

**K-12 and International and Foreign Language Education:
Global Teacher Education**

**A Paper Presented at:
Internationalization of U.S. Education in the 21st Century:
The Future of International and Foreign Language Studies**

A Research Conference on National Needs and Policy Implications

**April 11-13, 2014
Williamsburg, VA**

**Margo Glew
Michigan State University
April 12, 2014**

Teacher education programs nationally face the challenge of preparing future educators for a rapidly changing classroom environment. New teachers can expect to enter classrooms that are increasingly culturally diverse, and that require new approaches to educating children for success in the flat, globally interdependent economy and society in which students live and eventually will work. This requires preparing students not only with a strong foundation in core academic subjects, but also with the knowledge, skills, and points of view necessary to interact successfully across a variety of cultural groups as well as grapple with issues and problems whose causes and foundation are more complex than ever before, issues and problems that cross local, national, and international boundaries, and whose solutions require new approaches to problem solving.

There is, across all levels of the education sector, broad support for and appreciation of the value of global education for today's students and global proficiency for the teachers who educate them. The U.S. Department of Education, in its International Strategy report for 2012-16, *Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement* (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p.4), identifies "Increasing the global competencies of all U.S. students . . ." as the first of the four core elements of its International Education strategic plan.

Faculty and administrators at institutions of higher education as well as practicing teachers also recognize the value of global education and the importance of engaging in global learning as part of teacher preparation.

Schneider (2007), in her survey of practicing teachers as well as faculty and administrators at schools, colleges, and departments of education found support for international learning experiences as an integral component of teacher preparation programs. A majority of Schneider's study respondents indicated support for the strengthening of general education requirements with international content (54%-100% of respondents, depending on group), and foreign language requirements (60%-100% of respondents, depending on group), and indicated a desire for more study abroad participation by teacher candidates (51%-61% depending on institution category).

Incoming undergraduate students also express support for international learning as an integral element of their undergraduate programs. In its report, *College-Bound Students' Interests in Study Abroad and Other International Learning Activities*, The American Council on Education, Art & Science Group LLC, and the College Board (2008) found that 55% of the high school seniors surveyed indicated that they intended to study abroad in college. Of the respondents who indicated a plan to study abroad, 70% reported that they intended to develop enough proficiency in a second language to be able to navigate successfully in the study abroad context.

Practicing K-12 teachers and their students also express support for global learning and recognize the value of global education in the K-12 context. In two surveys of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders, the *Global Educational Exploration Study* (Project Explorer, 2013) found 80% of teachers surveyed agreed with the statement that, ". . . it's more important today than ever

before for students to learn about other countries and cultures.” (Project Explorer, 2013, p.2). Students who participated in the survey also indicated the importance and value of global education. 60% of respondents indicated that “understanding different countries, cultures, and customs” is extremely important. Additionally, students identified *World Events* as the one subject in which they would choose to have more instruction, ranking it higher in importance than “core” subject areas such as writing, math, or technical skills. Furthermore, students overwhelmingly (98%) agreed that, “. . . a strong understanding of world history and events is critical to developing solutions to global problems.”

Support for global education in the K-12 context as well as global teacher education, therefore, appears ubiquitous. Unfortunately, there appears to be a large and troubling gap between stakeholders’ expressed support for global education and the actual incorporation of global content in teaching or participation in global learning experiences by pre-service teachers.

For example, participation rates for college language study indicate that only a small proportion of college students overall study a foreign language. The 2009 Modern Language Association foreign language survey (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2010) found an enrolment rate of only 8.6 per 100 students, a rate that has held relatively steady for the previous 30 years.

In terms of study abroad, one of the most commonly cited mechanisms for internationalizing the student experience, participation rates are also low with fewer than 10% of college and university students studying abroad nationally (Institute of International Education, 2013). Schneider (2007, p.27) reports that

her research indicates the proportion of Education majors who study abroad as low as 1-4%. Furthermore, of the students who do participate in study abroad, over half (58.1%) participate in short term programs of only a few weeks' duration (Institute of International Education, 2013) which lessens the potential for transformative cross-cultural learning and the many other benefits that come from meaningful study abroad experiences.

A similar gap exists in the general support that in-service K-12 teachers express for global education and their actual integration of global content in their teaching. Project Explore (2012, p.2) found that while 80% of teachers agreed that it is more important than ever for students to learn about other countries and cultures, only 30% indicated that they actually incorporate global materials and content into their teaching. And while the students who were surveyed identified a course in world events as the most important subject for which they would like more instruction, 78% of teachers prioritized other subjects, agreeing with the statement, "We need to teach today's students the basics like math, science, and reading skills before we spend time teaching them about other countries and cultures." (Project Explore, 2012, p. 4)

While many campuses and K-12 districts, schools, and teachers are undertaking initiatives to infuse global content and perspectives into teaching and learning, there remains a troubling gap between general support for global education and the actual implementation of global learning in both the K-12 and higher education contexts.

