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Preparing World Citizens Through Higher Education: Responsibilities, Choices, and Implications

Jennifer A. Ostermiller

Students in higher education in the United States of America are in a paradoxical position. They are living in the only country in the world that publicly identifies as a superpower, and yet, at the same time, they are faced with an educational system that does not universally prepare them to live and work in a global society. In this article, I explore the feasibility of a paradigm shift for institutions of higher education in the United States of America to promote a more global context. Examination of the historical values of higher education and their evolution, definition of the phrase global citizenship, and suggestions for areas of change within the in-class and out-of-class curricula are also included. Finally, I provide recommendations and questions for the academy in an effort to inspire and evoke this dramatic andragogical (learner-focused education) change.

A Brief Context

Purpose and Intent

The goal of this article is to challenge individuals who are involved in U.S. higher education to consider the importance of working with all students to help them recognize the global context they are positioned in as they learn, live, work, raise their families, and make decisions. I examine historical implications within higher education toward promoting global understanding as a value. I also explore a deeper understanding and definition of citizenship and global citizenship, as well as how these concepts fit into higher education.

Ultimately, the questions I ask in this article are to encourage dialogue among all in the academy. I believe it is important to broaden our curricular and experiential lenses to see a global context in our classrooms, in our programs, and in our interactions with one another. After all, global citizenship is a philosophical affiliation rather than a political one. Learning to shift one's lens from nationalism to internationalism is a giant leap. However, I believe we, as humans collectively, have come to a crossroads, and higher education in the United States of America (U.S.A) can play an important role in encouraging a shift toward global awareness.

Personal Interest

My own undergraduate experience was interdisciplinary and maintained a consistent global perspective. I was forced to consider how to reconcile and augment my new knowledge and values with my personal and professional actions. As a result, while a student and later as a graduate, I have carried a global perspective that impacts my consumptive power, my responsibilities as a citizen, and my daily interactions with people and places.

As a graduate student in a higher education and student affairs administration preparation program, I have spent numerous hours in conversations about multiculturalism, privilege, and oppression. However, these conversations often lack a global perspective, and there is little recognition that we in higher education in the U.S.A. are functioning in a global context. For instance, we might discuss in-depth how access to higher education is problematic as the price of education rises. However, we rarely enter into conversation about the global implications, such as educating business students to operate in multinational corporations that assume education is a commodity to be purchased by those who can afford it.

Therefore, I began to ponder, should learning in a global context be a universal value for higher education? Do we (humans collectively) live in a global society? If so, do we have a responsibility to be global citizens? Does higher education have a responsibility to prepare global citizens? What does this mean for the field of student affairs, for the academy in general, and for professionals working in the academy?

History and Relevant Literature Summary about Globalization and Citizenship

Globalization and United States Higher Education

These questions I am asking are not new. Laves (1949) asked, "What is the role of institutions of learning in relation to

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the obvious and rapid development of understanding of the facts of one-world living?” (p. 117). He concluded that the role is twofold: first, a comprehension of the interdependence of all people and their actions, and second, a call to understand how the many people of this world, and the many countries, can coexist in a peaceful way (Laves, p. 116). Finally, he recognized the challenge institutions faced in “furthering this understanding . . . when one observes the many signs of ethnocentrism, racial prejudice, and so on, still manifested in public discussion and public policy, even when the consequence is to endanger peace and human welfare” (Laves, pp. 116-117).

In this article, globalization means internationalization in all realms of reality: human, environmental, technological, economic, and political. Laves’ observations, questions, and recommendations remain relevant today. However, they have different meaning in a postindustrial world with a multifaceted, globalized marketplace of ideas, products, and cultural values. These societal evolutions are particularly relevant to organizations of higher education, which play a critical role in explaining and describing them to individuals who are preparing to work within them. Bartell (2003) remarked that the “unprecedented growth, complexity, and competitiveness of the global economy with its attendant socio-political and technological forces have been creating relentless and cumulative pressures on higher education institutions” (p. 43). These pressures include preparing professionals in all sectors (business, human services, education, health care, science, etc.) to know how to make decisions based on a global understanding of their consequences. In order to be able to make such decisions, student learning may need to include everything from intercultural awareness of civilizations and societies around the world to deeper understanding of how the global economy works.

The current state of global affairs cannot be ignored. How can higher education draw on past experiences and assess current needs to formulate meaningful scholarly and contributive communities?

