Conceptual Framework for Studying Globally Integrated Education Activities

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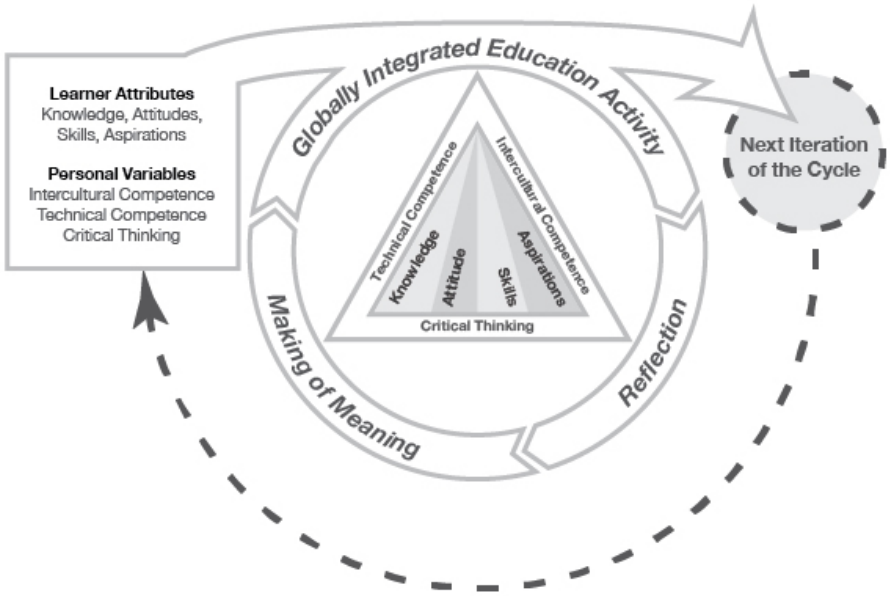

Figure 1. Conceptual model for studying globally integrated education activities.

Process

The actual experiences had by individual learners are the central feature of any globally integrated educational activity. These experiences are best conceptualized using experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984; Roberts, 2006). This approach allows the researcher to consider learning from the perspective of the learner who actively builds meaning by reflecting on their experiences and also provides a mechanism to consider previous knowledge and attitudes of both students and faculty because all current and future experiences are influenced by previous experiences. Experiential learning theory presents learning as a cyclical process by where the learner has an experience, reflects on that experience, develops understandings, and then tests those generalizations with subsequent experiences.

Learner Attributes

Several sets of pre-existing variable have the ability to impact student involvement in globally integrated educational activities. These variables can be categorized in several ways, one of which is fixed versus dynamic. Fixed variables are those pre-existing that typically would not change over time. Dynamic variables, on the other hand, would be those pre-existing variables that may change either as an effect of time itself (dynamic by time) or as an effect of the experience (dynamic by experience).

One set of pre-existing variables that should be considered when exploring the impact of student involvement in globally integrated educational activities are demographic variables (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, age, and location). These variables have been found to have the ability to impact student engagement. Some of these variables (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) are by their nature fixed, and thus not expected to change over time. However, some demographics (e.g., age, location) have the potential to change, and thus should be considered dynamic.

A student's pre-college academic aptitude and college programing are not the only cognitive variables that can impact and be impacted by the experience. An additional dynamic set of personal variables can be identified within the foundational KASA construct. The concept of KASA refers to the Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Aspirations that people carry with them as a result of their experiences (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004). Every person enters new situations with a previously constructed foundation of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and related aspirations. When having a new experience the person uses this foundation to determine if new information gained through the experience is either redundant, erroneous, or worth integrating into the current thinking scheme (Albarracín, Glasman, & Wallace, 2004).

Outcomes

Globally integrated education activities can produce a variety of outcomes, both intentional and unintentional. Outcomes can occur on two dimensions, intercultural competence and technical competence, both of which contribute to critical thinking. Although discussed independently, intercultural competence, technical competence, and critical thinking outcomes are likely not mutually exclusive. Across all three dimensions, outcomes from globally integrated education programs can be conceptualized as changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations (KASA) (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004).

