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Global Challenges for Business Education and the New Educational Agenda: Graduate Attributes and Teaching Methods

Beatrice E. Avolio
CENTRUM Catolica Graduate Business School, Lima, Perú
Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru, Lima, Perú
Email: bavolio@pucp.pe

Jorge B. Benzaquen
CENTRUM Catolica Graduate Business School, Lima, Perú
Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru, Lima, Perú

Carolina Pretell
CENTRUM Catolica Graduate Business School, Lima, Perú
Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru, Lima, Perú

Abstract

This paper outlines the various global challenges faced by business schools and, specifically, provides a discussion of the graduate attributes in business education and the appropriate teaching methods to address them. The approach involves a critical and reflexive examination of the challenges facing business education in the 21st century. A combination of teaching methods to address the graduate attributes required by business education are discussed.

Key words: *Business education curriculum; graduate attributes, teaching methods.*

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Introduction

The globalization of the economy has effectively internationalized business education. A consequence has been a rise in the number of business schools worldwide, as well as an increase in their importance in world affairs. To quote LeClair, Peters, Williams and Wood (2010, para. 7): *“Business schools are home to 25 million degree-seeking students and countless more participate in university-based executive education and management development programs. That means that what we teach them, and what we research to inform how we teach them, matters.”*

According to the Foreign Policy Special Report (2011), The Future Issue asserts **that** “major realignments are fundamentally changing the character of the global economy and how it functions. And they will shape the world we live for the years to come” (2011, 84). In the 21st century, business schools are acquiring an increasingly prominent role in the face of these new global prospects. According to this report, the changes in the global economy include: (a) technology will take on a life of its own; (b) micro-multinationals will run the world; (c) everything will be too big to fail; (d) the Americas, not the Middle East, will be **the world’s energy capital**; **(e) the world will be** more crowded with old people; and (f) problems and their solutions will be global. These changes redefine a new geostrategic world order, and entail new challenges for business schools, such as the need to adapt their curricula to rapidly changing realities if they want to successfully craft the new leaders who will manage business situations that lie ahead. In this era, management educators play an important role in helping potential leaders to rethink their basic assumptions and to broaden their vision of the future.

Moreover, **today’s business schools** face multiple challenges that arise both from their need to adapt to the changing global economy and from the fact that globalization now requires them to compete with an increasing number of management education providers worldwide. As Iguíñez (2011) stated in *The Learning Curve: How Business Schools Are Re-inventing Education*, *“...management education faces questions like it never has before...”* *Nowadays, business education is expected to craft “...well educated sophisticated and open-minded people with broad intellectual horizons and high moral standards will make better managers than narrow technocrats and laptop laborers”* (Kozminski, 2010, p.14-17). **Business education is considered the students’** transformation process into managers who can be recognized as **“citizens of the world”** since they are capable of effectively managing companies in multicultural environments (Iñiguez, 2011).

In this context, this paper outlines the global challenges for business schools and, specifically, we discuss the new content in business education (graduate attributes) and the appropriate teaching methods to address them. We propose a portfolio of teaching methods used to achieve the graduate attributes of business education in accordance with the main challenges that global business education face in the 21st century. Even though there are several research studies that address the assessment methods by learning outcomes (AACSB, 2005), to the best of our knowledge, the most appropriate teaching methods used to obtain the graduate attributes are not fully covered in the literature yet.

Global Challenges for Business Schools

Business education faces a series of challenges to remain **relevant in today’s** rapidly changing global context. We can summarize these challenges based on the observations of highly experienced business educators worldwide (Iñiguez, 2011; LeClair, Peters, Williams, & Wood, 2010; Kozminski, 2010). These include (a) new content in management education, (b) new teaching methods, (c) the development of new faculty, (d) new student needs, (e) academic research relevant to management practice, (f) sustainability and social responsibility, (g) greater stakeholder participation,

(h) globalization, (i) technology, and finally, (j) growing competition and the need to expand into new markets. Other relevant challenges that business education face are the complex scope of businesses, the emergence of new markets, the accurate use of **organized and systematic data, the student's basic aptitude to practice the profession**, faculty with vast work experience in the industry, the development of soft skills for employability, work ethics, and the competitive advantage that delimit the school's reputation (Faridi, Arif & Kumar, 2017). Moreover, Faridi, Arif and Kumar (2017) identified several emerging trends in business education, such as leadership, fast technological changes, ability to blend diversity, and environment of business schools, focus on solving business problems, inter-disciplinary research with several stakeholders, long-term partnerships among business schools and industries, and industry-specific business schools, among others.

New content in management education

Innovation in business education in recent decades has mainly focused on the architecture of programs, the contents, and teaching strategies. In this sense, as a result of the demands on business education program contents, business schools came to a crossroads where they must reconsider their value proposition. As a result, business education contents have been re-examined in recent years. The most comprehensive and recent study was conducted by Datar, Garvin and Cullen (2011) in their empirical study of MBA programs in Europe and the United States. The study concluded that business school research is positively relevant to the business practice and MBA students are not sufficiently engaged in academic matters. Consequently, business schools need to reassess the facts, frameworks, and theories they teach, while updating the curricula with hard and soft skills in management practice and values. In an analysis across MBA programs, Datar, et al. (2011) outlined opportunities to innovate and change curricula.