While many factors play a role in what content is covered and taught, as well as which learning experiences students seek out and complete, one significant barrier to the integration of global learning in education is the standards around which education and teacher education are organized. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts and mathematics is a set of standards which provide the framework for curricula in 44 states and the District of Columbia. State departments of education also provide content standards for other subject areas. It is these standards that provide the framework for the content covered in K-12 classrooms. Educators are responsible for making sure that students meet these standards and benchmarks. Standardized tests, aligned with the state's curriculum, are administered to students in order to assess the degree to which these standards are being met. These assessments are increasingly relied upon to make judgments about district, school, and teacher quality. Teachers, especially, have direct responsibility for student performance on these assessments. Because global proficiency is not a central or integral part of the Common Core State Standards and, more importantly, is not integrated into the assessments aligned with CCSS, it is ultimately up to individual teachers, schools, and districts to consciously prioritize global proficiency and find a way to integrate global education into the local curriculum. Incorporating global knowledge, perspectives, and skills may often be viewed as an "extra," an add-on to an already ambitious curriculum. As teacher quality is increasingly tied to student performance on high stakes, standards-based assessments, there is little

incentive to address anything in the classroom other than what is in the standards and the test(s) that measure them.

Teacher preparation programs also face a challenge similar to that faced by in-service teachers. Teacher preparation programs, in applying for accreditation, must meet the standards outlined by the accrediting body. Additionally, state departments of education provide standards which teacher preparation programs must address in order for programs to receive state approval. Both state departments of education and national accrediting bodies (e.g. the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)) publish these standards and teacher preparation programs must submit evidence (e.g. course syllabi and other forms of evidence) to demonstrate how their program meets these standards.

Accreditation organizations can support the goal of achieving global competency for all U.S. students by elevating global proficiency as a distinct construct with its own defining elements that extend beyond perspectives and include essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Work by Schneider (2007) and Project Explore (2012) indicate that university administrators, faculty, and students as well as in-service teachers and K-12 students recognize and support the value of global education. Making global proficiency a more central component of accreditation standards would provide teacher preparation programs with the “charge” they need to incorporate global/international content, themes, and issues into the permanent program structure.

In an effort to develop a model of teacher preparation that emphasizes the development of global proficiency for its teacher candidates, Michigan State University (MSU) created the *Global Educators Cohort Program* (GECP). This program is a specialization program for students in the teacher preparation program at Michigan State University. Students apply for and enter the program as incoming freshmen and must complete required coursework, engage in specialized practice teaching, and complete a global experience requirement that is typically met by participating in one of MSU's study abroad programs.

The required coursework is completed during students' freshman and sophomore years. 75 students enter the program each year and are divided into three 25-student "sections." These sections remain intact throughout students' GECP required coursework in the freshman and sophomore years. The coursework is a combination of courses that are required of all education majors but for which GECP students enroll in special, globally infused sections (a course on issues of diversity in education and a course on human learning) and additional required courses that are GECP-specific (a course on immigrant language and culture and a course on service learning for global educators).

GECP students also have specialized, global field placements. GECP has partnerships with selected local schools and GECP students are regularly placed at these schools for their student teaching internship placements. Students work with mentor teachers who have a commitment to global education and can support novice teachers in their induction into global teaching. Novice teachers do not automatically know how to translate their own global competence into

global pedagogical practice. The global student teaching internship experience is therefore a critical element of the Global Educators Cohort Program.

All GECP students are also required to participate in a global experience. Most students take advantage of MSU study abroad programs to complete their general education coursework or coursework in their disciplinary majors. Additionally, the MSU College of Education offers eight study abroad programs for teacher education students, most of which provide students with teaching abroad opportunities that range from teaching a single lesson to a 5-week student teaching experience.

MSU's Global Educators Cohort Program is committed to providing all students who are interested in joining the program with an opportunity to develop global proficiency through GECP; however, because of the program's global experience requirement, there is a real risk that participation in the program could be an option only for future teachers who are affluent enough to afford a study abroad experience. MSU GECP fully supports the U.S. Department of Education's International Strategy Objective 1: *Increase the global competencies of all U.S. students, including those from traditionally disadvantaged groups* (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 5). It is therefore critical that GECP students have global experience options that range in cost and time commitment. MSU's International Studies and Programs (ISP), which includes Title VI and non-Title VI-funded area and thematic studies centers, as well as an Office of Study Abroad and an Office of International Students and scholars, have provided

critical support that has allowed GECP to provide students with lower cost program options.

