

## **IDENTIFYING THE GLOBALIST AND INTERNATIONALIST MISSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**

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*In making their values explicit in their institutional mission statements, international schools need to draw attention not only to their internationalist values but also to their 'globalist' perspectives. This article discusses ideologies of internationalism and globalisation as contexts for international education.*

The mission statements of many institutions declaring themselves to be 'international schools' identify the values of internationalism with the values of the school. It may be argued that this perspective is the enduring legacy of Kurt Hahn's educational philosophy. These values include a commitment to world peace and understanding between nations, the development of a sense of responsible world citizenship, and 'character-building' informed by an existential, experiential ideology of education (Röhrs, 1970). This approach sees international education in terms of 'a transformative discourse which locates all fields of enquiry in a supra-national frame of reference and upholds the cause of peace' (Rawlings, 2000). It is a view of international education as a process and it is recognisable in the historical context as a form of progressive education that appeared in Britain and Germany between the two world wars. Indeed, the editors of the 1964 World Yearbook of Education proposed that such a philosophy was the 'classical' view of international education (Goodings and Lauwerys, 1964). It may be argued that the internationalist perspective formed the educational philosophy of those people who were involved in the League of Nations. Various aspects of it are also to be found in the philosophies of educational institutions (not necessarily international schools) such as Schule Schloss Salem, Gordonstoun, Outward Bound, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, the United World Colleges and the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). It explains not only why Creativity, Action, Service (CAS), Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and the extended essay form an essential part of the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme but also why they are the compulsory core of the programme (Thompson *et al*, 2003) because they are the experiential, existential parts of the curriculum.

In contrast with the internationalist approach, there is also a globalist perspective of international education. This sees international education less as a process and more as a product. It describes an approach to education that facilitates global mobility by providing educational certification that is both portable between schools and

transferable between different educational systems. This form of international education is supported by quality assurance through accreditation by curriculum and assessment organisations such as the IBO, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the US-based College Board, and international schools organisations such as the European Council of International Schools (ECIS).

The most important manifestation of globalisation is in the diffusion of global quality standards. For example, the fact that we are able to read e-mail messages sent to each other from different countries is an outcome of the establishment of global quality standards defining the operation of computer software, modems, national telephone systems and the interconnections between them. Another of these quality standards is the use of English as the global medium of communication, including the medium of instruction in 'international schools'. However, this is not an outcome of any idealistic view of the use of English for the propagation of world peace and understanding. It may be argued that Esperanto would be the most appropriate language for that particular project - and you can decide for yourself how successful it has been. The use of English as the medium of instruction in international education is an outcome of the global dominance of the Anglo-American culture of capitalism and its reproduction as a culture transplanted in other countries throughout the world. As such, the widespread use of English is not the outcome of idealistic hopes for world peace but the product of objective material forces embodied in the capitalist free market and historical contingency.

The values of global free market capitalism are held most strongly by those individuals in different countries identified with what Sklair (2001) calls 'the transnational capitalist class'. We may interpret international education as a service or product consumed by two client groups comprising the globally mobile workforce employed by multinational companies, governmental, non-governmental and parastatal organisations, and the members of the local economic and social elites in countries around the world with aspirations to social and global mobility. What unites these client groups is a disinclination to use the indigenous educational system of a country, either because of language, religious or cultural reasons, or because they calculate that international education will assist their children in a positional competition with the local education system. This argument is analogous to the one

deployed by middle class parents selecting private education in an improving public comprehensive system of education. As more students obtain educational qualifications in the local public system, the middle classes adopt a strategy of using private education to enhance their dominant position in the competition for places in higher education and employment in the professions. I am indebted to my colleague John Lowe (1999, 2000) for elucidating this argument.

While many international schools claim to be beacons of internationalist values, in practice they are frequently pursuing a globalist agenda. They are supported by curriculum and assessment organisations that are transforming themselves into the manufacturers of globally branded goods and services that are distributed by a network of franchised outlets, the international schools. Both partners benefit from this relationship. The curriculum and assessment organisations need the knowledge and understanding of local market conditions provided by the international schools, while the schools need the high profile, reputation and 'brand proposition' of the educational service providers to attract customers (Cambridge, 2002). This relationship is regulated by quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation, comparable with how companies such as Starbucks or Macdonalds regulate their branches and subsidiaries. It is a well documented approach to the management of franchised businesses. It may be argued that international education is a market with many features in common with global brand franchising. It may be conceded that international schools do not market high volume consumer products in the same way as the companies cited here, but that does not necessarily invalidate the argument. It is proposed that if we look at the involvement of global companies in the privatised management of public service industries in the international context - for example in the management of hospitals and prisons - we might form a better understanding of international schools as franchised distributors of globally branded products. This is an issue to which I would like to return another time.

A frequently cited criticism of globalisation argues that it leads to 'cultural homogenisation' and decreases cultural diversity. On the other hand, it may be argued that the increase in global trade has led to an increase in cultural diversity not a decrease. Supporters of 'internationalist' international education claim that it celebrates and enhances cultural diversity. To what extent are these contrasting

assertions valid? Many commentators argue that the so-called 'hyperglobalist' view of globalisation as a process leading to the spread of the same cultural values everywhere is naive and simplistic. They point to the development of a patchwork of deterritorialised national cultures that exist side by side in many of the great cities of the world (Jones, 1998). Schools in many national systems of education, as well as international schools, must face the challenges and opportunities of high levels of home language diversity among the children in their care. This is identified with the 'transformationalist' thesis of globalisation (Held *at al*, 1999). It has been pointed out that multiculturalism in education can lead to 'a monoculture of values mitigated by tolerance of exotic detail' (Zaw, 1996). In other words, diversity in some aspects of the practice of international education is decreased by the global diffusion of quality standards but it is enhanced and celebrated in other areas of practice. The problem may be that international education enhances and celebrates cultural diversity in its exotic and peripheral components - the so-called 'sambas, saris and samosas' aspects of culture. However, it may be argued that the ideological 'internationalist' form of international education as a style of progressive education is essentially the specialist interest of a minority of enthusiasts. Furthermore, it may be proposed that the majority of consumers of international education select it for its globalist attributes, because it provides 'a reliable product conforming to consistent quality standards throughout the world' (Cambridge, 2002).

It is proposed that, in making their values explicit in their institutional mission statements, international schools need to draw attention not only to their internationalist values but also to their globalist perspectives. These perspectives should include reference to mechanisms for the assurance of global quality standards in educational service provision and links between the school and global providers of international education. They should also make explicit the opportunities for global portability and transferability in the curriculum. It would make an interesting topic for discussion to identify what else should be included among these perspectives.

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