



# Education for International Understanding and Global Competence

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Report of a Meeting Convened  
by Carnegie Corporation of New York  
January 21, 2000

From time to time Carnegie Corporation supports meetings on issues of importance that may or may not be closely related to its grant programs. Occasionally, reports of these meetings merit public dissemination.

## Education for International Understanding and Global Competence

On January 21, 2000, Carnegie Corporation of New York brought together representatives of associations, organizations, agencies, and foundations interested in strengthening American understanding of the world through education.<sup>1</sup> Underlying discussions at the meeting were these fundamental questions:

- Are schools, colleges, and universities preparing their students to function effectively in a global society in which time and space no longer insulate the nations, peoples and markets of the world?
- Do U.S. citizens understand enough of the world beyond our national borders to evaluate information about international and global issues and make sound judgments about them?
- Is education in the United States preparing Americans for sustained involvement in an interdependent world?

Participants in the meeting assessed the current situation in all levels of education, considered goals and strategies, and provided advice to funding agencies on ways of strengthening education for international understanding and global competence. The conversation revealed a great deal of scattered activity, a number of promising innovations and considerable interest in states and communities across the country in integrating global perspectives into the curriculum and providing students and faculty with international experiences. However, participants concluded that American students' knowledge of the world remains limited and that baseline data, assessment and dissemination of new approaches, and sustained commitment to implementation required for institutionalization in schools do not yet exist.

**An Evolving Educational Agenda.** As the technologies of travel, communications and information have brought the entire world within our reach, our need to understand international and global phenomena has expanded. During the Cold War, the federal government and major foundations committed substantial resources to the study of international relations, foreign languages and economic

development. In a bipolar world, in addition to understanding the dynamics of international relations, there was a need to develop knowledge of the societies, politics and economies of international rivals, allies and the nations emerging from colonialism whose loyalties were a focus of Cold War competition. Centers for international and area studies were established, in part, for this purpose.

As the Cold War receded, attention shifted to issues that transcend national borders and politics, with concern about the quality of the global environment being a preeminent example, along with the globalization of markets. At the same time, cultural identities, within and crossing national boundaries, began reemerging in many places as the focal point for affiliation and, all too often, bitter and bloody conflict. These forces continue to exert enormous influence on the shape of the world and how Americans and American society interact with other countries, governments, businesses and individuals.

Meeting participants agreed that Americans' need to understand their relationship to the rest of the world is critical to the country's ability to sustain and build on its current successes. Note was made of the fact that although the U.S. is now the world's preeminent military and economic power, and the reach of its political and popular culture is global, it cannot control events and remains vulnerable to faraway developments. Because of our global reach and the openness and diversity of our society, we are perhaps even more easily affected by international and global phenomena than small and remote nations. Nothing is therefore foreign to us even though we live and compete in a world of differences. Understanding our place in that world and the cultural, social, political and economic variations of which that world is comprised presents a tremendous challenge for education as we enter the twenty-first century.

Much of the discussion at the Carnegie meeting focused on the challenge of creating educational models comprehensive enough to address the myriad subjects and issues that might be considered elements of a "global education," while also being flexible enough to react to the rapid pace of global change. Participants agreed that the framework for a comprehensive global education curriculum must encompass global issues and challenges, global cultures and world areas, and the relationships of the United States with the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge of culture, geography, history and language are necessary. But problems with implementing such a curriculum were also pointed out. For example, the current focus on standards and accountability tends to narrow the content focus of the schools. Innovative approaches to curriculum are needed to address this problem. One strategy highlighted in

the discussion was for classroom learning to address a few topics in depth, which might engage students in working out their own solutions to real-world problems that have both global and domestic elements.