New teaching methods

The key characteristics of business education programs abide by what Mintzberg (2004, p.9) **once said: "trying to teach management to someone who has never managed is like trying to teach psychology to someone who has never met another human being."** The work experience expected from the participants in an MBA program is of vital importance. Work experience is necessary to reasonably comment and discuss the business problems and the influencing external factors. Active participation and exchange of experiences among students are promoted during class, thus enriching **students' interdisciplinary learning**.

The type of teaching students receive is highly important. During secondary school and undergraduate studies, most students were subject to an ex-post type of teaching, i.e., students go to class without preparing anything. Students are used to waiting for the professor to give the class and, after that, they start to read and study **for the exam. In today's MBA program, however, the new** teaching methods tell us that lessons are ex-ante, i.e., students must study before the classroom session, so that they can actively participate in class discussions (flipped classroom). Therefore, self-discipline and adequate time management are important components of good study habits.

Good study habits consider three aspects. First, the individual preparation and study while exploring and analyzing the issues in light of new work and life experiences. The second aspect is group study and preparation. One characteristic of business education is the wide variety of professional and academic experience among the participants. The synergy of these experiences can enrich their knowledge. Third, with an ex-ante type of teaching, the instructor has the responsibility to advise students to come prepared to participate in class in order to have fluent tasks, whether individually or in group dynamics. The professor shall moderate the discussions to fulfill the objectives of the session. The student, not the instructor, should be the main actor.

Another essential element is the incorporation of new technology into the learning experience. The impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on the learning process is unquestionable and unstoppable. Online resources are revolutionizing the way business schools teach since these tools allow continuous interaction with students through online learning applications. The demand for online business programs increases every year. Therefore, technology facilitates continuous education, and high-quality online education can have an enormous impact on students. This requires an important and continuous investment in order to keep up with technological advances.

The development of a new generation of faculty

The recruitment of professors who fulfill the requirements to be part of a business school may be the most difficult challenge faced by business school administrators. It is a standard requirement for faculty to have outstanding teaching skills, research and professional experience, corporate connections, and international exposure. A faculty member usually develops most of these activities flawlessly, but it is quite difficult to identify professors who have all these characteristics. Faculty members who can effectively teach management of the new global economy still need to have more abilities.

According to with Iñiguez (2011), the traditional faculty model of business schools is introduced by Wilhelm Von Humbolt, in which an academic career should be highly specialized; faculty members must be expert on their field and teach only their subject. Under this philosophy, faculty members are the masters of the learning process **and the guardians of knowledge, generating what has become known as the "silo syndrome"**, i.e. when there are a tremendous specialization and a lack of integration within the curriculum. Iñiguez (2011, 177) proposed a new generation of faculty under **an interdisciplinary approach. In this new role, the faculty should be "active gatherers of new trends, ideas, and data [who] can identify which of them may transform the world."** **They should be "orchestrators of the learning process, catalysts of knowledge distribution, rather than the source of truth."** To do so, they should have mixed backgrounds, and be able to teach, consult, conduct research, and be familiar with multidisciplinary teamwork. **The role of the deans in this model is to be the "driver" of the process.**

For the above-mentioned reasons, it is challenging to find faculty who are able to meet the above-mentioned demands while also having a comprehensive and integrated approach to the business world. In addition, the so-called millennials are MBA students who require new teaching methods, the use of intensive technology, and agile methodologies that shall be consistent with business in this era. Therefore, business education requires not only faculty with outstanding teaching skills, the best credentials in research and professional experience, corporate networks, and international exposure, but they also must be prepared to effectively engage millennial students to provide them a highquality educational experience.

New needs of students

There are major societal shifts as a result of globalization and technological development. The demand for management education is increasing worldwide; hence, as a result, the profile of students has also changed significantly.

Business education, unlike other types of education, attracts students from heterogeneous academic and professional backgrounds. Students are not just business executives. Business education students come from a wide variety of careers (engineers, architects, economists, managers, accountants, surgeons, physicians, dentists, and even priests) from all over the world (developed, developing and underdeveloped countries) and they see business education as a way to improve their

quality of life. All of them have different lifestyles and work experiences that add value to their class participation in problem-solving. Their different approaches to the same problem enrich the problem analysis and resolution.

Business students' profiles have been changing constantly and, at present, students have more difficulties to balance work, family and study schedules because they have multiple learning styles, different educational and professional backgrounds, and great cultural diversity. Business education students expect today more than traditional knowledge; they want new learning experiences and more rounded and integral education. Students nowadays are looking for a global experience; knowledge goes way beyond management models and theories. It includes learning by spending time in a truly multicultural environment and experiencing the latest technological learning tools (Iñiguez, 2011).

Academic research is relevant to the management practice

Academic research must be aligned with the **stakeholders'** needs, although ongoing debates suggest that there is a gap between management research and management teaching. Academic research often fails to consider the practical relevance or the real world application and the impacts.

In recent years, business education has been criticized for emphasizing too much on research focused on teaching and for conducting narrow, irrelevant, and impractical research studies (AACSB, 2007). In this sense, a publication of the international accreditation agent AACSB International stated that: *"... in the future, business schools will have to be more strategic about their research investments and more explicit about assessing the return—not because AACSB will require it, but because stakeholders are starting to demand it. Every business school must prepare for this change"* (Williams, 2012, p. 4). In addition, Thomas (2010) mentioned that business schools need a renewed focus and engagement with the needs of practitioners.

