

Content Analysis of Outcome Assessment of Global Learning Foundations Courses: A Case Study

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Abstract: This study used content analysis to interpret and evaluate outcome evaluation matrices of undergraduate Global Learning foundations courses. The findings revealed a lack of uniformity in the faculty members' interpretation and implementation of global learning components in the coursework. Successful teaching practices and challenges were identified and classified.

A southeastern large urban public research university with a diverse student body is dedicated to support student learning, innovation, and collaboration. The mission of the University encompasses high standards in teaching, research, creative activities, and engagement with communities on local and global scale (AU, 2012a). In accordance with its mission, the University offers global learning curriculum and co-curriculum for all majors regulated by Quality Enhancement Plan *Global Learning for Global Citizenship* (AU, 2010). This plan is created to engage undergraduate students as global citizens by developing their global awareness, global perspective, and promoting attitudes for global engagement. Consequently, global learning requirement has been included in undergraduate curricula. It consists of two global learning courses and integrated co-curricular activities. The courses included in global learning requirement comprise of global learning foundations courses within the University Core Curriculum (UCC) and upper division discipline designated global learning courses at the 3000 level or higher. The faculty members who teach global learning (GL) courses are required to plan their curriculum, instruction, and assessment according to the designated University's GL student outcomes—Global Awareness (knowledge of the interconnectedness of issues, trends, and systems), Global Perspective (the ability to view the world from multiple perspectives), and Global Engagement (willingness to address local, global, international, and intercultural issues; AU (2010). To provide quality global learning experiences for students, the University provides faculty and staff development workshops “to investigate the theory and practice involved in developing a new course or redesigning a course for designation as a Global Learning (GL) course” (AU, 2012b).

In the end of every global learning course, the faculty are required to fill out the course outcome assessment matrices that provide information on how the global learning outcomes were addressed in the course (an example is provided in Table 3). Therefore, it is important to analyze these course outcome assessment matrices to learn how the faculty implement GL requirements in curricula. According to Landorf, Dorscher, Scorza, and Omolo (2012), global learning courses need to address global learning outcomes, include relevant interdisciplinary themes, active learning strategies, authentic assessments, and integrated co-curricular component.

A content analysis of GL course outcome assessments is important for future professional development planning, evaluation of the course curriculum content, eliciting data on how faculty identify and assess learning outcomes and design appropriate student activities, and what student assessment results are. In this study, I scrutinized the content and results of GL foundations

Dzhuryak, I. (2013). Content analysis of outcome assessment of global learning foundations courses: A case study. In M. S. Plakhotnik & S. M. Nielsen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 12th Annual South Florida Education Research Conference* (pp. 35-44). Miami: Florida International University. Retrieved from http://education.fiu.edu/research_conference/

courses through a content analysis of all available course outcome assessments submitted by the faculty and provided recommendations for teaching practices.

The following questions guided the research: (a) How did the faculty define course learning outcomes for the three identified global learning outcomes (global awareness, global perspective, and global engagement)? (b) What course content and teaching and learning strategies did the faculty members use to engage students in higher order thinking (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)? (c) What common themes or patterns emerge in course learning outcomes, assessment methods, assessment results, and the faculty's reflection on the assessment results?

Literature Review

The benefits of global learning and university internationalization for students are well recorded in research literature (e.g., Mayo, Gaventa, & Rooke (2009); Ramirez (2010); Rhoads & Szelenyi (2011); Singh (2005); Suarez-Orozco & Sattin (2007). Following Knight (2010), internationalization in higher education is a reaction to globalization as well as an agent of globalization. Internationalization of higher education leads to further economic integration and workforce mobility (Hugonnier, 2007). Likewise, global education ensures the competitiveness of individuals in a world market; provides “an understanding of cultures, languages, geography, and global perspectives” (p. 159); makes individuals realize their role and responsibilities in the global community; and provides understanding of how global events relate to individual experiences (Adams & Carfanga, 2006). Another important goal of global education is cultivating responsible national and global citizens (Abdullahi, 2010; Adams & Carfanga, 2006). It is in agreement with Ben-Peretz (2009) who argued that curriculum and curriculum development need to be connected to the social, political, and cultural developments that take place on international and local levels. Zhao (2009) indicated that whole-school changes in mind with achievement of global competencies, should also involve “changes in school mission, expected learning outcomes, curriculum arrangement, professional development for staff, working and communicating with the community, and creative use of resources” (p. 193). While implementing global education in higher education curricula, both administrators and faculty should be consulted in terms of curricula options and the development of global curriculum coursework (Stearns, 2009).

