

Citizen Diplomacy: A Principle-Based Conceptual Framework for Enhancing Global Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract

Global learning has been a defining feature of higher education in the United States since the onset of globalization and its demand for a global workforce. Despite its significance for student learning, the application and practice of global learning across higher education institutions (HEIs) remain challenged by its conceptual ambiguity and unclear requirements across individual institutions. This conceptual limitation has given rise to shifting institutional support of key global programs, resulting in uneven student success and preparation for global learning outcomes (GLOs). The current perspective-type, conceptual paper examines the theoretical challenges and derivative effects surrounding the notion of global learning, employing a qualitative review methodology to analyze and assess contemporary literature on the core concepts, foundational ideas, and conceptual barriers that have shaped its epistemology. Following this discussion, the article proposes a principle-based framework to overcome and enhance the current approach to GLOs, drawing on the concept and principles of citizen diplomacy. The article argues that the three pillars of citizen diplomacy—reciprocity, relationship-building, and search for common ground—offer a more cohesive framework, given their relevance, utility, and best practices for global learning in HEIs.

Keywords: global learning, citizen diplomacy, higher education institutions, global learning outcomes

Once *diplomacy* is seen again in terms of representation rather than as an instrument of more substantive foreign policies, then it becomes possible to see how it expresses a *human condition* that precedes and transcends the experience of living in the sovereign, territorial states of the past few hundred years (Sharp, 1999, p. 51)

1. Introduction

Through the longstanding tradition of cross-border partnerships and consistent enrollment of international students, higher education institutions in the United States have served as a distinct unit in fostering student learning in the global era. In the U.S., global learning has emerged as an essential student learning outcome in response to the new demands of globalization and its workforce (Juárez, 2013). Since then, HEIs have developed policies and invested in the infrastructure required to support campus internationalization strategies, accommodating the rising enrollment of international students (Helms & Brajkovic, 2017). Alongside investments in physical infrastructure and institutional partnerships, HEIs recognized that successful implementation of global learning would require a holistic approach to drive deep cultural transformation through enhanced student learning, curriculum reform, and innovative course design (Green, 2006). In response, professional organizations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) developed guidelines and offered recommendations for their implementation across U.S. institutions.

However, despite these initial efforts aimed at providing a “basic framework of expectations” (AAC&U) for global learning, American institutions have struggled to maintain consistency in their approaches and implementations, reflecting the autonomy and diversity of nearly 4,000 postsecondary institutions in the country. As Hovland (2014) reports, “The ways that institutions see themselves in global terms are often determined by how their states and local communities have been shaped by economic transformation, demographic shifts, trade relations, cultural relationships, and other webs of connection” (p. 3).

Furthermore, the implementation of global learning has long been challenged by its conceptual ambiguity and divergent interpretations, resulting in differing definitions and requirements across individual institutions. As Zhou (2022) claims, “ambiguity and variance in defining global learning further make assessment difficult, if not

impossible” (p. 116), and the lack of a shared conceptual framework has led to an uneven application and widening gap in student learning and success.

This conceptual study examines the core concepts and foundational ideas that shape the epistemology of global learning, and discusses the ongoing challenges associated with its conceptual ambiguity and derivative effects in higher education. It employs a qualitative methodology to review and assess the relevant literature on the theoretical background and conceptual limits in global learning. Based on this review, the article proposes a principle-based framework grounded in the concepts and pillars of citizen diplomacy, analyzing its relevance and utility for enhancing global learning in HEIs.

2. Global Learning in Higher Education: Theoretical Background and Definitions

Since the late 1990s, globalization has driven unparalleled innovation and growth through enhanced multisector collaboration and global connections. In technology, trade, and education, globalization has opened wide access to international participation and networking, and global success today is no longer limited to traditional, top-down diplomatic engagements, but private citizens and non-state actors are emerging as skilled contributors to global development (Gilbaud, 2019). Higher education institutions are instrumental in cultivating the values and practices of global learning and in conducting critical assessments of globalization's implications for our society. As Grad & van der Zande (2022) maintain, “higher education can no longer only observe from afar, but it is time to act as education is directly affected by the changes in society due to globalization” (p. 5). HEIs must acknowledge that “active engagement with the rest of the world has become fundamental to a high-quality education, one that prepares students and their communities for the larger world in which they will live and work” (American Council on Education, 2011, p. 6).

