

“International education: from contacts to connections”

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On the 30th November 2006, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, announced £2.5m of government funding to allow every Local Education Authority in England to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in at least one of its schools. This will add about 100 new IB schools to the current total of 93 (51 state and 42 independent) in the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson, said

Every young person should be offered a choice of rigorous, challenging qualifications that suit their interests and abilities.

I want to explore three consequences of making that choice: what is different? The first two are rather obvious and will therefore receive quite brief treatment. The third, which is far from obvious, will provide the foundation of my presentation which will seek to answer the question “what kind of education is most appropriate in a globalized world?”

The first obvious consequence.....

By studying the IBDP, students will be choosing a programme (and let me stress the word ‘programme’) which is now widely regarded as setting the pre-university gold standard both for intellectual stimulus and for academic rigour. In the United States, which has the greatest concentration of IB diploma schools (currently 520/1485), the programme is rated alongside the College Board’s AP courses as an advanced academic programme which brings students preferential treatment from the best universities. In the United Kingdom, a study of the perceptions of more than 70 universities, carried out in 2003 (IBO, 2003), showed that 57% of respondents thought that IB students would have an advantage over those with A levels in their university studies. In a comparison with other relevant qualifications, the IBDP was preferred for its breadth, critical thinking skills, communication skills, self-management and motivation. Only in the category of ‘depth’ was it outranked by the others.

I do not want to join the debate about grade inflation, but it is worth noting that the IBDP pass rate has shown an average 82.2% over the past nine years with a max-min spread around that figure of only 3.4%. Finally, the recent tariffing exercise by UCAS has rated a maximum (and rather rare) 45-point IB diploma as the equivalent of six A-grade A levels and a much more modest 30-point diploma as the equivalent of one A- and three B-grade A levels.

Choice of the IBDP therefore raises high academic expectations and there is even a suggestion that the programme will be thought suitable only for an academic élite. I strongly hope this is not the hidden message behind the Prime Minister’s announcement because it is simply untrue. Those of us who have worked with IB students know that the key to success is *not* outstanding giftedness but rather a combination of sustained hard work, a lively mind and efficient study habits.

The second obvious consequence.....

IB students study a very distinctive curriculum: a *broad* curriculum (though our continental colleagues would not agree) of six academic subjects; a *balanced* curriculum that requires

students to study their mother tongue, a foreign language, mathematics, a practical science and the humanities; a *rather unconventional* curriculum, in terms of its core elements: theory of knowledge, creativity, action, service (CAS) and the extended essay and a *values-driven* curriculum, as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) mission statement makes clear:

The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the IB works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

It was, of course, a *compromise* curriculum, reflecting its multi-national origins, and the fact that its basic structure has changed little in the 40 years since it was created suggests it was a rather good compromise. Six academic subjects lies somewhere between A levels and their continental equivalents. Theory of knowledge was the Francophone price paid by the Anglophones who desperately wanted CAS! Two men in particular stamped their personal beliefs on the programme: Alec Peterson, who was director of the Department of Educational Studies in this university and campaigned ceaselessly against the narrow focus of A levels and Kurt Hahn, the founder of Salem School, Gordonstoun and Outward Bound, whose emphasis on the moral dimension of education influenced both the IB and the closely associated United World College movement.

And what about the third consequence?.....

Well, the third consequence is engagement with the “I” in IB, its international dimension which finds IB programmes studied by more than half a million students in 124 different countries; that brought thirty thousand teachers to IB workshops in 2006 located all over the world; that brings together nearly four thousand examiners worldwide to set, mark and moderate diploma examinations; that ensures an international dimension to the IB’s governance, its curriculum development, its professional development and its assessment. This is the aspect of the IB that is least acknowledged in this country (except in schools like Atlantic College) and yet, as we peer anxiously into the 21st century, I believe it is the most important. Let me explain why...

