

Integrating Global Competencies in the Curriculum

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This chapter reports on an initiative funded by an NEH grant and implemented at Borough of Manhattan Community College, City University of New York. Faculty reflect on and define global competencies and subsequently enhance existing curricula by designing assignments that target the development of four targeted global competencies: Cultural understanding, responsible global citizenship, effective intercultural communication, and integrated reasoning. Participating faculty attended a series of seminars with invited scholars in global education, discussed challenging readings/issues in globalization, and pedagogical approaches to the integration of global competencies in coursework, and developed and implemented assignments for their courses in which they integrate at least two of the global competencies targeted by this initiative. This chapter reports on the initial stages of the program.

Keywords: Global competency, bridging cultures, faculty development, community college initiatives

El capítulo informa sobre una iniciativa auspiciada por una Beca del Fondo Nacional para las Humanidades (NEH), que fue implementada en el Community College del Borough de Manhattan de la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York. El profesorado reflexiona y define los conocimientos globales para así mejorar /realzar el currículo mediante el diseño de tareas que se enfoquen en el desarrollo de cuatro competencias: el entendimiento cultural, el civismo global responsable, la comunicación intercultural eficaz, y la pedagogía integral. Los profesores, que participaron en los seminarios con invitados expertos en pedagogía global, comentaron lecturas y tópicos sobre la globalización, y estrategias pedagógicas para la incorporación de los conocimientos globales en las clases. También desarrollaron e implementaron tareas para los cursos en los cuales integraron por lo menos dos de los objetivos de esta iniciativa global. Este capítulo trata de las primeras etapas del programa.

Palabras clave: Competencia global, acercando culturas, desarrollo profesional, iniciativas de los colegios comunitarios

College graduates in the 21st century are entering the global marketplace, an international arena that requires skills and competencies to navigate the vast terrain of international commerce. It is the responsibility of colleges and universities to prepare students with the knowledge, skills and competencies required to compete in today's world. The integration of global competencies into the curriculum is thus critical to providing future graduates with the tools needed to live and work in a

world that is increasingly complex given the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics at play in this multicultural, multilingual global village of the 21st century.

Global Competencies for Career and College Readiness

De Blij in *The Power of Place* writes of barriers imposed by the global core nations that make it difficult for “Locals” (the poorest and least mobile) and in some cases, “Mobals” (transnational migrants that cross international borders and challenge the power of place as agents of change) from becoming part of new lifestyles and ‘opportunities’ provided by the “mainstream of modernization.” De Blij proposes that in order to reverse this trend and empower both Locals and Mobals, we must “lower barriers.”

While the US may be one of the global core of nations that de Blij refers to as the nations that impose those barriers, that does not mean that in North America there are no Locals and Mobals. It can indeed be argued that many Americans experience the same barriers as their counterparts in other countries. Indeed, one of the primary justifications for the implementation of the Common Core in K-12 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016) was the recognition that many American youngsters do not have the 21st century competencies and skills that are necessary to meet the demands of a new technologically advanced marketplace, a clear disadvantage for continued innovation and economic development. It was acknowledged that there is an urgent need to prepare high school graduates with the academic skills necessary for college and career readiness, hence the proposed long-term goal of the Common Core to create a dynamic workforce that would allow America to compete in a global society.

Institutions of higher learning also play a key role in preparing young people with the skills and competencies they need to compete in 21st century careers. Not only do students need to graduate with the academic and technical skills needed for jobs in today’s world but they also need to be globally competent.

The term “global competency” has been variously defined, but there are some similar themes in each definition. In 1996 the Stanley Foundation and the American Council on International Intercultural Education (ACIIE) convened a group of twenty-four community college educators and representatives of government, private industry and NGOs for a conference “Building the Global Community: The Next Step.” The conference objective was to define community college goals in global education and they agreed that the globally competent learner is aware of diversity commonalities and the interdependence of the world, understands the non-universality of culture, religion and value, and accepts the importance of all peoples, appreciating the impact of other cultures on one’s own culture. The globally competent learner is also empowered by the experience of global education to help make a difference in society. He/she is capable of working in diverse teams and accepting the responsibility for global citizenship (ACIIE, 1996).

