

# The Warp and Weft of Glocalised Curriculum and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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# Introduction

In 2018 Brookings published a blog highlighting a tipping point of global significance. According to their calculations just over half of the world's population could be considered 'middle class' or 'rich'.<sup>1</sup> In an interview in January of this year, one of the authors of that blog, Homi Kharas focused on the pivotal role of the global middle class in geopolitics.<sup>2</sup> According to the World Poverty Clock, the impact of the global pandemic and the current regional conflicts may have slowed down, but have not reversed, the fact that more people are escaping poverty than falling into it.<sup>3</sup> Emerging from this burgeoning middle class has been a paradigm shift in the landscape of international education and the rise of the 'internationally-national school'.<sup>4</sup> In turn this has led to an identifiable shift in the implementation of 'hybrid' curricula.<sup>5</sup>

The weaving together of curricula is driven by a number of factors, not least the need to balance national curriculum requirements alongside local parental demand for international curriculum. This reflects a balancing act that we see playing out on a global scale with the shifting tensions between globalisation and regionalisation, presenting a complex interplay between global interconnectedness and potential cultural homogenisation, and regional efforts to maintain local identity, cultural distinctiveness and autonomy.

The concept of glocalised curriculum has emerged from this context as a dynamic approach that balances global perspectives with local contexts. Thinking global and acting

local has become the mantra for recognising the importance of contextual relevance, cultural authenticity and community engagement in shaping learning experiences. Fundamental to any curriculum however is the pedagogy that brings that curriculum to life and with that, the transformative power to engage, inspire and empower learners. This whitepaper explores the intricate relationship between glocalised curriculum and culturally responsive pedagogy as the warp and weft of the weaving act that international schools must now undertake to empower learners to navigate complex global issues, engage critically and effectively with diverse cultural perspectives and contribute meaningfully to their local and global communities.



<sup>1</sup> Kharas, H. Brookings, September 2018, [online] A global tipping point: Half the world is now middle class or wealthier. [Accessed June 2024]

<sup>2</sup> Kharas, H. Brookings, January 2024, [online] The Rise of the Global Middle Class. [Accessed June 2024]

<sup>3</sup> World Data Lab [online] World Poverty Clock. [Accessed June 2024]

<sup>4</sup> Pearce, S, April 2023, Internationally-national schools: A critical review of this developing sector and the frameworks that define international schools, Research in Comparative and International Education, Volume 18, Issue 3.

<sup>5</sup> ISC Research, February 2024, [online] White Paper: What data tells us about the international school market. [Accessed June 2024]

**“Thinking globally and acting locally includes critical thinking, communication, intercultural sensitivity, agency, and a sense of responsibility to be active and engaged global citizens. For us to be able to glocalise our curriculum and make sure all voices are heard, we need to reflect about our practices and explore our own frames of references.”<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>6</sup> Nieto. S, 2017, Re-imagining multicultural education: new visions, new possibilities, Multicultural Education Review, Volume 9, Issue 1.



# Reviewing perspectives

Jean Piaget's Three Mountains task is probably one of the better-known experiments to assess children's cognitive development with a specific focus on their ability to understand and take into account multiple perspectives. In the task, children are shown a model of three mountains each with distinct features. They are asked to select a picture that represents the view from the perspective of a doll situated at a different vantage point. Whilst there is significant academic debate about the research methods and the complexity of the task, it was the origin of the concept of decentering – the ability to conceptualise multiple perspectives simultaneously. This intertwining of perspective taking and cognitive development is fundamental to the success of any glocalised curriculum.

Sonia Nieto outlines how considering perspectives is key to helping educators to successfully implement glocalised curricula: "Thinking globally and acting locally includes critical thinking, communication, intercultural sensitivity, agency, and a sense of responsibility to be active and engaged global citizens. For us to be able to glocalise our curriculum and make sure all voices are heard, we need to reflect about our practices and explore our own frames of references."<sup>6</sup>

When implementing a glocalised curriculum, educators often focus on whether that curriculum is a mirror in which learners can see themselves, however Nieto's message is clear – we must first turn the mirror on ourselves. Examining our own perspectives, our cultural terms of reference, involves critically reflecting on the cultural beliefs, assumptions and values that shape our worldview and understanding of the world. What do we see when we look into this mirror: is it a case of the Emperor's New Clothes? Unless we are honest about our own frames of reference how can we be certain about whose cultural perspective we actually represent?

