

WHAT IS

# Global Education?

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By Peter DeWitt, EdD

Being a school leader has become increasingly complex. There was a time when leaders, teachers, and students could stay in their small town and be isolated from the outside world. There were less distractions, and only the biggest stories made the nightly news. That world is gone, and there are pros and cons to our newly connected world. Thomas Friedman, in his groundbreaking book, *The World Is Flat*, opened everyone's eyes to the idea that social media and the Internet have given us **the opportunity to connect with and learn from people from around the world.**

Whether it is for professional or personal reasons, social media, distance learning, and other Internet tools, when used correctly, help bring people together. For school leaders and teachers this has profound implications, because students need to be prepared for this global world, and therefore so do teachers and school leaders. We often look at students as the ones who are naive about the world around them, but the adults do not always have an open mind when viewing the outside world either.

It's easy to get stuck in the rut of doing what they have always done before, and technology and social media have helped others grow, while some still shun the experience. They're afraid of what we don't know, and quite frankly they are less concerned about the outside world when they have so many constraints happening in their own state. But even with those constraints, a more global view is needed, because it will help people break out of their own line of thinking, and perhaps help them gain a better understanding of the world that our students will be inheriting.

The misunderstanding about the use of technology and social media is that everything revolves around 21st century skills, but global learning is much more than that. Global learning is about connecting with others to get a better understanding of cultures, innovations, and other points of view. These are all things students who are much older had to learn through reading textbooks, but now students have the opportunity to interact in real time with students and teachers from around the world. Unfortunately, connecting is not enough. Merely connecting doesn't go deep enough to what students should be doing. Learning should be at the center of our discussions, intentions, and aspirations. What can we learn from

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one another is an important question, and some of the world's leading experts in the field of education offered SAANYS their best answers.

Russ Quaglia is the founder of the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations (QISA) and his work is being implemented around North America, as well as in London and Poland. Gavin Dykes is the program developer for the Education World Forum. Based in London, Gavin moderates forums based on global education, which brings in close to 30 ministers of education from developed countries around the world. Viviane Robinson is the author of *Student-Centered Leadership*, and she is a professor of education at the University of Auckland (New Zealand). Yong Zhao is a best-selling author and presidential chair and associate dean for global and online education at the University of Oregon. John Hattie is the director of research and education professor at the University of Melbourne (Australia) and his Visible Learning research, which involves over 250 million students, is being implemented around the world.

**HOW DO SCHOOLS PROVIDE A GLOBAL EDUCATION?**

Russ Quaglia states: “Global education should be underpinned by the notion of diversity and connectedness.” He goes on to say, “I think students need to be open to new ideas and ways of thinking. Schools need to allow students to explore their curiosities and be prepared to come up with creative solutions to issues they have yet to encounter. They need to do this by being connected with other students around the world. The naive simplicity of lectures and testing must be replaced with exploration, a spirit of adventure, and a common purpose. A purpose driven by the belief that teachers and students working together can make the world a better place.”

Yong Zhao agrees: “A global learning environment enables students to learn from, with, and for individuals around

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the globe. Such an environment allows students to take advantage of learning resources and experts from around the globe and enables them to learn how to interact with people from different cultures. It also helps students to develop a global perspective.”

John Hattie provides a much more critical lens as to why this is all important:

“PISA has changed many policy levers and shown many systems alternative ways to develop school leaders (e.g., in Singapore you choose early to go down the leadership or top teaching career paths and whereas school leaders were focused on local context there is now a much higher awareness of looking out and realizing that we are a) not unique and b) that there are so many other models of school leadership that can work. The world of international research is also much more accessible.”

Viviane Robinson provided a unique, and much more culturally inclusive, answer. She said, “While we all espouse tolerance, inclusiveness and the benefit of community and diversity, the world is increasingly characterized by sectarian and civil strife. State schools have a major part to play in instilling through formal and informal curricula, the virtues of open-mindedness, tolerance, and mutual accountability – an open-mindedness that rejects both weak relativism and dogmatic certainty. I see this as more important in a global education than issues of technology.”

