

# International students and global education sociology essay



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There is a widespread recognition and belief that our increasingly interconnected and interdependent global society mandates that students be educated to develop habits of the mind that embrace tolerance, a commitment to cooperation, an appreciation of our common humanity, and a sense of responsibility. The international students are the future leader of tomorrow. Understanding global issues is critical to the students across the global as they endeavor to promote democratic principles and social justice, improve our economic competitiveness, and provide leadership in the future. However, not enough is being done in public schools and classrooms to expose students to global issues. Research shows that most American students lag behind their peers in other countries in their knowledge of world geography, foreign languages, and cultures ( National Geographic-Roper, 2002). Our curriculum must undergo a paradigm shift recognizing that in order to be truly globally competitive; our teachers must be globally competent. Educating young people to become global citizens will allow them to learn about the interdependence of the world's systems, believe that solutions to global challenges are attainable, and feel morally compelled to confront global injustices and take responsible action to promote a just, <https://assignbuster.com/international-students-and-global-education-sociology-essay/>

peaceful and sustainable world. If we truly aspire to have a world-class education that connects and recognizes that what we do affects other humans in the world, we must engage with the world. The challenges that face the world today—from global poverty and climate change to financial systems and conflict—require globally-minded solutions (O’Meara, 1997). Knowledge of these skills is necessary so that young people can invent a future that appropriately addresses global challenges.

These young international students must gain global competence in addressing international issues as well as gaining the ability to work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Teaching for global connectedness should be grounded in the personal experiences of the student and her/his community. Teachers must be able to help students to connect global issues with daily life experiences. According to Ryan and Durning (1997) students ought to consider the impact of their daily consumption (and garbage) on the lives of other people and places in the world; the consumption of coffee, newspapers, t-shirts, shoes, car, computer, hamburger, french-fries and cola are traced from their origins through the inequities of the production process to the consequences of waste products. Teachers must approach global education from different perspectives, says Merry Merryfield, associate professor of social studies and global education at The Ohio State University. For example:

...” some teachers have the rationale that, in order to compete in a global economy, students need a global perspective...but others want to make the world a better place in terms of the environment and social justice. Still others want to promote cross-cultural understanding.” Each of these is a <https://assignbuster.com/international-students-and-global-education-sociology-essay/>

valid approach, says Merryfield, as long as teachers emphasize multiple perspectives and global interdependence” (Rasmussen, 1998, p. 2).

Teachers also need to have the competences they are trying to teach students. Our college preps do not prepare teachers to be globally competent. Understanding global issues makes teachers more apt to guiding students in the global challenges that face their countries of origin. Given the fragile state of the world and the level of continued destruction, more emphasis should be given to preparing students to become stewards of the earth and participants in democracy for global social justice. Authentic learning occurs when students from diverse cultures meet and work together, especially when they have equal status and collaborative goals that have meaning in their lives (Johnson & Johnson, 1992). Global educators find ways to increase their students’ experiences with people different from themselves through work with international students from local universities, immigrant organizations in the community, service learning projects, exchanges through e-mail or videos, and taking students overseas (Wilson, 1993). In a 10th grade world history, a unit on the Middle East, some teachers may motivate students by presenting exotic images-such as the harem, polygamy, belly dancing, Arab sheiks, and camel races-and may fail to challenge students’ comments that stereotype all Arabs as supporters of terrorism or all Arab women as having few rights. But Global educators, however, purposefully address stereotypes and challenge the exotic images and misperceptions that students bring with them into the classroom. They develop lessons to replace misinformation with knowledge of the complexity of cultures, cultural conflicts, and global issues. To begin a unit on the Middle

East, for example, a global educator asks students to brainstorm what they know about Muslims, Arabs, and the Middle East and then immediately addresses common misperceptions. When students confuse the terms Arab and Muslim, the teacher helps students map where Arabs live and introduces primary sources for students to differentiate diverse Arab cultures and the Muslim world (Said, 1997). Said (1993) ideas on how Europeans constructed the “ Orient” can help students recognize the exotic images of the Middle East in popular media, entertainment, and textbooks, and distinguish them from the materials that people of other countries have posted on the Internet and what local Egyptian, Lebanese, and Iranian students say about their lives back home. In developing an appreciation of the complexities within other cultures, students learn to challenge sweeping generalizations, misinformation, and stereotypes.

