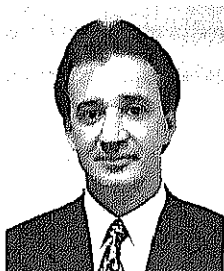


An Innovative New Program: International Business Management at Tsukuba University



John Benson

Career History

1997- present: Reader, Department of Management, University of Melbourne, Australia.

1994-1997: Professor of Management and Economics, Faculty of International Studies, Hiroshima City University, Japan.

1984-1994: Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics/ Department of Management, University of Melbourne, Australia.

1977-1984: Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Business, Monash University (Gippsland), Australia.

In the current dynamic, highly competitive, international business environment managers and key policy makers need to take a global business perspective to ensure their companies achieve and maintain a competitive advantage. While many Japanese companies have achieved such success, Japanese business has lost billions of yen over the past two decades through poorly executed international expansion strategies. Even when expansion strategies are well-developed and executed, ongoing international success can only be achieved where companies and manager's have adapted to the local cultural, institutional and commercial environments.

To date most Japanese managers have gained their international business knowledge through overseas assignments. Many

Japanese business associations also provide their members with valuable intelligence and assistance in international matters. These avenues are not, however, a substitute for well-trained and equipped managers who can integrate knowledge of their own companies with their understanding and training in international business. Up until now there has not been the opportunity for young Japanese managers to develop these skills while continuing to work within their company. This will change when the 'International Business Management (Professional)' Master's program at Tsukuba University commences in September 2005.

Tsukuba University

Tsukuba University is a progressive

institution that has high academic standards and which is open to all students within and outside of Japan. Its aim is to develop the creative talents of its students and to ensure that its courses take account of the changes occurring in contemporary society. This mission is particularly relevant to the field of international business. Japan, after more than a decade of low growth and declining business activity, is now facing the prospect of a strong economic recovery. Japanese companies, however, will be only able to take advantage of these more positive business conditions, and grow and develop their business activities, if they have innovative, internationally-oriented, and well-trained managers. The new Masters of International Business Management (Professional) aims to meet this challenge by producing professional managers who are capable of accepting their part in the international business community and able to play a major role in the development of a competitive organisation.

The International Business Management (Professional) Program

In designing this program the major concern was to develop a postgraduate master's degree that maintained the best of the traditional MBA courses while

extending its scope to accommodate global business management techniques, international negotiating skills, multicultural communication skills, and a knowledge of various international and overseas institutions and law. Many of these skills will be gained through the international content of the subjects, the global outlook and composition of the teaching staff and the diversity of the students undertaking the program. However, to provide a framework and consolidation of their studies students will be required to undertake a three-month overseas internship or an in-company project.

The Masters of International Business Management (Professional) has three aims:

1. To provide an educational experience where the core competencies of business strategy, organizational management, international adaptability, and information processing and analysis are taught in a way that provides the necessary knowledge and skills while providing an environment that integrates the essential aspects of each area through a focus on international business.
2. To provide students with the ability to specialise in particular areas that

they have an interest in through a wide range of optional subjects.

3. To develop the practical skills necessary for international business management by providing students with a strong theoretical basis for their studies and allowing them the opportunity to consolidate this training with practical and on-the-job assignments.

This pioneering program consists of four distinct but fully integrated components. First, 17 core classes must be undertaken that cover a range of areas that are essential for international business management. Among these subjects are global management, multicultural communication, and international management law which will complement the more traditional business management subjects such as marketing, organisational behaviour, organisational management, business strategy, and project and risk management. A special feature of the core is the introduction of new and innovative subjects such as data mining and career-oriented behaviour. Second, 4 seminar classes must be undertaken which will integrate and build upon the studies undertaken in the core competency areas. Third, students will be required to select 16 optional classes

from over 40 subjects offered in the four competency areas. Finally, practical training, either in the form of an internship or in-company project will be undertaken. This research-based project will allow students to utilize the knowledge acquired, and expertise and skills developed during the course.

In total, the program consists of 45 credit points made up of 17 credits for core subjects, 4 credits for seminar classes, 16 credit points for optional subjects and 8 credit points for the project. Classes will be held in late afternoon or evening, or on Saturdays and will be conducted on the Tokyo campus. This has the advantage of attracting part-time students, and for many will be easily accessible from their place of work.

Internship or In-company Project

The internship or in-company project will be conducted over three months and will allow students the opportunity to analyse a business issue in an entirely new context or to address a problem in detail that they have confronted in their own organisation. This represents a challenging task and one that will require considerable preparation and commitment. Nevertheless, upon completion students will have had the opportunity to study in-depth a problem or

issue and to observe the constraints imposed and difficulties encountered in international business. The academic staff will provide supervision and advice throughout this activity and students will be required to make a presentation to fellow students and staff. Younger managers who complete this project will develop confidence in their ability and a more balanced understanding of international business. This is not only good for the individual but it is what Japanese business requires if it is to restore its international reputation and prestige.

The Graduates

It is believed that this program will produce graduates that have acquired the expert knowledge and skills necessary to function as key managers in any type of business organisation in a range of managerial positions. The graduates of this program will become important policy and decision makers as their companies undertake further international expansion. They will be able to exhibit and utilise their global viewpoint and expert abilities, and will be well-placed to become the future leaders of their organisations. Moreover, as the economy improves and companies are searching for well-trained managers this course will give graduates

a competitive edge over their colleagues and the confidence to undertake overseas assignments. In short, upon graduation students will emerge with a strong set of skills and knowledge, ready to meet the challenge of building a career in international business. Over time, we believe the program will become seen as an essential part of the career development of promising young international business professionals.

Why should Young Professional Managers Undertake the Tsukuba Program?

The essence of an international business management program lies in the quality and diversity of the students, and the expertise and experience of the teaching staff. To ensure a mix of students is obtained in classes students will be selected from Japan and overseas and all core subjects will be conducted in English, the international business language. This means that Japanese students will be studying along side students from other cultures who have different ways of viewing the world and solving business problems. Optional subjects will be taught in either English or Japanese. This will allow the opportunity for Japanese students to study selected subjects in-depth in a way that may not always be possible for students studying in a second language. The

teaching staff will be a mix of highly-qualified and experienced academics from Japan and overseas, as well as experienced industry professionals brought in from outside the university. The full-time teaching staff are all active researchers who are contributing to the stock of knowledge concerning international business, and are in demand for consultancy and advisory roles to industry. In conclusion, the program is about providing a rewarding, intellectually stimulating and a friendly international environment for young professional managers to expand and develop their expertise in international business.

(ジョン ベンソン)