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SERU Consortium Research Paper* GLOBALIZATION AND STUDENT LEARNING: A Literature Review and Call for Greater Conceptual Rigor and Cross-Institutional Studies

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SERU Consortium Research Paper[*]
GLOBALIZATION AND STUDENT LEARNING:
A Literature Review and Call for Greater Conceptual Rigor
and Cross-Institutional Studies

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ABSTRACT

University learning objectives and the curriculum have evolved to include more knowledge, skills and aptitudes related to the increasingly international nature of a broad range of professions and occupations. More broadly, graduates are expected to know more about the world outside their home country in order to be informed and responsible citizens and to function personally and professionally in international contexts. There is, however, very little systematic assessment of international learning and programming. A review of the literature indicates that studies of institution level objectives and outcomes are few in number and studies that involve more than a single institution are also relatively rare. There is also a lack of consensus about the goals, nature and importance of the international dimensions of higher education despite a near universal realization that globalization requires institutional changes. As a result, there is no common language or set of concepts that are broadly accepted or shared by academics, institutional leaders or students within and across institutions regarding globalization and international education. Most of the research literature that is applicable to the international programs and curricula of the university appears to be concentrated in two main domains: 1) student mobility/study abroad (including foreign language acquisition and inter-cultural relations) and 2) the international student experience. Some recent research on international students and the larger student body at universities has focused on the campus climate and its effect on the social integration, intercultural contact and learning outcomes of what is often an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse student and faculty population. The challenges to research related to international curricula and programs at universities are many. To improve research, we need a strong theoretical foundation where the logic and normative assumptions are clearly explicated and the concepts used are coherent and understandable in light of the theoretical approach taken. In addition, researchers and practitioners should strive to develop some degree of common language and common concepts that can serve to develop more opportunities for finding relationships and links between the broad range of disciplines, theories and methods that are present in the field. More research and high quality studies should be pursued at multiple levels of analysis beginning with the individual learner, the course or degree program, the institution, the broader state or regional system, the national level and the international or global level. The capacity to study and assess international curricula at multiple levels across different student populations, institutional forms, and national cultures can only strengthen the quality of the research.

Keywords: International Curriculum, International Students, Study Abroad and Student Learning

Universities have progressively become more internationally engaged reflecting fundamental changes in their societies and the world.[1] New technologies, an increasingly global economy and the expanded movement across national borders of people, ideas, networks, organizations, and other phenomena have necessarily increased the number and significance of international links and relationships. In addition, many of the most pressing issues of the twenty first century necessarily involve international

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1. Scott, P. (2011). The University as a Global Institution. In R. King, S. Marginson, & R. Naidoo (Eds.), Handbook on Globalization and Higher Education (pp. 55–59). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

solutions: sustainable development and climate change, energy, global health and the spread of infectious diseases, population and resources, etc.

The impact of these changes on universities is significant and visible. The nature of research and scholarship, as well as the definitions of fields and disciplines, evolved over time to reflect the current realities. The number of international scientific and scholarly collaborations and conferences has grown. More publications are co-authored with academics in other countries and more research projects are co-located in different nations. Faculty and students from abroad have increased in number and importance at most universities and institutional collaboration with universities in other countries are more numerous[2]

How have students and faculty been impacted by the changes described above? It is clear that learning objectives and the curriculum have evolved to include more knowledge, skills and aptitudes related to the increasingly international nature of a broad range of professions and occupations. More broadly, graduates are expected to know more about the world outside their home country in order to be informed and responsible people and ideally be able to function personally and professionally in international contexts. Foreign language proficiency is viewed as an asset in many new work settings, as is experience abroad through study, work, volunteering or research.

Some institutions have created formal statements of their expectations of an international or global education. Some examples of common language and concepts used to describe learning outcomes for students include: global citizenship, intercultural competence, foreign language proficiency and knowledge about world economic, political and social systems and problems. As noted above, increased numbers of international students on campus is another indicator of change that may have an impact on the experience of their host country peers. Equally important is the need to have better information and assessment of the international student experience itself as major institutions change to accommodate this shift in student population.

For all these reasons, studies and assessments of international curricula and experience are important to pursue to create a more sophisticated and useful body of knowledge that can inform learning and pedagogical theory and practice.

The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium and research project based at CSHE is attempting to develop a focused research effort on the experience and educational benefits of international students and domestics students that go abroad for a short- or long-term stay. This essay has been developed to assist in this effort with the following objectives:

- To summarize the nature of existing research on international learning and experience.
- To describe the challenges of defining clear objectives, outcomes and measures.
- To propose a set of potential learning objectives and outcomes to encourage greater discussion and debate about the purposes of international education, the conceptual tools and theories used to study it and the methods appropriate to research in this area.