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In a similar vein, Dr. Sandra L. Russo, Director for International Center at the University of Florida and Leigh Ann Osborne, coordinator of the International Student Services areas at Florida State University (2004) defined a “globally competent student” as one who “exhibits both cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability because s/he takes advantage of opportunities to interact with diverse individuals. In doing so, the globally competent student questions assumptions and challenges stereotypes of his/her own and of others” (p. 8). Russo and Osborne identified five themes in defining a globally competent student: a diverse knowledgeable worldview, understanding of international dimensions of a major field of study, effective communication in another language and/or across-cultures, cross-cultural sensitivity and adaptability, and lifelong cultivation of global competencies.

Michigan State University (2010) made a noteworthy effort to bring the various perspectives on global competencies together in the Liberal Learning and Global Competence Framework in which they linked global competencies to defined liberal learning goals and outcomes. The intention was to provide a framework that would foster students’ active engagement in learning in and outside the classroom so that graduates would be able to demonstrate the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to be outstanding leaders and lifelong learners in this global village. The targeted global competencies in this framework were cultural understanding, effective communication, effective citizenship, integrated reasoning, and analytical thinking.

Like MSU, colleges and universities across the US must thus incorporate elements of global competency in academic courses to meet the professional demands that students will meet upon graduation. Community colleges are at the forefront serving large populations in America with affordable tuition, ease of access, flexible course scheduling, course variety, and transfer prospects to universities. Integrating global competencies in the college curriculum is one way to effectively lower barriers by systematically providing Locals, e.g., non-traditional students in urban community colleges, with the resources necessary to compete internationally.

The Context of the Initiative: An Urban Community College

The Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) is one such institution of higher learning. BMCC is an urban community college, one of the twenty-four campuses within the City University of New York (CUNY). BMCC is one of the most diverse community colleges in the nation, serving over 26,000 students who represent over 155 countries of origin and speak more than 113 languages. For the vast majority of these students, BMCC embodies their singular opportunity to acquire the higher education essential to their future success. BMCC is thus committed to high quality education in a pluralistic multicultural environment. (BMCC Fact Book. Retrieved from http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/about_bmcc).

Despite its diversity, many of the college’s students have only a limited understanding of increasingly complex relationships among world cultures and

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emerging global issues. For most, even their exposure to and knowledge of other ethnic groups is limited to their educational experiences in the classroom. To enhance exposure, BMCC has provided numerous activities to foster a greater understanding of multiculturalism and multilingualism and development of global competency. Despite these efforts, there remain challenges that inhibit the degree to which BMCC students of diverse backgrounds fully participate in the community of the college and, equally important, that they maintain a solid sense of their own identity and individuality. Like the program at Michigan State University, BMCC wants its students to graduate with the competencies essential in today's global marketplace.

BMCC has thus dedicated efforts towards globalization of the curriculum. In its five-year strategic plan: *A Bridge to the Future*, BMCC identified the commitment to promote student awareness and understanding of global issues as one of four strategic priorities for the college. As part of the strategic planning process, a Steering Committee on Globalization was formed in 2011. Given that global competencies are essential, high impact skills needed for our students to be competitive in the 21st century global economy, the committee recommended a series of comprehensive strategies aimed at infusing the curriculum with global experiences. The committee developed and piloted a professional development initiative aimed at infusing global competencies across the curricula in the humanities in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, guided by experts from global studies in the humanities. The aim of this project was to provide faculty pedagogical support in integrating global competencies into diverse classrooms and to foster a rich understanding of and deeper appreciation for global issues as well as a capacity to act as increasingly confident and responsible global citizens throughout their professional and personal lives. The program was piloted in summer 2014 with nineteen faculty from across the humanities.

