

MULTI-CAMPUS TEACHING OF A MULTICULTURAL STUDENT BODY: EXPLORING THE “ONE SIZE FITS ALL” LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Teaching multicultural student bodies in various locations creates a pedagogical challenge to ensure that students get a consistent curriculum despite various diversity factors. Using a paper-and-pencil survey of 371 students' feedback on a standardized course delivered simultaneously in 3 languages to 27 nationalities across 3 integrated campuses of a European business school, we surprisingly find a no-diversity effect suggesting homogeneous learning style preferences despite the multifaceted diversity that characterizes the students cohort. Our research contributes to the literature on international management education, by pointing towards a possible convergence of management students' learning expectations in a context of increased globalization.

Keywords: International management education; multicultural student body; learning style; convergence; globalization of education.

Introduction

Education is increasingly international, along with the growing interconnection of national economies: The number of international students enrolled in foreign universities has increased from less than one million in 1975 to 4.3 million in 2011 (OECD, 2013; Zhang et al., 2016) with a strong trend to offer integrated programs at various locations (“International branch campuses”, Wilkins et al., 2012). This development particularly applies to management education, requiring students to get prepared for international responsibilities and careers.

In this vein, recent research posits that “helping CLDI [culturally and linguistically diverse international] students to achieve both inclusion and academic success is one of the major obligations for universities and business schools” (Zhang et al. 2016, p. 377), and that “[m]any faculty members have not yet aligned the curriculum and teaching practices well to the needs of the increasing number of CLDI students” (ibid.). From a pedagogical perspective, the key issue is how to design a course in a fashion that the “inclusion” of students from various national backgrounds is guaranteed in business schools curricula by addressing foreign students’ interests along with helping them socialize with onshore students curricula (Zhang et al., 2016). Inclusivity means that all students learn and are taught together, following a curriculum that typically incorporates ethnic or cultural groups’ knowledge and perspectives on management and its various functional areas. Almost by definition, such a reality requires extensive cultural sensitivity inside the course content (i.e. an approach based on an orientation towards cultural differences or ethnorelativism, Bennett, 1993), along with a “one size fits all” course design for a consistent multicampus course delivery.

Extent literature generally acknowledges that culture, usually defined at the country level by nationality, plays an important role in ways students and teachers interact, as their teaching and learning styles depend on their cultural origin (Hofstede, 1986; Bennett, 1986). Culture-bound learning styles are also acquired as a function of successive socializations to different subcultures, such as age, gender, or area of specialization, which may have more impact than culture on learning styles (Joy and Kolb, 2009). However, to the best of our knowledge, empirical investigations on course feedbacks (one key component of learning experience), especially in terms of learning style preferences, of a highly diverse student body to a standardized teaching format are rare (e.g. Taras et al., 2013; Ramsey and Lorenz, 2016).

We thus use a natural experiment developed at a highly international business school with organically grown integrated campuses in 5 major European cities (namely ESCP Europe) for a multicampus compulsory course that is therefore annually delivered across campuses, using the same pedagogical material, but different teachers and also different languages. This particular educational context allows us to offer the following research contributions:

(1) We empirically explore how culturally diverse students embedded into a multicampus learning environment respond to a “one size fits all” approach promoted in multicampus curricula. More specifically, we analyze whether or not a multicultural student body shows converging (i.e., reasonably homogeneous) learning styles preferences towards such a course format.

(2) The multicampus (and in particular, multi-country and multi-language) context allows us to directly compare students of the same nationality who can be sorted depending on their study journey across campuses, as native/speaking local language student (e.g., when

a French student is studying in Paris, in French), as native/speaking foreign language student (e.g., when a French student is studying in Paris, in English), or as non-native/speaking foreign language student (e.g., when a French student is studying in Berlin, in English). Hereby, our investigation will be able to uncover the importance of 'student nationality' as a diversity dimension, and compare it to other dimensions of diversity (such as gender; the students' pre-experiences related to and their interest in the course topic; language groups; location of study).

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next section reviews the international management education literature related to teaching a multicultural student body, from the perspective of both the course offering (responses of business schools and management universities to their students body internationalization challenge) and the course taking (students' perspectives on their learning experience in such mixed classes). We then present the context and methods of the empirical study, followed with a detailed presentation of the results. We finally discuss the findings and their limitations, and suggest avenues for future research.

Literature review

International management education literature related to teaching a multicultural student body looked at how business schools and universities have responded to the internationalization of their students (i.e., at the need to develop courses targeting an internationally diverse audience). It also identified challenges, from the student perspective, related to inclusivity they could expect when studying abroad in a highly international context.

Teaching perspective: The adaptations of business schools to an increased diverse student body

In response to the increased internationalization of student cohorts, certain academics have called for internationalizing the curricula at business schools (Zhang et al., 2016), to (1) stimulate foreign and home students' international skill set (Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh, 2006), and (2) foster inclusivity by addressing foreign students' interests along with helping them socialize with onshore students. Three solutions exist at the level of courses offered to address an increased diverse student body: English and multilingual courses, cross-cultural courses, and offshore campuses mixing multicultural student body.

English (as a Medium of Instruction, EMI) and multilingual courses

English-speaking countries have traditionally benefited from the rise of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in higher education to attract international students. However, continental European countries including France and Germany also boast a significant share of international students (Wilkins et al., 2012). Management education institutions in these countries have developed different learning strategies to attract international students and create the linguistic conditions of inclusivity. Certain institutions have been particularly keen to adjust their medium of instruction in order to attract more international students. This trend is especially visible in continental Europe where English has become the language of higher education in non-English speaking European countries, particularly in management education (Coleman, 2006; Lueg and Lueg, 2015). It is furthermore supported by the strategies of non-native English speaking students in management who choose EMI as a reflection of

belonging to higher social strata: relative English proficiency provides a cultural capital and better gaming and positioning in career orientation (Lueg and Lueg, 2015).