A.   PREVIOUS RESEARCH, EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND SURVEYS

Large scale survey research in the U.S.
There are relatively few large surveys with the possible exception of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). NSSE does collect data on numbers of students studying abroad, but has not attempted a focused assessment of international programming or the international student experience as distinctive areas of interest. NSSE has, however, recognized study abroad as a valuable "high impact" learning experience. Other "high impact" experiences NSSE has identified are learning communities, service learning, internships, research with a faculty member and culminating senior experiences.

The American Council on Education has had several national surveys of member institutions regarding the extent of international activities and developed an "internationalization index" associated with the survey. The Institute of International Education does an annual survey of universities that collects demographic data on international students and students studying abroad, but has no assessment components.

The CIRP freshman survey and senior survey do not seek to obtain data related to international experience, foreign language acquisition or knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to an international or global context. The senior survey does collect data on whether or not students studied abroad.

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[2] Data on the magnitude of these changes are available from sources such as *Knowledge, Networks and Nations: Global Scientific Collaboration in the 21st Century,* The Royal Society, London 2011, *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2013*, Paris 2013, *Open Doors 2012,* Institute of International Education, New York City, 2013

Chun-Mei Zhao and John Douglass used data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey to investigate the relationship between the percentage of international students on campus and student satisfaction of both domestic and international students by creating a *density indicator*.[3] This testifies to the value of the large data set of SERU in performing analyses of this type.

Two main areas of research
A review of the literature on international education, foreign language acquisition, study abroad, intercultural learning, international students and international strategies of universities reveals a concentration of work on learning and pedagogical issues at the individual student or program level. Studies of institution level objectives and outcomes are few in number and studies that involve more than a single institution are also relatively rare.

Most of the literature that is applicable to the international programs and curricula of the university appears to be concentrated in two main domains: *study abroad* (including foreign language acquisition and inter-cultural relations) and *the international student experience*. As noted above, these studies are typically focused on the individual student experience using data from a single or small number of programs and institutions.

Research on study abroad seems to be the primary focus of American scholars whereas much of the recent research on the international student appears to come from scholars in the U.K. and Australia (both of which have 20%-30% of their student population coming from abroad).   There clearly is overlap in the problems studied and the methods used as both subjects are concerned with outcomes related to inter-cultural learning, language usage, personal development and identity. We have nonetheless separated the research into these two categories to simplify the task of reviewing this body of research.

Studies of language learning, inter-cultural relations, and study abroad
In this section, the major themes and types of analysis are summarized to provide a sense of the state of existing knowledge. A reference list for research in this area is included in the Appendix.

As noted above, much of the research on study abroad concentrates on the individual student experience. Some of the research is concerned with foreign language acquisition, intercultural relations and personal development. These themes persist over time because they are key elements of study abroad and most other educational experiences in a foreign country. In the 1960s 1970s and 1980s the numbers of students going abroad were smaller, the length of stay was longer (typically an academic year or semester) and a key learning objective was foreign language acquisition.

Some findings of studies of
Foreign language learning

Previous research provides insights into the effects of factors such as length of time abroad, type of housing arrangements, knowledge of other foreign languages, gender, prior proficiency in grammar and reading on the amount of growth in foreign language proficiency during study abroad.   Though rather technical and specialized, these findings have been useful in curriculum and program design as well as improving pedagogical methods employed during study abroad to increase progress in the host country language.   They also provide strong evidence that foreign language acquisition is significantly improved through immersion in a target language country and culture.

Research published in journals such as *The Foreign Language Annals and the Modern Language Journal* studied gains in foreign language proficiency in different contexts and for different durations of study. Examples of this literature include:

Rivers, W. P. "Is Being There Enough? The Effects of Homestay Placements on Language Gain During Study Abroad." (1998)

Brecht, Richard, Dan E. Davidson, and R.B. Ginsberg. "Predictors of Foreign Language Gain During Study Abroad."(1996)

Watson, Jeffrey R., Peter Siska, and Richard L. Wolfel. 2013. "Assessing Gains in Language Proficiency, Cross-Cultural Competence, and Regional Awareness During Study Abroad: A Preliminary Study." Foreign Language Annals 46(1):62–79.

