



No. 4, June 2009

Reforming Pre-Service Education to Fit the Times and Shape the Future

Edward A. Kolodziej
Director, Center for Global Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

What's the Problem?

American education faces two long-term, formidable imperatives. The first is to invest a population with the skills to compete in a global economy and to apply these skills to solve the many and multiplying problems confronting the nation and the peoples of the globe. We expect our schools to furnish these skills and understanding of the world. So far reports on this front have been disappointing. Successive national surveys reveal that K-12 students lack the basics of history, geography, economics, mathematics and science. They are falling behind their peers in other countries around the globe.

The second imperative has only recently surfaced to public consciousness. It is far more daunting. It involves human will and the transformation of values rather than simply mastering traditional skills or acquiring knowledge to address the challenges confronting humanity today. These range from terrorism to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global warming, sustainable economic growth, the globe's diminishing capacity to carry by 2050 nine to ten billion inhabitants, and the continuing denial of human rights and minimal material means to billions of people.

President Barack Obama underscored this second imperative in his address to the graduating class of Notre Dame University in May 2009. The President allowed that "no one person, or religion, or nation can meet these challenges alone. Our very survival has never required greater cooperation and understanding among all people from all places than at this moment in history."¹

Global warming illustrates the twin imperatives of imparting basic skills to students and knowledge about how a world of diverse and divided peoples works. Under United Nations auspices, scientists around the world have made a compelling case for global warming.² That's the easy part. Doing something to avoid or ameliorate its damaging effects—floods, droughts, famine, diseases, diminishing biodiversity—will be harder.

Cobbling together a global coalition to effectively stanch greenhouse gases must be mediated through the resistant material of the world's contending

About the Center for Global Studies

The Center for Global Studies globalizes the research, teaching, and outreach missions of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Since 2003, the Center has been designated as a National Resource Center in Global Studies under the Title VI grant program of the U.S. Department of Education.

Globalizing Missions of the Center

- Promote and support innovative research to better understand global issues confronting the world's populations and identify ways to cope with and resolve these challenges.
- Partner with faculty and disciplinary units to develop new courses and degree programs in global studies.
- Facilitate deep understanding of the values, thinking, practices, and aspirations of the world's diverse cultures, and the acquisition of advanced language skills in Less Commonly Taught Languages.
- Develop teaching resources, professional training opportunities, and public programs in global studies for researchers, educators, students, business leaders, media, governmental agencies, civic organizations, and all members of the public concerned with understanding and solving global problems.

For more information, please visit our website at: www.cgs.uiuc.edu, send an email to global-studies@illinois.edu, or call 1-217-265-5186

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/17/obama-notre-dame-speech-f_n_204837.html.

² United Nations Environment Programme. Global Environment Outlook: environment for development (GEO-4) <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>



About the Author



Edward A. Kolodziej is the Director of the Center for Global Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, a National Resource Center in Global Studies under Title VI of the Department of Education.

Professor Kolodziej also served as Head of the Department of Political Science (1973-77) and is Research Professor of Political Science (Emeritus). He is a co-founder and served as the first Director of the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security (1983-1986). He was previously a faculty member at the University of Virginia (1962-73) and served as Chair of the Department of Government and Foreign Affairs (1967-69).

Professor Kolodziej has written or edited eighteen books and monographs on security, foreign policy, and international relations theory. His latest book, co-edited with Roger Kanet, *From Superpower to Besieged Global Power: Restoring World Order after the Bush Doctrine's Failure* (University of Georgia Press, 2008), is the lead publication in a new series on problems in global politics. He is currently working a volume developing a theory of global governance.

Professor Kolodziej has contributed more than 120 articles to professional journals and chapters to edited volumes, the latest, translated into Chinese, for *Public Administration and Policy Review* (Beijing 2007): "Global Studies Education for the Public Service," pp. 29-44.

peoples. The obstacles to cooperation are further compounded by issues of social equity, since those who contribute least to global warming—vulnerable populations in the developing world—are most adversely impacted by it.

