Best practices in internationalizing student learning and development require cultural critical analysis before transferring, adapting, hedging, or avoiding existing practices in cross-border applications both in and beyond the classroom.

Internationalizing Student Learning and Development

Dennis C. Roberts, Susan R. Komives

Offering quality higher education is recognized as a pathway to prosperity in both mature and developing countries around the globe. The dynamics and impact of broader educational opportunity and depth that unfolded in the United States in the 20th century may foreshadow how similar dynamics will unfold in the 21st century in different cultural and regional contexts where educational opportunity is now expanding. International higher education leaders must recognize that student learning and developmental outcomes are accomplished through high-level engagement of students in both classroom and beyond the classroom experiences.

The perspective advocated throughout this volume is that higher education is a precious resource, one that must be managed carefully for maximum benefit of all. High-impact higher education can be achieved through expanding opportunity and by infusing international perspectives into students' experience both at home and across borders, but it must be implemented in ways that preserve the uniqueness of each culture and holds student learning and development as its central focus. Especially for countries just beginning to increase access to tertiary or higher education, two questions emerge: (1) How can the investment of governments and families be maximized? and (2) How can students be mobilized to take full advantage of the enhanced opportunity?

This chapter provides an overview of the expansion of higher education across borders and the internationalization that is unfolding in many higher education institutions. It provides frameworks for effective cross-border practices promoting student success through learning and development across diverse contexts with an emphasis on the importance of students engaging university life in ways that blur boundaries and integrate the student experience.
Key Terms

The expansion and internationalization of higher education that will be explained in this volume relies on the following definitions of common terms.

**Globalization of Higher Education.** Globalization is frequently used in reference to the economic impact of products and services that have spread across the world with fashion, entertainment, and popular products as primary examples. It assumes growing uniformity and sameness as transportation and communication costs drop, products and services globalize, and inequality increases (Stiglitz, 2013).

**Internationalization of Higher Education.** Internationalization identifies the growing links across nation, culture, and ideology reflecting “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education.” (Knight, 2004, p. 11). Internationalization is different from globalization in that distinct attributes of identity are accorded value, creating “a higher likelihood of protecting unique cultures” that is so important to individual and national identity. Preserving culture can be accomplished “while at the same time serving to embrace the inevitable—a shrinking planet with growing shared reliance on each other” (Roberts, 2015, p. 10). Internationalization can be accomplished through a variety of means (Knight, 2012) such as curriculum and academic programs, teaching/learning processes, research and scholarly activity, cocurricular activities, extracurricular activities, and liaison with local community based cultural/ethnic groups.

**Cross-Border Education.** Knight (2012) views one type of internationalization as cross-border education referring to a variety of educational strategies that move across national or regional lines and include people (study abroad, degrees, field work, internships, sabbaticals, consulting), programs (twinning, franchising, articulating, joint/double degrees, online/distance), providers (branch campuses, virtual, merger/acquisition, independent), projects (research, curriculum, capacity building, educational services), and policies (quality assurance, degree levels, credit accumulation and transfer, and academic mobility).

So globalization reflects a growing similarity and presence of a product or idea in many places around the globe and internationalization is a process of infusing international ideas across a variety of functions and experiences. The distinctions made in these definitions are important because they reflect both different purposes and processes that are often not differentiated when educators talk or write about their work.

**Historical Context**

As higher education opportunity expanded in the early 20th century in the United States, it was no surprise that, as educators began to recognize the
emerging complexities that they faced, they began to devise practices to ensure that the quality of students’ experience was maintained at the highest possible level. Shifts in educational philosophy and changes in social dynamics reinforced the importance of deeper and more holistic learning among students that valued both the academic and experiential dimensions of their learning; these pedagogies came to be known as the curriculum and co-curriculum. Enhanced educational opportunity has been recognized as one of the conditions most responsible for the improved economy and quality of life experienced in the United States in the 20th century and studies of developing countries in the 21st century confirm similar outcomes (Oketch, McCowan, & Schendel, 2014).

Deeper student engagement and its impact on graduates remain two of the distinguishing attributes of higher education in the United States. The role of engagement in the entire university experience is well documented (Kuh, 2008; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Indeed, paralleling a National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) finding, a recent Gallup/Purdue University (2014) alumni study found that “where graduates went to college—public or private, small or large, very selective or not selective—hardly matters at all to their current well-being and their work lives in comparison to their experience in college” (p. 6). The report went on to assert that “When it comes to finding the secret to success, it’s not ‘where you go,’ it’s ‘how you do it’ that makes all the difference” (p. 6).