While social attitudes may be evolving, international educators must still consider the prevalence of the bias of the WEIRD

(Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) perspective in global education.

Emily Style wrote in 1988 that the curriculum should function 'both as window and mirror':

It is limiting and inaccurate to only educate our children provincially when they must live their lives in a global context, facing vast differences and awesome similarities. They must learn early and often about the valid framing of both windows and mirrors for a balanced, ecological sense of their place(s) in the world.<sup>7</sup>

We must engage therefore in the conversation between frames of reference: curriculum as mirror should enable learners to see their own reflection and curriculum as window to see the realities of others. If we add the 'sliding door' to that metaphor, we extend observation to action, from seeing another perspective to experiencing it. This links to the mirror, window and sliding door analogy from the work of Rudine Sims Bishop.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Nieto, S, 2017, Re-imagining multicultural education: new visions, new possibilities, Multicultural Education Review, Volume 9, Issue 1.

<sup>7</sup> Style, E, 1988, Curriculum As Window and Mirror, Listening for All Voices: Gender Balancing the School Curriculum.

<sup>8</sup> Bishop, RS, 1990, Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, Perspectives: Choosing and using books for the classroom, Volume 6, Number 3.

# Understanding glocalisation: Why it is important

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Originally introduced as a combination of the terms 'globalisation' and 'localisation' in the 1980s, glocalisation refers to the adaptation of universally global concepts and strategies to local markets and cultures. In an educational context, it refers to the curriculum considerations and pedagogical framing of local and global community connectedness in relation to social responsibility, justice and sustainability.<sup>9</sup>

**This approach ensures that both global and local perspectives are considered, allows for cultural diversity, and for students to make connections beyond their geographical borders.**

In a world where issues affect all of us in different ways, there is a strong argument for glocalising international curricula, which provides the opportunity to enrich students' learning experiences in a positive way. By translating world concepts into local settings, schools can develop the global competency and cultural awareness of learners. Educators should also consider how and why we teach diverse narratives across the curriculum in order to promote cultural diversity within schools.

This goes beyond the ubiquitous '5F's' approach to culture: flags, food, festivals, fashion and faces. It must be a transformative approach empowering learner agency and enabling learner action.

<sup>9</sup> Patel and Lynch, 2013, Glocalization as an Alternative to Internationalization in Higher Education: Embedding Positive Glocal Learning Perspectives in Higher Education, International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Volume 25, Number 2.

# Understanding culturally responsive pedagogy: What it is and what it is not

In her book, education consultant Zaretta Hammond emphasises the importance of understanding students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities in order to create effective learning environments.<sup>10</sup> She argues that culturally responsive pedagogy goes beyond surface-level diversity and requires educators to develop culturally responsive instructional practices that recognise and leverage students' cultural assets, language practices, and learning styles to promote academic success. Hammond provides practical strategies for incorporating culturally responsive teaching approaches into the classroom, such as building relationships with students, providing culturally relevant content, incorporating students' cultural funds of knowledge, and creating opportunities for collaborative learning and critical thinking.

Hammond outlines the four key components to culturally responsive pedagogy as: Affirmation, Validation, Cognition and Processing.<sup>11</sup> By recognising and accepting students' multiple identities, validating their experiences of the world, and using their culture as a reference point to help them understand concepts, teachers are able to transfer knowledge and skills more effectively,

therefore enabling students to better understand their place in the world. Hammond also emphasises that culturally responsive pedagogy is not about mastering a checklist of cultural competencies but an ongoing process of self-reflection, learning and growth that requires educators themselves to continually examine their own biases, assumptions and practices. It's not about token gestures without addressing systemic inequities and it's not about stereotyping or cultural tourism.<sup>12</sup>



## 4 key components:

Affirmation

Validation

Cognition

Processing

<sup>10</sup> Hammond. Z, December 2014, Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students.