As the different international accreditation agents affirm, and as cited by Thomas, Dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of **Business**, *"business schools need a renewed focus and engagement with the needs of the practitioner"* (Thomas, 2010, par. 2). Research reveals a very weak correlation between the academic quality and practical relevance of research (Baldrige, Floyd & Markóczy, 2004). **Emerald's Wheel of Impact** appropriately summarizes the six conditions of the relevance of research: it improves teaching and learning; it helps companies to be better managed; it influences public bodies and policymakers; it contributes to economic development; it benefits society or the environment; and/or it contributes to the body of knowledge.

Sustainability and social responsibility

Sustainability and **corporate social responsibility are one of today's main** challenges in business administration. The trends for the next ten years in business education reflect the need to consider more soft managerial skills over hard skills, in other words, the need of business education that develops more skills and less knowledge. Different aspects of social responsibility, ethics and sustainability will be core issues of business education. The implication for management education is that it must provide students with the skills to achieve a sustained organizational performance and global societal wellbeing. A similar sentiment was stated by Iñiguez (2011): *"Management, if performed with personal modesty and a sense of service to the community, can be one of the noblest professions. It creates growth, wealth and development in society, provides jobs, fosters innovation and improves living conditions... Good management is one of the best antidotes to most of the world's illnesses as it promotes convergence and understanding among civilizations. We need true leaders, good managers; and good management is synonymous to ethical management, nothing more but nothing less."* (Iñiguez, 2011, 18-22).

Greater stakeholder participation

Business schools and management education must work more closely with their stakeholders. Business schools cannot be isolated islands that are unrelated to students, companies, the government, the local community, faculty, and employees. This new perspective on business education is a fundamental challenge that includes all stakeholders in the educational process which includes companies, government, employees, students, local communities, accreditation agencies, partner educational institutions, etc.

The role of business schools in this context is summarized in the words of LeClair (LeClair, Peters, Williams & Wood, 2010, par. 13): **"... Business schools have a valuable role to play in shaping a better world. Those of us who care about business education and the impact of business research should seek to rise to the challenge."** It is clear that management education must better serve the customers. Nowadays, society as a whole is our customer.

Globalization

Students are looking for a global experience. Knowledge for today's MBA student goes way beyond management models and theories. Students must learn by spending time in a truly multicultural environment and experiencing the latest technological learning tools.

The benefits of a globalized education include international degrees, real international experience, greater work opportunities, cultural exchange opportunities, and multicultural exposure. More schools are creating strategic alliances, international programs, and campuses abroad: international collaboration and cooperation, student and faculty exchange, student group visits, joint research, joint programs, and multiple school programs. The meaning of business school education, according to Iñiguez (2011, 139), *"is the transformation of their students into 'cosmopolitan managers,' persons who consider themselves citizens of the world and who are able to manage their companies effectively in multicultural contexts for the creation of a wealth of their stakeholders and society. The profile of a cosmopolitan manager prioritizes cross-cultural skills and understanding of diversity over traditional analytical capacities or technical knowledge."*

Technology

The impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) on the learning process is unquestionable and unstoppable. High-quality online education can have a tremendous impact on participants; technology allows continuous education. Online resources are revolutionizing the way business schools teach and the demand for online business programs increases every year.

Internet-based education may be the most powerful means for business schools to enter into new markets. Technological development has changed the mode of teaching in business schools, which now offer not only face-to-face or in-person experience, but also virtual mode, or e-learning. The internet offers a powerful learning tool; business schools can use the technology to become more global, as students can download their material to their PC, tablet or mobile phones from anywhere in the world.

Growing competition and the need to expand into new markets

The number of business schools worldwide has grown significantly in recent years. AACSB (2010) International claimed that there were 12,087 business schools in the world, ranging from small departments within universities in developing countries to renowned schools. The competitive arena, as a result of the global economy, is obliging deans to be creative, and to offer students something that differentiates their schools from the competition. This may be accomplished through international accreditations

and rankings that attest the **school's excellence and/or through other means that** differentiate the school from the competition and expand the operations into new markets in order to assure the sustainability. Several of these means will be explored below (Iñiguez, 2011).

The first to be considered is the expansion into international markets. Competition among business schools is now global and international; there are more and more students who leave their country of origin to study abroad. Until a few years ago, the United States was the center and the major player in business education. The business education sector today, however, is multipolar, and business schools from emerging economies, mainly in Asia, have grown in recent years. This multipolar competition requires business schools to compete globally and not to rely solely on attracting international students to their home-based campuses, but also to have a presence on different continents. The globalization of business, combined with the increased demand for differentiated business education, has led to greater international partnerships among schools and universities in Asia, Europe, and North America and, to a lesser extent, in Latin America with European and U.S. schools.

