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## TEACHING WITH A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

BY DR. PERCY RICHARDSON

Globalization is changing what and how we teach. To thoroughly understand what globalization is, authors Hill (2009), and McShane and Von Glinow (2008) have defined globalization as the economic, social and cultural connection with more integrated and interdependent world economies, and with people in other parts of the world. Simply put—we now live in one

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huge global marketplace where goods, services, and people are constantly moving across different boundaries (Zeszotarski, 2001). This movement of human capital places a greater demand for institutions of higher education to train their students for employment in the global marketplace.

My experience as the Coordinator of International Education, and as one who has traveled and studied abroad for the past twenty years, have allowed me to bring a global perspective into the classroom. It is from these experiences that I discuss the value of teaching from a global perspective, the need for foreign language skills, and the value of student travel.

### **Why Teach with a Global Perspective?**

As the world becomes “flat” with goods and services, and people move from one country to another, educators must teach global tolerance with an understanding that the new workforce may work for a foreign company in America or abroad (Friedman, 2005). Therefore, educators must equip students with knowledge about global economics that will have a direct impact on students’ future job choices (Dowling & Welch, 2005).

As jobs continue to be transferred overseas, institutions of higher learning are placed at the forefront of training bilingual and culturally astute workers for the global market. Globalization has caused American companies to move

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more of their operations into the global market because of cheap and highly skilled workers; unfortunately, this will create unemployment for both white and blue collar workers in America who are not prepared to work abroad (Hira, 2004).

Globalization is not limited to business related courses, but is relevant to all courses that are taught in higher education (White and Toms, 2009). For example, the first human face transplant occurred in France. The fastest train in the world belongs to China, and the tallest building in the world over looks the landscape of Dubai. Therefore, classroom instructors for all disciplines must shift their teaching philosophy from a domestic one to a global one.

### **The Global Teacher**

Generally speaking, college students are introduced to global issues from their instructors. Teachers who travel abroad have different experiences and can bring those experiences into the classroom. They can provide first-hand knowledge about the people, the food, the architecture, the language, the landscape, and the culture of a foreign country (Clowdsley, 2001). These experiences, good and bad, can support or contradict what the author is saying in a textbook.

By displaying authentic artifacts from their travels, global teachers can make the global experience become real for students who have not traveled abroad (White & Toms, 2009). Authentic artifacts such as foreign currency, pottery, jewelry, clothes, and artwork can validate the importance of global experiences, and make an indelible impression on a student. This may inspire the student to learn more about the world he or she lives in, and can arouse the curiosity of the learner through touch and sight.

The global teacher plays a key role in educating students for the Twenty-First Century. As the world economies continue to change, the paradigm of teaching has to change to meet these demands. Therefore, the global teacher has to draw from all possible best practices that will give his or her students the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to compete and work in the global economies.

### **Textbook Selection with Global Themes**

Textbooks are critical in teaching with a global perspective because they help reinforce the experience the teacher has had abroad, and they introduce global trends and contributions made by foreign countries. If a student has not traveled abroad, it is through the textbook that the student will acquire his knowledge about globalization. Textbook selection is just as important

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as the faculty experience, so faculty members need to devote time to reading available textbooks before making a final selection.

Textbooks need to be selected that emphasize globalization (White & Toms, 2009). Hence, textbooks that dedicate one or two chapters to globalization are not appropriate for the student. Textbooks written from a global perspective should have a global theme throughout, and each chapter should show global trends and foreign contributions to society (White & Toms, 2009). Omitting or limiting global contributions to society does not give students accurate information, leaving them ill- prepared for employment in the Twenty-First Century. Furthermore, they are unable to discuss facts about other cultures and their contributions to society.

Faculty members need to consider textbooks that are written and/or co-authored by non-American authors, which as a result are written in a more global voice, speaking of the culture and contributions that are often left out when written by American authors. Students who read textbooks written by foreign authors gain a new perspective because these authors often provide different ideas than American writers.

