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Gifted Learners as Global Citizens: Global Education as a Framework for Gifted Education Curriculum

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**Gifted Learners as Global Citizens: Global Education as a Framework for
Gifted Education Curriculum**

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Global education and gifted education share a common goal. The aim of both is to prepare learners to gain the knowledge and skills to successfully interact to the best of their ability in an increasingly globalized society. While providing an educational framework with a global perspective is beneficial for all students, the purpose of this study was to establish the idea that global education can provide a framework for developing an effective curriculum that meets the distinctive needs of gifted learners. An overview of each is necessary to fully understand their connection.

Dialogue concerning the need for global education began in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to be a relevant topic in educational reform today. Hanvey (1982) asserted the need for education that promotes global perspectives in the acknowledgment of our interconnectedness as a world system. These global perspectives include a perspective consciousness, “state of the planet” awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices. It would behoove modern educators and the organizations that govern educational reform to consider these perspectives in their planning, given the critical role they play in preparing young world citizens to succeed in a global community. Di Giacomo, Fishbein, Monthey, and Pack (2013), in the College Board Research Brief, stated that as globalization increases, it is important that U.S. students are given the opportunity to develop the “knowledge, skills, and understanding of a global competency

education that allows them to be competitive, collaborative citizens, and active participants in the economy” (p. 1). Technological advances contribute to an increased accessibility to information about our world and about those with whom we coexist. This is especially relevant in the classroom setting. As our interconnectedness is augmented by societal changes, the need for dispositions and skills that will facilitate positive interactions on a global scale becomes ever so much more apparent. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (n.d.) asserted that while the educational system has made progress in increasing student achievement, there “remains a profound gap between the knowledge and skills most students learn in school and the knowledge and skills they need in typical 21st century communities and workplaces” (p. 5).

Appropriate gifted education requires an acknowledgment of the unique characteristics of gifted learners. According to the National Education Association (2018), a gifted learner is one that “demonstrates outstanding levels of aptitude or competence in one or more domains. These domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system and/or set of sensorimotor skills” (p. 1). Unfortunately, gifted education is not given the attention it warrants. According to Le Blanc and Verner (1981), those that oppose gifted education feel it is unnecessary because there is an underlying opinion that gifted learners will succeed regardless of the quality of their education. As more is learned about gifted individuals, Silverman (1997) stressed the importance of the role of parents and educators in providing for their optimal development. The unique characteristics of gifted individuals, including overexcitability, asynchronous development, heightened emotional sensitivity, and perfectionism can produce misunderstandings and pose challenges in terms of educational programming (Colucci, 2015).

However complex it may be, the National Association for Gifted Children emphasized that gifted learners will comprise a large proportion of leaders in the next generation and recommends to policy-makers that if we settle on a mediocre education, we are doomed to suffer a mediocre society as a result (NAGC, 2014). An education of excellence will only happen through awareness and intentional effort.

A differentiated curriculum framework that provides opportunities for gifted students to use their skills and knowledge as unique individuals is highly effective. According to Colucci (2015), it is one that includes the 4 C's: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. These are also skills that are valued in a global education as outlined in the National Education Association (2018). Gifted learners possess dispositions that present both challenges and opportunities for educators whose objective is the development of global competencies in their students. In turn, a curriculum that includes global perspectives can meet those challenges and create opportunities for gifted learners whose needs are often times grossly overlooked. The role of education encompasses a responsibility not only to provide relevant learning opportunities for students as individuals, but to provide authentic experiences for students to realize their position in helping to meet the needs of a dynamic global society.

My research surrounding global education related to gifted learners stems from a desire to create differentiated and appropriate learning opportunities for all students and to facilitate a realization of their interconnectedness with the world around them and those with whom they coexist on a global scale. To be successful in this endeavor requires a thorough understanding of the unique characteristics and needs of gifted learners, as well as a determination of the essential components of an effective global education framework.

Guiding Questions

This examination of the literature will help to establish the idea that gifted students can benefit from a global education and that gifted learners can be instrumental participants in a global society. Guiding this examination are the following questions:

1. Does a gifted learner possess the unique characteristics to become an effective global citizen?
2. How does a global education meet the unique needs of the gifted learner?

The literature review in Chapter 2 is divided into three parts. Part I defines and presents the rationale behind the global education movement. Part II defines gifted learners and examines their unique needs and educational concerns. Part III examines connections between global education and gifted education; specifically, how a global curriculum can meet the unique needs of gifted learners and how this impacts the role of a gifted learner as a global citizen.

Use of Findings

As a Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction, I will be better qualified and will have a more expansive frame of reference in the area of global education when working directly with members of administration who seek to incorporate global competencies into existing curriculum outcomes. In addition, becoming better acquainted with the needs of gifted learners and how a global education framework can help to meet those needs will better equip me to collaborate with instructional coaches and teachers in regard to differentiation and effective educational strategies. Ultimately, the knowledge and information gained will be instrumental in my development as an educational professional and in helping me to understand my own role as a citizen in a global society.

Exclusions

1. The outcome of this study is to provide an overview of the current literature that pertains to the guiding questions that drive this examination. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive design for educational reform, nor does it attempt to assert a method for its implementation. It strives solely to increase knowledge, offer suggestions for possible curriculum modifications, and make recommendations for future curriculum development in the areas of global education as it relates to gifted education.
2. This review intends to define giftedness as is found in the literature for the purpose of further discussion involving gifted learners as global citizens. It does not intend to outline methods of assessing for giftedness. Literature pertaining to assessment for potential giftedness in any domain is intentionally left out of this review.

Upon review of the literature, connections between global education and gifted education are vividly apparent. Gifted learners hold the potential to become effective global citizens provided the opportunities to develop the global competencies necessary to succeed in a global society. A more extensive examination of the literature is necessary to fully grasp the relationship between global education and gifted education and the complexities of developing a curriculum that meets the needs of gifted learners and produces individuals prepared for life in the 21st century.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Part I: Global Education

Global education for K-12 learners in the United States warrants examination of its underlying foundational concepts to begin a discussion of related terminology surrounding it. Part I begins with defining global education for the purposes of this examination and then moves on to present its rationale. Finally, it suggests the idea that a global education can provide the framework for effective differentiation of the curriculum that will facilitate a successful learning environment for gifted learners.

Definition

Civic responsibility on a global scale is a common theme revealed upon examination of the literature regarding global education. Globalization decreases the boundaries of human interaction and increases the need for the acknowledgement of diverse perspectives if these interactions are to be positive and purposeful. Global education, according to Lehner and Wurzenberger (2013), is a plan of action to deal with the complexities presented by globalization. They defined global education as holistic and interdisciplinary in nature. It considers the past, present, and future in terms of understanding our global society. The acknowledgement of multiple perspectives is necessary to understand global interactions and relationships. As a result, global citizens are equipped to act responsibly, taking into account one's personal life and the world as a whole.

