Preparing Global Citizens

MANY INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS believe that young people in the twenty-first century be prepared to be "global citizens." A popular rationale is that young people need to be prepared for the "flat world," for globalized economies where all forms of capital—financial, intellectual, and human (money, ideas, and people)—move more quickly and easily across borders. Current and future generations of young people will enter and lead a world where competition and its benefits are based on knowledge and skill, two things that can be traded across nations and between people.

There is a lot to be said for this populist economic point of view. There is a human capital market, there is a trade in education services, and it is very valuable. Movement of ideas and money are now easier and faster than they were 100 years ago, and we would be doing young people a disservice if we did not acknowledge that in the way formal learning is organized and in the material that is presented.

Historical Perspective: Three Waves of Globalization

While the economic lens on the world is valuable, we need to acknowledge some other perspectives. First the historical: John Coatsworth reminds us that "globalization" has happened before.[1] He identifies three prior waves of events and technological innovation that led to significant shifts of people, money, and ideas. He labels the first wave as the transoceanic trade in goods beginning with 1492 up until the mid 1550s; the next is essentially the human misery of the slave trade and other forced movements of people from 1650 to nearly 1800. The third wave is the Belle Époque era from 1880 to the beginning of the Great Depression in 1930, covering the age on High Imperialism, the telephone, and the electric light. The current wave he sees beginning in the 1980s—and while it proportionally involves fewer people than some previous waves—it has greater significance for education because the tradable commodities are the products of learning: skills, knowledge, and services.
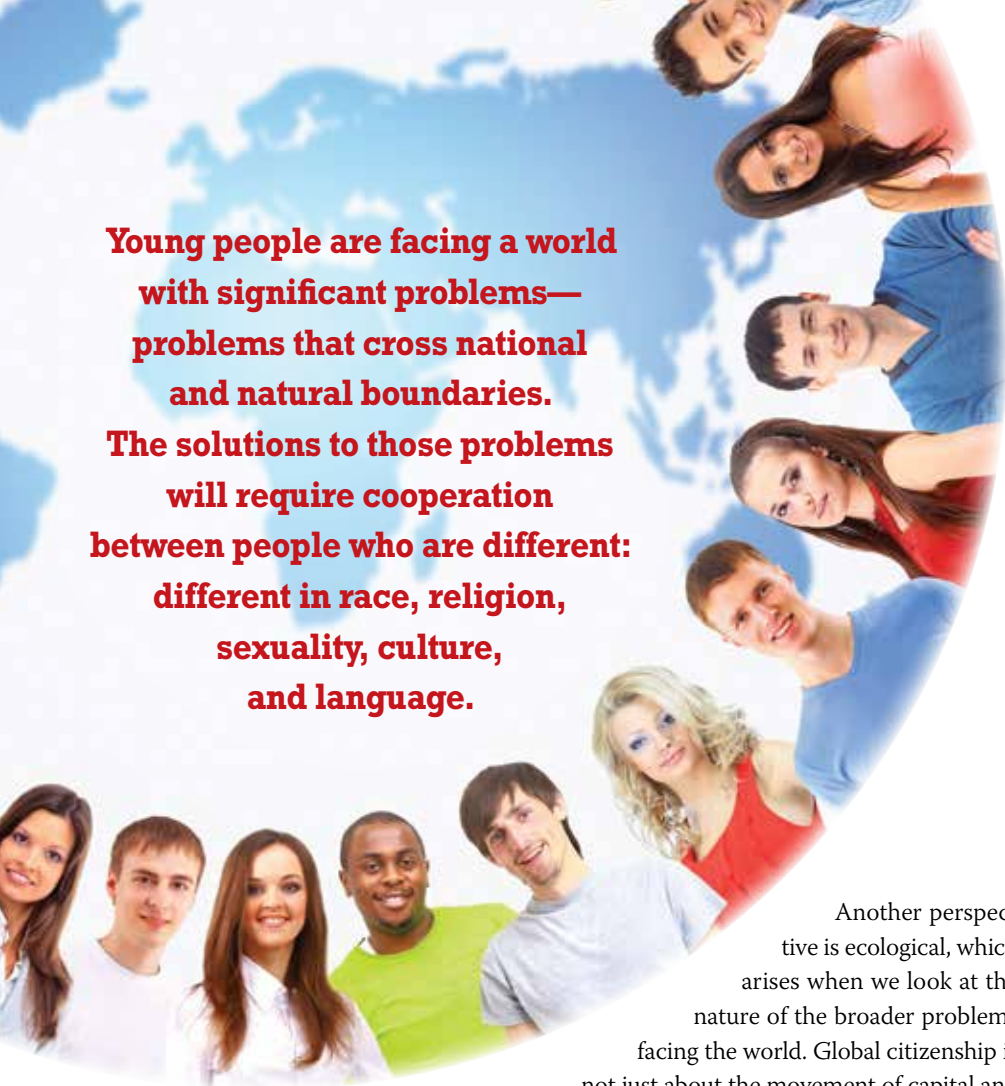
His view of the world is through the interactions between the Americas and the rest of the world so he omits the role of China in mapping the oceans and skips over the Silk Road as an example of cross-national trade and knowledge transfer.

