

Evaluation of the Global Citizenship Portfolio

Detailed Executive Summary

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Context

This evaluation measured the impact of the Global Citizenship Portfolio (GCP). The GCP is a non-credit bearing module that aims to support students at Sheffield Hallam University to become global citizens by helping them to engage with different values systems, communicate effectively across cultures and in different cultural contexts, and understand how their actions and those of others can have global implications.

The GCP was initiated in 2018 in response to Sheffield Hallam University's ambition to provide a global experience to all students and create world-ready graduates who can work successfully in an increasingly globalised world. A small proportion of students at Sheffield Hallam sought to develop these skills through an experience abroad, which prompted the University to make more efforts to develop global opportunities on campus as an accessible option to all. Lilley, Barker and Harris (2015) suggest that 'learning to become a global citizen is a process that occurs in response to particular facilitating situations that could be simulated through mobility comparable learning experiences "at home"' (p. 242).

The GCP is based on the model of intercultural competence proposed by Deardorff (2011) who defines intercultural competence as the 'ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions'. The GCP engages students in self-directed learning by combining academic-run sessions, lectures, an intercultural experience (a period abroad or a volunteering opportunity locally or on campus) and reflection on changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes. A total of 78 students completed the module in the 2019/20 academic year.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation was focused on the cohorts of students who started the module in October 2019 or January 2020 and finished in May 2020. A mixed-methods programme of data gathering and analysis was used to provide quantitative and qualitative evidence, specifically: 1) pre and post-module surveys, which included items from an existing survey on cultural intelligence (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004), that were completed by a total of 19 students; 2) a sample of 15 reflective journals.

Deductive thematic analysis was undertaken on the reflective journals and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide was followed. Responses to the surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics to examine changes in students' knowledge, understanding and skills before and after the module. Inferential testing, using

McNemar's Test (1947)¹, was used to determine whether there were significant changes in the number of participants who changed from an 'Agreement'² response to 'Non-agreement'³ and vice versa in the pre-post survey comparison. The data sources were triangulated and analysed using the markers that appear in the Global Citizens identikit (Lilley, Barker & Harris, 2015) as a framework.

Ethical approval for this evaluation was granted at Sheffield Hallam. All data collection during the evaluation was conducted within defined parameters of confidentiality, with no data being reported that could identify a participant. Consent was sought from all respondents.

Discussion

The accounts of students highlighted how they reflected and applied the knowledge that they had gained to become more critical of assumptions and more respectful and mindful about cultural differences. This change in mindset was deemed to be crucial for avoiding misunderstandings and helping cross-cultural communication and confidence. Nevertheless, the magnitude of change in students, in relation to their confidence of engaging with different values systems, was more profound in the reflective journals than the surveys, with high levels of confidence expressed in the pre-module survey. This could be due to the self-report measures of cognitive processes producing inaccurate responses by participants (Thomas et al., 2008) or some students overestimating their level of confidence before starting the module.

The experiences of students made them feel more confident as they were able to demonstrate sociolinguistic awareness by adapting their communication skills to ensure language differences were not a longstanding barrier and to establish rapport with others. Students emphasised the importance of listening attentively, applying self-awareness skills and fostering trust between all parties.

The analysis undertaken on the reflective journals and survey responses corresponded in showing that many students have developed an understanding of global issues and an awareness of the consequences. The lectures on global issues, such as fake news and global warming, challenged the prior views of some and students outlined how they could apply this knowledge to tackle global issues at a local level and influence others.

There are a number of limitations to the evaluation which need to be highlighted, for example, there was a drop in the number of respondents in the pre-module survey

¹McNemar's Test (1947) is a matched pair test used to determine whether there is a significant change in nominal data before and after an event. A 2x2 contingency table was used (Pre/Post survey and Agreement/Non-agreement). It would have been preferable to use a test that examines pre-post survey changes in all five response categories but there was an insufficient sample size and variation in responses.

²'Agreement' was classified as those students who responded with 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree'.

³'Non-agreement' was classified as those students who responded with 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'.

(56) compared with the post-module survey (21), with 19 completing both surveys. The reasons for this decline are not known and it might introduce a bias to the results of the evaluation. As parts of the survey were created specifically for the purpose of this evaluation, it would also be useful for the survey in its entirety to be cognitively tested in the future to examine whether students' interpretations are in alignment with the expectations of the evaluation team.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the evaluation indicate that the GCP has had a positive impact on students' development in becoming 'global citizens'. Analysis of the data, particularly the reflective journals, indicated that the majority of students have demonstrated evidence of acquiring intercultural competencies. This will help them to engage with different value systems, communicate effectively across cultures and understand how their actions and those of others have global consequences.

The module was deemed by many students to be insightful that allowed them to see beyond their own confined boundaries to become more curious and willing to discover 'new' and 'different' cultures. The findings indicate that many students were able to develop global citizenship attributes regardless of whether they were on an experience at home or abroad. However, any future evaluations seeking to specifically compare 'home' versus 'international' experiences will require more data to be gathered from students who went abroad.

There are several recommendations that can be taken to enhance the provision of the GCP and to increase the robustness of the evaluation to provide greater understanding about the impact of the module: consider the 'counterfactual' argument (Parsons, 2017) by exploring the outcomes of those who completed the module against those who did not engage at all and those who partially engaged; conduct follow-up evaluations to explore the longer-term impact of the module on participants after it has taken place; utilise additional sources of data to provide a greater 'matrix' of approaches to tap into constructs and to avoid a reliance on self-report measures (Thomas et al., 2008).

References

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