The aim of global education is to prepare students to become effective global citizens. To fully define global education, it is important to think about the outcomes. It is useful to

examine specific qualities an individual would possess as an effective global citizen. Theorists in the realm of global education collectively refer to these characteristics as global competencies.

Global Competencies

In order to contribute effectively in a global society, one must possess specific characteristics (Miller, 2016). Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) explained global competencies by outlining four domains of global competence. First, globally competent individuals recognize the world. They have an inquisitive nature. They explore global questions and collaborate with individuals across global boundaries. Second, they recognize diverse perspectives while contemplating viable solutions to these questions. The ability to understand that local issues are related to global issues is paramount. Third, globally competent individuals communicate ideas. They are able to realize that a diverse population requires an understanding of cultures and languages different from one's own and must strive to discover a mode of communication and collaboration that can lead to effective acquisition of a common goal. Finally, globally competent individuals take action. Taking an active role in creating a global society by thinking outside the box and devising opportunities for all citizens to access global resources and methods to assure the safety of all is characteristic of a globally competent individual. In addition, globally competent individuals are experts in their field. They are committed to learning through inquiry and practice. They bring this knowledge into their experience and apply it to a global context.

In their policy brief, the National Education Association (n.d.) added proficiency in foreign languages and competitive skills to the list of essential characteristics of globally

competent individuals. The ability to speak proficiently in more than one language enhances cross-cultural communication skills and enables a better understanding of other cultures.

Acquiring extensive knowledge of international issues and developing high-level thinking skills that enhance creativity and innovation increases the ability to compete globally.

A member of the International Academy of Education and the Council of Foreign Relations, and director/creator of the International Education Policy Program at Harvard University, Reimers (2009) spoke of global competency including the fostering of attitudes that promote peace, respect, and productivity with diverse peoples and cultures across the globe. He asserted three importance dimensions of global competency. First, it requires a positive disposition toward diversity and a framework of global values with which to explore and appreciate these differences. This outcome requires both a sense of personal identity as well as empathy for the circumstances of others. A globally competent individual views differences as opportunities to develop respectful and constructive interactions within a global society. He noted an ethical dimension to global competency that involves a commitment to equality and the rights of all individuals and a responsibility to uphold these rights. Second, he reiterates the need for knowledge of languages foreign to the dominant native language. Finally, the third dimension of global competency is an understanding of world history, current events, and global issues involving health, climate, economics, and the process of globalization. The ability to think critically and creatively about such issues is essential in finding solutions to the challenges they create. It is through the successful exercise of these global competencies that global education comes to fruition and the global society benefits from its underlying purpose. As stated in the Global Education Guidelines developed by the Global Education Week Network in

coordination with the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, Carvalho da Silva (2008) stated global education is “education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the globalized world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all” (p. 8). As globalization brings nations and peoples closer, our interactions increase, as does the potential for the global society to benefit from a collective set of knowledge and skills. Global education augments this potential and the need for systematic implementation of the global education framework becomes overwhelmingly apparent.

Rationale for Global Education

Creating a better world for all global citizens is a premise that upon most of the world’s population would agree. Increasing positive interactions and the exchange of knowledge on a global scale that would facilitate positive global change and equity for all requires effective communication and awareness of our interconnectedness as a global society. Globalization is the driving force behind this interconnectedness and is the underlying rationale for including a global education framework in K-12 educational programs throughout the United States. Within this interconnectedness, a number of significant areas stand out. These include interdependent economics, diversity in society, and global health and environmental challenges. A more complete understanding of the issues warrants individual examination of each.

Interdependent Economics

As the labor market changes to involve individuals, companies, and corporations that cross national boundaries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD; 2018), stated that employers increasingly seek to employ individuals who can apply their knowledge and skills in diverse contexts. This requires a sensitivity and understanding of

other cultures and backgrounds. A statement from the Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development (2006) stressed that increased globalization due to the end of the Cold War, the dot com bubble, and technological advances has enabled less developed countries to more easily compete in the global business world and trade market. Business success depends on an understanding of the culture, language, and customs of local markets. As this demand overburdens local teams, multinational companies must look to global teams to support business operations. Collaboration within this multicultural team is essential for success in the global marketplace. According to one marketing manager, “compared to their counterparts from universities in other parts of the world, U.S. students are ‘strong technically’ but ‘shortchanged’ in cross-cultural experience and ‘linguistically deprived’” (p. 7). Because of a lack of culturally aware and linguistically prepared professionals, U.S. corporations have “missed marketing or business opportunities; [failed] to recognize important shifts in host country policies toward foreign-owned corporations; [failed] to anticipate the needs of international customers; and [failed] to take full advantage of expertise available or technological advances occurring abroad” (p. 7).

It is noted that cross-cultural competence needed for success in the business world requires a “combination of foreign language skills, international knowledge, and international experience” (OECD, 2018, p. 8). Global education provides the framework through which students can develop the skills necessary to compete in an increasingly globalized economy. Cultural diversity plays a significant role in the world’s work force. It becomes a major element in the day to day interactions within our national society as well.

Diversity in Society

According to Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011), international migration is happening at an unprecedented rate. This is changing the demographics of our neighborhoods and classrooms on a much larger scale. How our youth “makes sense” of cultural differences in relation to their own identity depends upon how well prepared they are to live in diverse communities. Students who have learned “intercultural skills” understand multiple perspectives and “traditions in relation to their own views and perspectives” are less likely to consider differences as threatening. Rather, they are more apt to celebrate diversity and engage in positive interaction and collaboration. With this in mind, schools will need to “prepare youth for new contexts in which multiple cultures coexist. Managing this complexity-fostering kinship, communicating effectively, working together, valuing difference, benefitting from diversity—is essential to success in a global world” (p. 4). As our interactions with those of diverse backgrounds increases on a local and global level, there is a resulting heightened awareness of issues that transcend cultural diversity.

Global Health and Environmental Challenges

There are common challenges we face that require cooperation and collaboration from human kind as a whole. Global challenges reveal our interconnectedness by exposing the diversity and commonality of experiences (Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). For example, pollution in one location affects the ozone layer in another; floods in agricultural areas can have a negative social, economic and environmental impact on the local level, but can also affect

markets on a world-wide level and influence migration. Global challenges can be local issues that are global in their reach, but communities experience these same challenges in very different ways (OECD, 2018). Another example of this involves environmental responsibility. Climate change is global in nature but affects areas of the world in very distinct ways in terms of living conditions, job opportunities, and civic participation (Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). Other crucial environmental issues that require global awareness and attention are the illegal exploitation and poor management of natural resources, and global investment in renewable energy such as solar power, wind, and biofuels. Our nation's classrooms prove to be the most obvious context from which to examine these crucial issues. Global education provides access to information and offers opportunities to discuss environmental concerns that accentuate our interconnectedness as fellow inhabitants and dependents of the Earth. Again, our interconnectedness remains an underlying motivation for developing and nurturing global competencies in America's young population. The need for global education is at the forefront of educational policy. The U.S. Department of Education (2016) emphasized this with the creation of its International Strategy 2012-2016. It reads:

In today's globalized world, an effective domestic education agenda must address global needs and trends and aim to develop a globally competent citizenry. It is no longer enough to focus solely on ensuring that students have essential reading, writing, mathematics, and science skills. Our hyperconnected world also requires the ability to think critically and creatively to solve complex problems, the skills and disposition to engage globally, well-honed communication skills, and advanced mathematics, science and technical skills. Such competencies will prepare students, and our nation, for a world in which the following are the reality. (p. 2)

The National Education Association (NEA) is a founding member of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and in 2002 it became known as a "Framework for 21st Century Learning."

