

Characterization of Global Studies Certificates to Enhance Cross-cultural and Global Competency Among Community College Students

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Abstract: Within the continual evolution of diverse workforce environments, community college students need to be prepared to work with more flexibility. Educators must respond to this need by offering educational programming to engage students in developing cross-cultural skills that can be translated into global relevant competencies. This paper discusses the importance of internationalized curriculum programs such as Global Studies certificates. Such programs offer a credential recognized by employers for community college students to gain a reasonable understanding of working in diverse work environments whether multinational, international, domestic, or virtual.

In most industries, competency is required to obtain licensure, certificates, or credentials. In the area of community college education, certificates are a stalwart part of the structure of many Career & Technical Education (CTE) tracks and some transfer degrees as well. With the growth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) companies within different states, there is an opportunity to address the needs of potential employers by offering credentialing for cross-culturally and globally competent individuals graduating from Associates-level programs. Expanding opportunities for students to augment their cross-cultural learning within the context of their required coursework provides a great opportunity for enhanced learning. Global Studies Certificates integration into credentialing structures in community college curriculum can provide students a pathway to learning.

In defining global versus international, Raby and Valeau (2007) in *Community College International Education: Looking Back to Forecast the Future* distinguish this as “globalization is the phenomenon that exists and that we cannot control, while internationalization is the response that education is making” (Raby, R.L. & Valeau, E.J., 2007, p. 5). In this context, educators can focus on what aspect of education are within their purview to respond. Providing students with the flexibility to deal with an everchanging working landscape. Kevin Hovland in *Global Learning: Designing, Defining, Demonstrating* emphasizes the definition of global learning:

“The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) began using the term global learning to signal a narrow focus on what students are actually expected to learn through curricular and cocurricular educational experiences. The term global rather than international was to signal greater attention to the locational, cultural, and political fluidity characterizing real-world challenges and opportunities.” (Hovland, 2014, p. 4).

Global Studies Certificates are a combination of coursework, experiential learning, and/or study abroad participation. Different models exist at several community colleges as well as at universities. Some of the more established programs include Florida Community Colleges, North

Carolina's Global Scholars programs, and within the California community colleges. This paper specifically examines the Global Studies Certificate concept as a credential to encapsulate curriculum framework to provide students with these skills. How can the importance of global competency be characterized and what is the potential impact for community college students through a Global Studies Certificate program?

Research shows that international education is not a priority to many community college educators, the American Council on Education (ACE) found in a 2005 survey showed 59% of community colleges scored "zero" to "low" in commitment to international education (Green, M.F., & Siaya, L., 2005, p. ii). This is the case even though everyday decisions of individuals have greater global implications than ever before. The idea of civic responsibility has expanded beyond the local to the national and international concerns. All size businesses in the United States whether locally owned, foreign owned, or a multinational corporation have some interaction with global markets or multicultural employees. International issues dominate the headlines on climate, politics, conflict, trade and the latest pop culture phenomena. Having the ability to be flexible to react to the workforce environments of this new generation is critical to success (Molina, S & Lattimer, H, 2013, p. 415; Commission, 2005, p. vi). How can educators work to help prepare students to migrate through the information and make critical decisions about how these issues impact their lives? Slawomir Magala (2005) in his book *Cross-Cultural Competency* defines cultural concepts as:

Culture is tacitly assumed to be a survival kit carried as a backpack by members of our species going about their business....individuals can borrow ideas from one another as easily as they borrow books from the library. They profit from their implementation, as they profit from pooling resources and getting a credit from a bank to invest in their business venture...Each of us can do so much more quickly and efficiently because of access to the thoughts and feelings, explanations, and interpretations of many other individuals...Each of us, in turn, has a chance of contributing to human culture. Our backpacks guarantee access to human culture, but we need guides to navigate huge knowledge domains that increase every day, and we need skilled coaches to learn how to apply cultural knowledge in situations we have never faced before. (Magala, 2005, pp. 7-8)

Many authors refer to culture as a continually "re-engineering"; "evolving", or "ever-changing" concept (Magala, 2005, p. 9; Ladegaard, H.J. & Jenks, C.J., 2017, p. 9). It behooves community college educators to enhance opportunities for students to acquire the skills to fluidly adjust to these evolving professional and civic environments. Businesses are continually made aware of their needs as, "...business leaders recognize that they must be able to draw on people with global skills if their corporations are to succeed..." (Commission, p. vi.).

