

SHIFT HAPPENS-- TRANSITIONING INTO A GLOBAL MINDSET IN THE FIRST-YEAR THROUGH REFLECTIVE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Assist. Prof. Dr. Linda M. Lyons
Kennesaw State University, University College
USA

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shelbee Nguyen Voges
Kennesaw State University, University College
USA

Abstract

Experiential learning in higher education is identified as one of the most impactful learning methods and recent trends by which students' academic and social development can be fostered. Additionally, the role that reflexivity plays as a bridge between the experience and learning is underscored as a catalyst to making learning authentic and long-lasting for each learner. To answer the latest demands of the increasingly globalized and cosmopolitan society for our students entering the marketplace, it becomes important to arm them with the ability to think about themselves as a part of an interconnected global system; development of global citizenship. However, there is little shared on how these learning experiences manifest to cultivate a global mindset as a foundation to the higher education experience when applied to co-curricular initiatives within the first-year seminar context. Using the latest trends in high impact adult learning methodologies as a conceptual framework of first-year learning, experiential education, and reflective learning to underpin this study, the researchers investigate how students make meaning about their academic, professional goals, and course themes in a weeklong all-expenses paid, learning-by-doing excursion to Washington, DC. The aim of this co-curricular learning initiative is to cultivate new understandings centered around building global citizenship by using guided visits to various governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the nation's capital while reflecting about those experiences using guided prompted questions, group discussion, and journaling techniques.

Keywords: Reflection, first-year, global learning, high-Impact practices, experiential.

INTRODUCTION

Utilizing a first-year experience course or first-year seminar (FYS) to ease a students' social and academic adjustment to the higher education environment is a fairly recent trend and characteristic of the international higher education experience beginning in the 1990's (Koch & Gardener, 2014). More recently, there is additional emphasis on diversity and global learning that underscore curricular and co-curricular opportunities to help students actively explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own (Summit, 2011). While the purpose of a FYS course is to bolster connections between the student and their academic community, it is not guaranteed that this will occur. Incorporating active learning—"instructional method that engages students in the learning process" (Prince, 2004, p. 1)—can create conditions for developing cognitive skills, "where students synthesize ideas and concepts that cumulatively make a noticeable change in students' worldviews and self-awareness" (p. 19) while experiencing directly how to approach real-world problems and situations (Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014). In this study, researchers additionally highlight another key development of the first-year experience and draw attention to deeper "contemplative practices and student learning...connecting students to the material they are studying and showing how this connects not only to their lives but also to the outside world" (Boland, 2015: 114). Additionally, contemplative approaches "can deepen students' understanding of the material and make it more relevant to their own experience, allowing them to think more broadly" about the interconnectivity of human and natural systems (Barbezat & Bush, 2013: 23).

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study explores how an experiential co-curricular global learning initiative, the Global Engagement Scholars Experience (GESE), taking place in Washington DC, strengthens academic development, fosters identity as a global citizen, promotes personal and social development via reflexive journaling techniques. Literature concerned with the first-year seminar and experiential learning is shared followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework from which this research undertaken – active and reflective adult learning. Additionally, an overview of the co-curricular program design and background of the participants are discussed along with findings surrounding the application of adult theory in practice, development of social networks (social development), academic development, and building a personal practice of awareness the interconnectedness of our global world. A summary of the study's implications, limitations, and directions for future research will shed insight on innovative use of active and reflective learning best practices for first-year students and how high-impact learning practices (HIPS) (Kuh, 2008) initiatives like the GESE can be transformative as well as critical to building academic and social development.

