

Putting Old Tensions to Rest: Integrating Multicultural Education and Global Learning to Advance Student Development

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Abstract

Multicultural education and global learning have long been acknowledged by higher education professionals to be necessary in advancing student development. Both of these agendas overlap in significant ways and can be characterized as two sides of the same coin. Notwithstanding, there has been a historical divide, even a tension between these two elements, that has resulted in their moving on separate tracks towards the same goal of student development. This article discusses a successful approach that uses learning outcomes as the mechanism to integrate these two elements in order to achieve meaningful student development.

Occasionally, one can still hear articulated the old tension between global learning and multicultural education—a tension that may reflect a historical divide, an unwillingness of some to leave their comfort zone, and even a somewhat puzzling hostility. The argument is often made that successful pursuit of multicultural education requires an exclusive focus on matters of domestic diversity, that embracing global education in this conversation is an unnecessary distraction that takes away from what is and should be an increasing and deserving focus on ethnic diversity in the United States. In this line of reasoning, multicultural education should apply only to local or domestic concerns. Indeed, speaking about the roots of global and multicultural education, Cortés (1998) said that

global education sprang from the need for schools to address the growing interrelatedness of peoples around the world, whereas multicultural education developed from the need for schools to address the growing presence and significance of racial, ethnic, and other types of cultural diversity within the United States. (p. 110)

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With such a history, it is therefore no surprise that “multicultural educators focus primarily on diversity within the United States, whereas global educators emphasize worldwide phenomena” (Cortés, 1998, p. 111). Sadly, these differing emphases may have led educators in both camps, over the years, to ignore the inevitable ways in which one informs or enriches the other, something that may very well have fed an unnecessary controversy and robbed us of a more complete and nuanced perspective on this increasingly conspicuous relationship.

We define global learning as the “knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students acquire through a variety of experiences that enable them to understand world cultures, analyze global systems, appreciate cultural differences, and apply this knowledge and appreciation to their lives as educated individuals and global citizens” (Olson, Green, & Hill, 2006, p. v). Multicultural education, while including some dimensions of global learning, also “encourages students to critique society in the interest of social justice” (National Association of Multicultural Education, 2011, np). Notwithstanding these tensions, multicultural education and global learning are both central to the meaning of diversity and are fundamental elements of a liberal education. Thus, colleges and universities have a unique responsibility not only to facilitate opportunities for students to engage with perspectives from both of these areas, but more importantly, to foster critical inquiry about these two issues in ways that suggest the impossibility of engaging one without the other. When universities model an integrated approach to multicultural education and global learning, students have the greatest opportunity to develop as individuals.

Reasons for These Tensions

The diversity that is found within U.S. higher education to denote only domestic diversity is a reflection of the historical legacy of U.S. college campuses (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999), and is defined as the history of inclusion or exclusion of racial and ethnic groups in the curriculum and campus life. Hurtado et al. (1999) developed a framework for campus climate that includes three dimensions in addition to the historical legacy: structural diversity (who is present on campus), psychological climate, and behavioral climate. The tensions of which we speak are best characterized as an aspect of the psychological climate, because they affect how groups perceive one another, and of the behavioral climate, because the tensions affect how groups relate (or do not relate) to one another. The interaction between multicultural education and global learning is limited by the prevailing psychological and behavioral climates. For example, curriculum and committee membership rarely include both multicultural and global content and practitioners, and these tensions continue to keep the groups apart.

The American Council on Education (ACE) courageously cited reasons for these tensions between global and multicultural notions of diversity. In the publication *At Home in the World* (Olson, Evans, & Shoenberg, 2007), the ACE claimed that the tensions evoke “difficult conversations” because issues of power, privilege, and social justice are revealed. And though conversations across the divide are necessary, there is risk in diversity conversations that may shut down some supporters and disenfranchise others. Differences in power and privilege among speakers can ignite a dynamic wherein the “speaker has violated some unspoken code of politeness or niceness. Shunning and dismissal are extremely damaging non-responses” (Cornwell & Stoddard, 2006, p. 32). Olson et al. (2007) claimed power differences exist because internationalization (ACE uses the term *internationalization* as we are using *global learning*) is positioned as an asset model, linked to personal growth and glamour. Those associated with this area are often White

and privileged, with ease in access to campus resources through new, optional, and exciting initiatives. On the other hand, multicultural education is positioned as a deficit model, linked to mandates to correct past wrongs, to contentious identities such as race and class (its members are often People of Color), and to an ensuing struggle for campus resources.