Method and Data Analysis

An embedded single-case study was used to fulfill the purpose of the research and answer the research questions. The analytical research strategy was based on both qualitative and quantitative data drawn from GL course evaluation matrices filled out by the faculty. According to Yin (2009), such mixed method case study follows a strong analytic strategy if qualitative data remains central to the research even when essential amounts of quantitative data are statistically analyzed. Yin (2009) stated further the benefits of using the quantitative data in a case study— (a) the data may cover the outcomes in an evaluative case study; and (b) “the data may be related to an embedded unit of analysis within [a] broader case study” (p. 133).

A unit of analysis of this study was the global learning assessment outcomes of all current global learning foundations courses in the University (not faculty or students). In this case, the subunits of analysis were the assessment plans for each GL course. One of the benefits of an embedded case study is that it enhances the estimates of the study validity (trustworthiness of the study); its subunits increase sensitivity to a possible shift in research design and enable extensive in-depth analysis of a single case (Yin, 2009). Caution needs to be exercised with

embedded case studies; if too much attention is given to the subunits, a larger framework of the case study is ignored and shift in the research design may occur (Yin, 2009).

I analyzed the data on GL foundation courses curriculum content, procedures, and outcomes through a content analysis of GL Course Outcome Assessment plans submitted by the faculty. I used word frequency counts to identify the words of potential interest and tested for the consistency of their usage in a Key Word In Context (KWIC) search. Following Stemler (2001), KWIC strengthens the validity measures of the study. I created checklists to count frequencies of words of potential interest in two predetermined assessment categories in the GL assessment matrices — *Assessment Method* (consisting of *Assessment Activities/ Artifacts*, *Evaluation Process*, *Minimum Criteria for Success*, and *Sample*) and *Assessment Results*. The content validity of the checklists was reached through expert judge validity. The data was statistically analyzed by PASW (SPSS) computer software. The scores ranged from 0 (no agreement other than that expected by chance) to 1 (perfectly reliable). The *inter-rater reliability* was calculated using Cohen's Kappa based on the coding checklists of two raters (myself and one advanced doctoral student with research experience). An agreement of .8 or higher was considered almost perfect and used as statistically significant. In addition, the reliability estimates of coding were strengthened by means of *intra-rater reliability*. The level of *intra-rater reliability* was estimated based on my original coding checklist that was compared to another coding checklist that I created two weeks after the creation of the original checklist.

The next step in data analysis was coding and categorization of the qualitative data drawn from the predetermined categories of *Course Learning Outcomes* descriptions and *Use of Results for Improving Student Learning*. Emergent coding was used to produce and analyze the themes. The themes were verified by means of expert judge validity as well.

The limitations of the categorization of the items in the checklists as well as coding of the items are based on the fact that not all responses provided evident relationship with the checklist items or coding categories. A more detailed framework is needed to demonstrate how the academic content items fit in the checklist items or coding categories.

Findings

A content analysis of evaluation matrices of Global Learning foundations courses submitted by the faculty in an anonymous American public university revealed how the faculty defined their GL course outcomes, what GL assessment activities and artifacts they employed, how they evaluated student learning, and reflected on how the GL course results could be used to improve student learning according to the University GL requirements—Global Awareness, Global Perspective and Global Engagement.

Assessment Activities and Artifacts Used in GL Foundations Courses

The results of the statistical analysis of the checklists on *Assessment Activity/ Artifact* showed that the percentage of *intra-rater agreement* on the Global Awareness and Global Perspective learning outcomes was almost perfect in both cases (.99 and .89). The level of *intra-rater agreement* for Global Engagement was weaker (.70). The percentage of *inter-rater agreement* for Global Awareness was almost perfect (.92 and .91); weaker for Global Perspective (.59 and .78); and almost perfect for Global Engagement in the first checklist (.81), but weaker in the second checklist (.67).

