

# Establishing the need for cross-cultural and global issues research

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*More than any previous generation, today's students need to develop a global perspective and be knowledgeable about other nations in order to play a better role on the global stage. This paper first reviews some earlier and current studies on students' knowledge of the world, mainly conducted in the United States, and then it describes the global education status and similar studies in countries like Canada, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Based on a review of studies in these countries, the paper proposes that contemporary assessments of students' cross-national and global knowledge and attitudes are necessary. The new research must be multinational, assessing what paired nations' school aged populations know about one another's history, geography, politics, economics, and international relations.*

Global education, k-12, students, knowledge of the world, cross-cultural understanding

## INTRODUCTION

The compelling changes in our economy, the dawning of the information age, and the horrible events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath, have created an unprecedented need to focus on international knowledge and skills. To solve most of the major problems facing our country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require every young person to learn more about world regions, cultures, languages. (United States Secretary of State Collin Powell, 2003)

The terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 shocked and greatly impacted not only the United States but also the entire world. For the first time, perhaps since World War II, the American public is keenly interested in understanding more about the world that lies beyond their borders (States Institute Report, 2002). More than ever, there is the need for people all over the world to understand better the differences between people, nations, culture, religious beliefs, and values in order to live peacefully in this increasingly diverse but globalized world. More than ever, schools need to integrate global education into school curricula and throughout student school life to prepare them for the new challenges of the twenty-first century.

Attempts to infuse global education into the various states' and local school districts' social studies curricula of the United States can be traced to the late 1960s and early 1970s. The rise of advocacy for global education was doubtlessly caused by many factors such as advances in communication technology, increasing ease of world travel and improved transportation technologies, the growth of recognition of the transnational character of problems such as air

pollution and, perhaps most important, the growth of multinational corporations and world commerce.

Global education advocates realized that very little was known about the condition of students' cross-cultural knowledge,<sup>1</sup> so efforts were made to gather information that would substantiate the need for global education, portions of which are cited later in this paper. These data augmented other logical and rational efforts to persuade school districts and states to adjust their teaching to include more information about other nations and to offer greater treatment of global issues and themes.

Education systems and the condition of nation states and world affairs change over the span of a single decade, so much of the early research is now completely outdated. The importance of changing world trends increases the need for contemporary assessments of students' cross-national and global knowledge and attitudes. To be useful, new research must be multinational and comparative, assessing what paired nations' school aged populations know about one another's history, geography, politics, economics, and international relations. In addition, the inclusion of a global knowledge and issues scale that can provide a uniform basis for making comparisons among the many paired nation studies is needed. The following section of this paper first reviews some earlier and current studies on students' knowledge of the world, mainly conducted in the United States, and then it describes the global education status and similar studies in some countries like Canada, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Based on the studies in all these countries, the paper finally proposes that a contemporary and comparative assessment of paired nations' school aged populations' cross-national and global knowledge and attitudes is necessary.

### **EARLY STUDIES OF STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD**

Early research on children's cross-cultural knowledge and attitudes is often traced to a group of studies that attempted to discover how children viewed their own political and cultural identities at different ages and stages of development. For example, Piaget and Weil (1951) studied how Swiss children's ideas of their homeland developed and their conceptions of relations with other nations and revealed identifiable stages of development that ranged from early cognitive and affective egocentricity to objective understanding of other peoples. Hess and Tourney's (1967) early work on the development of political attitudes demonstrated, among other things, that schools played an important role in the development of attitudes and beliefs about the political system. They also concluded that children normally acquired rudimentary attitudinal attachments to their nation-state at a very early age and that by eighth grade most attitudes, concepts, and understandings important to political socialization were well established.

The first large scale study of children's cross cultural knowledge was conducted by Lambert and Klineberg (1967), who surveyed over 3,000 children, aged 6, 10, and 14 years, in 11 countries. Their research led them to conclude that children's early views of themselves greatly influenced their views of foreigners and that these views were often developed by comparing and contrasting views between themselves and foreign people. They noted the existence of exaggerated national loyalties and stereotypes of other nation's peoples. Younger children's predominant sources of knowledge were their own parents and television and movies but by later grades school experiences dominated as referents for their knowledge.