### **Gaining Global Experience through Teacher Exchange Programs**

If a teacher has not studied or traveled abroad as a student or for pleasure, there are various opportunities to do so. Many institutions participate in faculty exchange programs where faculty members can gain the global experience needed. Virginia Community College System faculty members are eligible for opportunities such as VaCIE-VCCS International Exchange, the Fulbright Program, and VCCS Mini Grants. These grants can be used by faculty members to do research projects abroad at a limited cost to the faculty member, and they provide valuable global experience for a faculty member who participates in them. By participating in these programs, the faculty:

- Gains knowledge of different cultures, values and norms,
- Brings a global value-added perspective to the classroom and to the college community at large,
- Learns a different way of teaching the respective disciplines,
- Supports campus wide globalization, and
- Supports the concept of global citizenship (Clowdsley, 2001).

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Faculty exchange programs vary in length from two weeks to a year of teaching abroad. Individuals who participate in these programs have an opportunity to live and work in a foreign country while experiencing a new culture. Some faculty exchange programs are designed so that the visiting faculty lives with a host family.

### **Foreign Languages**

Another important aspect of teaching with a global perspective is the need to teach foreign languages, both as a discipline and in a shared learning community. Researchers Barnum and Wolniansky (1989) asked the question, “What do you call some one who speaks only one language? An American.” This simple question continues to fuel the debate over dual languages in America.

As the language debate continues to rage in America, bordering countries Mexico and Canada have instituted dual languages for their citizens. This is so they can have access to and communicate in the global community, and barriers to visiting foreigners to move freely throughout the country are eliminated.

Many foreign countries expect their students to learn several languages with fluency in speaking, reading, and writing. The United States, North Korea and Iran do not require a student to learn a foreign language. Foreign language for most American students is considered an elective, and mastery of the language is not required. This often places American students at a disadvantage when employers are seeking to hire skilled bilingual workers (Zeszotarski, 2001). The dual language approach prepares students for employment in the global workforce by providing them with an additional skill set beyond the technical skills required (Tow, 2001).

Instructors who teach foreign languages understand the importance of immersing students in a language by taking them abroad. Students who are immersed in a foreign language can more readily master the art of speaking, reading, and writing it. Students who study foreign language abroad learn different approaches to speaking the language that is not their mother tongue. They have a unique experience learning a new culture, its social norms, and traditions compared to students who have not traveled abroad. Without the understanding of languages, it is difficult to communicate, appreciate and understand other cultures. Teaching a foreign language is critical to helping American students become globally savvy (Dowling & Welch, 2005; Zeszotarski, 2001).

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In addition, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 created an increased demand for bilingual students by the United States military, the CIA, the FBI, and businesses. Many sectors of the government, the military, and the business world are recruiting foreigners who are bilingual in the “critical languages”-- Russian, Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, and Chinese-- to serve as interpreters. Since there is a severe shortage of American interpreters, the military is hiring foreigners to serve as interpreters. These foreigners who speak, read, and write English fluently have honed their language skills so they can compete for jobs in the United States and abroad (Kapur & McHale, 2005).

### **Study Abroad Programs**

Information that gives added value to a student’s learning comes from life experiences (Friedman, 2005). Study abroad programs that are centered on a shared learning community concept provides students with a wealth of knowledge from different disciplines. In a shared learning community, instructors can have a more in-depth discussion about any given topic, because each instructor can share his or her knowledge about the topic (Beckford-Barclay, 2004). Study Abroad Programs should include visits to businesses, museums, art galleries, colleges and universities, and historical sites, as well as informal, age-appropriate talks with local politicians and local citizens (White & Toms, 2009). All of these experiences invoke critical thinking and elicit thought-provoking questions from students.

To make study abroad affordable, students can apply for international scholarships that vary in funding. Scholarships such as the David L. Boren awards a maximum of \$20,000 for one year to study a foreign language deemed critical by the U. S. government, and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship awards \$5,000 a year (Beckford-Barclay, 2004). Websites such as International Scholarships.com and Institute International Education Passport (IIEP) provide a wealth of unrestricted and discipline specific scholarships.