Global learning and related terms have become a hallmark of American higher education thanks to its history of international partnership and cooperation among faculty, students, administrators, and scholars. Through these connections, individual citizens have developed reciprocity and built relationships with global communities in areas and industries where governmental entities have struggled to make progress (Piros & Koops, 2020). In the face of new global demands, traditional strategies for campus internationalization evolved toward better aligning campus infrastructure and student enrollment with curriculum reform and course design, seeking a holistic transformation of internationalization (Hudzik, 2015). In 1994, Knight pioneered an early definition of “Internationalization of Higher Education,” which became a foundational concept for subsequent articulations of global learning on campus. Knight (1994) characterized the internationalization of higher education as “the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution” (p. 7), emphasizing the significance of building effective infrastructures for internationalization. Decades later, Leask (2015) expanded on this definition, describing the term as “the incorporation of international, intercultural and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a programme of study” (p. 9), positioning HEIs as a key contributor to student success in global education.

The rise of scholarly contributions that assess the shifting landscape of global education in the 21st century has contributed new insights and epistemologies on the subject. Hudzik (2015) introduced the concept of “comprehensive internationalization” and was defined as the following:

Commitment confirmed through action to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research and service missions in higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise (p. 7).

Comprehensive internationalization sought to provide a more holistic approach to campus internationalization, aligning enrollment efforts with global learning at host institutions. Illustrating the significance of campus internationalization, Zhou (2022) reported that 64% of HEIs had established GL objectives in their mission statements and 15% had instituted professional development for staff and faculty on campus (p. 118). The concept was subsequently adopted by prominent organizations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators and recognized by its annual Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization, aimed at recognizing “U.S. colleges and universities that are making significant, well-planned, well-executed, and well-documented progress toward comprehensive internationalization” (NAFSA, n.d.).

The rapid increase in international student enrollment on U.S. campuses has required new frameworks and strategies to support this unique demographic and to educate its host institutions, seeking cultural integration and a new *ethos* of internationalization at home (Knight, 2006). As Bovill et al. (2015) comment, “most well-established universities in developed nations have an ‘internationalization strategy,’ often with a focus upon increasing the numbers of

international students enrolling on programs” (p. 13), but many institutions struggle to establish a culture or ethos of internationalization through a deep transformation that aligns infrastructure investment with meaningful student formation. To support comprehensive internationalization through global learning, diverse mission statements were articulated based on individual institutions’ vision and level of commitment (Hovland, 2014). Zhou (2022) offers an overarching definition of global learning as “the essential learning outcome of comprehensive internationalization of curriculum requiring students to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes about the external world and their internal selves in their daily lives across local and global communities” (p. 115). The shift towards global learning in HEIs has yielded important advantages for both international and domestic students, with institutions prioritizing globally informed curricula and pedagogies that cultivate cross-cultural engagement and competencies (Shulsky et al., 2017). As ideas and strategies for campus internationalization became more firmly established within U.S. higher education, global learning has retained its vital role in the academic dimension of student learning (Green, 2006; Meachan & Gaff, 2006).

However, despite these efforts toward comprehensive internationalization, the practice and implementation of global learning have faced ongoing challenges due to the conceptual ambiguity surrounding the term and its divergent approaches at home and abroad across HEIs. According to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (2026), unclear global learning requirements across institutions have produced “questionable outcomes” and standards that often respond to contingent, external circumstances (e.g., fiscal challenges) rather than a commitment to student formation. These conceptual challenges arise from the absence of a principle-based understanding and conceptual framework of the notion of global learning, which leads to uneven outcomes and achievement across HEIs: “Global learning has become a fundamental aspect of international education. Yet, a clear understanding of global learning and how to develop it remains unclear” (Zhou, 2022, p. 115). Furthermore, as Hovland (2014) notes, global learning is “a term widely used across higher education, yet higher education faculty, staff, and practitioners do not always agree about what it means” (p. 2), adding to the growing inconsistency between institutional goals and practices.

