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NEED OF GLOBAL AWARENESS IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

A variety of concepts have been used to denote the interrelated notions of global awareness, sensitivity to and appreciation of cultural difference, and particular competencies necessary to interact cross-culturally. Notions such as intercultural competence, world mindedness, global-mindedness, and global citizenship have been developed to describe the concept of global awareness for the development of students. The purpose of the present study is to discuss the concept of global awareness and its need for Indian education system. The dimensions are meaning, definition and components of global awareness, its need in Indian education system and relation between global awareness and teacher effectiveness. The investigator has proposed to use qualitative method for the present study.

Key words – global awareness, components, education system, teacher effectiveness,

INTRODUCTION

Global Awareness is a conceptual understanding based upon an applicable knowledge of global and cultural perspectives. The understanding of concepts that impact the world encompasses, but is not limited to, environmental, social, cultural, political, and economic relations.

Global awareness involves a recognition and appreciation of the size, complexity, and diversity of the earth conceived as a single entity. It is literally a worldview-and is at the opposite pole of the view from horseradish. It enables us to perceive the vastness of the world, its dynamic complexity, and the diversity of its peoples and cultures. Awareness, much like mindfulness, knows that we don't know that there is a realm of knowing that exists outside our direct experience which is often identified with intuition.

Ignorance or the state of not knowing can be particularly embarrassing in intercultural encounters. Like it or not, in cross-cultural social interaction, we are judged by our lack of knowledge about people, places, and things of other cultures. According to Cushner and Brislin (1996, 13), “People, judge others to be well intentioned, ill mannered, well educated, hardworking, and so forth, relatively quickly-generally within the first few minutes of an encounter,” And these attributions have consequences.

Kirkwood (2001) described persons possessing global awareness as “those who possess high-tech skills, broad interdisciplinary knowledge about the contemporary world, and adaptability, flexibility, and world mindedness to participate effectively in the globalized world”.

A curriculum for global citizenship education has been developed by Oxfam (2006). The goal of global citizenship education is to develop citizens with the knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes, and behaviour that enable them to live responsibly in a globalized world. Oxfam (2006) saw the Global Citizen as someone who is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own roles as a world citizen; respects and values diversity; has an understanding of how the world works; is outraged by social injustice; participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global; is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place; and takes responsibility for their actions.

Oxfam (2008) has argued that the global dimension and global citizenship have most of the same key elements, but with different ways of expressing them. The global dimension usually refers to the eight key concepts in education (i.e., social justice, human rights, conflict, diversity, values and perceptions, interdependence, sustainable development, and global citizenship), whereas global citizenship concerns outcomes in the individual (Oxfam, 2008).

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) designed a Framework for 21st Century Learning which consists of core subjects and themes that revolve around three core skills: life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information media and technology skills. Global awareness is one of the 21st century interdisciplinary themes. Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) defined global awareness as:

- Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues;

- Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts; and
- Understanding other nations and cultures, including the use of non-English languages.

Technology is at the forefront of educational thought and reform from preschool to higher education. The belief that an integral purpose of education is to prepare learners for global citizenship through the development of global awareness is a hallmark of modern educational thought and reform (Postman, 1995). As technology and global issues have grown and evolved over the last two decades, many are turning to new communication technologies as a means for developing global awareness in students, thereby reducing the world's cultural divide. As the world's populations become more interconnected, students need to understand their global community.

Definition of Global Awareness

Hanvey (1982) was one of the first scholarly experts to define the concept of “global awareness”. He proposed five dimensions to develop students’ global awareness. These dimensions include perspective consciousness, state-of-the-planet awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices.

Global Awareness Group at the College of Charleston (2001) definition states: Global Awareness is an appreciation of interconnected worldwide environmental, political, economic, and social relations and their consequences. This appreciation includes recognition of a responsibility to participate in actively shaping those relations and consequences. This responsibility is demonstrated through active and constructive involvement with global issues individually, through our communities, and in concert with people around the world.

According to Think Global, global learning (thinking globally) fosters (Hogg & Shah, 2010,):

- Critical and creative thinking;
- Self-awareness and open-mindedness towards difference;
- Understanding of global issues and power relationships; and
- Optimism and action for a better world

University of Wisconsin-Superior (2010) defines the global awareness as the knowledge, competencies, values, and dispositions to act in an informed manner, demonstrate empathy, engage in effective intergroup communication, and build community across social, cultural, political, environmental, geographic, and economic boundaries.

