

Chapter 90

Fostering Development of 21st Century Competencies and Global Citizenship through Constructivist– Based and Learning–Style Responsive Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to provide practical applications for successful implementation of constructivist-based and learning-style responsive pedagogy that supports the development of 21st century competencies needed for college and career readiness leading toward global citizenship. In alignment with the objectives of this book, the content of this chapter will support the book's mission of helping educators "use what they glean to support children and families toward becoming successful in our global society".

INTRODUCTION

As citizens of the globe, learners need to be aware of the global nature of societal issues, to care about people in distant places, to understand the nature of global economic integration, to appreciate the interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples, and to respect and protect planet Earth – home for all human beings (Zhao, 2009, p. 113).

In order for such dynamics to become possible, future approaches to schooling need to support learners, instructional leaders, and families toward attainment of these goals in new ways, which will call for

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Careful evaluation of current approaches to teaching and learning. Zhao (2009) stressed the importance of development of global competence based on a required set of skills and knowledge, with the essential components being foreign language proficiency, deep understanding of other cultures, global viewpoints in thinking and a sense of global citizenship. Others felt schools needed to focus on more than content knowledge to help students develop skills necessary for success in work and life (Rothstein, Wilder & Jacobsen, 2007). Modern schools, comprised of diverse students, teachers, and administrators, are completely different entities than learning environments of years past. Many are grappling with federal and state mandates calling for higher expectations with far less support and resources, paired with increased accountability tied to performance on high-stakes standardized tests with minimal, if any, consideration of more valuable determinants of school success. While the current American educational landscape is riddled with complex and often discouraging challenges, the silver lining might be that certain modern-day school variables, such as increasingly diverse student populations and the advent of digital learning granting unprecedented access to the world via technology, can serve as vehicles for stimulating changes. By embracing these trends, educators can empower students to become more active stakeholders in their own educational journeys and motivate them to continue learning outside the traditional classroom environment. Although, historically, good educators always have aimed to ignite a passion for lifelong learning in their students, modern educators face the additional hurdle of preparing students to become socially conscious, responsible, and contributing global citizens, not an add on, but as a given. Therefore, the role of a 21st century educator is more complex than ever before and encompasses far more than teaching compartmentalized content knowledge and requisite skills, going so far as to include character education, habits of mind, and encouragement of growth mindsets toward development of 21st century competencies. Costa and Kallick (2009) believed that character education is grounded in moral values, good citizenship, and thoughtful processes, which require schools to develop climates that foster thinking processes, just as they support development of students who are productive citizens with strong character.

Building school climates ripe for advanced thinking requires another facet of planning, but with a promising rate of return on effort expended as transformative learning climates can support students' development of key dispositions needed for college and career readiness, along with global citizenship. Today's educators need to support students and families toward developing the knowledge, thinking skills, and growth mindsets necessary for success in our increasingly global society, which include 21st century competencies imperative for college and career readiness. Fortunately, professional educators, have daily opportunities to build student relationships that foster educational aspiration and academic performance (San Antonio, 2008). Furthermore, instructional leaders can seize such opportunities to foster character development, growth mindsets, and dispositions that will support students in striving for global citizenship. Therefore, this chapter will discuss pedagogical techniques for use toward those ends, more specifically, constructivist-based and learning-style responsive pedagogy for use in preparing students to become college and career ready through meaningful development, practice, and application of key skill sets in authentic learning contexts. Hopefully, stemming from ongoing immersion in innovative learning experiences throughout the preK-12 years, as students prepare to enter institutions of higher education and the work force, they will begin to truly see themselves as global citizens. The expectation is that, as a result, students will become more motivated and prepared to actively contribute to solving the complex problems of our global society and offer creative solutions.

A further layer of challenge awaits instructional leaders, many of whom were not trained to prepare students for global futures themselves, as they face paralleled obstacles while leading and guiding educators in teaching modern day students to embody key competencies needed for college and career

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