However, from the point of view of CLDI students, we know that their language skills do not always significantly improve over the time spent in a university abroad (Peelo and Luxon, 2007). Besides, the development of courses in English has produced ambivalent results in terms of inclusivity of international students. On the one hand, it aims to bolster students' employability across linguistic borders. On the other hand, it leads to the diffusion of Anglo-American values and practices, particularly in management disciplines (Engwall, 2004), which may be interpreted as the opposite of inclusivity. As the medium of expression of one's experience, language limits what can be expressed (especially when there is no English equivalent), thereby forcing the recipient to resort to the closest concept in English to convey it (Joy and Poonamalle, 2013). This can lead to an "imposed etic" perspective that impedes multiples perspectives (e.g., the French concept of "métier" – strongly embedded in the technical savoir-faire - does not exist in English and is "unequivocally" translated by "business lines"; D'Iribarne, 2009). Offering the genuine possibility to choose between different languages of instruction for the same course remains a pedagogical and organizational challenge for business schools and universities, and only a handful of institutions offer such curricula (e.g., Paris Sorbonne University has two campuses providing courses in French and English: Paris and Abu Dhabi; ESCP has 6 campuses: Paris, Berlin, London, Madrid, Turin, and Warsaw, providing courses in French, English, German, Spanish and Italian).

Cross-cultural courses

Management schools have incorporated international contents through cross-cultural (that is comparative) functional courses (e.g., International marketing, International finance, or International supply chain management), and sometimes (in schools or universities with an "international business" department or alike) through more systematic consideration of the international business dimensions embedded in these functional domains (that is how these functional domains are developed in the international firm). Schools have also proposed dedicated courses (called Cross-Cultural Management, or CCM, courses) looking at intercultural management situations aiming at improving the intercultural competences (such as intercultural communication or leadership skills) of their multicultural student body.

For the latter, however, the positive effect of CCM courses on students' international skills is only moderate (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Some scholars have thus proposed to increase international exposure of students through innovative technologically supported CCM courses in an experiential learning approach. For instance, Erez et al. (2013) implemented virtual multicultural projects to test students' global and local identities in culturally diverse virtual teams. Similarly, Bartel-Radic et al. (2015) examine global teaming from the point of view of student learning and the development of intercultural competence to show that students learned from the teaming experience, especially those with more prior international experience. In the same vein, Taras et al. (2013) developed a course (the X-project) based on globally distributed multicultural teams through virtual means, offering significant cognitive and attitudinal learning gains.

Unfortunately, such projects entail heavy technological investments and do not easily apply to large student cohorts. More importantly, these studies suffer from an inherent bias of positive course feedback as students proactively opt to undertake cross-cultural-related courses. These learners are already aware of the importance of such competencies and will consciously work towards developing these cross-cultural skills. In other words, studies on

the impact of cross-cultural projects likely suffer from endogeneity. Moreover, students who score high on cultural intelligence (CQ; “the capability of an individual to function effectively in situations characterized by culture”; Van Dyne et al. (2008), p. 3) are more satisfied with and committed to cross-cultural courses (Ramsey and Lorenz, 2016), which translates into improved cross-cultural skills.

Offshore campuses mixing multicultural student body

Another emerging trend at Western universities and business schools has been to develop internationalization strategies by establishing campuses in foreign countries (Wilkins et al., 2012). These strategies are using diverse “entry modes”, from wholly owned campuses reflecting organic growth, to more (e.g. double degree offering) or less (e.g. summer courses abroad) sophisticated international agreements with foreign local institutions reflecting an export perspective. For instance, in 2010, more international students from non-European Union countries were taking U.K. higher education programs outside than inside the U.K. (Wilkins et al., 2012). More than half of all foreign students are located in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (OECD, 2013). The main directional flows of students have been from East to West and South to North, complemented more recently with East to East flows thanks to new educational “hubs” such as Singapore or Malaysia (Knight, 2011) and more recently the U.A.E. (e.g., Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, or New York University Abu Dhabi, among others).

However, we do not know much about the perspective of students on multicampus learning. First, there is a limited number of studies that look into students’ choice to study in an international campus of a Western universities. Reasons for undertaking higher education studies abroad include enhancing their foreign language skills and employability profile, pursuing career opportunities, and increasing their social status (Lueg and Lueg, 2015). Few studies discussing offshore campuses are concerned with Western universities’ international branches in remote locations that identify a series of push and pull factors underlying student destination choice (Wilkins et al., 2012; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011). Second, only a few studies look at the impact of different learning environments experienced in multicampus education by students on their perceptions of learning approaches. Wierstra et al. (2003) found evidence for the influence of aspects of learning environment (whether student-, conceptualization- or reproduction-oriented) on two learning approaches (constructive with importance given to critical thinking, or reproductive focusing on memorizing and stepwise information processing). In particular, a learning environment characterized as student-oriented (oriented to active learning and important degree of self-regulation) discourages reproductive learning and promotes constructive learning. However, the learning environment preferences of the students were partly related to their learning orientations at home university, but they were strikingly similar for students from different countries. Finally, there was a strong preference for those learning environment aspects that promote constructive learning.

Learning perspective: The responses of students when studying abroad in a highly international context

Despite the adaptations of business schools and universities in their course offering to cohorts of increased international students, studying in several campuses abroad remains a challenge and suggests that mere cultural diversity inside the classroom is simply not enough to guaranty inclusivity students could expect. For many students, unfortunately, there is a gap between their expectations and the reality of the sojourn in terms of academic-language,

social, culture-value and travel-cultural experiences in short term studying abroad periods of time, such expectation gaps being one contributor to adjustment stress (Pitts, 2009). Sawir et al. (2008) even identified cultural loneliness perceived by foreign students studying in Australia in the absence of cultural and linguistic shared environment.