Components of Global Knowledge

- Each person considers and discusses social, cultural, political, environmental, geographic, and economic relations from a perspective informed by the relevant academic disciplines.
- Each person understands the social construction of human categories. The individuals of the society are aware of the social stratification and differences in their living standards.
- Each person is informed of key issues and their historical foundations that impact relations among groups.
- Each person acts with an understanding of and respect for the social and biological interdependence of global life. They understand the impacts of their actions on global environment.

Components of Empathy

- Each person is mindful of and interested in ways of understanding and feeling that are different from their own.
- Each person is able to use multiple frames of reference in intergroup and interpersonal situations.
- Each person is able to identify with and understand the perspectives of others.
- Each person is mindful of the multicultural influences on their own group affiliations.

Components of Effective Intergroup Communication

- Each person is able to function competently and communicate effectively in intergroup and multilingual situations.
- Each person is able to perceive different communication styles and communicate effectively with others who exhibit them.
- Each person is able to recognize and manage the social and emotional aspects of intergroup and multilingual situations.

Components of Community Building

- Each person is able to facilitate constructive contact, develop effective relationships, and foster cooperation among people in a diverse human environment

The Development Education Association's (2012) website has defined global awareness learning (thinking globally) as education that puts learning in a global context, learning about the wider world and our interdependence with it.

NEED OF GLOBAL AWARENESS IN EDUCATION

The purpose of schooling is to prepare students for life in the real world in their communities and societies, both in the present, while students are in school and in the future, after they leave school behind.

The world is more complex and interdependent than at any time in the past. We are expanding our citizenship responsibilities beyond the local, state and national level to include global citizenship. We must know about the world if we expect everyone to responsibly participate as global citizens. The conventional approach of acquiring disconnected information and then having it evaluated on standardized tests is an educational approach not suited for an uncertain future. We need an approach that is flexible, creative, and able to solve complex problems in a timely and collaborative way. Having a global perspective is imperative for students to navigate an uncertain future.

Good educators know that the real world is ever more interconnected and interdependent. We all share in facing such planetary challenges as climate change, health epidemics, global poverty, global economic recessions and trade imbalances, assaults on human rights, terrorism, political instability, and international conflicts. We also share opportunities for global collaboration in such areas as scientific and artistic creation, trade, and international cooperation. These challenges and opportunities define the contours of our lives, even in their most local dimensions. Yet in spite of growing awareness of the importance of developing global skills, few students around the world have the opportunity today to become globally competent.

Teaching children about global issues and encouraging them to see the world through other eyes is of huge importance, according to Campbell and a growing movement of internationally-minded educators. In an increasingly interconnected world, today's young generation need to learn be able to engage in communication with people from a wide range of different cultures and traditions.

By moving away from the mind-set that considers schools as factories and education a linear process in which the Teacher's task is to maximize efficiency to achieve a limited set of competing objectives. And by thinking about schools as systems of interdependent factors and processes, in which the most important outcomes, as in a symphony, are in the synergies that result from their interaction and collaboration. A curriculum that makes intercultural competency an asset, rather than a deficit, can powerfully motivate immigrant students who navigate cultural borders daily to engage, not just in further developing their global competency, but in all disciplines as well. Schools that find a way to cultivate the resources that culturally diverse communities of parents and teachers offer to the education of all students will engage these communities in positive ways, both in and out of school

GLOBAL AWARENESS AND TEACHERS

Global education has become a key component in school curriculums worldwide. Many times this is included in the larger school vision and permeates throughout the school culture. With demanding standards needing to be met, asking teachers to take on another component in their daily lessons can be overwhelming. But, global citizenship does not have to be a separate or additional part of the curriculum. It can be integrated into daily activities in a way that corresponds with what students are currently learning and demands little extra work from the part of the teacher.

Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world. Teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues. They actively select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions of all cultures. Teachers recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a student's development and personality. Teachers strive to understand how a student's culture and background may influence his or her school performance. Teachers consider and incorporate different points of view in their instruction.

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures with relevant examples from different parts of the globe.
- Select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate contributions.
- Recognize the influences on a child's development, personality, and performance.
- Consider and incorporate different points of view and accept them as well.

Teachers recognize the interconnectedness of disciplines. Teachers know the links and vertical alignment of the subject they teach. Teachers understand how the content they teach relates to other disciplines in order to deepen understanding and connect learning for students. Teachers promote global awareness and its relevance to subjects they teach.

- Know links between grade/subject. Teacher should have knowledge of interdisciplinary aspect.
- Relate content to other disciplines and real world.
- Promote global awareness and its relevance towards student's life and future vocation.

