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The magazine for international educators



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# International School

The magazine for international educators

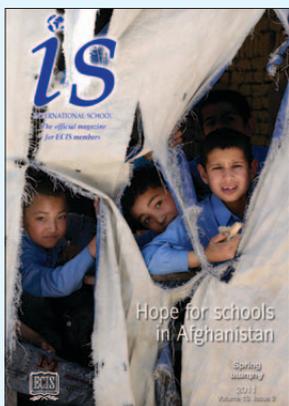
We are celebrating 20 years of covering international education and the issues important to you! Help us shape the future....

Can it really be 20 years since *International School* magazine was launched? And what a 20-year period it has been. Since 1998 there have been enormous changes in the numbers and diversity of international schools, and at a pace that would have seemed unimaginable at the end of the twentieth century. Throughout that period *International School* magazine has observed, commented on and contributed to debate from the very centre of this most exciting of contexts.

Though none of us can know what changes the next 20 years have in store, we might hazard a guess that they will include increased sophistication of technology, increased global mobility, and increased emphasis on including an international dimension in the education of future generations. We might also speculate that not only will an international dimension to education be promulgated through international schools (however many there may be, in their different guises) but that it will also be increasingly high profile in national schools, whether private or state-funded – since it will not only be those experiencing a globally-mobile upbringing who will need to develop understanding of events in the world at large, and their effects across national and cultural boundaries.

In whatever ways change in the international school sector might manifest itself in the coming 20 years (and more!), *International School* magazine is well placed to continue to act as a hub for celebrating achievement, disseminating ideas, and offering support to those who share the challenges of promoting international education. And it can only do that if those who are closest to developments in international education continue to contribute stimulating, interesting and informative pieces of writing – as *International School* readers have been doing during the past 20 years. We look forward to continuing to work with *International School* magazine in observing, commenting on and contributing to future developments in this exciting context – please do help us in that task by continuing to send stimulating and interesting articles for publication!

Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson, editors



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# Getting to No

## Cultural understanding does not necessarily mean justification, writes George Walker

Contributions to the most recent issues of *International School* have revealed interesting differences of opinion concerning the value of the abbreviation TCK. Third Culture Kid – the label of students who belong neither to the culture of their passport nor to the culture of their country of residence – no longer seems to describe the increasing complexity of international family relationships in the 21st century. Where there is complete agreement, however, is in recognising cultural understanding to be the bedrock of international education. National schools may take it for granted (unwisely, since it is a rare school in today's global village that is monocultural) but international schools are required to respond on a daily basis to the challenges posed by their multicultural students, teachers and parents.

Our culture shapes our identity and determines our relationship with the external world. According to Nobel laureate, poet and critic T S Eliot, culture is quite simply '*that which makes life worth living*' and it follows logically that the prime purpose of education is to contribute to building a shared culture that brings meaning to the lives of the nation's citizens, a sense of belonging and a striving for the best of human thought and action. If only it were that simple! Eliot was writing seventy years ago in the United Kingdom when his vision of a homogeneous culture, founded on a shared language and religion and driven by the unifying experience of the Second World War, was a viable proposition. Mass migration has changed the scene and today the maps of nation states rarely define discrete cultural groupings, making the study and management of *intercultural* relationships a prime factor in international education. Schools must help their students to understand what is meant by culture and why it is important as the citizen's experience of society's most precious values: justice, forgiveness, loyalty, honesty, gender relationships, power structures and so on. A multicultural school will have the benefit of human resources *in situ* but every school has access to the vicarious experience of literature, sometimes from the most surprising sources.

For example, anyone doubting the powerful influence of

culture should read the chapter entitled *Dulce Domum* in Kenneth Grahame's classic anthropomorphic tale *The Wind in the Willows*. The conservative, blinkered Mole, exhausted after a long wintery hike with his new friend the Water Rat, suddenly gets the scent of the old home that he has abandoned months earlier for a different and more exciting lifestyle. The memory of everything that he has left behind, not just his home but his entire way of life, comes flooding back to overwhelm him, '*his heart torn asunder and a big sob gathering, gathering, somewhere low down inside him*'. Meanwhile Ratty, who belongs to a very different, buccaneering, entrepreneurial culture, is reluctant to stop and becomes impatient to reach his own home before nightfall. However, he is sensitive enough to understand Mole's acute distress, changes his mind and joins the search for evidence of the ordered, comfortable régime to which Mole once belonged. It must be one of the most moving passages in English literature.

This cultural clash has a positive outcome; Ratty eventually realises he has struck a sensitive nerve; he is able to imagine himself in the Mole's situation and, in any case, he is intrigued to learn more about his new friend's earlier life. Sensitivity, empathy and curiosity are three clues to cultural understanding, the ingredients of tolerance. But what if Ratty had decided not to hang around? After all, it had started to snow again and he was unsure of the way home. His offer of a compromise (returning the following day) has been rejected by Mole. Surely the right decision was to press on. Does Ratty lack the courage to say 'no'? I am reminded of the alumnus in Geneva who told me how much he had benefited from his education at the International School. But he complained that he had left the school 'carrying a burden of tolerance'; no one had told him how to draw a red line, how to identify the intolerable. The problem is not new. The sixteenth century French essayist Michel de Montaigne struggled with the practice of cannibalism, newly reported from Brazil. What should be the reaction of 'civilised Europeans' to a barbaric practice of 'uncivilised savages' when it forms part of that

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society's culture? Montaigne, with the common sense that makes his writing so attractive centuries after its publication, concludes

'It does not sadden me that we should note the horrible barbarity in a practice such as theirs: what does sadden me is that, while judging correctly of their wrong-doings, we should be so blind to our own.'

Cultural understanding, the bedrock of international education, means what it says: cultural understanding, not cultural sympathy nor cultural justification. How then do we recognise culturally unacceptable practices that go beyond the red line? A helpful starting point would be some guidelines that put national behaviour into a wider global context, and indeed such guidelines exist in the form of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When it was adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, member countries were asked to 'cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions'. During my time with the International Baccalaureate (IB) I do not remember seeing

evidence of a single copy being disseminated, displayed, read or expounded and in 1998 its half-century passed almost unnoticed.

Of course times have changed. The UN has more than tripled its membership since 1948 to 195 states, and the Universal Declaration seems increasingly old fashioned in its scope and language. Moreover it fails to balance rights with responsibilities. However, it does no harm to be reminded (Article 4) that no one shall be held in slavery or (5) subjected to torture or (12) subjected to arbitrary interference with his (sic) privacy, family or home or (17) arbitrarily deprived of his (sic) property.

Fifteen years ago the IB adopted a new mission statement which, remarkably, remains in place today insisting, controversially, that 'other people, with their differences can also be right'. Perhaps the time has come to recognise that sometimes they can also be wrong.

**George Walker was Director General of the International Baccalaureate between 1999 and 2005**

We asked whether you thought the Third Culture Kid (TCK) label is now outdated. Here are some more of your responses...

## It is time for TCKs 2.0?

Adam Poole says the Third Culture Kid experience is an everyday reality for 'netizens' of the 21st century

This article is written in response to the editors' recent call for the term Third Culture Kid (TCK) to be replaced with a new term. I suggest that a useful starting point for such an endeavor might be to first redefine how we understand and experience culture in the 21st century. Rather than proposing a new term upfront, I consider it necessary to first offer a re-articulation of the TCK experience and then proceed to think of a term that corresponds to this definition. In so doing, I aim to offer a more expansive definition of a TCK by showing how the way in which we interact with culture in the 21st century is increasingly mediated by the internet and digital devices, which offer us far more opportunities to interact with cultures that would have remained largely remote in the past. It is now possible to speak of a *digital citizenship of virtual spaces*; individuals, also known as **netizens**, who use the internet regularly and effectively (Mossberger, 2007).

Although there are many definitions of culture, I define it as both product and process; it is the collective transmitted wisdom and beliefs of a society, akin to a cultural script that shapes behaviour and thought, yet at the same time enabling individuals to rewrite this script according to their own tactics and agendas (Tan, 2015). Culture, therefore, is

constructed and transmitted through social interaction. My argument is also based on a crucial distinction between two different ways of interacting with culture. Traditionally within a sociocultural paradigm, social interaction has tended to be conceived of as face-to-face social interaction – or what I call *analogue social interaction* (Poole, 2017), with culture being conceived of as transmitted product. Therefore, in order for an individual to interact with another foreign culture in a sustained and in-depth way, he/she would need to be either physically present in a country or in close proximity to individuals from that country. This analogue approach has also informed the way in which TCKs have been defined.

Useem's original description of TCKs as 'children who accompany their parents into another country' suggests that culture is inextricably tied to place. This definition has been developed by Pollock and Van Reken, who define a TCK as 'a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture' (1999). The preposition 'outside' implies that culture is once again understood in analogue terms. More recently, McCaig has proposed the term *global nomad*. While echoing Useem's original definition – 'individuals of any age or nationality



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*Image: The connectors on a child's building blocks.*



Word cloud created by a former student representing her identity as a TCK

who have spent a significant part of their developmental years living in one or more countries outside their passport country' (Schaetti, 1993: 2), the term global nomad adds a more negative connotation to the TCK experience by adding that 'while developing some sense of belonging to both their host culture(s) and passport culture(s), they do not have a sense of total ownership in any' (Schaetti, 1993: 2). The prevalence of this analogue approach to culture can be attributed to the era in which the concept of the TCK was devised and the fact that the work of Useem, Pollock and Van Reken is considered to be so foundational that it has become almost paradigmatic.

However, times change and so too must our way of thinking about the way we interface with culture. It is now possible for individuals to interact with cultures remotely and virtually due to the ubiquity of the internet and digital technology (what I call *digital social interaction* – see Poole, 2017). Moreover, culture should also be understood as an open-ended process, as individuals are able to interact with, and easily modify, culture via technology. Culture, therefore, can no longer be said to be tied to a specific place, but rather is now dispersed across numerous virtual spaces by social networking sites and wikis, and interacted with via digital devices. Therefore, the definitions explored above no longer adequately reflect the way in which young people interact with culture as netizens rather than as citizens. This trend is also complicated by the rise of international education for *aspirant indigenous elites* (Lauder, 2007). As Hayden (2012) points out, many affluent students in national contexts develop hybrid cultural identities as a result of their exposure to international curricula. For example, when teaching a module on TCKs, one of my Chinese IB Diploma students proclaimed that she was a TCK because she considered her identity to be informed by at least three cultures: 1) Chinese culture via her parents and country; 2) Japanese culture via

the internet; and 3) English/western culture via school, the IB Diploma curriculum, and the internet. Therefore, I argue for a more expansive definition of Third Culture Kids; one that reflects the changing practices of interacting with culture through both international education and technological innovation, and one that could, potentially, also include Lauder's *aspirant indigenous elites* as they fall into the group of *digital citizens or netizens*.

### Possibilities for a new term

Given that digital social interaction now mediates the way in which we interact with and experience culture, it is necessary to coin a term that corresponds to the idea of virtual transnational spaces of living and learning. TCK as a term is clearly not up to the task, as it has become so inextricably tied to an analogue understanding of culture that it is now somewhat anachronistic.