## **Global Challenges**

### **Sustainable development and climate change**

People all over the world are struggling with problems of a magnitude no other generation has faced. Even in the most affluent nations, millions of people suffer from hunger, homelessness, and unattended health problems. Sach (1995) opines that wars, civil conflicts and invasions take the lives of millions more. “ Global changes in the climate are creating severe local weather conditions, destroying lives and property. Well intended projects continue to despoil the land, water and air” ( Sach, 1995 p. 7). Millions of tons of hazardous waste generated by industrialized countries are exported to non-industrialized areas of the world without regard to the health and environment consequences. Jacobson (1991) says that over three billion

pounds of pesticides a year are used globally causing “ human poisonings, harm to fish and wildlife, livestock losses, groundwater contamination, destruction of natural vegetation, and more pests resistant to pesticides” (Jacobson et al, 1991, p. 45). Deforestation, soil erosion, destruction of habitat, extinction of species, and depletion of aquifers are but a few of the many attacks on our planet. While natural resources are stripped from the earth, new “ species” are genetically engineered by corporations for profitability and monopolized through complex international patent laws with few constraints for releasing them into the environment. According to Shiva (1997) ancient knowledge of plants and animals, and even human genetic material, are stolen from indigenous peoples and used to generate wealth for a few while the cultures which generated the knowledge are decimated. As these examples demonstrate, human rights and environmental issues are clearly intertwined.

A country like Kenya is a prime example of not providing an economic infrastructure to meet the subsistence needs of the communities in the northern part of the country and creating man made famine. Countries with hungry people export grains or feed them to livestock for export. Millions of jobs are eliminated by technology or runaway factories as CEO salaries skyrocket. While the United Nations ratified a Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, more than 250 million children are forced into labor (Sanders, 1997). Enormous resources are wasted on the production of guns and weapons of mass destruction as social programs and education funds are drastically reduced. Projects to solve one problem have created other problems. McMichaels (1993) observes that dams, viewed for decades as

creating “ clean energy and providing irrigation, are responsible for destroying the means of subsistence for millions of people who are forced to relocate their homes” (McMichaels, 1993 page 36). Altering the natural flow of rivers, these dams flood millions of hectares of arable land, create conditions for water born diseases and prevent fish from spawning. Aquaculture, heralded as the answer to declining fish and shrimp populations, is despoiling the habitat of other species.

The primacy of profit maximization over all other values is the core of both social and environmental problems. Nations and nature are being restructured to meet this primary goal, not to meet the needs of ordinary people or to ensure a sustainable environment. The problems created are global, with consequences for many different countries and communities. For example, when U. S. companies move plants and jobs to other countries to take advantage of cheaper labor, they leave economic devastation in local U. S. communities and undermine the existing economies in the new locations. At the same time, they take advantage of less stringent environmental policies in other countries that allow them to pollute more freely or to use chemicals banned in the United States. Sometimes, these chemicals return to consumers in the U. S. in the imported products. Global problems necessitate going beyond national borders to embracing the concept of global citizenship. By learning how global issues affect individual and community lives, how and why decisions are made which affect the planet and life on it and, most importantly, means by which the future can be influenced, global education can prepare students to become socially responsible international citizens.

## **The empowerment of women**

Empowerment of women has been one of the strongest drivers of social evolution over the past century, and many argue that it is the most efficient strategy for addressing the global challenges in this chapter. Only two countries allowed women to vote at the beginning of the twentieth century; today there is virtually universal suffrage, the average ratio of women legislators worldwide has reached 19.2%, and over 20 countries have women heads of state or government. Patriarchal structures are increasingly challenged, and the movement toward gender equality is irreversible.

With an estimated control of over 70% of global consumer spending, women are strongly influencing market preferences. Analysis shows a direct interdependence between countries' Gender Gap Index and their Competitiveness Index scores and that Fortune 500 companies with more gender-balanced boards could outperform the others by as much as 50%. Yet the Gender Equity Index 2010 shows that significant differences still remain in economic participation and political empowerment.

Gender stereotyping continues to have negative impacts on women around the world, and although progress is being made on closing the gender gap in terms of establishing global and national policies, real improvement will only be achieved when conflicts between written laws and customary and religious laws and practices are eliminated. Environmental disasters, food and financial crises, armed conflicts, and forced displacement further increase vulnerabilities and generate new forms of disadvantages for women and children.