But his historical sweep shows us that the role of knowledge and skill increases with each wave of globalization and that speed with which information, goods and services, and capital can be transferred increases with each wave. And the amount of information that an individual is presented with on a daily basis increases rapidly. That information comes from different cultural, linguistic, and political contexts. Evaluating, assessing, validating, and applying that information is one of the tasks of the globally aware individual.

Coatsworth's survey also reminds us that the movement of people was and is not always voluntary and definitely not always for the good of those involved. But we need to know that these waves of globalization peaked and then ebbed. They were often followed by periods of isolationism, trade and tariff protection, war and conflict. And that means that a globally prepared citizen is one that can also deal with a world that returns to its spherical shape, when Thomas Friedman finally sails off the end of his flat world. That round world will be one where trade barriers and farm subsidies persist and where currencies do not exchange freely and where the movement of people is controlled and constrained and freedom of speech and the right of assembly are denied. So, as we debate the ways to educate young people for global roles, we should recall that a duty of all is to resist oppression and tyranny and to care for others.

> **Young people are facing a world with significant problems— problems that cross national and natural boundaries. The solutions to those problems will require cooperation between people who are different: different in race, religion, sexuality, culture, and language.**

Making More Waves

One fundamental difference between the last waves of globalization and this wave is a shift in the locus of control over large-scale information exchange. In the past three waves, information assembly and distribution was largely in the hands of the church, the royal courts, and then mass media: print, radio, and film. The locus of control has shifted with the rise of the social media platforms. These tools increase the ability of individuals to extend themselves, to connect with more people, more quickly, and more often than ever before. And they use them: 61 percent of U.S. adult Internet users use a social networking site.[2]

These platforms do not face the boundaries of time, cost, or editorial control of conventional mediums like print, radio, or television. With increased choice and reduced barriers to participation, more voices shape, validate, and construct ideas and information or even the market value of a brand or the perceived attractiveness of a product.

Another perspective is ecological, which arises when we look at the nature of the broader problems facing the world. Global citizenship is not just about the movement of capital and being good stewards of money and people's efforts and skills. Other things have and continue to move more quickly. As people, animals, and food stuffs move, so do disease, pests, and predators, creating challenges for citizens. These challenges range from the air and water pollution to food security, biodiversity, health care, and human trafficking. These are challenges that are worthy of the best minds of any generation.

They are also challenges that Howard Gardner observes are not amenable to single discipline solutions.[3] They need to be addressed by supple minds that are willing to work with people steeped in expertise in other domains and intellectual traditions. This reminds us that young people need a breadth of preparation to be able to work and communicate with others to solve problems.