The First-Year Experience and the Impact of Transitioning into Higher Education

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) categorizes the first-year seminar experiences as "high-impact practices (HIP)," or learning strategies that lead to increased engagement and retention across undergraduate students supporting a seamless transition into college (Kuh, 2008). Further, studies show that first-year experiences focus on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies so that students build competencies across social and academic arenas (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007). Scholars, Conley, Travers, and Bryant (2013), summarize that many of the developmental challenges and stress associated with students' transition to college can be categorized as either academic (i.e. more difficult application in course concepts, critical thinking, and self-directing learning over time) or social (i.e. limited familial and peer networks, belonging (Romero, 2013)). According to the Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching (2007), the first-year should consist of integrated, interdisciplinary and inquiry-based learning (Marina & McGuire, 2008). The First-Year Seminar (FYS) is defined as a course intended to enhance the academic and/or social adjustment of first-year students (Black, Terry, & Buhler, 2016). Clark and Cundiff (2011) summarize that universities across the globe utilize the FYS, or "small discussion courses that focus on teaching basic study skills, academic planning, and time-management" as a way to promote retention (and decrease attrition) by remedying academic and social concerns early in the students' college experience (p. 618). Ryan and Glenn (2004) posit that a FYS has two components, academic-socialization models (courses are built around academic themes

with the intent for academic socialization) and learning strategies models (active learning skills are developed and taught, such as note taking, reading, and time management. "With the impeccable record of accomplishment, FYE reform proves as one of the most successful higher education movements in all of American higher education" (Marina & McGuire, 2008: 21).

The American College Health Association (ACHA) (2013) states that when it comes to social adjustment, over half of the first-year college students surveyed self-reported "overwhelming anxiety," while a third of those same students reported feeling depression to the extent of it being "difficult to function" when transitioning into higher education (p. 14). Scholarship in the area of emotional wellness indicates that the profile and issues encountered by first-year students is changing all the time. Higher Education Research Institution (HERI) notes that in 2010 the percentage of students experiencing emotional duress in their first year of college has not been this high since 1985 (Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, PaluckiBlack, & Tran, 2010). Earlier ACHA (2013) data reveals that college students report feeling lonely or homesick, and personally struggle to maintain previous interpersonal relationships. Additionally, Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley, and Whalen (2005) found that while 25% of freshmen students encounter social and personal challenges, which contribute to increased stress, nearly half of students' emotional health was related to managing academic responsibilities like critical thinking and synthesizing understandings across their courses. Ultimately, first-year seminar (FYS) programs were created to help students adjust to the new social and academic context to increase retention and promote success for the student in both social and academic adjustments (Koutsoubakis, 1999).

Experiential and Deep Approaches to Global Citizenship

Although active settings and experiential learning strategies are now approaches with a high record of success in the first-year seminar (FYS), few scholars examine the benefits of global experiential co-curricular learning activities within the context of first-year experiences. Further, how does academic and social adjustment manifest uniquely across learners within those experiences with global citizenship serving as a foundation for that learning. While global citizenship can encapsulate many different characteristics, we are most concerned with global citizenship as it relates to how students see themselves as a part of interconnected human and natural systems. High impact practices, (HIPs), programs and activities where students spend extensive amounts of time and effort in different settings can help to define the first-year college experience while taking a "learning by doing" approach to the idea of cultivating global citizenship (Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014; NguyenVoges & Lyons, 2017). Experiential learning practices can be used as a strategy to promote academic development and social adjustment, however, there is limited scholarship concerned with how co-curricular learning by doing helps students to shift into an analogical mindset in the cultivation of global citizenship within the context of the FYS. Experiential learning theory (ELT) emphasizes learning as a process (Kolb, 1984), unlike traditional learning theories that focus on learning as behavioral or cognitive outcomes. ELT views learning as a holistic process of adapting to the world that requires the integrated functioning of the total person, which includes thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving, as well as interactions between the person and the environment (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model describes learners going through a cycle of concrete experience, reflection on that experience, and applying the insights in a new context (Kolb, 1984). Thus, the cycle and conceptual framework of ELT serve an imperative function in analyzing the learning process as students engage in the process of critical self questioning and questioning about the world around them to cultivate agency as a global citizen in their academic and professional path.

