Mackenzie Dockendorf

Giovanna Walters

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Think Globally, Act Locally

Of the three honors competencies, global citizenship is the one that is most difficult in my eyes. When the term was first addressed to me in class, I thought that it solely included studying abroad or learning how to write and speak in a different language. However, after a few weeks of analyzing this term in class, I now know that I am not limited to these two things. In order to become globally competent, a person can find many different ways to get involved globally and locally. Although my time at MSU has been short, I have learned what global citizenship is, and how to enact a plan in order to develop my intercultural skills through various activities on campus and around the world. As a student in the Honors Program, I have seen the possibilities that are out there for me, in order to achieve my goal of becoming a globally competent citizen.

Prior to becoming a member of the Honors Program, I was advised to write an essay to be included in my application for the Honors Program. This essay required me to reflect on what skills and experiences in my life corresponded with the three honors competencies. I had a very vague grasp on the term global citizenship and struggled with this section of my essay. However, through these past few weeks in Honors 201, my understanding of this term has grown. The term global citizenship directly correlates with the term intercultural competence, both of which stand for the ability to see the world from a different perspective. If a person is attempting to achieve global competence they must be able to have an open mind, so they can view situations globally. According to Gupta, this global mindset, cultural competency, and cultural adaptability are skills necessary for anyone to become a leader in their field of work (p.1). In order to achieve this global mindset, a person must have a range of skills relating to global citizenship. This skillset should include a concept of time, understanding of the nature of intercultural communication, degree of formality when interacting with different cultures, and ability to cooperate to achieve a joint goal. Also, in order to achieve this global mindset a person must be able to adapt to their surroundings without judgment. According to Gupta, “Culture is also fluid, which means that it changes as the world around us changes, as we change through our experiences (p.2). A person must be able to adapt to their surroundings because time is not slowing down and adapting is the key to success when it comes to intercultural competence. This concept of adaptation to one’s surroundings is important because if a person is able to adapt without judging the culture itself then everyday life will continue normally. Tying into Gupta’s statements, Sorrells states that, “When people from diverse backgrounds come together, differences are there. (p.4)” These differences manifest in language, dress, behavior, attitudes, morals, and histories. This is why it is important to remember that in order to construct a global mindset, one must be able to use their intercultural skills and be able to adapt to the world around them.

Becoming a global citizen may seem like a simple task, when in reality it is very difficult. It will require me to take part in various activities in order to develop my intercultural skills. Although this seems like an easy task, I am troubled with the question regarding what activities I should participate in. When I initially joined the Honors Program, I knew that language was a component of the global citizenship competency. I started taking Spanish courses when I was in the fifth grade and continued on to take college level Spanish courses in high school. In order to continue to develop my language skills, I enrolled in Spanish 210W here at MSU. As the spring semester is winding down, I can see that my Spanish speaking and writing skills have improved immensely. Not only did my skills improve, but I also gained insight on the Hispanic culture around the world. During my time in this class, we learned about cultural slang associated with the various Hispanic cultures. We also learned about the history of a few Spanish speaking countries through an activity that required us to construct board games regarding a certain country and its culture.

In thanks to my Spanish 210W course, I enhanced my speaking skills, but most of all I enhanced my writing skills due to the fact this class was a writing intensive course. Although this class did introduce me to various cultures, it also reminded me that I have plenty of room to grow in order to become the global citizen that I strive to be. In order to become a better a global citizen, I need to begin partaking in more activities as a member of the community that will allow me to experience other cultures. One opportunity that I came across in my time at MSU, so far, was the “Discover the World in Mankato” international festival. The goal of this festival is to spread the common message of peace and harmony. This festival introduced me to a wide variety of cultures through singing, dancing, crafts, and interactive cultural displays. I observed these various cultures from a bystander point of view, while I was not able to completely experience the culture from this point of view.

My goal as a student in the Honors Program, is to become more globally competent. The international festival that I attended was a good place to start for me on my road to becoming a more globally competent member of the community. This festival exposed me to cultures that I am not used to seeing on an everyday basis. I need to continue to take part in interactive activities such as the one I listed above. In the future, I plan to take part in the study abroad program, which easily falls into the requirements for the global citizenship competency. Study abroad is a great way to experience a different culture because a person is able to fully immerse themselves in a new culture for a long period of time. Although this option is slightly complicated due to the fact that I participate in two athletic activities here at MSU, there are ways to make it work. My tentative plan regarding the global competency involves a study abroad experience for me the Summer of 2017. I plan to travel to either Ecuador or Costa Rica through the 4-week study abroad program. This program directly relates to my global competency, as well as my academic studies because I intend to minor in Spanish, which is my second language. This study abroad experience will allow me to discover myself and remind me of how I want to achieve my goal of becoming a globally competent citizen. Another way that I achieve my global citizenship competency is by working in the community. This would expose me to a variety of cultures and groups of people who are different than the people I met while studying abroad. I may achieve this by working at a youth center or a group home for women.

In conclusion, the process of becoming a globally competent citizen is not an easy process, and will take time to achieve. As I mentioned earlier, I have a tentative plan set in place that will immerse me in other cultures, and will push me to become a true global citizen. I feel that I can use this plan to continue to develop my intercultural skills and I can use it to truly embody the definition of a globally competent citizen. In the future, I plan to continue attending events such as culture nights or international events. I will continue to set goals for myself related to this competency, in hopes that I will grow into a more understanding and culturally aware person.

Works Cited

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