I take inspiration from the term Cross Cultural Kid (CCK) as it accommodates a range of identities (Van Reken, 2018). TCKs are just one of many groups whose cultural identities are becoming more complex as a result of globalisation and social interaction being digitally mediated. The term CCK also potentially corresponds to my idea about the way in which we now interact with culture, as the word 'cross' resonates with culture as occupying transnational and virtual spaces as well as the more traditional physical spaces tied to place. I also take inspiration from the notion of 'hidden diversity' – that is, being a TCK is now no longer an exceptional experience, but one that is becoming ubiquitous due to the effects of globalisation and the proliferation of new technology. The TCK experience is fast becoming an everyday reality for netizens of the 21st century, so *aspirant indigenous elites*, such as my students, should be seen as the next generation of global citizens. TCKs 2.0?

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## Please don't call them TCKs

It is not a helpful term, argues Melodye Rooney

There are several reasons why the Third Culture Kid (TCK) descriptor is not helpful for international school students. Firstly, it has morphed from its original application to primarily missionary kids growing up in difficult times, to a vague term too broadly applied. This has resulted in confusion and conflict over who belongs and who doesn't belong in the 'tribe', when we should actually be trying to go beyond tribal thinking anyway. Secondly, the characterization of TCKs as suffering from grief and loss, rootlessness and restlessness, has been based mostly on the model of Pollock and Van Reken (2009), as well as on a limited number of studies – many of which lack proper methodology, haven't been replicated, or are improperly extrapolated to international school students (Young, 2017; Sander, 2017; Melles, 2014). The old TCK profile was useful in bringing attention to problems in expatriate assignments and in repatriation, but is not helpful in understanding how to educate or counsel international school students now, since the globally mobile lifestyle has changed dramatically in the past 50 years. Finally, the emphasis on forming a 'tribe' or finding friends with primarily other TCKs is counterproductive to the transcultural background of these young adults, and is not supported by the growing evidence of how adolescents manage identity in a globally connected world (Sander, 2017; Tanu, 2014; Moore and Barker, 2012). Emphasis on being different and being isolated from monocultural societies will not give them the proper mindset to become the type of global citizens we so urgently need, able to reach out to 'others' and to find commonality in order to work together for the good of the planet.

The term TCK was originally restricted to those who have spent a 'significant portion' of their childhood abroad, and plan to return to their passport country (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009). The vagueness of 'significant portion' has meant that researchers have used the TCK term to refer to those who have lived one year or more abroad (Melles, 2014), and to those who self-identify but have never been outside their home country growing up (Van Reken, 2011). The idea of cultural identity as defined by the TCK term is an antiquated concept, discarded by social scientists in today's postmodern world (Benjamin, 2017; Hall, 1976; Young, 2017).



TCK characteristics were derived primarily from postcolonial missionary kids, often separated years from their families at a young age, in a time when missions were in crisis (Bowers, 1998; Ward, 1989; Pollock 1989). Too much emphasis is placed on the act of moving, when other confounding factors may actually be causing some to have feelings of not belonging, of anxiety, or of depression, which also affect some non-mobile teens worldwide. Factors such as the reasons for going abroad, the socioeconomic level (i.e. social capital), family relationships prior to the move, gender issues, and ethnocentric values as much as ethnicity and nationality determine cultural identity, and how resilient children become (Bradley and Corwyn, 2002). Thus, the TCK term is both too vague and outdated in its theoretical construct to characterize international students, or to offer effective strategies to improve the outcomes for these children. The term has been useful to start a conversation for those adults who suffered long separations and difficult living conditions 50 years ago, but that conversation is no longer pertinent to the current situation of most international school students.

The beliefs that most TCKs suffer grief and loss, lack a sense of belonging (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009), and that 'mobility harms learning' (Ota, 2014) are often accepted as fact, but actually aren't supported when one investigates the body of literature (Sander, 2017). In fact, many of the

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characteristics assigned to TCKs are also to be found in children who aren't moving internationally in this hyper-connected world in which we live (Boush, 2009). Many of the early studies were based on anecdotal stories, and not on rigorous sociological research (List, 2001): studies which do use careful methodologies have found that international school students tend to be more open-minded and tolerant (Gerner and Perry, 2000; Hayden *et al.*, 2000), and have a broader worldview (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000) than domestic private school students. The academic achievement of students at international schools suggests that these children are quite capable of learning, and many go on to become high achievers and leaders in diverse careers. One only has to Google some famous people to realize that often mobility *enhances* learning: Elon Musk (South African born, Canadian-American); Sergey Brin (Russian-born American), and former US President Barack Obama (US born, lived in Indonesia as a child).

In fact, the TCK profile that emphasizes culture shock, grief, and learning difficulties may be based on identity development assumptions about the psychosocial and sociocultural development of globally mobile children that are simplistic or just plain wrong, considering that the TCK profile was originally based primarily on postcolonial adult missionary kids (Pollock and Van Reken, 2009; Ward, 1998; Priest, 2003). Clearly some children do not thrive in a globally mobile lifestyle, but to attribute their struggles to the lifestyle, rather than other confounding factors, may lead to ineffective counseling and/or teaching strategies (Priest, 2003; Sander, 2017). Creating a false narrative of TCK traits may encourage students to blame the wrong sources of their struggles, and telling them that 'mobility harms learning' may make them question whether they really are 'damaged', and just don't realize it. The TCK 'industry' may create a problem, whether that problem actually exists or not (Cranston, 2017).

Early exposure to other cultures shapes these students in developing the potential to go beyond cultural identity boundaries that have limited more monocultural thinking of the past few centuries. They may be more open to diverse ways of living, are keen to build bridges instead of walls, and may look for their commonalities, not their differences, with those who may be called 'others'. If we provide a nurturing environment, they will understand that tribes don't have to conflict but can cooperate, that cultures change and merge, that we can accept differences if we can acknowledge why they exist between us. We need to emphasize that it may not be easy to obtain the benefits of their multicultural journey, but how often in life does achievement come without struggle?

Students of the 21st century are exposed to other cultures and lifestyles more than ever before, and international school students have the advantage of travelling the world and, each day at school, experiencing other cultures firsthand. If we help them, they may develop into resilient adults. Globally mobile students have unique challenges, but they are also facing many of the same issues and concerns as their non-globally mobile peers. As their parents and educators, we need to correctly identify the factors impacting their upbringing, so that we can provide the support they need to optimise benefit from their international lifestyles, to give them the confidence to be themselves, so that they may

go out and change the world for the better. Labeling them with a confusing term associated with too many negative connotations is counterproductive to this effort – so let's please stop calling them TCKs.

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# Staying behind – a challenge from the AIE conference

Terry Haywood looks at the opportunities and threats facing international education

During the October 2017 Alliance for International Education (AIE) conference in Amsterdam, Professor Marli Huijjer presented a keynote speech challenging international educators to go beyond their established focus on innovation, mobility and a world that is driven by change, and to give more recognition to those who, in her words, *'stay behind'*. Prof Huijjer is well-known for provoking her audiences to reflect on alternative and uncomfortable ideas. She was, after all, Thinker Laureate of the Netherlands as well as being a highly regarded philosopher with an interest in order and time in human affairs. The notion that an audience of successful, forward-looking internationally-transient professionals would follow her concerns for *'staying behind'* was an audacious one, yet her pitch continued to resonate throughout the conference. Those who *stay behind*, she claimed, can sometimes feel trapped and excluded from global trends, with lifestyles that are demeaned as being outside the socio-economic currents that are driving the world, yet their experience is anything but stable and their landscape is constantly evolving as newcomers bring novel lifestyle choices and cultural diversity to their geographical and psychological neighbourhoods. Significantly, they are beginning to want their voices to be heard.

I felt personally challenged by Prof Huijjer. As if to emphasise her point, Microsoft had just decided to upgrade my Windows 10 Operating System without asking if I wanted to *'stay behind'* with the previous iteration, the implication being that *'moving on'* is obligatory for my own well-being. But is it? I don't see anything essentially negative in *'staying behind'* if this phrase implies a conscious choice; and it's a perfectly legitimate decision for someone to choose to *'stay'* when others decide to *'move'*. More disturbing, of course, is to be *'left behind'*.

These ideas set up a train of thought about what is happening in our schools today and the pace of change in international schools. In the relentless expansion of our global impact, is everything going to be positive in the future of international schools? Or are there things we should consider *'staying behind'* for? Do we risk *'leaving behind'* some of the things that we should be keeping with us? And, if we are looking ahead eagerly, what are the educational practices that we are happiest to *'leave behind'* in our vision of an optimistic future? I don't expect that we will all agree on the answers to these questions, but that is the fun of debate. Are

there any of us who don't believe that it's beneficial to hear diverse perspectives? So in the style of Prof Huijjer (although without claiming to be the Thinker Laureate of International Education), I propose to share a few personal insights about what I would leave behind, what I would stay behind for, and what I am afraid might really get left behind if we lose track of the inspirational ideas that got us where we are today.

The context for these thoughts is the astonishing era of expansion that international schools are living through today. From small and often fraught beginnings in niche markets for idealistic pioneers or transnational professionals, international education has become a success story of the globalized era. Demand for places shows no sign of faltering, with the growth charted by ISC Research showing a tripling of the number of schools over the past 15 years and a further doubling forecast in the next decade. From just 2,000 schools at the start of this century we can confidently expect that there will be over 17,000 in 2027. This is a wonderful period of opportunity – for educators, for service companies, for investors and for families fortunate enough to find and afford places for their children in our classrooms.

There is a lot for us to be happy about – but this is still a phase of transition. The future will not be simply a bigger and better version of the past. Some things will be different, for ever. Systems that evolved in a network that was small enough to be known as the international schools *'movement'* have now consolidated and are on their way to becoming global corporations with structures that are less flexible and less open to input from grass roots. International schools were once dynamos of pedagogical innovation. They didn't get everything right, but they pioneered a multitude of novel approaches derived from the values of internationalism – and this is something I hope will not get left behind. Indeed, it's probably worth staying behind for if the trend will be towards innovation in curriculum and assessment driven by commercial organisations and not by the schools themselves.

The motivations that drive international education are also changing, as ideologically-driven schools are increasingly outnumbered by those that operate unashamedly for profit in a competitive market where shareholder returns might take priority over stakeholder benefits. There is also an evident tendency for school expansion to be driven by national and personal interest, with international mindedness

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**In the relentless expansion of our global impact, is everything going to be positive in the future of international education? Or are there things we should consider ‘staying behind’ for? Do we risk ‘leaving behind’ some of the things that we should be keeping with us? And what should we be most certainly looking forward to ‘leaving behind’ in the innovations that lie ahead?**

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and global citizenship interpreted as skill sets to enable the successful elite to gain admission to the most prestigious universities and the best-paid jobs. Even the way that schools evaluate their own success might be reduced to league tables based on quantitative testing and examination outcomes. Of course, these features have always been with us and they are in many ways inherent in how schools operate. But if the trends I have outlined are real, then it might be worth staying behind and seeking ways to ensure that the values of internationalism are not diluted to become mere cosmetic appendages to the institutional machinery.