Second, academic programs in business have increasingly been segmented to target specific industries or functional areas. As a result, programs are developed for specific market niches, e.g. the **Master's degree in Food Management**, **Master's degree in Healthcare Business**, etc. Business schools can also offer different kinds of mixed courses, called "cross-disciplinary courses". Other forms of hybridization include the courses focused on the synergy between the teaching methods and technology; business school-designed programs with cultural diversity to enhance the learning experience; and double degree students who study in different countries and learn cultural diversity directly. The growth of such specialized degree offerings is delimited only by the marketplace.

Third, ICT is not only changing education, but also the teaching techniques, procedures, and material, which has become more valuable because of its continually updated content, creating an interactive campus. Online educational programs offer the same quality as face-to-face programs, leaving behind the myth that online education is cheap and low quality, as on many occasions, online students have better results and are more interactive than face-to-face students.

Fourth, the consolidation of university-based schools: Many business schools are autonomous institutions even though these are supervised by a consolidated university. But, with globalization, a business school must join forces with their parent universities to try to make the most of as many synergies as possible. The purpose of this consolidation is to develop double degrees and joint programs with other sectors of the university in order to amplify **the school's focus on the post-graduate market** or to develop programs aimed at undergraduates.

Fifth, business schools may opt to pursue new ways to increase their size and scale, such as opening new campuses at home or abroad or increasing the size of their qualified faculty, technology and/or research resources. Mergers and acquisitions, as a way to achieve critical size, has long been taboo among educational institutions and the few that exist are in the same country, e.g. Aalto University, which resulted from the merger among the Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Art and Design Helsinki.

Finally, business schools may choose to collaborate with corporate universities (CUs). CUs are an integral part of large corporations where they train their staff, identify potential senior managers, and inculcate the core aspects of their organizational culture and strategy. The relationship between the academic world and the CUs has been largely collaborative and many in-company programs developed by business

schools are carried out jointly with the heads of CUs. Most CUs do not pretend to be **universities because they lack their own faculty and don't conduct research**, which is the reason why they cannot compete with business schools. But the two can work together to create interesting initiatives in management education. The collaboration between them is growing, although the academic and corporate worlds remain wary of one another (Iñiguez, 2011).

Graduate Attributes in Business Education

One of the main challenges of management education is the development of new contents for MBA programs. In this sense, Datar, et al. (2011) conducted an empirical study of MBA programs in Europe and the United States and recognized eight "*unmet needs of management education*", which make reference to the needs of the corporate world with respect to the graduate attributes in business education. The current programs do not necessarily meet these requirements: (a) The need to have a global perspective through skills, attitudes, and values to lead their companies in a culturally diverse business world, prioritizing cross-cultural skills and understanding of diversity over traditional analytical capacities or technical knowledge. (b) Leadership development, through the improvement of several skills, such as emotional intelligence, ability to motivate, delegate and lead ethically. (c) Integrate the concepts through a multidisciplinary approach to use all the knowledge and skills learned to solve problems, the capacity of synthesizing multiple approaches. (d) Understanding power and politics, and organizational processes understand how organizational processes work, and develop a good sense of how business works. (e) Creative and innovative thinking to be capable of outlining problems; collect, synthesize, and distill large volumes of data; exercise creativity and imagination; and develop, test, and revise ideas. (f) Oral and written communications skills to accurately communicate ideas to form logical, coherent and persuasive ideas, and have the communications skills to transmit the idea clearly and convincingly. (g) Balance practice, theory, and experience to understand actual organizational situations and to put theory into practice.

The same study introduced some strategies that educational institutions have commenced implementing to provide these graduate attributes, e.g. the development of a global perspective by recruiting international students, the integration of international contents, the development of global management courses, exchange programs and opportunities to study in other countries, and the establishment of international research centers and campuses in different countries. Other examples are: the various leadership, social responsibility and ethics courses; the creation of leadership laboratories to generate experiential learning programs in order to develop these skills; and the students' **exposure** to comprehensive projects where different perspectives are used.

Additionally, a research study conducted at CENTRUM Católica Graduate Business School (2015) in Peru identified the graduate attributes related to business education. They found eight aspects that are distinctive in the Latin American business environment: (a) Leadership skills, which include having good communication and negotiation skills, high level of critical thinking, multicultural team leadership, stress management, accountability, multicultural team leadership, and emotional intelligence. These so-called soft skills and integrative courses have been emphasized over the so-called hard skills related to the traditional areas of finance, operations, and marketing. (b) Strategic vision to create a long term strategic vision and to integrate all work areas towards that shared goal, driving the future of the company towards the desired outcome. (c) Corporate social responsibility to become socially responsible managers with well-defined ethical values and with a broad knowledge of the economic, social, political and environmental impacts of their actions. (d) Sustainability to understand sustainable business activities to meet current needs without compromising the resources and possibilities of future generations. (e) Entrepreneurship skills to develop innovative skills with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. Craft leaders who are willing to

think creatively and take risks from a new perspective in order to succeed; (f) Continuous improvement culture to have the quality management tools to improve processes, and act as agents of change by promoting the culture of quality within their organizations. (g) Technology skills to make the most of current technologies in order to maximize the resources and to adapt quickly to the changing technologies that give companies a competitive edge.

Teaching Methods Proposed to Provide Graduate Attributes in Business Education

Business schools should develop the educational models that address the different graduate attributes business education requires today. Several teaching methods, some of them more widely used than others, are applied to business education and then each business school selects a specific educational model according to its own objectives, for instance, the most well-known is the case method (Avolio, 2015).