Forging Interdisciplinary Dialogue in a Globalized World

The following year the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Bridging Cultures Initiative funded this three-year initiative "Negotiating Otherness: Forging Interdisciplinary Dialogue in a Globalized World," to support faculty in the redesign of curriculum to infuse global competencies into course offerings in the Humanities at BMCC. This is a special initiative through which NEH is investing in community college programs that strengthen the humanities through special attention to bridging cultures themes and to advance the role of humanities at community colleges through curriculum and faculty development focused on bridging cultures at home and abroad (National Endowment for the Humanities Bridging Cultures Initiatives, 2010.)

An Initiative for Professional Development in the Humanities

In this professional development initiative, “Cultivating Global Competencies in a Diverse World,” participating BMCC faculty in the first cohort attended a series of seminars on readings and presentations led by invited global studies scholars during the 2015-2016 academic year. The first group of this NEH-funded initiative included sixteen faculty from across ten disciplines, including speech, academic literacy and linguistics, social science, e.g., economics, criminal justice, and history, English, modern languages, art and music, and health education. Following the seminars, faculty redesigned assignments to enhance the development of global competencies in their respective courses, including SPE100, ESL94, and ENG101, ITL106 and SPN102, among others. Through pedagogical presentations and discussions of the enhanced assignments, participating faculty across disciplines provided continuing support and feedback to colleagues in the cohort in preparation for the implementation of the enhanced assignments during the semester. Student self-perception of their global competencies were assessed pre- and post-intervention, using an adapted version of the Global Perception Inventory (GPI).

Based on the Liberal Learning and Global Competence Framework developed by Michigan State University, this initiative targeted four of the original five global competencies aligned with higher education liberal learning goals: cultural understanding, effective interpersonal communication, responsible global citizenship, and integrated reasoning. Participating faculty were encouraged to further articulate performance indicators for each global competency adapted from the Michigan State University framework. For example, for responsible global citizenship, BMCC students would participate as a member of local, national, and international communities and have the capacity to lead in an increasingly interdependent world by 1) demonstrating a personal sense of ethics, service and responsibility informing decision-making with regard to diverse issues; 2) analyzing the impact of personal behavior on diverse systems; and 3) utilizing knowledge, attitudes, and skills to engage in diverse challenges facing humanity. and develop assignment learning objectives (ALOs) to measure the competencies.

Participating faculty were asked to redesign at least two assignments targeting at least two of the four global competencies as defined within the Michigan State University framework. The selection of assignments, the targeted global competencies, and the redesign to enhance the assignments and achieve assignment learning objectives (ALOs) were left to the discretion of participating faculty.

Sample Assignment

One participating faculty in the Academic Literacy and Linguistics department chose to redesign an assignment in Critical Thinking 100 (CRT100) targeting two competencies: integrated reasoning and responsible global citizenship. She redesigned a mini-research project on obesity in the US and at BMCC. This module included a series of assignments intended to teach an approach to critical thinking through the

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lens of the scientific method applied in the humanities. The first assignment described a scenario in which groups were assigned roles, e.g., a representative from the FDA, for a debate about who should take primary responsibility for a child's diet that would introduce and narrow down the topic to clarify the issue through the reading and discussion of articles. Students would later write a literature review based on their reading and research. Students were provided with a number of articles focusing on childhood obesity and the various parties contributing to this issue, e.g., the advertising and food industries, government regulating agencies, the schools, and the family.

The second part of the assignment focused on the obesity epidemic at BMCC. The scenario described the establishment of an ad hoc task force set up by the Student Government Association (SGA) to make recommendations to be presented to the food service corporation at the college. Each student was directed to write up a list of recommendations to SGA. Students were advised that this would first entail the collection of data regarding any aspect of the student cafeteria's operations that might be contributing to poor eating habits of the college community, e.g., menu, display of food, product placement, pricing, or traffic slow. Student groups were asked to summarize the data and present the analysis to the ad hoc committee.

The third assignment was to write a letter to the Student Government Association about how BMCC could join the fight against the epidemic of obesity at our school and submit their recommendations for changes in the food and cafeteria service to include practices that would promote healthier eating and contribute in a positive way to the campaign to fight the public health problems in obesity.