Value and Cultural Shifts in Higher Education

It is exciting to consider institutions of higher education as places to explore global awareness, particularly as there is past evidence that the field of higher education is open to changing values, philosophies, and foci in response to major events, shifting demographics, and new innovations. For example, higher education in the U.S.A. began as an elite institution available only to those who spoke Latin. Eventually, the academy reluctantly absorbed the German influence of athletics. Finally, after the G.I. Bill passed in 1945 which financed degrees for over 3.5 million veterans, higher education for masses of individuals was normalized, and the rise of large universities and community colleges was prompted to serve the increasingly diverse needs of the population (Rudolph, 1962). Value shifts of the public, administrators, and general leadership of the nation have accompanied this continuing evolution of higher education, sometimes spurring these changes and sometimes learning to accept these changes and purposes of the academy.

One recent shift in the academy is that “higher education institutions are beginning to adapt to the reality that the community of students, like the community of researchers and scholars, increasingly has no single geographical locus” (Bartell, 2003, p. 48). Additionally, several researchers such as Barber, Battistoni, Hamrick, and Rhoads (as cited in Anderson, Levis-Fitzgerald, & Rhoads, 2003, p. 84) have documented that a major goal of higher education is to prepare students for success beyond the walls of the classroom and into the future as they grow and interact professionally and personally with the world around them. In order to consider the relationship of the changing landscape of higher education in terms of campuses, individuals, and the objective of lasting success of graduates, the definition of citizenship must be defined, including an examination of how citizenship responsibilities are developed.

Citizenship

During college, students experience growth and independence by learning and testing how they will function in relation to economic, social, and political elements (Hossler & Litten, 1993). Additionally, students are being challenged to define their moral, ethical, and civic responsibilities as they assert their knowledge and learning.

While students are discovering their individual growth, there is an assumption that the academy will guide them in this endeavor. In fact, Hamrick (as cited in Anderson, et al., 2003) discovered that “over 90% of Americans . . . believed that a central task of colleges and universities is to develop contributing citizens” (p. 449). Citizenship is linked to moral and civic responsibility, including comprehension of issues, understanding of multiple perspectives, incorporation of global interconnectedness, and commitment to act toward the social good based on the personal relevance and meaning of cognitive and emotional knowledge (Colby, Ehrlick, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003).

Global Citizenship

While the principle of global citizenship may be encapsulated in the meaning and intent of citizenship, it is useful to examine these two linked terms separately. This is because citizenship in the global sense has a different meaning than the generally understood connotation of the term (civic responsibility to a nation-state):

Global citizens are not legal members in good standing with a sovereign state. More importantly, there are no recognizable privileges and duties associated with the concept that would envelop global citizenship with the status and power (in an ideal world) currently associated with national citizenship. (Lagos, n.d., p. 2)^{note}

With this understanding, the responsibility of global citizenship lies with the individual. There is no government advocating for global citizenship, and there are no legal bounds under which an individual might behave in favor of a world community, such as tax breaks or voting power.

The question then becomes: Why would an individual make a commitment to becoming a global citizen? Hitt (1998) provided some understanding to this inquiry and explained that:

The global citizen has a sense of oneness with the human family, which includes persons of different races, different cultures, different religions, and different nationalities. Global citizenship is an attitude or internal disposition toward members of the world community. It is a feeling that one is a member of the human family, and that all other human beings are members of the same family. (p. 4)

The initial motivation toward global citizenship, thus, may come from an internal commitment rather than an external or political pressure.

Hitt (1998) described four types of citizens (global citizen, spectator, cosmopolitan, and patriot) based on an individual's affiliation along two axes: *orientation*, focusing perspective on the universal or the local, and *realization*, involvement in community on passive or active level. The global citizen maintains a universal orientation and an active realization. Other types of citizens are spectator (local orientation, passive realization), cosmopolitan (universal orientation, passive realization), and patriot (local orientation, active realization). Of the four types, global citizenship requires a great deal of commitment from individuals, both cognitively and interactively. Such commitment is developed over time and with the support of other people, institutions, and resources.

Arguments Against Global Citizenship

Global citizenship is not universally accepted as a value. In this article, I am clearly advocating for global citizenship. However, I wish to acknowledge the arguments against global citizenship to better inform the dialogue and consideration for which I am calling.