Considering how complex, or what Michael Fullan refers to as Simplicity, this all is for leaders, Hattie believes we should start here;

“Given all this, the greatest change (still in process) is the move from transformational leadership (mainly coming out of business CEO approaches) to impact leadership – no longer can principals just be concerned with the vision of the school but increasingly are asked to be concerned with the impact of the adults in the school on students – and will more and more be asked to share this information.”

When looking at the learning that happens in schools, one of Hattie’s eight mind frames is “Know Thy Impact.” As important as that is for teachers, it is equally as important for school leaders. Being visible isn’t enough, which means that welcoming students off the bus, being visible in the hallway or classrooms, and making sure they go to the lunchroom are all important parts of a leader’s job, but it isn’t enough. Leaders must always try to understand, or Know Thy Impact.

**TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO IMPACT LEADERSHIP**

Principals, superintendents, and every administrative position in between understand that leadership is changing. It’s the “how” that is really difficult. As leaders continue to work their way through accountability and mandates, which is potentially resulting in a much more strict evaluation model, being innovative and working toward a more global school, while dealing with some of the same anchors that weigh them down, is a constant struggle.

Quaglia, who is a former school leader and teacher, says, “I find the most successful school leaders today having the ability to ‘balance.’ Balance between being a conformist and a bit of a renegade; being determined and passionate about one’s values and beliefs, and open to new ideas and ways of thinking; being driven by success, and accepting of failure to learn and grow; being able to voice an opinion with courage and conviction, and knowing when to sit back

and listen; being sensitive to local needs, and realizing the importance of global stewardship; being able to dream about the future and having a great vision for the school, and being able to inspire others in the present to reach those goals.”

Robinson isn’t so sure that global schools are needed, as much as a continued effort to work on those areas that are still not strengths.

Robinson says, “I don’t know that we need global schools so much as schools that can teach in ways that promote a more peaceful and prosperous global community. Leaders need the skills to engage multiple diverse communities and in so doing create the opportunities and expectations that they will engage respectfully with each other in the interests of their children. This means leaders need to be both courageous and respectful, as they model the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and mutual accountability.”

This, of course, is parallel to what Yong Zhao believes leaders should know:

“I think it is important for school leadership to imagine that learning is not confined within a local context, as the world has become globalized. To start the change, school leadership need to broaden their definition of learning outcomes and resources.”

One of the ways to meet Robinson’s idea, as well as provide the better understanding Zhao refers to, is through some of the work that Gavin Dykes is involved in with the UN. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are meant to eradicate the world of those issues that we have been battling for centuries. The 17 goals revolve around ending poverty and hunger, while improving health, working for equality for gender and marginalized populations, and providing access to clean water and reusable energy sources. Dykes goes on to say,



**UNSustainable Goals? YES!**  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

Scan or visit:  
<http://bit.ly/1EYw6i7>

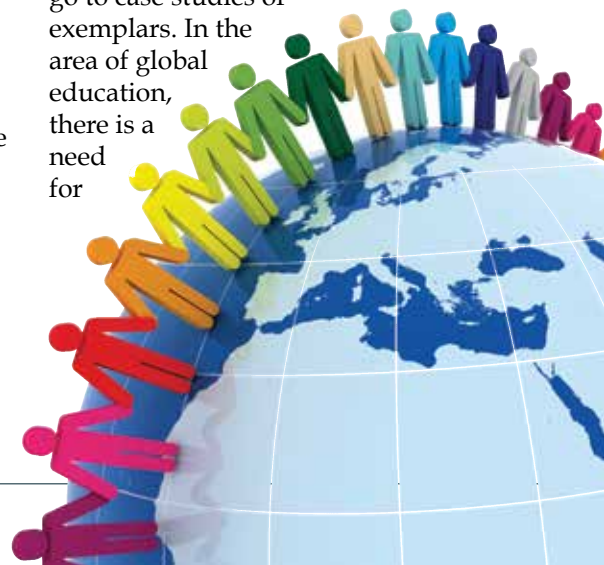
“New materials, films, and positive contributions to this initiative are being sought, so we all have an opportunity to play a part, to share and to learn. One step I’d be delighted to see school leadership taking is to start engaging with this now. That would be an excellent way to build towards becoming a globally engaged school, and to be a globally engaged school leader.”

