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## CHAPTER

# 1

# WHAT IS GLOBAL EDUCATION?

*You say  
goodbye, and  
I say hello.*

The Beatles

As Kenneth Cushner and Jennifer Mahon (2009) point out, several terms are used interchangeably to refer to “global education”: *multicultural education, international education, peace education, and culturally relevant or responsive education*. There are also many terms used somewhat interchangeably to connote a broadening conception of literacy, including: *new literacies, multiliteracies, multimodalities, media literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT)*.

In guiding the interviews conducted for this book, I have used the definition of *global education* suggested by the National Council for the Social Studies (n.d.):

The terms global education and international education are used to describe strategies for:

- gaining knowledge of world cultures;
- understanding the historical, geographic, economic, political, cultural, and environmental relationships among world regions and peoples;
- examining the nature of cultural differences and national or regional conflicts and problems; and
- acting to influence public policy and private behavior on behalf of international understanding, tolerance and empathy.

Global education and international education are complementary approaches with different emphases. The integration of both perspectives is imperative to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for responsible participation in a democratic society and in a global community in the 21st century.

Global education focuses on the interrelated nature of conditions, issues, trends, processes, and events while international education emphasizes specific world regions, problems, and cultures. International education encompasses studies of specific areas or regions of the world as well as the in-depth examination of a single culture or some aspect of that culture, such as its history, language, literature, religion, political organization, economic system, or current issues. It also includes cross-cultural studies that use a comparative approach in the examination of the characteristics of two or more cultures. Multi-cultural education is a closely related approach that explores the interactions among differing cultures within a political region.

Global education is not a new concept. Jean Piaget (1957) is credited with identifying Comenius, a thinker from the 1600s, who first proposed the idea of a “pansophic college based on ideas of pedagogical universalism” (Cushner & Mahon, 2009, p. 305). Charles Mann (2011) comprehensively describes the beginning of the global era as being when Christopher Columbus started the Columbian Exchange in 1492. And Mann, crediting Alfred Crosby’s (1986) book *Ecological Imperialism*, emphasizes that this early globalization was most crucially ecological and biological in nature. Columbus “and his crew did not voyage alone. They were accompanied by a menagerie of insects, plants, mammals, and microorganisms” (p. 9). Mann (2011) describes a jarring transculturation that has its roots in biology: “For five centuries now the crash and chaos of constant connection has been our home condition; my garden, with its parade of exotic plants, is a small example” (p. xix).

Our global culture might have had biologic roots, but these roots have grown to encompass more than the food we eat or the plants we see. Fast-forwarding a few hundred years, popular authors (Friedman, 2005; Pink, 2005) have written about the “flattening” of our world, with Friedman indicating that there are many trends that have led to a greater international connectivity than has ever been experienced before, including the outsourcing of everything from the doing of our personal taxes to the reading of our CAT scans. While some of the world is still closed, for the most part our world is increasingly open to us to explore, if not in person, then via the Internet. The internationalized world we live in is not

only impacting the creative worlds of music and fashion but also our politics and certainly our economies.

## Support for a Global Education

As mentioned, new curriculum frameworks in the United States have uniformly advocated for an emphasis on preparing students to be global citizens. These models have been accompanied by college readiness reports and standards that also highlight the need for high school students to be prepared to succeed in an internationalized market. Excerpts from a sampling of these documents follow.

### National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

Of course, the National Council for the Social Studies (2010) discusses the need for the social studies classroom to have an international focus. These excerpts provide some examples of that call.

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

Global connections have intensified and accelerated the changes faced at the local, national, and international levels. The effects are evident in rapidly changing social, economic, and political institutions and systems. World trade has expanded and technology has removed or lowered many barriers, bringing far-flung cultures, institutions, and systems together. Connections among nations and regions of the world provide opportunities as well as uncertainties. The realities of global interdependence require deeper understanding of the increasing and diverse global connections among world societies and regions.

In exploring this theme, students confront questions such as: What are the different types of global connections? What global connections have existed in the past, exist currently, and are likely in the future? How do ideas spread between societies in today's interconnected world? How does this result in change in those societies? What are the other consequences of global connections? What are the benefits from and problems associated with global interdependence? How might people in different parts of the world have different perspectives on these benefits and problems? What influence has increasing global interdependence had on patterns of international migration? How should people and societies balance global connectedness with local needs? What is needed for life to thrive on an ever changing and increasingly interdependent planet?

Analyses of the costs and benefits of increased global connections, and evaluations of the tensions between national interests and global priorities, contribute to the development of possible solutions to persistent and emerging global issues. By interpreting the patterns and relationships of increased global interdependence, and its implications for different societies, cultures and institutions, students learn to examine policy alternatives that have both national and global implications.