Cooperation will have to be negotiated, as Bill McKibben reminds us, "between industry and environmentalists, between Chinese and Indians and Americans and Germans." Lost in this crossfire of contesting parochial perspectives is humanity's fate. Lost from sight is where negotiation should properly take place. The "real negotiation is between humans on the one hand and chemistry and physics on the other. And chemistry and physics, unfortunately, don't bargain."³

Educators must now add yet another burden to their already heavy load: sensitizing their students to the national, cultural, and religious, and ideological differences that deeply divide the world's populations and hinder the development of a sense of a shared humanity confronting common problems. William McNeill, globalization's leading historian, observes, that "real human consciousness can only be expected to arise after political and economic processes have created such a tight-knit human community that every people and polity is forced to recognize its subordination to and participation in a global system."⁴

However much a humanity is divided against itself, the entangling interdependencies of its discrete populations across all areas of human concern now subordinate them to a global system, whether acknowledged by its separate social elements or not. The challenge is to find ways to temper and to transcend these differences to get to the business of negotiating on behalf of humanity as a whole on whose preservation its several components depend for their survival. President Obama states the challenge clearly: "We must reconcile our ever-shrinking world with its ever-growing diversity—diversity of thought, of culture, and of belief."⁵

A Partial Solution: Reform Pre-Service Education

Only a second-to-none educational system can address the mutually reinforcing imperatives of educating a rising generation of Americans. Such a system must disseminate solid, tested knowledge, incorporate best teaching practices, reward creative, energetic instructors, and pursue—ceaselessly—nimble and innovative strategies, responsive to new national and global challenges and capable of imaginatively exploiting opportunities to perfect the system. That elusive virtuous circle has yet to be created.

Among the several necessary requirements for superior education in the 21st century is a reliable and responsive K-12 system of teacher education. That system in the U.S. currently produces a cadre of instructors of widely varying professional preparation, competence, sense of civic responsibility, knowledge of "the diversity of thought, of culture, and of belief of the world's populations,"⁶ and instilled passion for teaching. This mixed record of pre-service programs fails to meet national needs. The system has to be fixed—and fast.

Given the powerful and forbidding inertial forces resisting change, reforms will be hard in coming and scarcely assured. To start the process and to sustain it over the next generation, a well-funded and aggressively led national reform program of pre-service education must be launched and maintained over the initial education and professional careers of K-12 teachers.

3 Bill McKibben, "Can Obama Change the Climate?" *New York Review of Books*, LVI; No. 10, June 11, 2009, p. 40.

4 McNeill, William H. 1992. *The Global Condition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. x-xi

5 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/17/obama-notre-dame-speech-f_n_204837.html

6 *Ibid.*

To be awarded a professional certificate to teach in primary and secondary schools, instructors should meet two minimal but indispensable tests, both keyed to the educational imperatives that a relentless globalization imposes on the nation. First, all prospective K-12 professionals must acquire a basic grounding in the conceptual tools, analytic skills, and methods to prepare students for a global economy and to introduce them to the complex issues impacting on Americans and the world's populations. Knowledge of these issues must, in turn, be informed by the widely contesting ideas, values, and religious beliefs impeding humanity's collective address of these issues.

Professionals at the K-12 level must assume the role of global informational and knowledge entrepreneurs. That role combines two obligations: to keep abreast of the principal challenges confronting the nation and the world and to empower their students through understanding to confront them throughout their lives. The means and methods to convey these messages will necessarily vary with the disposition and preparation of the students. For some, formal lesson plans may work; for others, informal discussions, clubs, or service experiences may be more suited to the students' absorptive capacity.

No open society can survive and thrive unless its members can continually bridge the gap between public will as a *sine qua non* to support and legitimate national policies and an *informed public will* capable of developing and implementing effective policies responsive to national and global needs. Freely governed societies demand much of their citizens: like all societies they must not only solve real problems, but these solutions must also enjoy public support, struck in the coinage of accountability, transparency, and legitimacy.