For students, studying management abroad (and performing well) implies to rapidly adjust to potential differences between home and foreign learning environments. Two factors concerned with barriers for “periphery” students explain why studying abroad may not lead to appropriate effective learning: the largely Western-centric course contents and multicultural classrooms with heterogeneous learning styles.

Western-centric course content

A first reason why cultural diversity inside the classroom is simply not enough to enhance students’ comprehension of international business realities and appreciation of inclusivity in curricula relates to the largely Western-centric character of course contents delivered at many (all?) business schools. There is an increasing popular recognition that American and European business schools and other higher education institutions deliver curricula encompassing a Western bias that may, or may not, meet the needs and expectations of non-Western students (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Joy and Poonamallee, 2013).

In this respect, a 2014 student-led campaign at a University College in London (“Why is my curriculum so White?”¹) asked why there is such a gap between inclusivity or diversity policies and the content of their curricula, which still reflects a Western-centric postcolonial viewpoint of the world and education. In the field of management, education institutions in Europe have been keen, everywhere, of imitating an American teaching and management style (being themselves actors involved in intercultural management situations). Management is seen as a discipline with a strong normative culture that is diffused through powerful role models, research impacts, students study trips, Ph.Ds of faculty, accreditations, or rankings. This is the “Americanization” of management education (Engwall, 2004) where conceptual integration of cultural analyses in curricula is lacking so as to critically reflect about the cultural assumptions and universalist pretensions that underpin many mainstream concepts in economics and management (Blasco, 2009). This acculturation of business school, notably in Europe, is not a recent observation (e.g. in France with contributions from Berry twenty-five years ago; 1992; 1995).

Heterogeneous learning styles

A second reason why cultural diversity inside the classroom is not a warranty to enhance students’ comprehension of international business realities and appreciation of inclusivity in curricula relates to learning styles that can be defined as “the individual, natural and preferred way of a person to treat information and feelings in a certain (learning-) situation which will influence his decisions and behaviors” (Barmeyer, 2004, p. 578). They refer to cognitive strategies to acquire and use information which differ across cultures (Hofstede, 1986; Bennett, 1986) and impact teaching as well (e.g., the influence of Hofstede’s Power distance and Uncertainty avoidance). This can affect the learning experience of certain students in case of mismatch between home and host country learning styles. For instance, Chinese students displaying a high power distance index tend to be less comfortable in front of their teachers, which leads to a lack of participation (Wang et al., 2009). This is a practical problem of inequivalent performance evaluation across students, as

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dscx4h2l-Pk> (accessed on November 29th, 2017).

participation is often considered as a pillar of (American) business schools. Hence, multicultural teaching might not be optimal for certain students' learning experience.

While Joy and Kolb (2009) found that culture does have an impact on students' learning styles, they also show that this impact is only slightly more significant than other demographic variables (age, gender, level of education, area of specialization). They also found that first year international students tend to be significantly influenced by their culture of origin, while last year international students tend to be more influenced by their study discipline. Wierstra et al. (2003) studying Southern European students at a Dutch university found that the learning environment has an impact on how students approach the learning process (reproductive vs. constructive) despite their learning preferences inherited from their country of origin.

Study purpose and context

Our literature review discussed three responses of Western (mostly but not exclusively) higher education institutions to attract foreign students and foster inclusivity (English and multilingual courses; cross-cultural courses; offshore campuses mixing diverse students body). However, from a pedagogical perspective, two major research issues have not been addressed so far. First, we still know very little, empirically, of whether such policies have any impact at all on students' learning experience. If ethnocentric curricula have clearly (and logically) been identified by the international students community as a barrier to inclusivity when studying abroad, learning style preferences (representing a key pedagogical aspect of learning experience) of a multicultural student body responding to an inclusive curricula have not been empirically studied. Second, previous research on the effectiveness of international curricula is scarce (e.g., Taras et al., 2013; Ramsey and Lorenz, 2016), and tends to generally admit the effect of cultures (national and subcultures) on learning styles. Studies investigating the impact of multiple determinants on students learning experience, including nationality, language of instruction, and campus mobility, have not been, to the best of our knowledge, conducted yet.

Therefore, this study investigates whether culturally diverse students fundamentally display different learning preferences according to the language of instruction and the campus location for a core course, concretely: (a) Does a multicultural student body show converging (i.e., reasonably homogeneous) learning styles preferences towards a standardized multicampus course? (b) What is the relative impact of culture compared to other diversity factors on the multicultural multicampus learning experience?

In order to address these questions, we use the case of an integrated multicampus business school, ESCP Europe. Hence the context of the study encompasses three related aspects (the school's strategy, the course development process, and the course topic) which altogether contribute to create an inclusive context of education.

A compulsory course in the second semester of the first year in a general Master in Management program served as an object of analysis. This core course in marketing (entitled "International Marketing Decisions", IMD) was developed at the level of the European Department of Marketing (EDM) to diffuse ESCP Europe's inclusivity agenda (the 'Culture for Business' [C4B] vision²). It is delivered annually on five campuses in three languages (English in particular; plus French and Spanish), using the same pedagogical material in these languages (syllabus, slides, cases, assessments and examples), but different teachers and also

² <http://www.escpeurope.eu/nc/media-news/news-newsletter/news-single/article/escp-europe-reaffirme-sa-strategie-interculturelle-cultures-for-business-c4b-1/>

different languages (English, French and Spanish; German and Italian are not used for organizational reasons).

Two professors from two campuses but from the same discipline and academic department affiliation (the EDM), developed the course, using an integrative and decentralized process, with successive validations and input brought over the years by the faculty teaching the course (fourth year of existence as of 2017-18). Teachers have also been given the possibility to adapt up to 20% of the course content, be it in terms of examples found in the country of study or in terms of assessments e.g. due to minor local legal requirements. The course development process uses a systematic feedback system to monitor from year to year the integration of the feedbacks provided by the stable teaching team spread over the five campuses, ensuring shared meanings across the European teaching team.