These challenges are not inclined to respect national boundaries or religious or cultural norms. They are largely indifferent to race, color, or gender. Acid rain and polluted water do not stop at passport control or seek customs clearance. Dealing with these problems effectively is predicated on people of different origins and locations working together for the common good. Again this reminds us that we need to prepare young people to work with others who may be different from themselves. This underscores the importance of teamwork and respect for others. And these teams of people will not necessarily be formed by governments or nations as Daniel Bell observed, the "national state has become too small for the big problems of life and too big for the small problems."[4]

Psychology: Acceptance and Rejection

And finally there is psychological perspective that bears on issues of individual identity. The globalized world is sometimes seen as a homogenizing force because it gives everyone access to the same news, entertainment, fashion, foods, and sporting events at the same time through the same medium, supported by advertisements for the same products.

As the world gets more interconnected, people simultaneously accept and reject the globalized culture. Rejection often comes in the form of new and revived interest in local traditions and languages.

As the dominant forms of culture become more pervasive, more people and more groups start to feel that their way of life is threatened. They respond by celebrating and often exerting their own identities, by celebrating differences.

But differences spark fear and intolerance. When economic and political events threaten livelihoods, those emotions are magnified. People begin to look for certainty, for things that define them—often through groups which share religion, culture, language, ethnicity, or kinship. They draw closer to people like them and in doing so, they exclude "others." Sometimes this is benign and sometimes it leads to violence and hatred.

Obviously a smaller world brings us into contact with a wider range of differences and challenges us to be tolerant. Without tolerance we cannot celebrate differences.

Public institutions like schools are usually designed to transmit common values and

beliefs and "essential knowledge" across generations. Individual differences are tolerated (although I do recall the day in my primary school when the left handed were freed). Individuals are seen as citizens first with duties and obligations—like military service. Group differences in terms of faith or ethnicity are secondary, and these groups may have some freedoms like right of association and private schooling. But access to the main institutions of such nations—high school graduation, university education, political office, and certain classes of work—is still through the dominant culture and language.

These realities will persist for many years to come, and the global citizen needs to be able to be active in both local and international settings. Both capacities are essential if the individual is to be engaged in the larger tasks facing nations and societies and enterprises and families.

So, in summary young people are facing a world where the movement of money and people makes economies and nations more interdependent. They are facing a world with significant problems—problems that cross national and natural boundaries. The solutions to those problems will require cooperation between people who are different: different in race, religion, sexuality, culture, and language. People with different identities and from different intellectual disciplines will need to work together. Yet while doing so they need to maintain and cherish their own identities as individuals and as citizens.

These things are observable now; this is not an unknowable future. So educators with the task of preparing successive generations of political leaders, of global guardians and stewards, and shapers of society need to ensure they offer young people opportunities to be globally engaged and globally aware.

Curriculum Implications

If we accept that, and not everyone does, we can turn to the question of "how"?

One traditional approach was to relabel some aspect of the curriculum. The victim was usually "social studies." No additional time was to be provided—just more content was to be covered. So for example social studies became "Asian Studies" in some Australian schools in the 1970s. In reality this meant that the main experience of a student at school was largely unchanged, few teachers had to change practice, and those that were involved were often enthusiasts who only educated a few.

The other traditional approach was to infuse or integrate global content into all aspects of the curriculum so that every subject made reference to happenings and discoveries outside the national or linguistic boundaries of the school. This is laudable and inclusive but its critics used to refer to it as the "peanut butter" approach to educational change—something to be spread thinly and preferably disguised by "jelly" and leaving the bread underneath untouched.

The third approach was to focus on language learning. Language carries culture and gives an insight into the values of different peoples. Immersion is still a great way to learn language and get an understanding of the realities of life in another culture. Frequent and systematic use of a language and use of a language for a purpose that has meaning to the student result in greater proficiency than grammar drills.

There is much to be gained from language acquisition. But there are strategic and practical considerations. Which language or languages to offer? How should they be chosen for reasons of economic and national security, for geographic proximity, because of cultural and imperial legacies, or because of immigrant histories? Or because of the access that language affords to richness of information and literature and culture?

The practical questions are ones of delivery capacity: availability of teachers, materials, equipment. They are not trivial. We also need to understand that some languages simply take more time to learn than others. For English native speakers the industry estimate is an average of 600 hours to learn French while pictographic based Chinese takes 2,200 hours. The timetabling logistics and assessment implications of that are challenging.

