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Teaching Innovations in the Field of IB: Insights from the Academy of International Business: Teaching Innovation Award 2021 Finalists

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ABSTRACT

This special issue on Teaching Innovations in the Field of International Business systematically explores the nature of teaching innovations and their impact. Featuring articles from the finalists of the 2021 Teaching Innovation Award organized by the Teaching and Education Shared Interest Group at Academy of International Business as well as a conceptual article that integrates these innovations, the special issue seeks to advance research on International Business pedagogy and to inspire scholars to pursue teaching innovations with greater impact.

KEYWORDS

Pedagogy; teaching innovation; immersion; transformational learning; reflexivity

1. Introduction

International Business teaching should continue to evolve so that students can become the problem-solvers and change-makers of tomorrow. Yet, education scholars often observe higher education's excessive reliance on traditional teaching methods (e.g., lectures) and a tendency to teach the same concepts and content as our predecessors did (Alters and Nelson 2002). Over the recent years, higher education scholars have probed what constitutes a teaching innovation (e.g., Walder 2014) and how to teach innovatively (e.g., Behara and Davis 2015; Chang and Wei 2016; Huda et al. 2018). In the International Business (IB) field, scholars have followed a similar path. New literature on experiential learning (e.g., Taras et al. 2013) and innovative teaching environments (e.g., Ferreira-Lopes, Elexpuru-Albizuri, and Bezanilla 2021) has emerged and such practices are being disseminated in institutions of higher education and adopted by IB educators.

The *Journal of Teaching in International Business* has a strong track record in the dissemination of teaching innovations in IB (see: Sureka, Donthu, and Kumar 2020). For example, Akdeniz, Zhang, and Cavusgil (2019) published a special issue on "Innovative Pedagogical Approaches in Teaching International Business" that includes several publications focusing on active learning approaches (i.e., an interactive teaching and learning instead of a passive in-class knowledge transmission). This special issue has shed light on teaching practices in flipped-classrooms (Koponen 2019), benefits of short-term study abroad courses (Harrison and Palmer 2019), possibilities of conducting intercultural

training in virtual environments (Kirste and Holtbrügge 2019), the potential of video case studies (De Beule et al. 2019), and the application of virtual reality in the classroom (Hernandez-Pozas and Carreon-Flores 2019).

The IB field sees regular shifts in teaching practices, some voluntary, some gradual, some disruptive or radical. To make the teaching innovation process in the IB community more systematic and to introduce more variety in teaching innovations, the Academy of International Business Teaching and Education Shared Interest Group (AIB T&E SIG) initiated the Teaching Innovation Award. From the outset, this award has taken an inductive approach by celebrating practical teaching innovations by passionate educators who wish to provide the best possible learning outcomes for their students.

The first AIB T&E SIG's Teaching Innovation Award competition was held in 2021. The 19 submissions were evaluated by a panel of judges based on the newness of the innovation, the degree to which the novel practice was supported by the existing pedagogy literature, the scope of the impact, the transferability of the innovation to different contexts or courses, and the contribution to the pedagogy practice and literature in the IB field. Multiple judges rated the award submission to ensure an unbiased, informed, and fair evaluation, resulting in five finalist nominations. These finalists were then invited to submit detailed reports on their innovative teaching practices, from which one was chosen as a winner of the award¹. This special issue features three contributions by award finalists, along with a conceptual paper that categorizes these diverse innovations and proposes a novel typology of teaching innovations.

With this collection of articles, the special issue advances research on IB pedagogy and aims to motivate IB scholars to pursue further teaching innovations. More specifically, the typology provided in the conceptual paper sets the scene for a more systematic assessment of IB teaching innovations that can be used in business schools, classrooms, or as a self-assessment. This typology combines the nature of teaching innovations with their impact on diverse stakeholders, the latter being an area that has been overlooked in the IB and general pedagogy literature. Further, the special issue features three distinct innovation types. The categorization of these teaching innovations illustrates the use of the typology in practice, and contextualizes the rich insights derived from four different teaching innovations that emerged through informed experimentation by committed IB educators. We believe that these reflections of the AIB T&E SIG's Teaching Innovation Award finalists advance the pedagogy literature in IB, as well as inform other educators on how to teach the topic of IB in a creative, effective, and engaging way.