Outlined within this framework are essential skills needed for students to become effective global citizens. The NEA (2002) noted, “as educators prepare students for this new global society, teaching the core content subjects- math, social studies, the arts-must be enhanced by incorporating critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. We need new tools to support classroom teachers and education support professionals in their profession, even as they implement new strategies in their classrooms” (p. 3). Global education is becoming increasingly important and is gaining significant attention and support from national policy makers. Global education seeks to elevate the consciousness of today’s students. It promotes a heightened sensitivity to those with whom they coexist and to the challenges facing our global society. While there is support for the benefit global education has for all students, it may prove to be a successful tool to meet the individual needs of students as well.

Global Education as an Effective Tool for Differentiation

Though modern educators work toward developing curriculum that is accessible to all, we cannot deny that there are differences amongst our student body. Differentiation of the curriculum seeks to meet the individual needs of our students by acknowledging various levels of aptitude and ways through which information is accessed. The wide range of needs in every classroom emphasizes the importance of assessing all students appropriately and providing differentiated curriculum and instruction that will promote their learning. Differentiation includes: (a) the design and/or selection of curriculum, (b) the selection and use of instructional practices, including grouping strategies, varied resources, and variations to the pacing of instruction, and (c) the assessment of learning, all of which rely on assessment evidence

demonstrating learner differences (NAGC, n.d). Differentiation of curriculum promotes student engagement and ultimately facilitates student success. According to the NAGC (2014), “evidence suggests that minimal differentiation of curriculum, instruction, and practice is provided to gifted students in the regular classroom. Thus, they often spend significant amounts of school time reviewing and practicing concepts they have already learned, limiting their academic progress and talent development” (n.p.). One might pose the question, “Is global education an effective tool through which to differentiate classroom curriculum to meet the unique educational needs of gifted learners?” To answer this question, it is necessary to first define a gifted learner and describe the characteristics that make up these unique individuals.

Part II: Gifted Learners

The subject of gifted education in relation to the unique needs of gifted learners is complex in nature. To better understand these complexities, Part II begins with a definition of giftedness, then moves on to discuss the unique needs of gifted learners, and finally concludes with noting instructional considerations in terms of gifted and talented educational curriculum.

Giftedness Defined

Common characteristics. Defining giftedness is a complicated endeavor. Throughout history, gifted learners have been identified in numerous ways and there is no universal definition of gifted learners. Scholars and researchers have described giftedness as natural talent awaiting development, the ability to use life situations successfully, and biologically superior development of various brain functions in the area of cognition, creativity, academics, leadership, or the arts. Simply stated, a gifted individual is endowed with a special aptitude or ability (Manning, 2006). According to the National Education Association (2018), gifted

individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10%) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports). According to the U.S. Department of Education (1993), gifted students are “Children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.” They went on to say that this definition of giftedness is the broadest and most comprehensive and is used by many school districts. It speaks of talent, which includes all areas of a child’s life: academic, artistic, athletic, and social. Most schools limit their definition and their programs to academics, but it is important to focus on performance and accomplishment. It is not enough to just have the talent; you must be using that talent to achieve at remarkably high levels. However, this definition also recognizes that while all very talented students have the potential to achieve at high levels, some may not have yet realized or demonstrated that potential. Such students may be underachievers, those with special needs, or represent underserved groups who have not had a nurturing environment to bring out those talents. Finally, this definition is a comparative one; these students achieve or have the potential to achieve at levels way above their peer’s level of academic achievement.

The Marland Report to Congress provided yet another widely accepted definition of giftedness (Marland, 1972). They are children who are professionally identified by experts in the field, who possess outstanding abilities and are capable of performing at a high level. Gifted students include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the

following areas, singly or in combination: “general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, excellence in visual and performing arts, psychomotor ability” (p. 8). Defining gifted learners through identifying common characteristics can offer insight and understanding. Realizing common vulnerabilities of gifted learners can establish a deeper understanding while moving toward determining their needs and designing effective curriculum and instruction.

Common Vulnerabilities

Giftedness is multi-faceted. It is challenging to define it in one concise statement. In addition to identifying common characteristics and aptitudes, another approach to understanding the complexity of giftedness, Roedell (1984) emphasized common “vulnerabilities” relevant to all gifted learners.

Asynchronous development is a common occurrence in the gifted population. According to Curley (2016), this is one of the “hallmarks” of giftedness. It refers to an irregular intellectual, social-emotional, and physical development. A gifted learner may have the intellectual capacity of an adult with the emotions of a child. They have thoughts that may be too complex for their emotions to handle. According to Silverman (1997), this asynchrony, a characteristic unique to gifted learners “renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally” (p. 39).

Related closely to asynchronous development is a heightened sensitivity and responsiveness in gifted learners. Mendaglio (2003) stated that gifted learners possess a sensitivity with awareness of perceptiveness at its core. They “display more sensitivity—they are

more aware of themselves and their social environments—than their non-gifted counterparts. Gifted individuals are deeply affected by other peoples’ moods and feelings” (p. 73). In addition to their heightened emotional sensitivity, gifted learners may exhibit a heightened physical sensitivity as well. These include sensitivities to light, touch, and textures (Di Cinto, 2015).

A propensity toward perfectionism can be a struggle for many gifted learners. Pyryt (2004) explained perfectionism as a way of thinking in regard to gifted learners. He outlined three perspectives. The first can be defined as dichotomous, an “all or none” perspective. If a learner makes one mistake, no matter how minor, he/she believes the entire work is a failure. The second perspective involves the learner transforming his/her wants into demands. If a learner wants a particular outcome and that outcome is not actualized, he/she sees him/herself as a failure. Finally, a learner may focus on unmet goals and challenges which might blind them to the positive aspects of their performance.

Defining giftedness is the first step in understanding the uniqueness of gifted learners. Consideration of the characteristics and vulnerabilities common to gifted learners provides necessary insight needed to determine their specific needs. Examination of their specific needs in terms of education adds another level of knowledge and discernment.