Eicher, Piersma, and Wood (1975) conducted a multi-state (Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota) survey of children's perceptions of the world, mainly China, India, and Nigeria. Their open-ended

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<sup>1</sup> We realize that cross-cultural knowledge is only one component of global education. However, it is an important component and, taken across, many nations, regions, and cultures, this knowledge provides the wellspring of specific facts and instances that support understanding of global issues, themes, and understandings.

survey of over 1200 children in Grades 1 through 6 simply asked students to tell (early grades) or write (upper grades) what they knew about these four referents. Among other things, the authors found evidence of Piaget's stages of intellectual development, with older students possessing more accurate and realistic views of the world than their younger counterparts. This pattern held true for the children's views of China, India, and Nigeria, though even older students still showed substantial misconceptions and stereotypes of these nations. Nigeria was the least understood nation. The investigators generally concluded that younger children mainly viewed the world in reference to their immediate environment and that they held the most inaccurate and limited views. Students showed more accurate knowledge of the world in later grades and television had a noticeable influence on their perceptions.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS), under a contract from the United States Institute of International Studies, United States Office of Education, conducted a survey of 1,728 students in Grades 4, 8, and 12. The survey items and sampling procedure was designed by ETS researchers and implemented in the fall of 1974 in 27 states. The survey assessed students' knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of China, Egypt, England, France, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Spain, and the United States. Knowledge questions were about evenly distributed between geographic, political, cultural, and economic information. Attitudes were assessed with semantic differential items and paired comparison items were used to measure cross-cultural perceptions. Overall, the investigators (Pike, Barrows, Mahoney & Jungeblut, 1979) deemed that their results showed substantial student illiteracy of world affairs. Data were obtained on the foreign languages students studied, relevant aspects of students' and teachers' backgrounds, the frequency and rank order of importance of the nations studied at each grade level and the extent of students' learning in each of the four knowledge areas. The investigators particularly noted the geographic illiteracy of students at all grade levels. However, there were weak performances across the board on the knowledge items, causing the investigators to conclude: "As illustrated in the preceding section, this study presents some powerful examples of the extent of student illiteracy in world affairs and gives some indication of how far we have to go" (p.15).

Following the lead of Lambert and Klineberg, Cogan (1984) conducted another study that provided cross-national paired comparisons, this time focusing on college students and only between the United States and Japan. His survey of Japanese college students' international and global knowledge and attitudes replicated a national survey of United States' college students (cited in Cogan, 1984) conducted in 1980 by the Council on Learning. Cogan noted that the U.S. study had shown, among other things, that teacher education students had the lowest scores of all majors and, "Perhaps even more disturbing, the students responses to the attitude and opinion scales shows a very limited and parochial view of the world". Cogan asked Japanese scholars to translate the U.S. survey into Japanese and then checked for accuracy of cross-cultural meaning by conducting a backtranslation into English from Japanese. The instrument had four major sections and took about two hours to administer. The four sections were: background information on the respondent; foreign language interest and use; attitudes about world issues; and knowledge of the world. Cogan found, among other things, that Japanese students outperformed their United States counterparts in knowledge by an average of about 10 per cent and that there were differences in both groups' attitudes, with the Japanese students being more altruistic and less chauvinistic. He reported, "The sum of this is that Japanese education majors...know more about the world in which they live than their U.S. counterparts" (p. 22).

Cogan's 1984 preliminary report of his research was followed by a deeper analysis that held further insights (Cogan, Torney-Purta, & Anderson, 1988). This research used regression analysis to investigate relationships among the items and variables that were included in the study and allowed the investigators to report a number of new insights in the data. Among other things, the investigators reported that students who had been admitted to better schools, students with higher aptitude test scores, those who had studied history and geography, and those who frequently read

international news had better knowledge of global issues. Japanese students tended to know more than American students about Asian religion, Chinese culture, international trade, nuclear issues, and international organizations. Kogan, Torney-Purta and Anderson (1988) also included information on a study of secondary school students in ten states of the United States that used many of the same test items to examine predictors of global awareness and concern. Among the conclusions reported from this study was that global awareness and concern were related to "school grades, reading international news in the paper, gender (boys performed better), number of years of social studies classes, foreign travel, and watching television news".

### **RECENT STUDIES OF STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD**

A few more recent studies continue to suggest that American students lack basic knowledge of other nations. Osunde's study (1996) reveals that American high school and university students know very little about non-Western nations, especially those of sub-Saharan Africa. Besides, students had developed stereotypes, misconceptions, and negative attitudes about Africa. A report given by Harvard University after a review of 30 years of undergraduate curriculum concluded that American students urgently needed more knowledge of international affairs (Report of Harvard University, 2004).

