Decoding The Global Competence Model

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ABSTRACT:

The primary aim of education is to create citizens of the future who would be change agents not just in their immediate contexts but also in the global context. Every learner today needs to be equipped with skills and competences that are globally viable and potent. It then becomes the responsibility of educational institutions to develop such global competencies in young learners. However the basic problem encountered herein is the lack of understanding of what would constitute global competencies. There have been several attempts to define global competencies and these definitions include significant aspects of the concept. There needs to be a comprehensive understanding of the concept that is grounded in research and survey and that fits into every era of society irrespective of the context. The understanding of the concept would help educationists frame concrete policies to incorporate it in the curriculum of schools and also of teacher education. The paper attempts to analyze Hunter's Model of global competence that is a result of research conducted on the same. The Model endeavours to give a comprehensive picture of the concept. In this paper I have tried to decode the model in order to understand its intricacies and interconnections. It is the totality of the model that educates us on global competencies.

Key words: global competence, education, Hunter's Model

With the dawn of the global era, educationists across the world would need to pay attention to the growing need of developing global citizens in the true sense of the word. A global citizen

is the one who would be able to break free from the narrow concepts of regionalism and exceptionalism and accept the ideas of internationalism and cosmopolitanism. With increasing demand for world class quality personnel, there is an increasing magnitude of mobility of individuals across borders. The world today faces challenges due to increasing demands on world citizens to go across borders and fulfill the needs of skilled and competent manpower in other countries of the world. It is therefore becoming necessary for educationists to think seriously about careful and conscious development of global competence among learners. The learners of today would be the citizens of tomorrow. It is therefore imperative to develop global consciousness and global competencies among the learners so that they would be able to become world citizens who are rooted in local culture and have a global outlook.

Defining Global Competence

There is no conclusive definition so far about global competence. It has been given various connotations by different groups of people across the world. There have been several definitions of Global competence and each one has included the aspects considered of utmost importance at that particular point in time. Hence it wouldn't be wrong to state that the definitions of global competence have been more contextual. Some of the definitions and explanations given about global competence are as follows;

- "An appreciation of complexity, conflict management, the inevitability of change, and the interconnectedness between and among humans and their environment. Globally competent citizens know they have an impact on the world and that the world influences them. They recognize their ability and responsibility to make choices that affect the future." - The Stanley Foundation (2003)

- "Having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside one's environment." - Hunter (2004)

- "A developed appreciation of other cultures and the ability to interact with people from foreign lands." Curran (2003). Curran suggested that global competence is the ability to become familiar with an environment, not causing a rift while experiencing something new, and reflection upon the experience at its completion.

- "The ability to communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic boundaries and to focus on issues that transcend cultures and continents" William Brustein, director of the University Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh (2003).

Still other researchers and practitioners have suggested that skills such as cultural awareness, willingness to communicate, ability to develop social relationships, and ability to resolve conflicts are the core of global competence. Global competence can thus be considered as an aggregation of the knowledge, attitude and skills required to live in harmony on the globe and function towards sustainable development. It is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance. It could be understood as the level of interest among individuals in global concerns that gets translated into proactive measures to develop greater insights into the dynamics of the globe and to take relevant, focused action on issues related to the same.

The Global Competence Model

Hunter in the year 2004 developed a model to explain Global Competence more comprehensively. The model highlights two very important aspects namely Internal Readiness Aptitudes or the attitude of an individual and the External Readiness Aptitudes or the capabilities to manifest the attitudes in actions towards global consciousness. It is an inside-out approach that emphasizes the significance of an internal driving force that would make individuals take proactive initiatives towards better understanding of the globe.

