



Future Forward Education - It's Time for Us to Catch Up to the World

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Despite the wealth of research on global education readily available to educators, the focus on developing global competencies in the K-12 domain remains elusive. This article aims to encourage educators to rethink the way we serve our students by addressing the urgent need of the times — empowering our students to be relevant in the global socio-economic landscape.

Global Education: Lost in Translation

When I excitedly shared the news of receiving the Fulbright Teachers for the Global Classrooms grant in 2017, I faced a subdued reaction from my co-educators. There were two predomi-

nant reasons: first, global education was an ambiguous concept unaligned to state standards; second, in districts grappling with significant learning gaps, global education was not a priority. Fast forward eight years and state standards now reflect global competencies. However, have we witnessed a significant shift in our collective understanding of student needs in the context of global shifts in economic and social behaviors? Are college and career readiness programs informed by the critical needs of an interconnected world? Much about the delivery of global education remains unclear in the K-12 domain. Therefore, curricular adoption of an instructional framework of global education is vital for our students' future-forward education.

A Critical Need

The expansion of global workforce mobility and the emergence of social media as a socio-economic domain has firmly established the need to engage purposefully across multiple nations and cultures. How do we empower students to become relevant in this dynamic and fluid space? How has the purpose of K-12 education changed over the decades? The overarching aim of education is to empower students with knowledge and the ability to apply it effectively. We aim to equip students for the world beyond high school graduation and successfully navigate the rapidly evolving economic landscape.

This leads us to an essential inquiry: How can our students thrive in the global economy? There is a window of opportunity to effectively guide students in a direction ideally suited to their future goals. While navigating the virtual space, knowledge of technology, and understanding social justice (Mortimer, 2022) remain key success competencies, global education also aims to develop additional competencies that enable students to be active global citizens. Competencies from global education include

- Critical thinking skills
- Purposeful collaboration with a diverse team
- Social and Emotional Competency
- Innovative thinking
- Digital Literacy

The shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based global economy has changed the college and career readiness domain. An instructional framework aligned to such shifts will enable educators to teach global competencies across content areas and collaborate with their colleagues to create authentic experiential lessons for deeper learning. From synthesizing information from multiple sources to the ability to articulate in written or verbal language, the path to global education engages students in core content in relevant ways.

Is Global Education for Everybody? Going Glocal.

Our students will either have the opportunity to step out of their immediate environment and interact with the world through globalization or interact with an increasingly diverse population in their immediate environment through glocalization (Radjuni. 2021; Patel, 2017). In either situation, they will have to navigate world cultures competently. Attaining global competencies is vital for all students, providing equitable access to opportunities worldwide. Even if students remain rooted in their local environments, they still need competencies to effectively collaborate with supervisors, colleagues, and clients from various socio-cultural backgrounds. With

remote career and business opportunities rising dramatically in the past decade, glocalization opens up exciting career pathways for all students while fostering an equitable environment for post-secondary success.

Equitable access resonates especially with low-resource school districts where a significant number of students qualify for free or reduced meals. Glocalization acknowledges the local context within our increasingly diverse communities and highlights the importance of equipping students with skills to navigate a globalized world. The glocalization engagement framework (Patel, 2017) allows quality learning, equity, diversity, inclusivity, and sustainability. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 2030 for education, it highlights inclusivity and equity through quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities (Patel, 2017).

Connecting to K-12 State Mandates

While several states are updating learning standards and standardized test items to reflect global competencies, such as synthesizing information across content areas, K-12 education still functions within content silos. Although state-level school report cards highlight College and Career Readiness as a success marker for high schools, educators often do not establish the connection between comprehensive learning standards that include global competencies and the instructional best practices that will provide the opportunity for our students to succeed in the future.

Educators must actively reflect on whether they are focusing on relevant competencies or narrowly focusing only on boosting test scores and graduation rates at the expense of a broader educational vision. Schools engage in data-informed instruction to elevate test scores and quantify student success. High schools aim for increased graduation rates and improved College and Career Readiness metrics. However, we overlook the student's holistic development by narrowly defining our approach towards the desired outcomes.

How can we integrate global education competencies into daily instruction? Evidence-based global competency rubrics (Asia Society, 2025), freely available and accessible, are aligned to the state standards and include the ability to think critically about multiple perspectives, synthesize information from multiple sources, and effectively articulate responses. Teaching these competencies across content areas will positively affect outcomes by providing high-engagement lessons and promoting authentic learning.

A Different Kind of Data - Storytelling

We need to leverage data that guide effective resource allocation to global education. In the social sciences, personal narratives and anecdotal evidence often yield invaluable micro-level insights to guide our momentum more effectively than volumes of quantitative data. Therefore, it is essential to explore the possibility of generating an internal data set to shape our understanding of the local education landscape. Moving away from national-level data, we can survey the population we serve. The following questions may help design a survey instrument that will yield data to inform a global education action plan:

- How many in our graduating class are prepared to engage as active participants in the emerging career market that the global and glocal economies are presenting?
- What is their competency level in working in a dynamic, multi-nodal environment?
- Can they successfully interact with a group of people who are culturally different from theirs?
- Are they articulate? Are they innovative?
- What is their social and emotional learning competency?
- What is the extent of their geographical and cultural knowledge of the world?

The responses will allow us to harness micro-level data and design a teaching and learning plan tailored to deliver global education to our students.

A Viable Pathway towards Global Education

What action steps can schools take to lay the foundation for a robust global education program? To support the process, several free resources are available from well-recognized organizations, including Fulbright, Asia Society, Harvard's Project Zero, and the National Education Association. The following strategies may help pave the path for a sustainable global education program:

- Gap Analysis to Identify Teacher and Student Needs: Using an internally designed instrument or a survey such as a Global Competence Index Questionnaire (AFS, 2025). Free surveys are available online
- Curricular Audit: This is the big one - the adoption and vertical alignment of global education curriculum, possibly including authentic interdisciplinary collaboration viable through cross-content, thematic learning units.
- Professional Development (PD): Several free opportunities for educators to engage in global edu-

cation PD include the Fulbright Teachers of the Global Classroom grant, the NEA Teacher of the Travel the World program, and the Global Teacher Campus. Teachers will need support to explore these opportunities and access other PD pathways. An effective plan will require professional development in the global education instructional framework. Radjuni (2021) highlights the importance of teacher education in sustaining a robust and relevant global education program.

- Intentional implementation: The iterative implementation process must include keeping abreast of global trends, supporting teachers through ongoing PD on global education, and creating learning spaces that promotes global education in the schools.

The Future-Forward Path

Driven by purpose, our practices must intentionally prepare the future generation to be relevant in a global age. Students from all backgrounds must

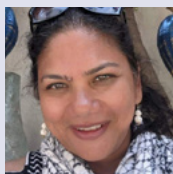
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be globally literate to have equitable access to multiple opportunities. Embracing global education is not merely a supplementary task but a fundamental dimension of modern education that will prepare our students to confidently and effectively engage in an increasingly connected world.

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About the Author



Dr. T. Bose is currently serving as the Vice-Principal and Head of the Visual and Performing Arts Academy at Trenton Central High School. She received the Fulbright (IREX) Teachers of the Global Classroom Grant in 2017, where she took graduate level coursework in global education and travelled to Senegal to complete her capstone project. Her involvement with educational non-profits both in the USA and in India, and her love for travel, has exposed her to various schools worldwide, and has allowed her to purposefully interact with underserved students as they strive for a better life. She is also the founder of a performing arts company and an educational consultancy that empowers the youth to explore opportunities worldwide.