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Increasing Intercultural Effectiveness Through a Global Citizenship Approach

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The authors conduct pre-treatment and post-treatment observations on students taking a first semester freshman course designed to enlighten them about their role in the world as global citizens. The authors use the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale to measure the students across the dimensions of Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement and Hardiness. Results suggests that students undergoing such a course may increase their intercultural effectiveness, especially in the area of interpersonal engagement, as well as, global mindset.

Many colleges and universities today seek to increase their students' global skill sets in order to prepare them for the complex integration of cultural, political, social and business processes that await them in today's world (Lane, Maznevski& Mendenhall, 2004). Indeed many accreditation agencies have for the past several years included globalization of the curriculum as part of the evaluation process. In this paper, we will measure how one introductory course for freshmen students can increase their global mindset and enhance their intercultural effectiveness. We will use the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale(IES) (Mendenhall, Stevens, Bird, Oddou and Osland, 2011) to gain insights into students' continuous learning, interpersonal engagement, hardiness and overall intercultural effectiveness by measuring such traits at the beginning of the global citizenship class and again at the end of the semester. Our results indicate that such a class can inch increase student global mindset thus improving their intercultural effectiveness.

The IES Scale

The IES scale discussion that follows draws heavily on the IES Instructor's Guide (2011) as the instrument analyzes three dimensions of intercultural effectiveness: Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness. Each dimension has two subdomains: Continuous Learning is made up of self-awareness and exploration; Interpersonal Engagement is comprised of global mindset and relationship interest; while Hardiness involves positive regard and resilience. The IES results report also contains scores on Continuous Learning, Interpersonal Engagement, and Hardiness which are combinations scores of their respective subdomains. Lastly, an Overall IES score is generated by combining the results of the six subdomains. The scale consists of fifty-two items on a five-point Likert-like scale.

Self-awareness is defined as the extent to which a person is aware of his/her personal values weaknesses strengths behavioral tendencies, interpersonal style, as well as, the impact of these things on others. Individuals scoring high in this sub domain are aware of their own personal values and behavioral tendencies while low scorers are not involved in self-discovery. Exploration measures the degree to which a person is open to and pursuant of understanding new ideas, norms, situations, behaviors, and values that are different from one's own. It measures a person's willingness to seek new experiences that result in learning or changes in perspective and behavior. High scorers are extremely inquisitive and curious, while low scorers have a preference for current habits and traditions.

Interpersonal Engagement is the next dimension and it is comprised of global mindset that measures the extent to which a person is interested in and wants to learn about other people and their cultures. Additionally, it measures the degree to which one seeks out information outlets such as newspapers, the Internet, movies, and other modes of information in order to expand his/hers global mindset. A global mindset provides the foundation to interact more effectively with people from other cultures. High scorers tend to seek information about cultures other than their own, while low scorers tend to avoid learning about other cultures and do not go out of their way to expose themselves to information about new cultures. Relationship interest is the degree to which a person is likely to initiate and maintain positive relationships with people of another culture. Specifically, it measures the extent to which engaging others is an energy producing or energy depleting activity. For example, a person's willingness to use a foreign language in developing a new relationship is an important aspect of this sub domain. Persons that score high are interested in developing friendships with people from other cultures while those that score low do not put very much effort into developing such a friendship.

The third dimension to be measured by IES is Hardiness which is comprised of the subdomains open-mindedness and emotional resilience. Open-mindedness is a measure of the extent to which a person withholds judgments about people or situations that are new or unfamiliar. It is a reflection of the extent to which a person is open to alternative perspectives and behaviors. High scorers have a tendency not to rush to judgment intend to refrain from stereotyping as they first desire to understand the situation or people. Low scorers have a tendency to make quick judgments about situations or people and they tend to use stereotyping in order to make sense of the world around them. Emotional resilience measures a person's capacity to recover from challenging emotional experiences. High scorers have the ability to cope well with such situations and are able to continue learning about a new culture while low scorers find it difficult to handle emotionally challenging experiences. Their recovery from such experiences tends to take a long amount of time and this limits their ability to remain open to others.

The Global Challenge Course

The Global Challenge course is mandatory and taught to first semester freshman students enrolled in the College of Business. The following is the course description contained in the syllabus (citation omitted as it would identify an author):

"The Global Challenge will help prepare the students for thinking globally. Not only will this course demonstrate the global dimensions of several crucial contemporary issues, including the problem of global conflict, the global environment, and health and population concerns, it also will underline the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding these issues. Scientific questions have political, social, economic, and ethical dimensions. Similarly, economic matters are inextricably linked with their cultural, psychological, political, technological, geopolitical, and moral aspects. The concerns of The Global Challenge demonstrate the relational thinking students will be called upon to exercise in other academic contexts, and throughout the rest of their personal and professional lives. In other words, this course is as much about how to study and think about global problems and relationships as it is a course about specific global issues. Students will be required to participate in a service learning project during the semester break."

The course has seven learning modules - Welcome to the World, Ethnicity and Global Diversity, Moral Reasoning and the Global Challenge, Global Economic Issues, Global Environmental Issues, Global Population and Health Issues, and Global Conflict in the 21st Century. Students are required to participate in a cross-cultural service learning project outside of class either in a domestic or international setting.

Results

Since students are tested at the beginning of the course and then again at the completion of the course, the appropriate statistical test is a series of paired sample t-tests. The results shown in Table 1 indicate that students completing the global challenge course scored slightly higher in most measures of intercultural effectiveness. However with $n=72$, only a few of these measures were deemed statistically significant.

Table 1 – Results of Paired T-tests

Pair	Dimension	Mean	Sig (2-tailed)
1	Self-Awareness/pre	3.78	0.095
	Self-Awareness/post	3.9	
2	Exploration/pre	4.1	0.785
	Exploration/post	4.12	
3	Global Mindset/pre	2.71	0
	Global Mindset/post	3.08	
4	Relationship Interest/pre	3.68	0.191
	Relationship Interest/post	3.59	
5	Positive Regard/pre	2.91	0.471
	Positive Regard/post	2.86	
6	Resilience/pre	3.17	0.309
	Resilience/post	3.23	
7	Continuous Learning/pre	3.94	0.306
	Continuous Learning/post	4.01	
8	Interpersonal Engagement/pre	3.19	0.003
	Interpersonal Engagement/post	3.33	
9	Hardiness/pre	3.04	0.887
	Hardiness/post	3.05	
10	Overall IES/pre	3.39	0.033
	Overall IES/post	3.46	

On average the students scored 2.70 on global mindset before the course, this increased to 3.08 after the course and this difference was deemed statistically significant at the .000 level. Student interpersonal engagement scores increased from 3.19 to 3.33 and this difference was significant at the .003 level. Lastly, students overall IES score increased from 3.39 to 3.46 while this difference was deemed statistically significant at the .033 level. Although many of the post course scores were higher on several of the dimensions these were the only difference is deemed statistically significant.

Conclusion

First semester freshmen students were enrolled in a course designed to teach them global citizenship that included a module on cross-cultural service learning. Our results suggest that such a course can increase intercultural effectiveness of students primarily by increasing their interpersonal engagement which is most largely a result of increasing their global mindset. Students increased their interest in actively learning about other cultures and their people through films, cross-cultural in class assignments, and hands-on service learning. Although most components of intercultural effectiveness saw a rise in the various subdomains and dimensions from pre-class testing to post class testing, only three of those differences were deemed statistically significant however, a larger sample size and further study could be insightful in this regard.

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