



INTRODUCTION TO

International Education

MARY HAYDEN

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International Schools and their Communities

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Foreword

Mary Hayden is arguably the most experienced researcher in her field – international schools and international education. She is acknowledged to be a distinguished writer and has published extensively in both journals and books. As many throughout the world will testify, she is also an accomplished teacher and has personally supervised the enquiry and research activities of literally hundreds of students at masters and doctoral levels – among them many teachers, administrators, curriculum developers and examiners – all of whom have benefited enormously from her dedication to their interests, her insistence on rigour in their work and their writings, and her particular way of motivating those with whom she collaborates. Her passion for the encouragement and promotion of the work of others, especially in the area of international education, has been evident in the many papers she has published jointly with students and colleagues and through the editorial roles she has taken over recent years in journal and book publications.

It is therefore fitting that, in writing a book on international education, she should draw upon the work of so many of those with whom she has collaborated over the years and, by including them in such a seminal volume, should pay tribute to their collective contributions to our understanding of the theory and practice of international education.

As may be expected of an experienced teacher, Mary Hayden has employed as her framework a number of underlying themes in constructing the *mélange* of knowledge, understandings and challenges that this book comprises. Among them are familiar dilemmas which those readers already engaged in teaching, administration and research in the field will recognise, and with which those contemplating involvement as teachers, students, parents and board members, for example, will rapidly become acquainted. By identifying international schools and their communities as the organising structure, the themes are woven through the account as the warp and

weft of the fabric of the volume. They include a range of issues relating to, for example, pragmatism and ideology, which recur as unifying themes throughout the work. In constructing the book in this way, Dr Hayden will not only be satisfying the needs of those who seek greater knowledge and understanding of the field through the sheer quantity of information the book includes, she will also be challenging and encouraging others to generate implicit and explicit theories and explanations by reflecting upon their own practice.

This book deserves, and will surely command, a wide readership for it concerns a topic of crucial importance – the education of world citizens – explored in its historical and contemporary settings, which is so vital to the future for us all.

Jeff Thompson
Professor of Education
University of Bath



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I have been fortunate in the course of my career to work in a number of different capacities with literally hundreds of inspiring professionals who have helped me to understand the context of international schools and the many issues and challenges that arise within them.

To these many colleagues and friends I owe a debt of gratitude for having helped to lay the foundations upon which this book is built. To some of them I am particularly grateful for not only having shared their ideas and experiences with me over the years, but for also providing particular assistance in the creation of this book. In addition therefore to thanking our helpful and supportive colleagues at Sage, I must extend a big 'thank you' to Jim Cambridge and Philippa Wheeler for sharing their technical expertise, and Gail Bradley, Ray Davis, Mary Langford, Peter MacKenzie, Edna Murphy, Bora Rancic, Coreen Sears, Wilf Stout, Ray Taylor and David Wilkinson for having been so willing to read early drafts of various sections of the manuscript and to highlight areas where improvement was needed. Extra special thanks must, as ever, go to my friend and colleague Jeff Thompson, without whose constant support, encouragement and chivvying the idea for this book would never have got off the ground.

To all of you, and to the international school community more widely, this book is offered as a contribution to further recognition and understanding of this important and rapidly growing field.

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CHAPTER 1

International Education: The Context

To many of those born and raised in the relatively stable, mono-cultural context of a country in the developed world of fifty years ago, where schooling was compulsory for a certain number of years prior to employment or further study, the concept of education was probably fairly straightforward. We went to school to be educated, to acquire the knowledge and skills which would be needed when we embarked on life in the adult world. If we gave any thought to the nature of our education (which most of us probably did not, other than when changing schools or if we went on to train as a teacher) we may have recognised that what we were being taught had been selected, either nationally, if in a country with a national curriculum, or locally (possibly by the school itself), as the basis for developing the knowledge and skills needed in order for the society in which we lived to be reproduced on a continuing basis. Lawton describes the curriculum (in the broadest sense, encompassing all the experiences offered within the school context) as ‘a selection of the culture of a society’ (1989) and in a slowly-evolving society, such a model can work well: if the society around us never changes very much, then the education we experience may not need to change very much either. There were changes of course, but for the most part children in the developed world experienced an education not majorly different from that of their parents, while most children in the developing world had little if any formal education at all.