Expanding Higher Education Opportunity Around the World

Although many countries have long had higher education institutions, a new dynamic of west-to-east and north-to-south geographic transfer has occurred that has focused on students’ learning and development. Singapore is an example of this recent refinement in focus of educational goals (discussed further in Chapter 8).

As a small, young nation, Singapore recognized early that its people were its greatest asset, and investment in education was key to its success in a global economy . . . Singapore’s higher education policy is now focusing both on improving undergraduate education and creating lifelong learning opportunities. (Duderstadt, Taggart, & Weber, 2008, p. 282)

Thoughtfully adapting practices from the north and west has helped developing countries forefront higher education as an economic and social resource in nation building.

This adaptive process, however, has not always been as thoughtful as it could have been. As north and west institutions have internationalized through such practices as international branch campuses, they have frequently assumed that home practices are equally appropriate in the more culturally diverse regions, often leading to unsustainable change. As Duderstadt et al. (2008) noted:
If the interest, or indeed the obligation, of mature universities in the developed world towards the developing world is to assist in development, rather than simply to exploit a market, then certain principles should be accepted: universities should accept a fundamental purpose as enlarging human freedom; ... mature universities should have the goal of building the capacity of universities in the developing countries; and the quality standards for education transmitted to developing countries should not be inferior to those of developed countries. (pp. 288–289)

A problem with the west to east and north to south transfer is that it is often shaped by an imbalance of power. Frequently, the west/north has what the east/south wants, allowing the west/north to exploit the growing economic strength in the east/south as a way to buoy the west/north's economies and infrastructures. This educational transfer then becomes a commodity of trade, placing a great deal of responsibility on the west/north not to abuse its temporary advantage by offering its help at a high price and without critical examination or adaptation of existing programs and practices.

Emerging International Guidelines. A variety of international documents advocate that higher education institutions should utilize culturally sensitive practices when pursuing cross-border opportunities or internationalization strategies. Principle 13 in the 2012 International Association of Universities statement on internationalization states:

The prevailing context for higher education internationalization ... requires all institutions to revisit and affirm internationalization's underlying values, principles, and goals, including but not limited to: intercultural learning; inter-institutional cooperation; mutual benefit; solidarity; mutual respect; and fair partnership. ... It requires institutions everywhere to act as responsible global citizens, committed to help shape a global system of higher education that values academic integrity, quality, equitable access, and reciprocity. (p. 4)

The United States American Council on Education’s (ACE) Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) that coordinates a variety of initiatives to assist its member institutions as they internationalize their campuses indicates, “We believe effective internationalization goes beyond traditional study-abroad programs and international student enrollment. It requires a comprehensive institutional commitment that also includes curriculum, research, faculty development, and active strategies for institutional engagement” (ACE, 2014, About CIGE). Such statements are beginning to address the conditions and advocate the processes by which balanced and respectful relationships can be established.

Bias in the Current Concepts. Higher education literature is often written by those from western perspectives, resulting in the inadvertent and
largely unexamined privileging of western perspectives and ideas (Tight, 2014). For example, offering academic programs in another country setting or internationalization of the home campus is sometimes conceived and advocated as the “global reach” of the university. Or, western educational approaches may not recognize the complexity of students’ cultural backgrounds, an example being the greater importance of family in students’ choice of academic majors and careers in some cultures and contexts. Other examples include coeducation residences and some activities and sports that may not be culturally acceptable at all in some environments. Indeed, those institutions expanding their programs to other countries have sometimes brought dimensions of the student experience without critical examination, often resulting in those practices being culturally irrelevant and ineffective in the host countries.

**Strategies for Cross-Border Internationalization**

The importance of carefully considering educational practices instead of simply benchmarking and applying a practice cannot be overstated; choices about what to do and how to do it must be based on institutional purposes and values.

Wilkins and Huisman (2012) proposed a model for use in planning branch campuses in various regions of the world, which has promise in other forms of internationalization as well. They indicate that cross-border initiatives should be assessed considering both the cultural distance between the donor and host environment, and the institutional commitment and supports available at the host site(s). After assessing the cultural distance as either high or low, then assessing the certainty of institutional commitments and supports that could result in success and sustainability, decision makers can determine the approach that would have the greatest likelihood of success (see Figure 1.1).