In June 2001, the National Commission on Asia in the Schools issued its report on American students' knowledge of Asia (Asia Society, 2001). The report found that despite the fact that Asia was the world's largest, most populous, and fastest-growing region, that while a majority of American students acknowledged Asia's vital role in the continued prosperity of the United States, in general, they lacked a rudimentary knowledge of Asia's geography, history, people or economic and political systems. Most students identified their teachers and schools as the principal source of information about Asia. However, it was also found that most teachers were not being prepared to help students to learn international knowledge because few non-western history courses were offered at American colleges, and Asian history was not required for a degree in history and a teaching certificate. Similarly, language instruction in the United States did not reflect the existing realities. Currently very few students studied Asian languages. The report concluded that young Americans remained dangerously uninformed about international matters, especially Asia, home to more than 60 per cent of the world's population (Asia Society, 2001).

A year after this study, in 2002, the National Geographic-Roper 2002 Global Geographic Literacy Survey polled more than 3,000 18- to 24-year-olds in nine countries including Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, and the United States (Roper for National Geographic Education Foundation, 2002). The survey found that United States students lagged behind their peers in other countries in their knowledge of geography and current affairs. While only 17 per cent of young American citizens could find Afghanistan on a world map, about 11 per cent could not even locate the United States on the map. Considering this survey was conducted in light of September 11, it was appalling that young Americans remained uninformed or ignorant of even basic knowledge of the world.

In the same year, Holm and Farber (2002) examined the geographic knowledge and global awareness of American upper-level undergraduate university students in a large teacher education program. Holm and Farber's study indicated a high degree of inattention, insularity, and lack of awareness among the prospective teachers. They argued that it would be like "teaching in the dark" if the pre-service teachers did not share geopolitical knowledge or develop global awareness, which has become increasingly important in an increasingly diverse world.

The most recent study was conducted by Clarke (2004) to investigate American students' global awareness and attitudes to internationalism in a world of cultural convergence. It surveyed a sample of 701 college students to ascertain their global awareness and attitudes toward

internationalism. The research found that college students had average levels of global awareness, and mixed beliefs about the United States' involvement with other countries.

### **UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL EDUCATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

The findings of previous studies clearly indicate that American students and teachers are not well-prepared in global education, and that it is critical that more efforts be made to foster both American students' and teachers' knowledge of other nations and promoting cultural and global understanding and awareness. American educators need to be aware of and knowledgeable about global education and about what American students know about other nations. It is equally important that we understand how other nations conduct global education to develop their students' cross-cultural and global awareness, and how well their students are informed of other nations in terms of history, geography, politics, economics, and international relations.

'Global education' is a commonly used term in the United States, yet the meaning of this term can come in varied forms in other countries, such as development education, global perspectives in education, intercultural education, world studies, international education, and education for international understanding. Great efforts have been made in many countries to include global education in their school curricula to promote students' global understanding and awareness. The following section aims to (a) explore the status of global education in countries including Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia; and (b) review possible research in these countries that report how well their students know about other nations.

#### **Global education in Canada**

Global education in Canada evolved with the funding provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (Tye, 2003). When the CIDA funding was eliminated, local sources have been funding global education programs in some provinces. The main purpose of global education in Canada is to integrate a global perspective into teaching and to instill a sense of global citizenship and increase global awareness of students.

Attempts have been made to infuse global education into Canadian social studies curriculum to help students better understand other nations. A study was conducted by Petrie, in New Brunswick, Canada in 1988 as an assessment of the impact of the Grade 9 social studies curriculum that had been developed by the New Brunswick Global Education Center. The test was administered to all 6,396 ninth grade students at the beginning and end of the 1987 school year. The first part of the test required students to locate countries on an outline map of the world and the second part measured particular aspects of Canadian geography, economics, and politics. The third part borrowed heavily from the ETS study and assessed students' knowledge of the geographic, cultural, political, and economic conditions in China, Middle East, Japan, India, Africa, Western Europe, and Latin America. The final portion of the study measured students' attitudes toward several global issues. Among other conclusions, Petrie (1988) reported that what teachers emphasized or neglected in their presentation of the curriculum directly influenced students' knowledge. Students were also apparently influenced by both print and television news. Significant increases in students' knowledge of specific countries were present when teachers confirmed that significant attention had been given to these nations. Petrie noted that students emerged from the year-long curriculum with a "more international... outlook," and that "the attitudinal changes represented by the results of the tests would appear to be those which are generally sought by proponents of global education" (p.16).

