



Stearns, Peter N. (2009). *Educating Global Citizens in Colleges and Universities: Challenges and Opportunities*. NY: Routledge.

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In *Educating Global Citizens in Colleges and Universities*, Peter N. Stearns encourages higher education administrators to place greater importance on global economic, political, academic, and sociocultural opportunities. Stearns is a historian and a seasoned administrator whose current institution, George Mason University, was awarded the 2006 Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education by the Institute for International Education. This book provides historical context, best practices, and rationale for a global emphasis in higher education.

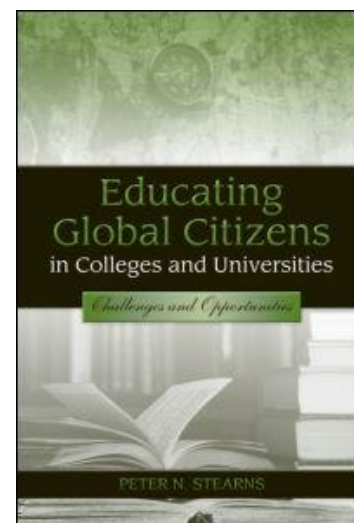


The author describes the challenge of global education by first discussing his choice of the word “global” rather than “international.” International emphasizes the nation state, while global captures the need to balance local traditions and frameworks with the pressures that bear on societies around the world. The need for global emphasis in

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education is not new, but rather newly urgent. The United States suffers from a diminished national image due to recent foreign policies (war, environmental, and anti-terrorist) based on its staunch, parochial view of American society. “The divide between American power and global involvement, on one hand, and awareness of international conditions is both great and troubling” (p. 9).

In chapter two, the goals of global education are discussed. Stearns believes a global curriculum should increase students’ knowledge and improve America’s role and standing abroad. Fragile enthusiasm for the American education system and growing international competition in education should move administrators to adjust their concept of global education. Whether focusing on curriculum, study abroad, or the recruitment of international students, an institution’s global efforts must be mutual, collaborative, and interdisciplinary. Stearns argues that key habits of mind should be taught in higher education. Students should not merely memorize facts, but should be taught how to access and evaluate global data, practice comparative techniques, and balance the interaction between local with global influences.



Stearns provides a context for global education in chapter three. He finds that American students enter post-secondary education knowing less about the world than peers from other regions. Stearns faults parochialism, saying American students lack linguistic competence and are limited by narrow, Western approaches to geography and history. He draws a causal relationship between students’ unpreparedness and a hands-off approach by federal and state governments to becoming involved in global education projects. To bridge the gap, some universities are reaching out to secondary school educators to capture the interest of motivated students who realize the importance of international learning and experience.

The author dedicates chapter four to the undergraduate curriculum, recommending that general education emphasize world history, language studies, and an overall focus on contemporary, *global* issues – not just the dominant Western approach. Ideally, institutions should adopt a philosophy that promotes “global components

across the curriculum, [building] on general education segments” (p. 52). Global emphasis should not only be found in humanities and social sciences, but also in technology, science, and management. To reach the goal of a global curriculum, institutions should engage faculty members by financially supporting faculty travel abroad and by providing grants for global research or course development. In this chapter, Stearns also briefly discusses global studies majors and the graduate curriculum.

Study abroad programs, said to be a cornerstone of global competency, are discussed in chapter five. National statistics related to study abroad are of particular interest. Well over half of America’s study abroad participants come from social sciences, humanities, and management (p. 75). Dismal percentages in education, science, and engineering are alarming given the future role students in these disciplines will play in global and local spheres. Lack of representativeness extends to the countries selected for foreign study (primarily Western Europe), study abroad participants’ gender (65% female) and social and ethnic backgrounds (affluent, primarily white). Stearns analyzes these statistics by weaving historical facts together with current studies. The glass may appear to be half empty, but the system isn’t entirely broken. There are successes at a personal level that remind the reader of the life-changing experience that comes from cultural immersion after living one or more semesters abroad.

Chapter six, related to international students, provides an understanding of administration matters such as recruitment, visas and credentials evaluation, pedagogies to overcome language barriers, and student affairs approaches to orientation and social needs. Most international students desire American instruction in topics of business, engineering, math, and sciences. This contrasts with American students’ undergraduate motivations to study abroad not for the sake of education itself, but to “achieve some combination of humanistic, culturally nostalgic, and entertainment goals” (p. 79). Stearns warns that competitive efforts by the United Kingdom, the European Union and Australia could break up America’s seeming monopoly on international students’ attention. American

institutions should actively increase and retain numbers of international students to ensure continued institutional and national profits, possible advances in fields desired by international students, and direct links to global education.

In chapter seven, Stearns focuses on the mutual advantages that flow from branch campuses and collaborative endeavors. While branch campuses might be created by Americans for Americans, some institutions are establishing branch campuses aimed at international students with the same requirements and degrees as the home campuses. In a New York Times article, Stearns summed up his institution's venture with a Persian Gulf campus: "I will freely express that it's all been more complicated than I expected" (Lewin, 2008). A year later, George Mason's Persian Gulf branch campus closed due to irreconcilable differences with a local sponsor. It was the first American educational venture in the region to collapse (Mills, 2009). Perhaps more promising, and less risky, are shared degree programs or consulting programs. Readers are provided a brief list of questions to help evaluate whether global ventures covered in this chapter are worth pursuing.

Effective leadership and administration are vital to higher education, and global education is no exception. In chapter eight, Stearns offers several ideas on managing the global approach in higher education. Coordination, interrelationships and flexibility are stressed as centralized and decentralized models of global education administration are explored. Stearns appears to favor a centralized office under direction of a vice president, but artfully minimizes this preference by stating there is no one best model of organization. Fundraising is vital to support global education, as is involvement by higher education associations to set benchmarks and provide systematic guidance for individual institutions.

Chapter nine conveys the importance of assessment - to ensure that global education meets desired institutional goals and individual learning outcomes. Stearns suggests assessing the global competence of faculty members before assessing the global competence of students. The

following standards could be reasonably included in an evaluation of global competence: knowledge of foreign language, world geography, historical forces, current world issues, and national political structures. The author shares the University of Georgia's recently drafted list of global competencies for two and four-year institutions. These competencies can spur campus-specific dialogue to create learning objectives that will shape the desired habits of mind for global citizens.

Stearns closes the book with an eloquent summary of previous chapters and further rationale to educate global citizens. He urges "mutualism" over parochialism, disciplinary and geographical balance, as well as faculty involvement. The global mission will be a focal point for American colleges and universities as innovative education models in the U.S. and elsewhere take shape. Stearns presses the reader to understand that "reliance on easy American superiority ... will not position us well for the global opportunities and challenges of the coming years" (p. 195).

This book is suitable for graduate students and administrators who seek general information about global education. The best practices that accompany each chapter and the suggested reading list at the end of the book will prompt further exploration. Stearns's fully articulated global approach may be best suited to large and mid-size institutions. However, administrators at smaller institutions can apply global approaches appropriate for their campus environment. While Stearns briefly included two-year institutions and graduate students in his discussion, focusing solely on the undergraduate experience at four-year institutions would have made a stronger impact. Paragraphs dedicated to graduate students and to two-year institutions were thin and did not contribute to Stearns's argument.

Educating Global Citizens in Colleges and Universities is timely given the ever-growing complexities of our world. Although the author himself recognizes the limitations of this concise read, its contents set forth thought provoking ideas to continue conversations at a local level. Higher

education administrators will benefit from Stearns's practical advice as they move to define and implement facets of global education that will meet our nation's changing economic, political, academic, and sociocultural challenges.

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About the Reviewer

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