Second, in this information age, all K-12 instructors must be computer literate, capable of using and teaching widely employed, standard application programs and skilled in the navigation tools of the internet. These skills (and their continual upgrading) would complement the foundational competencies possessed by these prospective professionals in teaching mathematics, the physical and biological sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts.

Reform of pre-service programs implies that these programs must increasingly be integrated into the larger educational networks of their colleges and universities. Those responsible for teacher training must assume a leading role in the development of the teaching, research, and outreach agendas of their academic and local communities. Isolation and insulation are no longer options either for those charged to educate teachers or for those responsible for the integrity of the academy's disciplines and professional degree standards. Members of both communities need to become much closer as partners in a shared educational commitment to contribute more effectively to the skill and knowledge needs of their students and, *ipso facto*, those of the American people.

To encourage reforms, tailored to the varied needs of the nation across locales and regions, and to resist the lure that that one suit fits all, a national competition should be organized, similar to the Department of Education Title VI process. Resourceful and innovative pre-service programs would compete for funds to reform their curricula to suit both national needs and regional constraints.

The several models of curricula reform, expected to emerge from these annual competitions, would be public goods. Pre-service programs everywhere could draw upon them in refining their curricula and in positioning themselves to compete for grants to facilitate reform. Put in motion would be an institutionalized, self-sustaining process of reform of K-12 pre-service education—a virtuous circle—to fit the times and shape the future.

Typology of Global Education Activities

Integrated Global Education: Global education occurs throughout the school's curriculum in each subject.

Issue-based or Subject-based Global Education: Global education that is limited to one specific issue, such as the environment, or is focused in one class or one segment of the curriculum.

Study Abroad: Students reinforce language learning with travel to a country where the language is spoken.

Electronic communication: Information exchange across cultures, via videoconferences on global topics, shared research, or social networking.

Electronic collaboration: Information exchange with follow-up action or tangible shared outcomes.

Foreign language: Language learning that includes core subject areas taught in the target language.

Service learning: Engaged learning in international settings.

Exchange students: Active enrollment and mainstream immersion of international students in the school.

Teacher exchange: Partnerships with international schools to share program strengths. Hosting school pays for visas, housing, support, and provides educational and social activities for a visiting teacher for a week or two. Participating teachers do some research and report to colleagues upon return.

Teacher travel: International study tours combine academic discussions with site visits and interactions with educators in the country.

Related Resources from the Center for Global Studies Library

Guzman, A. B., Rosa, P. S. M. d., & Arcangel, C. N. (2005). *The impact of globalization on teacher education: The philippine perspective*. (author abstract)

Hufford, L., Pedrajas, T., & World Council for Curriculum and Instruction. Triennial Conference. (2007). *Educating for a worldview : Focus on globalizing curriculum and instruction*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Townsend, Tony and Richard Bates (eds.). (2007). *Handbook of teacher education : Globalization, standards and professionalism in times of change*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

World council for curriculum and instruction - WCCI 13th world conference in education. Retrieved 4/3/2009, 2009, from http://wcci-international.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=28

Zajda, J. I., & SpringerLink. (2005). *International handbook on globalisation, education and policy research*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

If you are interested in submitting an essay for publication in the Policy Brief series, please contact Steve Witt: swwitt@illinois.edu (217) 265-5186.

Center for Global Studies Staff

Edward A. Kolodziej, Director

Steven W. Witt, Associate Director

Karen Hewitt, Outreach Coordinator

Lynne Rudasill, Global Studies Librarian

Annetta Allison, Office Manager

Graduate Assistants

Brent Fegley, Library and Web Assistant

Paolo Gujilde, Outreach Assistant

© 2009 The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. All rights reserved. The Center for Global Studies does not take positions on public policy issues. The views presented in Policy Briefs do not necessarily reflect the views of the Center for Global Studies.



International Programs and Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Center for Global Studies

303 International Studies Bldg.
910 S. Fifth St. MC-402
Champaign, IL 61820 USA
www.cgs.illinois.edu