The use of each of these models leads to a specific way of approaching, understanding and acting on a problem while providing the learners an opportunity to learn from authentic situations (Art-in, 2014; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). There is also an emphasis on the continuous cycle of learning: gaining new knowledge; relearning through experiences; and integrating old and new ideas, in order to transform an experience effectively into learning (Kolb, 1984). For more than half of first-year students who report limited learning in high school about the interconnectivity of the broader global

environment, the process of gaining new knowledge, reflecting on experiences, and integrating new knowledge can be overwhelming and cognitively incongruent to existing attitudes and beliefs. Thinking about oneself as a part of the interconnected human and natural system can be perplexing when deep understandings about contemporary global issues are absent. Researchers look to “deep” approaches to learning (DAL) which focus on the substance of learning and its underlying meanings (Nelson-Laird, Seifert, Pascarella, Mayhew, & Blaich, 2014; Marton & Säljö, 1976). This comprehensive and reflexive approach to learning and engagement in and outside of the classroom is a stark contrast to traditional K-12 teaching and learning methodologies and is at the heart of first-year adjustment (Khamung, Majumdar, & Pongruengphant, 2016).

The Need for Contemplative Learning and Reflexivity

Facilitating active contemplative learning and mindfulness have far-reaching and innumerable benefits for first-year students, yet there is limited scholarship that exists about how to facilitate the shift into an andragogical mindset of an informed global citizen within the context of first-year learning experiences. Studies have shown “that contemplative teaching can support the development of attention, insight, emotional self-regulation, empathy, compassion for self, and others as well as action in order to encourage and transform self-learning and builds deeper learning and skills” (Kuroda, 2014:1 400). Course content should task students to intentionally integrate and synthesize information from previously learned experiences to reflect a deep approach to learning – a difficult task when there is limited experience practicing these techniques (Nelson-Laird, et al., 2014). Furthermore, introspection—the careful examination of one’s internal processes, thoughts, and feelings in order to gain deeper understanding of oneself, —is one of the hallmarks of deep learning (Barbezat & Bush, 2013) imperative to the development of global citizenship. While deep learning is widely accepted as a characteristic of cultivating global citizenship, it is an area sparsely explored with specific attention to first-year students and their transition into the higher education environment.

Educators are more recently implementing reflective learning methods into first-year curricula to support students in their discovery of their intrinsic values, motivations, and to ultimately provide them with the tools to manifest that meaning in the interconnected cosmopolitan world (Barbezat & Bush, 2013). The intentional practice of critical reflection is an essential component of the discovery process. Instructors are challenged to intentionally guide students in the engagement of real-world applications to pique students’ interests and prompt learners to know more as well as “support students in examining [what] these issues [mean] for themselves” within their own frames of understanding and experiences (Schmidt, 2017; Barbezat & Bush 2013: 17). Additionally, mindfulness— “being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present” (Brown & Ryan 2003: 822)—in the first-year scholarship is scant when it comes to first-year learning possibly because of challenges in frequency, depth, time, and continuous commitment by the students beyond standard course work and classroom activities (Schwind, McCay, Beanlands, Schindel-Martin, Martin, & Binder, 2017).

Theoretical Frame

This study is situated within the practice of adult learning theory focusing on the triangulation between experience, learning, and reflection. Several strategies that promote active adult learning are: less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing students' skills; students are involved in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation); students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing); and greater emphasis is placed on students' exploration of their own attitudes and values (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). The traditional lecture style in K-12 settings where students passively receive information from the instructor differs from using active learning techniques. The core elements of active learning are student activity and engagement in the learning process and linking what goes on in class with students’ out-of-class activities, which creates a synergy that potentially compounds student learning. (Prince, 2004; Barefoot, 2000).

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to explore the ways global learning manifested uniquely across first year students in a weeklong learning by doing adventure in Washington DC in an effort to cultivate identity as a global citizen. Further, this study was interested in students' self-reported reflections about academic and social adjustment with specific attention to their academic and professional goals. To answer these questions we asked students:

- How will you apply both coursework and activities from this visit in your own professional and academic goals?
- What of the global challenges discussed in class, do you think most directly connects to the information shared at each placed visit?
- What lessons learned from the semester and from the visit change how you think about the world and how you exist?
- What was your most memorable educational moment from the visit and what is the information that resonates with you?

