

6-15-2009

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### Recommended Citation

Hovey, Rebecca, "Global Learning through Partnered Inquiry" (2009). Conference Proceeding, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

[https://scholarworks.smith.edu/lgsc\\_pub/5](https://scholarworks.smith.edu/lgsc_pub/5)

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## **Global Learning through Partnered Inquiry**

June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009

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Presentation at the AIEA Annual Conference, February 23, 2009, Atlanta Georgia  
Published on-line by the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) at  
URL: <http://aieaworld.org/publications/contemporary-issues>

The emergence of Global Learning associated with the internationalization of U.S. higher education signals a convergence of international/global studies and international education with the potential to dramatically innovate and transform the academy. Over the past decade the original aim of international education to foster intercultural understanding has become linked with the aims of international studies to enhance our knowledge of the world, and in particular, the ways in which new knowledge is created through non-western epistemologies and cultural perspectives. This paper seeks to situate the emerging discourse and initiatives around global learning in an understanding of the transformative potential of collaborative inquiry and pedagogy for U.S. higher education.

The Global Learning initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) provides a lens into this transformative potential of internationalization. The AAC&U Global Learning framework shares many assumptions underlying the movement for a renewal of civic engagement in higher education. Many of the AAC&U initiatives draw on Ernest Boyer's seminal work with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, calling for a reinvention of the American undergraduate experience (Boyer, 1987) and a "scholarship of engagement" (Boyer, 1996). The importance of the university as an actor within a wider community, and the community as a site of knowledge and practice is developed further

by Longo (2007), building on Lawrence Cremin's concept of an ecology of learning. Extending this further as a model for global learning, this paper builds on these Deweyian notions of community, democracy and knowledge to propose a "global ecology of learning" as a framework for understanding the transformative potential of global learning (Hovey and Weinberg, 2009).

### **Global Learning Initiatives**

The integration of global or international studies with international education is at the heart of the AAC&U's support of global learning with its member institutions. Inspired by work such as Cornwell and Stoddard's "Globalizing Knowledge" (1999) which sought to identify global trends and their impact on processes of academic knowledge production, this initiative brought together a range of academics from diverse institutions and disciplines to articulate a set of global learning goals that could support curriculum internationalization and its assessment (Hovland, 2005; McTighe Musil, 2006). A framework for the establishment of learning outcomes and assessment tools were designed around the following set of four goals:

1. *To generate new knowledge about global studies*
2. *To spur greater civic engagement and social responsibility*
3. *To promote deeper knowledge of, debate about, and practice of democracy*
4. *To cultivate intercultural competencies*

(McTighe Musil, 2006, pp.12-13)

These goals establish a link between knowledge of global issues with themes of civic engagement and intercultural competencies. As an assessment framework, the AAC&U initiative makes an important bridge between the assessment initiatives in international education which focus on the intercultural competencies (Deardorff, 2006) and efforts to promote global citizenship as a campus internationalization strategy, as exemplified in the frequent adoption of global citizenship ideals in campus mission statements (Lewin, 2009).

The American Council on Education's project, Global Learning for All, also links intercultural learning associated with international education with the two more traditional forms of international studies: global learning as a focus on “*systems and phenomena that transcend national borders*” and international learning, which focuses on the more traditional relations between nations (ACE, 2008). ACE defines global learning

*...as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students acquire through a variety of experiences that enable them to understand world cultures and events; analyze global systems; appreciate cultural differences; and apply this knowledge and appreciation to their lives as citizens and workers. (ACE, 2008)*

As the leading association for U.S. colleges and universities, ACE has played a central role supporting campus internationalization efforts through this initiative. The ACE Global Learning project resulted in at least two publications on comprehensive internationalization which have been the cornerstone of such efforts in U.S. higher education (Olson, Green and Hill, 2005; 2006). This project is an example of how the international education field has worked to partner with the academic disciplines in promoting internationalization across the curriculum.

### **A New Urgency for Higher Education Responsiveness to Global Issues**

At the meta-institutional level of university associations, the ACE and AAC&U represent the formal expression of the emerging discourse and programming around the notion of global learning. A scan of educational, non-profit and foundation sources reveals a widespread use of the phrase global learning that also links intercultural understanding with global awareness.

