<span style="color:#c0504d">**Feature Article**</span>
*Building Deep and Relevant Global Teaching and Learning*
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## Introduction

Learning about the world we live in has never been more important, given the range of global processes demanding our understanding and action: Environmental disasters; global financial crises and their impacts; ethnically motivated violence; increased cross-border flows of people, ideas, and capital; and instant access to people and cultures from all over the world. In many educational contexts, incorporating some form of global learning is already being practiced. For example, my son, age four, recently finished a pre-school unit on the seven continents. Each week the students studied one of the continents, exploring distinct cultural aspects and creating art or learning songs from a country or region of the continent. This form of global learning is now more common than it was in the past, even at such an early age, and helps to build knowledge and curiosity about the world. To further enhance such opportunities and build learning opportunities relevant for the globalized world in which we live, it is important to consider how to create deep, relevant, and reflexive forms of global teaching and learning.

There are, of course, multiple pathways to global learning. Whether at pre-school, secondary, or even university levels, global learning is deepest when educators find ways to incorporate international perspectives into everyday learning with strong connections to students' and teachers' daily lives. That is not to say that learning opportunities offered through outbound international experiences aren't valuable. In contrast, being able to experience firsthand a distinct cultural setting, to be in a linguistic context distinct from one's own, or to experience a different way of thinking and knowing all together are of course significant learning opportunities. However, these kinds of cross-cultural and international opportunities are not always possible given the often considerable cost and time associated with going abroad. We must also not assume that traveling abroad is the only mechanism for global learning, as cross-cultural and international experiences do not only (or always) occur overseas. It is therefore important to consider avenues of global learning that extend past an understanding of "the global" as something to travel to, which only some students and educators might access.

The aim of this article is to further consider the question of how to internationalize schools by examining some essential dimensions of incorporating global learning into curricula and pedagogy. In what follows, I'll describe what I see as several essential mechanisms for building deep and relevant global teaching and learning and provide some concrete examples.

## Global Teaching and Learning

Global learning contributes to building students' global competence, understood as "the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance" (for further reading, see article here). To deepen global learning, it is important to build connections between the student, the local school and community context, and issues of global significance. Developing these connections entails the following dimensions:

1. *Engaging students' sense of self*: In order to advance global understanding and action, it is important to consider and engage a student's own sense of self-identity and place within the world.

2. *Developing patterns of question posing and reflections about global issues, experiences, and communities*: Global learning involves practices of questioning and reflecting on issues of global significance. This might entail the encouragement of questions (both those that are answerable and unanswerable) and deep reflection on global issues. Connecting to the previous dimension, it is important to engage students' prior knowledge, how they come to understand a global issue or question, and examine assumptions and biases.

3. *Building opportunities for student connections between self, local community, other global communities, and broad global issues (e.g. migration, economic shifts, governance, social movements)*:  Building from the previous two dimensions, at the heart of global learning is the practice of making connections between students' everyday lives and global issues, which allow students to directly encounter and grapple with the opportunities and the challenges of global life.

These three dimensions deal not only with the content or material that is taught, but also *how* it is approached and taught by educators. Therefore, it is important to consider how educators *themselves* make sense of global issues and how they approach them in their teaching.

Along with a colleague, Dr. Megan Siczek, I have begun to study how teachers develop their own understanding of global citizenship and global competency. These understandings are often shaped by educators' individual experiences, values, and beliefs; their local environment and teaching context; and the messaging they receive about global learning (developed from Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer's 2002 theory of sense-making). What we have found thus far is that teachers' own global understanding and sense of global citizenship is influential in their commitment to deepening global learning in their practice. For example, teachers in the study who possessed a strong sense of their own global citizenship were often the most comfortable and active in building ways to link global issues and interactions with students' self-identity. This implies that question posing and connections between a teacher's own sense of self and the global world become essential in building deep and relevant global learning. Moreover, teachers who were invested in global learning tended to value it for humanistic reasons, suggesting that there is a commitment to developing global learning beyond content knowledge or skills alone.

**Examples of Global Teaching and Learning**

*Example 1:* Over the past year, I have been working with a current secondary school Spanish teacher in a graduate certificate program, Incorporating International Perspectives into Education. The student, Meghan[1], has described her school as a low-income, culturally diverse, urban setting, with an increasing number of students from immigrant backgrounds originating from Latin America. She has often focused her graduate coursework on re-building her Spanish class lessons and curriculum units to better incorporate reflective forms of global learning.

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[1] Names have been changed to protect the identity of students.

For example, as was previously the case, her classes often focused on learning about the cultures and countries of Latin America as static and faraway places. In her work, Meghan developed teaching approaches and curriculum that repositioned Latin America both within a broader context involving the global movement of people and more locally as part and parcel of the local school and community context. In rethinking her curriculum from a more global perspective, she has utilized some of the resources that are already within the school community: the students themselves and their families. Part of this has involved tapping into students' own backgrounds and experiences and building patterns of on-going question posing and reflective writing, including the students' own sense of global citizenship. In class, she has also begun to reflect on different ways of engaging families of students to play more participatory roles in teaching and learning. This echoes Day's (2012) research, which advocated for international families to be seen as resources for internationalizing schools. Cumulatively, with these changes, she has addressed deep and powerful aspects of what it means to be a global citizen (e.g. reflective thinking, question-posing, engaging local experiences of global issues). Furthermore, Meghan has also worked to develop forms of mutual learning between pairs or groups of students within the classroom and school. From this work, she has been able to observe opportunities, in which students are building friendships and creating more socially cohesive student communities.

*Example 2:* In one of my graduate-level courses, we focus a session on internationalizing curriculum. As part of our discussion, I ask students, many of whom are educators, to consider ways they might build a curriculum unit from a photography exhibit, Where Children Sleep? In designing a unit or lesson, some of the educators in the class begin with connections to the self, asking students to describe or visually create their own households and bedrooms. Questions are posed about similarities and differences between student bedrooms and what is depicted in the images. Some lessons consider how a student's own household and those of the images represent particular cultural dimensions of life in a local and global context. Lastly, questions might be posed about the extent to which the images reflect cultural understanding and bias. For example, a lesson might ask students to reflect upon photographs of the US households, posing questions about how they do or do not represent the US, as students know it, and American identity. Similarly, questions can be posed about the images of bedrooms in different countries: How do the household contexts and bedrooms in rural Senegal or a favela in Brazil, as shown in the photographs, relate to what students assume to know about these locations? Students might be asked then to conduct research to further consider their own assumptions and biases about poverty in the global South, to conduct research on poverty within students' own local communities, and to consider avenues for taking action. It might even be possible to create connections through global pen pals via e-mail and Skype to classrooms and schools in one or more of the places or countries in which these images reflect, asking students to consider ways in which the images accurately portray or counter their assumptions about a particular place.