Giving students agency to feel they can interact within the greater context of society, work, and citizenship is an important focus for their future student success. Whether students work overseas or domestically within the United States, the likelihood of working with a person of another culture, ethnicity, religion, linguistic background, perspective, socio-economic background, personality, or sexual orientation is guaranteed. It's the nature of many business environments that diverse personnel come together to interact. With expanding migration patterns within the

U.S., there has been a shift in the demographics of the composition of smaller communities, towns, and small cities that is impacting classrooms and businesses, many of which are unprepared for the impact of multicultural or multinational populations (Banks, 2016, Loc 457; Castles, 2017, p 3). Globalization of businesses and practices is seeing an unprecedented mobility in personnel and ideas creating a new diverse environment (Castles, p. 6; Jackson, 2017, p. 76). The change within the workplace and is also being reflected on many college campuses as many second-generation multicultural students, international students, and minority students are part of the student body. This creates an opportunity for cultural training and exposure within the classroom and in co-curricular programming.

In a 2018 white paper, by the NAFSA Global Workforce Development Roundtable, addressed issues regarding the importance of the development of global training noting that “the U.S. economy is inextricably linked to the global economy, offering both opportunities and challenges to U.S. businesses. Without a globally competent workforce those businesses risk being unable to adapt to new markets and new demands” (NAFSA, 2018, p. 1). Community colleges offer many allied health care programs; in these fields, national evaluations show culturally competent care fall short. Initiatives to increase health care cultural competency to reduce disparities are a part of the Healthy People 2020 initiative. Recommendations for health care training are becoming part of the accreditation training for many healthcare programs and initiatives (Healthypeople.gov, 2019; Saha et al, 2008, p. 1280; Campinha-Bacote et al, 2005. P. 12).

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the 2018 report on New Foreign Direct Investment in the United States showed that 67% of investment is focused in the manufacturing industry and this will yield an estimated 469,800 jobs. Community College programs train for many of these industry jobs and employers desire adaptable and trainable employees. Exposure to global competencies within the community college education can increase individual’s employability. Approaches include providing information on cross-cultural competency, campus international programming, global citizenship, and individualized concepts of course internationalization.

Global Studies Certificates within the community college setting offer an opportunity to provide a framework to organize all the elements of campus internationalization efforts and integrate them into existing curriculum to enhance programs. Recommended elements of internationalization plans for community colleges include adding elements to courses within the general core curriculum classes, offering study abroad, wider language offerings, and the expansion of cultural/global/multicultural/diverse co-curricular programming and activities. The 2005 ACE study gave common strategies for “Highly Active Community College”; of these options four surrounded the development of study abroad. Others included faculty course development for internationalization; campus-wide organizational structures such as task forces for developing international focus; and developing co-curricular activities and events to promote international topics and information (Green, M.F. & Siaya, L, p. iv).

Building these components into an academic curriculum gives a structural framework for learning experiences and exposure that can add to student’s workforce potential. Global Studies Certificates are not new, but most programs are available through four-years institutions with a

small percentage growing within community colleges. An independent certification which can be added to either transfer or CTE degrees can provide a great opportunity for students. In order to develop these certificates, it necessary to build a culture of internationalization engaging the administration, faculty, staff, and students. Raby (2007) states that:

Efforts to internationalize the community college curriculum infuse cross-cultural concepts, theories, and patterns of interrelationships into courses and academic programs. ...Faculty support is also critical; they are the institutional actors who teach the internationalized curriculum, serve on international committees, and lead education abroad programs. (Raby, R.L., 2007, pp. 57-58)

There has be support from administration, faculty, and staff to create a culture of learning for global context. Global Studies Certificates will require structured program development and can be a mechanism at a community college or community college system and offers a pathway for campus internationalization initiatives while meeting the needs of students and potential employers. Workforce credentials show a valuation of the information that students are learning and can be recognized as a valued added skill by FDIs and other globally oriented businesses. Building global perspectives and cross-cultural competency can boost student employability. Programs offering these skills and knowledge add a unique and valuable structure to community college education offer students flexibility to deal with our ever-changing world. Students can carry around their backpack of tools from their education and draw on it as needed to handle whatever the world and work offer.

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