In addition to this cross-sectoral global learning discourse, professionals within international higher education are recognizing the growing urgency for educational institutions to address the critical global issues of the 21st century. Jane Knight, a prominent voice in

international education, acknowledges the need for heightened responsiveness to these issues as a source of turmoil and change in global higher education (Knight, 2008). Public sector and multilateral agency voices in global civil society are calling on the academy to develop interdisciplinary and thematically-focused approaches that address issues such as global public health, climate change, environmental degradation, global security issues, financial systems collapse, poverty and hunger, and global inequities that too often are flagrant human rights violations.

The MacArthur Foundation in collaboration with the Earth Institute of Columbia University recently issued a multi-institutional Global Masters in Development Practice initiative for innovative transnational and cross-disciplinary graduate education programs that address critical United Nations Millennium development goals (Earth Institute, 2008). The Social Science Research Council (SSRC), known for its promotion of interdisciplinary knowledge since its inception, also recently launched a new program on Knowledge Institutions examining new approaches to graduate education and assessment based on their “I3 approach” – innovative, interdisciplinary and integrative. The need for the I3 approach stems from an understanding of the changing nature of knowledge institutions and information technologies:

*As a result of organizational and epistemological changes in knowledge production and accompanying structural and professional shifts in the labor market, efforts are underway to reform graduate education and training programs in ways that prepare students for new models of scientific research and new modes of scientific employment. (SSRC, n.d.)*

Integrated and interdisciplinary knowledge, produced and distributed through transnational networks, is also a product of the movements toward on-line learning and open-courseware for greater global accessibility of international education. The Open University of the UK has sponsored the Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, for example, as a collaborative

effort to open educational resources to the large, underserved global populations who are studied, but do not benefit from the resources of higher education. The Capetown Open Education Declaration (2007) calls for global access to the curricula and resources of educational institutions. The statement declares:

*We are on the cusp of a global revolution in teaching and learning. Educators worldwide are developing a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use. These educators are creating a world where each and every person on earth can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge. They are also planting the seeds of a new pedagogy where educators and learners create, shape and evolve knowledge together, deepening their skills and understanding as they go. (Capetown Declaration, 2007)*

And finally, the newly founded popular education models of University of the People, offering free on-line education to people around the world (University of the People, 2009), and Bolivarian University of Venezuela (UVP) providing social justice education at the community level (Robertson, 2008), are examples of global learning that address the urgent needs of the community. Whether at a transnational or local scale these institutions signal changes in higher education responsive to the societal context of the university.

This attention to global learning and responsiveness to global societal challenges, from climate change to financial collapse to human rights, raises the deeper question: What is the role of the university in the global 21st century?

### **A Global Ecology of Learning and Partnered Inquiry**

To answer this, at least in the context of U.S. higher education, we begin with the notions of community, civic engagement, and the public good that served as formative principles of higher education in this country. Longo (2007) provides a sociological foundation for the engaged university as community-based learning and presents historical case studies of how

social learning and knowledge creation take place within the interconnected experiences and structure of everyday life. Community matters, as the title of his book affirms, because as students, faculty and administrators, our life experiences shape the way we create meaning out of new knowledge, and our recourse to knowledge about the world rests in the community external to the institutional boundaries of the university.

Longo's work, as with the AAC&U initiatives, follows the scholarship of engagement literature inspired by Boyer (1996) and that of Harry Boyte, calling for a reawakening of the University to act as a responsible citizen if it is to prepare the next generation for responsible citizenship and public life (Boyte, 2004).

This 'awakening' within the U.S. academy emerged while the international education field was expanding exponentially through education abroad and awareness of the impact of globalization. While many policy papers emphasized internationalizing the campus based on needs of national competitiveness and security (NAFSA, 2003), other voices urged universities to consider the cosmopolitan ideals underlying responsible global citizenship (Stoddard and Cornwell, 2003). In the last few years, we have seen the call for civic engagement reframed in the context of a global community. Campus Compact, an organization that emerged in conjunction with the support for civic engagement on college campuses has also begun promoting dialogue on global citizenship. The Vermont chapter of Campus Compact in conjunction with SIT and World Learning, is sponsoring its third annual Fostering Global Citizenship conference. Service learning offices on campus are also including support of global service learning such as the conference held recently at Cornell University, in conjunction with New York Campus Compact and the Cornell Public Service Center.