In addition to language and as an alternative to the renaming and diffusion approaches, a lot of effort have gone into cross-disciplinary studies. One of the best is the Cambridge Exams Board's Global Perspectives program for years (grades) 9 and 10, which has been extended to years (grades) 11 and 12 to meet the demands of learners preparing for university and the workforce.[5] Sometimes presented as a critical thinking program, and sometimes as a skills-based program aimed at developing twenty-first century skills, the program aims to prepare young people for an "information-heavy interconnected world "by developing their skills in critically assessing and evaluating information, taking into account disparate viewpoints, communicating with others of different backgrounds and making judgments. It requires independent work and group work and assesses both. Students are expected to gather, synthesize and communicate information, work with others to an agreed end, be able to reflect and assess both the worth of the process and the end they reach, and do so rationally and logically. The course is not designed to produce people with like minds but people who can appreciate the diversity of human experience and marshal it and other forms of evidence into reasonable approaches to shared global problems.

It is a demanding program of study. Looking at the syllabus for 2014 and at the examiner's report for 2013, you can see that it requires sustained writing with three pieces of work across different areas of study that cover global problems touching many disciplines and hence forms of evidence. For example, the most popular areas for study in 2013 ranged across climate change; poverty and inequality; law and criminality; and conflict and peace. The assessment protocol is sophisticated, combining internal and external examiners and a portfolio of work. This is consistent with the breadth of the syllabus which requires that the issues be examined from the perspective of the individual, the group, the nation, and the world and draw on all disciplines. The learners are expected to identify and evaluate various scenarios, be able to accurately represent various view points, appraise them, formulate courses of action, and offer evidence-based recommendations.

Making Productive Connections

There are some proven longstanding practices. Pen pals, student and teacher exchanges, and sister-school relationships sound so old fashioned. Yet we have seen an excellent example of the value of such relationships as people in small communities supported, helped, and prayed for their friends in Japan during the tsunami/nuclear crisis. The little town of Glen Rock, New Jersey, has a sister town relationship with Onomachi a tiny village of rice paddies and tobacco farms 30 miles from the nuclear reactor site. They hosted school children and teachers for the last 20 summers. During the crisis the friendships and connections formed through those experiences became tangible offers of help and support and information.

The social media platforms and the wonders of cheap cross-border voice and image over Internet (Voip) protocols can revitalize these practices and give them new depth. But person-to-person connections still matter.

To put it succinctly, the development and guidance of young people toward global citizenship is best when it is based upon the fundamentals of good teaching and learning. I have seen too much lately that is the product of the deification of memorization, the accretion of facts, the grad grind of recitation, the atomization of knowledge, and the lack of problem solving and teamwork. Knowledge of the wider world and why it is worthwhile and valuable to know about others is best pursued actively, by actual engagement with text, with voice, with sight and sound, by contact with others, by working on real problems that cross cultures, borders, and disciplines.

There is a case for preparing young people for global citizenship, for a world that is interconnected and changeable. The best ways of guiding them to a state of readiness for citizenship is by active learning, by offering opportunities to work individually, and in groups on real problems, to imagine solutions and test them in debate with people of different minds, to experiment and pilot, to simulate and evaluate paths of action. **IE**

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Endnotes

1 John Coatsworth, "Globalization, Growth and Welfare in History" in Suarez-Orozco, M.M. & Hilliard, D.B., (eds.) *Globalization: Culture and Education in The New Millennium*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2004.

2 This statistic can be found online at this link: http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Online-Activites-Total.aspx

3 Howard Gardner, "How Education Changes: Consideration of History,Science and Values" in Suarez-Orozco, M.M. & Hilliard, D.B., (eds.) *Globalization: Culture and Education in The New Millennium*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2004.

4 Daniel Bell, "The Future World Disorder-Structural Context of Crises," *Foreign Policy*, 27, 1977.

5 Cambridge International Examinations, "Cambridge IGCSE: Global Perspectives Syllabus 2012" and"Cambridge AS and A Level: Global Perspectives & Research Syllabus, June 2013 Examiner's Report."