

The Use of Technology in Cultivating a Sense of Global Citizenship in Students

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Global citizenship is extending care across cultures, continents, and languages while creating a global convergence of mutual respect. A global citizen must recognize a literal distance and figurative unity to build capacities for cross-cultural perspective taking. Each individual has a responsibility to the collective world community (EPPL 604, personal communication, March 12, 2012). Education is a process of learning and teaching and a means for goal attainment of positive outcomes. There are reciprocal influences on education: home, school, career, life experiences, both external and internal. Education is inclusive of diversity and character (EPPL 604, personal communication, March 12, 2012). Educators play a large role in cultivating global awareness and a sense of global citizenship in students. Therefore, it is imperative that they are aware of and open to understanding the interconnectivity of cultures, economics, politics, environment, human rights and equality and the fields in the arts and sciences, and incorporate this lens as a platform for disseminating information and engaging students in learning in order to cultivate citizens who value and respect our global community.

These goals can be accomplished through K-16 education and teacher preparation programs by engaging students in learning activities (in and out of the classroom) that build empathy and understanding of different people and cultures through interpreting and communicating stories. These goals can be met through a strong emphasis on the Humanities in how education is approached. The lens of the Humanities allows teachers and students to learn together, build empathy for others, and gain a sense of identity and voice for themselves through communicating on a global scale: “the Humanities mirror our own image of the world. Through the Humanities we reflect on the fundamental question: What does it mean to be human?” (Commission on the Humanities, 1980). The Humanities are a disciplinary inheritance deeply rooted in the human condition, experiences, and the ability to recount these experiences. This disciplinary inheritance “aids and encourages self-reflection, a self-reflection which in turn helps personal consciousness and/or an active sense of civic duty” while helping to understand experiences outside one’s own individual social and cultural context (“Humanities,” 2012). Narrative imagination in the

Humanities can serve as a tool used to create meaning, and therefore is a vehicle in gaining empathy. People gain empathy through acknowledging, understanding, and interpreting the personal stories and experiences of others and making connections to their own lives. Technology is a powerful tool through which this can occur. Educators and students can utilize a myriad of online multimedia texts to gain access to global perspectives and Web 2.0 applications to communicate and share their own perspective and experiences. Since websites and applications are constantly changing, the operational definition of Web 2.0 for the purposes of this paper is any online tool that serves as a vehicle for communicating and/or publishing. In addition, multimedia texts refer to any combination of written, audio, visual, or video text published online.

Global Citizenship and Multimedia Texts

Global citizens are created through their understanding of the world at large. True understanding requires empathy, which can grow out of reading. Students and teachers are limited geographically to their local communities and the resources available to them. Technology provides an endless supply of resources and materials that allows them access to the world beyond their location. Teachers would do well to create multimedia text sets (collections of texts in any medium that are related to a common topic) that enhance the print resources dictated by the established curriculum and financial limitations. The teachers can then engage and motivate their students with authentic texts that provide a sense of immediacy and relevance. The goal of this approach to education is for students to build empathy towards other people and their experiences and view themselves as stakeholders in the global community.

Every text is embedded with the personal frame of reference of the creator. Bias is inevitable; the recognition of bias is imperative. By widely reading what is online, students will experience multiple perspectives of individuals and cultures. However, critical reading will allow them to place other perspectives into their own framework for understanding the world, make judgments about texts, and learn to appreciate others’ narratives and differences of opinion. We experienced this process in developing our framework for understanding the Humanities as a

disciplinary inheritance that focuses on narrative and put it into practice when addressing the educational problem of how to use technology in cultivating a sense of global citizenship in students.

Global Citizenship in Action: Narrative Interpretation

The best way to understand empathy and storytelling is through examples. When we were trying to imagine the Humanities in practice, we started with examples from our personal and professional experiences. In thinking about first person narratives, Jaimie shared a story about her childhood friend, Matt Farwell and his war experiences. Farwell (2011) recently published an article in the New York Times chronicling his life from the time of his decision to enlist in the United States Army through his current status as a homeless veteran suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Through reading his story, we viscerally experienced empathy. Our life experiences have been very different from each other and from Farwell, but we could come together in understanding his perspective through reading his story. This process informed how we wanted to share our understanding of the power of global citizenship and technology with others.

