees with multilingual skills and a good understanding of various cultures, which is an added impetus to work efficiently within international businesses.

The US education system needs to put forth a strong response towards globalization and a curriculum with an international focus, sets them well to compete and work with emerging markets, which have already raised their levels of education in preparing students for a globalized future. General knowledge and the ability to communicate in several commonly spoken languages are equally important as knowledge and experience in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields. International schools and internationalizing educational curriculum has been a very popular option among educators, which not only makes learning enjoyable but also gives the student an opportunity to broaden their views about the world. Over the years, the US education system has adapted well to the agricultural and industrial age, however the need of the hour today is to train and prepare students for a Globalized Age (Stewart 2007).

This study seeks to analyze the chief core competencies which students require for a globalized workforce. Incompetency in dealing with international clients and working with people around the world could result in abject failure, for the company as well as the employee.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the basic educational requirements, which will determine performance optimality for a college student as a workforce individual, in a globalized world? This study seeks to analyze what the basic education and skill set which an individual must attain in order to be competent in a globalized workforce.

2. What are the various methods of communication technology students could utilize for networking with peers in other countries? This study seeks to analyze various methods for students to network with their respective peers across the globe.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

This study is conducted to gain insight into the basic educational needs for a student to be competent in a globalized workforce market. The rationale for this study is to analyze a chief skill set for a student to be successful in a globalized workforce. The identification of the interactive nature between students and communication technologies will also be analyzed. It is hoped that this research paper will identify relevant methods in preparing students for a globalized workforce.

This research does not use a time study approach to quantify efficiency amongst students once they enter the workforce. Whether the results can be generalized for various students across the US, is yet to be ascertained and analyzed.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Globalization: The method of integrating businesses and manpower from countries all around the globe.

Job Security: Maintain continuity in a job which is especially threatened due to economic problems.

Virtual Organization: Businesses that operate mainly using computers and electronic communication.

Curriculum: Content within a set of courses

Maquiladora: Operation that involves manufacturing in a country that is not the clients

Internationalization: Respect and understanding of differences and similarities between and among nations

Ever since world-wide economic crises have become a cyclical phenomenon, organizations try to cope with increasing competition on the international production market. Elementary production work is being transferred to low-income countries on a more frequent basis as organizations try to become lean and more efficient (Hesselink, Vuuren 1999). In this age of inevitable change, organizations require a workforce that is highly skilled, flexible and adaptable (Fay 2006). With information available at the speed of light, it is imperative that we try to improve the training for the newly entering workforce, by catering to their most basic needs.

The current workforce is constantly changing due to globalization and with means of communication very accessible in most corners of the globe; the world is getting much smaller than what it was twenty years ago. The human capital marketplace is in a transitional state and shows no signs of settling in the near future especially with the introduction of changing technologies everyday (Chou 2008). The current workforce in the US in undergoing many transformations. With the baby boomer population retiring and a younger workforce entering a labor market which changes dynamically, there is a dire need for understanding how we can best train professionals despite the many existing constraints. The new buzzword at least around the US is Innovation and this takes a lot of motivation for employees to contribute towards thinking out of the box.

Domestic and National borders are fast disappearing with faster transportation methods. Many firms now look around the globe for partnerships, nexuses and do not restrict themselves to one particular region. Manufacturing and other divisions of a company are located strategically in various parts of the world, thus giving them a competitive advantage in the economic marketplace. 'Virtual Organizations' by several multinational organizations is an efficient method in creating jobs and savings for a company without investing in their country of origin Ex: Microsoft, Cisco, IBM etc.

The American economy has a come a long way from what was a completely agrarian, requiring manual skills to Silicon Valley where Virtual business is the new trend. The industrial revolution introduced machine power, mass production, and assembly lines during several decades of American manufacturing. One of the most notable transformations in the U.S. labor market since World War II has been the rising share of employment in the services industry and the declining share in manufacturing (Kim et al., 2007). The number of jobs in the Service

industry is rising faster than any other area of the economy and thus it could be said that the US

is quickly turning into a service economy (Sayer, Marshall, Barnett 2007). In 1945, the service

industry accounted for 10% of nonfarm employment, compared with 38% for manufacturing. By

1996, the services industry accounted for 29% of nonfarm employment, and manufacturing, at

18%, actually was somewhat smaller than retail trade (Kim et al., 2007).