Short-term aim and long-term vision

Any worthwhile educational project will combine a short-term aim with a long-term vision. For example, the Education Acts of 1902, 1918 and 1944 had the immediate aim of building a structure of state secondary education in this country. Their long-term vision was a better, fairer society that would justify the sacrifice made in three wars. The short-term aim of the IBDP is to provide an international qualification that can be studied anywhere in the world and used for university entrance anywhere in the world. Hahn called it the “Nansen passport to education” in a reference to one of the League of Nation’s few success stories. This short-term aim has been achieved to a degree that would have astonished even the most optimistic of those early IB pioneers.

But to understand the long-term vision we need to go back to the period of the IBO's development, the 1960s, a decade dominated by the Cold War and the threat of nuclear annihilation. The experiences of the Second World War were still fresh in the minds of people like Hahn, who was forced to flee from Germany in 1933, Peterson, who had worked in intelligence in Malaya, and his old military chief, Lord Mountbatten, and they inspired a determination to create an educational movement for peace that, in Peterson's phrase, would bring together "schools across frontiers".

The IBDP, then, was largely designed for globally-mobile students in international schools. The International School of Geneva, the United Nations International School in New York and Atlantic College in Wales (the first of the United World Colleges) all played prominent roles in its development. Students from different cultural backgrounds were encouraged to go beyond the mere "rubbing together of shoulders" by studying world literature, learning a foreign language, looking at history from a world perspective, examining the status of different realms of knowledge and giving service to the local community. They would learn to respect different points of view, form life-long friendships across the globe and, it was hoped, acquire an international mind-set that would compensate for their often missing national culture. At the end of the two year programme students would catch the plane to go back home, wherever home was.

It is clear from a reading of Peterson's account of the IB's early days (2003) that, for him, 'international' referred as much to the students as to the curriculum. It was the *International Baccalaureate* because its clients were an *international* group of students rather than because the programme was particularly internationally-oriented. Similarly, Kurt Hahn on one occasion commented (with ill-disguised irritation) that he was more interested working with friendly countries than trying to win over enemies, and his 'international vision' rarely extended beyond Europe.

A changed scenario

Some forty years later, the scene has changed. Only a minority of IB schools (less than 20%) can be described as 'international'; 69% of diploma examination candidates in May 2005 came from state, public schools. The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is doubling in size about every five years and has moved from a specialist niche position to the mainstream of education. The US Department of Education and the UK Department for Education and Skills have given substantial funding for the development of IB programmes in state schools. In future, the majority of students studying the IB will not be catching the plane to go back home; they will be catching the bus and the IBO now makes it quite explicit, through its mission statement, that the "I" refers to its programmes of international education and not necessarily to its students:

To this end the IB works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

By choosing the IBDP students, teachers and their schools are making a commitment to *help to create a better and more peaceful world* and in order to do this they must understand the increasing impact of globalization on their lives. We no longer live in the 20th century of international contacts, but in the 21st century of global connexions and surprisingly little has been written about the consequences of globalization for systems of education (the exception

is Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard, 2004).

Understanding globalization

I am going to start with a working definition of globalization to which I shall keep returning:

The widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life. (Held, 1999)

and I am going to identify five features of globalization which I believe should have a direct influence on programmes of education, particularly those which claim to have an international dimension.

The first feature: its historical context

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. Arguably, we are witnessing at least its fourth period. The first was launched in 1492 from Portugal, produced the first trans-Atlantic trading system and a century or so later had caused the deaths of more than 90% of the original inhabitants of the Americas. The second period, two hundred years later, saw nine million African slaves shipped to the Americas where they made good the labour shortages caused by the first period. The third period began with the huge growth of imperial trade in the nineteenth century and mass migration from Europe to North America. The current period of globalization started with the liberalization of international trade after the Second World War and has been greatly accelerated in recent years by new techniques of information and communication technology (ICT).

Each period of globalization has seen significant increases in human productivity. In most cases these have trickled down to improve overall standards of living relative to countries untouched by the process. But short-term benefits have often gone to tiny minorities and were usually achieved at the expense of acute suffering over many generations.