However, business schools may be better served by determining a portfolio of teaching methods based on the desired skills. Using one single teaching method may not be the most efficient way to provide the graduate attributes due to several reasons. First, each teaching method entails advantages and disadvantages. Some of them have more advantages than other methods based on the learning objectives (Avolio, 2015). Second, using one single teaching method might not be enough to achieve the learning objectives. According to Joshi, Davis, Kathuria, and Weidener (2005), who studied the experiential exercise for teaching strategic management concepts in undergraduates **programs, they found that "cases alone are insufficient in bridging the gap between students' knowledge, experience, and their preparation for the real world".** Third, cultural factors can influence the efficient use of a specific teaching method. Rodrigues (2005) **studied the students' cultures and their preference in teaching techniques**, considering that a teaching technique that is effective with students in one culture could not be as effective as in another culture. In this sense, using several teaching methods, based on the advantages and the required graduate attributes, might be a far more effective strategy in comparison to one single teaching technique.

In this context, a portfolio of teaching methods, according to the graduate attributes required in business education. The proposed teaching methods are explained below:

Experiential and action learning

Kolb (1984, cited by Kolb and Kolb, 2005) **defined experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience"** (2005, 194). Experiential learning is a process through which students develop knowledge, improve some skills and have first-hand experienced outside the traditional education system (Ramswamy & Ramaswamy, 2016). It is also a holistic and multi-sensory learning. Students are continuously adapting to the world, because they are learning from experiences that give them a global perspective to create knowledge (Hayden & McIntosh, 2018).

Mehorter (2017) studied a school that used and adapted active learning driven by the staff. The author stated that **experiential learning "describes the learning that occurs as result of participation in active learning"** (2017, 53) and, in turn, affirmed that action learning is the process where people help themselves to learn from experience. Experiential learning is important in global disciplines where the approach focused on the user is critical (Hoyos, Scharoun & Poplin, 2015). Also, it is important to connect classroom-based theory to practice and improve the critical and creative thinking (Ramswamy & Ramaswamy, 2016) that can help to put the theory in practice easily. Focused on learning outcomes, these types of activities can be used to encourage

students to engage in online exploration and critical thinking processes, so that they can share their findings with the class, and help professors to generate an environment where their belief can be discussed (Petrovic-Dzerdez & Trépanier, 2018).

Experiential and action learning encourage students to explore and instantly put in practice what they have learned while sharing experiences with the group (Petrovic-Dzerdez & Trépanier, 2018). As Fewster-Thente and Batteson (2018) mentioned, students are gaining experience in communication skills and teamwork in this kind of learning. Integrative projects and study trips are two important forms of experiential learning.

Multidisciplinary integrative projects

Multidisciplinary projects help to solve problems by working with professionals from other specialized field. Projects can motivate students to orientate themselves with other students from other disciplines (Cannistrà, 2003). The characteristics of educational integrative projects are: (a) opportunities to learn by doing; (b) provides benefits to academia, industry and students; (c) enables students to learn from the **other's experience** to create better projects; (d) the covered subjects include a wide range of industrial sectors; (e) the project is carried out throughout the course and **students receive the professor's** feedback during the development process and; (f) students use all the learned concepts to suggest strategic proposals that create value (Avolio, 2015).

The use of experiential and action learning in graduate business students **progressively solves problems as part of a "community of practice" and improves how** students address the issues and solve problems. Working in multidisciplinary integrative projects allows students with different backgrounds to enhance their negotiation, communicational and interpersonal skills, problem-solving techniques, trust, and leadership. Therefore, students can enhance their leadership skills and have a global perspective and strategic vision. It gives them the opportunity to integrate concepts through a multidisciplinary approach when working with groups that have different perspectives and it allows them to balance theory and practice in order to apply knowledge in real situations. Also, real projects **"force students to bridge the knowing-doing-gap"** (Datar, et al., 2011) giving the opportunity to understand how the real world of business works. Finally, multidisciplinary integrative projects are a good opportunity to apply social responsibility and sustainability concepts in organizations.

Study trips

Study trips are important foreign experiences that create culture. These intercultural trips serve as a global opportunity that shows new ways of thinking and doing. Understanding better different cultures also mean to be able to comprehend different people. This type of knowledge is critical for the globalized world and it can be obtained through study trips (Hoyos, Scharoun & Poplin, 2015). Study trips are a great opportunity because study abroad programs bring an intercultural competence, global mindedness and perspective, cross-cultural sensitivity and much more (Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski, 2018). Since students are familiar with different cultures and away from their comfort zone, they are more conscious and aware about the culture that they are involved with and they are more exposed to the learning of culture (Santoro & Major, 2012). Study trips bring a global perspective to students because it helps to open **the "horizons to a different and numerous global issues, show most scenarios which can be studied, and generate a supportive environment for the worldwide student community"** (Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski, 2018).

Furthermore, study trips with colleagues and the engagement with group members contribute to improve or develop leadership skills because students are going to face several challenges together and a leadership team will be necessary. Likewise, students are going to enhance their entrepreneurship skills as a result of the interaction with other people from different cultural backgrounds (Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski,

2018). Langlois, Langlois, and Muti (2016) conducted a quantitative study to identify the students' perceptions of short-term business trips. The results were positive in regard to the students' ability to analyze cultural differences because business trips helped them to understand better the cultural interactions in an international business environment. The study found that students gained more exposure to specific business areas.

