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Module 4

Global Learning Literature Review

Kay Gibson, Glyn Rimmington, and Marjorie Landwehr-Brown (2008) expressed the need for a global approach to education when they wrote, “Globalization in its broadest sense provides all peoples of the world with major challenges—chiefly related to trade, technology, and the environment—and poses significant implications for how best to prepare future world citizens to meet these challenges” (p. 11). In their article entitled “Developing Global Awareness and Responsible World Citizenship with Global Learning,” Gibson et al. argued that educators must change their practices to prepare students to serve as leaders in the 21st century world (p. 12). Over thirty years earlier, Robert G. Hanvey (1976/2004) reimagined traditional models of education in his work. Although he wrote before the term globalization dominated the international discourse, Hanvey understood the importance of “education for a global perspective” (p. 1). In 2011, the Council of Chief State School Officers & Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning (2011) reshaped Hanvey’s ideas for the 21st century. In their report entitled “Educating for Global Competency: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World,” the Council claimed that contemporary circumstances, such as the “flattened global economy,” brought global competency to the forefront of 21st century education (p. 1). Merry M. Merryfield (2008) contextualized this argument within the American educational system in “Scaffolding Social Studies for Global Awareness.” She emphasized the interconnectedness of the world today and discussed strategies to make students aware of their impact on the global community (p. 363). Although scholars have agreed on the need for global education, educators and policymakers have not yet come to a consensus on how global learning should take shape in American classrooms.

First, scholars have struggled to define the conditions necessary for global education. Gibson et al. (2008) put forth a set of conditions in their work on gifted populations. They argued that educators must use communication technologies to connect students with classrooms in other countries in order to facilitate global learning. According to Gibson et al., cross-cultural collaboration represents the foundation of global education (p. 13-14). In her survey of global learning theories, Laura Burnouf (2004) presented multiple frameworks that relied on intercultural contact. In addition to cross-cultural interaction between students, she claimed that teachers must experience international collaboration for themselves. Before implementing global education, teachers must develop their own perspectives and grow their personal knowledge (p. 9). Finally, Burnouf maintained that global learning requires a safe and open classroom environment. Students must feel comfortable and secure in order to collaborate effectively. Only teachers who build a positive atmosphere in their classrooms will be able to globalize their students’ perspectives (p. 11). Overall, these scholars agree that access to cross-cultural experiences and caring classroom environments are requisite for a global approach to education.

Beyond the debated conditions, education professionals have argued about the content of global learning. Hanvey (1976/2004) originated this discourse when he presented five dimensions of his version of global education. Hanvey labeled the first dimension “perspective consciousness,” which represents an awareness of one’s own perspective. He argued that students must understand the difference between opinion and perspective, while also developing the ability to trace the different influences on their own mindsets (p. 5-6). Merryfield (2008) echoed Hanvey’s point in her work. She argued that American students must reflect on the meaning of culture and address their own “cultural baggage” in order to become globally aware (p.363). The Council of Chief State School Officers & Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning (2011) corroborated Hanvey and Merryfield’s ideas. The Council claimed that globally competent students have the ability to recognize their own perspectives (p. 11-12). At the core of global learning, students must develop their intrapersonal intelligence and begin to critically examine their cultural backgrounds.

In addition to one’s own perspective, many scholars recognize that global learning must encompass cross-cultural understanding. Walter C. Parker, Akira Ninomiya and John Cogan (1999) focused on the importance of cultural understanding in their work entitled “Educating World Citizens: Toward Multinational Curriculum Development.” This article presented the work of an international team that collaborated on a global curriculum. In their list of proposed competencies, the team wrote, “Ability to understand, accept, appreciate, and tolerate cultural differences” (p. 125). This group’s work supported the development of a cross-cultural mindset, but failed to really define cultural understanding. Hanvey (1976) clarified this concept in the third dimension of his framework. He claimed that intercultural contact alone could not substantiate the need for cultural understanding. He argued that people must fully immerse themselves and openly participate in other cultures before they can really achieve cross-cultural understanding (p. 10-15). He specified four different levels of awareness and called educators to reach for “transspection” instead of empathy. Hanvey wrote, “Transspection means the capacity to imagine oneself in a role within the context of a foreign culture” (p. 18). Hanvey’s work gives a standard for educators attempting to foster cultural awareness.

Beyond the content contained within global education, scholars have worked to form strategies that transform global learning from theory to reality. For example, Merryfield (2008) encouraged teachers to pursue instruction that would hold relevance for students’ lives outside of school. She suggested three ways that educators could scaffold the global learning process. First, she described an activity that helps students examine their own “cultural lenses.” During this activity, the teacher hands out three images clipped from international publications. Students then collaborate to predict the stories behind the pictures. After the students present their thoughts, the teacher provides them with the original articles. The students then compare and contrast their predictions to the actual stories. The teacher then helps the class understand how their personal experiences and beliefs shaped their interpretations of the images. Merryfield’s activity demonstrated a concrete way that students could examine their own perspectives (p. 363-364). In addition, Merryfield prompted teachers to expose American youth to foreign media, literature, and primary source material. Finally, she argued that students must have opportunities to engage in the global community and address global problems (p. 364-365). Merryfield’s discussion supports Burnouf’s claim that route memorization does not allow students to develop global awareness. Burnouf (2004) cited several scholars that emphasize cross-cultural interaction as superior to traditional instruction (p. 4). Merryfield and Burnouf’s works prove that educators can translate global learning theory into effective pedagogy.

Many scholars have depicted global citizenship as the ultimate goal of global education. Gibson et al. (2008) illustrated world citizenship as the outcome of global learning in their work. They attempted to define global citizenship when they wrote, “*global* or *world* *citizenship* is defined as a set of key elements: knowledge, skills, and attitudes that equip a person to function as a citizen in the globalized world” (p. 17). Despite this article’s deceivingly simple description, global citizenship is a highly contested term that still lacks a set definition. In her article entitled “We Cannot Teach What We Don’t Know: Indiana Teachers Talk about Global Citizenship Education,” Anatoli Rapoport (2010) examined American teachers’ reluctance to address global citizenship in their instruction. Rappaport described one of the obstacles to global citizenship education as, “The absence of a mutually agreed upon definition of global citizenship that spans from a vague sense of belonging to a global community to more specific ways of individual and collective involvement in global politics” (p. 180). 21st century scholars have not only debated the meaning of the term, but have also questioned the existence of a global version of citizenship. In her article entitled “Global citizenship: Abstraction or framework for action,” Lynn Davies (2006) argued that the global citizen is not a metaphor but a reality for the 21st century world. She found that educators should emphasize the active characteristics of effective global citizens (p. 5-25). Although scholars have not reached a consensus on global citizenship instruction, global learning advocates can still benefit from the discourse around this issue.

Finally, scholars expect that the future of global education will center on international collaboration. Velta Clarke (2004) discussed an emerging international culture in her work entitled “Students’ Global Awareness and Attitudes to Internationalism in a World of Cultural Convergence.” She claimed that as time elapses, cultures will converge and the international community will eventually share a common culture. She used this point to push for internationalized curricula (p. 51-68). Parker et al. (1999) exemplified a global approach to curriculum writing through their study. First, they found that school curriculum usually suffers from national bias. They attempted to contrast this trend by forming an international research team to create recommendations for global curricula (p. 117-145). Their work demonstrates the benefits of cross-cultural collaboration between education professionals. The future of global learning will not only rely on intercultural experiences for students, but will also include the formation of an international education community.

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