

USAMV MEEARD MASTER PROGRAMS IN ENGLISH AS MEANS OF INTERNATIONALISING ACADEMIC EDUCATION FOR THE GLOBAL LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract: International Master Programs aim to prepare students for cultivating their own capabilities and skills to act upon business and societal opportunities, needs and challenges, in order to implement successful businesses and innovations in a global and changing business environment. Such programs should provide deepened theoretical and practical knowledge about strategy, innovation, entrepreneurship, networking and business growth, and, at the same time, systematically incorporate sustainability and internationalization aspects. The focus is on achieving know-how by networking and generating international growth in both established and new businesses. Students should participate in a real-life strategic process which requires acting based on assembled principles and take part in improving a business idea (e.g. developing a business plan for a start-up, or a new venture within an established organization). Broadening knowledge on innovation occurs by the selection of elective courses and the option to do an internship. International Master Students should be given the opportunity to acquire know-how in the field of business administration and become familiar with research methods on current trends in research. Writing, analysis and research skills will be activated through writing the master's thesis. During this year it should also be possible to study abroad one semester.

Keywords: academic internationalisation, Master Programs in English, entrepreneurs, global job market

Sustainability in academic education centres on social and environmental aspects as important complements to the economic perspective. Questions on this issue get enhanced attention in today's firms and organizations. In the business school framework, the academic institution needs to collaborate with companies and organizations in many different ways: internships, guest lectures, company visits, essay assignments and case studies from companies. Apart from the traditional settings, full/part-time, studies could be done by distance learning as well. International Master Studies will provide the necessary tools to implement the internationalization in the candidates' own company. **The targets of such programs are:**

- To step up company internationalization and to promote foreign trade activities.
- To develop a wide perspective and comprehension frameworks for all aspects integrating entrepreneurial relations at international level.
- To provide professionals & companies with practical and useful tools and guidelines, from both strategic and operational points of view, aimed at managing the internationalization challenge in a secure and successful way.
- To serve as an engine and turning point for companies and professionals to carry out their internationalization plan, especially small and medium enterprises.

- To bring solutions in all sectors involved, from both commercial (trading, documentation, payment methods, risk protection) and operational viewpoints (logistics, global operations).
- To generate quality and personal improvement for all participants, and to contribute to the enhancement of their technical skills, enabling growth on personal and managing levels.
- To raise professional and entrepreneurial awareness on international trade activities.

The figure below outlines the future of work in globalised economy and communication settings. It summarises the reality we face nowadays. It may well act as a flowchart indicating the course of setting academic didactics, objectives and curricula for the training programs of forming prospective managers, and for cultivating the entrepreneur spirit in successful business initiatives.

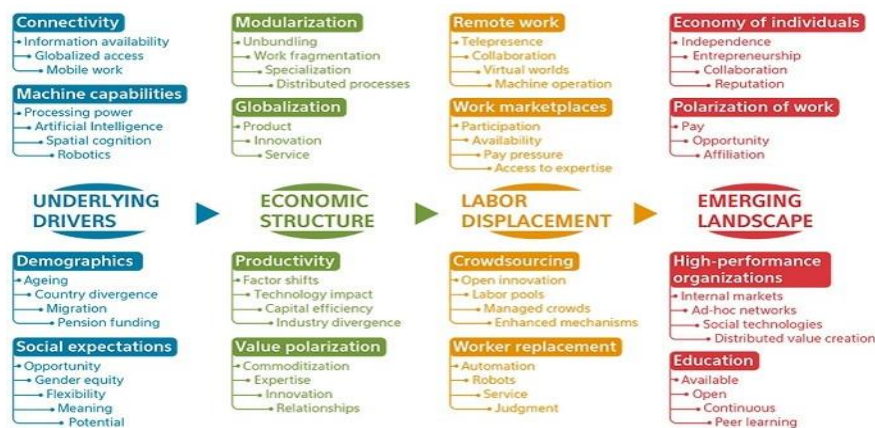


Fig. 1. The future of work, cf. www.futureexploration.net

Only few business schools give master students the opportunity to do an internship within a company in the country or abroad, and they should be more numerous, as this activity has high educational relevance, especially if organised by students themselves in firms they find interesting. Such internships provide good opportunities to put theoretical knowledge into practice and gain valuable experience and new contacts. Studying abroad is not only interactive and challenging for learners, but also a valuable experience with future employers. Internationalization is an important area for universities who are continuously working to offer candidates the best of all available opportunities. Hence, **graduates will be fully trained for:**

- Promoting the internationalization of the company and its foreign trade activities.
- Developing a broad vision and a framework for understanding and keeping in step with the various elements for worldwide business relations.
- Providing professionals and companies useful tools and performance standards, both strategic and operational, to govern securely and guarantee internationalization success.