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3 Zhao, Chun-Mei and John Douglass, The International Student Density Effect: A profile of a global movement of talent at a group of major U.S. universities, Higher Education Forum Vol. 9, March 20112

Intercultural learning was also an area of research. It focused on questions of adaptation, values, national identity, assimilation and the re-entry process after returning home. Examples of this type of research are:

Carlson, Jerry S., and Keith F. Widaman. "The Effects of Study Abroad During College on Attitudes Toward Other Cultures."(1988)

Chang, Wei-Wen, Yu-Hsi Yuan, and Ya-Ting Chuang. "The Relationship Between International Experience and Cross-cultural Adaptability."(2013)

The research literature also includes studies on cultural competency and learning related to interactions with foreigners. Some examples are:

Hoffman, J.E., and I. Zak. "Interpersonal Contact and Attitude Change in a Cross-cultural Situation."(1969)

Deardorff, Darla K. "The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States."(2006)

Yashima, Tomoko. "The Effects of International Volunteer Work Experiences on Intercultural Competence of Japanese Youth."(2010)

Findings from studies related to
Intercultural relations and
Functioning in Cross-Cultural or Multi-Cultural Contexts

These studies suggest that there are a distinct set of skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are associated with effective communication and greater mutual understanding. Much of the research in this area is relatively recent and exploratory in nature. Efforts to develop a strong theoretical frame or rationale continue and interest in this emerging field is significant. Existing research does inform teachers, learners and institutions regarding ways of designing appropriate curriculum, experiential learning opportunities and study abroad programs. They also provide some models of assessment related to attributes such as cultural self-awareness and capacity for self-assessment, adaptability and adjustment to new cultural environments, flexibility, capacity to cope with ambiguity, respect for other cultures, the capacity to withhold judgment, an ability to shift the frame of reference, and culture specific knowledge and understanding. It is interesting to note that foreign language acquisition is not always included as a crucial element for some researchers in this area.

Some research is focused on learning outcomes related to the study abroad experience itself. Examples include:

Castaneda, Martha E., and Megan L. Zirger. 2011. "Making the Most of the 'New' Study Abroad: Social Capital and the Short-Term Sojourn." *Foreign Language Annals* 44(3):544–64

Crossman, Joanna Elizabeth, and Marilyn Clarke. 2010. "International Experience and Graduate Employability: Stakeholder Perceptions on the Connection." *Higher Education* 59(5):599–613.

Cubillos, Jorge H., and Thomas Ilvento. 2012. "The Impact of Study Abroad on Students' Self-Efficacy Perceptions." *Foreign Language Annals* 45(4):494–511.

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Maddux, W., and A. Galinsky. 2009. "Cultural Borders and Mental Barriers: The Relationship Between Living Abroad and Creativity." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96(5):1047–61.

Norris, Emily Mohajeri, and Joan Gillespie. 2009. "How Study Abroad Shapes Global Careers Evidence From the United States." *Journal of Studies in International Education* 13(3):382–97.

Ryan, M. E., and R. S. Twibell. 2000. "Concerns, Values, Stress, Coping, Health and Educational Outcomes of College Students Who Studied Abroad." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 24(4):409–35.

Wiers-Jenssen, Jannecke. 2008. "Does Higher Education Attained Abroad Lead to International Jobs?" *Journal of Studies in International Education* 12(2):101–30.

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Some Findings
Study Abroad Research

- Study abroad continues to have more female participants than male participants. (Stroud 2010)
- Europe remains the preferred geographic zone for study abroad though there has been growth in the number of programs to countries such as China, Australia, India, and Brazil. (IIE *Open Doors* 2012)
- Social and economic backgrounds of study abroad participants are primarily upper middle class with college-educated parents of relatively high income. (Di Pietro and Paige 2008)
- Ethnic minorities have increased participation, but continue to constitute a relatively small number of participants. (Salisbury, Paulson and Pascarella 2011)
- The number of engineering, pre-med and science students participating in study abroad remains relatively small while there has been growth among students in business, nursing, social welfare and public health.
- Some studies related to study abroad and careers suggest that study abroad for a full year, host university course enrollment, internship participation, and host family living arrangements are all program factors that correlate strongly with future international work. Some recent studies, however, have indicated that short term study abroad also can, in certain cases, provide meaningful learning experiences. (Wiers-Jenssen 2008), (Norris and Gillespie 2009)

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New areas of research related to study abroad
Other issues that have begun to appear among topics of research include studies about the significance of the length of time spent abroad and the effects of short-term study abroad experiences (see Davidson 2010). Studies of student motivations for studying abroad (Salisbury et. al. 2009, Doyle et. al. 2010), the social backgrounds of participants (Salisbury et. al. 2011, Di Pietro and Page 2008) and the relationship between international experience and careers (Norris & Gillespie 2009, Crossman & Clark 2010) have also emerged as topics of interest. A few papers have been published regarding the integration of international experience into professional fields such as engineering, business, nursing and social work (Zorn 1996, Downey et. al. 2006, Mapp 2012)

Research on international students, their integration, adaptation, and satisfaction[4]
Research on international students has focused primarily on their cultural, social, linguistic and pedagogical adjustment to their host-university and culture. As noted earlier, most undergraduate international students are enrolled in degree programs that last 2-4 years. Their study abroad is not temporary or limited to language or cultural studies. They are treated as regular students who must meet the same or higher academic standards as host country students. Adaptation and adjustment are crucial if international students are to succeed.