Another way these tensions are manifested is in our use of often generalized language to describe the learning outcomes of global learning and multicultural education. Language without specificity furthers vague notions about how to resolve the strains. Those of us who consider ourselves Americans (or Westerners) may be uncomfortable with multicultural education's specific renderings of these tensions, especially those related to privilege and power: the discomfort is connected with the familiar emotions of guilt and anger. Thus, it is often easier to discuss outcomes such as "respect for diversity," "understanding multiple perspectives," "appreciation of culture," and "international understanding," rather than discuss resources afforded to new international initiatives when many ethnic and gender studies programs continue to struggle along after forty years in the academy. These programs have uncomfortable associations for administrators and some faculty, resonant of past battles and tensions. But as long as we maintain a generalized, distancing sort of learning-outcomes narrative, we will not be positioned to fully address the tensions, and as a consequence, student moral and intellectual development will falter.

Finally, the tensions may exist out of a simple fear that collaboration between global learning and multicultural education "might lead to the amorphous conflation of the two fields, the dominance of one field over the other, or the undermining of one or both of the fields" (Cortés, 1998, p. 111). Even if there are instances where this dominance might exist, the need to integrate these two fields at this historical moment is so compelling for the advancement of student development that responsible educators in both camps must find ways to get past such fears.

Student Development Compels Integration of Certain Elements into the Curriculum

The ongoing diversity dynamic, indeed the undercurrent in the campus climate, captures the problematic wedging of critical academic inquiry areas against one another (i.e., global versus domestic, race versus gender, race versus class, race versus sexual orientation). Campus discourse, classroom pedagogy, and cocurricular programming should embrace the whole of the human experience, just as a student affairs philosophy embraces working with the entirety of an individual student. An integrated approach to global learning and multicultural education captures the greatest potential for student development.

There is no question about the value of "the domestic and the global need to be in conversation with each other" (Olson et al., 2007, p. vii). Though there are good reasons not to collaborate, such as potential challenges to professional identities, the benefits of collaboration include the promise of access to resources, and even more compellingly, the potential for better student learning and development outcomes. The centrality of student learning in our institutions is the best argument for collaboration. Students need to experience the intersection and integration of multicultural education and global learning embodied within the structures of our campuses—through holism in the curriculum and in the cocurriculum—and through partnerships between academic and student affairs. What students learn through multicultural and global dimensions throughout the academy "will have a profound effect on their development" (Olson et al., 2007, p. 6).

Where Are the Models of Integration?

Unfortunately, there are many examples of the fragmentation rather than the integration of multicultural education and global learning. Often terms such as *intercultural*, *cross-cultural*, and *multicultural* get collapsed into the global and international literature but are not fully integrated into that literature (Bresciani, 2008), and thus the critical inquiry of multicultural education remains absent. Multicultural language then becomes a superficial add-on to global literature. Likewise, global language becomes a superficial add-on to some multicultural literature (see Anderson, 2007), and does not reflect the deeper inquiry of global and international perspectives. A review of the institutional projects sponsored by organizations like ACE, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, reveal little evidence of infusion of both global and multicultural education throughout the curriculum, especially in the disciplines. And yet, the AAC&U New Global Century report noted with respect to global learning, that “general education plays a role, but it is not possible to squeeze all these important aims into the general education program alone. The majors must address them as well” (AAC&U, 2007, p. 4).

