Teaching Cross-Cultural Business Etiquette: A Strategic Approach for International Business Success

Razak Surrey

Pennsylvania Western University, USA

Abstract. Effective cross-cultural communication is essential for success in international business, particularly in culturally diverse regions like the Arab world. However, many business education programs fail to adequately address the significance of culture-specific practices, such as Arabic business etiquette, in fostering global business competencies. This study examines the integration of cultural education into international business programs, focusing on the gap in cross-cultural communication skills that often results in miscommunication and failed negotiations. The study involved college students enrolled in an Arabic culture course aimed at enhancing their cross-cultural communication abilities and preparing them for professional business engagements in the Arab region. To gather insights, a survey was administered to collect participants' feedback. The findings reveal that students were highly engaged and satisfied, reporting increased cultural awareness and enhanced practical communication skills. This article explores the implications of these findings for global business education and recommends strategies for incorporating cultural components into business curricula to better prepare students for the demands of the global market.

Keywords: arab culture, cross-cultural communication, cultural competence, international business education.

1. Introduction

In the ever-growing global economy, effective cross-cultural communication skills are crucial for thriving in the world of international business. Efficient communication not only aids in negotiations and cooperation but also assists in establishing trust and creating long-lasting relationships across cultural divides (Hofstede 2020). In areas like the Arab world, where business customs are strongly influenced by cultural traditions, it is crucial to recognize and honor cultural norms (Nydell 2018). Yet, numerous global business education programs do not adequately focus on culture-specific practices of regions, leading to students being ill-equipped to understand and operate in culturally diverse markets (Brett, Ramirez-Marin, & Galoni 2021)

Arabic culture, with its focus on interpersonal relationships, friendliness, and respect, greatly influences the business etiquette in the Arab world. For instance,

utilizing formal greetings, recognizing hierarchy, and interpreting non-verbal cues are essential components in successful business engagements (Al-Khatib *et al.* 2002). Not considering these cultural nuances in business education may result in misinterpretations, disagreements, and lost chances in global markets. Acknowledging this discrepancy, the course on Contemporary Arab Culture was created to fill the gap by providing students with the necessary skills to grasp and implement Arabic business etiquette successfully.

This research examines how Arabic cultural education can be incorporated into international business programs, focusing on the Contemporary Arab Culture course as an example. The course highlights the importance of Arabic business etiquette in promoting cross-cultural communication and improving students' readiness for professional engagements in the Arab world. The course offers students a special perspective on understanding and managing the complexities of global business by educating them on cultural foundations like trust-building and indirect communication (Deardorff & Jones 2022).

2. Research Problem

The absence of effective cross-cultural communication skills frequently results in misunderstandings and unsuccessful business deals in the current globalized business environment. While cultural understanding is crucial in the Arab region, many international business curricula do not include Arabic cultural norms and business etiquette, which results in students being ill-prepared for the challenges of global markets.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that teaching cultural business etiquette within business programs can equip students with essential cross-cultural communication skills and prepare them for success in international business, particularly in the Arab region.

4. Research Questions

1. How does teaching Arabic business etiquette enhance cross-cultural communication skills?
2. How can cultural education be effectively integrated into business curricula to improve global business readiness?