Something that most definitely seems to have been left behind is the notion that international education is for everyone. It never was, you might say: international schools have always been elitist. But there have been moments of opportunity (which George Walker, once IB Director General, referred to as the ‘age of influence’) in which there might have been a coming together with the sharing of experiences and approaches across national/international lines. Not cultural colonisation – but genuine exchange. This moment seems to have evaporated as international schools thrive in their own domains with a sense of superiority that is necessary for them to attract families willing to invest in the expensive fees needed to keep them running and profitable. For those whose values in international learning were always founded on equity and inclusion, this is definitely something worth staying behind for. It’s a job that still needs to be tackled – and that is probably more important than ever.

If the future of international education is to be as dystopic in its success as I have suggested so far, then staying behind is a serious option. But wait a minute .... the future can be what we make it. Schools will still be staffed and led by passionate educators – there will still be learning goals that

incorporate values and attitudes, as well as parents who want their children to develop with an ethical framework as well as a cultural baggage and skill set that will enable them to find university places and jobs. And we thrive on diversity. Branding and kite-marking aside, the scale at which new schools are coming on the scene is creating a multitude of openings. Maybe the rate of innovation is slowing – but in absolute terms the opportunities for teachers to innovate will be greater because of all the new schools that need to have curriculum models developed for them. And just as the green economy will replace dirty engines with more ecologically compatible devices in our cars, most parents will still want their children to grow up with ethical principles and an awareness of global interconnectedness, so there will continue to be a place for idealistic and visionary educators.

This is certainly a fascinating time. International education has come a long way and it will have a dynamic and thriving, albeit uncertain, future. We don’t all have to accept the same role in the educational landscape that lies ahead. There will be places for those who accept the challenges provided in new schools that are appearing and in the organisations servicing our expanding sector. There will also be places for those who stay behind, perhaps to keep alive the principles of local innovation or to put down roots and strive to develop international minds in their localised context. Staying behind, as Prof Huijer suggested, can be an option – provided, of course, that we stay behind and are not left behind.

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# International perspectives from personal experiences – how does that work?

Shona McIntosh explores the impact on learners of the IB Diploma's CAS programme

Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) is different from the rest of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP). It requires students to be creative, to be physically active and to engage in service or volunteering activities. In addition, students complete a project which combines two or more CAS strands. CAS, as part of the DP core which also includes Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay, 'plays a central role' (IB, 2009: 7) in fulfilling the DP's aim of 'developing internationally minded young people' (ibid., p4). But how do students' personal experiences of CAS activities help them develop the international perspectives which are fundamental to international mindedness? Evidence from recent academic research provides some examples which can address this question.

A team of researchers at the University of Bath's Department of Education were commissioned by the IB to study the impact of CAS (Hayden *et al*, 2017). Part of the research used online surveys to establish what activities students undertake to fulfil the CAS requirements (see the word cloud included here) and to report perceptions of its benefits and challenges. Amongst the respondents were almost 8,000 students, largely in the final year of the DP. They came from 89 IB World Schools, located in IB world regions Asia-Pacific (AP) and Africa-Europe-Middle East (AEM). Responses showed strong agreement amongst students that CAS contributes to the development of those attributes for learning enshrined in the IB Learner Profile and those outcomes for which the CAS programme aims, as well as to the development of individual skills such as communication and leadership.

However, the connection between individual skills acquisition and developing international mindedness is not immediately clear. Some school-based CAS activities, such as Model United Nations, may encourage a global outlook but many common CAS activities – such as performance in school plays or with the school orchestra, playing for school sports teams, and helping teachers at school events – take place at a decidedly local level. This prompted a consideration of how CAS activities might contribute more intentionally to students' development of international perspectives.

There was evidence in our study that some CAS activities are designed to intentionally foster the development of an

international outlook in IB Diploma students. Examples were not limited to one particular strand of CAS. For Creativity, for instance, one school's Crochet Club made scarves to send to refugees. For Activity, beach clean-ups and mangrove planting combined physical exertion with global environmental concerns. Through Service, international perspectives were cultivated when students' activities were linked to worldwide organisations, such as the Red Cross or Amnesty International, or by supporting local organisations tackling issues of global significance, such as homelessness, care of the elderly or animal welfare.

The CAS project offers students the chance to develop a sustained response to an international issue. Sometimes this is organised through CAS trips; students return with memorable experiences, having met people – perhaps living in rural or impoverished conditions – they would never otherwise have encountered. However, it should be asked whether memorable experiences are enough, in themselves, to transform students' personal experiences into international mindedness. Although experience has the potential to lead to learning (Hayden and McIntosh, 2018), the quality of follow-up reflections is a key part of turning any experience into something from which students can learn (Cannings *et al*, 2015). Our study also made clear that students need to perceive CAS activities as meaningful.

An explicit intention to connect with international issues through CAS experiences has the potential to link the

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**CAS has the potential to do more than create great memories or develop individuals' skill sets.**

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# The Demo Effect Project

Perhaps a good way to inspire others to help the world is simply to show them how to do it, writes Matthew Baganz

It had been another one of those teaching moments. Students were brainstorming world issues to narrow down their action ideas for the IB Primary Years Programme exhibition, when one student suggested helping ‘all those starving people in Africa’. When asked which one of the 54 countries in Africa he meant to help, the student replied ‘Doesn’t matter, all of them’. ‘We can’t send a billion sandwiches over to feed everybody’, countered another student. ‘We can’t even send money because we’re kids and don’t have jobs’. When prompted to inquire into potential approaches kids could take to learn more about how they could help, the students remained silent. Finally someone said ‘YouTube it’, and the class laughed.

Two things were happening here. The first was that although students considered themselves internationally-minded because they attended an international school, had learned about other cultures, and sat next to international classmates, they continued either to reinforce stereotypes by repeating cultural clichés or to maintain an aloof mentality of disassociation from cultures to which they had had no direct exposure. Additionally, although students may have wanted

to ‘help the world’, they didn’t know how to do it, or even where to look to find out how to do it.

These considerations were the sparks that launched the Demo Effect project, which began as an international collaboration between students and teachers from thirteen schools in eight countries. With the idealistic vision of ‘an informed, invested everyone, realizing dreams’, educators across multiple time zones set out to accomplish two goals: connect students around the world, and capture on camera moments of them taking action, to be shared later with the collaborative team. At the end of the school year, clip highlights would be consolidated into one video that featured several schools and the different ways they demonstrated how they attempted to have a positive effect on their communities; hence the project title: Demo Effect. Molly Foote, teacher at Wade King Elementary School in Bellingham, Washington, USA, said about the project: ‘It is so important for students to see that the world is really a small place and that we are all more alike than different, regardless of where we live.’

To increase international mindedness with exposure to

more complex aspects found beneath the surface of the cultural iceberg, students from one culture were introduced to students from another culture so they could get to know one another on a personal level. The intention was to sow deeper personal connections in order to reap greater compassion and acceptance. This initially took the form of the traditional pen pal letter, albeit beefed up with fancy, colourful fonts and humorous selfies distorted with photo alteration applications. Later, schools communicated through other media such as Google Documents where, for example, students at the International School of Brooklyn, New York chatted live with students at Strothoff International School on the same document. 'Within this project, our students realized that we can communicate with anyone in the world: that we can compare, reflect, and learn from people around the world', said Ricardo Dominguez Gamez, PYP Coordinator at Colegio Bilingüe Madison Monterrey in Monterrey, Mexico. 'For many of them, it was the first time they received a letter. The excitement was fabulous.'

The second issue concerning the lack of student agency was significantly supported by the United Nations' The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World ([www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction/)). This clever page lists actions people can take to help work toward the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and it even rates the activities from Level One (the Sofa Superstar) to Level Three (the Neighborhood Nice Guy). Students were encouraged to begin here, with action examples that were quite attainable for children. 'By using the same goals, and knowing that there were students all over the world working at the same thing, our students were really able to maintain a high degree of motivation', said Karen Scharrer-Erickson, IB Coordinator at Wauwatosia Catholic School in Wauwatosia, Wisconsin, USA. 'For me, this was truly a concrete way of initiating international mindedness and global awareness.'

Video was selected specifically as the medium for the project, partly because of its prominence in today's media consumption, especially among children, but mostly for its achievability of comprehensive communication through motion pictures that capture facial expressions, body gestures, tones of voice and other audio – all within the original environmental context. The online video editor WeVideo made it possible for teachers in schools thousands of kilometres away from each other to upload video files to the same folder in real time. Within minutes, clips from all corners of the world were available for all the teachers involved to use and make their own videos.

Muriel Stallworth, teacher at the International School of Brooklyn in Brooklyn, New York, explained that her

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students 'understood that being able to share their action with the world through the Demo Effect project had the potential to multiply the impact of their action many times!' After a year of both successful collaboration and technical difficulties, seven schools ended up contributing to the final movie, which can be viewed online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxMo2JP6iLk&t=2s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxMo2JP6iLk&t=2s)

Further information about the Demo Effect project is available via [www.demoeffect.net](http://www.demoeffect.net) or email [demoeffectproject@gmail.com](mailto:demoeffectproject@gmail.com)

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# Leveraging lunch

Brett D McLeod argues the case for greater commensality at school

We do it daily. We eat lunch. We eat lunch to assuage our hunger. We eat lunch to fuel our minds and nourish our bodies. We eat lunch as respite from the demands of our day. But lunch also holds possibilities beyond the fulfilment of essential personal needs. Properly tapped, its revitalizing power can transcend the individual, and permeate both the ethos of a community and the capacities of its members.

In 2015, a team of researchers from Cornell University undertook a study of American firehouses to determine if there are any organizational advantages to be had from co-workers eating together (Kniffin *et al*, 2015). Their investigation affirmed that there are indeed such benefits. For schools these prove significant. In short, the study found that firefighting crews who ate together enjoyed better working relationships. For some teachers and administrators this is hardly revelatory. Indeed, savvy school counselors have long understood the benefits of hosting lunches, intuitively knowing that student bonding seems to occur more naturally over food. This is because the intimacy of eating with others fosters feelings of affinity in a way that other social gatherings cannot (Delistraty, 2014). As one Cornell researcher explained it, the joint partaking of food, known as commensality, 'acts

as a kind of social glue' (Kelley, 2015). For schools wanting to cultivate or sustain a strong sense of community, the implications of this study warrant serious consideration.

So, too, does the positive correlation the Cornell study found between commensality and workplace performance. In short, its comparison of firefighter platoons showed that those who ate together maintained a level of performance that was consistently superior to those who did not (Brooks, 2015). Personal experience as both a teacher and administrator has revealed the same. Grade-level teaching teams who routinely lunch together evince greater collaboration and synchrony in their planning and teaching of curriculum. Likewise, administrators and faculty who eat together typically enjoy a greater rapport. The same proves true for teachers who lunch with their students. However, experience has also suggested that those who do so are the exception rather than the norm. Given this, schools should do a better job availing themselves of the benefits commensality offers. For if the Cornell study's findings prove reliable across domains, the advantages for schools could be considerable indeed.