Also noted in the discussion were some of the gaps that participants identified as areas where aspirations for adding a global perspective to education were not met by reality. These included examples such as the following:

- A majority of the states have established content standards related to Asia. However, in a survey of 5,000 teachers conducted by the Asia Society for the National Commission on Asia in the Schools, less than 5 percent of the respondents reported having substantial background in Asia and only 25 percent had ever taken a course on any aspect of Asia. Teachers reported that they are pressed for time and they are uncomfortable teaching when they lack expertise in the subject.
- World history is another case in point. Although interest in the field is surging, few historians specialize in it, teachers have not been trained to teach it and materials are lacking.
- Twenty-four states are participating in an effort to develop a national assessment encompassing civics, history, geography and economics, but even the best teachers involved in developing the assessment lack sufficient content knowledge.

**Teachers with a Global Perspective, Resources for Global Teachers.** Bringing a global perspective into the classroom must begin with helping teachers develop that perspective for themselves. But teachers, for the most part, are not adequately prepared and even those willing and able to integrate global perspectives have difficulty doing so, given the multiple external demands on what they teach. Extraordinary teachers and extraordinary commitment are necessary to integrate global perspectives under these conditions.

What can be done to help? Those attending the Carnegie forum agreed that increased opportunities for teachers to travel, especially opportunities to become immersed in another society and culture, would do much to bring the world and the schoolroom closer together. For example, a modest federal

program of support for travel stipends for teachers could signal the importance of global education to the national agenda. Intercultural experiences at home and virtual exchanges via the Internet were suggested as broadly available, though imperfect, alternatives to travel.

And there are resources for global education available to teachers motivated enough to take advantage of them. Those cited at the Carnegie meeting include:

- The American Forum for Global Education, which has published over 200 books on curriculum and offers pre-service and in-service workshops.
- The National Endowment for the Humanities, which offers summer seminars and institutes for teachers, with nearly half of those to be offered in 2000 focused on other countries or including a global perspective.
- The National Peace Corps Association, which sponsors Global TeachNet, a professional development network for K-12 classroom teachers promoting a more global perspective within U.S. classrooms. Small incentive grants are provided to teachers to document successful global education curricula, which are then posted on the Global TeachNet web site. “Adaptor” grants are also available to teachers who want to adapt a curriculum to their own circumstances.
- The World Bank Institute, which has created “World Links for Development” to provide Internet connectivity and training in the use of technology for the classroom in 15 countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Schools in the United States have an opportunity to participate in Internet-based international collaborative projects with World Links schools.

Meeting participants pointed out that the availability of such resources is not enough. The impact of isolated innovations and interventions soon dissipates. Teachers must be prepared to integrate resources such as new content and technology into the classroom, and they need incentives and support to do so on a continuing basis.

To leverage existing resources and to provide both the impetus for change and the support needed

for sustained improvement, meeting participants offered the following approaches:

- Encourage the development of standards and assessments including global perspectives that will create demand for introducing them into the curriculum. The results of the assessments should then draw attention to the need for developing additional resources and strategies for global learning.
- Support the concentration of multiple resources on district-wide innovations in curriculum and instruction, which are most likely to bring about sustained change. The success of the National Geographic Society in renovating the teaching of geography was suggested as a model.
- Engage the business community. They are a potential source of support because of the need for a globally competent workforce, as are community leaders and state governors concerned about economic competitiveness.
- Use the power and outreach provided by new communications technologies.

**Schools, Colleges and Universities: Partners for Change.** Increased involvement of higher education institutions with elementary and secondary schools was seen by meeting participants as an essential component of an improvement strategy. Fortunately, the ways in which the schools need synergy with colleges and universities are consistent with emerging higher education priorities. The American Council on Education (ACE), for example, speaking for the leadership of higher education, has called for moving the education of teachers to the center of the higher education agenda.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, the commitment of higher education is critical to the training of globally knowledgeable teachers. Other sources of possible support cited included the university-based, federally funded area studies centers. However, changes in the regulations will be required to allocate resources to support for schools beyond the modest ones currently available.

Those attending the meeting also agreed that foreign language study was yet another arena that requires attention from all levels of America's educational institutions. While language instruction should begin in the early years of schooling, the commitment of higher education to foreign languages was seen by meeting participants as critical, both in the preparation of teachers and in signaling the importance of foreign language study through admissions requirements.