The items representing assessment activities/artifacts were further organized by the themes (Table 1). The percentage of intra-rater agreement within the themes indicated a strong relationship between the themes of Global Awareness (.99), a weaker relationship for Global Perspective (.76) and Global Engagement (.53). The percentage of inter-rater agreement within

the themes was strong for Global Awareness (.89 and .87), and weak for Global Perspective (.27 and .64) and Global Engagement (.74 and .60). These findings indicate that the conclusions can be drawn about the activities and artifacts used by professors to measure Global Awareness learning outcomes only. Based on Table 2, the most commonly used activities/artifacts to evaluate Global Awareness learning outcomes were tests, research writing, and discussion activities. The faculty did not use engagement activities to evaluate Global Awareness learning outcomes.

Evaluation Process, Sample, and Assessment Results

The findings revealed that there was no consistency between how the faculty interpreted evaluation process, sample, and assessment results because they identified and measured these items differently. Due to the lack of consistency about the evaluation process, sample, and assessment results, comparisons or generalizations cannot be inferred.

The following categories emerged from the information on the descriptions of *Global Awareness* and *Global Perspective* learning outcomes provided by the faculty: (a) subject matter and global issues/ trends/ systems, (b) subject matter and international issues, (c) subject matter and intercultural issues, (d) subject matter not mentioned, and (e) subject matter only. The percentage of agreement on items for Global Awareness was significant (.94) for intra-rater agreement and for inter-rater agreement for Time 1 (.86), but not significant for Time 2 (.74). For Global Perspective outcomes descriptions, the percentage of intra-rater agreement was high (.98), but not significant for inter-rater agreement (.60 for Time 1 and .54 for Time 2).

Four themes (categories) emerged from the descriptions of *Global Engagement* learning outcomes: (a) plan of action, (b) taking action, (c) willingness to address issues, and (d) critiquing. The percentage of intra- and inter-rater agreement on the descriptions of Global Engagement learning outcomes was significant (1 and .93). The faculty members were more likely to identify Global Engagement learning outcomes that involved a plan of action for global engagement as well as promoting students' willingness to take a global action. The descriptions of Global Engagement learning outcomes that involved students in taking a global action or critiquing global issues were less common. However, there was no consistency between assessment results produced by the faculty because the faculty did not use a common method of assessment. Therefore, a comparison between the assessment results could not be made.

Use of Results to Improve Student Learning

The findings provided in this section were organized by the individual qualitative feedback of the faculty members in the GL course evaluation matrices. I divided the faculty's comments on their students' learning results for each GL learning outcome into three categories: (a) what worked, (b) what did not work, and (c) suggestions made by the faculty.

Global awareness results. The faculty provided the following activities pertaining to *Global Awareness* learning outcomes that worked well in their courses: (a) group activities based on a book; (b) a current event journal; (c) mini-essay that compared two countries; (d) lectures that embedded case studies; (e) use of topic reviews, outlines, and sample questions; (f) training students to use electronic assessments; and (g) an essay-format final exam. The faculty identified the following activities that did not work well for their students: (a) pre- and post-tests to assess student learning; and (b) students discussing their mini-essays with two classmates and adding additional references. The faculty made the following suggestions to improve student learning pertaining to Global Awareness outcomes: (a) more emphasis on connections between the subject matter and globalization; and (b) more emphasis on interrelations between global, local, international, and intercultural issues.

Global perspective results. I divided the faculty's responses for Global Perspective learning outcomes into the same categories used for Global Awareness learning outcomes. The faculty identified the following activities that worked well in their courses: (a) students taking on different theoretical perspectives and conducting debates based on a case study; (b) the use of debates as the assessment activities; (c) a take home essay exam requiring the use of different theoretical perspectives; (d) a use of different religious philosophies to inform cultural behaviors; (e) understanding of issues of intercultural communication; and (f) group work. The assignments that did not work well for their classes were: (a) the use of Tuesday Times Roundtable discussions as an extra credit opportunity; (b) pre- and post-tests; and (c) discussion being difficult to conduct in very large classes. The following suggestions were made by the faculty to improve student learning pertaining to Global Perspective learning outcomes: (a) using blogging as a required part of assignments; and (b) a class size should not be more than 100 students for lectures.

