

**Higher Education Challenges in the 21st Century for Business Schools:
Assessing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Student Programming Designed to Create
Effective Global Citizens**

Abstract

In the 21st Century, the learning environment mandates that students develop a deep and comprehensive understanding of different cultures and ways of doing business throughout the world. This research includes a review of how institutions are defining such terms as “global citizenship” and “intercultural competency,” as well as how they are attempting to measure their achievement.

Higher education institutions and business schools around the world have incorporated language within their institutional missions expressing their intent to develop global/international awareness and intercultural competency among their students, particularly the ones currently registered in their business programs, to create graduates who are responsible and effective global citizens.

Given this vision, educators are now faced with the challenge of designing and assessing programs that can achieve this goal. The focus of this article is to consider the current state of these efforts, particularly ones that have facilitated the creation of effective student learning outcomes assessment data, both direct and indirect, that can validate this claim. A case study examination of these efforts is planned for the upcoming year. As a preliminary step to this project, the authors have examined various training and assessment tools used to collect

self-reported (indirect) measures of learning that are widely implemented across many different to types of institutions, both brick and mortar and online.

Practical Application

This research should be of particular interest to faculty and administrative staff tasked with designing and implementing student learning assessment processes and procedures intended to support national, regional and/or program-level accreditation processes that focus on international or global education goals. As an example, this discussion should benefit an institution developing an outcomes assessment process to measure their students' attainment of the "Global Dimensions of Business" Common Professional Component (CPC) through participation in study abroad and/or internship experiences as it will discuss the challenges inherent in obtaining useful and meaningful measures of student learning within these sorts of learning environments.

Keywords

Higher Education, Business Education, Global Citizenship, International Education, Outcomes Assessment

Diversity and the Multicultural Classroom

At the beginning of the globalization movement in the 20th Century, multinational companies expanded their operations to new countries and markets, imposing their original

products and services to a new legion of customers, without being concerned with original local needs (Yip, 1989). That was called global standardization. For that situation, education focused on the host country culture could have prepared professionals of any multinational company to be successful in any branch of the company across the world.

However, in the 21st Century, companies have realized that in order to keep their profits high and increase the number of customers worldwide, there should be more local adaptation of products and services. That finding, in turn, created the need for an increasing understanding of different cultures by those who would be working for those companies. Cross-cultural management became a must and directly impacted business education (Moran, 2011).

With this new reality in place, the biggest challenge faced by universities and business schools around the world is to provide students (and professionals who want to continue their studies) with a strong exposure to what happens in different cultures and countries. This imperative is motivated by factors related to the workplace environment (more nuanced understanding of what creates effective global business operations, increased diversity and mobility within the workplace) as well as factors related to the classroom environment (a more diverse student body population). The diversity found in the classroom of most higher education programs is a consequence of the globalized marketplace and worldwide immigration (Banks, 2004), with different nationalities coming together in a classroom environment to learn how to better perform in a market that is multi-cultural by essence (Malekzadeh, 1998).

Today, we have students from all over the world sharing online and brick-and-mortar classrooms, either in their own educational environment or through interaction with other institutions and organizations via study-abroad programs. This learning environment now mandates that students develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of different cultures and ways of doing business in different parts of the world compared to earlier decades.

The goal is to develop global awareness and citizenship, leading to a consequent employability improvement. That goal is reflected in

The noted changes in institutional goals to account for global citizenship reflects higher education's initial response to this changing learning landscape: the proliferation of Institutional Learning Goals related to global citizenship increasingly found in U.S. institutions of higher learning (Hovland, 2014). The real question now is what kinds of outcomes are a result of this institutional response.

Motivation and Context for Planned Research

Higher education institutions around the world have incorporated language within their institutional missions expressing their intent to develop global/international awareness and intercultural competency among their students, to create graduates who are responsible and effective global citizens. Educators are now faced with the challenge of designing and assessing programs that can achieve this goal.

The focus of this research is to examine the current state of these efforts, particularly ones that have facilitated the creation of effective student learning outcomes assessment data, both direct and indirect, that can validate this claim. This study includes a review of how institutions are defining such terms as "global citizenship" and "intercultural competency," as well as how they are attempting to measure their achievement. This will include a review of various training and assessment tools used to collect self-reported (indirect) measures of learning that are widely implemented across many different types of institutions.

The motivation for the development and implementation of comprehensive student learning assessment within international or globally focused curricula derives from the recognition that the typical processes for operational evaluation (e.g., collecting data related to

the numbers of students studying abroad or pursuing an internationally focused course of study) are insufficient if the institution wishes to learn if and to what extent its students are actually achieving the institution's learning goals, as compared to simply participating in the internationally focused curricular activities. Beelen and Jones (2015) observe that "the articulation and assessment of internationalized learning outcomes remains relatively under-reported" (p. 74). This research aspires to fill at least some part of that gap in the literature.

