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What does Globalization mean for Teaching and Learning?

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Globalization is no longer an arcane issue of interest primarily to academics, or confined to the business pages of the *New York Times*. The issue has triggered some of the most serious popular demonstrations seen in decades, most recently in Washington surrounding the meetings of the International Monetary Fund and a few months earlier in Seattle. Globalization seems to be the issue for the 21st century that the military-industrial complex was to the 1960s.

Yet, *globalization* is a term that is not well-defined, with different meanings for different groups. As the recent protests demonstrate, *globalization* is a term that is value-laden and controversial. A major ingredient of the word for some is its promise of increasing prosperity and development opportunities for all. For others, it symbolizes the terrible triumph of unfettered capitalism and the resulting cultural homogenization, the hegemony of the United States, despoliation of the environment, and the widening gap between the rich and poor. Many writers on the topic note that the question is not whether globalization will continue or intensify, for that seems certain, but whether its effects will ultimately be socially harmful, further widening the gap between the economic, technological, and educational haves and have-nots and ensuring that winners take all in the new economic environment.

In the higher education context, too, globalization has many meanings. Many institutions now include the term "global" in their mission statements; most aspire to prepare "globally competent graduates." For some, the terms "globalization" and "internationalization" are interchangeable, for others "international" connotes the nation-state as the unit of analysis, while "global" refers to issues and phenomena that transcend national borders. While the debate about terminology is instructive for the complexity it reveals, more interesting is the question of application of these terms and the resulting institutional strategies.

A frequent interpretation of globalization concerns its entrepreneurial and competitive face. In these discussions, globalization is viewed as selling or exporting an institution's educational product. This perspective looks at what the global economy can do for the institution rather than what the institution can do for the student. Such activities may include attracting international students, research collaborations, contracts involving other countries (such as providing training courses for Chinese middle managers), or marketing distance learning to students around the world. While these initiatives may contribute to the overall internationalization of the institutions, the contribution is more often a by-product of an entrepreneurial activity than a primary goal.

Consider two examples. The presence of international students on campus is often cited as a hallmark of the global campus. But is it really? In 1997-98, according to the Institute for International Education, there were 481,000 foreign students on U.S. campuses, compared to

114,000 who went abroad that year. And how intentional are campuses about profiting from the presence of international students to broaden the horizons of their U.S. students? The economic value of international students is undisputed—they bring in billions of dollars into the economy. But is their educational value equally prized?

Similarly, distance learning has the potential for enrolling students around the world in an institution's courses. It is also an attractive possibility for revenue generation, so attractive that many institutions are either moving in this direction or exploring the possibilities of doing so. If U.S. higher education can attract some half a million students to its physical campuses, who knows what the possible market is for virtual students? New consortia, national and international, and for-profit subsidiaries of non-profit organizations are springing up all the time. But what is the effect of these courses on what other students learn at that institution? To what extent do these ventures contribute to making the teaching, learning, or culture of the campus more explicitly international?

Another type of conversation about globalization deals with academic issues – with the teaching and learning processes that provide students with an understanding of the global nature of issues such as health and of the environment, a knowledge of other cultures, languages, and histories, and the ability to function in different cultural settings. These discussions center on curriculum, language and area studies, faculty and student mobility, faculty development and rewards, or collaboration with institutions in other countries in teaching and research. Technology has added a whole new dimension to this discussion, as it has provided easy access for faculty and students to their counterparts around the world, enabled new kinds of collaborations through the internet and audio and video technology. It has raised the question of whether these kinds of distance collaborations can provide one with the cultural exposure equivalent to living in another country.

"Internationalization", as the academic face of globalization is frequently called, is hardly a new discussion. U.S. higher education has been struggling with the issue of internationalization for the last quarter of a century, forming high-level commissions, and issuing statements lamenting the small number of students who study abroad, the non-existent language proficiency of our graduates, and the low level of awareness of our students about the world beyond the U.S. borders. Yet it has taken on many new dimensions and a new urgency. Our own American culture is increasingly and insistently pluralistic and multi-cultural. The line between "domestic" and "international" is increasingly blurry. Our students are citizens of a world in which the industrial pollution in Mexico or the AIDS pandemic has direct impact on their lives. And these same students are going out to work in a different economy and workforce, where the ability to work in multi-cultural teams and to understand different cultural paradigms are important practical skills.

These issues have given new energy and increased urgency to the discussion on campuses across the country about the changes needed in the undergraduate experience to ready graduates for this New World. Business schools have moved rapidly to include courses with an international focus and to infuse the concepts of global business in their curricula. Some institutions are focusing on increasing the numbers of students going abroad by ensuring that study or work abroad is financially feasible and that options are available to students who cannot be away for a semester or a year. Task forces on internationalizing the curriculum abound, for most students will have to gain their global perspectives without leaving the country. Internationalizing the undergraduate experience is an important new conversation on many U.S. campuses.

While these two aspects of globalization – the academic and the entrepreneurial – should be mutually reinforcing, there is no guarantee that they will be. It is possible for an institution to be highly active in the entrepreneurial aspects of globalization, exporting MBAs on the internet,

establishing branch campuses in other countries, or offering contract training to business executives or government officials, without substantially affecting the learning of its own on-campus students.

Consider, for example, the implications of exporting U.S. courses via technology to students beyond the United States. It must carefully think through how it will provide its product in multiple cultures. That institution must not only be aware of issues surrounding delivery, but equally importantly, of the fit between the content and pedagogy of its courses and the students receiving it. An institution that seeks to deliver courses globally cannot just deliver a product steeped solely in the culture of its domestic students. Education is culture bound in terms of learning styles and content. A host of questions must be addressed: Can institutions develop means of communicating cultural patterns and differences through technologically mediated instruction? What pedagogical techniques will they use to facilitate interaction among students of different cultures? Among faculty and students from different cultures? Will the institution deliver its courses in multiple languages? Some fear that the expansion of global educational offerings will diminish the variety of approaches to subject matter that now occurs, homogenizing (or ignoring differences among) learning styles and cultural perspectives. Do institutions need to consciously protect against that? And, if so, how?