<sup>11</sup> Hammond. Z, July 2012, [Online] Beyond Flesh-Colored Crayons: The Four Components of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. [[Accessed June 2024]

<sup>12</sup> International Curriculum Association, February 2023, [online] International Curriculum Specialist Series, Culturally Responsive Instruction with Zaretta Hammond, Season 2, Episode 3. [Accessed June 2024]

# What are the benefits of weaving together glocalised curriculum and culturally responsive pedagogy?

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## 1. Cultural Empowerment

A glocalised curriculum exposes students to diverse perspectives and experiences from both local and global contexts, thus enabling them to foster a sense of curiosity about different cultures and global issues. This helps learners to build their own understanding of world events, develop global competency, and equips them with the ability to think about values, take learning into the real world, value similarities and differences and practise cultural empathy. For example, a glocalised curriculum can involve literature studies that examine both local and international authors. This type of diverse representation has been linked to a variety of benefits for students, including more engagement and positive self-image, as well as an increase in empathy and understanding of cultural differences<sup>13</sup>

Diverse cultural perspectives in the curriculum can have a transformational impact on learning when combined with a pedagogical approach that validates and affirms cultural identity and promotes equity and inclusion, which works to emphasise both cultural competency and cultural empowerment.

## 2. Preparing learners for global citizenship

In the shifting landscape of globalisation and regionalisation, it is more important than ever to nurture and enhance students' cultural competence, critical thinking and

cross-cultural communication skills, and use these to work together against issues such as climate change, racism, economic injustice, and sustainability. Adopting a glocalised curriculum offers students the opportunity to practise these skills as they navigate real-life situations in their local context, since glocalisation has been shown to encourage the expressed commitment to engagement and action for change among glocal communities.<sup>14</sup>

## 3. Providing a relevant and authentic education

A glocalised curriculum strives to be both relevant and authentic by the integration of local examples, resources, case studies and real-world applications which echo learners' linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. When taught through a culturally responsive pedagogical lens, educators understand the importance of nurturing a relationship with, and having a social-emotional connection to, the student in order to create a safe space for learning. In this safe environment, students have the freedom to develop and explore their socio-political consciousness, defined by Skelley, Stephens and Anderson as "a personal awareness of the social, cultural, and political privileges and freedoms not available for some races, genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations"<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> The Education Trust, September 2023, [online] The search for more complex racial and ethnic representation in grade school books. [Accessed June 2024]

<sup>14</sup> Patel and Lynch, 2013, Glocalization as an Alternative to Internationalization in Higher Education: Embedding Positive Glocal Learning Perspectives in Higher Education, *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Volume 25, Number 2. [Accessed June 2024]

<sup>15</sup> Skelley, D, Stevens, M, Anderson, R, January 2020, Exploring Cultural Responsiveness in Literacy Tutoring: "I Never Thought About How Different Our Cultures Would Be", *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age*.

# What are some of the challenges of curriculum glocalisation and culturally responsive pedagogy?

Many schools around the world are situated in culturally diverse communities where the 'local' perspective may not easily be categorised. Any attempt, therefore, to glocalise a curriculum requires careful consideration of cultural nuances to avoid stereotyping or misrepresentation of local communities. In a PISA assessment of schools worldwide, teachers reported a high need for training in certain areas, such as teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings, teaching intercultural communication skills, second languages and about equity and diversity.<sup>16</sup> Professional development is therefore required to support teachers to address any implicit bias and build knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, it remains a challenge for education systems to create glocalised school environments that are accepting of diversity, multiculturalism, and immigrant students within a local context. For example, a report published in 2020 found that while Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children accounted for 34.4% of school-age students in England, only 0.7% of all GCSE students in England studied a book written by a person of colour.<sup>17</sup> Today's educators are faced with the task of developing and sourcing culturally relevant material and resources that accurately represent learners' linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds.

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<sup>16</sup> PISA, October 2020, [online] PISA 2018 Results (Volume VI): Are Students Ready to Thrive in an Interconnected World? [Accessed June 2024]

<sup>17</sup> Victoria. E, Lesley. NA, Chantiluke. R and Courtney. M, Penguin and Runnymede Trust, 2020, [online] Lit in Colour, Diversity in Literature in English Schools. [Accessed June 2024]