Motivated by observations such as these, institutions desiring to utilize student learning assessment tools within their international programming are faced with a broad and varied collection of options. A very common choice is to utilize one of the many commercially available tests designed to assess a variety of aspects related to global and intercultural awareness (Fantini, 2009; Intercultural Communication Institute, 2014; University of Michigan, 2014). These tests have been designed to fulfill a variety of purposes, including: assessing readiness for an intercultural experience, diagnosing areas of strength as well as those that require further development, assessing aptitude or potential for learning in an intercultural context, assessing attitude and disposition, assessing competency within a specific area or skill, assessing against a specific criterion or comparison group, assessing one's relative ability in a bilingual context, assessing one's intercultural development at different moments in time, and assessing achievement measured against a benchmark level of mastery or understanding (Fantini, 2009).

For the tests attempting to measure behavioral or attitudinal characteristics, these tools typically utilize self-reported data from respondents to evaluate their development or progress along a given set of criteria or established scale. As a result, one criticism of the use of many of these tools is their dependence on self-reported data. Thus they can create only indirect measures of achievement.

Student learning assessment efforts at many institutions focus on measuring global knowledge and intercultural attitudes at the course and program level: the former often by direct measures (e.g., tests of factual understanding or language proficiency tests), and the latter using indirect means (e.g., surveys or questionnaires). Equally important, however, is the measurement of student attainment of global and intercultural skills and competencies. Often this type of measurement proves more challenging to implement, particularly if the goal is to obtain direct measures of attainment. One approach well-suited for assessing student gains from international internship is to obtain performance evaluation data from the overseas internship supervisors (Gordon, 2013). Standardized rubrics designed to measure global awareness and/or intercultural perspectives (either developed “in-house” or by consortia of university faculty, such as the VALUE rubrics mentioned below) can be utilized to assess students’ written work, such as responses to essay prompts derived from a case study focusing on a complex global issue (Landorf and Doscher, 2013). Another approach is to utilize rubrics to analyze student performance on capstone projects completed either during or after an international experience (Gordon, 2013).

Particularly challenging for many institutions desiring this sort student learning assessment data is developing assessment strategies that obtain direct measures of global learning and intercultural competency. One approach increasingly utilized within U.S. higher education is the use of the “Global Learning” and “Intercultural Knowledge and Competence” VALUE rubrics, developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2014). While these rubrics are considered by many to be potentially quite useful, their ability to generate meaningful data requires that an institution create well-designed and appropriately implemented activities/assignments that will generate useful “artifacts” of student learning to be assessed using these instrument. How

institutions are addressing this “rubric implementation” challenge will also be examined by this study.

Student learning assessment experts are quick to note that a crucial first step in the development of effective learning assessment tools is the identification of a clearly stated working definition for the learning outcome being assessed. Thus for this discussion it is important to consider the operational definitions of “global learning” and “intercultural competence” typically utilized by institutions. Unfortunately, there is no single widely recognized definition for either term.

Hovland (2014) observes that institutions use this language to promote a variety of goals, including a social justice mission, a worldview focused on the increased complexity and interconnectedness of the world community, or to emphasize the new expectations and realities that graduates will face in their careers. Furthermore, Hovland (2014) argues that an institution’s understanding of what it means by these terms is enhanced by—and likely motivated by—discussions connected to the development of comprehensive student learning assessment processes and procedures.

Deardorff (2011) proposes a definition for intercultural competence that focuses on the “*effective and appropriate* behavior and communication in intercultural situations, which ... can be further detailed in terms of indicators of appropriate behavior in specific contexts.” (p. 66) [Italics in the original.]

The Study

During the next year, the authors will be pursuing a directed study of student learning assessment methods, processes and emerging trends as practiced within higher education institutions, for measuring and assessing the impact of internationalization on their programs and the increased emphasis on global understanding and intercultural competency among students.

The purpose of this research is to examine the institutional factors that influence the effective design and implementation of student learning assessment methods and processes utilized to address the challenge of preparing university graduates for a world that requires ever higher levels of global understanding and intercultural competency.

The research questions to be answered by such a study are the following:

- What processes and policies were used to develop and design the student learning assessment methods and processes utilized at your institution to measure the impact of curricular components intended to foster global understanding and intercultural competency among students?
- What processes and policies are used to implement the student learning assessment methods and processes utilized at your institution to measure the impact of curricular components intended to foster global understanding and intercultural competency among students?
- What processes and policies are used to measure the effectiveness of the student learning assessment methods and processes utilized at your institution to measure the impact of curricular components intended to foster global understanding and intercultural competency among students?

The study is structured as a qualitative examination of the phenomena under consideration. The data will be collected from on-campus, in-person interviews of individuals currently employed by the institution and the analysis of publically available or privately provided documentation. Given this framework, the researchers will be collecting two types of data in this study: written documents and interview responses. The documents may be publically or privately available, but only privately available documents that were intentionally provided to the researchers will be utilized. Examples of such documents include assessment plans or policy statements produced by the institution, documents connected to a strategic planning process within the institution, documents related to accreditation efforts within the institution, pages included within the institution's website, and information made available to prospective or current students that describe the institution's curricular components intended to foster global understanding and intercultural competency among students.

The initial data collection phase of the study will focus on two to three higher education institutions within the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and other countries that belong to the European Union. Preliminary discussions are now underway to schedule the on-campus interviews during the 2015-2016 academic year. The analysis of the results gathered from this data collection process will commence immediately thereafter. The authors hope the analysis of the data will provide a recommended approach that can be utilized by institutions aspiring to more effectively assess—and achieve—student learning focused on global understanding and intercultural competency.

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