Targeted Global Competency: Responsible Citizenship

This assignment targeted the global competency of responsible citizenship which requires that 1) students participate as members of local, national, and global communities and demonstrate the capacity to lead in an increasingly interdependent world; 2) develop a personal sense of ethics, service, and civic responsibility informing decision-making with regards to diverse issues; 3) demonstrate understanding of the impact of personal behavior on diverse system; and 4) utilize knowledge, attitudes, and skills to engage with diverse challenges facing humanity. This assignment required BMCC students to participate as members of their national community by first investigating childhood obesity as a national crisis and relating it to the local level by examining obesity at BMCC. Through their research on the national obesity epidemic, students would be analyzing the impact of personal behavior on diverse systems, i.e., impact of practices of the school food service and students', faculty's and staff's food choices, and utilizing knowledge, attitudes, and skills to engage in diverse challenges facing people in the contemporary world. Through the application of that research to the BMCC context, collecting data and making recommendations to SGA, students would be working at a local level, developing their capacity to lead in an increasingly interdependent world by informing decision-making of their SGA leaders.

Redesign of Assignment

Although this assignment already had all the essential components to support the development of responsible global citizenship as defined in this framework, this faculty member rewrote the assignment to make the focus on the global competencies more explicit and asked students to more explicitly articulate the relationship between the national epidemic and the situation at BMCC, to narrow their research to factors impacting students' and faculty's food choices, to collect and analyze data from the local cafeteria to explore the potential impact of those factors on obesity at the school and later to serve as evidence supporting their proposed changes in the food service, and to engage in the challenge at a personal and social level by writing the Student Government Association president with recommendations supported by data. The scenarios were rewritten to focus on the objective of gathering, analyzing, and reporting data relevant to the issue and using this evidence to make recommendations to the SGA to submit to the food service on behalf of the BMCC community.

Reflective Practice

Further enhancement of the obesity project to increase student awareness of the issue and how this issue involves them personally was the addition of a reflective practice that required journaling before, during and after the research project:

- Before: Reflect on the problem of obesity in the world today. What are factors contributing to obesity? What are solutions? What can you do about the problem of obesity on a personal level?
- During: As you are collecting and analyzing data with your partner what are your thoughts about the BMCC cafeteria, the BMCC community, the BMCC administration, and the students and our choices about food and nutrition? Do you think that your project and the data that you collect will make a difference? Is this project affecting your own food choices?
- After: What did you learn about obesity and food choices at BMCC? What did you personally do to fight the growing problem of obesity?

Assessment

Global Perspective Inventory (GPI)

To assess the impact of the implementation of the redesigned curriculum, an adapted version of the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) was administered pre- and post-intervention, that is, at the beginning and end of the semester. The GPI was designed as a tool to measure human development in three major domains: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The cognitive domain centers on one's knowledge and understanding of what is true and important to know. The intrapersonal domain focuses on becoming more aware of and integrating one's personal values and self-identity into one's self. The interpersonal domain is centered on the willingness to interact with people of different social norms and cultural backgrounds, acceptance of

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others, and feeling comfortable in relating to others (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Engbert, 2014). The original GPI is comprised of six scales with two scales in each dimension. It has been used by private and public colleges and universities offering BA and MA degrees as well as institutions offering doctorates to measure global perspectives before and after study abroad experiences and other program or institutional interventions, such as the implementation of assignments enhanced to develop global competencies. An adapted version of the GPI comprising 28 items targeting the 4 competencies ($r = .884$) was developed for use in this initiative.

This survey was administered by participating faculty pre- and post-intervention. Aggregate pre- and post- scores for each scale measuring global perspective in the respective competency were compared to examine changes in global perspectives among students, both for the overall program and for individual classes. This will be useful feedback for faculty on the effectiveness of the assignment and will be useful for this initiative in moving forward with future cohorts.

Items from the survey were mapped onto their related global competencies to create scales for each competency. Student gains from pre- to post-assessment for targeted global competencies were measured by aggregates of performance on items measuring a targeted competency. For example, eight items were tagged to measure responsible citizenship, including “I stand up for my rights” and “I am informed of current issues that impact international relations.” Table 1, “Global Competencies Spring 2016 Responsible Citizenship” shows student gains on all items measuring responsible citizenship, suggesting that students’ perception of their own global competencies have experienced change.