In Hovey and Weinberg (2009), we borrow from Longo to consider the “global ecology of learning” as a conceptual framework for this potential of the globally engaged university. This framework was used to examine the concept of global citizenship education and its accompanying responsibilities. Our conclusions led to an understanding of global citizenship in terms of citizen diplomacy, in which students and faculty have multiple affiliations and forms of belonging, but also a responsibility to engage in their home community while serving as responsible intermediaries and witnesses for the host communities with which they have lived, studied and formed bonds.

The learning that takes place in this approach to global learning within an extended community or global ecology, is one in which the learning occurs through collaborative inquiry with local partners. In a community-based educational environment common to many international education programs, students not only take formal academic classes, but they are learning from placements in home-stays or other local living arrangements, from navigating unfamiliar geographies, linguistic codes and sources of information, and having to resolve problems in a new culture through informal processes of inquiry and learning. This formal and informal local ecology is the extended learning community that comprises the actual and virtual campus of global learning.

### **Partnered Inquiry: Study Engagement in the Global Community**

Underlying this model of a “global ecology of learning” are the assumptions of what we call partnered inquiry. This is a model which combines the goals of global learning with an intentional engagement with local partners – institutions, individuals and organizations – in a pedagogy that rests on the following elements:



1. Dialogue
2. Collaboration
3. Reciprocity
4. Local context and
5. Multiple or global perspectives.

These elements of partnered inquiry are relevant to findings on U.S. student engagement and learning documented by the AAC&U, National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) and the recent Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) study at the University of Minnesota.

The NSSE, led and developed by George Kuh, reports on the “high impact” practices that result in effective learning for academic, intellectual, personal and integrative learning outcomes.

Writing for the AAC&U, Kuh (2008) expresses the concern of many U.S. colleges and universities that students complete their undergraduate studies unprepared for the challenges of today’s world. The NSSE studies attempt to identify those learning practices which are most strongly associated with students’ capacity to engage in society through responsible and meaningful forms of participation.

The NSSE study includes study abroad experiences as one of these high impact practices, although it does not rank as one of the most influential. While study abroad has ballooned in recent years in terms of student participation, it is still only reflected in a small percentage of U.S. undergraduates. Of the NSSE institutions, only 15% of graduating seniors reported having participated in a study abroad program (NSSE, 2008). However, of those who do study abroad, many professionals have found, at least anecdotally, that it can rank as the most influential or impact-full experiences of a college student. The current research on study abroad and global engagement (SAGE) led by Paige and Fry at the University of Minnesota reports preliminary finds that support this claim (Fry and Jon, 2009).

However, the research data on study abroad is careful to note that it is not merely the “travel away” element that provides a powerful learning experience, but the carefully designed program that enables students to participate in and learn from a cultural milieu that includes the integration of formal studies with a wider cultural community or ecology of learning (Engle and Engle, 2003). The research on study abroad identifies a number of factors associated with success although there is still much work to be done on understanding the nature of learning and appropriate pedagogies for study abroad.

Partnered inquiry, as we propose here, would draw on the other elements of effective learning for engagement such as those identified in the NSSE study. In looking at both self-reporting of seniors on their involvement in activities, and the survey of faculty perceptions on the importance of particular high-impact practices, we find two critical components that rank highly with each:

1. The highest level of student involvement in high impact activities is in community service or volunteer work, at 60%. Faculty perceptions of service learning is the second highest, at 58%. (NSSE, 2008).
2. Faculty viewed a culminating senior experience such as a capstone seminar or senior thesis as one of the most valuable high impact activities for effective learning with 82% of faculty valuing this experience. Community service was also highly ranked at 58%. While study abroad was seen as significant, with 43% of faculty viewing it as important, even higher were participation in a learning community (49%) and research collaboration with a faculty member (53%). (NSSE, 2008).

These surveys suggest that the most effective learning strategies for promoting responsible civic engagement are ones in which students are involved in a collaborative and/or community learning environment, especially one in which they have the opportunity for synthesis and application of their learning such as the culminating senior project.

