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# Globalizing THE CURRICULUM

**Jennifer Bowden**

The world has changed. The U.S. has moved from an industrial to a knowledge society yet much of our education system has seemingly turned a blind eye, putting our children into a dire situation. Former Governor James Hunt states, "Our students are trapped in a kind of educational isolationism" (Marx and Kagan 2008, para 4). This isolation creates a learning curve as students compete for jobs with people not just from other states, but from around the world. People only need to look around their neighborhood to see that the world has come directly to our doorstep. The 2010 U.S. Census found that 90% of our country's growth in the past decade was minorities. The world is only going to become more diverse both at home and abroad. Due to this fact, our population's general lack of global competency threatens our economy, security and citizenship. Only 7% of college students meet basic standards for global preparedness as defined by the American Council of Education (Hunter 2004). We are at a crossroad in history. How do we educate students in this new world where facts are at their fingertips, borders are erased, and time/space limitations have disappeared through technology?

As current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently stated, "We haven't been compelled to meet our global neighbors... learn about their histories, values, and viewpoints. I am worried that ... our country risks being disconnected" (Asia Society 2010, para 12). Globalization is now fully upon us. Goods, services, ideas, people, and money flow easily between countries. As former Secretary of Education Roderick Paige said, "We need to look no further than our morning paper to see that our future...is inextricably linked to the complex challenges of the global community" (Marx and Kagan 2008, para 3). Unfortunately, in 2006, a National Geographic/Roper poll of young adults ages 18-24 found the state of global competency in the U.S. to be dismal. The National Commission on Asia in the Schools also states that

Americans are "dangerously uninformed about international matters" (Committee for Economic Development 2006, 14). As Sputnik revived U.S. math and science instruction during the Cold War, many believe that the events on 9/11 should have been a wake-up call to increase our global competence. Nearly ten years later, education has rarely addressed this new global reality.

## Economic

Our world's current level of connectivity has been compared to a giant spider web. When one area of the web is touched, vibrations can be felt throughout. We are linked for better or for worse. Now, one in five jobs in the United States is tied to international trade (Longview Foundation 2008). With the ease of technology and transportation, companies conduct global employee searches. Working on international teams across time zones has become common. Domestic markets have been saturated and the majority of consumers now live outside the U.S. Many companies are keen to capture part of this untapped market. Not understanding and adapting to the other cultures in the business world can create hugely expensive failures. Business leaders see the value of international education and know the world is continuing to rapidly change. In 2010, four of the five leading world economies were Western. By 2050, only one of the five leading world economies will be Western (Kupchan 2012). Even if students never desire to leave the country, the world has come to their doorstep.

## Security

"To solve most of the problems facing our country ...will require every young person to learn more about other regions, cultures, and languages," stated former Secretary of State Colin Powell (Committee for Economic Development 2006, 13). National security is directly linked to the need for global competency. The FBI and U.S. military lack the trained linguists needed to translate intelligence intercepts

in a timely manner, creating a backlog of security information. In our military efforts, our forces must interact and negotiate with other nations creating the need for language study and deep cultural awareness. Speaking about Iraq, General Petraeus commented that, "We had terrific situational awareness, what we lacked was cultural awareness" (Committee for Economic Development 2006, 10). He understands first-hand that U.S. security is served, not undermined, by international understanding. In addition, our global ignorance makes the country seem arrogant or indifferent which can breed anti-Americanism throughout the world, also decreasing our security. As forward-thinking U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright warned years ago, "Our linguistic and cultural myopia is losing us friends, business, and respect in the world" (Asia Society 2010, para 44).