Dower (2003), President of the International Development Ethics Association, wrote widely about global citizenship. He summarized three major reasons that the concept of global citizenship is rejected. First, there is debate as to whether all human beings have an ethical obligation to care for all other human beings and the interconnectedness of the world. If this sense of responsibility does not exist, then much of the impetus for global citizenship dissipates. Second, there is an argument that since global citizenship holds no political or legal clout, it cannot truly exist. Finally, it can be contended that the call for global citizenship actually is repetitious of an inherent ethical duty of care. Therefore, by advocating for global citizenship, one runs a risk of either watering down or complicating obligatory ethical responsibilities carried by all people.

Dower's arguments are important to consider. His second argument, I believe, carries the most weight. Political influence would certainly bolster the case for global citizenship. However, many successful and influential movements in history have been started at the grassroots level, so it is difficult to reject global citizenship outright simply because it lacks an equal amount of clout as national citizenship. Additionally, with the presence on the political scene of organizations such as the United Nations, there is evidence that global organizations do have at least some support, respect, and power. Dower's philosophical stance that perhaps humans do not have a responsibility to care for each other is one I see regularly touted in my Western, capitalistic society. The basis of the American dream is focused on the individual's achievements. Therefore, within this framework, it is easy to feel validated in not having to be concerned for

others, as individuals are also responsible for themselves and their own successes and failures. Interestingly, Dower's first argument seems contradictory to his third one. If there is an understood ethic of care for others, then it is impossible to also have a framework focused entirely on the individual. While my assumption is that Dower is simply highlighting the many viewpoints that may exist toward rejecting global citizenship affiliation, and he may see the contradictory nature of these two stances, it is almost impossible to address either from a philosophical approach in light of each other.

As a result, while these arguments provide fodder for discussion, they do not address what I see as the heart of the issue: the world is changing and becoming more globalized, and there is a needed response to this change. Students in the U.S. system of higher education are poised to become the next generation of workers and leaders. More than ever, the actions of these individuals will have global consequences. Therefore, whether or not the disposition of global citizenship is validated politically or can be fully embraced by all, for me, education is the first step toward understanding our changing society and the resulting implications.

Importance of Global Citizenry and Links to Higher Education

Think Globally, Act Locally

This oft-used phrase, borrowed from the environmental movement, may be a tool to describe the role of higher education in preparing global citizens, thus helping students consider what it means to live in a global context and how to think critically about what that means for them. Thinking globally and acting locally becomes true because, as Lagos (n.d.) addressed, "An interesting paradox of globalization is while the world is being internationalized at the same time it's also being localized. The world shrinks as the local community (village, town, city) takes on greater and greater importance" (p. 9). Students who begin to see the interconnections of the world will then understand how their local actions can be effective and also can have a ripple effect of influence.

The Reality

The world is a complex, interrelated place. There are many different people, cultures, languages, religions, traditions, and so forth. These people also share a common environment, common genetics, and common value needs. For instance, Schwartz (as cited in Albine, 2002) completed empirical research on nine universal values of humans (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security) that guide all interactions. Students are arriving on campuses eager to form their values, ethics, and approaches. However, in their previous educational experiences, they may not have had exposure to learning in a global context and how they fit into the global picture. Therefore, higher education can serve to connect students with the driving principles and practices of global citizenship.

Implications for the Academy: Present and Future

The New Role of Higher Education

In this postindustrial, post-Cold War, postmodern era, the economy, technology, politics, and individuals (linked to each of these constructed elements of society) are globalized, whether they want to be or not. As a result, I believe there is a responsibility of U.S. citizens to be globally aware and conscientious on a pathway to becoming global citizens. Additionally, the system of U.S. higher education has a responsibility to help prepare its graduates to be global citizens.

An Expansive Curriculum

It is difficult to prescribe universal changes toward a globally oriented curriculum. Each institution within the academy has its own culture, approach, and mission. However, there are specific examples of institutional commitments in an effort to prepare global citizens.

Global citizenship development, which helps students draw conclusions about the global, interrelated environment in which they learn and live is best facilitated by an interdisciplinary approach to learning across fields, disciplines, and components of a student's life on and off campus. The interdisciplinary approach allows for a student-focused curriculum promoting engagement. Additionally, perpetual incorporation of intercultural and multicultural perspectives fosters understanding.