Understanding the Needs of Gifted Learners

Contributing factors which prohibit some gifted learners from accessing appropriate educational opportunities are socioeconomic status, race, inadequate assessment/identification process, non-regulated programs and funding, and a general set of misunderstandings related to gifted learners and their education.

Disproportionate Representation

Minority students and those of low socioeconomic status are disproportionately represented in the gifted and talented population (Cosmos, 2016). This is significant as our society becomes more culturally diverse and poverty continues to be a relevant concern. Breen (2016) cited the latest data from the Office of Civil Rights which “indicates that of the almost 3.2 million gifted students in the U.S., 60% of them are white with the remaining 40% represented by the following races and groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, black or African-American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, two or more races, students with disabilities, and English learners” (p. 4). Cosmos (2016) stated that in a study conducted by the Vanderbilt University published earlier this year, there was a startling difference between black and white students with similar test scores. Out of 10,000 elementary students surveyed, results confirmed that white students with high scores were twice as likely as black students with high scores to get assigned to a gifted and talented program. She offered relevant statistics as a result of a survey conducted by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. It stated that 84% of school districts in the nation significantly under-enrolled poor students in gifted programs and less than half enrolled black and Hispanic students related to local demographics. This demonstrates that disproportionate numbers of vacancies were generally taken by more affluent white students, and to a certain extent, Asian. According to Plucker, Hardesty, and Burroughs (2013), America has developed a “permanent talent underclass. In an age of increasing global competitiveness, it is somewhat harrowing to imagine a future in which the largest, fastest-growing segments of our K-12 student population have almost no students performing at advanced levels academically” (p. 29).

Payne (2010) stated that reasons for this disproportionate representation of minority and students of low socioeconomic status could be contributed to deficit orientation, ineffective teacher referral policies, and the use of culturally biased assessments. Deficit orientation “manifests itself in the form of low expectations for minority students and a perception that students have innate cognitive and scholastic abilities that are fixed” (p. 8). A teacher’s cultural bias may inhibit the referral of minority students for screening in a gifted and talented program. He went on to say that if minority students are referred, the assessments used to identify gifted students are “widely viewed as having a disparate impact on minority students and ELLs since these students may lack the linguistic skills and cultural sensibilities which are requisite for performing well on these assessments” (p. 10). Inappropriate assessment may, in part, be due to a lack of mandated and regulated guidelines for identification and educational programming. There is a need for equitable access to gifted programming for gifted learners. The contributing factors mentioned above must be further analyzed and addressed in order to make progress in this area.

Programs and Funding

In addition to the absence of a universally accepted definition of giftedness, there are very few regulations concerning the identification process and educational programming for gifted learners. McIntyre (2016) wrote, “although the federal Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Children and Youth Act of 1988 acknowledged a need for gifted learning programs and mandates tracking for the educational progress of gifted students, there are no guidelines in place that would “regulate the equitable identification and their progress” (p. 1). She went on to say that “no existing national requirements guide how gifted programs are executed” (p. 2). Cosmos

(2016) stated that according the U. S. News and World Report, 35 states do “identify gifted students but don’t require schools to assist them if they need help and 15 states do not track them at all” (p. 2). As much as unregulated programming guidelines inhibit access to appropriate education for gifted learners, inadequate funding for gifted and talented programs is in short supply. A survey conducted by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Virginia found that there is very little federal funding slated to serve gifted and talented students; they receive \$0.03 for every \$31 in federal funds spent on children with disabilities. Varying by school level, 40-60% of gifted programs surveyed had no state funding at all (Cosmos, 2016). It would seem that this inattention to gifted learners stems from a general lack of understanding of their unique situation. Attention to an equitable identification process is needed to fully meet the needs of gifted learners in our present educational program.

Misunderstandings and Myths

Above all, it is crucial to note that no two gifted learners are alike. Though they share similar characteristics such as asynchronous development, heightened sensitivity, and perfectionism, their needs are individually diverse. These characteristics can result in social and emotional idiosyncrasies that can be difficult to understand. It is not uncommon for gifted learners to be misdiagnosed. Some individuals may exhibit a heightened level of energy, they may be overly vocal, or exceedingly excitable. These characteristics are similar to those demonstrated by a student with a diagnosis of ADHD. On the other hand, a gifted learner may seem withdrawn, sensitive to noise and activity, socially awkward, or seem to be overly enthusiastic about a single subject. These are similar to the characteristics of an individual who is autistic. The possibility of misdiagnosing a gifted learner is a significant concern and the

educational consequences are detrimental (Kuzujanakis, 2013). Perfectionism can lead to excessive self-criticism and low self-esteem (Cross, 1997). A factor that intensifies these feelings of negative feelings is the stigma that surrounds gifted learners. Fearing that they will be treated differently and lose social acceptance, gifted learners try to hide their giftedness using a variety of strategies that enable them to “blend in with the other students.” The most detrimental of these coping strategies is intentional underachievement. As a result, gifted learners are not identified as such and miss out on appropriate educational opportunities, not to mention the emotional stress endured while feigning one’s true nature (Cross, 1997). In a more recent publication, Cross (2011) mentioned myths that predominate the understanding of giftedness. It is a general assumption that being gifted is simply something with which a person is born. “Trying hard and learning from failure are not to be expected. Success is a natural result of giftedness without intentional effort” (p. 198). In addition, a widely accepted view is that “all kids are gifted, and no kids are gifted. An underlying aspect of this belief is a lack of acknowledgement of the unique characteristics and needs of gifted learners. For some proponents this belief stems from the hesitation of attributing value to one learner over another. Without this equalizing statement, gifted learners could potentially be seen as better than non-gifted learners” (p. 198). Misunderstandings and myths surrounding the experience of a gifted learner present issues that require attention in relation to understanding their unique needs. Issues that impact the learning experience of gifted learners exist in the area of curriculum and instruction as well.

Curriculum and Learning Environment

Providing an effective curriculum and instruction to all students is a common goal for educators across all educational settings. When creating a learning environment that facilitates success for gifted learners, VanTassel-Baska (1989) presented four mistaken beliefs that warrant consideration:

1. A “differentiated” curriculum for the gifted means anything that is different from what is provided for all learners. It does not take into consideration the individual needs of the student but is utilized under the general assumption that the strategy, method, or content is appropriate for gifted learners.
2. All experiences provided for gifted learners must be creative and focused on process. In many gifted programs, open-ended activities, creative thinking, and problem-solving become ends in themselves. Core domains of learning have been ignored as content for gifted learners.
3. One curriculum package will provide what is needed for the entire gifted population. There is diversity among gifted learners and a “one size fits all” approach does not work. To be successful, gifted education provides multiple resources, units, and content areas according to individual student need.
4. Many educators mistakenly believe that acceleration is harmful because it pushes children socially and leaves gaps in their knowledge.