Challenges in Advancing Multicultural Education

The challenges in advancing multicultural education are real and perhaps greater than the challenges involved in advancing global learning. Often the academy takes the view that multicultural education is the province of minority and ethnic studies faculty and not the responsibility of all faculty. Many view multicultural education as the domain of the general education curriculum and not the majors. Multicultural education is often judged as being incompatible with academic rigor or dismissed as being important only to those who care about political correctness. What is clear is that there seems to be a fairly limited understanding of the value and meaning of multicultural education in the academy; indeed, this area does not receive significant institutional resources for its advancement. The resource deficit is exacerbated by the reality that global learning often does not emphasize domestic multicultural issues (Braskamp, 2009).

As Braskamp (2009) noted, the divide between multicultural education and global learning is indeed unfortunate, and we can do much more to encourage a more open perspective on engaging the conversation. Granted, there are risks to doing this, as noted by Cornwell and Stoddard (2006). But when we engage, we have the ability to begin to define some of the tensions. Through engagement, we might come to recognize the ways the two disciplines must remain separate and the ways they could both benefit through greater collaboration. And we might ask, what will students gain when we put the old tensions to rest?

Why Integration Matters for Student Development

The student affairs profession is rooted in a U.S. context, and, understandably, we have focused on domestic diversity much better than we have on global diversity. Though multiple efforts are under way in the national associations to create more connections with universities abroad through joint research projects, international conferences, study tours, and student and faculty exchange programs, the profession remains primarily focused on U.S. higher education and U.S. college students—in teaching, research, and practice. Dalton and Sullivan (2008) concurred by saying that “until quite recently, . . . international involvements were on the periphery of the profession and outside the mainstream of professional activities and responsibilities” (p. 7).

And yet student affairs has always embraced the whole student, evident in foundation documents (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], American College Personnel Association [ACPA], & NASPA, 1998; ACPA, 1937, 1949; ACPA & NASPA, 1997, 2004), and in practice. Global learning is consistent with a holistic approach to student development because it frames students as global citizens. In a very welcome development, concerns about global learning are making more frequent appearances in national conversations, evident, for example, in a thread throughout the new student affairs professional competency statement (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). This reference appears in categories involving equity, diversity, and inclusion; ethical professional practice; history, philosophy, and values; and leadership. Indeed, student affairs as practiced in the United States is increasingly a model for universities in Europe, Africa, and Asia, as our focus on the development of the whole college student (Braskamp, 2010) is a balm in a time of increasing market-driven education that is unrelentingly defining students by the dollars they generate or retain for universities.

Notwithstanding these advances in global learning, multicultural education matters in the world, and it probably matters more at this historical moment than ever before. In the increasingly complicated and integrated environment brought to us by globalization, and in the maddening rush to assert control over shrinking resources, the risk of intercultural and international conflicts grows. It is the Fulbright program, however, that captures the salience and urgency of blending multicultural education with cross-cultural engagement. Established to help Americans achieve greater familiarity with the diverse peoples of the world as a way to forestall the horrors of another world war, thousands of Americans, and even more of their teacher, scholar, and artist counterparts overseas, have had the opportunity to become immersed in each other's cultures and to learn things about their hosts and about themselves that would never have been possible without the Fulbright support. Has this made the world a safer or more peaceful place? We cannot be sure, but it is impossible to imagine conditions of peace and security in the absence of global understanding and meaningful familiarity with difference. Indeed, the most pressing problems confronting humankind, such as environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation, population growth, and diminishing fresh water supplies, are global in nature. Solving these problems requires talent and engagement from around the globe. It requires that we work collaboratively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds who happen to define problems differently (Downey et al., 2006).

Finally, the importance of multicultural education and global learning has become so compelling that even accreditation bodies, including the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), are now making the case for global learning among students who will eventually be part of the professional ranks they represent. ABET's Criterion 3 calls for engineering graduates to be able to demonstrate "the broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental and societal context" (ABET, 2011, p. 3). In effect, not only should engineering skills have global applicability, but their effectiveness must ultimately take into account the societal context in which they aim to provide solutions. Likewise, Standards 15, 18, and 19 of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2010) speak directly to the need for business majors to have learning experiences in areas that include "multicultural and diversity understanding" as well as "the dynamics of the global economy" and to have the "capacity to understand management issues from a global perspective."