Background and Context

This study was conducted at a large public comprehensive four-year institution of higher education located in the Southeast region of the United States where the current enrollment of full-time equivalent students exceeds 34,000. To enhance global citizenship, the institution offers a first-year co-curricular experiential learning initiative, known as the Global Engaged Scholar Experience (GESE). GESE offers first-year students active and experiential learning to promote multicultural understandings about the interconnectivity of global issues as they transition into higher education and begin to self-regulate their academic and professional paths. By aligning the learning outcomes from a globally focused first-year seminar course, students have the opportunity during their first semester of college to participate as a cohort in a domestic learning opportunity that explores global issues studied in their class. The purpose of this co-curricular activity is to cultivate new knowledge around global citizenship by using guided visits to various organizations in Washington, DC and reflecting about those experiences using journaling techniques. Furthermore, researchers focused on what team dynamics emerged during the experience that allow students to learn in a cohort environment and how course context prompted thinking about how they might exist as a change agent and global citizen in our ever-changing interconnected world.

Participants

Throughout the participants' first semester, they enrolled in a required three credit hour first-year seminar that had a focus on globalization. Only students who are enrolled in this course are eligible to participate in the GESE initiative. Through an essay application process, participants submit a brief description of themselves, why they should be considered for the program, and how they plan to apply new knowledge gained from class curriculum and from this experience. Ten students are then selected, based on the quality of their submission, to participate in an all-expense paid trip to Washington, DC where students visit federal agencies, NGOs, and private sector implementers as well as interact with members of Congress to explore how defense, diplomacy, and civil society shape their current experiences and future goals.

Applicants must indicate in their submission, what it would mean to them to be selected as a global engagement scholar, what they hope to gain from this experience, as well as how this experience will further their career aspirations and goals. Those students selected into the program receive a formal letter of acceptance and are required to attend a mandatory pre-departure orientation session where they are debriefed on learning goals, itinerary, reflective journaling procedures, and expectations. Students vary in age from 18-23 and are from a variety of academic backgrounds in humanities and social sciences, business, education, and engineering.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the purpose of this study, qualitative data gathering techniques were utilized via a triangulation of field observations, focus group interviews, essay application submissions, and journal entries. Students are given the specific prompt questions listed in the previous section to guide them through the reflective journaling process, with the goal of capturing new knowledge gained from the course, week-long excursion, in addition to the new learning acquired about their own thinking contributing to broadened awareness of global citizenship. Self-reflection encourages students to intentionally consider their experiences, in order to understand how the experience has affected them on personal and academic levels (Sanders, Van Oss & McGeary, 2016). Furthermore, open-ended discussion questions were posed to the students in a focus group debriefing setting each evening after the scheduled day's activities. Lastly, through the use of observations, researchers utilize field notes to document students' behaviors and engagement over the course of the week during their guided visits and discussions with key representatives of governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Journals, field observation notes, and focus group interviews were transcribed and comprised 47 single-spaced pages of data for analysis. Individual students data and transcripts were coded and analyzed for emergent themes using the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A coding diagram was generated by the researchers in order to facilitate the constant comparative technique "to group answers...to the common questions [and] analyze different perspectives on central issues" (Patton, 1990: 376). The next step involved, cross-case analysis in order to systematically take an individual students journal and focus group response and compare it to other students' reflections in order to assess the ways in which commonalities and divergences emerged across the data set (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers' intent was to shed light on students' unique global learning in an effort to cultivate global citizenship for first-year learners in a week-long experiential educative adventure. Participants' journal entries, researcher field observations, and focus group debriefing sessions during the weeklong trip to Washington DC, report a variety of new knowledge gained around global citizenship as well as what contributes to academic and social development. Specifically, findings demonstrate reoccurring themes in the areas of (1) applying global knowledge from the course in real-time experiences (2) promoting self-directed adult learning (3) identifying career aspirations (4) and building social networks of support.

