BOOK REPORT

[This series, begun in 1983, includes relatively short monographs examining problems in higher education through extensive analysis of the literature. Over sixty reports have been published, each addressing a different issue. The present example is the second of the 1992 series (there are eight each year).]

When Librarian of Congress James H. Billington addressed the graduating class of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service on May 30 of this year, he deplored the "continued provincialism" and "self-centered materialism in our general culture" and the failure of academia to give students a "sense of the great forces of ethnicity, nationalism, and religion that bind people together and drive them to forms of actions that elude our radar screens of predictability and that cannot be programmed on our computers." Noting that President Clinton is one of the School's alumni, he urged graduates to bring back to the school the "insights and practical wisdom that can come only when experience is combined with reflection," and advocated more alumni participation in the school's ongoing work.

Summary

This work emphasizes the need for today's students to develop a global world view that will empower them to place their own future lives into a broader perspective, thus improving their ability to 1) deal with problems of all kinds on a long-range, global basis, rather than the local and short-term perspective we are now apt to employ, 2) function competently in an international environment, and 3) make personal and public policy decisions as responsible world citizens.

The author defines international higher education as representing 1) international relations (study of relations among countries), 2) area studies (study of particular regions of the world), foreign languages and cultures, comparative and international approaches to individual disciplines, and 3) environmental, global, or peace studies, which examine issues affecting more than one nation. This broad definition obviously cuts across disciplines and departments and involves bi-directional exchange of students between the U. S. and other nations. A brief history of international education, especially in the U. S., leads into an expression of the need to take a more activist stance and a description of current activities at the state and national level.

Higher education institutions in the U.S. must undertake a variety of practical tasks to move ahead in international education. These include curriculum reform, educational mobility, and administration.

Curriculum Reform

Chief among the curricular reforms have been the changes in foreign language requirements. For the twenty years 1967 to 1987, the number of language majors declined drastically; in 1991, only 7.8 percent of college students in the U. S. were enrolled in foreign language classes. Several innovative foreign language programs exist; one of those described is at Lehigh University, which established a media resource center featuring satellite reception of foreign language programming from around the world.

Core courses, including some with international content, are reappearing at U. S. institutions of higher education. Examples include programs that 1) use team teaching and non-traditional methods to raise students' awareness of political, cultural, societal, and international issues, 2) integrate the study-abroad experience into the home institution, 3) integrate foreign language instruction into several disciplines, partly as preparation for study abroad, 4) integrate international aspects into basic technical courses and other existing courses, or 5) focus on a certain topic, but just on one area of the world. Some of these programs have had funding from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education.

Faculty members in specific disciplines have identified ways to integrate international aspects into their courses and have entered into interdisciplinary projects, such as area studies, international relations, global education, peace studies, and ethnic/multicultural studies. Professional schools have developed a special interest in international aspects of their fields: business, mining and engineering, education and social work.

Telecommunications and other simulation activities, as well as real links with students in other countries, have aided the development of international education programs. Foreign students in the U. S. usually take special courses to raise their awareness of U.S. institutions, politics, language, and day-to-day coping skills, but many educators believe they should also be exposed to multi-cultural education programs. Encouraging U. S. students to communicate with and learn to understand foreign students

on their campuses is one way to benefit from the exchange.

Educational Mobility

Study abroad is the second most common component of international education after foreign-language learning. Such programs are popular with students, faculty members, and institutions.

In Billington's address, for instance, he noted that half the Georgetown Foreign Service School graduates had studied abroad. Many believe the need for U. S. students to have a first-hand knowledge of at least one foreign country is critical to economic viability. Whatever drives students to go abroad to study, more of them are doing it all the time. Barriers to foreign study include lack of foreign language skills at a level necessary to take substantive courses in the language of the host country, faculty concern about the quality of the curriculum in study-abroad programs, and administrative details such as delay in graduating. High school students are also studying abroad; their experience has been well-researched.

Coordinating study abroad throughout the student's academic career has been overlooked, but some successful steps have included orientation programs, reports on the impact of the foreign experience on the graduating student's education, work on pre-planned projects, and evaluation of the student outcomes of the study-abroad program.

Programs for faculty are also designed to enrich their multi-cultural experience and to encourage them to provide positive reinforcement for the concept with students. Current reward and incentive systems fail to engender enthusiasm; they need changing.

The advantages of a two-way learning process between students from other countries and their hosts on this side of the Atlantic are extremely valuable. Billington also pointed out the value of this learning at home, commenting on the diversity in class membership and reflecting that the U.S. is "accommodat[ing] substantial populations from every continent in the world."

Administration

Coordination Through International Organizations

The European Community (EC) places a high priority on the integration of higher education across national borders; it therefore supports student exchange programs wholeheartedly. Exchanges may be among EC countries (ERASMUS) and other non-member countries (TEMPUS). These programs are placing heavier demands on the countries' foreign-language teaching programs and new approaches are constantly being sought. Suggestions for future study include work on attitude change, comparative studies of the experience of students from the U.S. and from other countries, the federal role, and possible coordination with programs in other countries.

Administering International Education

The integrated coordination of the various aspects of international education: foreign-language study, study-abroad programs, and hosting foreign students in the U. S., is a new field of higher education administration. The author notes several examples of evaluating institutions with regard to international education activities and expresses a need for tracking trends and directions.

Consortial arrangements often facilitate international educational activities, giving member institutions the opportunity for a greater variety of projects and offering strength in fund raising and grant seeking.

Before undertaking to promote international education, institutions need to take stock of where they are. A checklist of activities to evaluate is included here. Five top priorities for institutions adding to their international programs are: 1) establishing cooperative relationships with institutions in other countries, 2) offering study-abroad opportunities, 3) encouraging foreign-language study, 4) recruiting and training foreign students, and 5) including more international content in the curriculum. Two-year institutions included in the steps to more international activity improving library international collections.

Comment

Administrative arrangements may include cross-border access to information using electronic networks and computerized databases. Another library-related project is the UNESCO - ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education's English/French thesaurus project that will facilitate foreign access to ERIC higher education documents. Relatively little is included in the monograph about library and information needs related to international education in general and specific aspects of it.

In suggesting research in this area, the author mentions the need to analyze the effectiveness of administrative structures above the level of the individual institution. It might be valuable to consider a library/information studies international education agenda which relates to reference collections of information about studying abroad; collections particularly suited to students for whom English is a foreign language; inclusion of foreign-language material in a variety of subject fields; enhancement of foreign-language programs through the use of computer simulation programs in library-located language labs; and emphasizing international content in the general collection of print and non-print materials.

Conclusion

The author concludes with a plea for promoting an international perspective, enjoining individual faculty and administrators to encourage such a perspective on their campuses and suggesting specific ways they can address curriculum reform, educational mobility and administration of international education.

An excellent Executive Summary, characteristic of the series, presents an overview of the topic which can stand alone in providing a gloss on the content. The bibliography is extensive and up-to-date. The index is conceptual, rather than word-specific; for instance, while the text has limited library-related information, the index does not contain the keywords "information," "network," "library," or "thesaurus," although they do appear in the work.

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