#### **Global Education in the United Kingdom**

Global education in the United Kingdom dated back to the early educational interest in world matters in the 1920s (Hicks, 2003; Holden, 2000; Ibrahim, 2005). This early interest led to the

well-known World Studies Project in the 1970s and 1980s. The conceptual framework of the Project, directed by Richardson influenced teachers in the United Kingdom to develop a global dimension in the curriculum. In the 1980s, the World Studies Project 8-13 was established and targeted children aged 8-13. The project had five themes: others and ourselves; rich and poor; peace and conflict; our environment; and the world tomorrow. By the mid 1980s, many schools in England and Wales adopted the World Studies 8-13 project (Holden, 2000). Another equally influential global education program was conducted by Selby and Pike at the Center for Global Education. Selby and Pike (Pike, 2000) were both influenced by Richardson's World Studies Project and their global education program focused more on secondary schools.

The world studies programs in the 1980s were attacked by conservative politicians in the United Kingdom (Hicks, 2003; Holden, 2000). Among the major criticisms, world studies projects were accused of indoctrination for giving one-sided views of the world. The conservatives pointed out that by building a global perspective into the curriculum, politics was brought into the classroom. The teaching methods were also under attack. The use of simulations and role-play were considered improper. The rationality of having world studies as a school subject was questioned. The conservatives believed that the world studies project lowered the educational standards for the schools that had used these projects. Later on, the term 'world studies' was replaced with 'global education', which implied an approach rather than a single subject (Holden, 2000).

A recent study reported by Davies, Evans, and Reid (2005) calls for a 'new global citizenship education' based on an analysis of the existing global education and citizenship education programs in England. Their study reviewed and compared the global education and citizenship education programs in United Kingdom during the last three decades and concluded that global education and citizenship education programs should be separate from each other. Instead they call for a "globalizing citizenship education".

### **Global Education in Russia**

Global education was not introduced in Russia until 1991 when the Russian Ministry of Education invited scholars both in Russia and the United States to establish a global education program in its national curriculum (Mehlinger, 1998; Tucker, 1991). The objectives of global education in Russia were as follows: (a) understanding the plurality of possible world outlooks; (b) understanding problems the world civilization faces; (c) developing abilities to accept positively other cultures, finding commonalities and differences when comparing cultures; (d) systematic and system thinking; and (e) active involvement in solving problems of community, country and the whole world (Kolker, Ustinova, & McEneaney, 1998; Mehlinger, 1998; Tucker, 1991). In Russia, global education was perceived as an approach to education that would help build a bridge between the nation's authoritarian past and the more democratic and open society of their future (Tucker, 1991; Mehlinger, 1998). Global education was also adopted as an approach to break down Russia's isolation of the twentieth century and enable them to participate more fully in the interdependent world of the twenty-first century.

While the United States and Russia share many geopolitical characteristics and are facing a similar challenge to integrate the nations' economies and cultures into the world community of nations in the post Cold War era, both countries view a joint global education program as a potential channel for collaboration. In fact, such a channel has surfaced between the two nations. Mason, Kruchkov, and Kilbane (1998) compared the global education programs integrated in the curriculum of two schools, one in Russia and one in the United States. The study found that there was considerable agreement between Russian and United States educators regarding the fundamental issues related to global education, but there were some differences as well. In terms of the purpose of global education, the Russian school seemed to emphasize the significance of a global perspective to the individual development of students while the American school focused more on the relational impact of the global curriculum (Mason et. al, 1998). Kolker et. al (1998)

were convinced that such an integrated global curriculum could promote comprehensive changes in education.

### **Global Education in the Asia Pacific Region**

A striking development in global education in the Asian Pacific area was the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Center for Education for International Understanding (APCEUI) by joint efforts of Asian governments and UNESCO in 2000. "Its major tasks are to conduct research, strengthen school curricula, create support in the civil society, train professionals, promote international exchanges, develop and disseminate educational materials and information, and encourage international cooperation and networking" (Tye, 2003, p.166).

The global education movement in Asia was launched by each nation and was intended to meet the urgent needs of the new century and to improve its relationship with other nations in this increasingly interconnected world. To a certain degree, this global education movement also reflected the efforts made by APCEIU. The following section addresses the global education status in a few Asian countries.

### **Global Education in China**

Tremendous changes have taken place in Chinese society since the late 1970s when China started the policy of opening up to the world and economic reform. Since then there has been a strong and growing concern for issues related to global education, such as global awareness, education for international understanding, environmental education, population, and globalization of economy (Tye, 2003). Global education has become a hot topic in China in recent years as China has endeavoured to improve its political and economic status in the world and achieve the goal of developing China into a powerful but peace-seeking nation.

