

The Challenge of Changing Tongues in Business University Education

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Paper to be presented at the Bi- and Multi-lingual Universities: Challenges and Future
Prospects, Theme 3. Multilingualism at the universities in practice,
September 1-3, 2005, University of Helsinki, Finland.

Abstract

An element of risk is involved in any undertaking, but without setting performance targets, the goal first sought could turn out to be a shot in the dark. When packaging a product such as business university education in English, new strategies are needed to ensure that the transformation to the second language is successful. Changing tongues in business university education is a risky business, and if not approached with caution, the product will soon be taken off the shelf. Such a fate befell the Bachelor program in Business Administration at the Nijmegen School of Management.

In this paper I examine why the English version of the Bachelor program in Business Administration failed at our faculty and how a similar fiasco can be avoided when creating Master programs to be taught in English in the future. Thus, by making a theoretical analysis of how certain variables are of importance when developing an international university curriculum in which both content and language are combined (Wilkinson, 2003), recommendations can be made in order to book success when designing business programs. For this purpose, I have constructed a conceptual model in which three independent variables have been placed: the conditions set and the commitment and competencies of those involved. In order to determine how these variables influence the success or failure of a business curriculum taught in English, several face-to-face interviews were conducted with the faculty management and teaching staff, as well as students. After evaluating the results of these interviews, I can conclude that it is particularly the commitment and competencies of the faculty and staff which determines the success or failure of the English-based curriculum. If the extent and influence of these variables are fully grasped, and if appropriate measures are taken by all those involved in the process to reach a desired goal, then the challenge of changing tongues in business university education can be met with success.