

# Chapter 64

## Critical Instruction, Student Achievement, and the Nurturing of Global Citizens: Global and Comparative Education in Context

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter applies critical theory to analyze the impact of globalization on education at the classroom level. Based on the hypothesis that education policy decisions made at the global level result in outcomes at the classroom level, it is clear globalization directly impacts students in the classroom. Therefore, within the context of curriculum and instruction, this chapter critically explores 21<sup>st</sup> century instructional practices as a response to the following research question: What are effective methods for engaging all learners in today's classrooms? The chapter incorporates qualitative research results and historical background about globalization, which thus situates current 21<sup>st</sup> century instructional practices within a framework for critical deconstruction. Finally, the qualitative research utilized in this chapter stems from classroom observations of teachers delivering 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction, and this research serves the purpose of clearly illustrating the characteristics of 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction in the classroom.*

### INTRODUCTION

Researchers who approach education as a contested practice assert that the definition of knowledge and the hierarchical ranking of cultural values that manifest within schools and classrooms emerge out of an arduous process of negotiation, and this process of negotiation produces a contentious

curriculum fraught with misaligned perspective. The dispute over education practice exists because defined knowledge within the curriculum is instilled with cultural signifiers that either perpetuate the status quo or challenge the dominant culture narrative. The struggle to define knowledge within schools is not simply a dichotomous conflict; it involves multiple factions sometimes competing

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asynchronously. After all, educators confront challenges with the canon—the representative sanctioned literary collection—to incorporate material of ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural backgrounds not represented within the dominant perspective. Without a continued challenge to the assertion of dominant values, a perpetuation or social reproduction occurs. As Giroux explains,

*Reproduction refers here to texts [language and communication patterns] and social practices whose messages, inscribed within specific historical settings and social contexts, function primarily to legitimate the interests of the dominant social order. I want to argue that these can be characterized as texts, as social practices about pedagogy, and refer primarily to categories of meaning constructed so as to legitimize and reproduce interests expressed in dominant ideologies. (1983, p. 157)*

An understanding of this point—that education serves multiple purposes and varied agendas—underscores the importance of knowing education as a contested realm. Within this construct, the curriculum is a pathway to engaged instruction and to successful academic outcomes that can disrupt the status quo.

In our current, globalized world, education serves as the focal point for social conflict—schools cannot escape the pressures of their environment. The structural circumstances apparent in contemporary society, such as pervasive poverty and stratified employment opportunities, place demand on schools to deliver opportunity to all students. In this context, schools, through global pressure, now emphasize 21<sup>st</sup> century instructional skills as a driving force to promote student success. It is this point specifically that unfolds throughout this chapter and serves as the focus of critical analysis. The chapter comprises three key subsections, which in total delineate globalization’s impact on education at the classroom level. The

first chapter subsection is titled “Globalization and the Knowledge Economy.” In this section, the connection between globalization, the knowledge economy, and the evolution of 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction is established. The next subsection of the chapter, “Critical Instruction,” utilizes a critical pedagogy framework to deconstruct the role of 21<sup>st</sup> century instructional practices as a method of instruction for all learners. Finally, the last section of the chapter, “21<sup>st</sup> Century Instruction and Global Citizens,” examines whether or not the current trend of 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction perpetuates dominant cultural values at the expense of nondominant cultural values.

## **BACKGROUND**

To begin, an analysis of academic indicators—both international and national—shows that multiple levels of student underperformance exist. Academic underperformance is a problem steeped in intricate complexities that lacks simple explanations; this problem demonstrates a need for an aligned curriculum designed to reach all student populations. Consider international data in which American public school students do not experience a commensurate level of academic success as compared to their global counterparts. For example, data from the Program for International Assessment (PISA), which measures reading literacy, mathematics literacy, and science literacy for 15 year olds every three years, illustrates that American students when compared to their Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) equivalents on the 2009 PISA results rank 8<sup>th</sup> in reading, 21<sup>st</sup> in math, and 13<sup>th</sup> in science (Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010). Additionally, data from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) indicate that while the scale score for American students of 540 is significantly above the PIRLS

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