

SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING A BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION CURRICULUM
FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATION

This paper contains some thoughts of a committee assigned to reflect on the possibilities of developing a business administration curriculum or concentration at the National Institute of Administration. For a number of reasons, including the time element between assignment date and due date, this topic is treated with neither depth nor breadth. At best, this paper can only serve as a record of some introductory thinking.

The frame of reference, as dictated by the experiential background of the committee, is higher education for business as it has developed in the United States. The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of developments in higher education for business in the United States which seem most appropriate for consideration by the NIA. The second part records a number of questions which came to mind in efforts to relate the United States' experience to the possibility of adding a business administration curriculum to the program of the NIA.

I. DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR BUSINESS IN THE
UNITED STATES JUDGED MOST APPROPRIATE TO THE NIA SITUATION

Although successful educational programs are not developed by attempting to transplant programs or parts of programs from other institutions, it is highly desirable for those giving consideration to the installation of a new curricular area to examine the experience of institutions which have operating programs. The

fact that higher education for business in the United States is more extensive and more highly developed than in any other country makes it appropriate for those considering a program in business administration to examine the United States experience. However, an examination of the United States experience is not a simple task, for higher education for business in the United States is not one thing, it is many things.

Higher education for business includes that carried on by business itself, by trade schools, business colleges, correspondence schools, adult education programs, junior or community colleges, liberal arts colleges, university schools of business administration, university graduate schools, and by various types of management training and executive development short courses and institutes. Widely varying educational objectives are sought in these different programs. A program in a business college which has as its purpose preparing students for introductory routine positions is, of course, quite different from a program that assumes a university liberal arts degree to be followed by a year or two of graduate study in the field of business.

Of the various programs for higher education in business, it was assumed that an examination of programs in what are generally known as undergraduate schools of business that operate as a division of a university would have the most meaningfulness to the NIA situation. This is an assumption which needs further examination. It might well be, for example, that programs which have developed in departments of liberal arts colleges would have more meaningfulness. In brief, the assumption was made because

of the professional, as contrasted to vocational, orientation of these programs; because the collegiate schools of business have attained the highest development in program and in staff; and because these schools are generally recognized by business firms as providing the type of training they expect promising new employees to have obtained.

Collegiate Schools of Business Programs

There is a general curriculum similarity in business administration programs of collegiate schools of business which is due in no small measure to the efforts of the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business and the work of its Standards Committee. Curriculums in collegiate schools of business have the following common features: non-professional courses; basic or core courses in business; specialized courses in business.

Non-professional courses. In general, about two academic years of work are devoted to non-professional or liberal arts courses in collegiate schools of business curriculums. Roughly, about one-third of this two years is devoted to the humanities area, one-third to the social science area, and one-third to the mathematics and science areas. While it is true that all universities require students in all specialized curriculums to obtain a broad, general education, it is not the philosophy of collegiate schools of business that liberal arts training is necessary merely for the personal enrichment of the business student's life. It is rather considered to be as important as

the professional aspects of the program in developing business administrators who are capable of solving modern business problems with breadth and perspective and who are able to recognize the consequences of actions in many directions and dimensions. Of interest in this connection is the fact that some business executives have in recent years advocated a liberal arts type of training as the preferable type of preparation for entering business.

Basic or core courses. In general, about one academic year is devoted to basic or core courses in the subject matter areas of economics, accounting, statistics, business law, finance, marketing, and management. In requiring these areas of study of all business administration students, collegiate schools of business are attempting to provide all students with a broad and integrated knowledge of economics and business.

Specialized courses. A student following a business administration curriculum in a Collegiate School of Business devotes about one academic year of study to a specialized field of his choosing. In part, this is to give the student the opportunity to develop a level of competence in the field of his choice which will enable him to obtain satisfactory employment upon the completion of his training.

The most common areas of specialization provided are accounting, economics, finance, marketing, and management. Some institutions offer as few as five or six areas of specialization

while others offer twenty or thirty different choices. This difference is not as great as it would at first appear, however. For example, while some programs offer one concentration in accounting, others offer concentrations in public accounting, industrial accounting, and governmental accounting.

There are, of course, many factors which determine the areas of specialization that can be offered by a particular institution. Some of these factors are: size of the college; composition of the faculty; regional demands and interests; available job opportunities for graduates; and number of students interested in a particular specialty.

II. SOME QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE ADDITION OF A BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION CURRICULUM

The time and resources of the committee were such that it was not possible to make recommendations in terms of a business administration curriculum or concentration for the NIA. As a result of efforts to relate the experience of the United States to the possibility of adding a business administration curriculum to the NIA offerings, some questions were raised which are recorded below. It is felt that answers should be sought to these questions by those giving further consideration to this problem.

1. To what extent is the United States experience in higher education for business appropriate to Vietnam?
2. What is the nature of the need for training in business?

3. Should initial training programs in business have a vocational or professional orientation?
4. Is the NIA the appropriate institution for a program in business administration?
5. Presuming that efforts would be made to develop a business administration curriculum at the NIA with a professional orientation:
 - a. How can adequate training in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences be given?
 - (1) What is the liberal arts background of students entering the NIA?
 - (2) Is it feasible to add liberal arts courses to the NIA offerings?
 - (3) Could NIA students take liberal arts courses in the University of Saigon.
 - b. Are present courses required of all NIA students appropriate as basic courses for business administration students?
 - c. To what extent is it desirable and possible to provide areas of specialization?
 - (1) What specialized areas are most appropriate?
 - (2) Can specialization be extended to the graduate level?
 - d. Would a business administration curriculum reflect the teaching and research interests of present NIA faculty?
 - e. Can a business administration curriculum be offered with present resources?
 - (1) Would staff additions be necessary?
 - (2) Are adequate instructional materials available?
 - f. How many students could be expected to be enrolled?
 - g. What job opportunities would be available to graduates of a business administration curriculum?