How These Tensions Affect Student Development

Student learning and development are affected by the campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1999) because there is "a connection between desired student learning and development and the sociocultural environment" (Bras-

kamp, 2009, p. 3). For example, studies indicate that both White students and Students of Color are negatively affected by a contentious diversity climate (Milem, 2003; Hurtado et al., 1999). Conversely, when we increase interracial interaction, in class and elsewhere, students reap developmental benefits (Chang, Denson, Sáenz, & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Chang et al. (2006) found that peer average levels of interracial interaction (an institutional measure of climate) affect individual student development of openness to diversity (a measure of cognitive development). The learning environment influences student development, perhaps especially when campuses set the challenge of creating a climate that embodies integration of global and multicultural perspectives.

Contemporary student development theorists emphasize the ability to integrate competence in and advocacy for all forms of human diversity (including local and global diversity) and have coined related developmental terms. For instance, King and Baxter Magolda (2005) used the term *mature intrapersonal development* for considering *social identities* (race, class, gender, etc.) in a global and national context (p. 576). Helms (1995) employed the term *integrative awareness* for becoming *globally humanistic*. Kegan (1994) used *self-transformation* for *interpenetration of selves and inter-individuation*; and Braskamp (2009) adopted *global perspective*. To walk with students on the journey (Kegan, 1994), we might consider ways to model the integration of local and global competence on our campuses. By collaborating with academic and student affairs colleagues to resolve local and global organizational tensions (such as by working together across international and multicultural student affairs programs and integrating international and multicultural courses), we model powerful partnerships (AAHE et al., 1998) in the service of student development.

What Multicultural Education and Global Learning Can Mean for Student Learning Outcomes

When multicultural education is understood within the context of global learning, it becomes easy to begin to see the intersections. At our institution, Northern Arizona University (NAU), the Global Learning Initiative (GLI) incorporates three themes (global engagement, diversity, and sustainability) into an approach to transform the entire undergraduate curriculum, using the disciplines as the principal site for this work.

Very early in the process, we agreed that any definition of global learning should also embrace multicultural education and environmental sustainability. We felt that these three elements reflect the agenda for global learning in the early 21st century, that they do not stand alone but are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent, and that our objectives in advancing global learning would be best served by adopting and infusing them into the curriculum as a package. (NAU, 2010, p. 4)

We define these three themes, in terms of student learning outcomes, in the following way:

- **Global Engagement:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of (analyze, synthesize, and evaluate) the interconnectedness and interdependence of the human experience on a global scale.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Students will understand the scope of environmental sustainability in local and global terms and will know what it means to use natural resources in ethical and responsible ways that will maintain a sustainable environment.

- **Diversity:** Students will critically reflect upon the ubiquity and necessity of diversity in all of its manifestations, including cultural, ethnic, religious, and the natural environment.

Departments that sign on to the GLI are asked to engage in three tasks: develop and clearly outline global learning and multicultural outcomes in the language of their respective disciplines, develop and articulate curricular and cocurricular strategies that will help students achieve the global learning outcomes, and then develop assessment approaches that will establish the extent to which students are realizing the global learning outcomes committed to by the department. The first task offers one way of articulating the fluency by which graduates of any discipline may become globally competent and successful in a diverse context. The second task helps to ensure that students have multiple, substantive, and intentional encounters with these ideas by infusing learning outcomes in both the curriculum and the cocurriculum. If awarded credit, cocurricula learning opportunities may acquire even greater attention and legitimacy among students. The gateway course and the capstone course, for example, are perfect places to infuse multicultural and global perspectives. Classes can be coconvened with those of faculty colleagues at partner institutions overseas, exposing both sets of students to rich learning and teaching encounters. Study abroad offers, in one stroke, opportunities for both global learning and multicultural education, and can be built into the structure of the major so that students do not lose progress toward degree completion if they pursue such opportunities. Finally, the assessment task allows faculty, without reinventing the wheel, to tweak existing assessment tools—such as exams, research papers, and group projects—to have students consider multicultural or global elements that were addressed in the course. If a survey of graduating seniors is administered, this can be used to tap exposure to and reflection upon diversity issues. Assessment strategies employed for purposes of accreditation can also be used for this purpose.