Calling for a shift in perspective by asking students to consider the global implications of their actions and decisions is a major change. One way to promote this paradigm shift is through experiential learning, which is a strategy to help students implement action and reflection toward change. Experiential learning allows students to apply their knowledge, ranging from a case study simulation to a study abroad experience (Colby et al., 2003). Ultimately, when designing learning experiences, it is important to keep in mind what Heater (2002) contended:

The mind of the world citizen must be furnished with information about the Earth's peoples, countries, cultures and the interconnectedness of the several elements of both human living and the planet's ecosphere. Yet knowledge is inert if the significance and implications of that knowledge are not appreciated and understood. (pp. 154-155)

One Example of a Lasting Success Story

In the U.S.A., the premiere institution with a global focus is Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) (*Floram Scholars and Global Scholars*, n.d.) where "the reaffirmed mission, simply stated, is to be 'a center of academic excellence dedicated to the preparation of world citizens through global education'" (para. 1). All students take four required core courses to promote global competence. Student affairs practitioners and faculty advise student projects on a variety of topics through living and learning programs on two campuses where students take an interdisciplinary courseload. Additionally, a unique partnership between the United Nations and the institution exists, creating opportunities ranging from observation to internships. For instance, "one student is researching women in Saudi Arabia; she had the opportunity to have dinner with the Jordanian ambassador to the United Nations and posed questions about the role of women in the Middle East" (FDU, *Global education at FDU*, n.d.) and is advised by the Associate Dean of Students. FDU is committed to providing a rich experience for each student to explore what it means to live in a global environment.

Future Recommendations, Considerations, and Conclusions

My Perspective

From my earliest experiences in higher education, I was introduced to topics from a global perspective and truly valued this learning. Therefore, my opinion is clearly biased. The U.S.A. is in a position of global influence through business, government, and the non-profit sector. Students currently attaining a degree of higher education will be entering a workforce that increasingly will rely on knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity of global issues from all employees as markets and public sectors continue to expand and globalize. Therefore, I encourage the academy to embrace this evolution and have developed some suggestions for proactively addressing this change.

Recommendations for the Academy

- (a) It is important for administrators, staff, and faculty to consider and articulate their own personal values regarding global citizenship and the level of responsibility of the academy in preparing global citizens, keeping the tone of the dialogue respectful for those who might not believe in its value at all.
- (b) Global citizenship will grow if spaces are intentionally created for dialogue so that all individuals can synthesize their values, learning, and actions.
- (c) Global perspectives and commitment can help create a seamless learning environment, such as providing experiential learning opportunities for students to connect their course content with real world situations.
- (d) There is a need for a deeper understanding of global citizenship development within the academy, paying particular attention to how this development can be effectively assessed, which could be a great collaboration among students, staff, and faculty.
- (e) Consider the following factors identified by Bartell (2003) as indicators of an internationalized institution as a gauge of success:

International student participation; curriculum change; international partnerships; mobilizing financial, human, and technological resources for internationalization; university-private sector partnerships; faculty contributions to internationalization; contribution of research to internationalization; contribution of university internationalization development projects to internationalization. (p. 58)

Questions for the Academy

- (a) Can current professionals (faculty, staff, administrators) facilitate this global learning if they were not trained under this learner-centered educational philosophy of andragogy (as opposed to a pedagogy which refers to educating children) themselves?

- (b) How does the academy bridge the distance between disciplines, not merely acknowledging the interrelatedness, but actually demonstrating it?
- (c) Does each individual institution have to practice the philosophy of global citizenship (e.g., invest in socially responsible ways)?
- (d) Is there a need for a “synthesizer” role to promote this philosophy as part of the standard definition of citizenship, and if so, is student affairs the field within the academy to take it on?
- (e) Does a sense of urgency need to exist in order to provoke interest in global understanding?
- (f) Can this global context be created within an insular academy? Does learning within the safe confines of higher education facilitate preparing globally aware and responsible citizens? If not, how does the academy become more integrated with the social, political, and economic functions of the world?

A Call to Action

I am asking tough, theoretical questions to which there may not be any clear answers. My purpose is to provoke dialogue around these ideas and also to suggest the immediacy of addressing this change in society, while recognizing the messiness of my recommendations.

Global citizenship development is about values and ethics. At the higher education level, it is about helping students understand why a global perspective is important, but then creating space for individuals to define their own relationship with the world around them. Global citizenship certainly carries the ideal of fulfilling universal values and working towards a more equitable, just, and peaceful world. While these may be lofty ultimate goals, the actions that accompany global understanding and commitment have immediate and lasting effects. Thus, I believe, the leaders and citizens of the academy have a responsibility to embrace a value shift of philosophies and actions that prepare thoughtful, dedicated, and engaged global citizens.

Note: From *Global Citizenship Towards a Definition*, by T. Lagos, n.d., University of Washington. Copyright n.d. by Taso Lagos. Reprinted with permission.

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