The Model comprises of four concentric circles as seen in Fig 1, that moves from the innermost core of an individual to the external necessities of global competence. The inner two circles comprise competencies for Internal Readiness Aptitude, while the outer two comprise the competencies for External Readiness Aptitude. The Model indicates a necessary progression from the innermost circle to the subsequent circles.
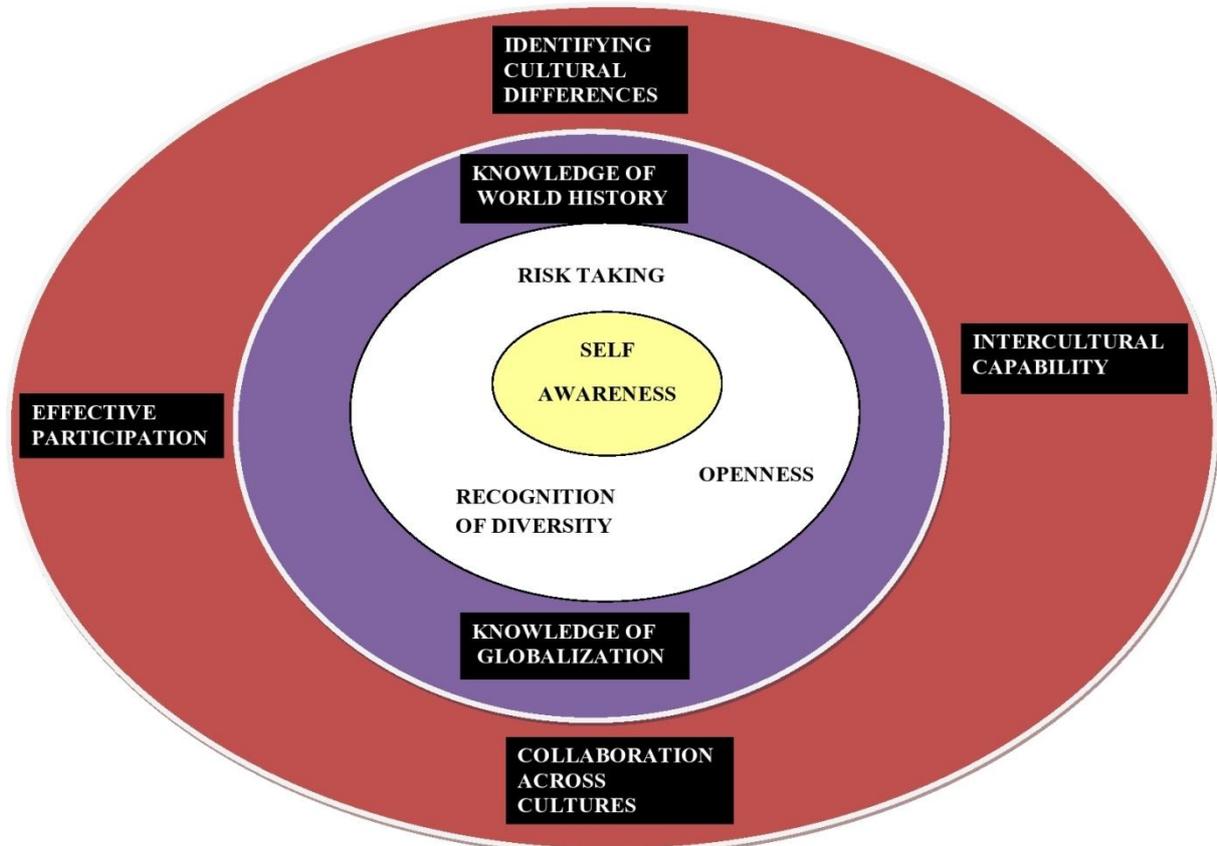
Fig.1. Global Competence Model developed by Hunter (2004)

Internal Readiness Aptitudes

This readiness includes a very basic necessity for any activity and that is an attitude to understand global concerns and issues. The aptitudes mentioned herein would be the initial requirements for the development of global consciousness. The aptitudes included are as follows;

Self Awareness

This is at the core of all global competences and it implies knowing one's own self and having an awareness of one's own identity. Knowledge of one's own culture, its details, its beauty, its customs, its richness and how one fits into it is imperative before even attempting to understand cultures of the world. It is important to check how one relates to one's own community as well as other communities; what one's own stand towards other cultures is and; what one prejudices and biases regarding peoples of different communities is. The results of Hunter's study noted that the most critical step in becoming globally competent is for a person to develop a keen understanding of his/her own cultural norms and expectations:

a person should attempt to understand his/her own cultural box before stepping into someone else's. An objective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals in terms of global attitude, global awareness and global skills is essential to consider the other aspects of global competence. Thus self awareness is at the core of global competencies.

Risk taking

This aspect implies the attitude of an individual to willingly take risks to gain experiences of other nations, cultures and contexts. It could include participation in multicultural affairs courses or cross-cultural simulations, directly experiencing cultures outside one's own box (which can include study abroad, but can also be accomplished locally by visiting unfamiliar cultural surroundings) and by extensive foreign language training.

Openness

This implies an intrinsic motivation and eagerness to learn about cultures and communities in order to develop a greater understanding about them. All biases and prejudices are kept aside and learning is acquired more objectively with a quest for authentic and accurate data. The individual goes through all sources to gather more information and does so for knowledge sake and not to create further divisions. The individual has non-judgmental reactions to the insights and awareness acquired about other cultures.