2. Special issue papers

The first article in this issue (Dieleman, Šilenskytė, Lynden, Fletcher, and Panina 2022) advances the pedagogy literature by presenting a novel teaching innovation typology that combines the different types of innovations (i.e., novel pedagogy methods, new technologies and new topics), and the stakeholders impacted by them (i.e., students, institutions of higher education worldwide and global communities). While the literature has long distinguished between types of teaching innovations such as new practices or new technologies (e.g., Walder 2014) as well as new topics, the authors'

¹ For more information on the award selection process and finalists, please see:

<https://tesig.aib.world/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2021/07/Special-Issue-inaugural-teaching-award-2021.pdf>

focus on impact is new. The framework elicits different innovation categories with far broader impact than an individual educator's classroom, thus embarking on an ambitious vision for innovative IB pedagogies. In addition to advancing the literature, this framework also opens up novel pathways for IB educators toward greater educational leadership by targeting broader stakeholder groups. Thus, the framework also offers practical guidance for innovative educators and higher education institutions to advance teaching excellence beyond individual classrooms and institutions.

The next contribution (Viswanathan, Sreekumar, Duncan, and Cai 2022) is an outstanding example of a teaching innovation that has had a significant impact extending far beyond students. Dr. Madhu Viswanathan, the lead author, was the inaugural recipient of the 2021 AIB T&E SIG's Teaching Innovation Award. Focusing on the topic of subsistence marketplaces, this innovation is a part of the dedicated ecosystem of learning built over more than a decade. The innovative approach is an example of a far-reaching innovation that combines new technologies, a new topic and new practices, as well as having an impact on stakeholder groups that include students, other educators in IB as well as global communities. In their article, the authors focus on one new technology practice – global virtual immersion – which stimulates bottom-up learning about unfamiliar contexts without being present in the specific location. In doing so, the innovation stimulates a learning process from sympathy to informed empathy. The long-running project has brought together global communities, entrepreneurs, students and other educators (through active dissemination) and the award winner has become a de-facto creator of a new field of knowledge within IB.

The third article in this special issue (Hasse 2022) is an example of what Dieleman and colleagues (2022) call a teaching practice innovation with impact on students in the educator's classroom. This innovation focuses on the development of students' global mind-set through transformative learning. The five teaching principles presented in the paper uplift learners' awareness of their assumptions, encouraging them to seek new perspectives and critical points of view. The article reports on an educational innovation pioneered in a North American classroom during the time of pandemic, demonstrating that a global mind-set can be developed with a suitable teaching method without changing students' physical location or engaging them in global virtual work, as it has been traditionally suggested in IB pedagogy research. Based on the evidence collected, a transformational learning approach is not just a novel teaching practice but also effective from the learner's perspective, suggesting that there is merit in its adoption by other educators in the field.

The fourth article in this special issue reports on an innovative way of teaching a new topic that is rapidly entering IB curricula: sustainability through academic collaboration across different institutions (Elo, Torkkeli, and Velt 2022). A collaboration between two universities during the Covid pandemic led to updated teaching practices in a new course delivered in Masters programs of two European universities. With sustainability at the forefront of global development, companies are grappling with the challenges of measuring and implementing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) programs. To prepare students for such a multi-disciplinary challenge, the authors stimulated bi-directional reflective learning and critical thinking on the novel topic, developing new skills and mind-sets to tackle urgent real-life problems within a classroom setting. The authors see an important role for reflexivity in preparing students for solving complex problems in the society, including critical reflection on students' interactions with others, on group collaboration and on cooperative learning. The lessons learnt are important for other educators as they can help bridge the gap between skills needed by multinational corporations and curricula offered by universities.

3. Conclusion

Teaching innovations can come in different shapes and sizes. Some develop new learning practices, others leverage new technologies, while others introduce salient new topics into the IB curriculum. Although most research considers such innovations as outcomes, this special issue goes further and considers their impact on students and academic peers, as well as on global communities. The key insight from the first AIB T&E SIG's Teaching Innovation Award is that the most innovative educators combine different types of innovations and aim for generating impact among different stakeholders. As such, this special issue provides an ambitious agenda for innovation in IB pedagogy, where educators can avail of different pathways to achieving impact through their innovations.

We suggest that the impact of teaching innovations can be seen as a set of expanding circles of influence. We hope that our ambitious agenda stimulates the pedagogy literature to pay further attention to pathways of impact while also stimulating individual educators to design their careers aiming for expanding influence through pedagogy leadership. Our 2021 award winner shows that such impact needs to be built up over time through a consistent effort. We trust that educators find inspiration in this special issue to embark on such a program and that academic institutions find our special issue useful to evaluate and reward passionate and innovative educators that become leaders in their field.

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