Women account for over 40% of the world's workforce, earn less than 25% of the wages, and represent about 70% of people living in poverty. An OECD survey found that women spend more time on unpaid work than men do worldwide, with the gap ranging from 1 hour per day in Denmark to 5 hours per day in India. FAO estimates that giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17%, or 100-150 million people. Child malnutrition levels are estimated to be 60% above average where women lack the right to land ownership and 85% above average where they have no access to credit. Microcredit institutions reported that by 2010, nearly 82% (about 105 million) of their poorest clients were women. However, many of their businesses are too small to transform their economic status, points out FEMNET.

Empowerment of women is highly accelerated by the closing gender gap in education. Most countries are reaching gender parity in primary education, and 50% of university students worldwide are women. Yet regional disparities are high, and UNESCO estimates that women represent about 66% of the 796 million adults who lack basic literacy skills. Although the health gender gap is closing, family planning and maternal health remain critical. Determining the size of the family should be recognized as a basic human right, and more attention should be given to women's health and social support for affordable child care worldwide, including industrial countries, which are facing demographic crises due to low fertility rates. Of the more than 500, 000 maternal deaths per year, 99% happen in developing countries, with the highest prevalence in Africa and Asia due to

high fertility rates and weak health care systems. Unless providing effective family planning to the 215 million women who lack it is seen as a key component of development, the UN goal to reduce maternal mortality to 120 deaths per 100, 000 live births by 2015 will not be achieved.

Regulations should be enacted and enforced to stop female genital mutilation, which traumatizes about 3 million girls in Africa each year, in addition to the 100-142 million women worldwide affected by it today. While the prevalence of this in Egypt, Guinea, and some parts of Uganda is at over 90%, communities in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and even in the EU are also affected.

Violence against women is the largest war today, as measured by death and casualties per year. While the proportion of women exposed to physical violence in their lifetime ranges from 12% to 59%, a function of region and culture, sexual assaults remain one of the most underreported crimes worldwide, continuing to be perpetrated with impunity.

According to UNODC, 66% of the victims of the \$32 billion global industry of human trafficking are women and children. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, has 142 parties and 117 signatories thus far, but it has yet to be adopted and enforced by some key countries.

Female vulnerability increases during conflict, when sexual violence is often used as a weapon. Recovery from conflict and disaster should be used as opportunities to rectify inequalities. Nevertheless, women make up only 8% of peace negotiators, and only 25 countries have developed National Action <https://assignbuster.com/international-students-and-global-education-sociology-essay/>

Plans supporting UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's protection in conflict and participation in peace processes.

## **Reduce the gap between rich and poor?**

The world needs a long-term strategic plan for a global partnership between rich and poor. Such a plan should use the strength of free markets and rules based on global ethics to combat poverty. Conventional approaches to poverty reduction (technical assistance and credit) that work in low- and middle-income stable countries do not work in fragile countries, which need stability first. “ Ethical market economies and systems require improved fair trade, increased economic freedom, a level playing field guaranteed by an honest judicial system” with adherence to the rule of law and by governments that provide political stability, a chance to participate in local development decisions, reduced corruption, insured property rights, business incentives to comply with social and environmental goals, a healthy investment climate, and access to land, capital, and information. Direction from central government with relatively free markets is competing with the decentralized, individualized private enterprise for lifting people out of poverty (Hersh and . Paterson, 1994 pages 93-94)

An alternative to trying to beat the brain drain is to connect people overseas to the development process back home by a variety of Internet systems. According to UNDP, if the WTO eliminated agricultural export subsidies, developing countries would gain \$72 billion per year, according to UNDP. Structural imbalances in world trade have to be corrected to assure fair competition, respect of human rights, and labor and environmental standards, as well as efficient management of the global commons and <https://assignbuster.com/international-students-and-global-education-sociology-essay/>

prevention of monopolies. China's monetary policy adjustments could help other countries' economic development and access to world markets.

International students must be exposed to these issues and offer possible solutions in a project oriented instruction. Also as a resource, the native students from these countries provide a rich understanding of how the issues affect their lives. Australia has set up a recruiting structure that gives international students scholarships with a pledge that these students will work in Australia for five years after graduation before returning to the mother country. Relationships are being developed to foster cooperation and understanding. The case study of such programs would enhance students understanding of international connectedness as international students. They can learn that the human experience is an increasingly globalized phenomenon in which people are constantly being influenced by transnational, cross-cultural, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic interactions. It is therefore important international students begin developing a deeper understanding of the world's economic, social, and political issues.