Globalizing Educational Tourism and World Learning Communities in Higher Education to Advance Intercultural Awareness, Language Policy, Curriculum and Teacher Competencies

Joyce Pittman and William Green

[1]Department of Educational Leadership and Management, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA, USA
[2]Meiying Foreign Language Training Institute in Shanghai, China

ABSTRACT

This article shares transformative knowledge, human stories and resources for considering educational tourism concepts for globalizing learning communities to bridge gaps between world cultures in education. Research shows the world has become more open and less restricted by borders. In theory and in practice, this momentum suggests learners, teachers, educators and leaders must experience and gain knowledge about resources and strategies for using new technologies, storytelling and curriculum as powerful tools for building language and communication bonds across generations and cultures in presenting common issues, sparking dialogue, and inspiring action to solve education and socio-economic problems world-wide. Students today are graduating into a world that is more globally connected than ever before. In fact, studies show that nearly 1 in 5 jobs in the U.S. is tied to international trade and requires some level of English proficiency. The classroom is no different and this calls for exploring international cooperation in global educational development to improve the quality of teacher education and teachers language and intercultural competency. Research shows there is a need to expand global learning opportunity communities for newcomer immigrants and others who are affected by teacher education policy and practices affecting inclusivity in education.

Keywords: Knowledge; Educational tourism

INTRODUCTION

In literature educational tourism is often described as pursuits of learning that involves traveling or connecting with others from other geographic areas, either learning knowledge (historical, cultural, social) or even learning a new language. Education has used different forms of tourism as a tool to complement learning, accumulating experiences from practice, which is often embodied in international or global education experiences. In recent years this emergent trend has been combined with new technologies as a good opportunity to implement new ways of blending cultural enrichment and curriculum in primary school, compulsory and higher education.

Since 2015, an initiative known as the *Global Teach Connect* Project has been advancing learning experiencing beyond borders towards informative dialog on global immigration, policy, practice and strategies for enriching teachers' and higher education faculty's global teaching practices. The aim of this education project supported by U.S. Department of Education funded partnership is to explore teaching and learning competencies to address the increased diversity in world learning communities and implications for least commonly taught language learning or learners [1]. The strategies from this project aim to provide expansive access to interactive research-based resources designed to help all stakeholders, but especially educators, understand the roles of cultural awareness, gender, language acquisition, educational policy and implications for globalizing learning opportunities for all people, not just a privileged few.

Although we are well into the 21st century, many educators, leaders and policy makers are not aware there is a wealth of Web-based resources designed by global learning experts, teachers and educators, who are well-positioned to engage participants in world learning community building activities, including film viewing and the sharing of personal stories through audio, video and written

Correspondence to: Joyce Pittman, Department of Educational Leadership and Management, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA, USA, Tel: + 2158951593; E-mail: jap386@drexel.edu

experiences. There are multilingual resources that can be used to create and innovate world learning communities, which could be cultivated for use collaboratively for implementing global learning in one's home country in culturally appropriate ways.

The significance is that through educational tourism, new technology and world-wide learning communities help to connect individuals to new experiences and knowledge building opportunities. Such connectedness deepens the existing work of researchers, teachers, educators, school leaders, policy makers or institutions and organizations interested in breaking down walls that often impede building bonds between new immigrant learning communities or newcomers in the education world. New world learning communities serve to expand strategies for globalizing learning opportunities for all people by increasing connectedness within our home, policy, business and educational communities.

BACKGROUND

Global Teach Connect (GTC) is by no means the first group to suggest international cooperation to improve the quality of teacher education and to expand global learning opportunities for all learners. For example, international research takes us back to 1953 when a unique group of administrators, educators and teachers join together to start the following group that continues to host forums, establish partnerships and launch campaigns to allow members to take an active role in addressing local and global teacher shortages and still exist today:

The International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) is a US-based International NGO with consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. ... members include scholars, administrators, educators, policy makers, business leaders and individuals committed to providing quality educators for all. ICET as a concept began during an international teacher congress held in August in Copenhagen in 1952. Key events during the congress included the formation of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOPT) and a commitment to form a group to prepare summary reports of opinions and current practices with regard to selected topics including Education for Teaching. In 1953, a small group of teacher educators attending the WCOTP Assembly in London formed the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) [2].