The course contents (“IMD”) aimed at opening students to the multiple impacts of cultural variables on consumption and buying process, to resulting adaptation and standardization decisions of mix marketing abroad, this within organizational contexts (depending on the internationalization level of companies) also shaping those decisions (Prime and Usunier, 2015). In addition, a central emphasis was systematically placed to discussing these aspects considering international business relations from/between mature Triad and emerging markets at a worldwide scale.

Data collection: Sample and measure

Our data set was collected using a natural experiment design where students were exposed to experimental (the IMD multicampus course) and other factors outside the control of the investigators. Unlike a descriptive study, an experiment is a study in which a treatment is intentionally introduced and a result or outcome is observed. Data were collected through a paper-and-pencil survey in class, at the end of the course (i.e., at the end of the 10th three-hour long session), in Spring 2017. Although delivered at five campuses in 17 groups, out of organizational constraints the survey was restricted to 3 campuses, 11 groups, and 3 teaching languages (2 groups in Berlin [both English], 3 in Madrid [2 English, 1 Spanish], and 6 in Paris [4 English, 2 French]).

The sample size was $N = 371$, and 27 nationalities were represented altogether (see Table 1). For the subsequent analyses, we decided to focus on the four biggest national groups (French, German, Italian, Chinese) and to analyze the remaining students (nationalities with minor representation; no nationality indicated) as one group. This approach also enabled us to check whether the (nationality-wise) homogeneous groups (French; German; Italian; Chinese) respond more homogeneously to the questions than the (culturally mixed) heterogeneous group, so that we can enrich our investigation into diversity issues of a student cohort that follows a standardized course format.

The questionnaire was simple and had two pages (see Exhibit 1: The structure of the questionnaire). The first page asked for demographics and course-related information, which in the following analyses represent the set of independent variables. These variables relate to different dimensions of diversity in class (“diversity factors”) and hence are potential sources of heterogeneous feedback to a standardized course format. Of particular interest is whether the student’s country-of-origin (nationality) represents a bigger challenge for courses targeted at an internationally mixed student body than other reasons for heterogeneous expectations and perceptions in such a mixed class. The last two questions point towards possible positive (preferences) and negative but constructive (suggestions) feedback that came to the students’ minds when thinking about what the course has actually delivered to them. Preference and

suggestion measures generated on this basis will represent the dependent variables in our following analyses.

Table 1: Sample description (N=371)

Diversity factor	Sub-groups
Nationality	Chinese : 39 French : 153 German : 41 Italian : 72 Others : 53 Unknown : 13
Campus	Berlin : 132 Madrid : 118 Paris : 121
Gender	Female : 201 Male : 170
Teaching language	English: 290 French: 28 Spanish: 53
Language proficiency	Very low – average : 42 Good : 67 Very good : 100 Excellent: 96 Mother tongue: 66
Internship in marketing	No: 276 Yes: 93 (2 missing)
Interest in marketing	Below average: 57 Average: 146 Above average: 168

To measure preferences and suggestions, the answers to the two open questions were content-coded, using an inductive approach. The first step included the formulation of a short-cut for any aspect that was provided as a response to either question. For example, the answer “I liked the many examples presented in class” was coded as “examples”. If the answer was already concise, such as “the group project”, then we defined the category “group project”. This procedure led to 23 codes for preferences and 54 codes for suggestions. Using two independent coders, the second step involved the formulation of superordinate categories, in an attempt to cluster the codes into categories. The two coders discussed their respective suggestions for category labels, and then applied these labels to the 23 (resp. 54) codes. This step led to nine (eleven) preference (suggestion) categories. It is interesting to note that the labels for both the positive and negative course feedbacks were essentially the same, except for two additional categories that only appeared in connection with suggestions. The ultimate set of feedback categories are the following: ‘application’, ‘assessment’, ‘content element’, ‘contents’, ‘illustration’, ‘interaction’, ‘material’, ‘organization’, ‘rules’ (suggestions only), ‘speaker’, and ‘support’ (suggestions only). Short explanations and examples for each one of these feedback categories (positive and negative) are displayed in Table 2.

On the basis of this coding scheme, we were able to measure the absolute number of comments per student with respect to each one of the nine (eleven) preference (suggestion) categories. Hence, we measured how a specific category was represented in a student’s positive and negative course feedback, i.e. how prominently this category was reflected in this student’s feedback thoughts. We also calculated the absolute number of comments per

student with respect to preferences (suggestions) in total, summing up the associated numbers in the nine (eleven) categories. These overall measures can be considered as an indicator of the richness of any student's positive and negative course feedback.

Table 2: Feedback categories, explanations, and sample codes

Category	Explanation: comments related to...	Sample code for positive feedback (preference)	Sample code for negative feedback (suggestion)
1. Application	... course elements intended to apply concepts / theories to a new example or case (requiring students' contribution)	Study of cases	More praxis like inventing a product
2. Assessment	... the various grading elements	Quizzes	Mid-term exam, oral defense instead of group project report
3. Content element	... specific topics of the course	Glocalization	Digital marketing
4. Contents	... the contents as a whole	Wideness of topics	More depth
5. Illustration	... course elements intended to clarify a concept / theory (without requiring students' contribution)	Short videos	More numerical examples
6. Interaction	... the interaction in class (between students, between students and professor)	Open discussions	Debates instead of case discussions
7. Material	... the pedagogical material (slides, links, additional readings)	Quality of slides	Less readings
8. Organization	... administration of the course	Standardization across campuses	Shorter courses
9. Rules	... all measures applied to incentivize a specific behavior of students	./.	No mandatory attendance
10. Speaker	... the way the instructor behaved in class	Passion of the prof	Invite famous employees
11. Support	... all measures taken to support the learning experience and outcome of students	./.	Guidelines for group project

Results

We begin with some descriptive statistics and complement them with ANOVAs, considering that age (the only metric variable) is so homogeneous in our sample that we ignored it in all further analyses, and that all other variables that potentially impacted the (metrically-scaled) dependent variables were non-metric. In each one of these ANOVAs, we use a specific preference or suggestion category as the dependent variable, and one item from the first page of the questionnaire as factor (except for “identifying language”, which we have refrained from using, as it coincided in more than 80% with nationality).