The Liberal Studies (LS) program is another site for this work, and departments are encouraged to use this program strategically (and the hundreds of LS courses that currently have significant global content) to support the efforts of students to build a program of study that reinforces departmental commitment to the three themes of global learning. Because important learning occurs in the context of the cocurriculum, this too is another site for global learning, and departments are encouraged to award credit to students whose involvement in cocurricular activities reinforce the global learning themes. While we are only two years into the implementation of the GLI, our experience represents the attempt of one campus to resolve the tensions between multicultural education and global learning through a focus on learning outcomes.

Examples of Learning Outcomes That Reflect Both Multicultural Education and Global Learning in Academic and Student Affairs

Olson et al. (2007) suggest focusing on learning outcomes as a mechanism to settle the tensions, or bridge the divide, between global learning and multicultural education. Indeed, because complex, multidisciplinary learning outcomes reinforce the intersections and commonalities between multicultural education and global learning, the focus can encourage collaboration. Learning outcomes should draw upon overarching concepts such as intercultural competence and global citizenship.

As mentioned above, a number of academic departments and a few student affairs departments at NAU that became engaged in the GLI developed learning outcomes that address both multicultural education and global learning as a first step in articulating their commitments to global learning. The examples below are representative of some of the learning outcomes developed by faculty (or staff in the case of the

Global Village Learning Community) that reflect their vision of what their students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation:

- Students will be able to demonstrate global citizenship by developing a diverse living and learning community with opportunities for intercultural interaction. (Global Village Learning Community)
- Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with the history, theory, and contemporary practices of grassroots democratic organizing and engagement across a wide range of issues pertaining to environmental sustainability, social justice, diversity, equality, globalization, and the common goods of community. (Sustainable Environments and Engaged Democracy Learning Community)
- Students will be able to explain, both orally and in written form, how human diversity affects the definition, use, and management of forested landscapes. (Forestry)
- Students will understand relationships between professional engineering and public and private organizations, and the mutual impacts that global environments and diverse societal and political systems of the world can have on one another. (Civil & Environmental Engineering)
- Through diversity, students will recognize the value of effective oral health and its impacts upon globally diverse populations. (Dental Hygiene)
- Students will understand that diverse cultures develop a diverse set of financial perspectives and instruments to facilitate their business arrangements. (College of Business)

There is no question that this very intentional approach to multicultural education combined with global learning has led to a more meaningful and potent curricula experience for students. In the case of the Electronic Media and Film (EMF) program in the School of Communications, faculty were concerned about how to achieve this curricular experience, particularly in lower division, introductory courses, because students typically decide their own production topics. Fortunately, students were themselves motivated to address issues of diversity and global learning in working on their documentary assignments. One documentary, for example, focused on the life of a Chinese exchange student as an artist and lesbian. Another focused on a Native American student who is raising her siblings, and a third focused on a native Hawaiian World War II veteran. These and similar documentaries were produced in EMF courses and shown to hundreds of students, faculty, and community members, as well as featured on the university TV station.

Another example is that of Freshman Seminar 131, where students, led by a faculty member affiliated with Latin American Studies, studied art, literature and performance about the Arizona-Sonora border as well as the political, economic, social, and environmental consequences of the 2,000-mile border between the United States and Mexico. Students explored through analytical papers, discussions and self-reflection in journal entries the ways in which Arizona and Northern Mexican populations share aesthetic characteristics in their artistic expressions. They met real-life agents including law officers, migrant workers, and nongovernmental government organization administrators during a five-day trip to the border that also involved visits on both sides of the fence. In addition, students discussed the role of race in relation to the sociopolitical obstacles with which migrants deal, U.S. border policies as well as Arizona's approach to immigration. Students even considered whether Latin America actually encompasses Arizona. Clearly, this

course, at a very foundational level, engaged students with issues that simultaneously touched on diversity as well as global learning.