Fast-forwarding to the early twenty-first century, the changes that have taken place in a relatively short period of time have been almost literally incredible. Advances in science, technology and engineering have led to greater comfort, increased ease of transportation and communication, and a growth in leisure for the privileged of the developed world and for some of those in the less developed world. They have also led to increased ease of violence and war, and presented us with enormous ethical dilemmas including how and when to preserve life (does the fact that we can, mean

that we should at all costs?) and how to respond to the major challenges presented by the seemingly increasing gap between rich and poor, where some have plentiful if not excessive amounts to eat while others starve to death. Countries such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia no longer exist, the notion of two superpowers has disappeared, and China is not only more open to tourism but is also increasingly seen as a major economic power on the world stage.

Sophisticated communication networks allow those who can afford to do so to keep easily and cheaply in contact with friends and colleagues across time zones and huge distances, and to have news beamed into their homes from the other side of the world as it is happening. Information is available via the Internet at the press of a button, though not without associated dilemmas about the credibility of the information accessed and whether such access is open to all (viz the recent opening up of a censored form of Google within China). The seemingly ubiquitous mobile telephone allows us to make contact with friends and colleagues at any time of the day or night, wherever they are, and has come upon us so quickly that an etiquette for its use – in meetings, during personal conversations, in schools – is only gradually being developed, while its use to send messages by text has led to the creation by young people of a new abbreviated form of language which causes great consternation to some adults (not least in an English examining board when it was used recently by a student to answer an English language examination question beginning ‘Write a letter to your friend ...’). The role of the United States as the only superpower, the influence of the Internet and the colonial heritage of the British Empire have all contributed to the dominance of English as the world language (though in many different forms, and unpalatable as this may be to some) as increasing numbers of non-native speakers of English see it as a means of communicating not only with native English speakers, but also with speakers of different native languages than themselves.

The increased sophistication of communication systems has also led, again for the privileged minority, to increased ease of travel, both within countries and internationally. Frequent and cheap flights make international holidays commonplace, with barriers to travel seemingly more related to differences in language and culture than to travel itself, overcome (in some cases at least) by the latter-day colonisation of certain areas in other countries with better climates or more interesting architecture than our own to make enclaves of familiar language, food and activities available in a ‘home from home’. Where once a young person embarking upon a career would have anticipated, unless they were becoming a missionary or joining the diplomatic service or the military, spending that career within one national context, it is now not uncommon to take up a

post with a local company and to find oneself at some stage being asked to attend meetings in another country, if not to consider relocating internationally on a longer term basis. Nor is it uncommon to undertake one's nationally-based business via members of staff based on a different continent, because the business has out-sourced part of its operation to a location with lower employment costs; the regular telephone communications between call-centre staff in India and holders of telephone accounts or those enquiring about railway services in, for example, the UK and USA are just one example of such a phenomenon.

One clear consequence of all these changes, and particularly those in communication – whether in terms of travel, or of oral and written contact – is the highlighting of the artificiality of the borders that have been built around what we call countries. Wilkinson (2006: 1) describes attending a presentation by an astronaut who showed photographs of the earth taken from 300 miles up in space, and who highlighted the lack of borderlines or distinctions between countries visible from that distance. The same point can be made by taking a daytime flight across, say, Africa and Europe. The Nile is visible, the Alps can be seen, but the boundaries which are so important in terms of the way human beings relate to each other and the way in which political decisions are made are nowhere in evidence: a product of thinking at a particular point in the history of a geographical region which so often forms the basis of on-going conflict as to where exactly those borders should or should not lie. One need only consider the map of Africa, with its beautifully straight lines drawn by colonial administrators cutting across cultures, languages, tribes and families, to recognise the artificiality of the ways in which human beings have become divided, and to understand the root cause of some of the conflicts that have led to the borders and, literally in some cases, walls that have been built to keep people apart in the twenty-first century.