Building on Farwell's article, Kerri shared her professional experiences by making connections to other texts that added different perspectives on how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have affected individual people. She drew on visual texts that her high school English students had responded to positively. The Pulitzer Prize Winning Feature Photograph Series (Walker, 2010) depicts the experiences of Ian Fisher, a young man just enlisting in the Army and his initial experiences including his friends, family, and new wife. These photographs provided sharp contrast to Farwell's perspective in the manner in which each of the stories are presented and the frame of reference from which each is told. The photographs provided an outsider's lens that gives distance and allows the reader to interpret through their own perspective. For example, in one photo Fisher and his two comrades are dressed in their camouflage uniforms holding their weapons. Their faces stood out as the focal point of the photo with their youth as a stark contrast to the severity of the situation. However, if Fisher was telling the story behind this photo it may lead to a very different interpretation, just as Matt Farwell's first person narrative offered perspective otherwise unseen by outsiders.

We collected the remaining pieces in this text set to compliment and provide contrasting perspectives to

provide a sense of the diversity of experiences. "The War Works Hard" is a poem about the enormous impact war has on the world from the perspective of mothers, children, gods and clergymen, families, poets, tyrants, generals, lovers: everyone has a stake in war (Mikhail, 2005). Mikhail writes from the personal perspective of an Iraqi-American woman. In addition, Wide Angle produced the documentary "Time for School" in which one segment follows the experiences of Shugafa, a teenage Afghani girl, determined to attend school (Wide Angle, 2009). Finally, StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide Americans with opportunities to record, share, and preserve their stories (Isay, 2011). One of their collections is of people who recorded their experiences of September 11, 2001. Together each piece of this text set adds to our cumulative understanding and empathy of people touched by war.

Global citizenship requires knowledge of multiple perspectives. Our narrative serves as just one example of how to compile a text set that will engage and motivate critical inquiry in students who are developing their sense of the global community. The process of learning is both for students and educators. The text set that we created would be appropriate for grades 8-16, but also served as an authentic example for educators in the William and Mary EPPL leadership course in cross-disciplinary perspectives. One student-educator responded to this text set, specifically the Wide Angle documentary:

I started the assignment thinking that I would just watch the required 15 minute 31 seconds of footage, but as I watched I became really interested in what the students/children were saying. They gave accounts of their own experiences in trying to achieve in education. I knew about the situation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the obstacles young men and boys encounter by watching City of God in a Latin American Culture class for some reason, but I remember how horrible it is for them and the serious choices they have to make each and every day. I admit that I did not know much about the situation or state of education in Afghanistan, but the Wide Angle documentary was such an eye opening experience, I ended up watching the whole thing, which led me to do more research. Technology is a wonderful means by which we can interact with the world.

This student-educator was empowered by her reading to make personal connections and motivated to further research the topic. This is global citizenship in action.

Global Citizenship and Web 2.0

An objective in learning about other peoples' stories is for students to realize that they too have a unique and valuable perspective and story to share with the world. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) advocates weaving global awareness into core subjects by "using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues." To foster global citizenship, students should be "learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse culture, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mature respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts" (p. 2). Web 2.0 applications open many possibilities for students and educators to communicate and collaborate with other people in geographically diverse places. Empathy and understanding gained through interpersonal communication adds a layer of invaluable experience to fostering global citizenship: their story becomes a part of your story. The student and educator become creators of text: their story becomes a part of the global dialogue.

The use of technology raises a number of concerns in school, including the availability of financial resources, disparity of access outside of school, and implementing and enforcing safe use policies. Rather than address these issues to allow students to practice hands-on learning with technology, many schools have taken the approach of severely restricting student and teacher access to technology and online texts and resources. These restrictions handicap students and educators from acting as global citizens. In a 2010 speech, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan highlights the necessity to address issues related to technology for successful learning in the 21st century:

In the 21st century, schools can't be throw-backs to the state of education fifty, twenty, or even ten years ago... This requires the use of technology tools and resources, involvement with interesting and relevant projects, and learning environments—including online environments—that are supportive and safe. In the 21st century, educators must be given and be prepared to use technology tools; they must be collaborators in learning—constantly seeking knowledge and acquiring new skills along with their students.

School systems need to shape their policies to focus first on helping students safely navigate online learning environments. This first requires adequate training for educators, but also educators need to have first-hand experience communicating online with other educators. Educators can then build on these experiences for their students to have these powerful collaborative learning experiences as well. The 2010 framework advocated by the US Department of Education provides school systems with goals for incorporating technology into education rather than restricting its use.

Students becoming global citizens need to develop their own voice and need a venue for finding and expressing their identity. Communicating with students and educators in other locations takes away literal distances while helping figurative unity become more of a reality. Students can also publish their work online in order to give them an authentic audience and purpose on the world stage. Educators and students are motivated when they see the value and receive positive feedback for their work. Fostering a sense of global community will bring down barriers that isolate students and educators. It gives them common ground for discourse and analysis of education and learning. The following section will explore examples of how educators have used different types of technology to help build a sense of global citizenship in their students.