Most business programs include overseas study trips so that students can have the opportunity to participate in different cultural activities and to network with foreign **students and professors. International study trips can help to enhance the students'** global perspective and entrepreneurship skills because they are exposed to global corporate environments that will help them to cope better with cultural differences when doing business. Moreover, the opportunity to interact with colleagues also allows them to use their own leadership skills to interact outside the classroom. Finally, study trips help students to understand how business work in reality; it enhances their ability to understand the organizational process of businesses.

Critical and analytical essays

Analytical thinking and critical thinking are not interchangeable terms. To think critically is to take facts in order to form an opinion about something. Individuals think analytically when they divide specific information through different perspectives and reach an overall conclusion (Miller, 2017). In addition, students' critical thinking can be enhanced focusing on the learning process during project-based tasks (Snyder & Snyder, 2008). Writing essays—which are documents with a descriptive, narrative, or argumentative approach that analyze a specific topic—helps to develop **the students'** critical and analytical skills. Essays shall be graded based on the pertinent contents, argument organization, and precise use of language (Avolio, 2015).

Critical and analytical essays are a teaching method that can be effectively used for developing creative and innovative thinking. We propose to include in an MBA program, in leadership, strategy, and organizational behaviour courses, essays as a part of the **students'** assignments. In addition, the critical and analytical essays allow students to improve their written communication skills, since they are challenged to write a short text with a high analytical sense.

Diagnostic assessment

It is important to know the graduate students' **knowledge** level, their strengths, and weaknesses in order to develop strategies that will help them to become more effective professionals. Schools can conduct several types of evaluations to diagnose a specific area, such as personality tests, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, leadership styles, personality insights, using validated instruments or using artificial intelligence tools (Avolio, 2015). For instance, Conine and Leskin (2016) suggested that 360 assessments might be useful to measure the university students' performance in a business environment to identify their weaknesses and validate their needs in a business simulation in teams.

Performing diagnostic assessments to identify some of the areas students need to improve can help to increase their leadership skills and critical thinking because self-knowledge is essential to develop and measure the progress of their own skills. In addition, diagnostic assessment tools also allow students to adjust to a continuous improvement of their skills.

Multidisciplinary group work

The terms "Teamwork" and "group work" are generally used as synonyms. However, individuals working in a team have a common understanding and commitment to complete a specific task, while the "group" has a perception of an individual purpose (Drake, Goldsmith, & Strachan, 2007). Multidisciplinary group work allows students,

with different but complementary experience, to complete tasks more efficiently with higher quality. In addition, students enhance their negotiation, communicational and interpersonal skills, problem-solving techniques, trust, and leadership (Avolio, 2015). Why teamwork? This is the normal way human beings work. Humans do not work isolated; they live and develop themselves in a society where they share spaces and experiences with people that may be akin to them. The workplace brings together professionals from diverse knowledge areas, with different professional experiences, personalities, etc. As leaders, we must learn and know how to work in teams to aggregate the capacities of each one of the members and to achieve the objectives set out by the company or institution to which they belong. Therefore, during the learning process, students from different groups, and change groups each term, with the aim of putting different styles of teamwork into practice, whether as members or team leaders.

In the case of multidisciplinary group work, students enhance their critical, creative and innovative thinking skills, because they are gaining more knowledge and share their own thoughts in order to solve their projects and tasks. It can also enhance students' global perspective as a result of the interaction with other people with different experience (Rafferty, 2013). Furthermore, multidisciplinary group work can help students to improve various skill sets, including communication skills, oral, speaking and listening and teamwork skills such as negotiation and conflict management (Blau, Petrucci & Rivera, 2018), which can help to increase entrepreneurship skills.

Case method

International management programs use the case method because it locates the students at a particular place in a specific point in time to think about a problem that needs to be solved in a business context. This tool is still widely used in management education because it promotes the development of important attitudes, competencies, and skills (Dixit et al., 2005).

The case method emerged in response to economic crises. Business students' needed to carefully reflect on the current situation. In contrast, this did not actually happen during traditional lectures, where students are required to learn the ideas of other people. The case method teaches future managers to make hard and courageous decisions with a broader perspective in uncertain environments (Bridgman, Cummings, & Mclaughlin, 2016).

The case method popularity increased because students are exposed to real-world experiences and interactively understand the business environment (Riordan & Fink, 2003). It is considered as an educational vehicle and a tool that allows students to be the business protagonist and make dynamic decisions, applying theoretical knowledge (Tvaronavičiene & Ginevičius, 2003). A general approach to describe the case method proposes to encourage students to become active members of the decision-making process in the business field (Tvaronavičiene & Ginevičius, 2003). Therefore, during the teaching of this method and the constant discussion, students are learning the importance of teamwork and developing close peer networks because they had started informal study groups for transmitting knowledge and for developing interdisciplinary subject understanding (Roy & Banerjee, 2012). Furthermore, the case method enhances the **students' communication skills. They guide the flow of the discussions and discover solutions to the problems by themselves** (Roy & Banerjee, 2012). The method facilitates the interactions of insights drawn from the experiences of international graduate students (Riordan & Fink, 2003). Also, they have to be prepared to exhibit their own opinions as well as to debate **other students' statements** (Roy & Banerjee, 2012).