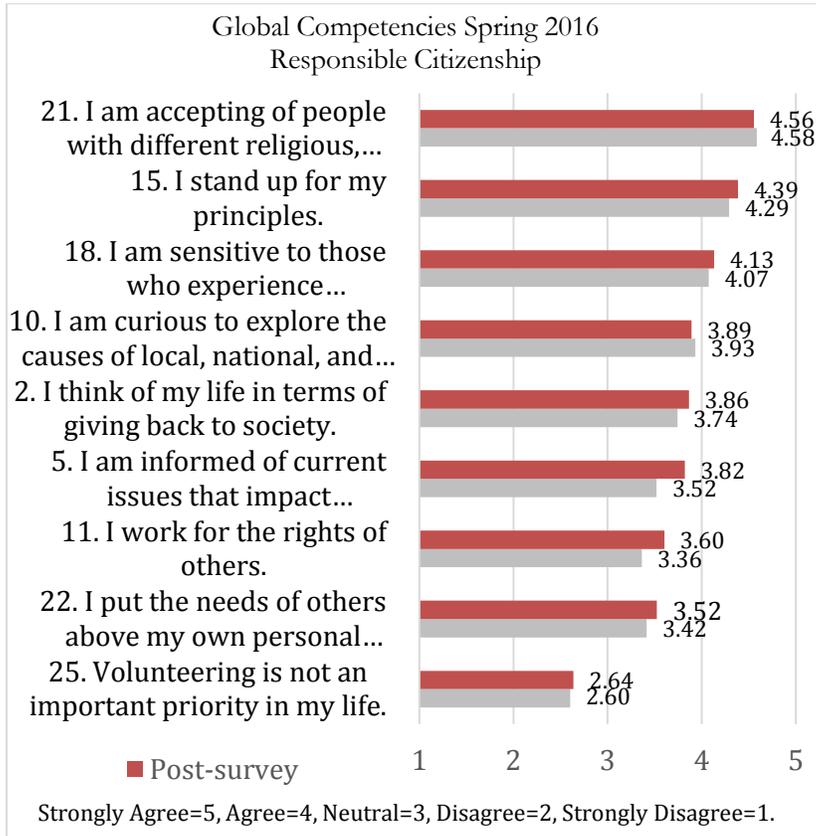


Figure 1. GPI Measure of Students' Self-Perception on Responsible Citizenship

Survey responses have been collected for classes in the first cohort, yielding preliminary results that document changes in self-perception, behaviors and attitudes related to global competencies.

Implications for Curriculum Development and Integration of Global Studies in the Curriculum

This curriculum and faculty development project to infuse global competencies in the curriculum in an urban community college is ongoing and promises to yield positive results both for faculty and students in meeting the challenges of preparing students to face the competitive demands of the 21st century workplace. It offers faculty the opportunity for continued development in their pedagogical approaches to convey the knowledge and provide for the acquisition and development of those skills and competencies needed by students in their study of the humanities and it gives faculty the opportunity for continued scholarship in pedagogical approaches in their own respective disciplines. Approaches to improving pedagogy are often complex but this initiative has established a framework through

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which faculty in the humanities can embrace that challenge to the benefit of themselves and their students.

In addition, this initiative follows the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) model that has already been institutionalized throughout CUNY. One Writing Intensive (WI) course is now a requirement for graduation and faculty are encouraged to develop WI courses to enhance the curriculum. Faculty are awarded a stipend for participation in the WAC training and subsequent development and implementation of courses that integrate writing in the course design. In addition, WI courses are capped at twenty-five students, a clear incentive for faculty participation. It is hoped that the benefits to students, faculty, and the college in developing assignments with a global component will be significant so that the college will support the college-wide implementation of a Global Competencies Across the Curriculum to develop Global Intensive Courses required for graduation. The institutionalization of this requirement will ensure that BMCC students will graduate with the global competencies needed in the 21st century.

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