Traditionally, knowledge of the world gained by Chinese students was mainly presented through the social studies curriculum, specifically, world history, world geography, and political science. Under current curriculum reform, world knowledge was presented through 'Morality and Society' at the elementary school level, 'History and Society' at the middle school level, and 'World History and World Geography' at the high school level. The new national curriculum standards stressed that one of the major goals of social studies was to help students develop global awareness, to understand and to respect different cultures in the world.

To help K-12 Chinese students to be more aware of global issues and implement this international understanding project, the Beijing Institute of Education conducted a survey of students' knowledge of global issues (Yu, 2002). This survey investigated over 2,000 middle and high school students in Beijing on their knowledge of: (a) world culture and history; (b) world religion and ethnicities; (c) world population, resources, and environment; and (d) peace and development. The research found that Chinese students, in general, lacked deep understanding of other nations' culture and history. While the majority of the students had a deep knowledge of the United States, their knowledge of Europe and other nations was poor. Students had some knowledge of world religions, yet this knowledge was incomplete and often biased. Most students understood the interrelationship between population, resources, environment and sustainable development, and they were concerned about global issues; however, their knowledge of environmental protection and some global issues was superficial and sometimes misleading. The research also found that Chinese students were resistant to learning about the Japanese culture because of the Japanese invasion of China during World War II and the history textbook controversy.

Another study was conducted to understand how Chinese students perceived America and what they know about America (Zhao, Zhou, & Huang, 2005). Over 100 high school students in three

regions of China were either interviewed or wrote an essay about their image and knowledge of America. The research found that although Chinese students had mixed feelings toward America, they possessed great knowledge of American culture, history, geography, and political and economic system. Media and social studies curriculum were reported as the major sources of their knowledge.

Besides the social studies and foreign language curricula, mainly English education in China is no doubt the most important way to expand students' world knowledge. As an international or a global language, English serves as a window for Chinese students to see the world, the key to accessing the western modern scientific and technological advances, and the most important way to communicate with both native English speakers and people from non-Chinese speaking countries. The major goal of English teaching in China is to help students to become capable of communicating in English and to obtain more knowledge about the world.

### **Global Education in South Korea**

Global education in South Korea can be traced back to 1960s, when the Korea National Commission of UNESCO (KNCU) tried to disseminate the value of peace. The most important role of global education in Korea was to help Koreans understand the local and global contexts in which Koreans lived (Savolainen, 2001).

Two important changes have taken place in the realm of education in South Korea in the past few years: one was the revised Curriculum that included "Education for International Understanding and Peace Education" (EIU) as an elective course at high schools in 2001, and another was that the South Korea Ministry of Education started to implement the New Approach for Unification Education (Chung, 2000). The revised curriculum mandated that the course covered a series of topics and programs, including democratic citizenship education, environmental education, education of information and its ethics, and education for international understanding, cooperation and peace (South Korean Ministry of Education, 1998).

Currently, global education in South Korea is mainly conducted through the social studies curriculum, especially world history and world geography. The general goal of world history is to help students: (a) understand the development process of civilization in world history; (b) recognize Korean status in the world through learning the process and characteristics of the formulation of modern society; (c) understand, analyse, and interpret historical materials to synthesize and evaluate the world history; (d) analyse the decision making process in history and apply the process to the solution of problems in current society; and (e) understand historical conflicts and their resolutions, and participate actively in solving problems shared by whole human races. However, modern and contemporary world history in South Korean addresses more Western history than Eastern history. This overemphasis on Western history results in ignorance of other cultures that do not belong to Western society (Zhao, Hoge, Choi, & Lee, 2006).

The national goal of world geography also tends to help students understand the world through investigating the characteristics and the change of these countries based on basic knowledge of geography, developing abilities to explore and solve local problems from the worldview; and cooperating with people in different countries (South Korean Ministry of Education, 1998). English education in South Korea is considered as an important way to obtain knowledge from other nations.

As in China, South Korean students are generally resistant to learning about the Japanese culture. The tensions between Korea and Japan still run deep. The root of these tensions stems from Japanese atrocities during its occupation of Korea for 36 years in the twentieth century and distortion of the historical issues regarding Japan's actions during World War II.



## Global Education in Japan

In Japan, the term ‘international education’ is more commonly used than ‘global education’. The concept of international education, as introduced by UNESCO, came to be known to the general public in 1954 when UNESCO adopted the recommendation concerning “education for international understanding and co-operation” and Japan adopted and promoted similar proposals to those of UNESCO (Sato, 2004). Since then this form of education has been called ‘Education for International Understanding’ in Japan.