KASA

KASA specifically refers to how program participants, students participating in globally integrated education programs in this context, can develop Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Aspirations as a result of the designed program experience. According to Rockwell and Bennett, (2004) "practices change as people increase their

knowledge, modify their attitudes, improve their skills, and raise their aspirations, and then apply these KASAs changes in their own living and working situations" (pg. 5).

- Knowledge – "learned information or accepted advice" (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004, p. 6)
- Attitudes – "beliefs, opinions, feelings, or perspectives" (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004, p. 6)
- Skills – "mental and physical abilities to use new or alternative practices" (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004, p. 6)
- Aspirations – "ambitions, hopes, objectives, or desires" (Rockwell & Bennett, 2004, p. 6)

Technical Competence

Globally integrated educational programs in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANNRS) are by nature bound in a technical context. Each program has unique intended learning outcomes established by the instructor of the program. The specific nature of each learning outcome varies based on the instructor's goals and can focus on knowledge, attitudes, skills, and/or aspirations.

Intercultural Competence

An integral part of a globally integrated educational activity is learning about another culture. As noted by Delaney (2011), culture is a complicated concept, which has been defined in a number of different ways. Since the 1970s and 1980s, various terminologies have been used to describe the integration of culture into our livelihoods, including "cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural sensitivity, multicultural competence, transcultural competence, global competence, cross-cultural effectiveness, international competence, global literacy, global citizenship, cultural competence, and cross-cultural adjustment." (Deardorff, 2005, p. 32). The use of the specific term *intercultural competence* was selected to reflect its broad application (Deardorff, 2009). The various experts within the intercultural field that informed Deardorff (2004) in creating this definition also made note that the variety of skills needed for intercultural competence direct one to the process and intentionality required. Intercultural competence can be developed over time (Deardorff, 2006) and globally integrated educational activities provide a potential set of experiences for this development, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and/or aspirations.

- Culture – the "signifying, symbolic, or meaning systems" of a group of people (Delaney, 2011, p. 13).
- Intercultural competence – "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations, which again can be further detailed in terms of indicators of appropriate behaviors in specific contexts" (Deardorff, 2004, p. 66).

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the process by which decisions are made and concepts mastered through reasoned, purposive, and reflective processes. It is the means by which an individual can introspectively solve problems and address problems, in which there may be no clear solution (Rudd, Baker, & Hoover, 2000). For the purposes of this framework, critical thinking is designated by both disposition and skill of an individual. The dispositional nature of critical thinking is linked to an individual's natural instinct or inclination toward thinking critically. The dispositions, as recognized by Facione (1990) include a range characteristics including: Inquisitiveness, Open-mindedness, Systematicity, Analyticity, Truth-seeking, CT Self-confidence, and Maturity. However, these dispositions are often complex and take a great deal of time to change. It is for this reason, that critical thinking skill, which is developmental, is the emphasis of this framework's anticipated outcomes.

Those skills include Interpretation (comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, etc.); Analysis (ability to identify inferred expressions of beliefs, judgments, etc. within concepts); Evaluation (assess credibility of statements); Inference (identify information needed to draw reasonable conclusions); Explanation (ability to justify one's reasoning); and Self- regulation (self-examination and self-correction to consciously monitor one's cognitive activities) (Facione, 1990). Globally integrated educational activities can enhance many, if not all of these skills. For the purposes of measuring critical thinking style a complementary view may be utilized. The UF-Critical Thinking Inventory measures style using only two dimensions, seeking-behavior and engaging-behaviors. Style is measured on a continuum of Engagement Style and Seeking Information Style (Lamm & Irani, 2011). Individuals who possess an engagement style are often aware of their surroundings and are able to anticipate situations where reasoning will be required. They are often confident in their reasoning ability and enjoy solving problems and making decisions. On the opposite spectrum, those individuals demonstrating the seeking information style are considered "hungry learners" and are often looking for new knowledge and information. They are capable of seeing the world as complex and are aware of their own biases and predispositions (Lamm & Irani, 2011). Together, these two styles represent the breadth of critical thinking style that individuals may express.

- Critical Thinking – the process by which decisions are made and concepts mastered through reasoned, purposive, and reflective processes.
- Critical Thinking Skills – cognitive abilities to interpret, analyze, evaluate, infer, and explain a given situation while self-regulating one's own thinking.

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