In a second step, we run regression analyses, using a specific preference or suggestion category as the dependent variable, and a set of dummies to represent the categorical independent variables (“diversity factors”), to draw a more complete picture than that produced by the (separate) ANOVAs. Note that it is not our intention to test specific hypotheses. In contrast, any insignificant relationship (effect of a “diversity factor” on positive and negative course feedback) means that there is no indication to believe that this diversity factor represents a barrier when offering a standardized course to a heterogeneous student body. In other words, insignificant models (or insignificant relationships) point towards a relatively homogeneous perception of a standardized course format, despite the diversity in class.

Descriptive Statistics and complementing ANOVAs

As noted earlier (see Table 1) 153 (41, 72, 39) were French (German, Italian, Chinese); the remaining 66 students were merged into the culturally mixed group. Students followed the course on three campuses: Berlin (132), Madrid (118), and Paris (121). Regarding the distribution of course languages, 290 (28, 53) students followed the course in English (French, Spanish). We are aware of the fact that this distribution is quite imbalanced; still, we will not ignore this potential source for heterogeneous course evaluations in the subsequent analyses. Proficiency in the course language was high on average: only 42 students indicated proficiency levels between very low and average, so that the remaining 329 students have at least good proficiency (67 “good”, 100 “very good”, 96 “excellent”, 66 “as my mother tongue”). Gender-wise, the sample split into 201 females and 170 males. Regarding students’ link to the course topic, 276 had never done an internship in marketing, and the remaining 93 students (data from 2 was missing) had an average experience of 4.67 months. Last, 57 (146, 168) students expressed a below-average (average, above-average) interest in the marketing discipline. In conclusion, perhaps except for gender, the independent variables all follow a somewhat skewed distribution, which needs to be kept in mind when interpreting and discussing the results.

Regarding the dependent variables, we provide descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), complemented with the results of ANOVAs, in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 considers overall preferences (i.e., the number of responses per student across all nine preference categories) and overall suggestions (i.e., the number of responses per student across all eleven suggestion categories). We split the descriptive statistics by sub-groups, according to nationality, campus, teaching language, proficiency in the teaching language, gender, internship in marketing, and interest in marketing.

Some observations are interesting to note. First, although preferences are clustered into nine categories and 23 codes (compared to eleven categories and 54 codes for suggestions), the answers are altogether richer with respect to preferences (mean of 1.37) than suggestions (mean of 1.09). This points towards an altogether positive overall feedback of the course, albeit on a highly aggregate level. Second, of the seven diversity factors, five significantly impact the richness of feedback regarding preferences (except campus and teaching language), whereas teaching language is the only factor that impacts the richness of suggestions. Although all effect sizes are small (not beyond 0.25, the conventional threshold for medium size), this result is quite interesting as well, as it points towards heterogeneous answering behavior of students when asked to provide positive feedback, and more homogenous behavior when it comes to negative feedback. Third, analyzing the significant diversity effects, we note that the richness of preferences is highest for German students (as a side note, the more heterogeneous “Other” group is *not* characterized by the highest standard deviation); for students on the Paris campus; for students studying in French; for students with increased levels of teaching language proficiency; for male students; for students who have done an internship in marketing; and finally, for students with above-average interest in marketing.

All these analyses could now be repeated with the nine (eleven) preference (suggestion) categories. This would lead to 20 models, each one with seven diversity factors. For the sake of clarity of presentation, and as we will provide more comprehensive insights (i.e., by considering the various diversity factors simultaneously) with regression analyses, we decided to select two diversity factors: nationality of students (this factor is the most prominent in previous literature) and campus (this is the main organizational factor of the specific context of our school). Note that on the aggregate level of overall preferences and

suggestions, only nationality, not campus, made a difference, and only with respect to preferences. Consequently, the following additional analysis will perhaps uncover more differentiated insights that have remained hidden on the aggregate level. Table 4 presents the ANOVA results.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on overall preferences and overall suggestions by subgroup (**highest** and **lowest** subgroup means [the latter in case of more than two levels] are highlighted; significant [$p < 0.05$] and non-negligible [$\eta > 0.1$] effects **highlighted**)

Variable	Overall preferences		Overall suggestions	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
<i>Nationality</i>				
French	1.37	1.02	1.02	1.05
German	1.68	1.01	1.44	1.27
Italian	1.17	0.84	1.13	1.09
Chinese	1.21	0.61	0.85	0.96
Others	1.53	0.97	1.26	0.98
ANOVA	F=2.65, $p < 0.05$, $\eta=0.17$		F=2.13, $p = 0.08$, $\eta=0.15$	
<i>Campus</i>				
Berlin	1.35	0.74	1.02	0.81
Madrid	1.31	1.05	1.14	1.16
Paris	1.47	0.98	1.10	1.21
ANOVA	F=0.98, $p = 0.38$, $\eta=0.07$		F=0.42, $p = 0.66$, $\eta=0.04$	
<i>Teaching language</i>				
French	1.68	1.22	0.54	0.69
English	1.38	0.92	1.11	1.05
Spanish	1.21	0.95	1.24	1.24
ANOVA	F=2.25, $p = 0.11$, $\eta=0.11$		F=4.49, $p < 0.05$, $\eta=0.15$	
<i>Language proficiency</i>				
Average or below	1.05	0.91	1.14	1.30
Good	1.13	0.85	1.06	1.23
Very good	1.41	0.82	1.12	0.91
Excellent	1.49	1.06	1.15	1.01
As my mother tongue	1.61	1.04	0.94	1.04
ANOVA	F=3.76, $p < 0.01$, $\eta=0.20$		F=0.45, $p = 0.7$, $\eta=0.07$	
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	1.28	0.92	1.02	1.04
Male	1.50	0.98	1.16	1.10
ANOVA	F=4.88, $p < 0.05$, $\eta=0.11$		F=1.47, $p = 0.23$, $\eta=0.06$	
<i>Internship in marketing</i>				
No	1.32	0.92	1.03	1.02
Yes	1.56	1.03	1.26	1.17
ANOVA	F=4.46, $p < 0.05$, $\eta=0.11$		F=3.13, $p = 0.08$, $\eta=0.09$	
<i>Interest in marketing</i>				
Below average	1.11	0.84	1.23	1.23
Average	1.34	0.99	0.99	1.02
Above average	1.50	0.94	1.13	1.05
ANOVA	F=3.90, $p < 0.05$, $\eta=0.14$		F=1.25, $p = 0.28$, $\eta=0.08$	
Overall	1.37	0.95	1.09	1.06