Addressing foreign language study on perhaps an even more fundamental level, meeting participants voiced the opinion that competence in another language would seem to be essential to understanding the rest of the world. It is vital, for example, to comprehending and communicating with the majority of the world's people who do not have access to modern communications or to education beyond the basics. With the growing primacy of English as the language of international communication, however, the case for studying other languages becomes harder to make. Complacency about the dominance of English coupled with the backlash against bilingual education could well work against the teaching of languages other than English in elementary and secondary schools. The voices of educators and others interested in the benefits of global education must continue to be heard as part of this ongoing debate.

**Beyond a Global Perspective.** Discussions at the Carnegie meeting ranged beyond the concept of a global perspective for education to address perhaps even more far-reaching questions. For instance, one participant asked, what makes a campus internationalized? What are the indicators of internationalization: Area studies? Studies of global issues such as environmental change? Strong foreign language departments? The proportion of foreign students on campus? The availability of study abroad programs? (Some answers may come in the near future from a major study of the internationalization of American campuses being launched by the American Council on Education.) Conversation at Carnegie's January meeting eventually coalesced around an exploration of issues relating to area studies, foreign language study and study abroad.

Area studies, defined by geographic proximity or cultural affinity<sup>4</sup>, have provided a foundation for research, graduate education and teaching about the rest of the world. In the postwar period, area studies and area studies centers received considerable government and foundation support to develop American expertise in areas of Cold War competition.

Today, area studies are in flux, and not just because of the end of the Cold War.<sup>5</sup> The definitions of various areas are under challenge, seen, in part, as artifacts of Cold War politics. Evidence for this can be found in the fact that the boundaries between area studies and domestic diversity and ethnic studies are falling. One obvious instance is the frequent blending of African and African-American studies. Area studies are also being transcended by global issues and cross-regional developments. Global competence, defined as the capacity to function effectively across cultures and national borders, may under-

value deep knowledge of any particular part of the world. Funding for area studies has been under pressure as institutions have sought to reduce costs. The pool of scholars trained in area studies may be shrinking as a result.

However, there are also positive signs. Area studies programs in liberal arts colleges remain strong. There is evidence that student interest in learning about other parts of the world is increasing. The intellectual challenges coming from the intrusion of domestic and global perspectives could revitalize area studies. Revitalizing area studies—“to ensure that knowledge and understanding of particular places continue to be grounded in serious study of culture, language, and history, while finding new ways of conceptualizing ‘area’ so that its study opens up exciting new questions, new approaches, new ways of understanding both history and changes in the contemporary world”<sup>6</sup> —is the purpose of a major Ford Foundation initiative.

As noted earlier in this paper, the future of foreign language study in colleges and universities is also very much in question, although enrollments have been mostly holding steady. According to Richard Lambert—whose 1989 work on undergraduate international studies provides the baseline data<sup>7</sup>—the increase in language enrollments over the past five years has occurred in comprehensive institutions and baccalaureate and community colleges while enrollments have declined at doctorate-granting institutions, especially research universities. Some of the increase may be attributable to students studying English as a second language and native speakers of such languages as Spanish and Korean studying those languages. To put the increases in perspective, enrollments in language courses have not begun to keep up with the overall expansion in enrollment over the last three decades.<sup>8</sup> This is so at a time when the U.S. government annually needs to fill 34,000 positions requiring foreign language skills, and business increasingly requires employees with international and multicultural experience.<sup>9</sup>

Undergraduate study abroad for academic credit has also been increasing rapidly in recent years, driven by students seeking international experiences that will help them in their careers and institutions that are offering more and more diverse opportunities to study overseas. It is important to note that even with the increase, less than 10 percent of undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities do study in other countries, with the largest number from research universities. Women, whites, and social science and humanities majors are disproportionately represented among those taking advantage of overseas study. Science majors and minority students are underrepresented, a matter of concern to



meeting participants. Two-thirds of the students study in Europe, and Britain, which poses few language challenges, is the single most popular destination.

