

Developing a Global Perspective for Personal and Social Responsibility

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One of the four essential learning outcomes of a liberal education advocated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities is for students to develop a sense of personal and social responsibility. Through its Core Commitments initiative, AAC&U (2007) is working with colleges and universities to make this goal a central part of a movement in higher education to change the way we can think and educate our young people for the twenty-first century. The authors of this article argue that this essential learning and developmental goal—which we call global perspective—can be enhanced if it is further interpreted within the context of educating students to be citizens of a global society.

The traditional-aged college student needs to develop and internalize a global perspective into her thinking, sense of identity, and relationships with others. This holistic student developmental perspective is grounded in sound student developmental theory, but given the changing societal demands and expectations, we argue for an enhancement of student development along four “vectors” that one of us (Chickering 1969; Chickering and Reisser 1993) identified and defined as important in the psychosocial development of college students. These four vectors are:

1. Moving through autonomy toward interdependence
2. Establishing identity
3. Developing purpose
4. Managing emotions

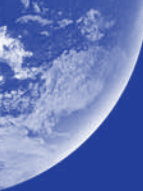
MOVING THROUGH AUTONOMY TOWARD INTERDEPENDENCE

In the second edition of *Education and Identity*, Chickering and Reisser shifted the emphasis of this volume from developing

autonomy to moving through autonomy toward interdependence. They wrote, “With the growing knowledge that every action has an impact on others and that freedom must be bound by rules and responsibilities, individuals moving toward interdependence learn lessons about reciprocity, compromise, sacrifice, consensus, and commitment to the welfare of the larger community.” (140) That “larger community” now requires not only global; “reciprocity, compromise, sacrifice, consensus, and commitment” (140) but also much greater sophistication than was the case forty years ago. We need to understand, empathize, and communicate with persons who differ dramatically in national origin, ethnicity, religious, and spiritual orientations, as well as in race and gender. So moving through autonomy toward interdependence has become a much more challenging task and much more critical for leading a satisfying and productive life.

ESTABLISHING IDENTITY

Identity is the second vector that one needs to develop to take on a global perspective. Colby and Sullivan (2009) recently identified it as one of three major constructs for understanding the development of individual and social responsibility. Identity refers to one’s special sense of self, having a coherent self-image that can serve as a motivational force. They argue that persons with a civic and moral identity and sense of obligation to society are more apt to behave in ways that fulfill individual and social responsible goals. Thus, from today and into the future, students’ horizons for developing identity need to be global. Our identity formation must be enriched by more wide-ranging experiences, knowledge, and insights.



DEVELOPING PURPOSE

Purpose, the third vector, related to intentionality and establishing priorities, centers around the questions of “Who am I?” and “Who am I going to be?” It has both an inward and outward characteristic. Inwardly, it brings to an individual a sense of calling, an attachment to something beyond themselves that provides meaning and significance. It is also motivating—it energizes the person into action.

Outwardly, purpose has consequences, since the actions based on fulfilling that purpose influence others. Developing purpose is a way to think broadly and to view one’s life in a manner that encompasses career plans and aspirations as well as personal interests and interpersonal and family commitments and responsibilities.

Sullivan and Rosen, in *A New Agenda for Higher Education: Shaping a Life of the Mind for Practice* (2008) argue that college

the beginning of recorded time, communities have been grounded in family, tribe, and place. Today’s communities, which include neighborhoods, churches, schools, clubs, and local networks, are more diverse and pluralistic and not as stable and lasting as those in the past. Thus developing a sense of purpose requires us to become as competent as we can in understanding persons who differ widely in their political, religious, and spiritual orientations; in privilege and social class; and in ethnicity and national origin. And a global perspective has become critical for effective contributions to these purposes larger than our own self-interest.

MANAGING EMOTIONS

Managing emotions relates to one’s capacity to respond realistically and productively to, and have control over, one’s emotions—such as anger, depression, guilt, fear,

identity of what we see but an opinion about it. Our emotions have a mind of their own, one which can hold views quite independently of our rational mind” (18, 20).

Thus, awareness of our emotional reflexes is step one. Allowing feelings to percolate, accepting them, naming them, and respecting them are critical. The second step is increasing our capacity for flexibility so that our varied feelings do not take charge but add depth and texture to our responses. Then we can broaden our repertoire of verbal and nonverbal responses and exercise more conscious choice about when and how to express them. Personal, rich, and engaging encounters with other cultures and persons different from ourselves challenge our built-in emotional reactions. Experiencing unexpected reactions when we are misunderstood increases our awareness of these built in reflexes and helps us modify them so they better reflect the person we want to be.