Applying New Knowledge: Learning-by-doing

Active and experiential learning in academic programs is central to putting adult theory into practice (J. M. Bennett & Salonen, 2007). However, simply taking learning outside of the formal classroom, does not always guarantee that students are connecting to the context and content of the course material. Engle and Engle (2002) refer to this as the 'the magic' myth whereby instructors falsely assume that simply travelling outside of the home classroom means learners are applying learning within that real-time, real world contextual frame. During visits and discussions with government officials, organization representatives, and historical sites students reflected and answered prompt questions that connected new knowledge gained from their FYS coursework to current local-global events. Findings share the connection students made between what was taught in the traditional learning setting to what they were being exposed to during the trip to Washington DC. One student wrote *"It paid that I had known a little bit about what they were discussing, all of that reading and course work I've done finally come into fruition."* Another student illustrated *"There was a story he shared on Dhaka, Bangladesh about challenges in resource management and governance, which was interesting since my class watched a video on [that same issue in] Dhaka."*

Kabat-Zinn (2003) posit that mindfulness creates an awareness that emerges when paying attention on purpose in the present moment as the experience unfolds moment by moment. One student

elaborates on this position sharing *"It was so unreal, I was actually in the room that was pictured in my AP government textbook with Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Ginsburg in front of me."* Students were exposed to various behind the scenes processes over the course of the week, which encouraged them to reflect and connect to key concepts from class synthesizing learning from contemporary issues like Deferred Action, immigration and population growth. One student shared *"DACA talks at The American Immigration Council were really eye opening, we learned about migration and population growth, but this made me see the stories and people behind all the debate.* Brubaker (2007) illustrates that reflection is key so that students are not operating under the false impression that simply being abroad will magically and automatically open him/her up to novel thinking and ideas in the promotion of global citizenship.

Additionally, another student shared *"I was surprised at how little press was present, and learned that the [Supreme Court] Justices tend to be relatively isolated from the media also surprised at the demeanor of the Justices".* When engaging with federal officials at the nation's capital and members from government and non-profit organizations, alignment of key course objectives and experiential learning were indicated in one response—*"I have a strong opinion and knowledge of the Affordable Care Act, and that's one of the topics that Isakson stands strongly for; it was interesting to ask and hear him explain in person, to see how things are more complicated than what we see in media and popular opinion".* There was also recognition of cognitive dissonance when addressing learners' assumptions about and their biases of government entities, operations, and personalities of federal officials. Being able to have first-hand experiences connecting with governmental and nongovernmental officials demystifies some of their grandiose notions and humanizes the profession so that students can create personal frames of understanding, and further imagine what it might be like to occupy that position. One student noted *"The two congressmen we met were very interesting to see in person; very different than what I thought and have heard about them in the news or on the radio, very personable relatable and their stories help me see how we all start from the beginning, with interest but not a lot of knowledge".* Experiential learning is a continuous learning process. New knowledge, changing existing ideas and perspectives, relearning and integrating old and new ideas are important aspects of learning that enable students to develop deeper understanding of experiences and be better equipped to manage similar situations in the future (Kolb, 1984, S. Thompson & Thompson, 2008). For participants in this study, reflection served to reinforce and add depth to the knowledge from the FYS course when interacting with individuals, historical sites, and organizations. Additionally, the experiences helped students to imagine themselves in those same situations. For students of color and students with limited social/cultural capital, exposure to these models is a crucial piece of their academic/social development and the shift in mindset.

Promotion of Self-Directed Learning

Participants' experiences and discussions at various organizations outside of the classroom environment and coursework in the FYS encourage critical thinking—the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of concepts and their underlying meaning (Gokhale, 1995)—to promote self-understanding. This is often one of the most notable challenges for students as they navigate the shift from high school to higher education (McGuire, 2013). Further, "being in the moment" facilitates self-regulated, or self-directed, learning with students' continuous interest in wanting to learn more, and critically think on their own. One student offers an example of this by sharing *"I took pictures at the Museum of Natural History so I can go back and read more information on the things that interested me."* Another stated *"Based on my major, I enjoyed seeing the development of bone structure and anatomy at one museum; this is what got me into my major and to be able to see replicas of them in a national museum was AWESOME! I plan to come back and learn more."* Knowles (1975) defines self-directed learning as "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes" (p. 18). This process of self-directed learning is one of the key aims for first-year students as many are engaging for the first time in the "active constructive processes [to] set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their

cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of their environment (Pintrich, 2000a: 453). One student illustrates this new practice and shares, *"After today, I'm determined to begin researching and applying for different internships."* Exposure to these learning opportunities empowered the students in this study to take the initiative in seeking additional information in the areas of professional development to advance career aspirations as well as academic success. In our work with GES's, it is also worth mentioning that nearly 30% of our previous scholars (39 students in total) seek out and self-regulate additional internationally educative experiences, after having participated in the week-long trip-- recognizing the evolutionary power of building knowledge about diverse perspectives over time. Those events include volunteering at the Symposium for Asian USA partnership opportunities (SAUPO), the largest Asian business conference in the US, organized by Kennesaw State University.