There are parallels to be drawn here and contrasts to be made. There is evidence to be sifted and alternative explanations to be weighed. There are issues to be argued about and some lessons to be learned. All this speaks to me of “history” and I would like to see globalization included in the IBDP history syllabus as a thematic topic alongside (for example) *the causes, practices and effects of war*, and *the rise and rule of independent states* and *religion and minorities*. Surely we should acknowledge that globalization has become one of the defining social movements, shaping the development of humankind.

The second feature: complexity

Important issues appear to have become much more complex. I stress “appear” because there is no reason to suppose that the issues themselves are necessarily more complicated or perplexing; they just appear that way. This is partly because a range of different, but relevant, information is so quickly available to us. Compare, for example, the not wholly dissimilar situations of Suez in 1956 and Iraq fifty years later. The true situation in Suez was largely hidden from the general public which had no means of finding out. The true situation in Iraq, with all its confusions, claims and counter-claims, information and disinformation is there for anyone who has the time and inclination to try to make sense of it.

Generally-speaking it is becoming more difficult to make up one's mind as, for example, one watches (as I did in Geneva) the truth of a particular incident according to CNN, the BBC, France 1, Télévision Suisse Romande and Al-Jazeera. Reaching a conclusion from all this diversity of viewpoint – most of it entirely true – is an intellectually challenging process. Globalization requires us to resist premature conclusions, to learn to live with ambiguity and to reject the black-and-white for less reassuring shades of grey.

But there is another cause of complexity, and to illustrate it let me choose a very different example, that of carbon credits, a concept upon which our very survival may depend. The importance of climate change has been around for as long as anyone has needed to keep warm, or cool, as the case may be. Globalization (which has *widened, deepened and speeded up inter-connectedness*) has of course accelerated the problem, but at the same time it forces us to adopt solutions that require international cooperation: we are having to think and act globally. The entire system of operating credits depends upon international cooperation and only few months ago I came across a group of Japanese in South Australia who were planting eucalyptus trees on Kangaroo Island as part of a carbon credit scheme. Today's problems cannot be resolved within international frontiers.

How can education best respond to this growing complexity? First, I believe, by insisting that students study a range of different disciplines that, for example, help them to grasp the scientific, statistical and economic aspects of a carbon credit scheme; the historical, cultural and political aspects of the Iraq conflict. In other words, a broad curriculum. Second, by becoming aware of the status of different forms of knowledge, thereby developing a sense of intellectual honesty. Last year, for example, students in the IBDP theory of knowledge course were asked to respond to these questions:

What are the differences between 'I am certain' and 'it is certain' and is passionate conviction ever sufficient for justifying knowledge?

To what extent may the subjective nature of perception be regarded as an advantage for artists but an obstacle to be overcome for scientists?

Third, by exploring some aspect of globalization in depth, bringing to bear learning from different disciplines. I would prefer that the 4,000-word extended essay in the IBDP (another legacy of Kurt Hahn, incidentally) be focused on an inter-disciplinary global issue rather than, as is presently the case, on a single disciplined topic.

My three chosen areas: a wide disciplinary base, an awareness of the limitations of different forms of knowledge and a inter-disciplinary study in depth, all encourage the development of what are popularly called 'critical thinking skills': the ability to use sound intellectual tools to analyze an argument and then put appropriate information together in order to construct a better one.