Consider the possible outcomes of faculty, students and leadership eating together regularly in small gatherings

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## Nutrition, table manners, and guidance in, and exercise of, norms essential for mannerly and meaningful dialogue are but three examples vital to student welfare in both their current and future lives, physiologically, socially, and professionally.

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or even collectively as a school. Relationships would be cultivated, connections fortified, communication promoted, feedback obtained, trust engendered, morale buoyed, and cooperation and coordination enhanced, all of which could facilitate coalescence around the aspired culture and mission of a school. School recognition, reputation, initiatives, and even enrollment might all be invigorated by this. So, too, might student learning and achievement. Even behavioral issues might be diminished. But how?

Gatherings over food involve proximity. Proximity promotes interaction; reciprocal sharing and personal disclosures that constitute the bedrock upon which the feeling of connectedness with others is founded (Karbo, 2016). This does not necessarily guarantee friendship, but it does increase the probability of mutual understanding, courtesy, and respect among those partaking. This is pivotal in terms of helping students, and their teachers, to communicate and work together more fruitfully. *Ergo*, interruptions to learning would be reduced. Thus, factors known to have a high effect on learning such as reciprocal teaching, student responsiveness to intervention, and productive classroom discussions, could all be more easily realized (Fisher *et al*, 2017).

For informal learning too, commensality at school offers much. After all, the exchange of knowledge and information has long been inherent to gatherings around food. The key is to keep lunchtime 'lessons' leisurely and allow topics, discourse, and disclosures to arise and evolve organically. Moreover, with an educator present the reliability, accuracy, and appropriateness of what is discussed is responsibly overseen.

Commensality also offers opportunities for practical instruction. Nutrition, table manners, and guidance in, and exercise of, norms essential for mannerly and meaningful dialogue are but three examples vital to student welfare in both their current and future lives, physiologically, socially, and professionally. And the beauty here is that students can prove just as instructive as the adults hosting the lunch: maybe more so given the weight of peer influence. And the cost of all these potential benefits? A nominal expenditure of time and the occasional exercise of some hospitality.

Still, as myriad and manifest as the benefits of eating lunch with co-workers and students might be, mandating it would be impolitic. Doing so would compromise the very promise it holds, perhaps even risk dissension. The solution? The advantages of commensality at school must first be shared among personnel to encourage rumination thereon. Second, its undertaking must be voluntary. To do otherwise

would undermine the conviviality necessary for the positive interaction that encourages rapport and learning. Third, the hosting of lunches needs to be relaxed in fashion, with those participating free to determine their schedules with license to opt out should their involvement prove unworkable.

Customarily, such a loose arrangement would undermine an initiative's success. Not here. Understanding the potential benefits to be had, most would agree that making time to eat with colleagues or students at least once a week would not be an unreasonable request. Being the social creatures we are, the proposition might actually be welcomed. The latter would likely hold true for many students as well. Clearly, there will be those who would choose not to eat with their teachers, but an open invitation nevertheless sends a very powerful message: that they matter, that they are accepted, that they are included, and that they belong. And let's not forget, curiosity can be a very compelling lure.

In his best-selling book, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell explains how minor changes to an environment can have swift and far-reaching effects on a community. In the case of commensality and school, these effects are apparently favorable. So break some bread, build some bonds, and discover the fruits commensality has to offer your school.

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# Time for an IB mission review?

Carol Inugai-Dixon looks at some alternatives

The International Baccalaureate (IB) celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2018. It is a very different organization now from when it was inaugurated, and the world is a very different place from how it was in 1968. I propose that it would be timely, in order for the IB to avoid showing signs of aging and losing the cutting edge of its youthful years, to reconsider its mission statement.

One declaration in particular within the mission statement that has bothered me for some time is the following:

*'Other people with their differences can also be right'*

This sentiment was no doubt admirable in declaring an attitude of tolerance after two world wars when nations committed to hegemony and intolerant of difference decimated millions. But on closer examination the underlying attitude expressed is surely not to be admired in terms of how we have come to think today. Let's look at the declaration more closely.

In suggesting that other people with their differences can also be right, the statement subtly, through the use of the word 'can', implies that they can also be wrong. That might seem perfectly reasonable. However, another implication made by the statement through the use of the word 'also' is that we, who are declaring the statement and who are not the 'other people', are assumed to be right without any question of us ever being wrong. Although exactly what is being referred to as 'right' has not been made explicit, the context of the mission statement is about education for a better and more peaceful world – which therefore suggests to me that 'right' is related to this concept and perhaps to different world views. I don't believe it is referring to whether, for instance, a simple mathematical formula is right or wrong. I imagine post-colonial analysts might very easily detect traces of the self-satisfied righteousness of the old imperialism woven through this declaration.

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**It might be better  
to talk about us  
all as a diversity  
of global citizens  
who have different  
(local) world views.**

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Perhaps the following might be an improvement:

*'Other people with their differences can also be right. They can, of course, also be wrong. And so can we.'*

This modification at least introduces some humility and flattens dominant claims to right and wrong. Nonetheless it stays in a field of 'othering'. It dichotomizes people into 'us and them', and judges. Post-modern writers have pointed out in great detail the problems that can result from dichotomizing and then judging in (mostly) western thinking. Some possible results are irrational hierarchies, hegemonies and elitism.

The IB, however, makes claims to be inclusive. There is ample documentation that describes how the IB values diversity and considers it, along with intercultural awareness and multilingualism, for instance, as active components for developing international mindedness and global citizenship. The language of inclusion does not dichotomize and judge the other, but instead talks of diverse multiple perspectives and frequently uses the pronoun 'we'. So, instead of framing the mission statement with language that talks of 'us' and 'the other with differences', it might be better to talk about us all as a diversity of global citizens who have different (local) world views but who at this time share common global concerns.

Consideration of what is right and what is wrong is, of course, extremely important. But one ultimate aim of an IB education is international mindedness, and although this is a difficult term to define, it most certainly does not include the self-satisfaction that arises from knowing beyond doubt that one is 'right'.

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# I'm a teenager; I don't want to talk about myself

Catherine Artist on helping students to gain confidence and celebrate their achievements

Teenagers are often described by the media as narcissistic and self-obsessed. They post their likes and dislikes umpteen times a day, moan about how adults just don't understand them, and think that life is just so unfair to them. If this perception is accurate, why is it such a challenge to get these teenagers to write their personal statements or college essays for university applications? After all, the subject of the writing is ... well ... themselves!

As is so often the case with stereotypes, this generalised view about teenagers does not reflect the reality. Some of my students refuse to rave about their achievements – culturally for them, it is considered conceited to heap praises upon oneself. Others humbly confess that they cannot think of anything worthy to write about. It seems that even if our students constantly enthuse over their new hairdo, or share their teenage angst on Facebook or Twitter, that does not mean that writing about their amazing work ethic, lifelong fascination with a specific field

or tenacity in overcoming obstacles comes easily. In fact, for my International Baccalaureate Diploma English B class, this has proved to be almost impossible.

## Legally Blonde

The idea struck me while I was watching a re-run of *Legally Blonde* and shaking my head in disbelief over Reese Witherspoon's videotaped application essay to Harvard Law School. Some may argue that the movie is inappropriate as a classroom resource, but I thought it was perfect – for both good and bad. When I showed the segment of the video résumé to my class, the responses were more than I could have hoped for. Some were livid with the way in which women were objectified, while others roared with laughter at the tongue-in-cheek application. The video prompted an intellectual discussion of gender stereotypes and media misrepresentation. Not a single student remained unaffected.

Next I asked the class, if they were the deans of Harvard,

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how would they view Elle, the character played by Witherspoon? Almost everyone declared they would not accept her application: "Miss, she comes across as being very shallow, and her bikini ... ugh! Harvard wants intellectuals and not fashion models". Bingo! Lesson #1: know your audience. The students were then asked to listen to the segment, without the accompanying visual. When asked if Elle's video résumé highlighted qualities that would make a good law student, students conceded that there were "one or two good arguments with supporting details", but "not always the most appropriate examples or evidence!" Here's Lesson #2 : Select the best ideas and support them with the most appropriate and convincing supporting details.

The discussion carried on in similar manner, with students identifying the do's and don'ts of making a video résumé, going beyond the 58-second videotaped application of Elle Woods. Students debated the language used, setting, persuasive devices and so on. At the end of the segment, they had a useful list they could refer to.

### Creating a video résumé

Students were then asked to create their own video résumé. The target audience? Their desired top university. Students were asked to write their script, considering their target audience, tone, style, register, setting and structure. They were asked to make themselves into the 'perfect' candidate

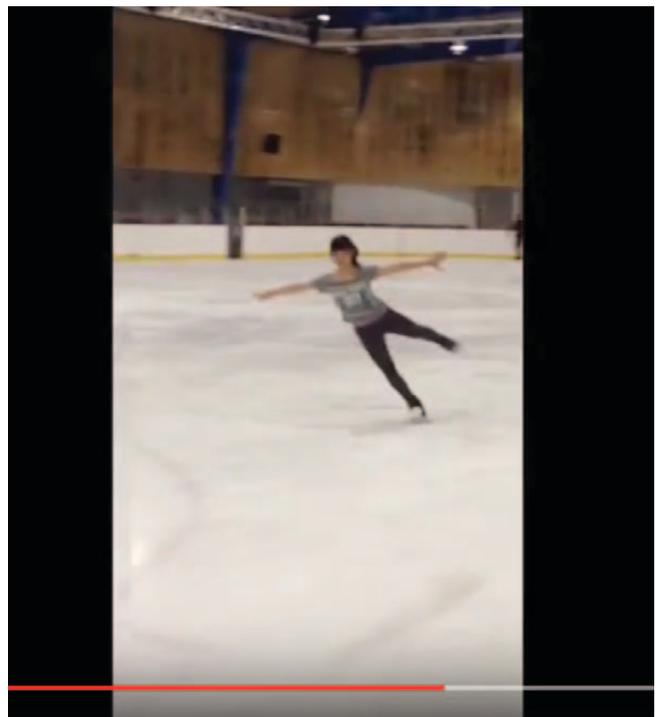
with imaginary work experiences, academic credentials and extra-curricular activities that were relevant to their application. Then their script was edited by their peers before they recorded the résumé on their mobile phones.

In addition to being a practical task, creating a video résumé allows students to be creative with ways to make themselves stand out in their applications. One student for instance, an amateur figure skater, did a double axel. Even though this is a personal interest, it demonstrated that her pursuit for excellence was a given. Another waxed lyrical about a Mercedes C-Class, which had coincidentally been seen parked in the school compound. This young man has dreamt of studying automotive design and being employed by Mercedes.

Working on this task at the start of Grade 11 has given my students a foretaste of what they need to include in an application for university, and adequate time to rectify what they lacked: "Seriously, Miss, I've got to get some proper work experience during the summer at a hotel. How do I go about this?" My students were more engaged than ever in a language task that was both creative and relevant.

The language skills and knowledge learned in this unit would certainly be useful when it is time for my students to write their personal statements/college essays. The presentation of that information via a different medium gave them an opportunity to use technology they were familiar with and, for those with more advanced IT skills, a chance to use an alternative method to present their work. Just as important, at the end of the unit my students were able to talk with pride about their good qualities and achievements. And the final lesson of the unit? It's OK to take pride in your achievements – especially if you have worked very hard to earn them.