Basically Japanese elementary students obtain their knowledge of the world through social studies and moral education. However, in both subjects, little world knowledge is introduced before Grade 5 and often the knowledge presented is heavily and explicitly value-laden (Sato, 2004). The main purpose of social studies and moral education is to help develop students’ attitudes to and ways of thinking about other countries and about Japan. In secondary schools, the major sources to gaining world knowledge continue to be the social studies and moral education curriculum.

International education in Japan may be popular and progressing, but in reality, the knowledge of and attitudes towards the world that are being structured in schools are very Western-biased (Parmenter, 1999). Knowledge and culture of Asia and other nations are largely ignored.

Education for international understanding in Japan emphasizes understanding various cultures of other countries and learning foreign languages. As in China and South Korea, foreign language education is highly valued. To a large extent, foreign language in Japan, China, and South Korea means learning English. Foreign language is a major school subject with an international perspective, however, the major goal of foreign language education in Japan is not international understanding or world knowledge, but the mastery of grammar and vocabulary necessary to pass examinations (Parmenter, 1999).

More than 50 years have passed since Japanese started its education for international understanding. However, Okuda’s research indicated that the education for international understanding in schools in Japan is far from satisfactory (Okuda, 1997). A positive development is that the new school curriculum now includes education for international understanding, and hopefully it can help Japanese students develop more knowledge of nations outside Japan.

## Global Education in Australia

Global education in Australia can be dated back to the development in education in the 1960s, when many educators became concerned about global issues and were committed to change or eradicate global poverty and inequality (Griffin, Woods, Dulhunty, & Coates, 2002). Later environmental education, peace education, education for human rights, and multicultural education were advocated and pursued in the school curriculum. Global education in Australia has been supported by the national government and many non-governmental organizations that have developed instructional materials for teachers. Global education in Australia has focused on ecology, social justice, human rights, economic, technological, and political interdependence (Tye, 2003). Generally, global education in Australian schools aims to help students to: (a) understand international development issues and ways to reduce poverty; (b) build peace and resolve conflict; (c) appreciate and value diverse cultures, languages and religions; (d) promote human rights and social justice; and (e) work towards environmental sustainability (The Australian Agency for International Development, 2005).

In the past, the curriculum used to be Western-oriented. However, in recent years the Australian Government and schools have largely recognized its regional position and its relation with Asian countries. This recognition has enhanced the international dimension in the Australian school curriculum.

The Assessment Research Center at the University of Melbourne conducted a survey of 7000 Australian students' knowledge and understanding of Asia (Griffin, Woods, Dulhunty & Coates, 2002). Primary and secondary students' knowledge and understanding was described in a profile that consisted of seven levels, including knowledge of historical, cultural and contemporary issues in Asia, understanding of the impact of Asian historical figures on traditional and contemporary practices, basic knowledge of symbols, food, customs, costumes, popular cultural artifacts and people. The research found that students' scores were distributed over the seven knowledge levels, although more secondary than primary students were grouped at higher levels. At primary and secondary school levels, girls tended to have more positive attitudes than boys towards Asia. Differences in the year levels were most evident at the extremes. Middle school students tended to have more negative attitudes towards Asia than primary students. However, it was unclear why there was such a difference in attitudes.

### A CALL FOR RESEARCH INTO ISSUES IN GLOBAL EDUCATION

It is pleasing to see that global education was addressed in almost all of these countries during past years and more international content, especially knowledge of Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and various global issues, has been increasingly presented in the school curricula. At the same time, many global education programs have been implemented in schools. Some countries, especially non-English speaking countries have put unprecedented emphasis on foreign language education to promote students' ability to communicate in English as well as their cross-cultural awareness and global understanding.

Despite the increase in global or international education, reviews of the research literature indicate that few studies have been conducted in recent years to examine the effectiveness of various global education programs implemented in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, and some Asian Pacific countries. Similarly, few studies have examined knowledge students in Grades K-12 of other nations in terms of their history, geography, political science, economy, and other global issues. This specific lack of research is the primary impetus for a call for research into issues in global education. More than any previous generation, today's students need to develop a global perspective and be knowledgeable about other nations in order to play a better role on the global stage. Knowledge from comparative studies of how well students of paired nations know about each other can surely help improve the global education programs in these countries and help teachers to prepare better students to face challenges in this culturally diverse and globally connected world.

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