The third feature: ethical education

Globalization demands from education a greater emphasis on ethical values. This may appear strange since, for many people, the very word 'globalization' conjures up images of violent street protests fuelled by a deep-rooted sense of inequity (Klein, 2001 and Stiglitz, 2002). In the popular mind, globalization is unethical. However, the *widened, deepened and speeded up interconnectedness* (I remind you once again of my chosen definition) has the

essential merit of making it impossible to ignore other opposing points of view or to refuse to examine the other side of the coin. To find an example, let us pass over the exploited coffee growers in Kenya and the mangetout pea farmers in Zimbabwe and instead consider the case of the *Emma Maersk*, much nearer to home. This is the name of the world's largest container vessel which docked for the first time at Felixstowe on 4 November 2006. The quarter-mile long ship unloaded 45,000 tons of Christmas goods in 3,000 containers, all from China. She sailed away from the port virtually empty. In 2005, the UK exported £2.8b of goods to China and imported £16b, a 30-fold increase over the figure in 1980.

In a newspaper interview (Vidal, 2006), the regional MEP, Caroline Lucas, commented:

“Whole sectors of global trade are now being dominated by companies operating out of China and it's clear the whole free trade project is in question. The real cost of the goods that the Emma Maersk is bringing in should include the environment, the markets destroyed in developing countries and the millions of jobs lost.”

Peter Mandelson, the European trade commissioner was not available for comment but is known to regard China as a globalization success story since its growth as a manufacturing centre means cheaper goods in European shops, more competitive companies and lower inflation.

With this example in mind, I was rather pleased to read the aims of the IB geography course, expressed as follows:

- Develop a global perspective and a sense of world interdependence.
- Encourage an understanding between people, places and environment
- Create concern for the quality of the environment and for sustainable development
- Recognize the need for social justice and equity, combat bias and prejudice, and appreciate diversity

and I applaud this emphasis on issues that require ethical judgments about what is good and bad, what is right and wrong, providing a striking example of the values of the IBDP.

Professor Howard Gardner (2006) of Harvard University recently addressed the RSA on the theme of 'Five Minds for the Future', the title of his new book to be published later this year. Gardner identifies five kinds of mind – disciplined, synthesizing, creating, respectful and ethical – which he believes need cultivating if we are to respond to the challenges of globalization. In considering the ethical mind he draws attention to the responsibility of adults in setting good examples, particularly in the workplace when confronted by market forces, ambition and different interest groups. The person possessed of an ethical mind is able to think about herself in a universalistic manner: *“What would the world look like, if all persons behaved the way I do, if all workers in my profession took the stance that I have, if all citizens in my region or my world fulfilled their roles in the way I do?”*

I have detected a renewed popular interest in ethical issues (see, for example, the light-hearted but seriously-intended, and clearly very popular, daily column entitled Modern Morals in The Times) and this should be developed amongst students by overt reference to ethical issues within each discipline of the curriculum.

The fourth feature: other people

Let me try to illustrate the difference between the 20th century's international contacts and the 21st century's connexions with the following vignette. Imagine your Aunt Asha has always spent the Easter weekend with you since your uncle Ted died, in order to keep up family links. You don't know her very well but you make a special effort to make her (and sometimes her two children) feel welcome. Nonetheless there is a palpable sense of relief when they take their leave to go back home. On her most recent visit, Asha announced that this time they had all come to stay – for ever. You do not speak her mother tongue, which is unfortunately not French, Spanish or German (all of which you speak fluently) but Bengali, and she hates Sunday roast lunch. A farfetched scenario, but it illustrates the point that there is now a very high probability, almost a certainty, that you will have regular connexions – in your neighbourhood, at work, in your leisure pursuits – with people of very different cultural origins. No one is 'going home' and, despite increasing Government unease about policies of 'multiculturalism', most immigrants to the United Kingdom are going to retain and use (indeed *have to* retain and use) large chunks of their cultural identity, including their language and religion. Education for globalization must address the situation which exists here, now, at home on our doorsteps. For example, in addition to Aunt Asha, another 400,000 people in the UK speak Bengali; half a million speak Punjabi and 200,000 speak Italian. French, Spanish and German do not register on the UK language scale. What might this tell us about future school language policies?