In total, 13 models are insignificant. Hence, the course feedback in these categories is quite homogenous with respect to where the students come from or where the course is taught. Across the various nationalities and across campuses, the frequencies of feedback statements pertaining to this category are similar. So when analyzing course feedback on a more fine-grained level (i.e., on the level of feedback categories), offering a standardized course to a (national and teaching location-wise) diverse student body does not emerge as a big problem.

In the remaining seven significant models, of the potential 21 (7×3 factors) effects, only nine are significant, and six pertain to “campus”. This result is interesting for three reasons.

Table 4: ANOVAs with preference or suggestion categories as DV, and nationality, campus, and their interaction as factors (significant [$p < 0.05$] and non-negligible [$\eta > 0.1$] effects **highlighted**)

	Preferences			Suggestions		
	Nationality	Campus	Nat \times Cam	Nationality	Campus	Nat \times Cam
Application		Model insignificant			Model insignificant	
Assessment		Model insignificant			Model insignificant	
Content element		Model insignificant			Model insignificant	
Contents		Model insignificant		$p = 0.11$ $\eta = 0.15$	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.25$	$p = 0.12$ $\eta = 0.19$
Illustration	$p = 0.17$ $\eta = 0.14$	$p < 0.05$ $\eta = 0.14$ (B highest)¹	$p = 0.10$ $\eta = 0.19$		Model insignificant	
Interaction		Model insignificant			Model insignificant	
Material	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.25$ (G highest)²	$p < 0.05$ $\eta = 0.14$ (P highest)¹	$p = 0.35$ $\eta = 0.16$	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.21$ (O highest)²	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.16$ (P highest)¹	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.26$ (I\timesP highest)³
Organization		Model insignificant		$p = 0.63$ $\eta < 0.10$	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.23$ (B highest)¹	$p = 0.96$ $\eta < 0.10$
Rules		./.		$p = 0.16$ $\eta = 0.14$	$p < 0.01$ $\eta = 0.18$ (B highest)¹	$p = 0.20$ $\eta = 0.18$
Speaker		Model insignificant			Model insignificant	
Support		./.		$p = 0.23$ $\eta = 0.13$	$p = 0.06$ $\eta = 0.13$	$p = 0.13$ $\eta = 0.19$

Notes: 1 – B=Berlin; M=Madrid; P=Paris; 2 – G=German, O=others; 3 – I \times P=Italian students in Paris

First, in contrast to the aggregate level presented earlier, this time the picture is more differentiated for the negative course feedback (suggestions). Consequently, the differentiated (category-level) analysis does uncover some specificities (in particular, with respect to negative feedback and hence areas for potential improvement of the course) that have remained hidden on the aggregate level of analysis.

Second, whereas the “campus” factor remained insignificant with respect to positive and negative aggregate feedback, on the disaggregate level it seems to play the major role, relatively speaking. To understand why the Berlin campus receives a relatively high number of positive feedback regarding illustrations would require an additional characterization of the teaching methods employed by the professor. In turn, many comments on “organization” and “rules” were expressed by students on the Berlin campus, probably due to the large groups in Berlin and the fact that rules were often explicitly mentioned in class (the necessity of reminding students to stick to some rule may also have been due to the group size).

Third, the only two significant effects of students’ nationalities relate to material (see Table 3, line “material”; in all other lines $p > 0.05$). Whereas German students praised the course material most, the culturally mixed group made most suggestions for further improvement. The codes pertaining to this category are “less reading” (perhaps these students did not fully understand that the extra readings were not mandatory but instead intended as an add-on), “slides to recap” (these were not missing but included in every single slide set, so this critique was without justification), and “stick closer to slides” (perhaps these students were not acquainted so much with the fact that the slides support but do not replace a lecture). In conclusion, the fact that the culturally mixed (and thus presumably most heterogeneous) group mentioned the highest average number of suggestions regarding material is the only case where this group responded more heterogeneously to the course than any other monocultural group.

Regression Analyses

To get a more complete picture of how the set of diversity factors potentially influenced course feedback, we calculated 20 regression models (in each one of them using the number of feedback statements pertaining to one of the nine preference or eleven suggestion categories as dependent variable) with eleven influencing factors: three nationality dummies (German, Italian, and Chinese; French being the base line nationality), two campus dummies (Madrid and Paris, Berlin being the base line campus), two teaching language dummies (French and Spanish, English being the base line language), proficiency in the teaching language (0=below or at average, 1=above average), gender (0=female, 1=male), internship in marketing (0=no, 1=yes), and finally interest in marketing (0=below or at average, 1=above average). Table 5 summarizes the results.

Of the 20 regression models, only nine are significant. Hence, in more than half of the cases, the various diversity factors taken together do *not* explain the variation of feedbacks regarding a specific preference or suggestion category. Put differently, feedbacks in these categories are quite homogeneous and thus similar in particular across nationalities, teaching languages, language proficiency, gender, as well as interest and experience in the course topic.