For example, in spring 2011, support from various international units allowed MSU's teacher preparation program to expand a short-term study abroad program in China. This program, subsidized by the MSU College of Education, provides a low-cost, short term-study abroad opportunity for students who cannot afford a lot of time away from a summer job or who cannot afford the cost of a traditional study abroad program. In 2011, students who participated in this program invited their Chinese "buddies," pre-service teacher candidates at Beijing Normal University with whom they interacted while on their program, to come to MSU for a return visit. MSU international programs provided funds critical to supporting this visit, which was so successful that it has since become an integral part of the program with recurring funding from the College of Education and from Beijing Normal University. The China "study abroad" program has become a reciprocal exchange program where students make deep and lasting personal and professional relationships with teacher colleagues in China.

GECP and the College of Education have also collaborated with several Title VI-funded area and thematic studies centers on two successful grant applications that provided support for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers who mentor GECP student teaching interns to travel abroad. Both programs included pre-service and in-service teachers in diverse professional learning communities charged with expanding their world knowledge and working

together to develop global curriculum projects to be implemented in K-12 classrooms. The prior success that the Title VI-funded centers have had with these types of grants, their staff expertise in helping write the narratives, and very valuable budget support were all critical to these successful awards.

MSU's international programs have also played a very important role in the internationalization of key elements of the teacher preparation program curriculum. Support from Title VI-funded area and thematic studies centers directly supported the infusion of global content into one of the required educational foundation courses: *Human Diversity, Power, and Opportunity in Social Institutions*. This course offers 15-17 different sections every semester. The support received from the Title VI-funded area and thematic studies centers resulted in global professional development for course instructors and the development of several global projects such as lesson plans, resource collections, global collaboration projects, and other global resources for this course.

MSU's international programs have provided much needed financial and professional support that have led to lasting and significant impacts on the development of global proficiency for MSU teacher candidates. This support has been particularly critical when launching new initiatives, allowing GECP to pilot new projects and global learning experiences for our students. As these new initiatives were implemented and their impact on student global learning demonstrated, we were able to leverage recurring, long-term support for the efforts.

As MSU's global initiative grows, teacher candidates are beginning to graduate and take positions in U.S. classrooms (and abroad). It is exciting to see these new teachers enter schools with global pedagogical expertise and the commitment to integrate global and international content into all aspects of their teaching. One recent GECP graduate expressed her feelings well, "I teach 3rd grade and . . . I use what I learned in GECP everyday. My room is even globally themed!"

Teacher preparation plays a pivotal role in meeting the goal of global competency for all U.S. students. Teachers need the means, the opportunity, and space in their teacher preparation programs to not only develop global proficiency themselves, but also develop the global pedagogical knowledge necessary to educate for global citizenship. The Global Educators Cohort Program at Michigan State University, through support from and collaboration with international programs on campus, seeks to develop in its teacher candidates global knowledge, cross-cultural communication skills, diverse perspectives, a commitment to making the world a better place, as well as the knowledge, strategies, and mentorship essential for the development of global pedagogical proficiency in its teacher candidates. When global educators take positions in schools across the U.S., transformation is possible. Teachers can not only educate students for global citizenship but they can also be agents for change and an inspiring example of best practice – demonstrating and sharing with colleagues their enthusiasm for learning and teaching children about the world around them.

REFERENCES

- American Council on Education, Art & Science Group LLC, and the College Board. (2008). *College-Bound Students' Interests in Study Abroad and Other International Learning Activities*. Washington DC.
- Furman, N., Goldberg, D., & Lusin, N. (2010). Enrollments in Languages Other than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2009. In *Modern Language Association*. ERIC. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED513861.pdf>
- Institute of International Education. (2013). "Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2001/02-2011/12." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>
- Project Explorer. (2013). Global Education Exploration Study: Key Findings and Implications. Retrieved April 3, 2014, from http://projectexplorer.org/shared/reports/GlobalEdExplorationStudy_2013.pdf
- Schneider, A. I. (2007). *To Leave No teacher Behind: Building International Competence into the Undergraduate Training of K-12 Teachers*. Washington DC: United States Department of Education.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *Succeeding Globally through International Education and Engagement: U.S. Department of Education International Strategy* (p. 22). Washington, DC.