The only situation in which a practice could simply be applied or transferred from one setting to another is when the cultural distance is low and the institutional commitments and supports are high. An example could be adopting an educational practice in a partnership between Canadian and Australian institutions. The most typical circumstance to encounter is one in which the cultural distance may be significant but the commitments and supports predict reasonably achievable success. Adapting practices would then be used when utilizing a practice from a United States institution in Africa when the institutional leadership and resources have been secured to provide a firm foundation for success. Even an environment of low cultural distance can be difficult if commitments and supports are not secured, justifying a strategy of hedging one’s bets by seeking other significant linkages or partnerships. The most volatile scenario for internationalization is where the cultural gap is wide and the institutional commitments and supports are low; under these circumstances, avoidance may be the best option.
Although it is easy to reflect that partnerships involving high cultural distance and low commitment and support are easy to avoid, institutional decision maker’s desire for the reputational and monetary benefit of partnerships may cloud their vision of the real risks involved.

It is essential, therefore, to adopt a critical perspective to evaluate the appropriateness of any given cross-border internationalization strategy for student learning and development, resulting in a conclusion to transfer, adapt, hedge, or avoid the practice.

**Student Learning and Development**

Student learning is widely recognized as a prime objective of higher education. As explained further in Chapter 7, student learning is integrally connected to student development (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). Student learning and developmental outcomes are a documented attribute of high-impact institutions where learning and development are recognized as occurring across the entire university experience; yet the ubiquitous nature of learning is sometimes unrecognized.

**Learning Outcomes.** Learning outcomes have long existed in western/northern colleges and universities and have grown in breadth, depth, and complexity. The concept of learning outcomes became the basic building blocks of the Bologna reforms as well (EUA, 2007). From its inception, the Bologna process sought to identify disciplinary-based competencies, later called outcomes, to promote student learning, transferability of credit,
and to meet labor needs. This process also identified general competencies across disciplines identified in the Tuning Bologna model (Adelman, 2009).

In the United States, the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U, 2010) has given leadership to a widely adopted, commonly defined set of outcomes. Presented in Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) (http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm), these essential learning outcomes relate both to disciplinary studies as well as to general outcomes from the university experience. They include: (1) Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World through the study of such fields as language, history, and science; (2) Intellectual and Practical Skills, including critical and creative thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem solving practices across the curriculum; (3) Personal and Social Responsibility, including civic engagement, ethical reasoning, and intercultural competence (4) Integrative and Applied Learning, including applying knowledge and skills to new complex problems.

A strength of US higher education is the role of student life in promoting learning, development, and student success beyond the classroom. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2015), a 35-year-old US and Canadian consortium of 42 professional associations, has established over 40 standards of practice in student affairs and services that address a set of outcomes, including the domains of knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, and application; cognitive complexity; intrapersonal development; interpersonal competence; humanitarianism, and civic engagement; and practical competence. CAS standards have been adapted in numerous regions around the world.

A philosophy of learning and development that can influence the overall environment, the thesis of this volume, is that development of student outcomes is the responsibility of those who provide educational experiences both in the classroom and beyond the classroom. Learning Reconsidered (NASPA & ACPA, 2004) stressed the critical nature of “vibrant educational partnerships among members of the academic faculty and student affairs professionals in which all campus educators share broad responsibility for achieving defined student outcomes” (p. 35). Indeed, the recent Gallup/Purdue study (2014) of graduates and employers demonstrated diverse college factors such as mentoring, long-term projects, and participation in student organizations that contributed to workplace engagement and personal well-being.

The use and related assessment of university outcomes is expanding internationally. Recently, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) piloted their Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project with 17 countries or regions. Their study sought to determine the feasibility of assessing common skills in the disciplines of economics and engineering along with a set of generic skills independent of disciplines.
Understanding the Student Experience

As the preceding sections illustrate, how a student engages during college impacts the learning and developmental outcomes they achieve and their overall student success.

Considerations Related to the Classroom. If broad and deep impact is desired in the classroom, comfortably and naturally infusing an international perspective across a variety of disciplines, courses, and related experiences is a must. Knight’s (2012) “at home” and “cross-border” framework demonstrates that faculty and academic administrators have numerous elements that can be included in a comprehensive strategy that will repeat common themes and build on values and learning outcomes that have the potential to permeate an entire institution.