A close examination of scholarship on these essential inquiries and their impact on student development is critical to enhancing GLOs in higher education. The following section discusses the ongoing challenges that limit the effective implementation and practice of global learning in HEIs.

3. Challenges in Global Learning: Conceptual Ambiguity and Derivative Effects

As higher learning institutions navigate the complexities of the current educational landscape, global learning should be centered on cultivating the essential competencies that support student success in the global workforce. Particularly, in times of geopolitical uncertainty, universities and colleges have both the opportunity and the responsibility to cultivate the country’s diplomatic and intellectual human capital by leveraging its richly diverse linguistic and cultural resources (ACTA 2026, p. 4). Achieving these goals, however, requires more than a mere integration of global content in course design; it calls for shared principles and practices conducive to a comprehensive change in institutional support and culture. As Kahn & Agnew (2017) state, “if global learning is a strategic priority for institutions of higher education, then a new way of doing academic work must evolve” (p. 61).

The concept and practice of global learning remain understudied and inconsistent across HEIs due to the lack of a clear, principle-based framework for understanding and applying its outcomes. The lack of conceptual clarity has often led to the interchangeable use of related terms such as global engagement and world citizenship (Khazen, 2018; Scoffham, 2018), with “wide variation in degrees of commitment and some lingering uncertainties” reinforcing the lack of a shared understanding of the concept (Stearns, 2009, p. 2). Likewise, Angrist et al. (2021) note that despite notable improvements in school enrollment across institutions in the recent decades, these gains have not translated into actual achievement in global learning outcomes. The authors draw attention to the disconnect that exists between “schooling” --tracked through enrollment rates and years of attendance--and “learning”--development of core skills and cognitive abilities, contending that student assessment only through schooling cannot forecast career outcomes and economic returns. The authors, therefore, underscore the limits of numerical, quantity-based education indicators, prompting the need for quality-driven, skills-focused experiential global learning that develop genuine real-world proficiency.

Similarly, Bosio and de Wit (2025) point to the increasing destabilization of values and ethical basis that guide global learning in contemporary higher education. At the institutional level, the authors problematize the widening gap between rhetoric and practice, whereby policy statements supporting internationalization and global learning do not always meet the implementation plan and resource allocation needed for global programs. The authors contend that faculty often face increasing workload and inadequate support, leaving them without a sense of responsibility for

curriculum reform. Contingent issues that challenge global learning today is constrained in structural terms, shaped by economic pressures and crisis management rather than by authentic commitment to student learning.

A significant effect resulting from the absence of a shared, principled conceptual framework has been the shifting institutional priorities and resources for key global programs such as foreign languages and cross-cultural studies (ACTA, 2026). In recent years, fiscal challenges and other external pressures have strained institutional support for global programs. Additionally, the swift adoption of digital learning and similar modalities has shifted common standards, compromising some essential components of GLOs (Ashman et al., 2014). These changes undermine students' language and cross-cultural education and the capabilities needed to fill key positions in global workplaces. In 2020, according to ACTA (2026), 15% of positions designated for overseas requiring language competence remained unfilled, with 24% filled by underqualified personnel, as well as a significant shortage of qualified candidates for the international workforce.

Fiscal and ideological constraints in HEIs can often lead to decisions seeking a short-term impact, but if not carefully managed these decisions can compromise the longstanding progress in and commitment to global education: "Despite the massive growth in the American population who speak foreign languages over the last few decades, America's colleges and universities have been cutting languages as a quick solution to budget woes, while ironically proclaiming allegiance to diversity and global competency" (ACTA, 2026, p. 10). As Kahn and Agnew (2017) note, "global learning requires the integration of multiple, and often diverse and conflicting, perspectives, across both macro and micro contexts" (p. 53), where the cultivation and practice of collaboration, dialogue, and diplomatic skills across differences is vital for higher learning institutions. The development of skills to engage across these differences is a "non-negotiable universal" in global learning (p. 53).

