



Improving Global Competence for College Students Through a Domestic Service-Learning Project

Juyoung Lee, and Caroline Kobia, Mississippi State University, USA
Anna Lingling Perry, Colorado State University, USA

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Introduction: The need for a workforce with global competence in the ever growing global business world has seen an increase in recent years (Rathje, 2007). Many universities incorporate learning pedagogy to increase student's global competence through study abroad and language education (Deardorff, 2011), but many of their efforts are based on tapping into the students actively interested in learning about different countries or have financial resources to travel or study abroad. There have not been sufficient discussions of how to improve global competence for students with less initial interest about different countries and financial resources to travel or study abroad. Based on this, the purpose of this research is to explore the curriculum development process of a domestic service-learning project where the target students are those with less initial interest about different countries and financial resources to travel or study abroad. To achieve the goal, this study proposes the following objectives: (1) to develop a domestic service-learning project in a lecture-based class to improve global competence of the target students, and (2) to report student learning based on the newly proposed project on global competence.

Theoretical Framework: Service-learning is “a pedagogy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (Seifer & Connors, 2007, p. 6). Scholars believe students can learn while balancing community service and academic learning where service and learning goals are explicitly integrated with each other (Furco, 2003). Service-learning is also believed to use each step of knowledge creation in experiential learning where students prepare, act, and reflect on their experiences in the service-learning context (Seifer & Connors, 2007).

Method: Twenty-nine students in a social and psychological aspects of clothing course completed final reflective essays about (1) what they learned from the whole class, (2) what experiences and challenges they faced during the local school visit, and (3) how this learning affected their understanding of different cultures. This research is a pilot study where five of twenty-nine collected essays were analyzed. The authors analyzed student reflective essays using a constant comparative analysis method (Glaser, 1965).

Development of a Domestic Service-Learning Project: In Fall 2014, one of this study's authors developed a domestic service-learning project for a social and psychological aspects of clothing course where students (1) learned about Japanese culture and fashion in lectures, and through informal writing assignments throughout the semester, (2) participated in a kimono wearing workshop conducted by a university Japanese cultural coordinator, (3) prepared and conducted a presentation about Japanese culture and fashion for a local high school, and (4) reflected upon their experiences in service-learning.

Students Learning Through a Domestic Service-Learning Project: Results showed students were able to increase global competence in the Japanese culture as well as other cultures, in general. Specifically, students gained an understanding of Japanese culture, viewing it through the lens of the Japanese people. They were also able to acquire knowledge about the Japanese culture. Broadly, they were able to understand the existence of rules and traditions in other cultures like their own cultures and become knowledgeable that cultural norms in other cultures are sometimes different but oftentimes similar as well. In addition, students enjoyed the presentation at the local high school to teach Japanese culture and fashion to local high school students because they were able to feel enjoyment of local high school students, experience interactive participation with them, and witness positive reactions. Furthermore, results also showed the experience provided personal growth for the target students. Students became motivated to leave their comfort zones as they learned practically and emotionally how to prepare, plan, and implement interactions with individuals from other cultures.

Conclusion: This research explored the development of a domestic service-learning project to improve global competence for college students where the target students are those with less initial interest about different countries and financial resources to travel or study abroad. Through a domestic service-learning project in a lecture-based class to improve global competence of college students, this research reports student learning based on the newly proposed project on global competence. This research found students were not only able to increase their global competence, but also achieve personal growth to leave their comfort zones. They also experienced positive interactions with local high school students, which made the entire experience enjoyable for themselves. This research provided empirical evidence that domestic service-learning can be used to improve college students' global competence. This study also provided a protocol to develop curriculum that incorporates domestic service-learning to increase global competence for college students. Future studies might compare experience between a domestic service-learning project and other learning experiences, such as travel and study abroad to compare how students improve their global competence.

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