Global engagement results. The faculty identified the following successful Global Engagement class activities: (a) students writing a research proposal; (b) students conducting biweekly presentations of events from their current event journal and explaining global connections between the events; and (c) group analysis of a specific international organization, followed by debates, discussions, and questions and answers based on their research. The faculty identified low student attendance as an obstacle for active student engagement and understanding. One faculty member found it challenging for students to move beyond individualism and believe and engage in social justice issues. The following suggestions were made by the faculty to improve student learning: (a) providing examples of global engagement in lectures; (b) asking students about their ideas of global engagement and using the information for their future research papers; (c) deepening student global engagement by means of service learning; (d) student engagement in virtual global events and social networks; (e) smaller class size for civic engagement; and (f) *engaging* students in the issues of social justice instead of making them *believe* in social justice.

Discussion and Recommendations

The faculty members used an array of Assessment activities and Artifacts to measure global learning outcomes in their classes. The only statistically significant results were achieved for the student activities and artifacts used to measure Global Awareness learning outcomes. Therefore, I could make inferences pertaining to the Global Awareness learning outcomes only. Tests were the most commonly used evaluation activities (their use in the course ranged from 6 to 9 times), followed by research writing (range of 4-5), discussion activities (range of 3-4), oral reporting activities (range of 3-4), team reporting activities (range of 3), and analysis activities (range of 2). Engagement activities were not used to assess Global Awareness learning outcomes.

A uniform table of assessment activities and artifacts should be created to measure global learning outcomes. The items in Table 3 may be used as *an example* for the faculty to report the variety of assessment activities and artifacts they used in their course. The use of a uniform format in faculty reporting will enable a more discrete categorization of the results and will serve as an important factor to increase the estimates of validity and reliability of future analyses of the GL matrices. Consequently, the assessment activities and artifacts used to measure the global perspective and global engagement outcomes may reach statistical significance, so that inferences about these GL outcomes could be made.

In addition, the faculty's feedback on Evaluation Process, Sample, and Assessment Results lacked consistency and no inferences were possible to make. Therefore, the faculty members need to be trained to provide the responses that would fit a consistent format.

A frequency of themes that emerged from GL Outcome Descriptions for Global Awareness and Global Perspective was not statistically significant. However, a frequency of themes that emerged from the descriptions of Global Engagement learning outcomes – plan of action, taking action, willingness to address issues, and critiquing – was significant. The most frequently used curricula activities for Global Engagement were the activities that promote willingness to address global issues (range of 6-12 instances), followed by the activities that include or create a plan of action (range of 5-6). The least commonly used Global Engagement activities were those that involved taking a global action (range of 0-2) and critiquing (range of 1). These themes may be used for faculty professional development planning.

I divided the results from the section Use of Results for Improving Student Learning of GL matrices into three categories – curricular activities that worked and did not work in terms of student learning outcomes, and suggestions the faculty made to improve student learning outcomes. This information is important for future planning purposes and can be used as a reference for professional development of faculty. It would also be useful to include these three categories in the matrices for future GL course evaluations. After these categories are specified in GL matrices, common themes may be found and inferences made.

Global awareness learning outcomes. The following activities were identified positively by the faculty: (a) group activities based on a book; (b) a current event journal; (c) a mini-essay that compared two countries; (d) lectures that embedded case studies; (e) use of topic reviews, outlines, and sample questions; (f) training students to use electronic assessments; and (e) an essay-format final exam. One faculty member reported that pre- and post-tests were not effective to measure student learning in the course due to the issues with internal validity and reliability of the instrument as one of the factors. However, this finding does not disapprove the use of pre- and post-tests if a valid and reliable instrument is used to measure student learning outcomes. A negative feedback from another faculty member indicated that students did not follow the requirements for the discussion based on their mini-essays. This faculty member pointed out that he or she did not make the requirements for this assignment clear to the students and suggested to be clear about the requirements next time. It is instructive to note that both negative comments pertained to the professors' challenge to use appropriate assessment activities.

Several suggestions made by the faculty to improve student learning outcomes included a more deliberate use of technology, such as Moodle, Adobe Connect A-V, and WIKIs search. Another suggestion was made to use activities that include technology interchangeably with activities that ban technology, specifically the use of social networking friendly devices in the classroom. Other faculty suggestions were calling for the clarity of course expectations and clear interconnections between the subject area of the course and global, local, international, and intercultural issues. These are important suggestions that should be addressed in other global learning courses.