Publications on international students in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were mostly by American authors and focused on adjustment issues such as mastery of the host country language, health issues, academic support and social needs. Examples of these types of analysis are:

Hagey, Ar, and J. Hagey. "International Student and Junior College - Academic and Social Needs." (1972)

Hamilton, Jt. "Comparison of Domestic and International Students Perceptions of the University Environment." (1979).

Miller, Df, and Dj Harwell. "International Students at an American University - Health-Problems and Status."(1983) .

Pyle, K. Richard. *Guiding the Development of Foreign Students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1986.

Wan, Ty, Dw Chapman, and Da Biggs. "Academic Stress of International Students Attending United-States Universities." (1992).

In the 1990s and the first decade of this century, research and publications on international students increased in number, had a wider range of topics and were most often published by individuals in the UK and Australia.[5] In addition to issues of cultural and linguistic adaptation, publications addressed academic outcomes, pedagogical problems, changing demographics among host country student populations, and approaches to recruiting international students. Some examples of these topics are:

Kagan, Henya, and Jo Cohen. "Cultural Adjustment of International Students." (1990)

Cownie, F., and W. Addison. "International Students and Language Support: A New Survey." (1996)

Al-Sharideh, Khalid A., and W. Richard Goe. "Ethnic Communities Within the University: An Examination of Factors Influencing the Personal Adjustment of International Students." (1998)

Pimpa, N. "A Family Affair: The Effect of Family on Thai Students' Choices of International Education." (2005)

Lee, Jenny J., and Charles Rice. "Welcome to America? International Student Perceptions of Discrimination." (2007)

Kingston, Emma, and Heather Forland. "Bridging the Gap in Expectations Between International Students and Academic Staff." (2008)

Findings of
Studies on the experience of international students

These studies provide evidence that international students go through a transitional experience in terms of their intercultural adaptation within different educational environments and different cultures and societies. Depending upon their age, social background, personality, life experience and level of study, they also are coping with the process of maturation and human development common to all students. Some studies typically viewed the process of adaptation, acculturation and assimilation as a linear process. Some research focused on the associations of language mastery, social integration, personal development and academic outcomes as a shifting and complex process that is not a simply linear in nature. Other studies suggest that successful adaptation involves a reconfiguration of individual identity that incorporates both home and host cultures. There is also some evidence that institutional accommodations and support services related to language mastery, health issues, housing, campus social climate and pedagogy can have a positive influence on international student success and academic performance. Some studies also indicated that there are significant variations associated with nationality and discipline or field.

Emerging Areas of Research: Campus Climate and Intercultural Contact
Some of the most recent research on international students (and host country students) concerns the campus climate and its effect on the social integration and intercultural contact of an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse student and faculty population. Some examples are:

Dunne, Ciaran. "Host Students' Perspectives of Intercultural Contact in an Irish University." (2009)

Glass, Chris R. "Educational Experiences Associated With International Students' Learning, Development, and Positive Perceptions of Campus Climate." (2012)

Cruickshank, Ken, Honglin Chen, and Stan Warren. "Increasing International and Domestic Student Interaction through Group Work: a Case Study from the Humanities." (2012)

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[5] The increase in research on international students in these two countries is probably associated with a rapid increase in the numbers of international students in their universities during this time period.

Arkoudis, Sophie, Kim Watty, Chi Baik, Xin Yu, Helen Borland, Shanton Chang, Ian Lang, Josephine Lang, and Amanda Pearce. "Finding Common Ground: Enhancing Interaction Between Domestic and International Students in Higher Education." (2013)

B. SOME CHALLENGES TO RESEARCH ON AND ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL CURRICULA AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Different Models, Objectives and Language

Most assessments and research on international programming tend to focus on the level of the individual student and their experience. Outcome studies have shown a tendency, according to Deardorff (2013)[6], to focus on conditions for desired outcomes rather than the actual outcomes themselves. They examine specific support structures (inputs), activities, policies and outputs in terms of numbers. Assessment of student learning outcomes linked directly to program or curricular objectives is less common and cross-institutional, national or international studies are quite rare.