Perhaps the time has come that as we think about globalizing world learning communities, we expand our focus beyond the shortage of classroom teachers by redefining the meaning of *quality teachers in globalized world* that is now so much more culturally diverse and knowledge dependent on newer technologies. This welcomed change highlights the struggle for many to understand the new global landscape as the new foundation of educational systems. New global technologies are advancing educational development from seeking isolated classrooms strategies to globalized community strategies with diverse groups of learners who bring with them their unique approaches to learning, culture and language. This change has now exacerbated the problem of "quality global teacher shortages" worldwide as teacher education institutions, organizations and program leaders seek solutions to new issues such as teachers' ability to address widespread diversity in global learning communities that has promulgated a question by Townsend and Bates [3].

Increasing globalization has impacted on teacher education in terms of teachers now having to understand and cater for a diverse population. In certain parts of the world there are now classrooms where a multitude of languages are spoken and where different religious and cultural understandings must be considered when teaching. A teacher can no longer assume that what seemed to be right to a white western middle-class community, will have meaning for students from other countries that have different cultural values, different understandings of the values important for human development and different habits and structures of knowledge. This has brought about the need for a substantial shift in teacher attitudes about the task and substantial change in terms of the teacher education program offered by universities.

Transformative knowledge

Based on the perceived research need for exploring international cooperation in global educational development to improve the quality of teacher education and to expand global learning opportunity communities for people affected by teacher education, the purpose of this section is to present how transforming learning and teaching environment strategies require the commitment of all stakeholders, especially teachers or teacher educators. This belief is based on both theory and reality that individual values of academics and policy makers in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) influence the content, learning outcomes and pedagogy found in educational settings whether we are talking about classrooms, virtual or global learning communities.

Institutional vision, mission and goals play a primary role in value setting and in the way academics will respond to proposed cultural, pedagogical and policy changes to address requirements for globalizing and sustaining world learning communities for all learners regardless of their culture, language or gender [4]. A critical question is: How do we go from educational policy to change pedagogical practices to improve learning for all migrant and second language learners? The following case describes one approach by two universities that agreed to partner in search of potential solutions or responses to this question.

Case-in-point: The GTC story

Drexel's School of Education GTC project created interactive customized workshops and summits to identify how linking research to practice could change the educational diversity discourse to foster learners and educators ability to critically question their assumptions and frames of reference for globalizing teaching and learning for all learners especially new immigrant (or newcomers) and second language learners. The following describes GTC's case-in-point approach to incorporating this ideology and espoused theory put forth in this paper.

In partnership with the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East and South Asia Area Studies Centers (MEC and SAC), Drexel University School of Education will enhance associations and collaborations by seeking out new pathways for promoting quality education and teacher training that focuses on the language pedagogy and policy related to Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures. The project team efforts build on ongoing practice-based research and successes in academic and public programming that includes attention to intercultural understandings, teaching and
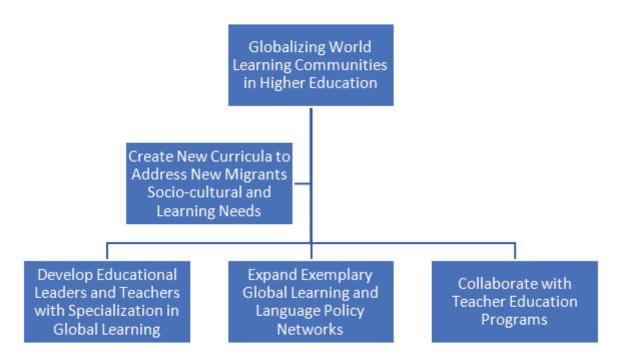
Figure 1: Global teach connection conceptual framework for globalizing world learning communities.

learning by advancing knowledge through training, curriculum and development.

The project focuses on unveiling strategies to meet the nation's areas of greatest need in preparing teachers, educational leaders and policy makers to respond appropriately to educational diversity and equity by globalizing teacher education policies and practices. In cooperation with two university area studies centers these efforts embrace and advocate for advancing the educational value of civic engagement, courses and programs that enhance comprehensive area studies and language training globally and specifically among the rich and diverse communities of regions with growing populations of diverse populations often resulting from newcomer immigrants.

The activities in this partnership are directly aligned with two Universities *Vision* and several signatures areas targeting growth and development within Schools of Education. Specifically, these sub grants are embodied in the concept of globalizing learning and teaching through *Equity and Access.* For example, this is an excerpt from the strategic planning group:

Our faculty and professional staff will apply their expertise to increase the availability of high-quality learning and produce graduates who will do the same. Our work will address the complex barriers to learning, inequalities in access to education, and constantly evolve our practices to meet the needs of all. Building on our legacy of empowering historically disadvantaged populations, we will nurture academically productive collaboration among faculty and with other university departments, local community organizations, and students.