Global perspectives learning outcomes. Two faculty members identified debates as successful activities to be used in global learning courses. Other reflections on successful classroom practices were taking on different theoretical perspectives for promoting understanding of intercultural issues and incorporating them in take-home essay exams. These class activities are in alignment with the definition of Global Perspectives learning outcomes –

“multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems. One faculty member also reported that student group work produced higher student learning results than individual work.

The activities that did not work for specific courses as identified by the faculty members were the use of Tuesday Times Roundtable as an extra credit opportunity, pre- and post-tests to measure student learning, and challenges to conduct discussion in very large classes. It may not be inferred, however, that Tuesday Times Roundtable should not be used as an extra credit activity. The professor reported that only those students who had high grades attended the Tuesday Times Roundtable discussions. The issue of using pre- and post-test was reported by the same faculty member and was discussed earlier. One faculty member reported that a class size of over 100 was too big for discussions and suggested to place a cap of 100 on class size. Other suggestions made by the faculty dealt with the use of technology in classes, such as blogging and faculty’s timely posting of course readings on Moodle.

Global engagement learning outcomes. A few of the faculty members shared the activities that worked well for this GL outcome: (a) students writing a research proposal; (b) explaining global connections between the events; and (c) group analysis of a specific international organization, followed by debates, discussions, and questions and answers based on their research.

The first three activities are in agreement with the Global Engagement learning requirement as it is stated in – “willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.” Other faculty who teach GL courses may consider using these activities as well. Making instructions and rubric clear to students is the suggestion that was also voiced for the Global Awareness and Global Engagement learning outcomes. Therefore, faculty need to make sure they are clear about the course expectations from the first day of the semester. One faculty member pointed that low student attendance was an obstacle for active student engagement and understanding. Indeed, faculty members need to emphasize the importance of attendance in their classes.

The section of the GL evaluation plan *Use of Results to Improve Student Learning* that contained an open-ended feedback from the faculty members, provided important recommendations on teaching and learning in courses with a global learning component. One faculty member pointed that it was challenging to make students “move beyond an attitude of total self-absorption and individualism without concern for others.” This faculty member suggested that instead of making students *believe* in the issues of social justice, he could teach them to be at least *engaged* in the issues of social justice. This is an important issue that probably rose out of students’ perceptions of certain issues of social justice. Faculty members should let students themselves identify the issues of social justice that they *believe* in and can be engaged in.

Some of the suggestions the faculty made in terms of Global Engagement learning outcomes echoed the suggestions made for Global Awareness and Global Perspective learning outcomes, such as making course expectations clear to students and having smaller class size for effective civic engagement, a use of technology with a purpose of engagement in virtual global events and social networks. One faculty member suggested asking students for their ideas about global engagement for the purpose of their future research. Another faculty member emphasized the importance of students’ global engagement by means of service learning. All these suggestions are important for faculty to consider when developing their syllabi for GL courses.

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Appendices

Table 1

Activity/Artifacts Categorized by Themes

Themes	Activity/artifact categories			
analysis activities	ranking power relationships	current event journal	comparative mini-project	case studies
oral reporting activities	PowerPoint presentation	oral presentation	role-play/skit/monologue	
research writing	essay	term paper	reflection paper	research proposal
tests	test	essay-format test	pre- and post-test	course survey
team reporting activities	team presentation	team report	video of the activity	group project
engagement activities	interviews	site visit	engagement activity/ service learning	civic engagement/donations
discussion activities	book discussion	group discussion	debate	

Table 2

Assessment Activities/ Artifacts Themes in Global Awareness Outcomes

Themes	Frequencies		
	Time 1	Time 2	Rater
Discussion activities	4	3	4
Analysis activities	2	2	2
Oral reporting activities	3	3	4
Research writing	4	4	5

Tests	9	9	6
Team reporting activities	3	3	3
Engagement activities	0	0	0

Table 3

A Sample GL Course Evaluation Matrix

Global Learning Student Learning Outcome Addressed	Assessment Method	Assessment Results
	Assessment Activity/Artifact:	
	<p><u>Global Awareness:</u> Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.</p> <p>Evaluation Process:</p> <p>Minimum Criteria for Success:</p>	
Course Learning Outcome		
	Sample:	
	Use of Results for Improving Student Learning:	