CULTIVATING GLOBAL AWARENESS: EXPLORING THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL LEARNING

*Norshimah Abdul Rahman[1], Marjan Mohd Noor[1]

[1]Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Perlis
*Corresponding author: shimah70@uitm.edu.my

In today's world, education is no longer confined to classrooms within our neighbourhoods. Global learning opens doors to new perspectives, connecting us with people from different corners of the globe. Global learning (GL), also known as global education or global citizenship education, is an educational approach that aims to foster a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the world and to prepare individuals to be active and responsible global citizens. It is the process of diverse people collaboratively analyzing and addressing complex problems (Hartman et. al., 2023). The GL education is much more than just learning about global and development issues. It aims to support teachers to develop their knowledge, skills and values base, in order to provide a quality learning experience to students and young people about how they relate to a globalised world (Bourn, 2014). It can also pose challenges to existing approaches to teaching and learning since it goes beyond traditional academic subjects and emphasizes developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to engage with global issues and challenges.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the traditional boundaries of education are dissolving, making room for the concept of global learning to flourish. GL a dynamic and multifaceted approach to education, offers individuals the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their local contexts (Kahn & Agnew, 2017). This article explores the positive outcomes or benefits and consequences of global experiences. By examining its positive outcomes and considering potential implications, we gain insights into how global learning shapes individuals, societies, and the global landscape as a whole.

Key benefits of Global Learning

GL offers a range of benefits that contribute to personal growth, professional development, and broader societal progress. Some of the key benefits of GL include:

- Cultural awareness and sensitivity:

  Global learning exposes individuals to different cultures, customs, and traditions. This fosters cultural awareness, sensitivity, and a deeper understanding of the diversity that enriches our world. Cultural understanding plays a vital role in preventing misunderstandings and conflicts by promoting effective communication, empathy, and mutual respect. For example: Engaging in discussions about politics or historical events without understanding cultural sensitivities might lead to unintended offense or conflicts (Lusha, 2023). Cultural awareness helps navigate such topics respectfully.

- Broadened perspectives

  Global learning exposes individuals to diverse viewpoints and perspectives by immersing them in environments where they interact with people from various cultural, social, economic, and ideological backgrounds (Alam et al., 2013; Diem et al., 2023). This exposure goes beyond theoretical knowledge, providing firsthand experiences that challenge preconceived notions and broaden one's understanding of the world.

  Exposure to new perspectives encourages open-mindedness and the ability to embrace viewpoints that differ from one's own, promoting tolerance and reducing prejudice (Cotter et al., 2022).

- Enhanced communication skills

  Engaging with people from various backgrounds enhances communication skills, as individuals learn to navigate language differences, nonverbal cues, and diverse communication styles (Diem et al., 2023). It will sharpen your ability to adapt, interpret, and convey messages effectively in a variety of settings. This enhanced communication proficiency not only enriches your personal interactions but also prepares you to succeed in multicultural professional environments.

- Global citizenship and responsibility

  Global learning cultivates a sense of global citizenship, encouraging individuals to take responsibility for addressing worldwide challenges like climate change, poverty, and inequality. This exposure increases awareness of the pressing issues that affect societies worldwide. Moreover, global learning instills a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others, beyond one's immediate community. Individuals begin to perceive themselves as members of a global community, sharing responsibility for its well-being.

  By fostering a sense of global citizenship and responsibility, global learning equips individuals to engage actively in shaping a more just, equitable, and sustainable world (Diem et al., 2023). This mindset transcends geographic borders and encourages individuals to think and act beyond their immediate surroundings.

- Personal growth and resilience

  Global learning pushes individuals out of their comfort zones, leading to personal growth, increased self-confidence, and a broader sense of identity. Interacting with people from various backgrounds creates a global network that can prove valuable for future collaborations, both personally and professionally (Diem et al., 2023). Understanding

cultural nuances improves conflict resolution skills by promoting effective communication and negotiation across cultural differences. Global Learning provides insights into diverse markets, enabling more informed decision-making and successful international ventures.

Challenges

Embarking on a global learning adventure opens doors to new horizons, yet within these horizons lie challenges that demand resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to navigate the unfamiliar. Individuals are confronted with both opportunities and obstacles, as they venture beyond their comfort zones to engage with cultures and perspectives vastly different from their own (Majewska 2023). Among the noticeable challenges are:

- Cultural shock and adjustment:

  Adapting to a new cultural environment can be overwhelming, leading to cultural shock, homesickness, and a sense of isolation (Alam et al., 2013). Misunderstanding cultural cues, customs, and nonverbal communication can lead to unintentional offense or confusion.

- Language and social barriers:

  Communicating in a foreign language can be challenging, leading to misunderstandings and difficulties in expressing thoughts effectively. Building relationships with locals and peers from different backgrounds can be struggling due to differences in social norms and communication styles (Majewska 2023).

- Different education systems and academic expectation

  Navigating unfamiliar educational methods, grading systems, and teaching styles can be confusing and impact academic performance. Meeting the academic expectations and workload of a foreign institution can be demanding and require strong time management skills (Che, 2023). Furthermore, collaborating with peers, professors, or colleagues across different time zones can lead to difficulties in scheduling and communication.

- Navigating bureaucracy and financial pressures

  Dealing with visa applications, legal requirements, and administrative processes in a foreign country can be complex and time-consuming (Liao et al., 2019). Managing finances, including currency exchange rates and unexpected costs, can add stress to the experience (Diem et al., 2023).

- Balancing cultural immersion with academic goals

  Finding the right balance between fully immersing oneself in the culture and focusing on academic responsibilities can be challenging. Unintentional cultural insensitivities or misunderstandings can strain relationships and hinder effective communication (Bakhtiari & Shajar, 2011).

Conclusion

Bakhtiari & Shajar (2011) believes that education is one of key local factors that can be used to moderate some impacts of globalization from negative to positive and convert threats into opportunities for the development of individuals and local community in the inevitable process of globalization. Understanding and anticipating these challenges can help individuals or

students prepare for a rewarding global learning experience (Diem et al., 2023). Institutions and program coordinators should provide adequate support, resources, and guidance to help students overcome these challenges and maximize their international student exchange experience. By proactively addressing these challenges, students can overcome barriers, improve cross-cultural competencies, and grow personally and academically abroad. Individuals or global learners should study or research the host country's culture, customs, and norms to anticipate potential challenges and adapt accordingly.

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