# How are schools addressing and glocalising their curriculum successfully?

## 1. Teaching diverse narratives

Developing students' ability to approach situations with flexibility and alter their responses according to different perspectives can be advantageous. Teaching diverse narratives of global and local events helps to promote positive interdependence between cultures and the development of students' own critical judgement. The International Curriculum Association (ICA) has pioneered a philosophy that offers a solid foundation for glocalising a curriculum and adopting a culturally responsive pedagogy, by offering globally competent learners the opportunity to explore issues and topics that are significant worldwide. The International Curriculum defines International Learning Goals that help learners on their journey to global and intercultural perspectives whilst developing the capacity to take action and make a difference. For example, within the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) all units of learning provide opportunities for learner challenge and choice within a task. One of the ways that choice is integrated is through the lenses of:

- **Home** country – where the learner was born/ has cultural roots
- **Host** country – where the learner is living now, where the school is located
- **Heritage** country – where the learner's family originates from
- **Adopted** country – where the learner chooses for comparison to the home/host/heritage

At the East-West International School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the school glocalised the International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC) in order to help older students understand the impact of global events in their own country. For example, while teaching a unit about the US bombing of Cambodia in the 1960s, the school adapted lessons to ask students to consider not only the motivations behind the US campaign, but also the impact of the events on the local population, and how residents adapted to the constant threat of bombing.

## 2. Developing inclusivity and sense of belonging

By glocalising a curriculum, schools are able to nurture a sense of belonging and inclusivity while also celebrating diversity within blended learning communities. One school to have achieved this is Jakarta Nanyang School, which is located in Indonesia, where the population is made up of a diverse range of cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds. To reflect this diversity, the school's Kindergarten leveraged the flexibility of the International Early Years Curriculum (IEYC) to teach its youngest students not only the central values to Indonesian culture, such as empathy, but also the traditional Chinese values of harmony and respect, due to many of its students having a Chinese background. The adaptable structure of the IEYC enables educators to choose which units they teach and how. For multicultural educational settings such as these, the ICA provides educators with guidance and resources for developing glocalised curricula tailored to diverse educational contexts.



### 3. Engaging with the local community to foster a stronger sense of identity

A globalised curriculum can also empower students to take action and make a change in their world by engaging with the community at different levels. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) symbolise the main issues that the world is facing around the globe as everyone strives for a better future. In the IPC, learners are given the opportunity to develop global competence through interesting and exciting challenges that are linked to each of the UN's 17 SDGs.



For example, while working on an IPC unit 'Different Places, Similar lives', Straits International School in Rawang, Malaysia enabled younger students to learn about organisations that help others and associate cause and effect related to global events and issues. The students found and contacted the charity 'The Lost Food', which works to save the 3,000 tonnes of edible food in Malaysia that is thrown away and wasted every day. Over a course of a few weeks, the children began to pay more attention to how much food they ate and wasted, encouraging one another to understand the concept of 'what we want, and what we really need'. The school then carried out 'The Food Drive', where food items that they didn't need or had nearly expired were rescued from their homes and donated to The Lost Food charity.





# Conclusion

In weaving together meaningful learning experiences, globalised curriculum and culturally responsive pedagogy are the warp and weft. Understanding and integrating learners' cultural backgrounds into both curriculum and teaching practices requires the fostering of a critical consciousness for both learners and teachers. The opportunities for learner challenge and choice through engagement with and participation in learning, the interactions between learners and teachers, the type of feedback and nature of assessment should all scaffold around the learners' cultural experience and prior knowledge.

In practice, this means deepening the level of cultural responsiveness and globalisation from a cultural tourist approach, that might include the incorporation of resources from cultures other than the dominant culture, through to structuring the curriculum so that it enables learners to view concepts and themes through a multiple perspective lens and empowers them to make decisions and take action from a multicultural perspective. As one student studying at Sanskriti International School, Nepal commented about their education: "Education unlocks the imagination and is fundamental for respect. The smallest of our actions have the power to bring immense change."

The International Curriculum Association (ICA) is an active, well-connected and global community of passionate educators who operate at the forefront of global education. It exists to Champion Quality, Improve Learning and Unlock Potential and has been supporting the development of educators and learners for over 30 years.

At its core is a comprehensive Model for Improving Learning. The Model encompasses a suite of dynamic and rigorous curriculum materials which foster exceptional learning experiences, as well as impactful professional development resources and a supportive and empowering Accreditation pathway.

To learn more, visit:

[internationalcurriculum.com](https://internationalcurriculum.com)



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