In times of fiscal and geopolitical uncertainties, HEIs should safeguard their fundamental mission and practices: "Contradictory goals and ideologies, which are driven from differing motivations and emerge from diverse contexts, can derail the very best internationalization efforts" (Khan & Agnew, 2017, p. 60). To bridge the gap between global learning goals and practices, the following section proposes a principle-based conceptual framework based on the concept and practice of citizen diplomacy before analyzing the relevance and utility of integrating its framework in higher education.

4. Citizen Diplomacy: A Conceptual Framework for Global Learning

A citizen diplomacy framework offers a new lens to envision global learning and to address its conceptual challenges in HEIs. The concept and guiding pillars of citizen diplomacy--reciprocity, relationship-building, and relentless search for common ground--as proposed by Mueller (2023), can contribute to a shared understanding and orientation towards a more engaged, community-focused GLOs, informing course design and pedagogy.

The contemporary global landscape is evolving swiftly, adding complexity to international relations in public and private sectors alike. The emergence of non-state actors and entities--non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, multinational corporations--is gaining influence globally, as demonstrated by the success of the Ottawa Treaty in 1997 (Davenport, 2002).

According to Heine (2008), the concept of diplomacy in its traditional form and practice has undergone a significant transformation due to a broader participation of the civic society and private citizens in international relations, but its practitioners have been slow to adapt to the new changes: "Traditional model of diplomacy, founded on the principles of national sovereignty and of statecraft, is becoming less relevant as a field of new, influential actors enter the international system" (2008, abstract section). The practice of diplomacy, as Heine notes, is shifting from the conventional "club model" to a more expansive "network model," demanding broader engagement with a range of global actors across public and private sectors. This paradigm shift in approaching diplomatic engagement promotes the participation of non-state actors and individual citizens by leveraging NGOs, private businesses, technology, and education to build global influence. Heine (2008) notes that it is about the ability of private corporations and NGOs to move across national boundaries in ways that governments and intergovernmental organizations cannot. It is about the globalization of knowledge, information and science, and about transparency (Heine, 2008).

Moomaw (2010) observes that today, diplomacy is anything but simple. A complex set of rules of engagement has evolved to deal with the ever more complex sets of issues that face modern national states and their relationships. The author cites the creation of the United Nations as deeply influential in chartering a new era of diplomacy (Moomaw, 2010). The rise of humanitarian and environmental advocacy across civil societies, as well as their work on a range of global issues, has entered the international system as key agents and contributors to global development and peacebuilding in areas and in ways that governmental organizations have proven less effective and agile

(Moomaw, 2010). Increased access to technology and cross-border contact enable new international actors to engage in diplomatic practices that contribute to global influence. With this new reality, Davenport (2002) notes, “we are entering a time of ‘polylateral’ diplomacy, where major actors will have to balance and juggle a host of players and interests in shifting alliances” (The future of New Diplomacy section). International NGOs and multinational businesses have proliferated on a global scale and are building effective methods of citizen diplomacy that serve as key contributors to global impact.

According to Mueller (as cited in Shuai, 2025), citizen diplomacy in the current global context can be defined as “the concept that the individual citizen has the right—even the responsibility—to help shape foreign affairs...Citizen diplomacy prompts the question—what can one person do?” (para. 4). Lachelier & Mueller (2023) state that citizen diplomacy refers to the ways in which individuals, who are not government officials, exert their influence to shape international relations through mechanisms that “are not necessarily government-sponsored, as public diplomacy is” (p. 91). While public diplomacy, a concept coined by Edmund Gullion in 1965, promotes government-led initiatives, citizen diplomacy emphasizes the agency, responsibility and contributions of individual private citizens in promoting international relations (Lachelier & Mueller, 2023).