Teachers make instruction relevant to students. Teachers incorporate 21st century life skills into their teaching deliberately, strategically, and broadly. These skills include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility. Teachers help their students understand the relationship between the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and 21st century content, which includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy and health awareness.

- Incorporate life skills which include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people, skills, self-direction, and social responsibility
- Demonstrate the relationship between the core content and 21st Century content that includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health and wellness awareness.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS AND GLOBAL AWARENESS IN EDUCATION

The “A Nation at Risk Report” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) changed the educational landscape by telling the country that education was again in trouble, and students were not learning and lacked even basic skills. The current system of schooling poses tremendous burden on children. Educationists are of the view that the burden arises from treating knowledge as a given, an external reality existing outside the learner and

embedded in textbooks. Knowledge is essentially a human construct, a continuously evolving process of reflective learning. The NCF 2005, requires a teacher to be a facilitator of children's learning in a manner that the child is helped to construct his knowledge. Education is not a mechanical activity of information transmission and teachers are not information dispensers. Teachers have to increasingly play the role of crucial mediating agents through whom curriculum is transacted.

To facilitate the kind of cultural shift that it needed to move us towards a sustainable and ecologically sound future that is underpinned by cooperation and equality, we need to re-evaluate and re-learn different ways of how we work within the world and how we interact and relate to it and each other. In order to achieve any of this, we need to educate ourselves and each other as we explore and experiment our way into a possible future.

If we are to thrive and survive without killing the planet and everything else on it, Education has to be the central method of ensuring that useful and beneficial knowledge and skills are acquired by people to make the Transition into the future. There is also an overwhelming need to reclaim education from Neo liberalism and the Market Place where it used to mould passive conformity and selfish competitiveness into our students instead of community and cooperation. Ironically as we reclaim education from its Neoliberal grip by using education itself, it is education that is able to offer us the many alternatives and solutions that can emancipate the wider society from the prevailing Neoliberal hegemony.

Education is crucial for developing understanding the local ecology and the inherent beneficial relationships that exist within ecosystems and communities. It also shows us how to form mutual and beneficial relationships by sharing and developing a variety of social and culturally useful skills, through developing intimate understanding of communities within the broader context of the world. These communities are not just human; they are the communities that exist in the soil and the communities that live on top of the soil, in the seas and in the skies.

Teaching children about global issues and encouraging them to see the world through other eyes is of huge importance, according to Campbell and a growing movement of internationally-minded educators. In an increasingly interconnected world, today's young generation need to learn be able to engage in communication with people from a wide range of different cultures and traditions.

Kirkwood (2001) describes globally educated people as "those who possess high-tech skills, broad interdisciplinary knowledge about the contemporary world, and adaptability, flexibility, and world mindedness to participate effectively in the globalized world" (p. 11). Therefore, the teacher needs to strive for and possess the above characteristics in order to validate her/himself as an educated person of the 21st century. Following the crisis of September 11th, Merryfield (2002) posits the question, "Did teachers possess sufficient knowledge of relevant cultures, their beliefs, felt needs, histories, political economies and their past and present relationships with the United States to be able to provide students with the necessary background information?" (p. 148). This question needs to be further explored and there is no better time than now due to the dilapidating state of our planet to begin to address the concern for a more holistic and deeper understanding of the world.

CONCLUSION

Global Awareness provides students with the opportunity to learn more about the world and its diverse peoples and to promote a better understanding of other cultures. Students should gain an understanding of global situations and how these situations affect their lives as well as creating possibilities to address them. Teachers should emphasize cross-cultural awareness and deepen students' understanding of the diversity of perspectives, life ways, and structures that shape our global community. Teachers should possess high-tech skills, broad interdisciplinary knowledge about the contemporary world, and adaptability, flexibility, and world mindedness to participate effectively in the globalized world. This knowledge and experience of teachers will help students to acquire the skills and competency to become an effective global citizen.

We have the tools within our storehouse of teaching pedagogies (ways of teaching) a range of approaches. We also have the knowledge to utilise these pedagogies to bring about a Permanent Culture through developing a holistic and flexible curriculum that is egalitarian in nature, delivered in the setting which is best suited to the learner and learning, in order to instil useful and appropriate knowledge to build a Permanent Culture.

Since the teacher is globally aware and have qualities of a good global citizen, it will increase the possibilities of educating students to be a good global citizen as well. Effectiveness of teachers as global citizen will produce a globally competent student. If the teacher is supported in making the changes necessary for addressing the areas of Global awareness it can significantly help schools in retaining excellent educators who strive for improvement in

society. This in turn benefits the students of that school, with far-reaching ramifications for society.

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