Gifted learners present a significant challenge for today’s educators. Their educational success requires intentional curriculum planning and appropriate teaching and learning strategies that will meet their individual needs. Could global education provide the potential framework

from which educators can begin to develop meaningful learning opportunities that will effectively meet those needs, and will it enable gifted learners a chance to become effective global citizens?

Part III: The Connection Between Global Education and Gifted Education

A comparison between global education and gifted education reveals commonalities. The objectives of global education are the same as those that drive appropriate gifted education. While all students prove to benefit from a global education, gifted learners present unique qualities that would suggest they would thrive within the context of global education, allowing them to grow into effective global citizens. Part III looks at the philosophical connections, the educational and pedagogical connections, and finally the psychological connections between global education and gifted education.

Philosophical Connections

Diversity is a foundational aspect of global education. Reimers (2009) offered a perspective on diversity as it relates to global competencies. Global competency requires the development of attitudes of acceptance toward diverse cultures that lead to empathy, trust, and the ability to conduct effective interpersonal interactions in diverse cultural contexts. This can be done through reading books that reflect cosmopolitan views and values, interacting with culturally diverse groups of students, and engaging in school-to-school international projects. The motivation behind global education is to improve our current educational system for all students by designing curriculum that addresses the instruction of a new set of skills necessary to participate in a growing global society. The classroom provides a model of diversity that mimics the real world. Students can represent a variety of races, cultures, socioeconomic status, and

ability levels. It is a widely accepted understanding that gifted learners can feel isolated from their peers in pull-out programs and self-contained gifted classroom and does not allow them the opportunity to develop relationships with a diverse population (Cross, 2013). A classroom that promotes global education in one that supports diversity and inclusion. According to the American Field Service Organization (2016), it is one in which students can experience a broad spectrum of lifestyles, perspectives, and opinions. Inclusive classrooms provide an environment in which gifted learners can realize their full potential. In a sense, an inclusive learning environment mimics a diverse society. What better place for students to learn and practice interacting with others different from themselves than in the safety of the classroom walls.

Curriculum and instructional strategies in an inclusive classroom move away from traditional textbook, and basal-driven instruction to include methods such as cooperative learning, whole language, thematic instruction, critical thinking, problem solving, and authentic assessment (Sapon-Shevin, 1994). These methods and strategies represent the philosophical foundations of the global education framework as well as those of gifted education.

Educational Connections

Global education strives to provide opportunities for students to participate in authentic learning experiences involving real world issues and the examination of multiple perspectives through student driven inquiry-based modalities. Gifted learners stand to benefit from this approach given their propensity toward inquisitiveness, and their heightened sensitivity toward societal concerns. Berkowitz and Hoppe (2009), asserted that gifted learners tend to be more successful when engaged in pedagogies that have a decidedly constructivist bent. Within an

inclusive classroom, gifted students can take a more “sophisticated perspective on the same task when in a cooperative group and can even enrich the experience of others” (p. 139). Project-based learning provides for the differentiation needed for gifted learners as well as incorporating the framework for gifted learners to develop the skills to become globally conscious individuals. By designing projects that involve relevant social issues, requiring collaboration between peers that are working toward a common goal, students are able to develop critical thinking skills, establish effective communication strategies, while creatively learning to realize challenges and identify solutions. According to the Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011), global competence is “best seen as an integrated outlook on the world—not a collection of independent skills” (p. 11). Globally conscious thematic interdisciplinary projects provide this “integrated outlook” through which students can develop global competencies. According to VanTassel-Baska (1989), when discussing successful interventions for gifted learners within the classroom setting, there is an understanding that gifted learners are tomorrow’s leaders and providing an education where global issues are at the forefront is important. Project-based learning allows gifted learners to engage in relevant and engaging content at their own pace. It naturally allows for differentiation according to student need and promotes the development of globally conscious individuals.

As society realizes the importance of educating for global citizenship, a curriculum aimed at developing the necessary competencies benefits all students but may prove to offer significant opportunities for gifted learners specifically. Gibson, Rimmington, and Landwehr-Brown (2008) made a compelling statement:

A paradigm shift from the prevailing democratic national governance to a mix of concern for this and the effects of global corporations necessitate world citizenship and global awareness on a level that is not familiar to most people. Societies need to identify and cultivate world citizenship and leadership

among the gifted, not just in the predominant culture groups but in all constituent ethnic groups in order for there to be enough capacity and diversity to deal with current and future global challenges. These needs have implications for the education of teachers in general, and for teacher of gifted students in particular. (p. 21)

Approaching gifted education through the framework of Global education can be addressed successfully by listing strategies that prove to be effective for gifted learners and explanations as to how global education can provide an effective means through which they can be implemented. By incorporating the foundational components of global education into a gifted curriculum benefits gifted learners and enriches their educational experience. This experience will enable gifted learners to grow and develop into effective global citizens.

Psychological Connections

As stated in Part II, gifted learners possess a heightened sensitivity. Specifically, a multifaceted sensitivity that is associated with intelligence. This multifaceted sensitivity involves an intense awareness of others through an empathetic response which, according to Mendaglio (2003), is defined as a vicariously experiencing the plight and emotions of others. This heightened sensitivity can also manifest itself as an augmented concern for environmental issues and societal moral dilemmas (Silverman, 1997). Global education can provide an opportunity for gifted learners to have discussions, gain knowledge, or take action in the areas with which they have significant concern. According to Gibson and Landwehr-Brown (2009), “gifted students’ heightened sensitivity to universal responsibility accelerates the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed by a global citizen” (p. 310). They went on to say that “we as educators must develop in gifted students, the potential leaders of tomorrow, and active universal consciousness with a sense of empowerment and connection to humanity that is needed

to achieve good works as integral to global citizenship” (p. 302). As global education seeks to broaden students’ understanding of our interconnectedness as a global society, gifted learners can find their voice and ways in which they can have a positive effect in our world and in the lives of those with whom they coexist. They reiterated by saying, “Global learning is an effective method for teaching gifted students the ethical and moral behaviors required for the 21st century global citizen” (p. 308). Gifted learners possess the characteristics that respond well to the pedagogical principles of global education.

Global education provides a framework for gifted education that meets the unique needs of gifted learners. As a result, gifted learners hold the potential to become effective and contributing members in a global society. While all students benefit from a global education, gifted learners possess the qualities to rise as the leaders of tomorrow.

Chapter 3: Summary and Recommendations

Gifted Learners as Global Citizens

Globalization creates the need for education that teaches the skills necessary to succeed in a global society. Our interconnectedness creates a responsibility to understand diverse perspectives and acknowledge the affect that our interactions might have on those with whom we coexist. Gifted learners possess the unique qualities to engage in the process of global education and as a result, hold the potential to become effective global citizens.

An instructional approach which seeks to provide authentic learning opportunities involving real world issues promotes the development of global competencies necessary for students to become effective global citizens. At the same time, it proves to provide an appropriate strategy that supports the education of gifted learners. Implementation of such a curriculum takes planning and preparation. It begins with a comprehensive understanding of both global education and the needs of gifted learners. Its success depends upon educational professionals committed to addressing the issues of a dynamic and pluralistic society, while ensuring that all of today's students can realize their individual potential and are prepared to engage in life as effective global citizens.