The idea for private citizens to engage in diplomatic practices can be traced back to the 1920s; then-U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root, in response to World War I, urged its citizens to learn about and engage proactively in international affairs and build diplomatic relations (Lachelier & Mueller, 2023). This idea gained greater traction in 1956 when President Dwight Eisenhower convened the White House Summit on Citizen Diplomacy, bringing forward initiatives such as People to People International and Sister Cities International. In 1959, an official framework for citizen diplomacy was released by the U.S. Department of State through its publication, *The Citizen's Role in Cultural Relations: An Account of Public-Private Cooperation in the International Educational Exchange Program of the Department of State*. The publication underscored the importance of public-private sector partnerships and the contributions of members of civic society as “citizen diplomats” in promoting international and cultural relations (Lachelier & Mueller, 2023). According to Mueller & Rebstock (2012), the notion of citizen diplomacy became more prevalent in the 2000s thanks to the role of the National Council for International Visitors (NCIV) in working with leaders for the Wingspread Conference on Citizen Diplomacy (2004), which had led to the celebration of three National Summits (2006, 2008 and 2010) organized by the U.S. Center of Citizen Diplomacy in Des Moines, Iowa.

5. Citizen Diplomacy Framework: Relevance and Utility for Global Learning in Higher Education.

In accepting her Fulbright Prize in 2019, Angela Merkel emphasized the importance of educating individual citizens to engage effectively in global affairs to tackle complex problems. Merkel stated that “it is not only politicians and diplomats who foster peace, but above all citizens who establish and maintain friendly relations with people in other countries” (Merkel, 2019, as cited in Lachelier & Mueller, 2023). In the United States, HEIs serve as essential units of education and training for the global workforce, developing the talent and intellectual capacity that the country needs to build its representation and asset internationally. As Nye (2005) claims, “American higher education produces significant soft power for the United States” (p. 13), leveraging its diplomatic assets through global partnerships. Likewise, Knight (2019) highlights the university's international orientation, noting that its design and designation evoke the idea of the “universe,” a place for world communities to come together and build reciprocity, relationships, and common grounds. HEIs serve as important hubs for the praxis of citizen diplomacy thanks to their educational infrastructure, dynamic systems, and human capital. As Lachelier & Mueller (2023) suggest, “researchers and practitioners interested in advancing citizen diplomacy globally should collaborate to design and build a larger citizen diplomacy ecosystem” (p. 101), and institutions of higher learning should play a vital role in building this ecosystem.

In the face of current challenges, higher education is presented with a crucial opportunity and responsibility to cultivate GLOs guided by the principles of citizen diplomacy. Its conceptual framework and fundamental pillars of reciprocity, relationship-building, and search for common ground add value and utility to current practices of global learning in higher education as it offers a more cohesive, principle-based approach. The following section examines the three pillars of citizen diplomacy proposed by Mueller & Rebstock (2012) and provides recommendations for integrating them into GLOs.

6. Pillars of Citizen Diplomacy and Recommendations for Higher Education

The practice of global learning across U.S. higher education has been limited by its conceptual ambiguity and unclear requirements, complicating the implementation of its objectives. To address this shortcoming, the present study examines the principles or pillars of the citizen diplomacy as a framework that can be integrated to enhance the current practices in global learning. In essence, citizen diplomacy is the relentless pursuit of conflict resolution through cooperation, informed civic discourse, and identification of common ground through intercultural understanding (Mueller & Rebstock, 2012). As such, the three pillars of citizen diplomacy—reciprocity, relationship-building, search for common ground—proposed by Mueller & Rebstock (2012) offer helpful guidance and insights that can inform a more cohesive framework to understand and approach GLOs.

6.1 Reciprocity

The pillar of reciprocity emphasizes a dialogic, person-centered approach to global learning through a peer-to-peer, community-engaged approach. Mueller (2012) illustrates reciprocity as “one handshake at a time,” underscoring its values placed on human-centered approach to intercultural dialogue, constructive feedback, and civic discourse. Reciprocity represents a shift in directionality from the traditional one-way, unilateral engagement to a dynamic, polyilateral, reciprocal mode of exchange (Villanueva, 2007). Active reciprocity in citizen diplomacy requires deep knowledge of global cultures and the ability to navigate diverse identities, professions, and backgrounds across languages, religions, socioeconomic contexts, and political spectrums. Reciprocal exchange demands effective cross-cultural negotiation and communication skills to meet the challenges of complex global connections (Heine, 2008).