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# Teaching and a growth mindset: do we really embrace failure?

Kaeyla Wilmoth-Hogg tackles a difficult question

How often are we crushed when our students don't do as well as we had hoped? We tell them it's OK – setbacks or even failures are just part of the learning process. But how often do we take on their failures as a negative statement about our own ability as an educator? We support them in developing skills to negotiate their own learning process, but are we really leading by example?

For many years now, educators have been influenced by the work of Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck. Dweck's research includes debunking ideas about intelligence being related to fixed traits and innate abilities: a 'fixed mindset'. An individual with a 'fixed mindset', according to Dweck, generally believes *"You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are"* (2006: 12). Dweck promotes notions of a 'growth mindset' or, as Guy Claxton suggests, an expanding or 'expandable intelligence' (2002). In essence, this research has developed key methods

for helping students to embrace challenges and develop resilience: to see their minds as ever changing, with the capacity to expand and grow.

Dweck's research explores how a teacher's 'growth' or 'fixed' mindset will influence student learning. If little Rachel fails an exam, will the teacher assume that Rachel does not have an aptitude for that subject? – a possible consequence of a teacher not having or promoting a growth mindset, assuming that aptitude, ability or intelligence are measurable and to a large degree 'fixed'. So, a fixed mindset teacher may advise little Rachel towards other pursuits, working under the assumption that there is little that can be done if she does not display a 'natural ability'. Dweck's research also proposes that if we as educators over-empathise ('It's OK – not everyone can be good at creative writing'), then we are actually doing more harm than good. Teachers should be careful of the language they use, including the use of praise

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**As educators we must also ask ourselves questions including: How often do we attempt new or more creative strategies? Do we take the easier or safer option? Are we too results-driven to risk a lesson or two experimenting with something new?**

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to define intelligence. Labels such as 'smart' or 'gifted' have been found to be detrimental to students' motivation to learn.

As educators we must also ask ourselves questions including: How often do we attempt new or more creative strategies? Do we take the easier or safer option? Are we too results-driven to risk a lesson or two experimenting with something new? If we truly have a growth mindset and our school environment is encouraging in this endeavour, then staff should feel supported in trying something new. Observations would also be welcomed. Honest critique would be embraced and we wouldn't feel anxiety over openly analysing our own practice.

If we delve even deeper, we should consider the ways in which 'mindset' also impacts on a teacher's emotional state. How often, when a child fails or struggles in our class, do we take this as a personal failure on our part? Could it not be part of that child's journey? Aren't setbacks sometimes just part of a necessary process? Isn't that what we tell our students? As long as we assist the student in developing skills to cope with failure, build resilience and continue to move forward, aren't setbacks OK? Sometimes, though, as teachers it feels impossible not to take on students' failures as our own. Personalising student failure is dangerous, as it also leads to teachers attempting to save students from experiences which are necessary if a growth mindset is to be developed. From negotiating failure, students develop resilience, perseverance and resourcefulness.

Do we not often feel that we are employing new strategies in a constant attempt to engage and motivate every last student in our class? I have had many conversations with stressed colleagues, who feel demotivated by struggling students for whom they feel a personal responsibility. Over time many of these students improve through the tireless efforts of their teachers. However, many of these teachers are telling students that 'setbacks are part of the process', while at the same time feeling demoralised by their failed attempts at facilitating the students' development. The acceptance of our own fallibility should be a key part of the growth mindset process. We shouldn't be aiming at an unattainable ideal. We are growing and developing skills towards proficiency, not perfection. Having a growth mindset for an educator

should incorporate acceptance. We should embrace the fact that classrooms are filled with a multitude of variables that will influence the success or failure of a lesson. We cannot and should not attempt to control all outcomes and, most importantly, should not be too hard on ourselves.

How can schools be supportive in promoting more of a growth mindset? Allowing teachers to make mistakes is not only a learning experience; it's an essential component for growth as a teacher and a human being. Our goal of creating a safe space for students is crucial. Is it not also necessary for teachers to feel they are supported within that same safe space? We still have to consider our motivation. Often, so much of what we do is purely driven by the needs of our students. But by concentrating on our own personal and emotional growth, won't we be better models for a positive growth mindset? We have the capacity to encourage and inspire, and we shouldn't be deterred when our attempts do not play out in the way we had hoped. Being flexible, adaptable and continuously striving to grow and change, along with our students, will help us to become the kind of educators we all hope to be. As Guy Claxton reminds us (2008: 193):

*"Happiness is a mixture of pride, satisfaction and the sense of effectiveness and value that arises when we have stretched ourselves to achieve something we care about."*

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# A space for creativity and innovation

Ruwan Batarseh explains how her school is promoting 'maker education'

With the emerging interest in 'maker education', Design as a subject is becoming an essential in schools. Maker education is 'an education approach that positions the student as an innovator with the responsibility to find solutions to relevant problems' (Wiebusch 2016). Making can contribute to empowering learners and developing a greater sense of possibilities to engage and shape their future (Agency By Design 2015). Jankowska & Atlay (2008) highlight the positive effects on student engagement that can be fostered by creative learning spaces such as 'makerspaces' or 'fab labs'. Locally to Amman Baccalaureate School, Jordan (where I teach), Amman has witnessed a design movement integrated in many fields and manifested in youth design events such as the annual Amman Design Week. In the past few years the design professions have been taking key roles in developing the local community and forging the professional future for our students.

Amman Baccalaureate School (ABS) offers Design Technology (DT) in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) as a Group 4 science subject, and Design as a Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) subject. Until recently the ABS Design Technology department included a traditional wood workshop, electronics laboratory, computer lab and classrooms. Although the space was confining in many ways, four years ago Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) was introduced, incorporating Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines and three dimensional (3D) printing into the creation of products. As CAM coupled with the development of Computer Aided Design (CAD) to aid design and modelling, the department leapt to a new level by offering a variety of technologies. Students were able to reach new depths in understanding the design process and applying the design cycle to innovate and create solutions for problems or respond to the needs of users.

In 2017 a decision was made to renovate the space and provide students with an environment that promotes creativity and welcomes innovation. An architectural design approach of an industrial learning space was adopted that offers openness and transparency. The final design represents a design hub which students can utilise during formal lessons and in other informal sessions of designing and making. An inner foyer includes informal seating areas, laptop charging station, and space to display students' final products with a digital display screen to present past projects and elements of the design process. This foyer is visually open to the rest of the facilities in the centre and provides access to the classrooms, workshop, computer lab, staff room and electronics lab. The transparency within and between the spaces allows for visual continuity of the space and keeps all learning activities visible to students and visitors of the location, provoking curiosity and adding interest to the centre. A grade 12 student who has studied DT for the last six years adds: 'I think the new DT department gives off an industrial design feel from the way the interiors are designed, which helps put students in the contexts of the subject being taught. As for the facilities, they are high technological advancements that are usually not offered in schools and they have definitely helped students create their products and understand the way they function, as it is required for us to understand them (being a part of the DT syllabus). Finally, the students' safety is majorly considered; there are bigger and safer spaces for movement in the renovated Innovation and Design Centre'.

The first exhibition in the newly renovated Innovation and Design Centre (IDC) focused on the final design project for the Year 2 (grade 12) Design Technology IBDP students. The

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project started towards the end of grade 11 and stretched till the end of grade 12 first semester. The students looked for authentic design problems with real intended users. The projects varied from furniture design to 3D printed prototypes using a variety of manual and computerised techniques, and from the traditional wood workshop manufacturing techniques to computerised manufacturing using the CNC routers. Students had the freedom to adopt any technique that is required for the creation of the prototype; even textile products that are outsourced appeared as part of the final outcomes in the exhibition. Another grade 12 student shares her experience of the final design project: 'I have certainly developed as a designer. I made a hammock that would meet the needs of any camper and guarantee a positive camping experience by considering aspects of comfort, safety, privacy, and catering for all external and uncontrollable factors, such as weather, temperature, insects, etc. I learned a lot about ergonomics and truly experienced what it's like to design for people. It is more complicated than I initially thought because I had to consider different percentiles for height, weight, and width of a person. I also learned a lot about textiles and ensured that my textiles had all the characteristics (waterproof, UV-proof, and mosquito-proof) that would make my hammock successful and meet the needs of any camper or user. Overall, the design of my hammock was radical, and so was its function, and [it] will require promotional techniques to raise awareness and shift the stereotypical image from tents being the source of accommodation for campers to hammocks'.

Crucial to designing learning spaces is a good understanding of the educational need. The spatial relationships between the spaces and the openness

are important elements in formulating the functional connectedness that the students need in maker education. Staying updated with the latest technologies and merging techniques is a challenge. Nevertheless, utilising the updated technologies is a key element in involving students and supporting their learning through the design process.

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# Science is not scary

## Briony Taylor introduces a case study of teacher attitudes towards science in the context of the IB Primary Years Programme

From 2006 to 2011 I was the primary school science teacher at a bilingual school in Switzerland. Hands-on science was used as a platform to help the non-Anglophone students learn English in a fun and authentic way. In this role, I very quickly remembered why I love science and I realised how important science education is. I witnessed first-hand how motivated students can be when they engage with science. They are inspired to learn how to think, solve problems and make informed decisions, just like scientists do.

Being a passionate science educator, I wanted other primary school teachers to enjoy teaching science as much as I did. The positive association between teachers' attitudes towards teaching and students' attitudes toward learning is well recognised, in science as in other areas of the curriculum. If teacher attitudes play a role in teaching and learning, consideration of these attitudes is therefore essential for understanding and improving education.

I also wondered what was the best way to teach science. Many research projects have documented the failures of traditional methods of teaching science, while many others have favoured the more modern approach of teaching science through inquiry. Despite these findings, a majority of primary science teachers still use a textbook-based, content-acquisition approach to science education (Tenaw, 2014), while studies by Harlen and Holroyd (1997) demonstrated that instructors with low confidence and low content knowledge might rely heavily on kits and teach science very prescriptively by having students follow step-by-step instructions.

In 2015, for my final dissertation as part of a Master's degree, I investigated teacher attitudes towards science in the context of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years

Programme (PYP), motivated by three research questions: (1) What are the attitudes of PYP teachers towards science in the context of the PYP? (2) Can PYP teachers identify any unique challenges or advantages to teaching science in the context of the PYP? (3) How often are PYP teachers teaching science to their students? I chose to ground my research in the PYP because it is an inquiry-based, concept-based, transdisciplinary curriculum that states that science must also be taught as a way of thinking. This is very much in line with how current research suggests children best learn science.

I used a case study approach with 18 international school teachers. I created a theoretical framework for assessing attitudes by adapting a model proposed by van Aalderen-Smeets and Walma van der Molen (2013). The framework was made up of seven aspects: perceived relevance, perceived difficulty, gender bias, enjoyment, anxiety, self-efficacy and context dependency, and was used as the basis of a questionnaire to assess teachers' attitudes towards science in the PYP. Although with only 18 participants the findings cannot be generalised to other contexts beyond the case study school, I hoped that the results would be interesting to other teachers and would provide some ideas for their own context.

