

Actualized Outcomes of International Business Case Competition Participation: A Three Country Exploratory Study

Jeffrey E. Johnson

St. Mary's University, U.S.A.

Robin J. B. Ritchie

Carleton University, Canada

J. B. van Oudheusden

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Abstract. Undergraduate international business case competitions have become increasingly popular in recent years. While there is considerable anecdotal evidence about the impact on participants in terms of enhancing their business acumen and better preparing them for the workforce, what do we really know about the true impact? This study set out to examine actualized outcomes of international business case competitions on participants' job or graduate school placement and early career performance. We found evidence from the U.S.A., Canada and the Netherlands that business case competition experience did in fact have a positive relationship with successful job and graduate school acceptance and with success in the workplace and graduate school. Our main contributions lie in its validation of the value of international business case competition participation on subsequent job and graduate school placement and success, along with providing support for international business case competition participation as an invaluable experiential learning opportunity.

Keywords: international business case competition, outcomes of case competition, case competition skills, job placement and performance.

1. Background to the Research

Undergraduate international business case competitions have been flourishing for many years. These competitions are generally one week in duration and involve teams from universities around the world analyzing MBA-level business cases, identifying the key issues, developing potential solutions, and making specific recommendations to a panel of industry and academic judges. The popularity of these competitions with student participants and academics is rooted in their

This shortened version of the article is for promotional purposes on publicly accessible databases.

Readers who wish to obtain the full text version of the article can order it via the url

<https://www.neilsonjournals.com/JIBE/abstractjibe14johnsonetal.html>

Any enquiries, please contact the Publishing Editor, Peter Neilson pneilson@neilsonjournals.com

© NeilsonJournals Publishing 2019.

intrinsic challenging and rewarding nature. While there is much anecdotal evidence of the impact on the student participants in terms of enhancing their business acumen and better preparing them for the workforce and graduate school, what do we really know about the true impact? Scant empirical evidence exists regarding this metric. Hence, this research study set out to explore the actualized impact of student participation in international business case competitions on their preparedness for the workplace and advanced academic pursuits.

There are many highly regarded international business case competitions organized around the world, such as the Belgrade Business International Case Competition, the John Molson Undergraduate Case Competition, the Foster School of Business Global Business Case Competition, and the Network of International Business Schools (NIBS) Worldwide Case Competition (Karan 2016). We have decided to examine the outcomes of international business case competitions on student competitors using the NIBS Worldwide Case Competition as our sample competition. This decision was made based on two central factors. First, all three authors have been team coaches and competition organizers for the NIBS competition for several years, thereby providing us with significant insights into the competition as well as a large network of past student participants to survey. Second, the NIBS Worldwide Case Competition is widely respected and one of the longest running international case competitions (Karan 2016).

The NIBS Worldwide Case Competition has been operating for 25 years in competition locations throughout Europe and North America, and in Guatemala and New Zealand. NIBS member universities and colleges throughout the world are encouraged each year to enter a team of four undergraduate students into the highly competitive event. The qualifying round, consisting of a written case report, is held in November of each year, with the top 16 teams moving on to the championship round at a host university in February/March. The finals are held over an intense weeklong series of matches, with PowerPoint presentations being made to a board of judges with extensive industry and academic discipline experience. The competition is designed to challenge and develop the students' problem-solving abilities, business skills, cultural literacy, oral communication competencies, and teamwork dexterity (NIBS Worldwide Case Competition website 2019).

Since case competitions entail complex problem-solving, integrative thinking, teamwork, communications skills, and performance under pressure, they have long been regarded as a useful vehicle for experiential learning (Burke *et al.* 2013). Internationally-oriented case competitions further enhance the experience by introducing differences in culture, economic development, regulation, and political stability (Damnjanovi and Mijatovi 2017). Although there are many differences in the format and rules governing