An effective global curriculum that provides the necessary differentiation to address the needs of gifted learners depends significantly upon the preparedness of teachers. As the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, it requires teachers to be culturally aware and competent to deal with diversity issues while promoting inclusive educational approaches. In addition, globalization has increased our interconnectedness. Educators must be pedagogically competent to help students examine complicated global issues and realize their responsibility as

global citizens while promoting peaceful cross-cultural interactions (Guo, 2014). Teachers must also be prepared to accurately identify gifted learners so as to successfully differentiate curriculum and monitor student progress in a diverse and inclusive classroom setting.

Recommendations for Teachers as Global Educators

If teachers are to successfully implement a global curriculum, they must be culturally aware themselves. This requires a sensitivity toward global issues that have an effect on all global inhabitants. Making an effort to stay abreast of current events and issues encourages authentic participation in the learning process with students. Participation in cross-cultural experiences can also increase a teacher's global awareness. Professional development programs and activities designed to increase teacher's global perspectives and how to incorporate global understanding into the general curriculum will enhance learning and increase student success. Teacher preparation programs can also play a significant role in helping teachers to become global educators. The Longview Foundation (2018) recommended that teacher preparation programs that support global education include course work that would develop deep knowledge in one world region, culture, or global issue and basic knowledge of one language in addition to English. It would also be beneficial to participate in cross-cultural experience such as student teaching in another country, or service-learning or student teaching in a multicultural community. Formative and summative assessment of teacher candidates in the area of global competence would serve to further ensure the preparedness of teachers as they strive to educate students in a global society.

Recommendations for Teachers as Gifted and Talented Educators

To differentiate a global curriculum to meet the needs of gifted learners, teachers must first accurately identify gifted learners. Developing background knowledge about the unique characteristics of gifted learners is paramount as some behaviors can be easily misunderstood. Organizations such as the National Association for Gifted Children and the National Society for the Gifted and Talented provide resources for educators as they seek to identify and meet the unique needs of gifted learners. Suchsland Schneider (2008) recommended implementing various types of assessment to ensure accurate identification of gifted learners. In addition, she asserted that understanding the unique needs of gifted learners requires partnerships and collaboration among stake holders. A partnership between home and school allows for parents—those who know their children best—to provide input when making educational decisions. A partnership between specialists and generalists can help classroom teachers fully understand their gifted students and plan curriculum accordingly. Partnerships between teachers and administration can facilitate program modifications and changes on a schoolwide or district level that can have a positive influence on the success of gifted learners. Finally, she stated that ongoing professional development opportunities be offered to teachers. Insights and resources provided by specialists in the field of gifted education can increase a teacher’s knowledge of gifted learners and facilitate the enrichment of classroom curriculum that would more appropriately meet their educational needs. A willingness to include gifted learners in a regular education classroom to meet the challenge of differentiating an appropriate curriculum is necessary for gifted learners to actualize their potential. VanTassel-Baska (1989) recommended a content-based mastery dimension that allows gifted learners to progress through the curriculum

at their own pace, a process/product/research dimension that encourages in-depth and independent learning, and a theory of knowledge that allows for the examination of relevant issues, themes, and ideas across disciplines.

Using the foundational concepts of global education as an educational strategy that seeks to meet the educational needs of gifted learners holds positive implications. Gifted learners are able to realize their potential through the utilization of appropriate curriculum approaches facilitated through the collaborative efforts of prepared and highly qualified educational professionals. As a result, gifted learners gain the skills and competencies to become effective global citizens in an increasingly interconnected global society.

Recommendations for Curriculum

Both global education and gifted education share common philosophical foundations. Recommendations for curriculum reinforce both educational approaches. A curriculum that is “student centered rather than teacher centered” (Collier, 2017, p .7) should become the underlying premise for all curricular decisions. According to Chval and Davis (2008), effective curricular design should facilitate respect for students’ situation and opinions, present engaging and relevant content, encourage creativity, and promote flexibility. These areas are closely related. However, provision of purposeful recommendations in each of these areas warrants further consideration.

Respect for Students’ Situations and Opinions

A learning environment that facilitates respect for students’ situations and opinions should incorporate a curriculum that utilizes collaboration as an instructional strategy as well as one that embraces multiple perspectives. In essence, one concept facilitates the other. Without

collaboration, an understanding of multiple perspectives is not possible, and without acknowledging multiple perspectives, collaboration is not authentic. Both should be considered individually but should be understood as complimentary curricular components.

In a collaborative culture, a student should feel empowered to share their knowledge and take an active role in the learning process. According to Fester (2016) “ultimately, in order to be successful in the 21st century world, our students need to be able to manage themselves and work effectively with groups of peers” (p. 1). Tinzmann, Jones, Fennimore, Fine, and Pierce (1990) stated that to establish a collaborative classroom, teachers must shift their perceptions of teaching from the traditional to one that facilitates the development of 21st century skills. They should redefine the roles of both teacher and student within the classroom setting. Consideration should also be granted to new instructional approaches. Creating a culture of collaboration takes conscious effort and planning.

Sharing in the learning experience at the same level as their students should be the teacher’s perspective regarding collaboration in the classroom. They should consider themselves an active member of a collaborative group, sharing thoughts and ideas with their students, modelling learning through think a-louds and demonstrations. They should become mediators and coaches while students are thinking and constructing knowledge for themselves, scaffolding their support according to individual student or group need. Coaching students through the learning process, teachers should provide hints or clues, provide feedback, and redirect students’ efforts, but should always be mindful to provide the right amount of help when needed—not too much, not too little, so that students retain as much responsibility of their own learning as possible (Tinzmann et al., 1990). While it is recommended that teachers make a shift in thinking

about their role in the classroom, it is also important that they reconsider the role of the student as well.

Teachers should seek to perceive their students as having control of their own learning. To facilitate this, they should provide opportunities for students to set manageable goals and to plan their own learning activities. Students should be given a chance to regulate their own by providing opportunities for questioning and exchanging ideas with their peers. According to Lehner and Wurzenberger (2013), this collaboration helps students develop meaningful relationships with peers and social interdependencies. It also reduces competition and egoism and promotes cooperation. Creating a culture of collaboration and independent learning requires an alternative approach to instructional strategies.

