

Global Education

Global Education for the 21st Century

We must prepare our children to deal with the ever-shifting economic and political realities of our shrinking planet.

The changes that took place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union late in 1989, the pending economic union of Europe, the unification of East and West Germany, the impact of Japan's economy on the world—these events will profoundly influence the 1990s and will shape the world of the 21st century. Our challenge is to prepare our students for a world where familiar geopolitical boundaries and economic assumptions are being replaced by new realities.

These circumstances call for effective global education at all levels and in all disciplines. Global education is not a new concept; global awareness has long been a desirable outcome of student learning in a variety of subjects. However, as the old order crumbles, the need to provide school experiences with an international and global dimension acquires great urgency.

Redefining Our Position

It should come as no surprise that the United States has not been effective in international education. To begin with, our large population lives in relative isolation on a huge, resource-rich continent. For this reason, but even more because of our political and economic dominance during the 20th century, the U.S. has developed a strongly nationalistic character and a correspondingly limited curriculum. For example, many Americans believe that studies of foreign cultures and

To build citizens for the 21st century, we must continuously strive to offer instruction that helps students learn to see "through the eyes, minds, and hearts of others."

languages are nonessential—nice to have if you can afford them, but far down the list of priorities. Consequently, only a few thousand students in the U.S. study Russian, while in the Soviet Union, millions study English. The American situation also stands in stark contrast to the small European nations such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and the Scandinavian countries, where many citizens are multilingual. In today's world a provincial approach to curriculum is no longer acceptable.

Now, at the edge of the 21st century, all the countries of the world are interconnected in virtually every aspect of life. World markets have been developed for consumer goods, labor, technology, and energy. The global

economy irrevocably ties the economic health of the U.S. to events abroad. Thus, the U.S. must continually redefine its position within the context of global development.

Today the flow of ideas, information, and services is linked globally, and these linkages reach every household and every person. The flow includes the arts, the sciences, sports, medicine, tourism, and entertainment, as well as such unfortunate phenomena as drug traffic, disease, and environmental damage.

In every aspect of life, boundaries between domestic and foreign affairs are disappearing. Planetwide ecological issues include ocean pollution, acid rain, deforestation, toxic waste disposal, and global warming. Solving these problems will require international collaboration and international responsibility.

At the same time that interconnectivity is increasing, we are witnessing remarkable and widespread population migrations, particularly from unstable to stable areas and from Third World to more affluent regions. These migrations are strongly felt in the United States, especially along our coasts, and our population is becoming more multiethnic than ever before. The reality of a classroom of students from various parts of the world, more forcefully than any abstract idea, calls for an international approach to teaching and curriculum.

Finally, in relation to other nations, the position of the U.S. has changed from that of dominance to the role of partner, so that our well-being now depends on collaboration and understanding. There is no doubt that gaps in cultural understanding cause some of the current strains in U.S.-Japan relations, for example, and that sensitivity to other cultures is an essential ingredient for success in a global economy.

Economic, scientific, and technological factors now have as great a bearing on international relations as military or strategic considerations, as evidenced by the influence of nations, such as Japan, whose impact is based on economic and scientific strength rather than military power. Individuals now have a greater opportunity for international involvement on a non-governmental level than ever before, through work with multinational corporations and employment abroad.

All these factors are closely tied to the way we need to prepare our students for the 21st century. But what is global education?

Seeing through Others' Eyes

According to Hanvey, global education means:

learning about those issues that cut across national boundaries and about the interconnectedness of systems, ecological, cultural, economic, political, and technological. Global education involves perspective taking, seeing things through the eyes, minds, and hearts of others; and it means the realization that while individuals and groups may view life differently, they also have common needs and wants.¹

What does it take to bring this about in our schools? We must infuse a global perspective into *all* curriculum areas, at *all* levels, including literature, the arts, the sciences, and the extracurricular experiences of students. It's not a matter of simply adding foreign language courses or a unit on international relations, and it doesn't concern only social studies courses. In the past, literature classes in the U.S. and Europe have relied almost exclusively on European literature without paying sufficient attention to the contributions of Africa, Asia, and South Amer-

ica. If our children are to understand other cultures, literature is an ideal medium, reflecting universal values and problems. Similarly, we tend to limit ourselves to Western traditions in art and music. Using resources now available in many communities, we can bring non-Western arts into the classroom and enrich our curriculum. Through such experiences, we widen our students' horizons and enable them to extend their perspectives.

Perhaps the most important element required to succeed in global education is what Tye calls the "deep structure" of a school.² A school's culture may be closed and ethnocentric or open, cosmopolitan, and international. The faculty and administration, as well as the community surrounding the school, can dramatically influence the social environment and climate of the school. To build a cosmopolitan culture within a school, they must provide repeated experiences, beginning in the early grades, that bring the world into the classroom. Together, as a school community, they must take the initiative in inviting artists, lecturers, and discussion leaders to bring international viewpoints to the students. And they must provide textbooks and resource materials that reflect a global perspective.

Building Stronger Citizens

To build citizens for the 21st century, we must continuously strive to offer instruction that helps students learn to see "through the eyes, minds, and hearts of others." Recently, for example, the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools recommended that U.S. history, which is usually taught as a separate subject, be combined with world history in a multi-year sequence. The recommendation recognizes that integrating national and world history will allow students to place our national past within its larger international context. The recommendation continues, "The more we understand about the international influences on our past, the more prepared we will be to play a strong role in the global affairs of our future."³

To achieve its best effects, global education must go beyond the transmission of information, beyond historical analysis, to what we might call "anticipatory learning." The rapid pace of change and the emergence of new political and economic structures require that we learn to project into the future, taking into account new assumptions and situations. We must move beyond factual learning, even beyond inquiry learning, to problem finding and problem anticipation. Our students must learn to look at issues from different perspectives and then to explore options. Above all, we must lead them to understand and respect cultures other than their own so that they can live and work with people from all around the shrinking globe.