Contracting operations to firms in developing nations where labor is much cheaper is a

very common trend with businesses. When workers are paid one tenth of costs of what is paid in

the US for performing a task, plants will eventually shut down as profits are the main goal for

most organizations. Maquiladoras along the Mexican side of the border from Texas to California

are an important avenue of outsourcing for most American businesses. The minimal trade

restrictions and the geographical advantage of these regions have helped create many jobs on the

other side of the border in Mexico. Globalization sometimes has an economic leveling effect,

where the standard of living drops in one part of the world but increases in another part.

In July 2003, India announced 30,000 new jobs where most of them were being

outsourced from the US. During the same time period a total of 226,435 American jobs were

being lost. Businesses have clearly been attracted to low cost talent and countries like India and

China have been producing them in surplus. The term Life time employment has been replaced

with Life time employability.

Another definition of globalization is the method of integrating businesses and manpower

from countries all around the globe that operate industriously. With the expansion of

globalization companies have begun to examine carefully for job functions which can be

outsourced to low wage, high productivity countries. Due to cost of living and standards, it is

usually very expensive to get tasks carried out in US and countries such as India and China, have a plethora of individuals who are well trained in technologies and work for pennies on the dollar.

Globalization has also given rise to Great-Localizers, which are businesses that take advantage of globalization by collaborating with other companies around the world to bring work back to the local economy (Hafner, Owens 2008). Many businesses are influenced greatly with developing technologies and that demands industries have continuous adaptation. Most managers are looking forward towards development within Information Technology (IT) based tools and techniques to improve performance within organizations (Mamaghani 2007). With the advent of newer technologies such as task reducing robots and high speed communication tools, jobs have been created with a need for comprehensive technological knowledge; and gives a potentially divided workforce, which is computer trained, the ability to learn newer technologies and an unskilled, technologically challenged workforce. Most businesses rationalize that it is a normal process of market capitalism to destroy and create jobs. Just as businesses change often to survive, workers must also adapt to survive (Sue, Parham, Santiago 1998).

Designing curriculum to adopt globalization within schools is an important necessity for students to remain competitive in the global market. At a university level there are several international engineering programs in the US which are usually combinations of the Bachelor of Science (BS) in engineering and Bachelor of Arts (BA) liberal arts degree programs (Vohra, Kasuba, Vohra 2006). There is an increased reliance on the ability to construct partnerships and alliances across various departments in a university to offer a wide variety of pertinent international education courses. Internationalized curriculum can be defined as content with international orientation primarily aimed at preparing students for a professional or social realm

in an international and multicultural context. Internationalized curriculum is not only designed for domestic students but foreign students as well (Briguglio 2007).

Courses can range from international languages spoken commonly around the world, World Geography, Multiculturalism and real-time case studies, where students specializing in a particular area of expertise can contribute to current and impending issues around the globe. The US has a very large Hispanic population, who mainly communicate in Spanish. Spanish has been emphasized as a second language within several schools across the US, which also gives students an ability to communicate with the rest of the Latin American population around the globe. With increasing trade with China and close to a billion speakers of Mandarin around the globe, it would serve as an undue advantage for students in the US to learn a popular language as such.

There have been several surveys (Ex: Asia Society, National Geographic-Roper) conducted, which have indicated that students from US, lack World Geography knowledge compared to other industrialized nations and thus the need for emphasis on the former subject cannot be stressed enough. Multiculturalism broadens a domestic student's point of view of different cultures and encourages them to them coexist in harmony with a divergent community, relating to cross cultural aspects of society such as business, art and social welfare. Real-time case studies can apply to a broad range of disciplines where students can aid in solving global issues using their area of expertise. Economic and Finance students can make recommendations to improve economic situations in poverty-stricken areas of the globe by analyzing specific issues. Issues with infrastructures in developing nations could be addressed by engineering students, across various universities in the US. Health and Medical students can combat various epidemics and fatal diseases around the globe by participating in current issues.