Teachers should shift their approach to teaching from knowledge flowing in a one-way direction from teacher to student (Tinzmann et al., 1990) to one in which is more of an exchange of knowledge. As was mentioned above, students should take a more active role in their learning. In order to do so, instructional practices should be designed to allow for differentiated learning. While teachers should still plan the framework for learning, they should also provide options for activities and assignments that support individual interests, abilities, learning styles, and individual situations. To ensure productivity in a collaborative learning environment, roles should be clearly defined, and students should be allowed time to practice the collaborative learning method. According to Fester (2016), all members of the group should know what is expected of them and understand the shared goal of the assignment. Groups should create norms where appropriate and students should be held accountable for them. Boss (2014) recommended starting by grouping students in pairs and working toward larger group collaboration and clearly

communicating what it means to be an active group participant. Reinforcing healthy conflict resolution skills should also be incorporated into group norms. To ensure group productivity, constant progress monitoring through the process of systematic check-ins throughout collaboration is recommended. Be sure that groups and individuals are provided consistent feedback and positive reinforcement to promote a culture of intellectual growth.

In addition to collaboration, a learning environment in which provides respect for students' situation, and opinions is one which should provide students with a curriculum that embraces multiple perspectives. This can be done through establishing a classroom climate of inclusion, through deliberate use of resources and strategies that acknowledge multicultural perspectives, and through the use of multiple instructional modalities.

Honoring students' individual experiences should be a focus when intending to establish a culture of inclusion. Teachers should seek to understand the unique characteristics of their students and cultivate a welcoming environment in which students feel safe to share information about their backgrounds and personal experiences. The Yale Center for Teaching and Learning (n.d.) emphasized the need for teachers to anticipate sensitive issues and acknowledge diversity in the classroom. When discussing controversial issues, teachers should expect emotional responses. By incorporating discussion guidelines that include confidentiality, respectful disagreement, and civil debate, classroom conversations should result in respectful and equitable participation.

Another element of creating a climate of inclusion is the modeling of inclusive language. Instructions should be wary of language practices that may exclude or misrepresent some

members of the population. When using American idioms, they should be explained for the benefit on non-native English speakers. Establishing a classroom culture of inclusion should reflect a feeling that is friendly, caring, and supportive all students.

The Teaching Tolerance Organization (2016) recommended including a variety of resources and utilize strategies that give students an independent voice and provide opportunities to acknowledge that of others in the classroom. One such strategy involves making real-world connections to the classroom curriculum and content. It suggests that students be encouraged to reflect on the classroom material as it connects to their own lives and to the world. Facilitating discussions that connect classroom content to current events helps to generate authentic and relevant dialogue among students. Including classroom resources that highlight diverse cultural experiences can contribute to students' understanding of life events and environments unlike their own. According to Tinzmann et al. (1990), teachers are advised to “structure resources in the classroom to provide a diversity of genres and perspectives. Boss (2014) recommended cultivating diversity as a resource. She suggested drawing on students' backgrounds through music, literature, and art, as well as students' diverse interests, talents, and backgrounds, and then incorporating this information in the curriculum planning process. Utilizing resources in the classroom that acknowledge multiple perspectives ensures a more authentic representation of our global community and allows students to make connections to life experiences unlike that of their own.

The use of a variety of instructional modalities can reinforce individual learning style and personal situations of all students. Heterogeneous grouping strategies should be utilized to create collaborative learning opportunities with diverse perspectives. Grouping may include combining

students with diverse cultural backgrounds or ability levels. Effective instructional modalities might also include video conferencing with populations of students from different regions and countries. Students are allowed the opportunity to learn first-hand the experiences of peers from diverse backgrounds and living situations. Engaging in service learning endeavors is another effective way to expose students to the situations of others. Philanthropic endeavors encourage empathy for fellow citizens and reinforces the connection we share with one another. Through incorporation of a variety of instructional modalities, students are able to experience multiple perspectives throughout the learning process.

A curriculum that respects the individual situations and opinions of all students is one that incorporates collaboration and exposure to multiple perspectives. Teachers should strive to develop curriculum that does so through the development of engaging and relevant content.

Engaging and Relevant Content

A successful classroom environment should be one that provides curriculum that is both engaging and relevant to students' life experiences. Curriculum decisions should be based on the understanding that students are independent learners, it should be constructivist in nature, ensure appropriate rigor and challenge, and allow for consistent feedback and assessment. Inclusion of these elements will promote a successful learning experience for all students.

Consideration of students as independent learners should be a priority when determining curriculum. According to the Iowa Department of Education (n.d.), "teachers [should] provide access to information, resources, experts, and technology that students need to complete authentic tasks" (p. 2). Due to the individual nature of students regarding learning styles, a multimodal approach to instructional strategies is recommended. In its research brief,

Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning, the Wisconsin Department of Education (n.d.) stated that the utilization of multiple modalities can enhance student understanding of complex concepts. These modalities might include printed material, videos, PowerPoints, and computers. In addition, educators might consider implementing simulated learning or gaming. This will provide an engaging learning experience that nurtures creative thinking. Gaming can demonstrate how to manipulate complex problems and what affect it may have on the outcome (Sharritt, 2008). Boss (2014) stressed that even things such as classrooms supplies be accessible to all students. They should not be restricted only to the teacher's use and discretion. An additional key component is self- reflection and assessment. Time for both should be deliberately planned for throughout curriculum planning. According to Boss (2014), this promotes autonomy and allows students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Utilizing resources such as response journals, student work portfolios, and rubrics can assist students to this end. As much responsibility that can be given to students regarding their learning and educational success, the better, so long as it is managed and is an intentional part of curriculum planning as a whole.

Adopting a curriculum that is constructivist in nature is closely related to students as independent learners. Students should be independently constructing knowledge through lessons and activities that involve real world situations. Mayer (2004) described constructivist learning as a process through which learners actively seek to develop coherent and organized knowledge. By adopting a hands-on, project-based approach to curriculum design, students acquire knowledge through doing. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Education (n.d.), by facilitating an inquiry-based approach, students have an increased capacity to understand and

retain content. According to Neo and Neo (2009), it will help students to identify real world problems, generate questions, and discover answers to their individual questions. According to VanOers and Wardekker (1999), curriculum should connect instruction to real-world applications. It should help students develop a broader understanding of their individual experience in relation to the larger community as a whole. It should allow students to extend their learning to practical and authentic discoveries that extend beyond the classroom walls.

By providing authentic learning experiences that addresses students as independent learners, teachers should deliberately incorporate a curriculum that is both rigorous and appropriately challenging for all students. The Iowa Department of Education (n.d.) stressed that there should be a shared understanding and intention to promote high expectations across disciplines and grade levels. This will move students from one level and area of instruction to another with consistency as their skills develop and concepts become increasingly complex. Opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills should be part of planning a rigorous curriculum. Students should be required to make predictions, hypothesize, justify, interpret, synthesize, evaluate, analyze, and generally create new levels of meaning and understanding. In their Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning, the Wisconsin Department of Education (n.d.) suggested that instruction must be designed to engage students through levels of cognition in order for them to fully understand content. A rigorous curriculum should strive to develop a deep understanding and mastery of concepts and skills.

