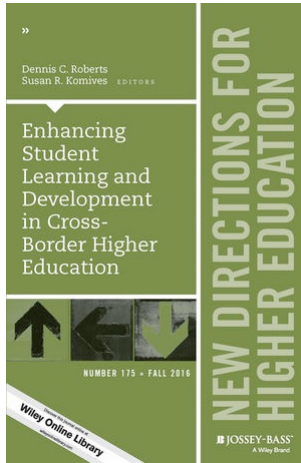




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Enhancing Student Learning and Development in Cross-Border Higher Education (New Directions for Higher Education, Number 175)

Roberts, Dennis C.; and Komives, Susan R., eds.
Wiley, John & Sons, Inc., 2016

Book Review

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This volume is dedicated to cross-border education, a type of internationalization focused on education strategies that move across national and regional lines. Editors Roberts and Komives cite J. Knight's description of internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education" (10). Internationalization, at first blush, may appear but a mere euphemism for globalization, a rather deleterious concept especially when partnered with education. Roberts and Komives, however, are quick to point out how internationalization differs from globalization in both purpose and process. Globalization promotes rampant product production, increased uniformity, the ubiquity of certain products and hegemonic narratives, and is often associated with the pernicious effects of the exploitation of vulnerable populations around the world. In contrast, "internationalization is a process of infusing international ideas across a variety of functions and experiences" in which "distinct attributes of identity are accorded value" (10). Internationalization, according to Roberts, "embraces the inevitable - a shrinking planet with growing shared reliance on each other" but also seeks to preserve culture (10). Cross-border education (CBE) goes beyond the traditional study abroad mindset; it requires "infusing international, cultural, or comparative perspectives in existing courses," "modifying teaching and learning processes through virtual experiences," and incorporating scholarship from other cultural settings to bring the world "home" to students within their own schools (16). It also encourages fluidity of people, programs, projects, and policies across national and regional lines and places a high premium on critical analysis of the cross-cultural application of educational practices.

Section one addresses how to systematically study educational practices and evaluate their transferability to a different context. Darbi Roberts' contribution requires readers to address how and why educational systems choose from which programs to borrow. Section two illustrates examples of student learning and development programs around the world (South Africa, China, UK, Mexico, and more) created to address specific populations and needs within their own cultural and national boundaries but which may prove incredibly useful for others throughout the world. Previously, much research on student learning and development originated in the United States, but this volume highlights the growing programs in other parts of the globe. McGlory Speckman writes about first-year village programs in South Africa, where this program was developed, and the need of many students from backgrounds of "economic, social, and political deprivation" for a communal and supportive environment as they transition to a university setting (34). Wong's chapter is a fascinating foray into a unique population in China, students born under China's 1979 One Child Policy, whose disruptive adjustment to university life requires universities to set up programs addressing this population's lack of compromising skills and enhance their resiliency and self-reliance. These programs include everything from complicated team work, physical training, and mentorship to a simulation activity called the "city challenge" in which "students are given very limited pocket money and they have to earn their food by selling products they invent" (45). Chapter 5 focuses on a specific program at the University of Sheffield, UK, dedicated to "looked-after children" and "care leavers" (49). Encouraging this population towards higher education is a real challenge, as "only around 6% of English care leavers enter higher education at the age of 19, compared to 48% of a similar age in the general population" (53). Mexico's legacy of political corruption, financial disparity between rich and poor, and a general lack of civically engaged citizens have created a challenging environment for local universities trying to educate their students to become leaders, according to Alicia Canton's chapter. The Universidad de Monterrey (UDEM) has invested in numerous initiatives to encourage students to become involved in their communities such as implementing active pedagogies "connecting the student to current problems within the local community," requiring every student to complete an internship at a local organization, offering cocurricular courses to develop leadership competencies, and mandating "every student perform 480 hours of service" (59-60).

Section III moves readers back into the realm of theory, providing analytical tools for exploring data produced in specific student learning and development environments like those described in Section II. This section exemplifies how those designing initiatives to enhance student learning and development, especially in the arena of cross-border education (CBE), must explore the significance of context as well as content. Readers are prompted to explore prevalent cultural assumptions, national agendas, and various socio-political discourses which have informed and shaped their own definitions of learning and development, as well as those

of the programs they wish to adopt or adapt. Broido and Schreiber's chapter presents social justice frameworks for student learning and development as well as concise renderings of various pertinent dimensions of student development theories (identity development, cognitive-structural development, and self-authorship theories). Drawing on the work of Hofer and Weinstock, Broido and Schreiber note how "patterns of epistemological development vary among cultures" and how cultural assumptions about knowledge, truth, and authority, can profoundly affect how students learn and develop (70). The general values of a culture "as well as the role of the family, religion, and social identity enhances a critical perspective on designing appropriate strategies for student learning and development" (75). Chapter 8 applies an ecological systems view to Singapore, a culture that highly values formal education, an attribute likely stemming from a belief among families that education is a passport out of poverty. Deference to elders and authority, possibly arising from a Confucian root in the culture, are attributes which lead to a particular learning environment, not unique to Singapore but definitely significant when considering program adoption across borders. Chen's and Mathies' contribution looks at increased interest in assessment and evaluation in the halls of higher education, in the U.S. and around the world, over the last few decades. The fact that college admission in many Asian cultures is controlled by the government via a national entrance exam, exemplifies just another way in which U.S., European, and Asian institutions approach education differently (89). Formerly faculty and now on staff as an academic advisor, I fully concur with the authors of chapter 10 that "in a cross-border educational paradigm, it is increasingly important for faculty and staff to orient their work and self-understanding of their roles to be that of educators" (93). The need for internationally competent staff will only become more critical in the future.

Roberts and Komives close their volume with a look at how partnerships can enhance student learning and development by taking into consideration institutional motivations for transferring, adapting, hedging, or even avoiding certain programs or policies. Some aspects of student learning and development programs (such as career decision making, counseling, intercollegiate sports, student governance, fraternities and sororities, coed housing, and so forth) may work well in the "home" country but prove disastrous when transplanted into another environment. This volume will prove illuminating to any student affairs professional, academic advisor, study abroad or exchange coordinator, faculty, or administrator within higher education today but it is especially germane to those directly or even tangentially involved with policy adoption across borders.

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