Southside Virginia Community awards three full study abroad scholarships annually, so that students can study abroad during spring break. Scholarship funds are raised by the college’s Foundation Board (via an annual golf tournament) and the Coordinator of International Education.

Students who have traveled abroad have an advantage over students who have not traveled abroad when it comes to getting a job (Stinson and Richardson, 2006). It is because these students have a better understanding of people from different cultures; thus, reinforcing the concept of global citizenship, cultural tolerance, and humanitarian responsibility which are the hallmarks of study abroad programs (Tow, 2001).

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## SVCC Scholarship Recipients Comments on Study Abroad

SVCC students' comments validate the importance of both teaching with a global perspective and having a study abroad program as part of their education. Their comments show the benefits they received from participating in a study abroad program.

**Dayne J.** (Peru, 2008): As a recipient of a \$2,600 International Study Abroad Scholarship, I highly valued this privilege to travel overseas and study a different culture. As I spent time in Peru, I saw that getting to travel overseas and study another country is a privilege that I am very happy to have experienced. For example, walking through the trails surrounding Sandoval Lake Lodge, and seeing all of the various native species of monkeys and trees, I asked myself, how many U.S. college students can say that when they were nineteen years old, they were literally walking in the Amazon rainforest? The answer is a very few... My cross-cultural experience to Peru has also made it clear to me that it is almost impossible to truly appreciate the U.S and the freedoms that we enjoy, until we first tread foreign soil.

**Jeff A.** (Peru, 2008): About a dozen from our group visited an orphanage for girls in Cusco, Peru's ancient capital city. The children there were obviously overjoyed to have visitors from another country who took the time out to stop and see them, and were very grateful for the simple gifts we brought them: items of clothing, notebooks, crayons, coloring books, paper, pens, pencils, and small toys. When it was time for us to go, I wasn't ready to leave. And the girls weren't ready for us to leave, either. If I have the opportunity to go back to Peru in the future, that orphanage will definitely be on my list of places to make a return visit!

**Cheryl J.** (Israel 2011): My trip to Israel was a tremendous learning experience. I was able to see the culture and the lifestyle of the people of Israel. I had the opportunity to learn about the modern Israel of today, as well as their rich history. We were able to learn about the religious differences that shaped this country, and we also learned about the Israeli government. Israel is a country full of

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history and culture, and it was the trip of a lifetime to be able to see all the sites and experience what it was like to spend eleven days in that beautiful country.

**Robin C.** (Israel 2011): I got the feeling of a child in a fantasy land, but it was oh-so-real. The several courses recently taken in varying history classes became vivid and alive; the ancient columns, caves, aqueducts, and deserts all around the valleys were as if straight from a text book. Who would have thought that trees and other agricultural crops could grow and be productive in the barren desert? The olive tree bark was astonishing. And then to learn the average olive tree lives about nine hundred years; it was just awesome!

**Rosche T** (Israel 2011): I would like to acknowledge Southside Community College for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime, and making it accessible for young adults to broaden their horizons in new territories. This scholarship has made me look at individuals from a new perspective; also I became thankful for my country and the opportunity ... to become educated.

## Conclusion

The benefits of teaching from a global perspective far outweigh the disadvantages. Teaching from a global perspective provides the employer with global workers. Such teaching produces students who possess the knowledge of languages, culture, social systems, dress, religion, and cultural norms, as well as skills for employment in the global marketplace (Stinson & Richardson, 2006). Also, it teaches global citizenship and cultural tolerance, as well as good stewardship of the world's resources (Zeszotarski, 2001).

By learning different languages and traveling abroad, American students can move easily from one country to another based on the demands of the job, their global travel experiences, and their skill sets. American educators must equip students with the knowledge needed to understand race, color, creed, language, customs, norms, religion, global politics, and foreign business practices in order for them to compete in the global workforce of the Twenty-First Century (Tow, 2001; Dowling & Welch, 2005).

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