Of the nine significant models, the model fit is very low (between 2.9 and 6.9%), and of the potential $9 \text{ [models]} * 11 \text{ [factors]} = 99$ effects, only 23 are significant. The picture of course feedback that can be explained by diversity factors (including nationality and language proficiency which have been highlighted by previous literature) is thus very scattered and hence only a collection of “tiny” individual effects.

Analyzing these few significant effects carefully, we realize that 12 (and hence more than half of all significant effects) relate to “campus” (Madrid and Paris, as compared to Berlin). In consistency with the ANOVA results, the campus differences regarding suggestions related to the organization of and rules applied during the course stand out (see the interpretation above). Conversely, very few effects relate to students’ nationalities.

In conclusion, administrative aspects of the course (i.e., offering the same ‘environment’ on all campuses – e.g., similar class sizes; or communicating and applying the same rules everywhere – e.g., computer use in class) are a more important source for heterogeneous course feedbacks than factors that pertain to the students’ cultural background (nationalities; language skills). These “little details” of the course administration relate, using a marketing of services approach (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016), to the “service physical environment” (one the “7Ps” specific to marketing of services). In and across the campuses of the education service delivered by the management schools and universities, these emerge as the most pertinent area for further improvement of the course learning experience. In sum, however – given that the standardized course format is evaluated quite homogeneously – the teaching concept seems to be able to address quite different aspects of potential benefit for a multicultural student body and as such is already an altogether sound “all-rounder”: Every student (independent of nationality, teaching language, language proficiency, gender, marketing interest and experience) seems to like “something” about the course, an aspect that he/she thinks is worth mentioning in response to being asked for positive course feedback. From the students’ perspective, the course and its contents seem to be perceived as inclusive.

Table 5: Overview of regression analyses (columns: independent variables; lines: dependent variable); only significant beta coefficients appear (regular: $p < 0.05$; **bold: $p < 0.01$**)

	R ² (in %)	German	Italian	Chinese	Madrid	Paris	French	Spanish	Proficiency	Gender	Internship	Interest
Preferences												
application	n.s.											
assessment	n.s.											
content element	3.7							0.21				
contents	3.2					0.16					0.24	
illustration	3.5	0.16			-0.16							
interaction	n.s.											
material	5.3	0.21			0.15	0.15						
organization	n.s.											
speaker	n.s.											
Suggestions												
application	n.s.											
assessment	n.s.											
content element	n.s.											
contents	5.0				0.15	0.28	-0.12					
illustration	n.s.											
interaction	n.s.											
material	5.4		0.14	-0.14		0.14		0.14		0.17		
organization	5.8				-0.27	-0.28						
rules	6.9	0.13			-0.29	-0.20						
speaker	n.s.											
support	2.9				0.18					0.15		

Conclusion

Summary and discussion: “One size fits all”?

This study investigated a multicampus standardized and compulsory course delivered to a cohort of international students. To the study of whether or not a multicultural student body shows compatible (i.e., reasonably homogeneous) learning styles preferences towards such a course format (research question 1), our empirical results suggest an overall quite homogeneous course feedback, across a variety of diversity factors discussed in literature (nationality, language, gender) and specific to the institutional context (multicampus education, internship and interest in marketing). The heterogeneity in course feedback, albeit considerably small in total, mostly relates to administrative factors of the learning environment (e.g., the course organization in each campus) and much less to diversity-related factors (nationality, language skills, gender), signaling that the intrinsic student characteristics did not impact much on course feedback, confirming a “one size fits all” perception.

To the study of the relative impact of culture compared to other diversity factors on the multicultural multicampus learning experience (research question 2), we find a surprising result: nationality (used as a proxy for culture) does not have a more significant impact on

students' preferences and suggestions. However, we do find a relative impact of culture on two specific yet not essential points: the material provided (German students praise the course material) and the suggestions (culturally mixed group made most suggestions for further improvements). As a consequence, offering a standardized course to a nationality and teaching location-wise diverse student body does not emerge as a big pedagogical problem for students' preferences (positive and constructive).

Overall, the results seem to signal that within this particular institutional context and for a specific cohort of students, the course was designed and perceived in a pretty standardized and inclusive way. These results are highly consistent with the context of the empirical study in terms of offering-related factors: (a) the school's C4B strategy is promising high inclusiveness, (b) the specialization (business and management) is very normative and tends to impose an American culture (for teaching and learning), (c) the organizational design process of the course is inclusive (it was purposely designed to address various diverse expectations or predispositions, using elements that almost everybody would perceive as beneficial – preferences – and not-so-beneficial – suggestions), (d) the perspective taken in the course contents is inclusive (it is not a marketing course with an international flavor, but an *international* marketing course strongly embedded in an *international* business perspective where marketing is considered as the engine of internationalization of firms in a globalizing economy).

However, in interpreting these surprising results, we need to consider demand-related effects, due to the profile of the students. Our results bring forward a contradiction to one stream of literature on differences in learning styles across culture suggesting that the study discipline (Joy and Kolb, 2009) or the learning environment (Wierstra et al., 2003) impact more on students' learning styles than their learning styles preferences inherited from their country of origin. Even if our study does not include direct measures of learning styles, we see that the unprecedented cultural heterogeneity among students in management (here 27 nationalities altogether) reflecting the internationalization of management education, has led to the development of converging learning preferences. This could possibly be best explained by relying on a sociological Bourdieusian perspective on business schools studying population. The social background and cultural capital of the students play an effective, but hidden, role in generating convergence, with higher social strata being more likely to choose EMI (Lueg and Lueg, 2015). These students would represent "global cosmopolitans" or a kind of modern "offshore elite", sharing a similar social status across countries engaged in international business, speaking a "Globish" English (Calvet, 1999), being rather urban, wealthy, mobile and internationally exposed, and hyper connected (like educated Millennials worldwide). This profile is consistent with the observation that economic globalization has created higher demands, especially from multinational companies, for high-profile and high-paying careers that both Western and non-Western students logically both want to capitalize on (Joy and Poonamallee, 2013). Overall, this no-cultural diversity (especially that measured by nationality) effect on learning preferences might reflect the idea that management students altogether represent a subculture community that has progressively embraced the values and learning style associated with the highly internationalized Western business schools learning style and environment.