Globalizing learning communities

The Global Teach Connect project supports Drexel's exceptional educational and research expertise in globalizing education, which is accessible to the local campus, regional communities and international communities in virtual settings. Affiliated faculty

and graduate student researchers further engage in research and practice-based activities to expand the debate of language pedagogy and global education policies beyond borders.

Such an inclusive approach is necessary to close the divide that in the past separated us from diverse populations. As a result, some individuals or groups have not been traditionally included in conversations about the access and equity in teacher education, global learning communities and policy arenas.

Several forward-looking new initiatives support this meaningful direction towards creating more globalized learning communities and high qualified teachers prepared to teach new diverse student audiences globally. GTC strategies include a framework based on lesson learned that support (Figure 1).

- Creating new curricula in global education with emphasis on new migrant populations

- Developing educational leaders and teachers with specialization in language pedagogy, policy and area studies and award certificates

- Using new technologies to expand exemplary global training and professional development networks with schools and communities serving diverse and new immigrant populations

- Collaborating with teacher education, language and literacy faculty to explore ways to advance teachers intercultural competency and language proficiency to innovate, create and sustain globalized learning environments.

Visit GTC websites and links to other resources below to learn more about our team and how we plan to achieve our goals

Global Teach Connect Project sites [5].

Global Teach Connect Summit and Affiliated Faculty [6-17.]

Case-in-Point 2: Video Games as Virtual Worlds in the EFL classroom

Recent research by Green (2020) makes the case for utilizing technology in the classroom as a means of supporting learners through offering opportunities to interact meaningfully with others, utilize key language learning skills and strategies to meaningfully collaborate, reflect and solve problems within a 21st century context. The information detailed in his study provides insights for educators on how video games such virtual worlds in the classroom or online could promote language learners' motivation, willingness to communicate, language learning competence and performance as well as scaffold and develop key 21st century skills in a class of grade 7 and 8 Chinese L1, English L2 students.

A Phenomenological Study: Exploring Chinese Junior High School Students' Lived Experiences and Perceptions of Using Game-based Technology to Learn English in an English as Foreign Language Classroom in Shanghai, China (EFL-C)

William Clifton Green II, EdD

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine the effectiveness of a video game called Scribblenauts based on the lived experiences of 30 junior high school, lower secondary Chinese speaking students in Shanghai. The problem in this study was the need to understand English language acquisition, problem solving and critical thinking skills as well as collaboration using game-based learning in China classrooms based on the lived experiences of Chinese Junior High School students who were enrolled at a language-training center studying English as a foreign language in Shanghai, China. In China, secondary school starts from grade six until grade twelve.

The study was organized on the premise that video games help and motivate students learn constructively and autonomously as well as develop learners' communicative and academic competencies. This study explored how game-based learning becomes manifest in four dimensions comprising affective, behavioral, cognitive and social/cultural engagement. Game-based learning was explored in light of the Chinese middle school students' learning context.

The overall organization of the literature review was based on three research questions that provided a rationale for the research questions. The research questions were:

1. How do Chinese junior high school, lower secondary school English as Foreign Language (EFL) students describe the influence of a video game on their ability to acquire English?

2. How do Chinese junior high school, lower secondary school English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners describe how playing video games contributes to developing skills such as creativity, innovation, and problem solving while acquiring English?

3. How do Chinese junior high school, lower secondary school English as Foreign Language (EFL) students describe their collaboration with peers while playing a video game?

The researcher, Dr. William Green II coded and analyzed data from three focus groups of 20 junior high school students as well as interviewed 10 junior high school students about how Scribblenauts promotes language learning and skill development (e.g. critical thinking). Student assignment portfolios were also analyzed to collect data about the participants' experiences playing video games.

The study found that Scribblenauts, through its multiple solution in-game puzzle prompt activities, motivated and enabled students to engage in persistent, collaborative gameplay that stimulated vocabulary development as well as promoted student creativity and problem-solving skills. Chinese Junior high school students preferred utilizing games like Scribblenauts to traditional teacher-led forms of instruction because they believed the ability to take-action in the game was exciting. They further believed being able to brainstorm multiple solutions to problems helped them to learn as they explored the video game.