A review of the literature on the assessment of international programming and student learning along with consultations with a small sample of well-informed specialists in the field suggest that there is a lack of consensus about the goals, nature and importance of the international dimensions of higher education. This poses problems for efforts to assess these programs and student learning experiences within and across institutions.[7]

There is no common language or set of concepts that are broadly accepted or shared by academics, institutional leaders or students within and across institutions regarding globalization and international education. This is undoubtedly due to the complexity of the subject matter and the often-experimental nature of pedagogies associated with international programming. Even scholars engaged with research related to globalization, inter-cultural learning, study abroad, international student experiences and foreign language study use different theoretical, methodological and conceptual approaches in their work.[8]

The lack of a shared language and conceptual clarity is evident from a review of the ways different universities describe their learning objectives and program goals for international curricula. Common examples include the use of concepts such as *global citizenship, international competence, intercultural competence, 21st century skills, global mindedness, global awareness and sensibilities, global learning, and humanitarian action studies.*

The absence of rigor or even common sense in the use of the word *global* testifies to the lack of attention given to the need for clarity and meaning in the description of a wide range of educational programming. There are undoubtedly some shared ideas, common objectives and similar learning theories among all these different labels and models. It is, however, difficult to know what they are. Moreover, there is great variation in the extent to which curricular and pedagogical approaches and learning objectives are clearly defined and stated.

Institutions vary markedly in terms of the extent of effort and resources allocated to international initiatives and programming for students. Recently many institutions have recruited significant numbers of new international students at the undergraduate or first-degree level, often as a means to generate revenue to offset cuts in public funding. Many universities have prioritized study abroad and set numerical goals for participation. Campuses also have developed innovative international service learning, internship, and research programs. In addition, special international programs or tracks have been launched on some campuses to encourage students to combine their study of a foreign language with other international activities and study. Special events, lecture series and language and culture themed housing arrangements are other examples of efforts to embue an international or global dimension to campus life.

What does this imply for efforts and capacities to study and asses various international activities, programs, curricula, and learning experiences of university students and faculty? It suggests that significant attention should be given to establishing a common understanding of the main learning objectives and program goals underpinning the international curricula. It also

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] The author benefited from a lengthy conversation about issues related to research design and methodology with Mark Salisbury, Director of Institutional Research at Augusta College and a review of the paper by Jonathan Gordon, Director of Assessment at Georgia Institute of Technology.

[8] An excellent analysis of the key issues related to assessment of the international dimensions of universities is by Darla Deardorff and Adinda van Gaalen "Outcomes Assessment in the Internationalization of Higher Education", Chapter 10 in *The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education* Sage, 2012.

demands greater effort to clearly define theoretical assumptions and the logics and concepts used to describe and analyze whatever dimension of the international curricula being studied. Different disciplinary approaches, models and methods should seek to make sure their research is accessible to scholars and practitioners from other fields.

More fundamentally, it calls for an increase in basic research that tests the assumptions used to justify international curricula and experience abroad. For example, what types of knowledge and concepts are best able to contribute to our capacity to understand phenomena such as globalization, transnational networks, international politics, global communications and linguistic differences? Other relevant questions concern the nation-state and national cultures, the global economy and labor markets, migration patterns, religion and religious fundamentalism. Is there a relationship between competency in a foreign language, international experience and career patterns? To what extent are labor markets becoming international or global? Is an international or global culture emerging that supercedes or at least influences our attachment to national and local cultures? How does this impact our identity?

Of course there are also the basic questions about theories and knowledge related to student learning and how to assess outcomes. What pedagogies are most effective in acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes that are related to living and working in other countries and cultures. What value should be given to learning foreign languages, or to experiential learning through a period spent abroad? Can some of this knowledge and associated competencies be acquired pror to entering the university or through non-formal or co-curricular learning opportunities? What assessment methods are the most effective in evaluating student learning outcomes?

C.   CONCLUSION

Researchers and assessors must ground their work on strong theoretical foundations where the logic and normative assumptions are clearly explicated and the concepts used are coherent and understandable in light of the theoretical approach taken. In addition, researchers and practitioners should strive to develop some degree of common language and common concepts that can serve to develop more opportunities for finding relationships and links between the broad range of disciplines, theories and methods that are present in the field.

Finally, more research and better research should be pursued at multiple levels of analysis beginning with the individual learner, the course or degree program, the institution, the broader state or regional system, the national level and the international or global level. The capacity to study and assess international curricula at multiple levels across different student populations, institutional forms, and national cultures can only strengthen the quality of the research.

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