The artificiality of national borders, and the level of our interdependence, are no less highlighted when we become aware of issues relating to the environment which cannot be contained within those borders. When high levels of industry and individualised transport in developed nations are believed to contribute to the global warming which seems likely to lead to low-lying inhabited islands disappearing beneath the sea in the foreseeable future; when a chemical factory explosion in one country causes severe air pollution in another, or an oil tanker spillage in one country's shipping lane causes the destruction of wildlife in many other countries for miles around; when the threatened pandemic of Avian flu quite clearly cannot be contained within national borders and if it begins to spread will be no respecter of nationality, location or privilege in terms of who it will strike down; then again are we reminded of the artificiality of the boundaries we have chosen to place around ourselves.

Against this global backdrop, it is clear that even within the borders of a national system the concept of education is no longer straightforward. Where once the major purpose of education might have been to prepare young people for adult life in the relatively stable society of their childhood, it can no longer be assumed either that a young person will remain within that society or, indeed, that the society will be recognisable as having much in common with that of the child's parents or grandparents. Teachers in some, if not all, national systems are thus increasingly expected to teach transferable skills and to encourage young people to learn how to learn, rather than only to acquire knowledge which, of itself, may have little usefulness or relevance in twenty years time.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Given this overall context, the question of what we mean by the concept of 'international' and its use as an adjective to describe other concepts such as 'trade', 'sport' or 'education' can be seen to be problematic. It might be assumed that the word literally means activities between two or more nations, and in some contexts that may be so. In the case of education, however, definitions are not so straightforward.

The term 'international education' has, over a period of years, come to have a number of different meanings. Marshall (2006) provides a helpful overview of the different ways in which the term 'international education' is used. Development education, for instance, could be considered one such interpretation when focusing specifically on the promotion of awareness of development issues in schools, while comparative education is sometimes used interchangeably with international education – though Crossley and Broadfoot point out that 'comparative and international studies in education have evolved in different ways and there are significant differences in emphasis in approach that distinguish the two' (1992: 101). Crossley and Broadfoot go on to cite Postlethwaite's attempt to distinguish the two terms as follows:

Strictly speaking to 'compare' means to examine two or more entities by putting them side by side and looking for similarities and differences between or among them. In the field of education, this can apply both to comparisons between and within systems of education. In addition, however, there are many studies that are not comparative in the strict sense of the word which have traditionally been classified under the heading of comparative education. Such studies do not compare, but rather describe, analyse or make proposals for a particular aspect of education in *one* country other than the author's own country. The Comparative and International Education Society introduced the word 'international' in their title in order to cover these sorts of studies. (1988: xvii)

Another dimension of international education is what has come to be known as global education, relating generally to the integration into national systems of educational considerations that go beyond national boundaries. Within the context of the USA, for instance, Clarke describes global education as 'the study of curricular perspectives and issues of cultural diversity, human rights, and prejudice reduction as they relate within the national context, and across national borders' (2004: 54). Within the UK, meanwhile, Marshall explains that 'Whilst education for global understanding has been an agenda for many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for over half a century, recent UK government interest in global education is unprecedented. Government endorsed strategy documents and recommendations ... send a clear message to schools that incorporating a cross-curricular international or global dimension into the school curriculum is essential' (2007). Also arguably of relevance in any consideration of the concept of international education is that of cosmopolitanism, which Gunesch describes as 'a personal cultural identity form' (2004: 254) and which Hannerz argues 'tends ... to be a matter of competence, of both a generalised and a more specialised kind. There is the aspect of a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting, and there is cultural competence in the stricter sense of the terms; a built-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings. ... Competence with regard to alien cultures for the cosmopolitan entails a sense of mastery' (1992: 252–3).

