



## The Field of Early Learner Global Education

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### Introduction

The purpose of this article is to highlight the movement to integrate global citizenship into education. Global citizenship has evolved from human rights education, international education, civics and many other earlier movements. What sets global citizenship apart from these earlier movements in education is its focus on creating both an international and a local identity for students as well as helping students to understand the impact that their actions have throughout the “global village”. The goal of the essay is to identify methods of bringing a global view to students while highlighting some pedagogic issues.

The national census of Japan in 2010 reported a record population. Japan was ranked as the tenth most highly populated country in the world. The population of foreign residents in Japan reached 1.5%, now projected to be closer to 2% or more. This increase of foreign residents is a reminder that the world is ever changing. To help future Japanese citizens stay internationally savvy, the foreign language education curriculum at secondary level has begun to see a change. With English now being introduced from third grade primary school with more materials and a focus on foreign cultures, the time has never been better for a rethinking of educational teaching methods.

### The Objective

The aim of education for global citizenship is to raise students’ awareness of their impact on the local and global society around them, to develop a sense of their rights as citizens of their community, to increase knowledge of the world around them and to encourage them to make informed decisions regarding the international community of which they will be a part when they reach adulthood.

Teaching global citizenship can give students the general knowledge, skills and understanding to navigate the international world around them. By learning more about other cultures, students can increase their confidence, gain the ability to be empathetic to those around them, begin to understand adverse situations in society and learn how to respond to these.

### The Circumstances

There is a need for people to become more aware of their role in their local social-economic situations, and to create a multi-national view of

themselves. Since the 1980’s, European education systems have increasingly focused their students on civics in order to create an appreciation of and a feeling of belonging to local, national and global communities. Japan, Singapore and other Asian nations have slowly begun to incorporate globalization into their national goals. These goals encourage students to go global while developing a sense of belonging to their homelands, by recognizing individuals, as well as other peoples and communities, as collective subjects of rights.

It is now, more than ever, paramount to teach global citizenship in class to facilitate discussion and communication, and to better prepare students for the globalized world they will face in the future. Any issue viewed through the scope of global citizenship can be used to spur student discussions and make for a good class. By introducing examples of literature from around the world, guest speakers and examples of national and international laws, students can develop a deeper understanding of the world around them.

### Background of Global Attitudes in Japan

In most secondary school systems, students are taught citizenship through classes like social studies and history, as well as personal development classes in some parts of the UK and the US. These classes help students to understand their roles as local or national citizens but rarely venture beyond the mother country of the students. However, with the exponentially globalization of the world around us, it is necessary to add an international element to education.

Japan was a prominent world power in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then it has overlooked, or dismissed, major events around the world and become one of the most introverted nations in the world. The lack of interest in global activities has severely stunted relations with global businesses. This lack of growth and interest in global issues can be attributed to the lingering dominance of an older generation of politicians and business leaders.

What helped Japan become a world power in the 1980s before the bubble economy recession were curiosity and a yearning for experiences that would broaden horizons (Banks, 2006). When the economic bubble burst, business leaders and politicians withdrew into their companies changing the corporate from curious and extroverted to introverted and cautious. This led to steady high unemployment, low

consumption and almost zero foreign trade or economic growth.

Only recently, since the early 2000s, has there been a turn-around in employment, consumption and exports. This turn-around is possibly the result of the old business leaders and politicians passing the corporate torch to younger leaders. These new leaders have a different business attitude and outlooks on global business, thus changing the way business is run. To compete with the ever more globalized communities of the future, it is important to expose students to multi-national viewpoints early. In a modern study of people who consider themselves global citizens, most attributed their view of the world to experiences gained in early childhood (Davies, 2004).

### **Global Citizenship: Then and Now**

The challenges of the future will require students to be able to make informed decisions and traverse multi-cultural arenas of business. Through teaching for global citizenship in the classroom, students can be encouraged to develop their beliefs and values, and become critical thinkers respectful of others opinions and cultural belief systems.

When Taiwan and Hong Kong began to revamp their education systems in the early 1980s, the reforms generated an awareness of the need to focus on the students' global identities (Schattle, 2008). This was achieved by intensifying English and technological capacities in class as well as introducing civic education for students beginning in the third year of elementary school.

The modern curriculum in Japan, established shortly after World War II, has seen changes on an average of once every ten years. The first of these changes took place in 1947 with a total revamp of the education system. The changes leading up to the current reforms took place in 1977, 1989, and 1993. These changes included additions of specialty classes such as moral education and a reduction in the number of subjects taught. After 1999, a new direction in education was introduced focused on students' creative abilities.