Domestic students in any given country are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to compete in a globalized world with an international curriculum. An inquiry about the flexibility of a program to incorporate a study abroad program needs to be analyzed by educational institutions, but where it is not viable for students to travel and participate in study abroad programs, communication technology based alternatives such as video-conferencing needs to be encouraged by educational institutions. Students in a classroom from the US can communicate via virtual conferencing with students in China and other parts of the globe, which makes it a fascinating and inexpensive experience for students to share their culture with their peers half way across the globe. Various exercises such as debates and discussion of current issues through video-conferencing can be easily achieved. Through virtual computing, students can work on several technical issues in collaboration with their peers in different corners of the globe.

The universities in the US have always been a premier destination for international students, who not only increase diversity in classrooms, but also act as a vibrant source of information and cultural exchange for domestic US students. Recruitment of international students needs to be encouraged in educational institutions as they abet in a healthy process of intercultural learning and economic innovation. Also interaction between international and domestic students needs to be encouraged through study groups and group projects. Studies have shown that many US undergraduate students report being nervous and intimidated by even the simple of striking up a conversation with an international student. International students can hold presentations on various issues and share their point of view, thus leading to an exchange of ideas. It is important to view international students as an asset rather than a liability (Pandit 2009).

SUMMARY

This research has listed the basic competencies for a student entering the globalized workforce and elaborated the effects of globalization, primarily on the workforce in US. It has also explored the need for an increased emphasis of communication technology in classrooms, thus giving students from various countries an opportunity to network with each other. The recommendations for future work are as follows,

- Conduct a Design of Experiments to determine other parameters that impact performance optimality for a college student as a workforce employee in a globalized world.

- Conduct a Psychometric Analysis amongst students to measure the effect of communication technologies in classrooms.

Use a qualitative or quantitative approach to measure the effectiveness of International programs in educational institutions, thus serving as a model which can be generalized.

REFERENCES

Masschellein, Jan and Simons, Maarten (2002), "An Adequate Education in a Globalized World? A Note on Immunization Against Being-Together," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36(4), 589-608.

Stewart, Vivien (2007), "Citizens of the World," *Educational Leadership*, (April), 8-14.

Hesselink, Klein D.J. and Vuuren, Tinka V. (1999), "Job Flexibility and Job Insecurity: The Dutch Case," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(2), 273-293.

Fay, Dorris and Kamps, Alexandra (2006), "Work characteristics and the emergence of a sustainable workforce: Do job design principles matter?" *Gedrag en Organisatie,* 19(2), 184-203.

Chou, Sean (2008), "Strategies to Combat Today's Changing Workforce," *Supply & Demand Chain Executive,* 5(9), 39-40.

Marshall, Nancy L., Barnett, Rosalind C. and Sayer, Aline (1997), "The changing workforce, job stress, and psychological distress," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* 2(2), 99-107.

Hafner, Dedra and Owens, Laura A. (2008), "How globalization is changing our workforce: A global vision to job development," *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation,* 29(1), 15-22.

Mamaghani, Farrokh (2006), "Impact of Information Technology on the Workforce of the Future: An Analysis," *International Journal of Management,* 23(4), 845-850.

Sue, Derald W., Parham, Thomas A. and Santiago, Gloria B. (1998), "The changing face of work in the United States: Implications for individual, institutional, and societal survival," *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health,* 4(3), 153-164.

Vohra, Promod, Kasuba, Romoualdas and Vohra, Divya P. (2006), "Preparing Engineers for a Global Workforce through Curricular Reform," *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, 10(2), 141-148.

Briguglio, Carmela (2007), "Educating the Business Graduate of the 21st Century: Communication for a Globalized World," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 19(1), 8-20.

Pandit, Kavita (2009), "Leading Internationalization," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99(4), 645-656.

Kim, C., Emmett, D., & Sikula, S. (2001). Employee Relations Ethics and the Changing Nature of the American Workforce. *Ethics & Behavior, 11*(1), 23-38. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier Database.