Identifying Career Aspirations

Scholars have supported the notion that career development courses are effective methods of promoting college students' growth in several career-related areas, but some traditional-age college students struggle with career-related development (Rowell, Mobley, Kemer, & Giordano, 2012). The itinerary for the week in Washington DC not only included meetings with government officials and organizations, but also, NGOs, non-profit and for-profit organizations. Additional findings connecting to academic development were identified in students' exposure to what career paths look like and the value of being introduced to those career and internship options as a first-year student. One student indicated, *"This trip opened my eyes to the great job opportunities in the government; I want to travel and had always thought government jobs would be in a cubicle from 9-5, so this really surprised me when I heard about going to Africa and Asia for their job."* As first-year students, many of the participants, have limited knowledge about the nuances of what a potential career path looks like within a 21st century contemporary frame. The opportunity to interact with individuals that currently work in a role and an environment that seemed appealing to the participants, as well as met their career aspirations was a benefit for the participants. One respondent illustrates this point by sharing *"I am an international business major and have been thinking of changing my major to international affairs and in genuinely interested in both and didn't know any careers that intertwined the two, but now after this trip I see a balance of both."* Another indicated *"In the past I had considered Peace Corps, but wasn't sure what my major could really do in the Peace Corps, but now I see that various backgrounds/majors are acceptable."* These findings emphasize the value of the interaction between the learners and those in specific fields of study outside of the classroom when considering career paths.

Building Social Networks

"Social networking facilitates interaction and connections with others" (Belford, 2017: 502). Experiences outside the formal classroom setting are influential and most impactful, especially when those learners are able to interact with others who are unlike themselves and have support for processing and reflecting upon new experiences (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). Students communicate a sense of empowerment to explore the city on their own-- *We were given the freedom to see Washington DC; taking in the landmarks, museums and monuments gave a deep sense of pride and an almost childlike curiosity."* Another student shared their excitement of building a stronger peer networks by sharing *"I genuinely like all the people on this trip. They are all smart and funny. I see myself becoming good friends with these people and keeping in touch for the future"* Drago-Severson, Helsing, Kegan, Popp, Boderick, and Portnow (2001) expand on the notion that interpersonal relationships developed in a cohort make a critical difference to peers' academic learning, emotional and psychological well-being, as well as their ability to broaden their perspectives. "Proponents of collaborative learning—the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving an academic goal—posit that the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking" (Gokhale, 1995: 1). Findings indicated that the cohort-learning environment enhanced and encouraged developing a long-term relationship with their peers. As one student stated *I'm certain the friends I've made on this trip will remain so for a long time to come, especially when I need to vent and look for other experiences*

like this.” Romero (2013) indicates that when students find common frames of reference and support they are resilient in the face of challenges and obstacles within their academic career, further bolstering their chances of being academically successful.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Assessing the students’ response to the program and co-curricular interventions was conducted during a short period and was limited to only ten participants’ in their first semester on campus. In order to determine the long-term effects of being exposed to this week-long initiative, a longitudinal study should be considered with the total sample of GES’s to include all 39. Through a longitudinal research approach, there is the possibility to have sufficient time to fully assess the impact of the global engaged scholars’ experience on their long-term career plans and goals. Informally report is available in the form of solicitations for letters of support/recommendation in a variety of global learning opportunities including international appointments in Russia, Italy, Japan, China, and the United Arab Emirates. Documenting their long-term academic and career path choices would be impactful to demonstrating how this week-long experience in DC shaped their identity of global citizenship overtime. During the study’s short timeframe, facilitators of this initiative may not know of the impact of being exposed to the learning until years from now. The participants in the research project may have gained immediate knowledge through this experience, which may have stirred awareness as well as the curiosity to learn more.