Overall the participants in this study held a positive attitude towards the four key aspects of the PYP (inquiry, concept-based, transdisciplinary, science as a way of thinking). The vast majority of participants perceived these methods of teaching science as relevant and made clear that they enjoy teaching in these ways. Only a small number of participants perceived the PYP science teaching methods as difficult, felt anxious teaching in these ways and had low perceived self-efficacy (see Figure 1).

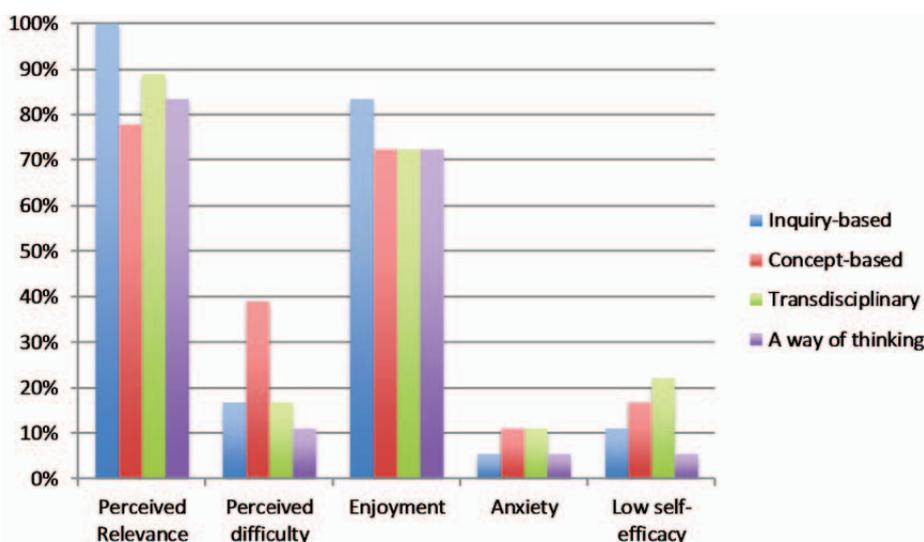


Figure 1: Attitudes towards science in context of the PYP

## How could teachers have a positive attitude towards science but not teach it regularly?

Participants valued the inquiry-based and student-centred approach but did find some aspects of teaching science in the context of the PYP challenging, and suggested more support and training for teachers in the areas of student-centred, transdisciplinary and concept-based teaching. Participants also stated that a good quality Programme of Inquiry (POI) would help improve science teaching and learning; this could be something of particular interest to PYP Coordinators.

However, despite most participants having a positive attitude towards science in the context of the PYP, not many participants were actually teaching science regularly or intending to do so. Some even stated that they never teach science (see Figure 2). They expressed concerns that it is difficult to incorporate science into some units of inquiry, and that it is hard to balance the science programme within the class and within the school. This finding from my research bothered me; how could teachers have a positive attitude towards science but not teach it regularly?

I was aware that the findings from my small-scale study were not in line with the literature, which suggests that, overall, teachers tend to hold negative attitudes in regards

to science and science teaching – an issue that needs to be addressed because of the impact it must have on the teaching and learning of science. Ramey-Gassert *et al* (1996) found that teachers can gain a more positive attitude towards teaching science through inquiry-based hands on professional development training.

As a next step, I am interested to explore further why a positive attitude towards science education does not necessarily translate into teaching science regularly. A positive attitude towards science is a good starting point. Attitudes are precursors to behaviour intent, which can lead to actual behaviour. So, what ingredients do teachers need to turn a positive attitude towards science into teaching more science? Any ideas would be welcome!

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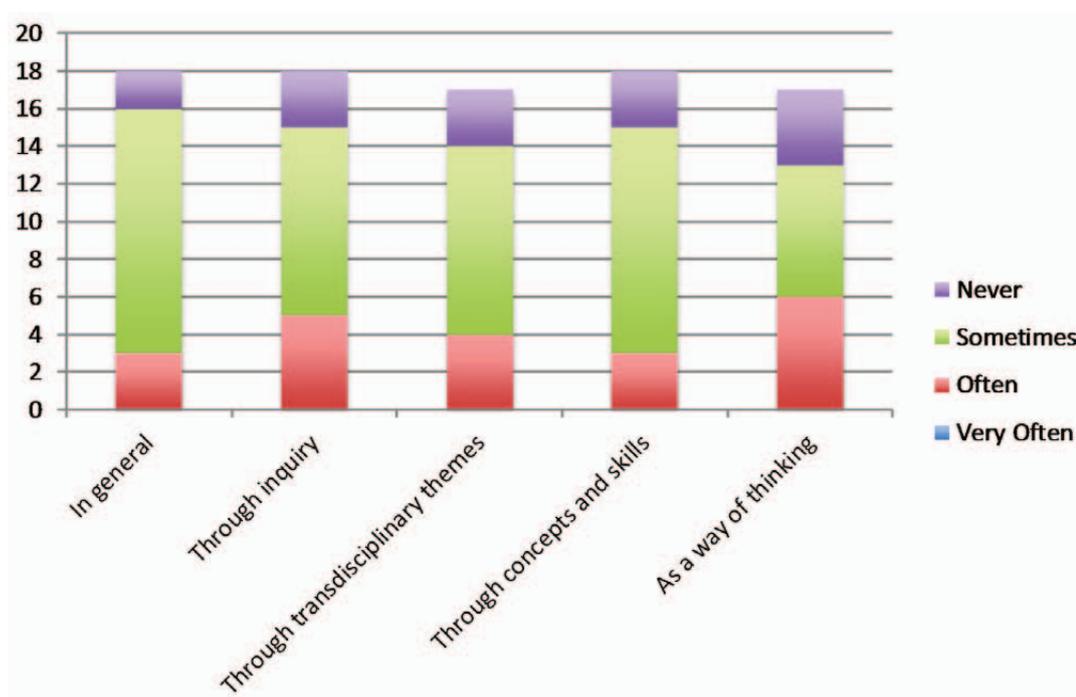


Figure 2: Actual behaviour: how often teachers were teaching science in the context of the PYP



## The Third Culture Model

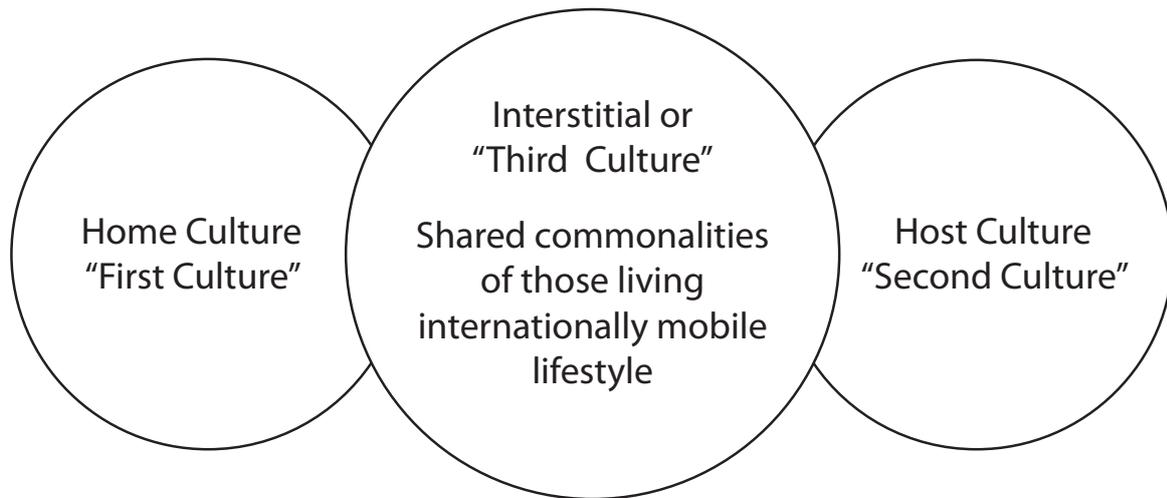


Figure 1: The Third Culture model (Ruth E. Van Reken, 1996)

school systems, and over time developed the language of their host country to high levels of proficiency. Using as a reference point the 'Third Culture Kid' framework (home culture, host culture, third culture: see Figure 1), we began to understand that these children, because of their long-term, everyday experiences in this cultural setting, were gradually replacing their home language with their host language in terms of affinity and fluency. This led us to the following guiding questions:

- Dr Jim Cummins states that 'When you reject the child's language in school, you reject the child' (2001). If we agree to allow the whole child into our school, culturally and linguistically, is it fair to say some parts of you are welcome here and other parts (that don't line up with your passport or parents) are not?
- Families do arrive at our schools with mother tongues already or nearly lost. Don't we have to meet them where they are, rather than force them into a mother tongue vision that may no longer apply to them?
- Who are we to decide for a student what their cultural identity should be?

These questions helped us to see that we were not, nor should we ever be, the architects of our international families' identities and languages. Therefore, the entry requirements governing Mother Tongue Programming at ISH were expanded to include this new wave of children. Self-selected identity languages would become the new measuring stick for our Language Programmes. We also opted for the UNESCO mother tongue definition (2003) to replace our outdated version linked to passport status. This definition creates the opportunity for identity languages to be developed alongside mother tongue languages. The UNESCO mother tongue definition is as follows:

The term 'mother tongue', or identity language, may refer to several different situations. Definitions often include the following elements:

- the language(s) that one has learnt first;
- the language(s) one identifies with, or is identified as a native speaker of by others; and
- the language(s) one knows best and/or language(s) one uses most.

'Mother tongue' or 'identity language' may also be referred to as 'primary' or 'first' language. (UNESCO, 2003)

Finally, mother tongue and identity languages were given equal status at our school and both groups of students therefore have access to our language programmes.

In order to understand each child's linguistic profile we have developed our own ISH Language Portfolio tool inspired by Roma Chumak-Horbatsch (2012). This has proven to be very useful in unraveling the complexities children navigate in their daily lives, through their many languages. In adapted versions for younger and older primary children, the language portfolio is used throughout the whole school. In our 'within the curriculum' mother tongue programme, supported by classroom teachers and peer tutors from the secondary school, children with multiple mother tongues and/or identity languages may change the language group they work with at three points during the academic year, allowing for continued growth in multiple languages. Children may also enroll in extracurricular mother tongue lessons, where explicit language instruction is provided. Affirming children's identity (Cummins, 2001) and continuing their language development remain core principles behind all of ISH's language programming.

At the International School of The Hague, staff, parents and students have undergone a significant mind shift in how we perceive and value languages and their subsequent development in our classrooms. From listening closely to our international families and children, we have learned that identity and languages are closely intertwined. If a language links to a lived experience and makes up an important part of who a person is, it should be given the chance to grow

alongside more traditionally accepted languages like mother tongue. Ultimately, throughout this learning journey it has been, and remains, our continuing aim to provide all our children with the opportunity to develop their full linguistic repertoire at ISH, whether they have home, additional, or identity languages – or all of the above.

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# Forthcoming Conferences

May 12-14, COBIS Annual Conference, London, UK.