Recognition of diversity

Individuals have to be make efforts to recognize the diversity existing in the world and the factors responsible for the same. The diversity is not only to be identified but also to be understood from the socio-political and cultural contexts. This understanding would have to lead to an acceptance of diversity and live in harmony with the citizens of the world.

The above aspects of the internal competencies that are indicators of global competencies include a disposition to understand global citizens, global affairs and global dynamics. It pertains to the intrinsic motivation in individuals to make deliberate and conscious efforts to unconditionally know, understand and accept the diversity in the world. It is an analysis of one's own patterns of thinking regarding the "others" in the global society.

External Readiness Aptitudes

Development of an attitude towards global understanding would just be the beginning of the journey towards global consciousness. To be thoroughly equipped in order to make a positive

difference to the world, a learner needs to make use of external resources. It is all about using the external world to understand it better and act in it meaningfully and purposefully. The aptitudes that Hunter includes herein are as follows;

Knowledge of World History

Every country has its own History and this has had several implications on world history. Most political and economic relations of the world today are the result of the equations built up over the years. The success and failure of dynasties, rulers and nations have a direct bearing on the socio-political scenario today. The treaties and resolutions of the past have influences on the present conditions of individual nations as well as the globe. The battles, wars and revolutions have left deep impacts on people leading to present day social, political and economic relations. Global competence therefore would include knowledge of world history in order to have deeper insights into global affairs.

Knowledge of Globalization

Research conducted by Hunter, noted that in order to become globally competent, one must establish a firm understanding of the concept of globalization and its implications on society. It is here that the recognition of the interconnectedness of society, politics, history, economics, the environment, and related topics becomes important. This knowledge is acquired through analytical and critical consideration of global dynamics in terms of economic, political, social and environmental developments. The blurring of borders between nations has huge implications on the policies of every nation related to trade, education and social welfare. These implications are understood by individuals who are globally competent and this enables them to appreciate the importance of responsible national and international policies. This knowledge can be attained within a higher educational setting, but may also be acquired outside this formal setting.

Identifying Cultural Differences to compete globally

Global competence necessitates the skills to compete globally based on the socio-cultural and socio-economic needs of the world citizens. In every sphere be it business, trade or education, success happens when all endeavours are catered to the diversities in society. For this an individual needs to possess the skills to identify the cultural differences among people and communities.

Intercultural capability / behaviour

It does not suffice to have knowledge of globalization and world history in order to be globally competent. It also does not suffice to have the knowledge of cultural differences among people of the world in order to compete globally. One needs to possess the ability to apply the knowledge in the interactions with the people of the world. It is imperative to assess one's own intercultural capability and test one's own people's skills while dealing with citizens of the world. The quality of personal interactions with people of diverse cultures is an indicator of global competence of an individual. The capability to interact meaningfully, purposefully and effectively with people from various different contexts depends upon a deep rooted understanding of the world history and culture. The confidence to carry out interactions in harmonious and sustainable manner and conduct fruitful negotiations with people of the world is part of global acumen. An individual's intercultural behavior indicates the extent of his/her global competence.

Collaboration across cultures

A globally competent person must be able to identify cultural differences to compete globally, collaborate across cultures, and effectively participate in both social and business settings in other countries. Partnerships, networks, consultations are now crossing national borders. In this scenario, individuals should be able to transcend cultures and national borders to form networks and collaborations for trade, business, entertainment as well as education. The extent of such cross-border and cross-cultural collaborations are indicators of an individual's level of global competence.

Effective Participation both socially and in business globally

Competence in understanding diversity and catering to it at the global level should serve to meet the goals and objectives of a global society. The growing global interdependence that characterizes the times calls for a generation of individuals who can engage in effective problem solving and participate simultaneously in local, national and global civic life. Maintaining positive and harmonious social interactions, thereby ensuring sustainable development in society through all endeavours is required of a global citizen. Such a citizen would be able to build healthy working relations with people and work towards the growth of society as well as enhancement of world business and trade.

The concentric arrangement of the model is a deliberate effort to emphasize the layers of influence. In the innermost circle is Self-awareness that Hunter feels would be the biggest

driving element to global consciousness. This would influence the next circle of influence that includes openness, risk taking, understanding of diversity, recognition of differences and making non-judgmental reactions. The first two circles form the Internal Readiness competencies.

The third and fourth circles include the external readiness aptitudes. In this Hunter places Knowledge of the World History and Knowledge of Globalization in the third circle as essential components to lead to the fourth circle that comprises of behavioural components.

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