The significance of global learning for undergraduate education in the 21st century, the transformative impact of study abroad experiences, and the identification of community and

collaborative high-impact learning experiences suggest that some of the most effective learning can occur when these elements are combined in a well-designed partnered learning model.

The model of partnered inquiry proposed here is one in which students and faculty engage in collaborative learning projects based on problem-posing inquiry and field work. This type of inquiry, which can include ethnographic learning approaches, apprenticeship models of research, and participatory action research with local organizations, engages students as active learners understanding the relevance of knowledge to action, culture and social practices. At SIT Study Abroad, these learning experiences are designed through the Independent Study Project (ISP) a culminating experience of a semester-long program in which students are immersed in a community-based learning model, living with families and developing communicative competence in the local language, and developing a research ISP proposal overseen by a local mentor. These ISP mentors may be local faculty with their own research project that students participate in, they may be community organizers or policymakers with whom students work on specific projects for a month, or they can be artists or cultural experts guiding students in the study of an art form or cultural practice.

The outcomes are ones in which students develop new knowledge based on their interactions in a local community, their understanding of empirical and cultural phenomena directly from field work observations and dialogue, and their synthesis of this knowledge is shaped by local indigenous knowledge sources independent of formal frameworks or knowledge paradigms of a single academic discipline. The interdisciplinary and contextualized knowledge reflected in the student ISPs offers a deep personal connection to how research and professional practice contributes to new knowledge. The written product of the ISP also becomes an intellectual bridge to their academic preparation of their home campus and students develop

further cognitive capacities to transfer their new knowledge into existing structures for further analysis and knowledge dissemination.

### **Conclusion: Implications of Global Learning and Partnered Inquiry**

These reflections on the effectiveness of partnered inquiry in education abroad are relevant to the current debates around internationalization of the curriculum as curriculum integration. Returning to the notion of global learning, how do we integrate global learning across the curriculum for all students as a critical component of undergraduate education?

Within the international education field, this debate has been framed in terms of two competing approaches:

1. *Do we build internationalization of the curriculum by mapping disciplinary knowledge needs to courses in the existing curriculum?* This is the standardization or homogenization argument in which departments or accreditation boards seek to ensure that courses taught at an international institution are “equivalent” to courses at the home institution.

or

2. *Do we propose that internationalization is best when opportunities to experience uniquely local forms of global knowledge (whether through education abroad, work with local migrant communities or study of the local impact of global political economy) are approached in ways that combine community participation, collaborative inquiry, and/or practical hands-on experience with a final culminating or integrative project?* This is the collaborative or transformative argument in which global learning occurs through partnered inquiry with local organizations and mentors in a community-based learning environment.

This model of partnered inquiry provides a transformational pedagogy for teaching and learning.

Its implementation, notably, has the potential to not only be transformative for the individual students, but for both institutions of higher education and disciplines of knowledge.

The need for new models of education with the capacity for such transformative power was articulated among the many faculty and administrators participating in the AAC&U’s Global

Learning project. Hovland's report on these faculty conversations reveals a passionate call to rethink our educational strategies (Hovland, 2006). He writes that these initiatives respond to "... a moral imperative to imagine the future and build capacity for associated living" (p.4). Efforts to transform the academy, however, face several obstacles including an organizational "immobility" in campus culture (p.15) as well as the 'legacies of colonialism" (p.23) within international studies in which the academy sees itself in a dominant role in terms of global knowledge production. Hovland concludes "*What is needed is an intentional and comprehensive renegotiation of the goals of undergraduate education.*" (Hovland, 2006, p.28).

In conclusion, this paper has intended to show that new learning models such as Global Learning are not just adjustments to the curriculum. Transformational learning is relevant not just to the student, but it results in institutional transformations when effective.

Internationalization in higher education is not just a new organizational model: the innovations created through global learning and partnerships will result in transformations of higher education and its institutions. As a model of engaged scholarship that creates a "global ecology of learning", partnered inquiry provides philosophical foundations for not just for pedagogy, but for the purpose of higher education itself – the production and dissemination of knowledge.

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