May 27-June 1, NAFSA Annual Conference and Expo, Philadelphia, US.

July 25-27, CIS Australia Conference, Brisbane.

July 26-29, IB Americas Global Conference, San Diego, CA, US.

September 11-14, EAIE Annual Conference, Geneva, Switzerland.

October 4-6, IB AEM Global Conference, Vienna, Austria.

October 25-27, EARCOS Leadership Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

November 7-10, CIEE Annual Conference, Barcelona, Spain.



# Dyslexia – an EAL difficulty, a specific learning difficulty – or both?

Mary Mountstephen says that schools need a structure in place to answer this question

As the number of non-native-English speaking students attending English medium international schools increases, those involved in the admissions interview, assessment and intervention process face challenges in accessing appropriate test resources. The task of identifying English as an Additional Language (EAL) students with potentially additional specific learning difficulties requires a more specialist approach and one that moves beyond assessments of language knowledge alone. In this article, I will look at some of the features of dyslexia that may also be apparent in EAL learners, as well as ways of overcoming some barriers to the identification of underlying learning differences.

At the initial admissions interview, screening tools in common use are generally produced and standardised for the English speaking population; this, by definition, can place any EAL student at a distinct disadvantage. This

can, however, be at least partly overcome by either using tests which are not so heavily reliant on language, or on using some assessments which can be carried out in the individual's first language. This can then help guide the individual student's support programme. In addition to the day-to-day life of the student, there are also ethical and inclusion issues to be considered to ensure that the student is not overlooked in terms of access arrangements for examinations that might include the provision of extra time, reader and/or scribe. Such considerations become relevant also in relation to the inspection process, when schools need to demonstrate that there is a proactive and planned process for the identification of 'hidden' barriers to learning and academic achievement.

I have been providing 1:1 assessments of academic potential for EAL students when there have been concerns expressed by

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## Children need the right support and to know that they are not 'stupid'; that there are ways in which they can learn to develop effective learning strategies and strong self-esteem, and be on target for success.

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teachers about a student's progress. The assessment process includes a number of tests that are less reliant on vocabulary and language, and more reliant on the sub-skills of visual and auditory processing, in addition to tests of non-verbal ability and self-rating scales covering concentration and focus.

### What is dyslexia, and how does it vary across languages?

There are countless definitions of dyslexia, but the following appears in an article about the development of a multilingual test for dyslexia:

'Dyslexia is a difficulty with the acquisition of reading, writing and spelling which may be caused by a combination of phonological segmentation and assembly, visual and auditory processing deficits. Word retrieval and speed of processing difficulties may also be present. The manifestation of dyslexia in any individual will depend upon not only individual cognitive differences, but also on the language used' (Smythe, 2000).

Much of the research and writing on dyslexia focuses on languages that are alphabetic. Some of these, such as English and French, are seen as more difficult to learn than, for example, Spanish or Italian. Literacy studies have shown that even for children without literacy difficulties, Spanish and Italian are easier to learn. However, there is little evidence that these more regular systems would significantly decrease the numbers of individuals with dyslexia, due to other aspects of dyslexia to be found including the visual, auditory and working memory aspects. Different languages make different cognitive demands, and any one specific cognitive deficit in an individual will have different consequences, depending on the particular language being learned.

It can be seen, therefore, that an identification/screening programme can be drawn together which is holistic in nature and which opens teachers' minds to the possibility that Titus or Dante may not just be a little slow or unwilling to learn English; they may have underlying difficulties that, for whatever reason, have not yet been identified.

Early identification is crucial in helping a child to work with and around a developing learning barrier and in ensuring that school, family, and boarding staff (where relevant) understand how it affects their learning, confidence and self-esteem. Children need the right support and to know that they are not 'stupid'; that there are ways in which they can learn to develop effective learning strategies and strong self-esteem, and be on target for success. For the individual who is learning English as an additional language, the way in which this is handled can be particularly sensitive, depending

on the cultural perspectives prevalent in their home country in relation to the perception of learning differences. Dyslexia can easily go undetected in early schooling. Children can become frustrated by difficulties in learning to read, and may show signs of low self-esteem and behavioural problems that develop out of frustration.

### Some indicators suggesting the need for further investigation

Children with dyslexic-type learning difficulties may demonstrate:

- inconsistent performance: sometimes cannot remember the names of objects such as 'computer';
- problems with memory (lists, homework, maths tables);
- problems with concentration, focus and recall (following instructions, recalling correct sequences, forgetful);
- problems with organisation (management of books, kit etc.); and
- issues around motor control and hypersensitivity to sensory input: distractible.

If these signs are evident in an individual who in other ways seems bright and alert, it is possible that they are indicators of a dyslexic-type learning difficulty. Though this is not always the case, the possibilities should be explored.

### Conclusion

In this article I have tried to raise awareness of issues that face some EAL students that may remain 'hidden'. The implications are significant at many levels, from the importance of nurturing the individual student's inner sense of worth and achievement, to the accountability of the school in effectively meeting each student's needs. The original question raised in the title was: Is dyslexia an EAL difficulty, a specific learning difficulty, or both? Each school needs to have a structure in place to show how this question is being addressed, so that students such as Titus and Dante are recognised, supported and challenged in order to succeed.

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# Head in the cloud?

Saqib Awan has some suggestions for schools

A report published by ISC Research at the beginning of 2018 on management systems in international schools highlighted a movement towards cloud-based data management. According to the report, while over a third of international schools are now proponents of the cloud, many schools still shy away from storing school data this way. Though the report identified that very few international schools today have major issues with internet connectivity, more than a quarter of schools believed there was no need for their data management to be cloud-based. Most schools that prefer to stick with their server do so because of not trusting a move into unknown territory, not wishing to face change, or not knowing the benefits that change will bring. But relying on traditional methods of data storage not only exposes school data to greater security risk; it also limits interaction and data access for the entire school community at a time when online accessibility to data and information is becoming the norm.

Many of us choose to manage numerous aspects of our lives today through online platforms; finances, utilities, work and social life. Within a decade, what is currently a preference will become an expectation, providing freedom of access wherever we are and whenever we want it. Such freedom is only possible, in a secure way, because of the cloud. Without it, we are dependent on a portal connected to a server which inevitably limits our access due to security updates and system demand, lack of band-width and functionality. The information we want and data we need are becoming increasingly available through seamless, intuitive, secure interfaces, and soon we'll require this delivery in everything we do. Today's e-generation is accustomed to instant access and indeed expects it; their parents almost as much. So why would any school restrict its chance to be as interactive as it can be with these, its most important customers?

## User friendly data access

Schools are certainly maturing in their approach to technology. Many are no longer content with using it only for functionality, such as storing student data, dealing with finance, and managing teaching resources. An increasing number are also enabling their community (not only teachers and administrators, but students and parents too) to interact with the school through technology. Many forward-thinking international schools have user-friendly, multi-language platforms that mirror the kind of interfaces we've become used to in the typical online interaction of our daily lives. But to ensure that students and parents can access this wherever they may be, on any device, and to ensure full access to everyone in a large school or school group when demand is extensive, a cloud-based interface is a necessity.

Once parents know that there are schools that can offer them extensive, easy access to their child's learning progress, attendance and behaviour whenever they want it, many will seek out those that do. Once students know that schools can offer them access to schoolwork, resources, feedback, progress

analysis and even lessons, wherever and whenever they want, they'll consider a school using more traditional methods as possibly limiting their potential for success. Perhaps most important are the benefits for teachers. Having instant access to data that has been automatically analysed to assess each individual student's progress helps teachers to identify areas for intervention to improve performance and support learning where needed. Rather than spending time analysing the data, teachers spend more time acting on it. Once teachers know of schools that enable tracking and assessment of students through a single, online, teacher-friendly platform, they will look for such a resource wherever they go.

In the competitive world of international schools, where choice for parents, students and teachers in many cities is extensive, providing the best possible interaction and full accessibility to ensure outstanding education for every student is a convincing, if not essential, selling point.

## Recognising cloud-based solutions

Cloud-based schools don't have to manage software updates and server maintenance. They don't need to worry about upgrade shut-downs, band-width limitations, or the competencies and reliability of their local IT support – all of which can, and do, compromise data security and impact functionality. True cloud school management solutions have a number of common characteristics:

- They are not adaptations of former server-based models; they have been designed and built from the ground up, exclusively for the cloud.
- They provide a complete maintenance-free solution for data storage, back-up and recovery, including software as a service (SAAS) provision. This means that system upgrades, patches, and updates all happen automatically and when necessary.
- They are elastic. True cloud solutions will be able to flex to accommodate peak or increasing demand. They will scale automatically and accommodate future needs without having to know what the future requires (just think where we've come in the past ten years of technology use).
- Rather than accessing through a portal connected to a server, cloud solutions give users access to data wherever they are, even with low bandwidth, and without interference from updates or server restrictions.
- True cloud solutions provide a level of data security superseding all other data storage options and can manage any size of data need a school or school group could ever have.

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# Journals – more than just a collection of entries

Caroline Montigny argues the case for a traditional method

If you take a look into an international language classroom, chances are you will see some type of technology in use which might include a projection screen, computer, or portable electronic device. However, there is one essential tool that should remain part of the modern classroom: a journal.

The journal is a time-tested tool that provides a safe place for students to write. Within the pages, teachers might read about a family event, feelings, likes or dislikes. These entries provide an opportunity for teachers to learn about students as individuals and possibly a platform to start a conversation. One student wrote about enjoying her family vacation and

how she was eager to sleep in her own bed again. However, she was dismayed to arrive home to disarray and a broken window. Her house had been burgled while she and her family were away. The journal entry continued with details about a previous break-in that happened a few months earlier. As her teacher, I talked with her about a variety of things including feeling safe at home and how she cannot help but worry when her family goes on future vacations. Another student wrote about homework and how he has difficulty some nights going to bed early. He has friends in a different country, where the time zone is seven hours ahead. When he is trying to go to bed, his friends are texting and

## Curriculum, learning and teaching

wanting to talk. We spoke about sleep and talked about what he can do about the situation. After several days, the student told me that he now turns his phone off when he goes to bed because it is important for him to get some rest. While there are many more examples that can be shared, these two show that students are approachable and open to conversations with their teacher. While the journal can be a tool to generate conversation, it can also provide a place to practice writing to increase fluency and use new vocabulary.