An alternative view of the case study is that it is useful to analyze situations and make decisions (Tvaronavičiene & Ginevičius, 2003). **Students identify their issues in**

the assigned case and conduct research to create alternative solutions, evaluate alternatives solutions, etc. (Riordan & Fink, 2003). This method improves the ability to have a strategic vision. A case discussion teaches students to analyze business situations, to identify problems, to expect possible action plans, and to notice the most plausible consequences. However, it is also related to enhancing the creative and innovative thinking (Tvaronavičiene & Ginevičius, 2003). **Finally, students recognized** that the case method was more adjusted to shaping the entrepreneurship skills which were felt to be more important than concept development in order to make students more employable in the job market (Roy & Banerjee, 2012).

In summary, the case method is very useful to develop most graduate attributes: (a) a global perspective, (b) integrate concepts through a multidisciplinary approach; (c) develop a strategic vision; (d) develop entrepreneurial skills, (e) enhance the creative and innovative thinking; (f) understand how organizations work in real life; (g) develop communication skills and, (h) balance theory, practice and learning from experience from the experience of other business cases and situations.

Blended learning and online learning

Schedlitzki, Young and Moule (2011) stated that blended learning can act as communication, file sharing, and transfer tools and can provide quick access to the educational resources when students are not on campus. This might be convenient for students who live away from campus and who study only in the evenings or at weekends. The authors also affirmed that "face-to-face interaction is valued by part-time management students... competing work and family pressures, as well as technological problems, were further found to counteract the benefits of online **technologies from the students' point of view**" (Schedlitzki, Young, & Moule, 2011, 36). Iñiguez (2011) affirmed that high quality information and communications technology have a significant impact on the learning process since online tools provide more interaction among the learning community and the faculty. Furthermore, a 90-minute class can continue with virtual tools, such as videos, tutorials, etc., and this is not possible in a traditional face-to-face classroom.

Blended learning is a combination of traditional learning and online learning: there is an instructor who had the ability in the application of technology, using for education. However, its implementation must take in account the characteristics of the students, instructor characteristics, learning objectives, the strategy, the learning environment and the resources available (Ilahi, Ayu, Prasetya & Nugraha, 2017), in order to give a major education. There are many different kinds of blended learning but it's looking to achieving the learning objectives because of the application of a proper mix: personal learning technologies and learning style. Its major characterized are innovative and technological advances (Ekawati, Sugandi & Kusumastuti, 2017). One advantage of blended learning are the oral and written communication skills. Students have the freedom to ask about the class to another student or be able to send messages or emails. The communication, especially related to feedback, with the instructor is more fluid and quicker (Ilahi, Ayu, Prasetya & Nugraha, 2017). A close relationship has been found between the ways in which students approach the search for information (Bartolomé, García-Ruiz & Aguaded, 2018). In this way, they can obtain all the possible information and be able to communicate effectively.

Technological skills are also acquired because the class is involved, most of the time, with online platform and tools (Ilahi, Ayu, Prasetya & Nugraha, 2017). Furthermore, the right skills can be transferred more efficiently in the correct time and any place. Blended Learning **can give to the student's flexibility and** use the information available at any time (Ekawati, Sugandi & Kusumastuti, 2017). Furthermore, blended learning helps to acquire higher cognitive abilities and entrepreneurial skills in students and enhance to be more productive for in-service students, blends the different theories and creates new ideas of learning (Tupe, 2018). Also, its environment facilitates

students in organizing work groups (Ilahi, Ayu, Prasetya & Nugraha, 2017) due to the collaborative works they promote. Therefore, it generates a crucial impact in the classroom by increasing social interaction and group learning. The interactions among the students, the centrality and density of the networks, the feeling of belonging and the norms of reciprocity, appear as predictors of online participation (Bartolomé, García-Ruiz & Aguaded, 2018). These attributes are essential to enhance entrepreneurship skills.

Blended learning systems combine online and face-to-face teaching in each course. Some of the advantages of this type of learning system are: (a) the learning process might continue outside the classroom with interactive online tools; (b) students are able to interact more with the professors and other fellow students; (c) continuous flexibility and feedback. Using blended educational systems in business education might **enhance the students' need to** be familiarized with modern technologies, entrepreneurship skills, and be competent and innovative in the global perspective business world.

Case study writing

Quality writing needs a high level of cognitive skill that involves learning and summarizing new knowledge, problem-solving, and reflecting about a specific subject in a manuscript (Defazio, Jones, Tennant, & Hook, 2010). The use of case studies in business education enhances the students' problem-solving skills (Farashahi, & Tajeddin, 2018). In addition, students who write case studies enhance their creativity, ability to analyze an environment and adapt to changes (Riordan, Sullivan & Fink, 2003). Vega (2010) conducted a study on case-writing in entrepreneurship and small business management undergraduate courses. The author affirmed that writing cases help students to develop their written and interpersonal skills, apply the learned theory into practice, and grow in the professional and personal spectrum through networking.