A first implication of our research relates to how business schools and universities can improve inclusivity in their curricula. Being themselves actors of international business and cultural socialization agents of the management field, their capacity to develop more inclusive curricula, pedagogy, and assessment techniques seems conditioned by their capacity to be themselves more inclusive in their identity (corporate culture pillar of the

internationalization strategy). Reflexivity, introspection and multicultural training for teachers are ways to get there (Joy and Poonamallee, 2013).

A second and related implication relates to the design of management courses for a multicultural student body and a multi-country educational journey. Following one direction (the convergence view), we could predict that teaching challenges (related to a “diverse” class, and in particular culturally diverse and diverse reg. language proficiency [between native and non-native]) will become gradually less pertinent in management education. On the other side, it could be argued that such “globalized” (i.e. standardized) teaching would be putting more emphasis on similarities than on differences and ultimately would put at danger the many opportunities provided by multicultural team diversity (Stahl et al., 2010) and opportunities to engage in interactions with and learn from each other (Joy and Poonamallee, 2013). The design of such courses should therefore be inclusive itself, requiring multicultural and multilocation collaborating faculty to avoid just “infusing” international elements in the course, generally from a Western-centric posture. Purchasing standard pedagogical packages in English (typically from the USA) and re-selling them to the own students, is not appropriate if one wants to promote more inclusivity in the course design and contents for business schools and universities in their growing multicultural environment.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations. First of all, one may ask whether course feedback is an appropriate means to capture and evaluate the inclusivity of a given curriculum. Filling a course feedback requires students to thoroughly reflect on the overall course, their teachers, the material, the methods, and assessments. Even if the questionnaire was based on open questions to minimize this risk, the complexity of what leads to such and such course feedback may not have been properly addressed. In addition, the fact that course feedback forms were circulated at the end of the last session might not have been conducive to providing accurate feedbacks, especially by means of open answers.

Second, we have used nationality as a proxy for culture. This is of course debatable (Fisher, 2009), all the more so as, taking into account international mobility of students, nationality might not always (and less and less under certain social backgrounds) reflect where (in the proper and figurative meanings) students have grown up. Our country level analysis of culture may not be sufficient to interpret our no-diversity effect to reflect culture. For the purpose of this research (a first empirical exploration), we defined culture very simply (we use the “nationality” country-level proxy to measure culture), and probably not without sufficient nuances: Is nationality the best proxy when we look at international management education and learning styles preferences of international students? Could/should we use other definitions of culture –shared meaning systems- related to disciplinary subcultures (“business studies”)? This limitation calls for future research to explore possible within-nations variability of learning styles depending on discipline subcultures (e.g. management).

Third, we could not investigate the impact of inclusive policies set up on students’ international skills set enhancement. Instead, we focused on students’ feedback with respect to one particular course embedded in a specific institutional arrangement. Still, the compulsory feature of the course under investigation should have removed an endogeneity bias that would have been more likely with elective courses.

Future research could first analyze in detail possible learning expectations relative to course designs of mixed student bodies (in our example, this seemed to have been the case already). This would require identifying mixed student bodies to explore within national

subgroups of those mixed student bodies possible individual level more nuanced expectations. Second, future research could also better document the current students' dominant culture (or educational subculture) in business schools. Direct measures should be made to test the Bourdieusian analysis of social replication of converging learning styles expectations from high social classes due to higher social and cultural capital. In the same direction, as the national identity of international management students can be challenged in the learning experience, a research on cultural hybridization of business school's students identity (as did Raltson, 2008, and Raltson et al., 1997, with international managers) could analyze the impact of national culture and economic ideology on management learning styles, especially that of students from emerging markets who tend to exhibit multiple layers of cultural identity (whether being at home or abroad). Third, future research should study whether an inclusive integrated course is facilitated at schools offering integrated programs, compared with schools where the clear distinction between local native-speaking students and foreign non-native speaking students described best its reality. This requires a comparison between an integrated (e.g., multicampus, multi-language business school) and a more conventional institution that welcomes "international" students. Finally, a promising area of research would be to study teaching styles in business schools across the world (supply side of the internationalization of students' body) in order to better understand of the evolution of management education under strong globalization pressures.

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Exhibit 1: The structure of the questionnaire

We asked the following questions (note that except for age, all variables are categorical or ordinal in some cases):

- (1) What is your age? [open question; in years];
- (2) What is your gender? [male, female];
- (3) What is your nationality? [open question; we registered the first nationality only, in case of multiple citizenship];
- (4) Which language do you identify most with? [open question];
- (5) On which campus did you study the IMD course? [Berlin, Madrid, Paris];
- (6) In which language did you study the IMD course? [English, French, Spanish];
- (7) How would you assess your language proficiency? [very poor, poor, moderate, average, good, very good, excellent, as my mother tongue];
- (8) Have you ever done an internship in marketing? [no, yes; they altogether cover a period of ... months];
- (9) How would you describe your level of interest in the marketing discipline? [very low, low, average, high, very high]

The second part asked two open questions, to get insights into the learning experience of students as of how they perceived the learning style. Hereby, we deliberately refrained from asking closed-ended questions, to be able to draw an un-preconceived, multi-faceted picture of students' course perceptions and recommendations:

- (1) What did you like most in the course? [students' preferences];
- (2) What could be done differently? Provide concrete suggestions, if possible. [students' suggestions].