The globalisation of world commerce, communications, financial markets, and transports has generated a new world order, which can be seen reflected in the way companies are managed. Master Degree courses in investment strategy and internationalisation are innovative courses in the international panorama and have been designed for graduate degree holders of different areas who want advanced and in-depth knowledge of international management. Competencies obtained are pivotal for the practice of management, which is increasingly international and global. In point of objectives, the master courses aim for the development of technical and behavioural competencies appropriate for business management and for meeting challenges posed by international companies. In addition, the courses grant high level training focused on all aspects related to

a borderless world of business management. Furthermore, such academic training should demonstrate complementary articulation of professionalism, research and application. Graduate degree holders wishing to develop their conceptual capacities, gain solid analytical skills and be up-to-date so as to be able to work effectively in the area of management and international business management are the ideal candidates for programs like these.

When the job market falters, many employees try to remain unnoticed for fear they may be made redundant. Nevertheless, firms save the people who stand out because they well manage their managers. So instead of being the good-enough team member the boss has trouble remembering, become noticed and indispensable by doing the following:

1. Understand the manager since managing upward requires empathy. For success try seeing the world from the manager's perspective. Instead of being frustrated, observe work styles and dialogue preferences, and adapt. Read the manager's reactions to the way reports provide data.
2. Stay few steps ahead as employees who anticipate the manager's needs before they arise are seen as leaders and problem solvers. If one starts thinking like the boss, one can take the initiative.
3. Be indispensable by learning the boss's weaknesses and compensate with subordinate strengths.
4. Approach the manager about issues in work styles. The common frustrations employees have are micromanaging bosses and absentee ones. People think it is risky to address such problems, but, if handled professionally, this attitude increases the manager's esteem for the employee.
5. Ask for more responsibility without overstepping own boundaries, as, ultimately, the immediate boss controls projects and promotions, so such trust is needed. An effective way to gain an audience with company leaders is to ask for more responsibility, so identify a big project and volunteer for it. Offer to head an initiative. Become the resident expert on new issues or organize company events. Suddenly, people come with questions and view you as a leader. Ultimately, make yourself valuable. Not only will you get respect, but you may get a raise.

Professors' skills must develop so that they successfully manage managers while they are still university students. Here are academic education guidelines for training managers' managers:

- Motivate every member of the team, even if they are very different
- Adjust management and personal style to the requirements of different situations
- Resolve conflict more effectively in a wide variety of contexts
- Get more done by using the best delegation techniques for each situation
- Turn difficult people and poor performers into team players
- Win cooperation and trust from people in the organization
- Increase confidence, leadership skills, and professional satisfaction in the job
- Successfully e-manage people and fellow managers
- Use positive & corrective feedback to influence problem employees & maximize productivity
- Network & learn from a diverse group of peers of different functions, industries and countries
- Develop a personal action plan to implement back at work
- Learn and practise people management skills using case studies, real examples and role plays