The development of courses that convey the importance of cultural differences should address another set of academic questions concerning students at home. The entrepreneurially global campus cannot be truly global unless its entrepreneurial activities are strategically combined with intentional academic strategies to give students the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that allow them to understand the larger global context in which they live. Faculty may have international reputations, publish in international journals, participate in international conferences, and conduct research with international partners, but do those activities affect their way of viewing the world or presenting it to their students?

As institutions engage more deeply with entrepreneurial global initiatives, it is likely that they will be pushed to think differently about curriculum, about faculty preparation and rewards, and about student learning. But colleges and universities need to be clear about their purposes in engaging in international activities. If their purposes are to develop new markets of students or new sources of revenues, what are the impacts on faculty, on traditional ways of doing business? Do these activities benefit students directly or indirectly, and how?

As institutional leaders consider the their commitment to the academic part of globalization and the effect it has on students, the following questions should help guide their thinking:

- 1. To what extent is global understanding and/or competence articulated as a goal of undergraduate education at this institution? How is it defined? How is it assessed?** Many institutions articulate the goal – often in their mission statements – of global awareness or competence. Fewer have crafted definitions of and strategies to achieve the specific learning associated with these goals. Assessing student learning in this arena is new territory, and much work needs to be done here. As in other arenas, measures tend to be inputs (courses offered with an international focus, language courses, and grants for internationally focused projects) rather than outcomes (student learning and attitudes).
- 2. To what extent does this institution's general education curriculum include global perspectives?** Most undergraduates will derive the lion's share of their international learning from the general education curriculum. The infusion of the general education curriculum with global perspectives must be purposeful, targeting specific courses to incorporate material that broadens the students' vision beyond their national experience.

3. **How does this institution implicitly or explicitly encourage or discourage study abroad? What is the role of financial aid in such encouragement or discouragement? What are the cost barriers? Departmental requirements in the major? Faculty attitudes in general?** A survey of college-bound seniors in 1996 by Student POLL revealed that 60 percent expressed an interest in studying abroad. Since less than one percent actually do so, it would be useful to know the explanation for this startling gap. Do requirements in the major preclude credit for study abroad? Is it possible to fulfill all requirements for graduation if one goes abroad? Is institutional financial aid portable? If colleges and universities are serious about increasing these numbers, a thorough exploration of the barriers is in order.
4. **To what extent do collaborative activities with institutions in other countries affect the experience of undergraduates? Do they affect undergraduate curriculum? Involve undergraduates in international activities such as study abroad or collaboration in transnational research?** Many international collaborations involve relatively few students. Contracts to provide technical assistance on health or environmental issues, for example, may be excellent opportunities for selected faculty, but do not necessarily involve undergraduates or inform the undergraduate curriculum. While such collaborations have the potential to be a rich source of opportunity for internationalization, they are not necessarily so.
5. **To what extent do the international activities of faculty have an impact on undergraduates?** Does the fact that a professor delivers papers at international conferences (in English) and keeps up with colleagues in different countries about his or her research affect that professor's teaching? Again, the answer may be yes, but not necessarily.
6. **Are distance learning courses offered by your institution that are taken by students outside the United States tailored to an international audience in terms of content or pedagogy?** As we noted above, taking an existing course and adapting it to a distance format does not in itself address either the knowledge needs or the learning habits of an international audience. A course in organizational behavior, for example, rooted in U.S. corporate traditions and culture, may seem very remote for a French or Thai student, especially if that student has first-hand experience of organizational issues in another culture. Nor does this course necessarily contribute to the international competence of U.S. students taking it, unless the design specifically encourages intercultural learning.
7. **How does this institution review and assess the global dimension of undergraduate education?** If an institution does not ask itself "how are we doing," in achieving its stated goals, it can't be all that serious about achieving them. Colleges and universities regularly undertake program reviews as well as program and institutional accreditation that force reflection on strengths and weaknesses. A similar approach makes sense for internationalizing-a review process that will inform continuing efforts to help undergraduates achieve global learning.
8. **To what extent do academic policies and practices such as promotion and tenure criteria or faculty development opportunities emphasize and reward teaching and learning with a global focus?** Every discussion of change in the academic enterprise, whether it concerns emphasizing teaching and learning, introducing service learning, or encouraging interdisciplinary work, to name a few examples, ultimately leads to the question of faculty roles and rewards. Higher education's professed values, such as "we value teaching as much as research" or "we want our undergraduates to be globally

literate" must be aligned with its practices in order to get beyond rhetoric to achieving real change. Thus, institutions cannot expect faculty to incorporate international dimensions in their courses or research while the reward system either punishes or ignores such efforts. Incentives and support through faculty development opportunities and funding are classic ways to promote innovation. The international arena is no exception.

Keeping a vigilant focus on students in the process of globalization is a useful way to sort through the decision making process about what constitutes appropriate and beneficial global activity for an institution. Higher education is in a period of transition; there is a window of opportunity as institutions intensify their international activities to be intentional about integrating the various relevant activities on campus, so that they are mutually reinforcing and coherent. It is possible to engage in both entrepreneurial activities and in fostering students' global competence, but in the rush to globalize, college and university leaders would do well to be clear about purpose and keep their eyes on the educational needs of all their students.

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