### **Foreign Language Teaching**

Foreign languages became compulsory with English being required during the school day and other language study to be done outside of class. Bringing global citizenship into the classroom requires a re-evaluation of pedagogy and cross-cultural knowledge. Self-analysis and self-reflexivity within class become crucial to class operation. Individual differences between students and the teacher should be cautiously highlighted and developed as part of this new pedagogy.

### **Challenges and solutions**

Daily life can be a good starting point for teaching. There are many things that students unwittingly do every day. These, when looked at from a neutral viewpoint, can be projected onto a large scale and used as a stepping stone for discussions of global citizenship. Such behaviors as name-calling and excluding students from games during recess can be looked at through a global lens to raise student awareness of prejudice, racism and other behaviors rampant in the world.

The varied interpretations of global citizenship leave much to the individual teacher, whether this is taught as a responsibility that everyone has, a creed, a way of life or a philosophy to frame one's life by. All are valid ways to view the application of global citizenship within the classroom.

The methods of teaching or the philosophy that the teacher subscribes to are not as important as the aim of global citizenship. In Hong Kong, global citizenship has been taught from elementary third grade since the 1980s. Lessons are designed to help students appreciate the diversity of the world around them and develop perspectives for making informed judgments on multi-national issues. By being exposed at a young age to issues in their immediate environment and finding ways to relate these to other elements in the world, students can build a long-lasting awareness of the local and global worlds around them.

### **Children and global citizenship**

Despite claims that students at a young age are not cognitively ready to handle the topics that arise in discussing global citizenship, many prominent researchers have proven these wrong. Teachers should protect their students and shield them from potentially dangerous material, but sometimes this comes at a cost to the students. Students possess the mental ability to comprehend matters such as intercultural education that far exceed the expectations of many educators.

A 3-year study done in Canada with CIDA (*Canadian International Development Agency*), the University of Birmingham and DFID (*Department for International Development*) has shown that students have a great interest in global issues. Students who were gradually exposed to global issues in class showed no trauma or negative impacts. In fact, students reported a further interest and new outlook on their role as global citizens (Davies et al, 2004). All in all, since the 1980s, technology has gradually progressed making it more and more possible to make contact with foreign cultures around the world. With the dawn of the Internet and services like Skype, people are connected more than ever.

To keep up with these developments, countries like China began to implement changes to their education system and teaching pedagogy. Japan has been slow to make changes but is gradually making steps forward. To help students in the international world they face, teachers need to make major changes to their classes.

Now is the time to make these changes that will affect the future of our students. Without a solid knowledge of their identity in their local communities and the responsibilities they have as an international citizen, students will struggle in our ever-changing world. It is the duty of every parent, caretaker, advisor, principal and teacher to sow the seeds of curiosity, help this seed grow so that students yearn for the knowledge around them. So take your students by the hand and bravely lead them outside the school doors into a bright future.

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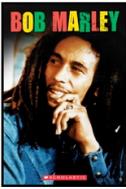
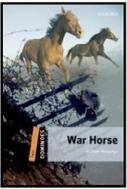
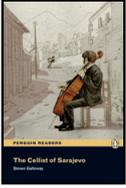
### Finalists for the

## Language Learner and Literature (LLL) Awards



Extensive Reading Foundation (ERF) <<http://erfoundation.org>>

Each year, the *Extensive Reading Foundation* (ERF) chooses the best reading texts for English language learners. Special *Language Learner and Literature* (LLL) awards are given in 5 separate categories: 1 for young learners and 4 each (beginner, elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced) for adolescent and adult learners. Among the 2014 finalists this year were the following 4 books.

<p><b><i>Bob Marley</i></b> by Vicky Shipton (Scholastic)</p> <p>This lively biography brings to life the iconic 1970s reggae singer, Bob Marley. It introduces his music plus events from his life, the history of Jamaica and the Rastafari movement</p> 	<p><b><i>War Horse</i></b> by Michael Morpurgo (Oxford OUP)</p> <p>This engaging book tells the powerful story of a horse – from rural England to the battlefields of World War I – along with the trials and experiences that he encounters in his journey.</p> 
<p><b><i>The Cellist of Sarajevo</i></b> by Steven Galloway (Penguin)</p> <p>This haunting story describes the lives of 4 people whose lives are upended during the siege of Sarajevo. It deals with a difficult topic but is written with sensitivity and intelligence.</p> 	<p><b><i>Oscar's Journey</i></b> by Fiona Joseph (Nat'l Geographic)</p> <p>This book tells the dramatic story of a young boy in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England who is forced to confront his father when he discovers the shocking truth about the family factory.</p> 