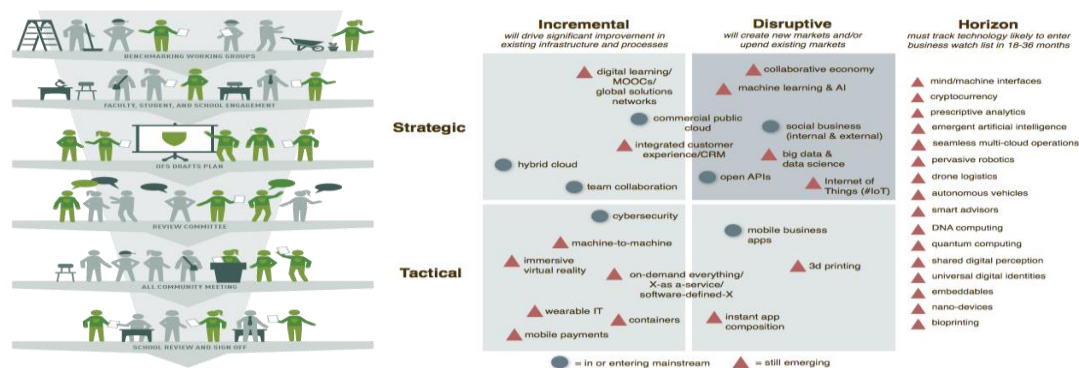


Fig. 2. Conclusive flowchart with successive stages in managing managers via academic e-environments, cf. www.astd.org

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) organised as project-work and employed in Denmark since 1974 is perhaps the most successful didactic strategy granting solid learning to all international students. If our university could implement this strategy, its scientific visibility will be enhanced due to more effective, rapid and long-lasting learning, generating skilled professionals, efficient on the global job market. PBL facilitates teamwork accelerating professional and cultural integration.

Here follows an outline of the functioning of this structure, bringing clear benefits if/when implemented in UASVM MEEARD.

The international students who attend the programs conducted in English generally come from around the world, the majority from outside the European Union. Integration involves multi-cultural teamwork from the very beginning, as they come with various cultural backgrounds from different academic traditions and they need to learn to cooperate in teams on a full-time basis. Functioning in team-work and experiencing cultural and language problems are challenging. It calls for high social, communicative and cooperative skills from the students. Project themes should stem from real-life problems. As such, there is a need to foster close cooperation with (local) industry in order to clarify real problems. Each problem-based project work comprises problem analysis and problem definition in engineering terms, problem solving, as well as documentation in the form of a report or a scientific paper/poster. Students discuss the project and carry out designs, simulations, as well as communications, using adequate and available software tools. After lectures, the learners are expected to go to their group to solve assigned problems or simulations based on the content of the lecture. The professor facilitates the process. The students learn how to communicate and cooperate in solving key engineering issues as part of a team. They learn how to handle professional debates in situations like problem definition and argumentation for their personal choice of solution. They learn how to argue about and explain in scientific terms what they believe is the correct solution convincing other group members. Likewise, they must be able to listen to the arguments of their group members and negotiate the measure to take. In this sense, argumentation proves to be a good way to learn. Furthermore, students also learn how to organise teamwork and learn that it cannot function effectively if members do not do their share of the work. In this way, the students adopt a certain attitude towards work that is different from those students doing traditional individual university study. Moreover, PBL students get the feeling of safe social surroundings. Teamwork also has the effect that students encourage each other, particularly with regard to problem solving, and they assign certain sub-tasks for each group member. In order to succeed in such individual tasks, the student must read the literature, seek out additional information, including scientific papers, search the Internet and operate certain programs if needed. The project offers opportunities for students to reflect on their professional work. As compared to traditional university

teaching, PBL obviously improves the learning effect twofold: an increased program completion rate and an average completion time within the prescribed duration. Students learn and socialise professionally. Discussion, argumentation and application constitute strong study methods, both for bright students and for those who may be average. It might not be possible for foreign students to be directly integrated into PBL models from the day they arrive and be expected to work together in groups with other students who already have experience with this structure. Therefore, an introductory term should be set up for foreign students only. They will be trained and examined both in the content of the report and in the process of their teamwork, including their ability to communicate with fellow students and teachers. They must be able to demonstrate group-work capabilities. They cannot study further if their technical or communication skills, such as language skills or cooperative attitude, do not meet the required standards. Adapting to a different culture at the new university, and to a new country generally, is a major challenge for students in the introductory program. Moreover, students also have to closely interact with peers of other nationalities in project work. The introductory academic program is designed to provide assistance that allows them to adapt to the cultural novelty. The aim is to develop skills and learning habits for all students so that they can interact with staff and other students and benefit from the learning concepts used. New students will become able to appreciate, benefit from and contribute to the diversity of the academic population. Those who will accept responsibility and make positive contributions to the current increasingly interdependent and multicultural world can create academic understanding, foster intellectual tolerance, and cultivate freedom and integrity. The foundations of successful studies also rely on the fact that students establish a strong social network during this introductory program.