This theme typically appears in units or courses dealing with geography, culture, economics, history, political science, government, and technology but may also draw upon the natural and physical sciences and the humanities, including literature, the arts, and languages. Through exposure to various media and first-hand experiences, young learners become aware of how things that happen in one part of the world impact other parts of the world. Within this context, students in early grades examine and explore various types of global connections as well as basic issues and concerns. They develop responsive action plans, such as becoming e-pals with a class in another part of the world. In the middle years, learners can initiate analyses of the consequences of interactions among states, nations, and world regions as they respond to global events and changes. At the high school level, students are able to think systematically about personal, national, and global decisions, and to analyze policies and actions, and their consequences. They also develop skills in addressing and evaluating critical issues such as peace, conflict, poverty, disease, human rights, trade, and global ecology. (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010)

### **Partnership for 21st Century Skills**

From its beginning, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has emphasized the need for students to understand the interconnectedness of our world. The following excerpt discusses the need for students to understand the environmental aspects to this interconnectedness.

#### **Environmental Literacy**

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the environment and the circumstances and conditions affecting it, particularly as relates to air, climate, land, food, energy, water and ecosystems
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of society's impact on the natural world (e.g., population growth, population development, resource consumption rate, etc.)
- Investigate and analyze environmental issues, and make accurate conclusions about effective solutions

- Take individual and collective action towards addressing environmental challenges (e.g., participating in global actions, designing solutions that inspire action on environmental issues) (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011a)

This excerpt demonstrates the economic implications of this interconnectedness.

### **Life and Career Skills**

Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills. (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011c)

### **National Standards for Foreign Language Education**

There has always been a strong cultural education component to foreign language education, and the following excerpts from the National Standards for Foreign Language Education highlight that emphasis.

#### **Cultures**

Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

- Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied
- Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied

#### **Comparisons**

Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

- Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own
- Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, n.d.)

### **Horizon Report**

The *Horizon Report* emphasizes the collaborative element that needs to be in place for a true global education.

The world of work is increasingly collaborative, giving rise to reflection about the way student projects are structured. This trend continues from 2010 and is being driven by the increasingly global and cooperative nature of business interactions



facilitated by Internet technologies. The days of isolated desk jobs are disappearing, giving way to models in which teams work actively together to address issues too far-reaching or complex for a single worker to resolve alone. Market intelligence firm IDC notes that some one billion people fit the definition of mobile workers already, and projects that fully one-third of the global workforce—1.2 billion workers—will perform their work from multiple locations by 2013. (Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, & Haywood, 2011)

### **National Education Technology Plan 2010**

The need for students to compete in a global economy is touted in this excerpt from the National Education Technology Plan (NETP) 2010.

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and equal access. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2010, back cover)

The plan also points out that providing each child with an internationalized education can improve America's competitiveness.

Education is the key to America's economic growth and prosperity and to our ability to compete in the global economy. It is the path to good jobs and higher earning power for Americans. It is necessary for our democracy to work. It fosters the cross-border, cross-cultural collaboration required to solve the most challenging problems of our time.

Under the Obama administration, education has become an urgent priority driven by two clear goals:

- We will raise the proportion of college graduates from where it now stands (around 41 percent) so that 60 percent of our population holds a two-year or four-year degree by 2020.
- We will close the achievement gap so that all students graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and careers.

These are aggressive goals and achieving them is a sizable challenge. Add to the challenge the projections of most states and the federal government of reduced revenues for the foreseeable future, and it is clear we need cost-effective and cost-saving strategies that improve learning outcomes and graduation rates for millions of Americans.

Specifically, we must embrace innovation, prompt implementation, regular evaluation, and continuous improvement. The programs and projects that work must be brought

to scale so every school has the opportunity to take advantage of their success. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2010, p. ix)

This excerpt of the plan points out that we know increasingly more about the ways people learn, and this should be put to use in service of international education.

### **A Model of Learning Powered by Technology**

The NETP presents a model of learning powered by technology, with goals and recommendations in five essential areas: learning, assessment, teaching, infrastructure, and productivity. The plan also identifies far-reaching “grand challenge” R&D problems that should be funded and coordinated at a national level.

The challenging and rapidly changing demands of our global economy tell us what people need to know and who needs to learn. Advances in learning sciences show us how people learn. Technology makes it possible for us to act on this knowledge and understanding. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2010, p. x)

The need to be interdisciplinary is key to fostering international education.

### **What and How People Need to Learn**

Whether the domain is English language arts, mathematics, sciences, social studies, history, art, or music, 21st-century competencies and such expertise as critical thinking, complex problem solving, collaboration, and multimedia communication should be woven into all content areas. These competencies are necessary to become expert learners, which we all must be if we are to adapt to our rapidly changing world over the course of our lives. That involves developing deep understanding within specific content areas and making the connections among them.

How we need to learn includes using the technology that professionals in various disciplines use. Professionals routinely use the Web and tools, such as wikis, blogs, and digital content for the research, collaboration, and communication demanded in their jobs. They gather data and analyze the data using inquiry and visualization tools. They use graphical and 3D modeling tools for design. For students, using these real-world tools creates learning opportunities that allow them to grapple with real-world problems—opportunities that prepare them to be more productive members of a globally competitive workforce. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2010, p. xi)

As this excerpt demonstrates, the emphasis on global education is one of the first goals and recommendations of the plan.