## Citizenry

Creating a strong citizenry has always been a goal of education in the United States, but people must now consider that they are also global citizens. World issues affect us all, whether they relate to food, disease, war, energy, environment, etc. These problems do not recognize boundaries or wealth. Also, people need to act civilly while interacting with others at home and abroad. This can only happen through understanding differences and acknowledging human commonalities because people fear what they do not know. Consider the teacher that may think their newly immigrated Asian student is "shifty" because they do not look the teacher in the eye, not realizing that the student may be showing respect. In addition, people must be sensitive to stereotyping. Just as all Americans are not the same, neither are people from other countries. Civility becomes increasingly important as our own "country-of-countries" increasingly diversifies. As President Obama stated in 2009 to the graduating class of Notre Dame, "Our very survival has never required greater cooperation and understanding among all people from all places" (Kolodziej 2009, 1).



## Texas

Most importantly, internationalization of education creates meaningful, real-world lessons that can increase student participation, depth of knowledge, and act as a thread to tie all disciplines together. Texas is a perfect case study for the future of the United States and the need to teach a more globally equitable curriculum. Texas is already a minority-majority state with 65% of students coming from a minority group (Deviney 2008). Texas is the top exporting state in the U.S. and is ranked the third most globalized U.S. state (Virmani and Kumar 2007). Texas has more Fortune 500 companies than any other state and is home to three of the top ten biggest cities in America (*Economist* 2009, para 2). However, the Kauffman Foundation ranks Texas as 41<sup>st</sup> in the U.S. for the level of education of its workforce (*Economist* 2009, para 13). Adding more global competency/diversity to the Texas curriculum would undoubtedly lead to improvement as people are generally more interested in information in which they can directly relate. This could create a more equitable system and allow more students to have a “place at the table.” Already, Texas is somewhat ahead of many other states in that it requires World or Human Geography and World History as part of the standard diploma requirements. Shockingly, 42 states do not require high school students to even take a geography class according to *National Geographic* (*National Geographic*).

## College and Career Readiness

The United States Department of Labor states that most of today's students will have ten to fourteen jobs by the age of thirty-eight. To be successful in this new globalized world, new skills are required. These requirements are addressed in the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards through the Cross-Disciplinary Key Cognitive and Foundational Skills that cut across subjects. These not only emphasize reading and writing skills but also include critical thinking (suspending judgment, analyzing multi perspectives), creativity and innovation, flexibility, communication and teamwork (in culturally diverse settings), leadership, problem solving, life-long learning, and accountability. These skills are greatly enhanced with an international component. They are a meaningful vehicle to process the overarching global themes that are so lacking in most school subjects. Part of the issue may be due to the fact that pre-service education for teachers has not kept up with the drastically changing

world. “Despite significant attention to internationalization in higher education in recent years, teacher training programs are often among the least internationalized” (Longview Foundation 2008). A 2007 study by Ann Imlah Schneider called *To Leave No Teacher Behind* reinforces this sad truth: Over 80% of teachers report that certification requirements and subject standards do not reflect increasing globalization. The magnitude of this issue can be recognized when one imagines that teachers are working with students that will live into the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

## First Steps

Without global competency provided in pre-service teacher training, the question becomes: How do you incorporate this global competency into all subjects as a currently practicing teacher? It is much easier than most would guess. Integrate a global focus into existing lessons. Infusing international examples into existing lessons is not taxing, costs nothing and takes little time while also strengthening the basics. One could argue that adding a global perspective is now itself a “basic” in our global age. So as to not become overwhelming, start small by infusing an international example, case-study, or a non-western perspective. A few ideas for different subject area integration include:

- Math: Use real-world data in calculations, make predictions based on global statistics, calculate a country's energy use, study concepts of exponential growth, create budgets, devise quality of life indicators, and study geometry through cultural designs.
- Science: International energy flows, production and food chains, global environmental issues, impact of inadequate food or sanitation, global health, create possible solutions for world issues like lack of water.
- Language Arts: Read international literature, study cultural beliefs and values, role-play situations, analyze texts for any possible bias, compare world newspapers and their coverage of a world event, debate current events.
- Social Studies: While Geography and World History are obviously international, other courses like U.S. History (TEK 4,7,8,10,12,13,15-18, 26), U.S. Government (TEK 4,12,20) and Economics (TEK 5-7,10,12-14,21,22) can easily be infused using the TEKS above. Ideas include comparing civil rights movements around the world, studying different government systems and citizens rights/responsibly, comparing different world economic

systems, analyzing world events effecting the U.S. economy, etc. Try *History Lessons: How Textbooks from Around the World Portray U.S. History*, by Lindaman & Ward.