“At home” methods of internationalization include infusing international, cultural, or comparative perspectives in existing courses or creating new courses that do. Modifying teaching and learning processes through virtual experiences, inclusion of international experts, and introduction of research and scholarly work from other cultural settings are other “at home” methods. Research involvement, co- and extracurricular involvement, and liaison with local or regional cultural groups can also offer “at home” opportunities. Most of these share a contextual limitation—they are internationalization within the confines of what is essentially a national or regional perspective. An example of a pervasive internationalization model that originates from a national perspective is evident in Singapore’s 21st-century competencies (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2014).

“Cross-border” internationalization, as noted previously, involves moving people, processes, pedagogies, or entities across national or regional lines. Probably the most ambitious internationalization effort of this type is the European Union’s Bologna process. Although the largest number of students benefiting from the access and mobility fostered by Bologna and now Erasmus are students with EU passports; the changes brought by these policy statements and changes have also made European universities more attractive to students throughout the world. European Commission (2016) highlighted significant gains for students who studied across national borders in employability characteristics such as tolerance for ambiguity, decisiveness, and vigor.

Opening national borders throughout the EU is seldom referenced as study abroad, but it is much like what happens when United States students utilize study abroad as one of their internationalization experience. Study abroad by United States students is likely to increase as a result of the “Generation Study Abroad” commitment of 150+ universities to doubling the number of United States students who make this a part of their academic experience (http://www.iie.org/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad). And, the presence of international students studying in the United States, the
United Kingdom, Australia, and other countries continues to rise (http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors), although trends and preferences of where to study are often moderated by visa approvals, finance, or home country policy and funding. International students who study in another country are most often perceived as the only ones benefiting from this when, in fact, if domestic students welcomed international students as a resource and actively sought to learn from them, all would benefit. Engaging with international students is not only an untapped resource but sometimes is perceived negatively. For example, recent analysis of Canadian students’ views of international students conveyed mixed opinions (Lambert & Usher, 2013), perhaps emblematic of the cultural gap yet to be recognized and bridged as students from all cultural/national backgrounds encounter each other. Successful cultural encounter, and growth toward cultural competence is not well understood and is difficult work, especially because students in the early stages of their own maturational processes are not only uncomfortable with “others” but may have many questions about themselves.

One of the more challenging aspects of adopting or adapting contemporary educational practices from the west relates to active learning pedagogy. Those students who have been socialized in cultures in which deference to authorities, personal humility, and affiliation with the group is the norm, may find active learning to be a particularly difficult stretch.

There are many other possibilities for infusion of international perspectives in cross-border academic partnerships. The most important point is that internationalizing the curriculum will be more successful when it is comprehensive, when it occurs in multiple synergistic experiences, recognizing both the intellectual and personal development journey that learners are encountering.

Considerations Beyond the Classroom. From access, recruitment, admissions, and retention, to career advising, mental health counseling, residential life, campus activities, leadership and service, sports and recreation, student government, health and well-being, and financial aid advising are all examples of the range of necessary programs and services that stretch beyond the classroom. Altbach (2009) observed that “student development and student affairs are now seen as a key task of most academic systems—and with good reason” (p. xiii). Although Altbach recognizes student affairs work for supporting student success, it is also widely regarded (see Learning Reconsidered, NASPA & ACPA, 2004) for its educational and developmental contributions to college outcomes. In that regard, many student affairs staff members may also be seen as educators in the co-curriculum.

Not only has student affairs been recognized as critical to student learning and development in North America, other regions of the world have advocated and are increasingly asserting the importance of enhancing student learning throughout students’ experiences (Woodard et al., 2004). As an
example, for nearly 20 years, the Asian Pacific Student Affairs and Services Association (APSSA) has offered conferences with themes such as Serving Increasingly Diverse Student Populations (1996) and Promoting Students’ All Round Development (2008).

In a 2009 UNESCO publication, Ludeman, Osfield, Hidalgo, Oste, and Wang (2009) documented the state of student affairs and services in numerous countries. This publication was significant in starting the conversation about what student affairs and services had to offer international higher education and provided essential grounding for what is becoming a much more robust conversation. Writing in the same UNESCO publication, Ludeman and Strange (2009) acknowledge that “Student affairs and services professionals are key players in the advancement of the talents of all nations” (p. 6). They identify a set of principles, values, and beliefs that can be used to support and guide student affairs and student services (see Table 1.1) as higher education institutions pursue various internationalization strategies.