These four vectors of student development need to be recast if we are to educate students for a global society. Helping students form and internalize a global perspective requires us to assist students in how they think, view themselves, and relate to others unlike them. Having students develop a global perspective means helping them develop the capacity to think with complexity, taking into account multiple cultural perspectives. They need to form a unique sense of self that is authentic and consistent with their own cultural background, and to relate to others who differ with respect and openness. Developing a global perspective stresses personal and social responsibility that is based on interdependence, identity, purpose, and emotional intelligence.

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professors should foster in students a “life of the mind for practice,” which means that they are to act on their own sense of who they are (i.e., being engaged in the world to make a difference). It is not a life of abstraction and withdrawal from the real world, but instead a life of active engagement to make a difference in the lives of others. In short, it means guiding students to go beyond analytical and critical thinking and to find meaning and purpose in their lives (Braskamp, Trautvetter, and Ward 2006).

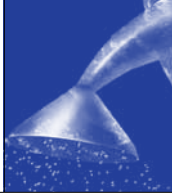
Human development, even when it needs to include a global perspective, still must be concerned with community. Since

and lust. The ability to manage emotions becomes critical to effectively tackle social problems as we bring diverse backgrounds and perspectives to a variety of hot topics.

In his groundbreaking publication, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), Daniel Goleman says, “Anatomically the emotional system can act independently of the neocortex. ... Some emotional reactions and memories can be formed without any conscious, cognitive participation at all ... in the first few seconds of our perceiving something we not only unconsciously comprehend what it is, but decide whether we like it or not; the ‘cognitive unconscious’ presents our awareness with not just the

FOSTERING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ALONG THE FOUR VECTORS

Have we met the demands and challenges of including a global perspective in



preparing our students for the twenty-first century? Derek Bok, in *Our Underachieving Colleges* (2006), concludes that our students today receive “very little preparation either as citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them” (233).

In this report, we present evidence to shed some light on the question raised by Derek Bok, based on results from the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI), which includes scales that measure cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions (Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill 2008). While the GPI was not specifically designed and constructed to measure the vectors of student development as proposed by Chickering and Reisser (1993), some GPI scales reflect four of these vectors that are important to developing a global perspective.

During fall 2008, 245 undergraduate students took the GPI before and after they spent a semester abroad, and they demonstrated growth in their holistic global development (Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill 2008). In this report we provide results of a follow-up study, based on approximately five hundred students who studied in more than thirty different programs during the 2008–09 academic year. As shown in the figure below, students progress more on some dimensions than in others, with students showing the most difference in

their knowledge and understanding of cultural differences before and after their semester abroad. That is, the difference of 0.31 between the pre-test and post-test mean on the knowledge scale is the largest gain recorded, and it is consistent with the results of the earlier study. (Since the sample size is so large, the gains on all eight scales are statistically significant. Thus we are using the criterion that a difference between the post-test and pre-test means on a scale has to be 0.10 or above to be considered an important educational or practical difference.) Over a semester, students also increased their amount of social interactions with others unlike them (social interaction scale); gained a level of respect for and acceptance of cultural perspectives different from their own and greater emotional confidence when living in complex situations (affect scale); increased awareness of their own identity and purpose in life (identity scale); and developed a more complex view of their understanding of what is true (knowing scale).

The education abroad experience in general has a positive psychological impact on students’ own personal development, as measured by a set of eight items that correlated most highly with an established scale of well being—Inventory on Learning Climate and Student Well-Being (Walker 2008). Students express a greater self-confidence in their ability to meet new

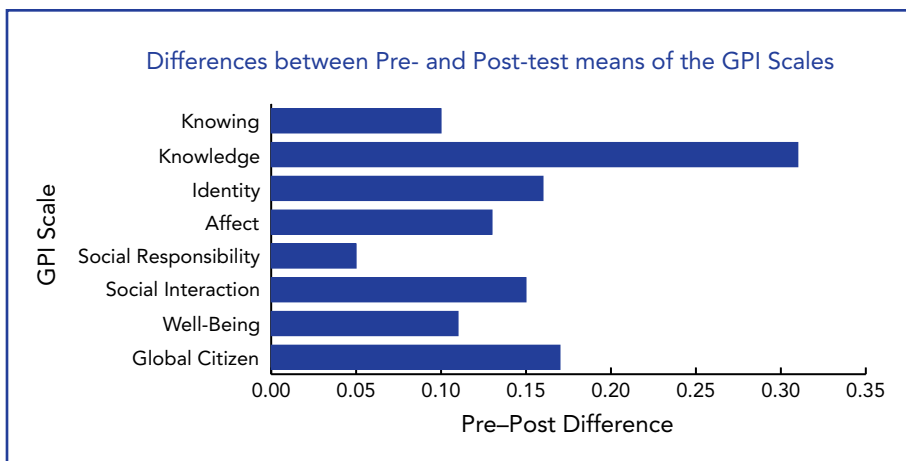
situations, communicate with others not like them, and have a lesser need to be continuously supported by others. Overall, students express a greater willingness and ability to view themselves as global citizens, based on a set of nine items from all three dimensions (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal). That is, they have a better understanding of cultural differences and greater awareness of who they are as unique persons, and are more comfortable in relating to others unlike them.