To determine mastery and ensure continued engagement and self-regulated learning, instructional planning should allow for consistent feedback to students in the form of progress monitoring, and assessment. To facilitate this process, Barge (2014) suggested that a clear

academic focus is established for each lesson, and students are provided with explicit learning objectives. Providing rubrics for student work and projects, allows students to self-assess and regulate their learning. As students grow in their independence as learners, teachers should allow time in their instructional planning to conference with students on a regular basis. This will provide opportunities to review student goals, scaffold instruction according to student need, and serve to ensure comprehension of content and quality of work. By providing authentic and meaningful feedback, students are able to more fully engage in the learning experience and learning becomes more purposeful.

Engaging and relevant curriculum creates an enhanced learning environment for all students. Teachers should strive to develop a curriculum that is intentionally designed to acknowledge students as independent learners by providing authentic real-world contexts, challenge students to reach their highest potential, and support self-regulated learning through feedback and scaffolded instructional approaches. To fully incorporate these ideas into a comprehensive instructional plan, it is essential to adopt a mindset that promotes creativity and flexibility in the classroom setting is essential.

Flexibility and Creativity

Allowing for creativity and adhering to a mindset of flexibility should be considered an important characteristic of a successful learning environment. As independent and unique learners, students should be allowed the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity. This should be facilitated through flexible instructional planning and classroom management. Consistent with the recommendations above, creativity and flexibility are closely related but warrant individual attention.

Flexibility in the learning environment involves both the physical classroom space as well as the implemented instructional practices. If students are to be acknowledged as unique learners with unique abilities and needs, the classroom environment should support this premise.

Teachers and administrators are challenged to consider redesigning the physical space in the classroom to allow for creativity, collaboration, and authentic learning experiences. According to Markle (2018), the traditional arrangement of desks in organized rows does not facilitate conversation and collaboration. The classroom environment should emulate what students will encounter in their careers—collaboration, discussion, and problem-solving. Teachers should be challenged to consider rearranging their classrooms to allow for small group collaboration, movement, and personal learning style. A classroom might include an area where students can sit on the floor and engage in learning activities or students might be provided alternative seating to allow for added movement. It may even be appropriate to provide standing desks to accommodate those who feel most comfortable working in a standing position. As teachers take a more active role in the learning process of their students, moving around the room to conference and monitor student progress, one might consider removing their large desk in favor of a small mobile teacher “work space.” While providing flexibility in the physical classroom space helps to facilitate personal learning style, flexibility of instructional practices supports universal access to content.

Student need should motivate the flexibility of instructional planning. Darby (n.d.), in her text written in accordance with the National Education Association, stressed flexibility in content delivery and access driven by learner diversity. Students bring to the learning environment a variety of backgrounds and ability levels. Instructional practices should be varied

to ensure all students have equal access to materials and content. In addition, instructional practices should be flexible enough to allow for students to demonstrate mastery of the content in a variety of ways, keeping in mind individual strengths and challenges. For example, if writing is a challenge, a teacher might offer an assessment allowing verbal responses. Curriculum design should allow for student choice regarding projects and assignments. Frequent check ins with students should occur regularly to enable the flexibility for lessons to be modified and tailored to meet the needs of individual learners. While best practice in teaching calls for deliberate planning, scope and sequence development, and determining daily objectives, striving to remain flexible in how these practices are implemented will facilitate a learning environment that is successful for all students.

Providing a flexible physical learning space and implementing flexible instructional practices empowers all students to engage in the learning process. Each bringing unique attributes to a cooperative learning environment. Flexibility in the classroom facilitates creativity—yet another essential element to a successful learning environment.

According to Guerrero (2018), promoting creativity in the classroom allows students to think outside the box and utilize ingenuity in problem-solving endeavors. She offers a number of recommendations for teachers. Make room for visual reflection. By posting thoughts and ideas, it not only benefits those who share them but all other students in the classroom. Utilize unconventional learning materials. Internet sources such as TED talks, blogs, videos, and interactive websites and applications can provide a variety of outlet for individual expression. Incorporating humor into the classroom experience can create a more positive environment which will promote creativity. Drawing on pop culture references and finding relevant jokes can

lighten the classroom atmosphere. Team building activities can create opportunities for students to work together to make decisions based on creative thinking and problem-solving strategies. By deliberately creating challenge opportunities for students that include open ended questions that require problem-solving strategies and ideas can foster creative thinking. Personal expression and creativity is part of our very existence as human beings, if we are to provide a learning environment that prepares students to engage in the world around them, develop meaningful and productive relationships among those with whom they coexist, embracing creativity in the classroom is paramount.

The connection between areas of curriculum development is noticeably apparent. Each gives way to the other and all support the other. Development of one leads to development of the other and so on. The underlying premise is to be highlighted. Curriculum decisions should be student-centered. They should focus on the diverse needs of individual students. Curriculum planning of this nature is labor intensive and requires a substantial amount of time. It requires a shift in thinking from the traditional to the progressive. It asks that teachers give up the control of the classroom and trust students to direct their own learning. It depends upon meaningful conversations between individuals of diverse backgrounds, learning to solve problems that have yet to be determined. It challenges teachers to dig deep and find resources and methodologies that will engage and motivate students to become independent learners responsible for their own success or failure. It calls for teachers to be flexible--to jump out of their comfort zone and design classrooms that allows for movement and gives permission for students to learn outside of the confines of desks in rows. It entices creativity and personal expression. It is a curriculum

that celebrates the individual and creates an environment in which all students can reach their highest potential with the support of an inclusive community of learners.

Further Research

As our world continues to grow smaller and technological advances increase, our interactions as global citizens become more evident and our interconnectedness more pronounced. Gifted learners are precious resources that hold the potential to become effective leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers in a global society. As educational professionals faced with the task of educating the next generation of global citizens, research that aims to enrich, improve, or reform our educational system to that end on all levels becomes increasingly important. At the instructional level, research would focus on including global competencies in curriculum objectives and identifying instructional strategies that would facilitate student success. Because global education relies heavily on educational theory, discovering methods to put these valuable theories into practice warrant further research as well. On the administrative level, research would focus on program planning that would encourage the inclusion of gifted learners in a globally conscious and constructivist classroom. In addition, it would delve deeper into finding effective assessment methods and strategies to accurately identify and support gifted learners. On the policy-making level, questions arise as to whether or not our current educational system is equipped to meet the needs of gifted learners or facilitate the development of globally competent individuals. Further research would investigate wide ranging policy changes or shifts in paradigmatic thinking that would give the acknowledgement of human resources and global understandings priority over international competition and political gain. Overall, further research would seek to acknowledge the process of learning and perpetuate the

idea that there is always something new to be learned. The field of education is dynamic. It is influenced by societal whims. Further research is necessary if educational professionals are to demonstrate integrity as individuals entrusted with the well-being of tomorrow's global citizens who have the power to create and sustain peaceful interactions that hold the potential to benefit our global community as a whole.

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