

# PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY ON GLOBAL LEARNING

Personal Philosophy on Global Learning

Shannon Russell

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## Personal Philosophy on Global Learning

Population growth and the development of new technologies are causing our world to change dramatically. People around the globe are more connected now than ever before due in large part to the internet, ease of travel, and the extremely fast rate of information exchange. Inevitably, we are on the brink of a new, digital era. Educators are faced with the challenge of preparing students for life in this brand new world; this requires innovative approaches to education that are extremely different than those of the past. Global learning is essential to the goal of adequately preparing 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners. For true global learning to occur, many factors must be present, including: strong pedagogy, technology, and dialogue. Together, these factors should emphasize global problem solving skills and guide learners to embrace diversity.

### **Pedagogy**

Pedagogy refers to the act of teaching; for students to attain maximum learning outcomes, strong pedagogy must be in place. Of course, this is not a new notion; best practices have always been extremely important to education. However, it is essential that pedagogy remains a priority in our shift to the digital era. It is an absolutely critical factor in any educational system. Prior knowledge, efficient organization of information in the brain, problem solving skills, and knowledge transfer are all important elements to best practice and pedagogy.

All students come to learning experiences with some amount of prior knowledge. Teachers must be savvy in knowing when to use this prior knowledge to help the student reach the desired learning outcome and also in knowing when to debunk this prior knowledge if it is inaccurate or misleading. Once material is learned, students must learn

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how to organize it effectively in their brains so that they are able to use it in the most efficient ways. The Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education wrote that people with the most efficient organizational systems are experts; they can use more working brain space to solve problems because it does not take them as long to retrieve pertinent information from their schema (page 17). This is extremely important to global learning, as problem solving should be emphasized over fact memorization. The new global-digital era presents many problems that require innovative thinking and creative solutions; therefore, these skills are critical. In my own classroom, I base much instruction around problem based learning so that students must use higher level thinking skills to find solutions to problems. For example, rather than explaining simple machines (part of the first grade science curriculum) to students, I had them build leprechaun traps out of many different materials. Building a machine themselves gave them valuable insight into that objective.

Because global learning is so complex, it is important that educators understand that a combination of many different teaching approaches is necessary. Depending on the context of each learning situation (content being taught, student backgrounds, learning goals, etc.), teachers must have a variety of methods to mindfully choose from such as direct instruction, experimentation, cooperative learning, and many more. One teaching method will not be ideal for every teaching situation, so educators must think flexibly. For example, refer back to the leprechaun traps my students built. By combining direct instruction, cooperative learning, and hands-on experimentation, I used three different teaching approaches that were much more effective combined than had I just used one independently. When executed properly, these educator decisions guide

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students to become metacognitive thinkers who are able to transfer knowledge to many different contexts and apply it in various ways. Furthermore, these choices can help reduce the chasm between in-school and real world problem solving that currently exists. To be successful in a global society, students must participate in more real world application activities.

### **Technology**

Technology advances in recent years have been monumental; they have changed the way the world works in both personal and professional contexts. Global education cannot exist without the use of technology. Of course students need to understand how to use technology, but they must also be constantly exposed to it to develop what I call technological stamina. Technological stamina is the ability to continuously play with and tweak technology to reach one's final goal. I think this is essential in the digital-global era because technology is constantly changing, so without this stamina people will simply give up and choose not to use technologies that would make their lives easier and their efforts more productive. Having the perseverance to stick with technology despite its quirks and imperfections is a skill essential to 21<sup>st</sup>-century citizens. Thus, not frequently exposing students to technology does them a great disservice.

Another positive factor about technology is its ability to provide learners with more real-world applications, such as the Stock Market game many elementary students participate in. Groups of students invest imaginary funds into the Stock Market. They then receive reports of how their money is growing or diminishing based on the real-world status and events in the economy. After several weeks, students have gained valuable knowledge about the economy. Additionally, technology often motivates

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students who are not personally vested in more traditional paper-pencil tasks. For example, there is one student in my class who is a very poor speller. Allowing him to practice spelling words on an i-pad has greatly improved his spelling abilities. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about using technology to support global learning is not to get so caught up in the technology itself that the curriculum goal is lost. If students are using Animoto, they should be creating a product reflecting their knowledge of a curriculum objective rather than just freely using it to create whatever they want. Technology should co-exist with curriculum to enrich it and help accomplish its goals; it should never be seen as a separate entity. An example of this is the class wiki I created for my students. Through the wiki, students can explore links to sites that supplement our curriculum, play games that enable them to practice skills we are learning, interact through comment posts, and even create their own wiki pages. Learners must be given content knowledge and technological skills, not just one or the other if they are to be successful in a globalized society.

### **Dialogue**

As educators undergo the art of teaching in all the ways previously outlined, it is crucial that they do so in a way that encourages dialogue. Having conversations about the world and its citizens is what will foster pluralistic and cosmopolitan mindsets in students. Students should not just understand what cultures represent, they should also seek to understand *why* people make choices and live the way they do. A productive world is one in which citizens are accepting, tolerant, appreciative, and understanding of one another despite differences, no matter how extreme. Appiah summed it up nicely when he wrote: “The challenge, then, is to take minds and hearts formed over the long

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millennia of living in local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe we have become” (Appiah, xiii).

Educators can encourage pluralism by using primary sources, choosing a wide range of materials that promote diversity, and modeling empathy. For instance, if students are learning about Anne Frank, they could read her actual diary and interpret it themselves rather than reading another author’s interpretation of it in a history book. In my own elementary classroom, I keep a multi-cultural book display out year round and change the books every few weeks to represent a different group of people. The students love this part of our classroom library, and it sparks interest in them about people different from themselves. They often do their own research at home or on classroom computers to learn even more about each group’s heritage and customs which they can then record in our class culture journal.

Global learning is extremely important and should be a high priority for all educators. By making careful and conscious decisions about pedagogy, technology, and dialogue, teachers can give students the necessary tools to become productive global citizens that are open-minded to diversity. Because our world is changing at such a rapid rate, educational systems should not hesitate in implementing global learning practices.

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