Clearly then, there is no simple definition of international education to which all would subscribe. Perhaps it is most appropriate therefore to consider international education as an inclusive umbrella term which incorporates a number of other more specific interpretations, or as a Venn diagram in which different concepts overlap to varying degrees. A helpful summary in that sense is the following, taken from the editorial preface to the 1985 special issue on international education of the *Harvard Educational Review*: 'International, global, cross-cultural and comparative education are different terms used to describe education which attempts – in greater or lesser degree – to come to grips with the increasing interdependence that we face and to consider its relationship to learning'.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CONTEXT

Given that the term 'international education' has to be used with caution, a book with international education in its title might conceivably be focusing on any one, or a combination, of the different interpretations referred to above. The focus for this particular volume, however, will be on a

dimension of international education not so far mentioned: the context of international schools. Here again, the use of the term 'international education' is contentious, in that material generated within the context of, and/or written about, international schools seems often to suggest that international education is by definition the education experienced by those who attend such schools (and, by implication, not elsewhere). Writing about the international school context, Gellar pointed out the rather imprecise way in which the use of 'international education' as a concept had developed, whereby as the numbers of international or 'overseas' schools worldwide grew, 'for want of a better one, the term "International Education" gained currency – a term that meant all things to some people and meant very little to many – a good example of Wittgenstein's "bewitchment of intelligence by means of language"' (1981: 21).

The notion of a one-to-one correspondence between international schools and international education is rejected in this volume, in that international education is argued (as above) to be a broader, more inclusive, concept of which the education experience of those who attend international schools is just one form. One first year undergraduate included in a survey undertaken at the University of Bath in the UK, for instance, explained when asked about this issue: 'Both schools I have attended ... do not consider themselves as international schools, but I think they [offer an international education] for they offer you opportunities to develop an "international attitude" (for example by dealing with international issues or typical foreign issues, by offering trips abroad/exchange programmes)' (in Hayden and Thompson, 1995: 341).

Conversely, the fact that a school describes itself as an 'international school' does not necessarily mean that whatever education it offers should be described as 'international education'. Another undergraduate involved in the same survey believed that, although she attended an international school, she had experienced a 'Western education, because everything I was taught was delivered in a Western point of view since all the teachers were from the West'. The same student did, however, believe that she had experienced an international education 'out of class' as, through clubs and societies at school, she was 'exposed to many different cultures and began to appreciate them, especially since some of my closest friends were not of the same culture as me' (in Hayden and Thompson 1995: 341).

Interestingly, the views of this undergraduate reflecting on the experience of international education are consistent with those of over 3,500 16–18 year old students in international schools who were asked in a different survey about their perceptions of the importance of a number of factors in the experience of international education. Three groups of students aged approximately 16, 17 and 18 respectively all rated most highly in importance their exposure to, and interaction with, students of

different cultures within school (ahead of teachers as exemplars of international-mindedness, the formal curriculum, other informal aspects of school and exposure to others of different cultures outside school), a perception shared by international school teachers surveyed at the same time about the same issue (Thompson, 1998: 283–5). Such a view would seem to suggest a weakness in another one-to-one relationship sometimes implied in the context of schooling internationally: that international education is entirely related to the formal curriculum, usually in respect of one of the international programmes frequently offered in international schools such as those of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO, 2006) or Cambridge International Examinations (CIE, 2006). Again, such an implication is rejected on the basis that, as suggested by students and teachers, the international education experience within schools is a broad one of which the formal curriculum is just one – albeit very important – part.

CONCLUSION

In summary, then, it is argued that international education as a concept is inclusive, with many interpretations within different contexts. Within schools, international education has a number of facets including, though not exclusively, the formal curriculum. International education may be experienced in national schools, where suitable opportunities are built in to facilitate this experience for students, and may also be experienced (though not necessarily) within international schools.

It is international schools that provide the focus for this book. Beginning in Chapter 2 with a consideration of what it means to be an international school, the following chapters will go on to explore a range of issues relating to the different communities with which they are associated: the parents who send their children to these schools, the students who attend them, the teachers and administrators who work in them, and the Boards which oversee them. Further chapters on the curriculum, and on a number of external factors that impinge on international schools, will be followed by a final chapter which considers the future role of international schools and how they might develop as the twenty-first century progresses. In all chapters, a number of references have been made to relevant sources that have informed the developing arguments: in a still relatively thinly researched field, it is hoped that readers will find these references helpful signposts to sources of further relevant reading.