Ludeman et al. (2009) stimulated what is now becoming an international movement dedicated to analyzing and refining higher education practice across national borders. Although international convergence has yet to unfold, it is clear that many contributions have been made through western/northern higher education practice.

Considerations Related to Integration. Ultimately, it is the integration of students’ experience both in the classroom and beyond the classroom that may be most important of all; students typically experience these complex settings seamlessly. Some internationalization offerings very naturally integrate in and out of class dimensions. Service learning is an example in which many institutions find that the most effective approach combines student development staff maintaining relationships in the community, encouraging cultural openness, and managing legal and logistical factors while faculty provide disciplinary perspectives, research evidence, and inquiry processes to the mix. Such a shared responsibility in international service learning is a very powerful tool to bridge the intellectual and personal development aspects of students’ learning.

Although some North American practice in student affairs has become more professionalized and consequently compartmentalized, the early educators who advocated for improved student support and focus on learning and development viewed this responsibility as one shared among faculty, staff, and students (Roberts, 2012). As educators create new opportunities designed to address the broader challenge of internationalizing their institutions that are proposed in this book, a full partnership among faculty, staff, and students is likely to be required as well (Schuh & Whitt, 1999).

Conclusion

This volume seeks to enhance student learning and development by creating a dialogue about international education practices, allowing for cultural
Table 1.1. Key Principles for Internationalizing Student Affairs and Student Services

| Purposes and partnerships                                                                 | Be consistent with the institutional mission  |
|                                                                                         | Be student centered (acknowledge students as partners and responsible stakeholders) |
|                                                                                         | Promote lifelong learning                      |
|                                                                                         | Promote learning for life                       |
|                                                                                         | Use seamless delivery integrated with the academic mission |
|                                                                                         | Build and nurture robust partnerships among faculty and student affairs educators |
| Access and diversity                                                                    | Attract and retain a diverse student body       |
|                                                                                         | Ensure culturally sensitive practices           |
|                                                                                         | Cultivate human capacity for work and community development |
|                                                                                         | Align access goals with the needs of local, regional, and national vision |
| Learning and development                                                                | Apply critical cultural perspective when adapting practices from others |
|                                                                                         | Address the personal and developmental needs of students as whole human beings |
|                                                                                         | Promote independent, self-directed student behavior |
|                                                                                         | Address three major transitions of moving into university, through university life, and into career and workplace |
|                                                                                         | Recognize learning is complex and multifaceted  |
|                                                                                         | Prioritize academic and career counseling       |
|                                                                                         | Use information technology to facilitate the student learning process |
|                                                                                         | Build supportive and inclusive learning communities, locally and globally |
| Resource management                                                                     | Adhere to codes of ethics and use of effective management practices |
|                                                                                         | Ensure diverse funding sources that include significant institutional support |
| Research and assessment                                                                  | Provide systematic inquiry related to how students’ experience can be documented and enhanced |
|                                                                                         | Use assessment data to improve programs and services |

Source: Adapted from Ludeman and Strange (2009, pp. 5–9).

adaptation, that draws together the work of policy makers, faculty, management, and student affairs and services staff. This volume focuses on the broad experiences of university student learning and development achieved through intentional practices in the curriculum and co-curriculum. We present ideas that we hope are equally compelling for faculty and staff members in higher education, whether they work in class, out of class, or in the infrastructure support systems that allow excellence in learning and development to thrive.
References


Ludeman, R. & Strange, C. (2009). Basic principles, values and beliefs that support an effective student affairs and services programme in higher education. In R. Ludeman, K. Osfield, E. Hidalgo, J. Oste, & H. Wang, (Eds.), Student affairs and services in higher education (pp. 5–9). Paris, France: UNESCO.


DOI: 10.1002/he


Dennis C. Roberts was associate provost of Hamad bin Khalifa University and assistant vice president for education with the Qatar Foundation from 2007–2014. He is past president of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and has authored 4 books and over 50 book chapters and other articles on student affairs, student learning, and leadership.

Susan R. Komives is professor emerita in the Student Affairs Program at the University of Maryland. She is past president of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, ACPA, and editor of the Handbook for Student Services along with other books and articles on student leadership.