What opportunities does the school curriculum offer to students to work alongside people of different cultures? The IBDP's CAS programme is frequently misinterpreted as providing service to needy communities, even charitable aid, but its primary purpose is neither service nor aid, but learning. CAS offers a rare opportunity for students to work with people whom they would not normally encounter at school and to learn from that experience. Service may indeed be rendered but often the net flow is powerfully to the benefit of the student.

How many school curricula offer the opportunity, in particular through literature, film and the performing arts, to understand what is meant by a culture and thereby to realize how much of one's thinking is predetermined by the 'software of the mind' – one's culture? How many take the risk of examining the same issue from different cultural viewpoints: the concept of marriage perhaps? How many can truly sign up to the final sentence in the IBO mission statement that concludes "other people, with their differences, can also be right"? In the early days of the IB that would have been a statement of intellectual faith; today it is a statement of practical policy.

We must recognize that the globalized young person of today will have many different cultural allegiances: to the Islamic faith but also to a non-faith school; to an inner-city community but also to a regional soccer team; to family in Bangladesh but also to a rock group of non-Islamic friends; to a language at school but also to a very different language at home; depending on the circumstances to the United Kingdom, the European Union, perhaps the Commonwealth and even on occasions to the United Nations. We must therefore define and encourage "multiculturalism" as representing all the different *threads of affiliation* (Maalouf, 2000) between that young person and those different groups and resist the temptation to label people with a single affiliation and put them in one cultural box.

The fifth feature: winners and losers

My fifth and final feature of a global curriculum is to draw attention to a new acronym that has arrived on the scene, one which we shall see with increasing frequency. The acronym is BRIC, as in 'bric economies' and it stands for Brazil, Russia, India and China, four countries whose stock markets rose in 2006 by 41, 66, 37 and 102 percent respectively. The UK and US markets, which by the way came in at 56th and 84th of the 93 studied, had growth figures of 26 and 14%. (All figures are US dollar converted and include dividends.)

None of that will surprise Thomas Friedman (2005), author of the best-selling book *The World is Flat*. His wake-up call draws our attention to 3 billion new economic players coming from these countries at a time when a combination of factors including deregulation, global communication via the internet, outsourcing and off-shoring have all leveled the playing field for countries that have the appetite, the education (particularly in science and engineering) and the entrepreneurial skills to exploit new opportunities. Friedman's conclusion is that the United States no longer has; for Britain the jury is still out.

The World Bank reported roughly 375 m Chinese living in acute poverty (less than \$1 per day) in 1990; the figure decreased to 212m in 2001 and, if current trends are maintained, will decrease further to about 16m by 2015. China is working its way out of acute poverty but in stark contrast, in sub-Saharan Africa the comparable figures *increase* from 227m to 313m to 340m. Such are the inequities that result from catching or missing the globalization train and they are likely to be as marked within countries as between them. Trying to grapple with this dilemma, Friedman writes about the increasing importance of the 'social entrepreneur' and insists that in future a business school brain must be combined with a social worker's heart. If he is right (and he would probably be encouraged by the 2006 award of the Nobel Prize for Peace to Mohammed Unis and Grameen Bank) then I would argue that the IBO mission statement, which juxtaposes the following adjectives: knowledgeable and caring, challenging and compassionate, inquiring and rigorous, offers a robust framework for an appropriate education for globalization.

Summary

I have suggested that 'international' is not the same as 'global' and we should therefore not assume that an international education programme such as the IBDP, which was designed to meet the challenges of the 1960s, will necessarily be an appropriate response to the increasing influence of globalization forty years later.

In order to judge the relevance of any curriculum in the 21st century, I have suggested five themes that should form the basis of an education for globalization:

- the historical development of globalization
- the intellectual tools to handle growing complexity
- the increasing importance of ethics
- understanding the significance of culture
- the interaction of compassion and intellectual rigour.

In fact, I believe the IBDP stands up to the challenge rather well, which suggests that it is perhaps time for the IB, the *International Baccalaureate*, to become the GB, the *Global Baccalaureate*, but I can anticipate one or two international objections to that!

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