Throughout discussion in the various chapters one particular theme will be seen to recur. International schools in many cases are juggling to respond to the pragmatic demands of modern life (the very reason that

many of them exist, as a response to increasing global mobility) and the more ideological and values-based issues which surely need to be central to any education offered to young people who will become adults throughout this century. The balance between pragmatism and ideology is not an easy one to strike, particularly when the two are sometimes in conflict. These, and other, issues will be raised and discussed in what follows. It is hoped that, while this book can only scratch the surface of the complex and multifaceted world of international schools and the issues faced on a daily basis by those who study and work in them, it will nevertheless make a contribution to raising the profile, and increasing understanding, of this still relatively little known but increasingly influential set of institutions.

International Schools

Of the many books written on various aspects of education, few have devoted much space to the basic concept of a school. Why would they? We all know what we understand a school to be: there may be variations on the concept, encompassing those that are state-funded, those that charge fees, those that provide residential accommodation, those that cater for young children, those that cater for older students, those that cater for particular religious beliefs and those that specialise in certain areas of the curriculum. We don't feel the need to read what others think about how a school should be defined, or when a school can or should call itself a school, how many different types of school there might be, or what their characteristics are. Why, then, do we need a chapter in this book devoted to discussion of the concept of an 'international school' and what this term might or might not mean?

Part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that, unlike the more generic concept of a school in a local or national context, many people may not have come across the term before in the sense of having had to give any thought to what it might mean. They may know a family who moved abroad and whose child now attends an international school; they may peruse advertisements in a newspaper and fantasise about teaching in an exotic location where the sun always shines. But that's as far as it goes: international schools are, by and large, schools in other parts of the world in which others teach and learn. For some whose personal situation brings them into individual contact with such a school, their experience becomes first hand: the teacher who decides to move from a national school to an international school, or the parents whose work takes them to another country where an international school education is the most attractive option for their child, for reasons related to language, curriculum and perhaps university prospects. Such individuals may now know what they believe an international school to be: they have, after all, experienced it for themselves either first hand as a teacher, or vicariously through their offspring.

And therein lies the reason for devoting a chapter to the concept of international schools: because in moving on to another school in due course such a teacher or parent may, not unreasonably, make certain assumptions about the new school based on previous experience. Depending on the schools in question, these assumptions may be entirely justified. Alternatively, they may turn out not to have been justified at all, with the second experience being quite different from that of the first. This may not necessarily be a bad thing – perhaps they are pleasantly surprised by the differences – but the fact that they could make such inaccurate assumptions may give cause for concern. Next time they make such a move (if they do) they will know not to make assumptions, and to ask many questions in advance; indeed, the more moves they make over a period of their teaching career or their children's school career, the more questions they will probably ask.

Because in truth there are few assumptions that can be made with any confidence about a school that describes itself (or is described by others) as an 'international school'. Indeed the question of what is or is not an international school would seem to be one where the more one knows, the more complicated it seems to become. As Findlay points out,

the nature of international schools can be puzzling. Most of us go to school within one education system. It is this experience that forges our educational beliefs. When families first explore expatriate education they discover a world of differences. The nature of the differences is confusing and can call into question some of the beliefs and values that families hold dear. (1997: 5)

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

At the root of this potential for confusion is the fact that no one organisation internationally can grant the right to use of the term 'international school' in a school's title. It may be that within a national system a school has to meet certain conditions in order to be described as an international school, but even this is not necessarily the case in all countries and, where it is, the conditions may vary. In essence, schools describe themselves as international schools for a variety of reasons including the nature of the student population and of the curriculum offered, marketing and competition with other schools in the area, and the school's overall ethos or mission. In 1995, Hayden and Thompson wrote that 'for the most part, the body of international schools is a conglomeration of individual institutions which may or may not share an underlying educational philosophy' (1995: 332) and that, indeed, is where we still stand more than ten years later: more schools have opened, and