Finally, the Department of Teaching and Learning offers a course titled *Issues in Multiage Education*. This course includes a study tour to either Australia or New Zealand and, therefore, provides a comparative dimension to multiage education. By exposing students to the practices around multiage education in Australia and New Zealand, it introduces them to cross-cultural practices focused on this teaching and learning strategy. In addition to these practices, however, the course and study tour emphasize the scope of racial and ethnic diversity within the context of education. Students visit Maori and Aboriginal schools where there is a focus on language restoration. They grapple with the implications of racism and societal interaction that have left profound scars on the psyche of these two groups in particular. They come to understand how the disparities in educational funding because of issues of race, culture, and language have disadvantaged these groups and how policies in place today are seeking to correct some of these past injustices.

The more comprehensive definition of multicultural education developed by a cross section of faculty for use by departments on the campus gives additional insight into how this theme overlaps with global learning, and even with sustainability, although this later theme is not a focus of this paper. The definition is “Students will appreciate the ubiquity and necessity of diversity (meaning multicultural education) in its many manifestations, including cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and biological diversity.” These manifestations include, for example, the following issues:

- The scope of racial and ethnic diversity both in the United States and globally.
- In addition to race and ethnicity, how gender, class, sexuality, religion, age, language, and disability constitute key dimensions of diversity.
- The ubiquity of racial and ethnic diversity and the ways it intersects with other forms of diversity, such as gender, class, sexuality, religion, age, language, and disability.
- The relationship between diversity and survival on the planet.
- The ways in which the position we take on diversity can either strengthen human communities and sustain the natural environment, or lead to conflict and environmental degradation.
- The role of ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism in human and societal interaction.
- In all of the issues listed above, multicultural education is linked to global learning, and any meaningful appreciation of global issues must address multicultural concerns; they are inseparable concepts.

The Role of the Faculty in Advancing Multicultural Education and Global Learning

Faculty play an essential role in integrating multicultural education and global learning because the curriculum is at the heart of the academic enterprise. The cocurriculum is an important dimension in this process because it provides meaningful and relevant learning opportunities tied to these two agendas. While we acknowledge major challenges facing multicultural education in the academy, faculty can decide to make

multicultural education a thematic student learning goal within the context of their own discipline and the courses they teach. In fact, this could be an ideal point of departure for faculty engagement with multicultural education, because individual faculty members have a significant voice in shaping the curricula within their respective disciplines and often total control of their courses. Current assessment efforts will soon enable us to determine the extent to which this engagement with multicultural education is reflected in the actual curriculum taught, while long-term assessment efforts will establish whether what students are learning is impacted by these efforts. In defining multicultural education as a part of global learning, it means that these concepts, when infused in the curriculum, are tied to each other.

Final Thoughts

The inexorable march of globalization is transforming our communities, both locally and globally, at an unprecedented rate. Notwithstanding talk of a postracial America, the diversity of our nation seems to matter now more than ever. Moreover, conceptions of diversity have become even more complex. Although we have long acknowledged differences in terms of sexual orientation and class, the recent decision by some U.S. states to legalize same-sex marriage and the recent revocation of the “don’t ask don’t tell” policy in the U.S. armed forces have finally institutionalized and legitimized these differences in a way that has never before existed in American society. Economic disenfranchisement, just as racial and gender disenfranchisement in our history have shown, breeds instability, civil unrest, and even war. Therefore, the development of our students as individuals, as moral agents, as responsible members of their community, and even as global citizens, hinges on their ability to have meaningful encounters with issues of diversity rendered in terms of the global realities of our lives.

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