Inviting students from abroad to our schools contributes importantly to the learning environment and opens opportunities for sharing and understanding in formal and informal settings. And it is equally important to encourage our students to participate in study programs abroad. Such opportunities open new perspectives for students and influence the direction of their advanced studies and, eventually, their choice of careers.⁴ In a recent survey of several hundred students who participated in such programs, a large percentage specialized in international studies and then chose careers connected with their international interests.⁵ Such opportunities will multiply in this decade, and we can prepare now to take advantage of them.

Global education has a strong ethical dimension: a value system that calls us to accept responsibility for the well-being of our planet. This value system requires loyalty that, while in the interests of one's particular nation, is not exclusive to that nation: a loyalty that is a commitment beyond national boundaries. The absence of this extended commitment is at the root of international conflict and tragedy. The record of the 20th century indicates clearly that nationalism without international responsibility leads to disaster. We need only think of Nazi Germany's aggression leading to World War II and of the dictatorial policies of countries in the Middle East and Latin America.

Some Americans fear that global awareness implies abdication of national values, that it accepts ideologies, political beliefs, and practices from other nations without subordinating them to American values. On the contrary, there need never be a contradiction between global understanding and national values and interests. Students must develop an international perspective and international skills if they are to participate as successful and productive citizens on behalf of their separate nations in the global environment.

General Principles for Global Education

There is no recipe for a global curriculum to fit any given school or any given region. However, we can agree on general principles for such a curriculum. A committee of the ASCD International/Global Education Commission, under the leadership of Jim Becker of Indiana University, has developed the following working draft of principles.⁶

- All teachers, as well as all students, should have opportunities to learn about and work with individuals whose ethnic and cultural backgrounds are different from their own.

- International/global studies should be viewed as cross-disciplinary, involving the arts, humanities, sciences, and mathematics, as well as foreign languages and social studies. And the global approach should start at the earliest levels of childhood.

- The impact on individuals and on society of the increase in transnational interactions should be included in the curriculum, reflecting interdependence with other nations and the role of the United States in a global economy.

- The changing role of nations in the world system should be explained throughout instructional materials, and the increasing number and importance of international organizations should be highlighted wherever appropriate.

- The changing and evolving role of the United States in world affairs should be included in the study of international trends and developments.

The implementation of these principles presents a challenge to each school and each teacher. One of the aims of ASCD's International/Global Education Commission is to encourage the development of appropriate curriculums and to disseminate successful models and practices. An im-

portant step toward this aim is the commissioning under ASCD's aegis of a model curriculum for global education at elementary levels that will be piloted and disseminated in 1992.

Meeting the Challenge

The children in our schools today will play a part in shaping the world in the 21st century. Our responsibility as teachers and developers of curriculum is to help them become knowledgeable about their planet and about the issues we face for survival and for international harmony. If we succeed in infusing a global perspective into their school experiences, if we can give them an appreciation for cultural diversity, if we can help them understand principles of conflict resolution and of alternative futures in an interconnected world, we will have fulfilled the most important challenge in education of the 21st century. □

¹R. Hanvey, (1976), *An Attainable Global Perspective*, (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations).

²B. Tye, (1987), "The Deep Structure of Schooling," *Phi Delta Kappan* 69, 4:281-284.

³National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, (1989), *Charting a Course Social Studies for the 21st Century*, (Washington, D.C.: NCSS).

⁴For a comprehensive list of educational travel and exchange programs, consult the "Advisory List of International Educational Travel and Exchange Programs, (1990), published by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel, 1906 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091.

⁵S. Ramler, (1988), *Another Window* (Honolulu: The Foundation for Study in Hawaii and Abroad).

⁶Presented at the meeting of the ASCD Global/International Education Commission, October 4-6, 1990, Alexandria, Virginia, by Jim Becker, University of Indiana; Mary Soley, Foreign Policy Association, Washington, D.C.; and Jonathan Swift, School of Global Education, Livonia, Michigan.

World Literature

Today's educational zeitgeist no longer favors stale basal readers, but finding appropriate and authentic literature to replace them is easier said than done—especially now that the emphasis on interdisciplinary global education has educators also looking for ways to increase global awareness through the language arts.

Filling this void are the *Short Story International* reading series published by the International Cultural Exchange, a nonprofit organization. Published on three reading levels, the series offer short stories written by living authors around the globe, in the original English or unabridged English translation.

Published quarterly, the *Seedling Series* (\$4.95/ea., \$16/year) for grades 4 through 7 and the *Student Series* (\$5.25/ea., \$18/year) for grades 8 through 12 contain stories appropriate to students' reading levels and interests while maintaining literary quality and avoiding a patronizing style. For advanced high school students and adults, the original *Short Story International (SSI)* (\$5.45/ea., \$24/year) is published every two months and contains 12 to 15 stories by celebrated authors like García Márquez, Greene, Solzhenitsyn, and Vonnegut. A short teacher's guide—with lesson plans for each story—is provided free of charge with an order of 20 copies or more.

For more information, write: Short Story International, P.O. Box 405, Great Neck, NY 11022, or call 516-466-4166.

Siegfried Ramler is Director of Instructional Services and Coordinator of Curriculum, The Wo International Center, Punahou School, 1601 Punahou St., Honolulu, HI 96822. He serves as Chair of ASCD's Commission for Global/International Education.

Copyright © 1991 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.