Future areas for Study

The prominence and trends associated with the first-year seminar (FYS) is well documented since the start of college can signify a major transition for students and bring about any number of academic and social challenges. Therefore, first-year students have received and continue to receive special attention in higher education research. Scholars, suggests that research in this area can better equip higher education professionals with the knowledge, resources and tools to encourage students’ academic success in the first year; a year which is most critical to retention and progression (Koutsoubakis, 1999; Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005; McInnis, 2001). It would be significant to the field of study to review the long-term impact of the experience. Studies to explore a longitudinal study with the GESE throughout the student’s four years at the institution in order to capture long-term learning impact of the program will be useful as well as support the program’s sustainability. “Having (grasping) an experience without doing anything with it (transforming) is not sufficient; transformation cannot occur without an experience that can be acted upon” (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009: 513). We believe that this study and weeklong excursion is well founded in transformative learning properties. Measuring these perspective transformations and shift into global citizen identity may provide a way to encourage participation and funding for continued internationally educative experiential learning. Additionally, facilitators should consider further studies of this experiential learning opportunity using active learning research techniques. This will reinforce the learning process for the facilitators when implementing the program during the evaluation and execution stages as well as produce scholarship and opportunities for presenting at pedagogical conferences.

Lastly, more scholarship and attention could be placed on underscoring the shift that happens within professional or academic approaches before higher education and approaches once in higher education. While scholarship concerned with students in transition centrally focuses on this disparity, not much attention in the literature is concerned with distinguishing andragogy vs. pedagogy and that this differentiation drives much of what is difficult about transitioning into higher education in the first place. In other words, students only recognize that a shift has happened, but not necessarily why it is happening within a broader global, 21st century context. Active learning makes learning authentic and unique for the learner and their experiences. It can be difficult to navigate newly found agency as a student if a learner has never been challenged to actively drive his or her own learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of experiential learning, when inserted into a global learning co-curricular activity for first-year students, can encourage deeper understanding of course work by witnessing application in real time—aligning theory to practice. While the trend of experiential learning is not new, the high-impact strategies using prompted questions and journaling techniques and reflective analysis underscore new insights to how students make meaning about themselves, the world around them, and their role as a global citizen. Ng, et al. (2009) posit that the reflective observation and the active experimentation are actually two different ways of acting upon an experience. This study examined the literature focusing on active participation and reflective learning and how these theoretical frameworks can be applied in novel ways via co-curricular experiences embedded within the first-year seminar. With the intent of cultivating new knowledge around global citizenship, student development effectively occurs when given opportunities to actively learn outside of the classroom environment. The use of journaling strategies also show that learners are able to critically reflect on experiential learning and align new knowledge gained through co-curricular activities with classroom curriculum. Students are also empowered to be self-directed learners and apply skills gained through active learning with other learning environments. Additionally, further research in this area will better equip educators with information, tools, and resources to promote first-year students' development and academic success using new and innovative approaches.

BIODATA AND CONTACT ADDRESSES OF AUTHORS



Dr. Linda M. Lyons is an assistant professor of education and the director of strategic initiatives in University College at Kennesaw State University. Her research focus is building intercultural competencies in higher education through a collaborative approach with academic instructors when developing and executing cultural awareness curriculum and initiatives. Linda teaches leadership development courses that are germane to multicultural education and globalization.

Assist Prof. Dr. Linda M. Lyons
Kennesaw State University, University College, USA
E. Mail: llyons5@kennesaw.edu



*Dr. Shelbee R. Nguyen Voges is a tenured Associate Professor of Education and the Assistant Director of First-Year Programs at Kennesaw State University in the Department of First-Year and Transition Studies. She has taught in 6 different international locales including two years spent in Dubai exploring intercultural and international experiential education. Central to her core research is academic development and social adjustment within multicultural contexts. Her particular research interests place importance on sociocultural influences to the learning environment, study abroad participation, and the practice of adult learning theory.

* Corresponding Author

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shelbee Nguyen Voges
Kennesaw State University, University College, USA
E. Mail: E: shelbee.voges@kennesaw.edu

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