Most electives are easily infused.

All cultures have dance, music, and the arts. All people have family structure, group dynamics, etc. infused into Home Economics and Psychology. Physical education can bring in global games and sports such as karate, yoga, and cricket. *Planning Curriculum in International Education* by the Wisconsin Department of Education, *Education for Global Competence: Preparing our Youth to Engage the World* from the Asia Society and *In the Global Classroom* by Pike and Selby explain how all players can contribute, give creative ideas for all subject infusion, and create a framework for schools to start the global competency process.

There are also books specifically addressing how to teach each core subject through real-world global issues at [www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org). Teachers can also take advantage of free international trainings, speakers and student events through their local World Affairs Councils and other community resources. (There are many international trips competitively awarded to teachers at <http://www.dfwworld.org/page.aspx?pid=973>.) By teaching through the culturally pluralistic 21<sup>st</sup> century skills required in this new world, and by adding a global theme to act as the thread that connects all subjects to the real-world around us, students will understand the “big picture” of education, make knowledge fluid and useful, and find meaning in the curriculum no matter what their background or future education attainment.

## Conclusion

Globalization and its consequences are here to stay. International education integration needs to thread subjects together in a context that will increase retention and understanding and prepare today's students to be successful in a very different world. This must be integrated in all subjects. The need to have globally competent United States citizens has never been greater. This lack of knowledge threatens our economy, security, and citizenry. “There is no greater context for educational change than that of globalization” (Waks 2003, 383). The U.S. has changed. The world has changed. Our education must change with them. As the Committee for Economic Development states in its 2006 *Education for Global*

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*Leadership* report, "In short, we must re-define, as each generation has done, what it means to be an educated American in a changing world." The Asia Society states what seems to be forgotten, "For a truly world-class education, we must have schools that teach students to actually know something about the world." This change does not have to be difficult or cost much money, but it will create students with 21<sup>st</sup> century global competency needed. Globalization is not predicted to go away, only to continue to shrink our world. It is a small, small world after all.

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Jennifer Bowden is Director of Education at the World Affairs Council in Dallas/Fort Worth. She is currently finishing an M.Ed in Global Studies in Education at the University of Illinois and taught ten years before moving to the Council in 2007.

opportunities in different cultures for women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other underrepresented populations; and 17D: evaluate the experiences and contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies.

**WG18 Culture.** The student understands the ways in which cultures change and maintain continuity. The student is expected to: 18A analyze cultural changes in specific regions caused by migration, war, trade, innovations, and diffusion;

## Teaching Suggestions

- Explain the difference between the terms emigration, immigration, and migration in the context of coming to America and ask students to research and write about their families' earliest immigrants.
- Show students how to access archives of governmental immigration agencies and historical societies to find information about immigrants.
- Ask students to research one nineteenth or early twentieth century immigrant from their area who became famous.
- For students in higher grades, tracking down the translated, typed manuscripts (in two volumes) of Rabbi Gurwitz's *Memories of Two Generations* (available at the University of Texas, Austin and San Antonio) might be an interesting project. Some examples of chapter titles are "The 1905 Revolution and the Pogroms," "We begin our journey to America," "We arrive in Bremen," "We board the ship," "Our voyage on the sea," "We arrive in Galveston," and "We bring our children to America."

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June Penkar is a former high school teacher and currently Outreach Liaison for the Public Education Initiative (PEI) of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Dallas ([www.pei-jcrrcdallas.org](http://www.pei-jcrrcdallas.org)) which provides resources to educators in Texas. She is a member of TCSS and attends conferences as a vendor and presenter.