Business students can write their own case studies, including the teaching notes. For this purpose, they must visit the companies, discuss with the manager or key personnel to collect the relevant information for the case. Some of the benefits of writing cases are: (a) it allows students to reflect on the international business situation, connecting theory with practice; (b) provides valuable insights about running a business; (c) develops soft skills; and (d) when submitting the case to the company, entrepreneurs can recruit talented professionals for their businesses.

Writing cases as a part of the graduate business curricula can help students to: (a) integrate concepts through a multidisciplinary approach; (b) understand organizational processes; (c) improve their strategic vision; (d) improve entrepreneurial skills when studying different business situations; (e) improve written communicational skills; and (f) balance practice and theory when writing case studies.

Research

Conducting high-quality research makes a connection between the author and academia. Higher education aims to look for new knowledge and truth; therefore, students who conduct high-quality research are the thinkers of the future that will inform the new theories and practices (Garvey, 2006). This method consists of collecting information and data organized in a logical manner to acquire knowledge using observation, induction, deduction, analysis, and synthesis. Some types of research are applied research, pure research, literature review, business case study, comprehensive research, and narrative case study (Avolio, 2015).

If students learn to conduct high-quality research, they enhance their (a) creative and innovative thinking as a result of the intellectual processes involved in the research development process; (b) written communication skills to write the high-quality academic documents; (c) capacity to make practical and theoretical recommendations

as a result of the research. It also provides an opportunity to develop corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Capstone or thesis workshop courses provide the opportunity to develop applied or theoretical research. In some countries, this is a requisite in MBA programs.

Neuropedagogy

The recent development of neuropedagogy, which is the “*interdisciplinary field that combines neuroscience, psychology and education to create improved teaching methods and curricula, bringing new links between arts education and general learning, how learning physically alters the brain, and how to stimulate new zones of the brain and create connections*” (Naegele, 2015) is a concept that should also be considered. Some business schools are still studying neuropedagogy and its potential use in business education learning methods. The applications are expected to be important for predicting behaviours and trends also allowing for the combination of different disciplines (Avolio, 2015).

Discussion

Whilst there are several research studies that address the assessment methods by learning outcomes (AACSB, 2005), in our opinion, the most appropriate teaching methods to achieve the graduate attributes have not been adequately nor fully covered in the literature as yet. Table 1 presents a conceptual list of graduate attributes that seem to be required to meet the demands of business education when preparing a portfolio of teaching methods.

MBA graduates require leadership skills that can be developed based on an assessment of their current situation and then provide various opportunities through experiential learning, which should enable them to develop their skills during the program. The global perspective required in an MBA has to be acquired through multiple interactions with multicultural environments. This can be achieved through multidisciplinary projects with international teams, study trips, case methods, and blended learning. Multicultural environments help students to understand the current global environment of businesses, which is why study trips are an important component in business programs.

The ability to **have “integrative thinking” and to synthesize** multiple approaches might be achieved through experiential learning, case method, and case study writing. Students understand how organizational processes actually operate and learn to balance practice, theory, and experience when they engage in real life situations in projects and study trips, and when they study different cases and real business situations. In addition, collecting high-quality information relevant to conducting research and writing academic papers is also essential for management education because students will analyze information and then transform it into new knowledge, putting theory into practice.

Strategic vision has a theoretical basis that has to be tested through final applied assignments, work experiences in other business environments (study trips), and case studies. Entrepreneurial skills are also developed as a result of study trips, case studies, and networking during blended learning. Corporate social responsibility, business sustainability, and culture can be the most complex aspects of MBA programs. These can be addressed through cases and applied assignments.

Table 1:
Proposed teaching methods to address graduate attributes

Business education graduate attributes	Teaching Methods								
	Experiential and action learning: Multidisciplinary integrative projects	Experiential and action learning: : Study trips	Critical and analytical essays	Diagnostic assessment	Multidisciplinary group work	Case method	Blended learning	Case study writing	Research
Leadership skills	•	•		•					
Global perspective	•	•				•	•		
Integrate concepts through a multidisciplinary approach	•					•		•	
Understanding organizational processes	•	•				•		•	
Strategic vision	•	•						•	
Corporate social responsibility and sustainability	•					•			•
Entrepreneurship skills		•				•	•	•	
Continuous improvement culture				•					
Technology							•		
Creative and innovative thinking			•	•	•	•			•
Oral and written communications skills			•		•	•	•	•	•
Balance practice, theory, and experience	•	•				•		•	•

Conclusion

In the present environment, business education is facing several types of challenges. Business schools need to update the content of their business education in order to develop the students' soft skills and encourage them to actively work in teams and discuss the business subjects based on the students' work and professional experiences. Due to globalization, students expect more than just raw knowledge. They want an international experience in order to have a global outlook of businesses and have the opportunity to network.

The initial diagnostic assessment provides an important starting point for the students' self-knowledge and their own improvement plan. The development of critical and analytical cases, as well as multidisciplinary teamwork is a way to increase critical thinking skills. Finally, the capabilities of oral and written communication can be developed transversally through different methods, such as critical and analytical essays, multidisciplinary group work, case method, blended learning, case study writing, and conducting research papers.

In conclusion, business schools would be well served by undertaking a review of their teaching methodologies in order to help the students acquire the business skills that are suitable for a radically evolving global economy.

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