Reciprocity in global learning may be best practiced in higher education through meaningful peer-to-peer, community-engaged projects that pursue authentic exchange with members of target cultures and languages. The curriculum or course design should incorporate a service or field research component to allow students to interact with and evaluate diverse worldviews. As Mueller (2012) notes, “active, contributing exchange participants learn more, develop more self-esteem...than passive, uninvolved participants” (p. 7). Community-based courses can promote student interest and “open up funding opportunities for ‘civic engagement’ initiatives in language departments” (ACTA, 2026, p. 18). For instance, students enrolled in a world language course or program can serve the local community organizations of the target culture at home. A primary goal of global learning is to help students broaden their perspectives by engaging with diverse worldviews and experiences that differ from their own. In the current educational landscape, where the rapid adoption of digital learning often undermines human-centered education, reciprocity takes on a particular meaning and timely relevance. Further recommendations for the practice of reciprocity involve opportunities for international forums and guest speakers that promote civic discourse and active exchange of constructive insights. Respect towards dissenting views and identification of common grounds for mutual understanding are fundamental attributes in global learning, and HEIs must offer opportunities for informed civic debate and discourse through faculty expertise across academic disciplines, languages and perspectives (Taylor, 1994; Mezirow, 1997).

6.2 Relationship-Building

Closely related to reciprocity is the pillar of relationship building, cultivated through deep respect for the members representing distinct cultures or communities. Positive international relations begin with enduring human relations based on deep respect (Mueller & Rebstock, 2012). The initial reciprocal exchange may serve as a gateway, but interpersonal, relationship-building skills through sustained communication and networking will pave the way for mutual trust and understanding among members of global cultures.

Recommendations for relationship-building in global learning in the context of higher education include lived, interpersonal experiences in interculturality for students to learn about others as well as to develop a sense of self awareness and identity. Course assignments may employ comparative perspectives to introduce world cultures and languages, helping students break from self-constructed or media-induced cultural assumptions and stereotypes. Cultural differences and unfamiliar views can evoke discomfort at first, leading to uncritical reactions that reinforce pre-conceived ideas. Transformative learning occurs when students and faculty engage in deep examination and reflection on the differences between prescribed cultural narratives and human-centered lived experiences (Shulsky et al., 2017). This process can be developed through collaborative projects or faculty-guided interactions with international students, helping learners gain a deeper understanding of their own identity and history within the broader geopolitical and sociocultural contexts. Likewise, it has also been demonstrated that “International students also have increased academic success when they have regular encounters with students from other backgrounds” (Glass, 2012). Equipping students to navigate distinct cultural backgrounds and histories to reach mutual

understanding is essential for global peacebuilding. As Parent & Varnhagen (2011) suggest, dialogical perspectives are “conducive to the articulation of new meaning through social action and to the subsequent enhancing of the capacity of individuals and communities to break out of predetermined attitudes and mindsets” (p. 162). Dialogic modalities of exchange help students “avoid arbitrary individualism or simply ‘doing one’s own thing’” (Parent & Varnhagen, 2011, p. 162). While differences and conflicting ideologies are difficult to navigate for students and faculty alike, it is nonetheless a foundational learning outcome in higher education and institutions should remain committed to this mission through support of key programs: “Institutions can encourage true diversity by building robust language programs....language programs produce students with a deeper understanding of other peoples and cultures and the linguistic skills that enable them to communicate across differences” (ACTA. 2026, p. 4).