The impact of study abroad depends on students' preparation in advance, the degree of immersion in the host culture, and the opportunities to build on and share the experience upon return to the home campus.<sup>10</sup> Meeting participants feared that the general quality level of study-abroad programs was low and that the full potential of such programs is not realized.

In addition to curriculum and overseas study, the presence of foreign students and faculty on campus contribute to internationalization. The number of foreign students enrolled at U.S. campuses continues to grow in absolute numbers, accounting for three percent of total enrollment in U.S. higher education. However, U.S. market share of students studying outside their home countries has fallen from 40 to 30 percent since 1982.<sup>11</sup> Interest was expressed in taking greater advantage of the presence of foreign students and scholars to enrich the educational experiences of other students on campus and the schools in the surrounding community.

Internationalization is progressing at varying speeds on different kinds of campuses. Although the number of students involved is small, liberal arts colleges, with the advantage of the residential experience and their emphasis on international studies as a component of the liberal education that is their reason for being, may have most effectively integrated international experiences to date.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, meeting participants were less positive about the progress of the internationalization of research universities despite the number of students and faculty involved. For example, many research universities do not control or integrate the study abroad experiences of their students. Many scientists do not see the need for increased internationalization because they are so involved with the international scientific community.

The increasing internationalization of community colleges, however, was seen as a positive development, one fostered especially by the Stanley Foundation. The globalization of community colleges includes the general education curriculum, foreign language study, study abroad programs for faculty and students, growth in the number of foreign students enrolled exceeding that of other sectors of higher education and service to the local business community.<sup>13</sup>

Business education was also cited as a positive example, responding at the graduate and undergraduate level, like community colleges, to the globalization of the economy. But whether international education has been truly integrated into business education (through the inclusion of foreign language study as a standard component of the business curriculum, for example), is a matter of debate.<sup>14</sup>

**Opportunities and Strategies for Action.** Implicit throughout the conversation was the conviction that international and global perspectives must be an integral part of twenty-first-century education from kindergarten to graduate school. While there is a continuing need for specialists in international and global issues, all of us are players in an increasingly global society and need to be able to participate in and understand our place in such a world. Recognition of this need is reflected in the increasing demand for internationalization of the curriculum from business, students and communities that understand that they must compete in a global economy.

Given the many demands on schools and the crowded, often fragmented curriculum of colleges and universities, how can education respond? The following strategic opportunities emerged from the discussion:

- **Integrate international and global perspectives into the curriculum.** Content standards for schools should include such perspectives, as many already do. The challenge is to work with teachers to provide real substance rather than just superficial exposure. Colleges and universities can reinforce the importance of such perspectives by reflecting them in their admissions requirements. Requiring competence in a second language, for the most obvious example, would go a long way to prepare students for international understanding and global competence. As colleges and universities review and renew their commitments to liberal learning as the common core of undergraduate liberal arts and pre-professional education, knowledge of another part of the world and the development of habits of mind conducive to intercultural communication and international understanding should be an integral component.
- **Encourage learning by doing and through experience.** The importance of providing students with the opportunity to study in other countries cannot be overvalued. Programs that engage participants actively in the life of the country they are visiting—through study, living arrangements, research projects, service or work—can develop competence as well as knowledge.

Efforts are needed to make such opportunities available and feasible for the full range of U.S. students, including minority and low-income students and pre-professional, science and technology students. The rich diversity of American communities and the presence of foreign students and scholars on college and university campuses provide additional opportunities for students to engage with people of other cultures and nationalities.