Impact leadership, as Hattie refers to it, is an excellent way to meet the goal Gavin Dykes would like to see from schools, because that work could coincide with meeting the new UN goals.

“One of the hidden steps in working with this now is the cross-curricular nature of these Sustainable Development Goals. If you set to work on doing something about them locally now, then you will have great opportunities to associate science, literacy, math, language, and geography with them and to step along the path of project-based learning and learning by doing if you have a mind to take your leadership in that direction.”

**WHO DOES THIS WELL?**

As leaders and teachers look for resources around their goals, they go to case studies or exemplars. In the area of global education, there is a need for





knowing who does this well, and which leaders we can learn from as they try to meet this global goal. This often brings schools, states, and countries to a sticky point, because the immediate reaction is to go to competition. Who do we compete against? How are their test scores? Is there a standardized approach? The simple answer is that none of this comes in a box or a textbook, which is why technology and social media are important to these pursuits.

When looking at countries that are doing well, Quaglia, Dykes, and Hattie provide some answers. Robinson and Zhao felt that there are many examples, too many to call out a few.

Quaglia comments:

“Rivers Academy is a school that is on the move in all the right directions. The school is based in west London, England, and is one of thirteen schools of the Aspirations Academy Trust. The leadership (Paula Kenning) has instilled a sense of self-worth, meaningful engagement, and purpose for everyone. She did this by having high expectations of everyone (staff and students). She made sure that everyone knew they mattered and their opinions were sought after, valued, and listened to. The culture of the school went from testing and accountability to trust and responsibility. Yes, they are still taking tests like everyone else, but the feel of the school is very different and emotionally healthy. I might also add their test scores have improved as well!”

Hattie provides a much more critical answer when he says,

“Singapore is the best answer. They have widened from the narrow view of excellence of PISA (i.e., a focus on math and reading), to include vocational preparation (and it is now not the poor cousin); they have focused on teamwork, collaborative problem solving, and entrepreneurship.”

However, he believes other countries have pockets of excellence but still have things to work on:

“Australia has adopted ambitious standards for teachers and school leaders and is now embarking on a radical investigation of teacher education preparation, but still is narrow in what it values in high school.

NZ has moved to ask schools for their ‘overall teacher judgments’ and NOT the test scores. This has highlighted the massive variability in teacher judgment, has included all subjects and not just the usual few, and related a wide debate across schools about ‘what it means to be good’ at various subjects at various times in the curriculum progression. It has not always been an easy debate – and this has meant principals play a much stronger role in developing common mind frames about progress.”

Gavin Dykes provided some important insight from his work with ministries of education from around the world. He said,

“I sometimes wonder if small countries take their international context more seriously than larger and perhaps more powerful countries. In some there seems to be a natural instinct to look outwards and engage with and learn from what is happening elsewhere. This is about attitudes and values and requires empathy, humility, and skills of collaboration. But that doesn’t mean it has to be that way – those living in any country can develop those attitudes and values. It’s interesting, too, that it seems like many of today’s companies seek people with healthy doses of empathy, humility, and collaboration.”

In the end, all schools in all countries are a work in progress. One thing is for sure, schools need strong leaders who will know Thy Impact. Dykes ends by saying,

“I see the shift towards new models for leadership, school culture, and teaching also playing out through the work of organizations such as the

Agastya International Foundation as it works to support students, teachers, and schools in several of India’s states. Agastya acts as a stimulus to innovation and as an agent of change, supporting teachers and students in doing things differently. I sense it happening where schools change their approach to set student aspirations at the center of their work, changing the dynamics of learning, improving relationships between all those involved with leadership and increasingly shared responsibility, and moving towards models more appropriate to today’s increasingly globalized world.”

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