The student enrolment program can be fostered with the provision of scholarships, which should be jointly sponsored by the government and the local industry. Multiple strategies can be implemented for successfully coping with such responsibilities, such as the ones illustrated in the next flowchart. They aim at pointing to learning outcomes to be achieved by tertiary education professors in working with their international master students:

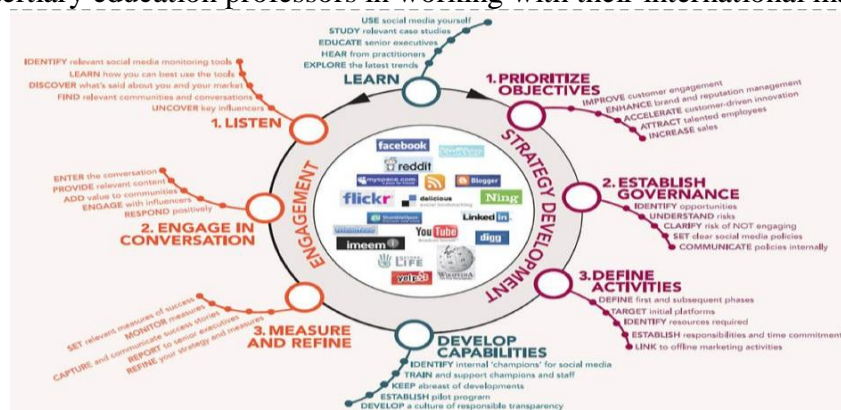


Fig. 3. Social learning strategy framework, cf. www.ahtgroup.com

Traditionally, a critical point is the formation of groups at the start of each term. These groups partly stem from professional interest in a particular subject, or from personal preferences. As a rule, groups must include both native and international students.

Generally, most students quickly learn to function well in teamwork situations. However, a number of problems can occur: difficulties with language, and different backgrounds in the way the study is organised. Also, the dependency between the members of the group is very high: one is responsible not only for own study, but also for the fellow students', which is a new concept for some. The aim of learning abroad is to adjust to another

way of studying and to acquire different ways of learning things. Aspects such as prestige or punctuality differ across cultures and need to be given adequate consideration.



Fig. 4. Enhancing engagement strategies to avoid management errors cf.

www.rossdawson.com

However, the decisive factor as to whether a student succeeds or not is his/her English language proficiency; at more abstract levels it is seen as the ability to communicate. Worldwide English tests actually convey little information about conversational skills. Different pronunciation, accents, and syntax customs often make dialogues difficult, an issue that is mentioned particularly in connection with group work and points to obvious inadequacies in English qualification testing at universities. Other problems seem to stem from regional differences in using English. Even though students from the same part of the world understand each other's spoken English without problems, local language conventions can make it extremely difficult for people from other parts of the world to comprehend what is said. Sometimes it generates subsequent misunderstandings, especially in groups suspecting they are discriminated. Less evident is the fact that, due to the teamwork model, the assimilation of inexperienced students into groups can directly affect the grade given for the project work, so, in certain cases, there is reluctance in accepting new members into groups.

The university should have a very strong tradition of undertaking PBL in collaboration with the industry. Hence most master students will complete their Master's Degree thesis project in some form of collaboration with an industrial partner. The benefits here are mutual. The students work on real-life engineering problems, often receiving support in the form of equipment or access to in-house expert knowledge, and the companies receive a thorough analysis and proposed solutions to their problem, as well as a base for recruiting the students when (or even before) they graduate.

Globalisation entails internationalization of academic education, mainly via master programs. Although Project-Based Learning, in combination with project oriented teamwork, proves its worth, it is very different situation from what most students know at other universities.

A large number of skilled graduates around the world are looking for an opportunity to study abroad, combine professional with personal development and explore another part of the world. In addition, business has become international and continues to expand worldwide. In the information society increasingly more consumer products require progressively more knowledge to produce. Given this, knowledge and competence have become some of the most competitive parameters.

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