

Chapter 16

Using ICT to Establish and Facilitate Global Connections in K–12 Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter was written to highlight the value for cross-cultural communication practices in schools with the support of innovative information and communication technology (ICT). A detailed theoretical foundation was provided to justify the inclusion of global perspectives in the classroom through cross-cultural communication, which is made possible with ICT. This chapter details the perceptions of 139 educators via a survey study, which shaped the author's suggestions for practical ICT cross-cultural communication opportunities in the classroom. Implementation strategies include classroom-to-classroom and classroom-to-world cross-cultural communication opportunities. This chapter suggests practical solutions supported by solid theoretical justifications for utilizing ICT to facilitate cross-cultural communication and improving student global awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Despite being the most technologically connected generation, members of Generation Z, those born from the late 1990s to the present, are constantly characterized as being the most *disconnected*. Ironically, the label is a result of their technologically connected world. Generation Z members have a permanent audience to advertise themselves at all times of the day. They literally have the world at their fingertips through their cell phones, computer screens, video games, and more, but generally speaking, they maintain a global presence of self-interest. Instead of exploring the vast perspectives available through the internet, most members of Generation Z would rather project their often singular perspectives on everyone else. The United States school system can perpetuate these ethnocentric views. Analyzing data from the U.S. Department of Education, Geiger (2017) reports

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Blacks and Hispanics make up 15.5% and 25.4% of the U.S. public school population, respectively. Yet large shares in each group attend schools where their own race or ethnicity accounts for at least half of students...Meanwhile, whites, who continue to make up by far the largest share of the U.S. public school population, tend to go to schools where half or more of students are white. (para. 1-2)

This data presents a problem in United States schools: students are isolated from diverse perspectives and backgrounds within institutions for which systems of prejudice and inequity already exist (Donaldson, 1996).

In order to thwart cultural, individual, and systemic racism and bias, educators are tasked with making antiracist and anti-bias curriculum choices. Multicultural curriculum is one approach to improve equity and encourage antiracist and anti-bias attitudes and systems (Gay, 2004). In fact, the standards movement charges teachers with the responsibility to emphasize and improve multicultural awareness. Unfortunately, in the United States, teachers' burdens are far reaching. Standardized tests, score accountability, prescribed curriculums, and packed class schedules make it difficult for teachers to create lessons that foster these valuable multiple perspectives. Nevertheless, the technological savvy teacher can use those same technological crutches to create a "web" within the web of perspectives that not only engage students but also motivate them to celebrate differences. According to Pirie (1997), "... it is the teacher's job to help the web become as full and intricately articulated as possible, and to help students reflect on the existence of the web and the principles upon which it is woven" (p. 22). The web that Pirie (1997) discusses includes all of the experiences that the student can encounter when studying content if given the opportunity. These new cultural perspectives challenge students to break out of this egocentric routine thinking and experience novel contexts thereby improving their critical thinking skill sets. Global education is the link that ties students' lives to the lives of people around the world in meaningful ways (Osler & Vincent, 2002).

Introducing students to global perspectives has never been easier thanks to the ease of cross-cultural communication. Since millennials already possess the technical skills to communicate globally, why not teach them to expose the perspectives that already exist on the other side of their computer screen? This study was conducted to discover the relevance, priority, and potential of global education in the United States. Although theoretical support exists, the current practices to establish cross-cultural connections and employ global strategies are relatively fragmented and underdeveloped. Therefore, this chapter reports on the perspectives and current practices of cross-cultural communication to foster global perspectives from a survey study involving 80 educators across the United States. Additionally, it provides practical suggestions and solutions for utilizing cross-cultural communication to improve students' global awareness.

BACKGROUND

Global education is just one buzz word in the educational world that refers to an overarching concept called global awareness; other such names include multicultural education, multiethnic education, culturally relevant education, peace education, citizenship education, and international education (Cushner and Mahon, 2009; Kist, 2013; Osler and Vincent, 2002). Following the guide of Kist (2013), the definition of global education in accordance with the National Council for the Social Studies (2016) was used for this study:

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