

Business Educators' Integration of the NBEA Standards for International Business: Teaching for Global Competence

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The life of a student in the 21st Century has, more than ever before, been impacted by the world's interconnectedness in technology, trade, and migration patterns. Today the effects of globalization have become more apparent, and indeed as Friedman (2007) asserted, our world in this century has become flat. How this global interconnectedness affects students in the United States can be interpreted either negatively or positively, but what remains true is that “put simply, if individuals and their communities are to thrive in the future, schools must prepare today’s students to be globally competent” (Asia Society & OECD, 2018, p. 5).

The urgency to integrate global competence in education cannot be overemphasized. In their report on preparing a globally competent workforce through Career and Technical Education (CTE), Asia Society and the Longview Foundation (2013) asserted that teachers in the United States are increasingly faced with a crucial role to get students ready for jobs in environments that will require them to compete, connect and cooperate on a global level.

A report by Business Roundtable (2022) revealed that in 2019, over 41 million jobs constituting 20.3% of total employment, were connected to trade. Trade-dependent jobs have increased over thrice the rate of non-trade-related work in the ten years from 2004 to 2024. This put into perspective the scale at which global business has become essential in the United States.

As part of CTE, Business Education through its career clusters and pathways delivers content that seeks to prepare students for future workforce and post-secondary education. In particular, the National Business Education Association (NBEA) standards (2020) which prescribe skills students should possess to be successful in business, recognized the need for preparation of a globally literate knowledge worker who will operate in workspaces rich in global cultural diversity, and thrive in these environments by effectively working with others. Among the numerous standards developed are those of International Business “so that students understand the interrelatedness of one country’s political policies and economic practices on one another and learn to function in a global business environment” (p. IV). The standards are designed flexibly, specifically to allow for integration in different content areas, not necessarily restricted to a singular course. Within the current standards, NBEA (2020) highlighted the centrality of global competence integration, calling for “... the use of International Business standards in all business education disciplines, which enables the internationalization of the curriculum to reflect the impact of the global economy on the workplace” (p. 2).

While the importance of global competence for the future and its relation to CTE have been acknowledged, Asia Society and the Longview Foundation (2013) noted that numerous schools across the United States had not emphasized instruction that promotes global competence. In addition, schools miss the opportunity to relate CTE classes to others of crucial global competence relevance, such as foreign language instruction which usually gets scheduled at the same time as CTE classes. Further, Apple Inc. (2007) shared that while it is undeniable that the world has become increasingly interconneinternational content in the American mainstream media.

The California Department of Education (2016) further demonstrated the complexities of integrating global competence instruction, outlining that while this competence is not only critical for employment but for civic engagement and socio-emotional intelligence, lack of uniformity across the state stemming from school system autonomy meant global competence integration differed vastly from one system to another, with most sidelining its integration. In addition, Woo (2019) revealed that some of the challenges facing global competence integration in Business/Marketing Education were factors such as states' prioritization of other competencies over it, lack of student interest, teachers' negative perspectives on the concept, as well as teachers' inadequate content knowledge when it comes to global competence. Against this backdrop, we designed a study to investigate how business educators recognize the importance of teaching toward global competence, specifically as it relates to integrating the existing NBEA Standards for International Business in their different subject areas.

Integrating the standards would be especially relevant as it forms a component of internationalizing at home (Beelen & Jones, 2015) it also uses readily available and nationally appropriate guidance of the NBEA—a professional organization with membership across all different U.S. States and territories. Of paramount importance to the researchers is to investigate business educators’ perceptions of their competency to integrate the NBEA standards on International Business in their different business-related disciplines, the extent to which they do (if at all) integrate the standards in their subject areas, as well as to determine possible predictors and challenges to the integration of these standards.

The Auburn University Business/Marketing Education Program is among the declining university-based Career and Technical Education teacher preparation programs in the United States. Among the multifaceted program aims exists the need to ensure that teachers graduating from the program are competent in delivering instruction with rich technical content essential for career and college readiness, as well as crucial 21st centuries skills such as technological literacy and global competence. Further, program faculty are constantly engaged in the ongoing professional development of current CTE teachers, the design and assessment of State level CTE courses of study, and the design and revision of national content standards such as those of the NBEA. For these reasons, insights from this study will be instrumental in learning more about business educator practices concerning global competence at the secondary and post-secondary levels, assist in curricula design responsive to global competence appreciation within our teacher preparation program, and inform efforts towards continuing professional development.

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