Global Citizenship in Action: Communication

The best way to develop your voice is to use it. Software and Web 2.0 applications allow users to express themselves in multiple forms. As one teenager explained, "'any teenager in the world with a computer' will continue to become a part of the global society, with or without the guidance of schools and teachers, by using [technology] to share their writing with the world" (Witte, 2007, p. 96). Schools and educators have an important opportunity and duty to provide guidance for students' online interactions to teach students safe and responsible use of technology.

Educators can provide a safe and authentic audience for elementary and middle school students through online communications between students and pre-service teachers. An example of this is the Talkback Project, in which an Indiana teacher fostered collaborative two-way journaling between an 8th class and Indiana University pre-service teachers discussing a novel both groups read. This project was done in the service of building literacy skills: middle school students developed their comprehension and writing skills and pre-service teachers developed their ability to interpret

and assess student work (Witte, 2007, p. 92-3). This was an important first step for students and educators to begin to use technology for learning and communicating through Web 2.0. While the Talkback Project was an important part of the road to global communication, it fell short of fostering true global citizenship because of the contrived nature of the project and almost immediate restrictions by administrators. This article only highlights why educators on all levels need to learn the capacity of technology for meaningful, engaged learning on a global level. Professional development opportunities for learning these methods must occur in order for educators to feel comfortable, be knowledgeable, and plan to see projects through successfully.

Educators need to utilize simple everyday technologies to gain comfort and fluency in using Web 2.0 that focuses on increasing student learning. Global citizenship on the part of educators is equally as important as global citizenship in students. Teachers who identify themselves as global citizens will be best able to foster that feeling in their students. An example is a world language teacher who Skypes with another educator in Chile during class to answer students' questions and practice their language skills: "Such moments of human contact make geography, culture, and language real for students" (Cutshall, 2009, p. 41). Through the use of Skype, students are able to see the person and their surroundings in real time. Cross-cultural face-to-face communication builds empathy and understanding on a personal level creating an authentic learning experience. This is a positive example of using technology to foster global citizenship.

Publishing ideas online gives students a sense of voice and a venue for expressing their learning and identity that is accessible for all. In Kerri's professional experience, she facilitated a project in which high school English students created websites and videos posted online addressing issues of interest and concern to them. This was a culminating project-based assessment in which the students utilized the skills they developed throughout the year and found a personal connection and authentic audience for their learning. Students could choose any topic that was meaningful to them and designed their own method for communicating their ideas to share. Students made websites, videos, and podcasts or a combination thereof (Mahoney, 2010). This gave them the opportunity to practice global citizenship in their community of peers so they could foster skills to become an active participant in a global

community. The students learned that their voice is important and people want to hear it.

From blogs and Skype to Edmodo and Facebook, there are plenty of applications for integrating technology based on the needs and requirements of the school system. Educators need to be willing to bring their own sense of global citizenship into their school. There also needs to be further research and publication as well as district-wide needs assessments to disseminate effective strategies for using technology to foster global citizenship. Educators need to tell their stories to learn from each other and build relationships with their students through their experiences.

Conclusion

The National Education Technology Plan "recognizes that technology is at the core of virtually every aspect of our daily lives and work, and we must leverage it to provide engaging and powerful learning experience and content, as well as resources and assessments that measure student achievement in more complete, authentic, and meaningful ways" (Atkins et al., 2010, p. 7). Students need to be motivated in order to learn. They are motivated when they see the value and meaning in their work. As educators, it is our job to provide meaningful and authentic learning experiences that will foster students' growth as individuals and global citizens. Educators can offer students access to multimedia texts and Web 2.0 applications to enhance their understanding, knowledge, and empathy of the world at large. This is necessary because we live in a world that is increasingly interdependent and students must be prepared to communicate cross culturally and trans-continently to stay relevant in their future lives and professional experiences. There is no absolute knowledge because contexts are constantly being reinvented; using personal narrative and multimedia texts as methods for finding and constructing the truth creates an endless quest for knowledge. Citizens who identify themselves as a part of the global community have had the opportunity to develop empathy and understanding of people who are different from themselves, thus they see themselves as stakeholders in global politics, environmental policy, agriculture, energy, and arts and culture, and are more likely to promote peace and social justice. Educators are not solely responsible for advocating global citizenship but are in a unique position to reach a wide audience who can spread a sense of urgency in creating a global initiative. Students' voices through personal narrative and communication are crucial in capturing an audience.

It is essential that students believe their own voices are equally as valuable as the rest. Students are constantly exposed to vast amounts of media. They need to know that they have a stake in the future of the world, and their voice will be heard.

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