- **Take full advantage of technology.** In addition to the wealth of curricular materials for classroom use and professional development, the Internet makes possible virtual international exchanges, connecting individuals and classrooms around the world. This is an area where innovation is taking place. Systematic study of the use of technology versus other methods of instruction, perhaps using cross-cultural awareness as a measure of impact, could be used to identify best practices. The challenge is to integrate these resources so that they have a sustained impact on teaching and learning.
- **Start with the teachers.** Globally aware, internationally knowledgeable teachers are the key to all of these strategic opportunities. Study abroad and other professional development opportunities are important for teachers working today. For new prospective teachers, global and international perspectives need to be integrated into the liberal arts component of teacher education.
- **Support the development of an international education policy.** During the Cold War, the federal government made substantial investments in international and area studies, but in recent decades, international education has not been a priority. NAFSA: Association of International Educators and the Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange has recently proposed the development of an international education policy, which provides a starting point for consideration.<sup>15</sup>

**Summing Up.** Given the many initiatives in both K-12 and higher education, the meeting concluded with discussion of opportunities for funders, large and small, to advance the integration and institutionalization of programs designed to strengthen American understanding of the world. Participants urged foundations to break down their own barriers between domestic and international programs, the latter currently constituting only 11 percent of foundation funding. A more integrated approach to education funding was also urged. Rather than focusing on elementary and secondary edu-

cation or higher education independently, foundations concerned about global education and international studies should think in terms of the progression from kindergarten to graduate school.

As with other areas, participants suggested that foundations can make a significant contribution to the movement for international education by focusing on data collection, capacity building, identification of best practices, dissemination, and evaluation. Systematic data on the response of K-12 education to globalization are especially needed, to complement the ACE study of higher education. In conclusion, participants encouraged a continuation of the discussion and exchange of ideas and information initiated at the meeting.

## NOTES

- 1 A list of participants is attached as the Appendix.
- 2 H. Thomas Collins, Frederick R. Czarra, and Andrew F. Smith. "Guidelines for Global and International Studies Education: Challenges, Cultures, and Connections." *Social Education* 62(50), 1998, pp. 311-317.
- 3 "Touch the Future: Transforming the Way Teachers are Taught: An Action Agenda for College and University Presidents." Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1999.
- 4 Peter W. Stanley. "At Home in Our World: The Place of International Studies in Liberal Arts Colleges." *Distinctly American: A Residential Liberal Arts College*. Eds. Steven Koblik and Stephen R. Graubard (Rutgers University: Transaction Press, 2000).
- 5 The following points draw on the meeting of January 21 and Stanley, op. cit.; *Crossing Borders: Revitalizing Area Studies*. Ford Foundation, 1999; Peter A. Hall and Sidney Tarrow. "Globalization and Area Studies: When Is Too Broad Too Narrow," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 23, 1998, p. B4; Louis W. Goodman, Kay King, Nancy L. Ruther. *Undergraduate International Studies on the Eve of the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs, 1994.
- 6 *Crossing Borders*, p. xii.
- 7 Richard D. Lambert, *International Studies and the Undergraduate*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1989.
- 8 Richard D. Lambert, "The Winds of Change in Foreign Language Instruction," *International Educator* VIII (Spring 1999).
- 9 "Toward an International Education Policy for the United States," NAFSA: Association of International Educators and The Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, November 22, 1999, found at [www.nafsa.org/int-ed/policy](http://www.nafsa.org/int-ed/policy).
- 10 Stanley, op. cit., pp. 9-12.
- 11 "Foreign Students Continue to Flock to the U.S.," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 10, 1999, pp. A57-58; "Toward an International Education Policy for the United States," cited above.
- 12 Stanley, op.cit.
- 13 "2-Year Colleges at Crest of Wave in U.S. Enrollment by Foreign Students," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 11, 1998, p. A66; "Community Colleges Look Abroad," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 26, 1995, p. A39; Building the Global Community: The Next Step, Report of a Conference Sponsored by the American Council on International Intercultural Education and The Stanley Foundation, November 28-30, 1996; "NEW EXPEDITIONS: Charting the Future of Global Education in Community Colleges," <http://199.75.76.16/ubutuatuves/newexpeditions/poaciie2>.
- 14 "Business Schools Promote International Focus, but Critics See More Hype Than Substance," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 12, 1997, p. A14, and October 24, 1997, p. B3.
- 15 "Toward an International Education Policy for the United States," cited above.

APPENDIX: Participants, January 21, 2000 Meeting

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