6.3 Search for Common Ground

The pursuit of common ground is vital to citizen diplomacy and is accomplished through a commitment to civic discourse and dialogue to reach conflict resolution. In contrast to some current methods of global learning in HEIs that focus primarily on individually-driven research projects or digital learning, requiring minimal or no interpersonal or dialogic interaction with peers, citizen diplomacy prioritizes human-centered exchange through reciprocity, relationship building, and identification of common ground (Lachelier & Mueller, 2023). Common ground and consensus are crucial achievements for crisis resolution and must be processed through well-informed civic dialogue driven by deep knowledge of the history and identity of global cultures.

To advance this principle, students of higher education must be provided with robust opportunities to learn about world cultures, histories, and languages that inform contemporary geopolitical dynamics. Case-based studies help students focus on a specific global problem and evaluate potential solutions. Scenario-based activities or projects develop the skills needed for collaborative problem-solving, civic discourse, and consensus-building. Additionally, globally-focused professional training and internships that allow learners to gain real-life experience through linguistic and cultural competencies enhance their professional credentials and competitive edge. Global learning tailored to professional contexts is vital for careers that serve multicultural and multilingual communities at home and abroad (El Ghraoui et al., 2023). To develop collaborative solutions and identify commonalities across cultural, political, and ideological lines, students should learn to apply deep respect for all, shifting away from the traditional, top-down unidirectional mindset towards a more dynamic, cooperative culture of citizen diplomacy. As Andreotti & de Souza (2008) note, global learning encourages learners to connect the local with the global, applying information and experiences that acknowledge shared similarities as well as respect for core differences.

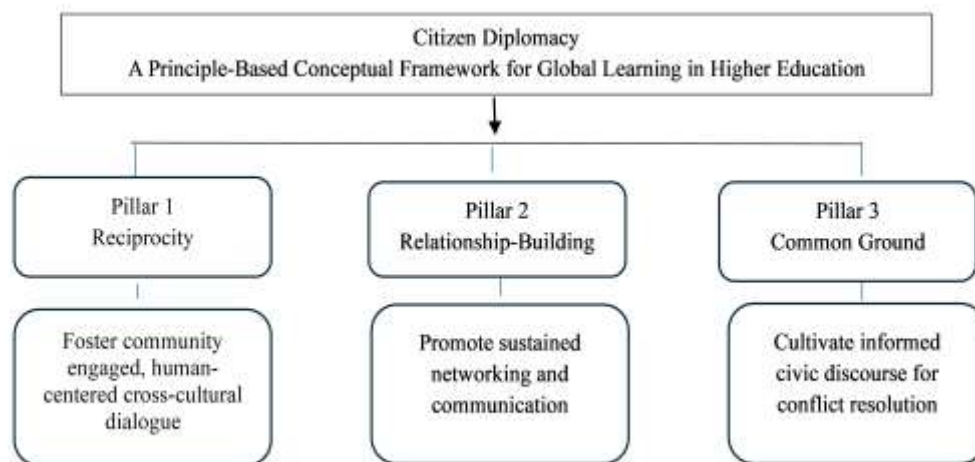


Figure 1. A Principle-Based Conceptual Framework for Global Learning in Higher Education

7. Conclusion

While global learning has been an integral part of HEIs in the United States for nearly three decades, ongoing challenges triggered by conceptual ambiguity and derivative effects have limited a consistent and effective application of GLOs. To address this gap, this study has proposed and examined the relevance and advantages of a principle-based conceptual approach to global learning based on the foundational pillars of citizen diplomacy. If global learning continues to be a fundamental mission of universities, then internationalization strategy at home and abroad should explore the utility of the citizen diplomacy framework in promoting global learning, starting with faculty and students in the classroom:

Classrooms are entry points into the world...Global learning classrooms provide a form of practiced mimicry, where students incorporate perspectives, overcome challenges, transcend differences, and seek answers collaboratively. Collective work puts knowledge into practice, transforms students into educators, and allows learners to see themselves as nodes within global learning communities (Khan & Agnew, 2017, p. 56).

Sustained development of global learning will require a broader institutional support to build an ecosystem of scholars and practitioners focused on the continued progress and enhancement of GLOs. As builders and bridges of collaborative knowledge and global partnerships, institutions of higher education are distinctly positioned to cultivate and expand that ecosystem.

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