This study concluded the following points:

Games like Scribbelnauts can be useful in the classroom or learning communities for promoting creativity and collaborative problem solving when the level of game play allows students to understand what is to be achieved while motivating students to be persistent through giving them choices when responding to the challenges and feedback within the game. The sustained interest of the student in the game and its relevant topics as well as the ability of learner to enter a state of flow while attempting to creatively solve problems in the game has a positive effect on students' language learning while they are immersed in the game.

Students are active in determining the value of using technology in the classroom in comparison to traditional methods utilized by teachers. In order for students to choose technology over traditional ways of learning, they need to perceive the technological learning experience as engaging as well as pedagogically meaningful. Students perceive the ability to be creative, explore and take-action in game play as critical to the development of their creativity and problem-solving skills.

Key recommendations from this study are that schools should create embedded course curricula objectives that center on using game-based learning technology to teach English. Schools should also allow students a voice in determining which technology should be utilized in the classroom as well as train staff and invest in resources to ensure all students have the opportunity to use technology.

This study concludes that future research should increase the number and variety of participants in studies that utilize puzzle prompt video games, provide more structure for group activities, connect such games to school curricula objectives as well as be longitudinal in nature.

CONCLUSION

The argument in this paper is that although new comers to the U.S. education system do not fall into the category of educational tourists, they are global learners who could often find benefit from more high quality global teacher and leader support in the learning process to help them adjust to U.S. academic culture and expectations. There are interrelated policy issues that diverse, second language, and immigrant learners face in and beyond the classroom that affect their success in global educational systems where English is the foundation language.

Teachers and leaders require new strategies for aligning their instruction with the goal of including all learners in the classroom

so that "every student has a chance to succeed". By creating and sustaining policies that support high quality, global teaching competencies institutions and organizations can grow and sustain globalized learning communities. Establishing global learning, language and policy networks will require collaboration with teacher education programs to develop teachers and leaders with specialization in intercultural understandings to create new inclusive curricula to address socio-cultural and learning needs of newcomers and welcome them to our educational system.

Suggested workshop toolkit resources and readings

Coming to America – Podcast by Real People Tell Stories of Immigrating to America.

A Culturally Responsive Guide to Fostering the Inclusion of Immigrant-Origin Students. Carola Suárez Orozco. Adam Strom and Rosalinda Larios.

REFERENCES

1. https://drexel.edu/soe/research/research-initiatives/global-teach-connection/

2. https://icet4u.org/who_we_are.php

3. Townsend T, Bates R. Handbook of teacher education: Globalisation, standards and professionalism in times of change. Springer; 2007.

4. Leal Filho W, Raath S, Lazzarini B, Vargas VR, De Souza L, Anholon R, et al. The role of transformation in learning and education for sustainability. Journal of cleaner production. 2018;199:286-295.

5. https://drexel.edu/soe/research/research-initiatives/global-teach-connection/GTC-Summit/about-the-speakers/

6. https://drexel.edu/studentlife/diversity/events/details/?eid=23533&iid=66650

7. https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/54045/coming-to-america-our-best-student-podcasts-about-immigration

8. https://reimaginingmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Inclusive-Curriculum-V9-24Sept2018.pdf

9. National Council on Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL, 2016).

10. Pittman J. Educational tourism: A strategy for understanding emergent bilinguals learning differences to improve pedagogy, policy and practices in global context. J Tourism Hospit. 2016;5:248.

11. Pittman J. Women's leadership development, learning opportunities and the connection to educational travel: Perspectives, analysis and related research. J Tourism Hospit. 2015;4:e131.

12. Pittman J. Educational tourism empowerment: Implications for flexible learning and digital equity. J Tourism Hospit. 2012;1:e119.

13. Newby KA, Pittman J. International forensics collaborations in debate as a tool for empowerment advancing global learning, cultural understanding and critical dialogue. J Tourism Hospit. 2013;2:e128.

14. Pittman J, McLaughlin B. Professional conferences, social capital and tourism: Is the alliance in Jeopardy? J Tourism Hospit. 2012;1:e109.

15. Pittman J. Tearing down walls: Migration, language, culture, literacy and policy in global contexts. J Tourism Hospit. 2016;5:247.

16. Pittman J. Creating and maintaining high quality, sustainable healthy learning environments for students, teachers and staff in global schools. J Tourism Hospit. 2014;3:123.

17. Green WC. A phenomenological study: Exploring Chinese junior high school students' lived experiences and perceptions of using game-based technology to learn English in an English as foreign language classroom in Shanghai, China (EFL-C). (*Unpublished doctoral dissertation*). Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA. 2020.