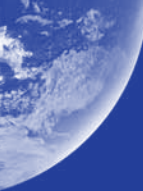
However, after a semester abroad, students express a relatively lower gain in developing an interdependent view of their relationships with others (i.e., they did not increase as much in their social concern for others by being in another country for a semester). A more detailed analysis shows considerable variability among the centers and programs, with students at some of the centers showing significant gains in developing greater social justice perspective. Since we cannot publish the results of individual institutions participating in this research to protect institutional confidentiality, we can only point out that some programs are more effective than others in influencing students to develop a greater sense of social responsibility while studying abroad for a semester.

In summary, study abroad fosters a global perspective, but not equally across of the all the dimensions of a holistic global development. These changes over a semester abroad are generally similar to the differences between first-year and upper-class students, with the exception that students at different class levels show greater differences on the knowing scale than students before and after a study abroad experience.

IMPLICATIONS

Education abroad does and can have an important influence on the holistic and global development of students. It may prove to be one of those defining experi-





ences in the life of college students that advances them in their journey toward a more refined and defined sense of self. It can be a powerful avenue for students to develop holistically (Gillespie, Braskamp, and Dwyer 2009). But developing students to be global citizens requires an intentional effort. The challenge for leaders and faculty is to provide experiences and opportunities that integrate how students think, feel, and relate to others. That is, they specifically need to help students gain experiences that prepare them to live in an increasingly globally challenging context. Commonalities between domestic issues of multicultural education and global issues of internationalization are greater than their differences in today's world. In its publication, *At Home in the World*, the American Council on Education (Olson, Evans, and Schoenberg 2007)) argues that "visible leadership and collaborative strategies that transcend the historical divide between internationalization and multicultural education are needed to ensure that students can live ethical, meaningful, and productive lives in an increasingly diverse and complex world" (v).

Thus, what is important is that leaders and faculty do not limit their perspective to cultural differences that historically have been associated with nations and countries. They instead need to understand and respect justice, equity, fairness, and equal opportunities as virtues and values that should not be viewed as assumed universal truths, but as important and contested goals and ends in our dialogues that also accept different traditions. In short, we live in a global world in which multiple perspectives about knowing, sense of identity, and relationships with others serve as powerful influences in our society.

We suggest three strategies for helping students develop a global perspective in enhancing their personal and social responsibility. First, a campuswide initiative is required, with faculty as the key interven-

tionists in creating in- and out-of-classroom conditions that foster a global perspective. Neither formal classroom instruction nor experiences such as travel abroad, community involvement, and social encounters are sufficient alone to guide students in their journey to become global citizens. Both are needed. Faculty members, as well as students, need to:

- Sustain person-to-person contact with each other, individually and in groups.
- Work in some institutional or organizational context providing service, as a volunteer, as an intern, or for pay.
- Read ethnographic anthropological studies, sociological research, narrative descriptions, novels, poems, and plays.
- Attend theatrical or musical performances, poetry slams, sports events, and movies, pertinent to the culture, human relationships, and social problems.
- Reflect, with journals, factual diaries, metaphors, analogies, pictorial representations, individually and with a group.

Second, bring the cultural differences associated with studying abroad into the campus culture. Not everyone can study abroad, but all campuses should take advantage of their pluralism—the cultural differences due to the presence of international students; students from rural, suburban, and urban backgrounds; and those from varying religion and faith traditions. Third, use pedagogical strategies, based on active learning practices such as internships, field trips, and service-learning activities. Integrate these experiences and reflection with rigorous and critical, constructive, and creative thinking.

For optimal impact, these strategies must be implemented within a community that stresses both challenge and support, a principle for helping students learn and develop that has been around for more than a half a century. But it now needs to be balanced with new conditions and expectations. Being challenged should not only be viewed as important in one's intellectual pursuit, but rather as an emotional pursuit as well.

Faculty as mentors can play a powerful role in helping students become who they are by stressing what is unique and meaningful to each student. It is more nurturing than telling, bringing out from within rather than pouring in from the outside. In these ways faculty and professionals can help students develop a powerful global perspective. ■

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