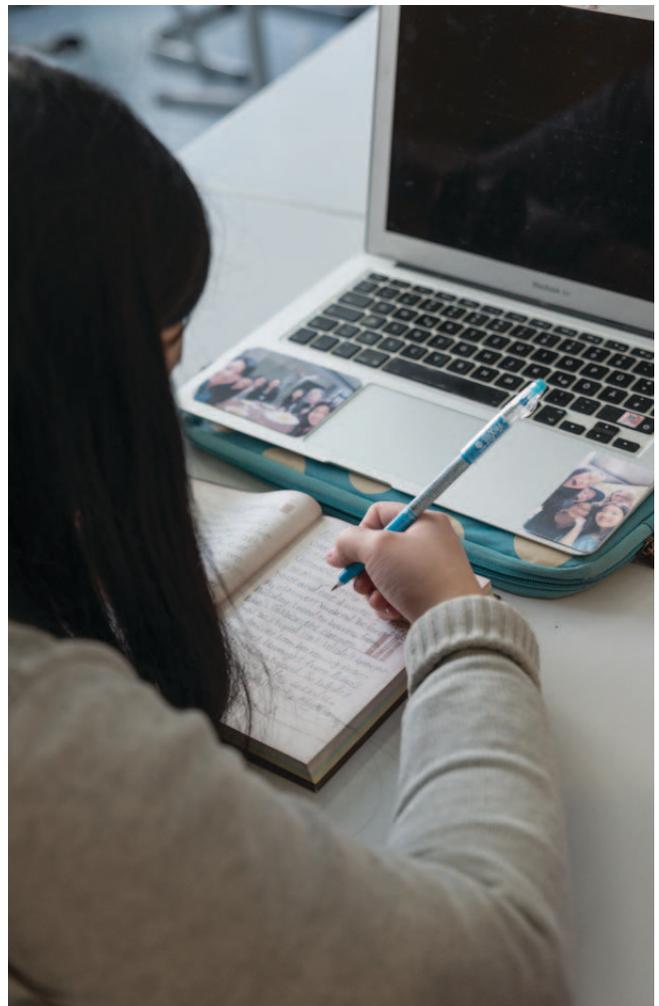
When students keep their informal writing within the pages of a bound text, they themselves can see tangible evidence of their own progress. One student wrote 'I think it [journal writing] has helped my English because it improves my grammar and vocabulary'. Another wrote 'I can see the new vocabulary gradually'. Students can also reflect on how they have grown, from their viewpoints, to how sentence structure and vocabulary becomes more sophisticated over time. With continual practice, transfer into the everyday is also possible: 'I often get new vocabulary and connect to my conversation'.

For journals to be successful, they must have a prominent place in a language classroom. There should be dedicated time given for students to write and teachers should consistently collect and peruse the pages. By reviewing students' work, a teacher can also see what might need to be addressed from a grammatical point of view. While there should not be an expectation of perfect grammar and spelling, teachers can

create mini-lessons to address inconsistencies that might come up from time to time: sentence structure, punctuation, and capital letters, to name just a few. Depending on the classroom, these needs can vary each year. Teachers can draw on many sources when a student does not know what to write about. Creating a database of ideas is ideal as students can access the information on their own and choose topics they wish to write about. One student wrote 'I like to write according to funny topic' and another 'I can write about what I like'. This free choice creates 'tuned in' students and an opportunity for them to express themselves. While some prompts can be assigned by teachers, they should be balanced with free choice.

Some might argue that a computer journal is the way to go, but I have mostly positive experiences with journals, even with the most reluctant writers. Giving writing its proper due in today's classroom is essential. Students should be given the time to learn to express themselves in a safe environment and to unplug from a world that is increasingly busy and, at times, overloaded with technology.

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# No longer a case of 'Do as I tell you to do'

Natalie Shaw on the implementation of Design-Based Education at ITEps (International Teacher Education for Primary Schools)

"I could give them detailed instructions on how to hold the bat, where to stand, ... never letting them hold a bat until they had heard several lectures on the subject. Or, I could give them a bat and allow them to take a few swings" (Bain, 2004: 110).

Not the words – as one might be forgiven for thinking – of a baseball coach; rather, the teaching philosophy of Harvard professor Michael Sandel, one of many teachers featured in Bain's study on higher education teachers who consistently achieve exceptional transformations of students' levels of conceptual understanding. With Michael Sandel, we as

teacher educators believe in the power of learning through challenging and relevant experiences, in activating and building upon prior learning – and, in doing so, in conveying trust in our students' abilities to successfully manage these complex learning situations.

As our subject is teaching and learning, we are further aware that our instructional approach, in addition to transporting our essential beliefs about human learning and understanding (Krull, 2012), provides powerful and lasting examples which may in turn shape the way that our graduates conceptualise, organise and guide teaching and learning in their own international school classrooms

## Curriculum, learning and teaching

of the future. As individuals, teachers and researchers who passionately feel the dilemma of teaching within the constraints of a subject, whilst being invested in facilitating an experience of deep and transformative learning, we are intrigued to embark on a curriculum that transcends the borders of our 'regular' subjects and allows students to connect conceptually with core ideas in the fields of English as an International Language, Democratic Citizenship and Educational Studies.

With the implementation of Design-Based Education (DBE), ITEps (a programme specifically preparing students to teach in international primary schools) is launching a new framework for learning. Similarly to Sandel's approach, DBE utilises complex problems from the beginning to spark student inquiry and collaboration. Students work together on long-term projects; ideally, these problem situations are encountered during teaching practice or identified in collaboration with stakeholders in international schools, the wider community or educational agencies. Formerly discretely taught Electives, such as Arts & Culture or Inclusive Education, will be more closely linked and provide tools and perspectives to look at core educational problems and to find pathways to solutions. A decided focus on process over product will allow for students to generate ideas, test hypotheses and develop varied approaches, whilst also allowing for the most transformative of learning experiences: making mistakes and reflecting upon these in a safe and supportive environment.

Sharing close ties with inquiry in following a circular approach of thought and action, DBE also shares inquiry's aim in cultivating a 'mindset of curiosity' (Le Fevre *et al*, 2016). Further, both approaches have at their heart a commitment to developing the learners' competencies beyond the mere acquisition of conceptual knowledge: Meinel and Leifer (2011) stress the social construction of all design innovation and, in doing so, echo the vision statements of many international schools in focusing on the development of the interpersonal and communicative skills of their students.

As we teacher educators prepare for a curriculum change to incorporate DBE, to connect our formerly discretely taught subjects and to allow for greater diversity and student initiative with regards to assessment, we also share the challenges and questions that inquiry-based teaching faces in international schools: how can we reliably and fairly assess conceptual understanding, if we allow for a wide variety of different outcomes and learning processes? How can we connect with learners whose prior experience of secondary education has led them to equate teacher-centred transmission of factual knowledge and a subsequent testing of this knowledge with academic rigour? Reaching answers to these questions and following the outlined process cannot succeed without bringing students on board and without explicitly discussing their hopes, ideas and fears – after all, we are departing from a tried and true model of presenting content and then testing the retention and transfer of said content.

To capture the students' point of view, an independent student-led group was set up, facilitated by an internship student. Staff felt a commitment to facilitate an open and non-monitored process, where students had the freedom to express concerns but also the opportunity to develop

ideas without actual or perceived constraint. Our internship student, currently studying for a Master's Degree in Education, was the ideal link between staff and students in having a deep understanding of the intended process, but also drawing on her own recent experience of university and therefore being able to empathise with the students' perspective. Interestingly, an area of overlap between staff and students was assessment – which mirrors discussions that are also held within the field of inquiry-based teaching and learning in international schools (Roennebeck *et al*, 2018). What is necessary to assess for conceptual understanding? How can staff assess a wide variety of possible products and formats of students' work, whilst not being experts in all of these? How can we ensure a plethora of possible assessment forms, whilst also preparing our students for the challenge of an academically sound Bachelor's thesis?

At the recent point of convergence between the formerly independent staff and student task forces, it became obvious that we are now embarking upon the last phase of planning from the basis of a common understanding. Staff and students are excited to work towards shared solutions and to continue to co-create a programme that allows our students to focus on their own interests, questions and wonderings: a programme that supports its enthusiastic and energetic learners in developing core 21st century skills. And, most importantly, that prepares our students to drive inquiry and conceptual learning in the classrooms of the future. May the journey begin!

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# Bringing music and mathematics alive through interdisciplinary learning

Francesco Banchini and Lynda Thompson describe a collaborative approach

Our schools have a responsibility to prepare young people for their futures. However, in a rapidly changing climate for technology and social change, this is becoming increasingly challenging. Educationally our response has been to focus on the acquisition of skills which can be applied in a range of contexts, with one way to concentrate this focus being through interdisciplinary learning. The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP) highlights the importance of applying learning through different subject disciplines: 'Interdisciplinary instruction enlists students' multiple capabilities (aesthetic, social, analytical) and prepares them to solve problems, create products or ask questions in ways that go beyond single disciplinary perspectives' (IBO, 2010).

The interdisciplinary unit (IDU) we will describe here was born out of a desire to understand if there is a 'reason' behind our reaction to music and if mathematics can prove

useful in explaining that reason. And so, as teachers of music (Francesco) and mathematics (Lynda) we sought to work with our students to understand why certain music makes us sad, while other music makes us want to party. Within our own backgrounds also existed the social anthropological interest to explore how different cultures have created music which provokes different emotional reactions. We built an MYP IDU centred upon exploring to what extent our emotions can be described as mathematical. This focused on pattern and repetition, used in a variety of ways in both disciplines. Our aim as educators was to give the students an experience of using their understanding and skills from two very different subject areas in a truly integrated and purposeful manner, drawing upon the heritage, both in terms of mathematics and music, of a variety of different cultures.

When exploring the Ancient Greeks, students made their own mono-chord instruments and used these to explore

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## In the Greek Mixolydian mode we can find songs by Guns N' Roses, Madonna, The Rolling Stones, Gorillaz, Coldplay, and Radiohead. We questioned whether this arose from conscious decisions or not.

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how the frequencies change as the length of the string is altered. Although instruments were somewhat crude and results varied, there was great excitement to discover that as the length of the chord is halved, the frequency doubles. This doubling continues as an exponential function. Students were able to explore how the Greeks used different musical modes for different social purposes, and how these were associated with different emotions.

We examined the relationship between the frequencies of notes which 'sound good together' (consonance) and those which do not (dissonance). Exploring the frequencies and wavelengths of notes was differentiated as we used lowest common multiples, as well as the transformation of sine graphs. Students discovered that for the C and G notes, for every 2 complete cycles for C, G completes 3, and thus their wavelengths 'meet' frequently. These notes sound consonant. In contrast, C and F# do not experience any such synchronicity, and sound dissonant to our ears. The unit culminated in the students exploring a piece of music and finding mathematical reasoning for our emotional reaction to it.

As educators we have learnt both pragmatically and philosophically from this experience. On a pragmatic level, we have invested significant amounts of time into the planning and preparation of this IDU. We spent lesson time from both subjects and were able to team-teach many of these sessions. This gave the students a very clear example of subject specialist teachers working collaboratively to reach a common goal, using subject knowledge from another discipline.

On a more philosophical level, students learnt an important lesson in how skills and knowledge from different subject disciplines can be used meaningfully together. Raising awareness of different cultural traditions, we felt that students were able to connect their understanding and experience to ancient civilisations. Our use of the Mayan, Greek and Arabic cultures ignited their interest in these cultures, and some students investigated different aspects of these civilisations. Throughout the unit, we frequently used examples of current songs to illustrate different techniques and different modes. Students really enjoyed discovering that Lorde, Maroon 5, The Beatles and The Ramones all make use of different modes coming from the Greek and Arabic traditions. For example in the Greek Mixolydian mode we can find songs by Guns N' Roses, Madonna, The Rolling Stones, Gorillaz, Coldplay, and Radiohead. We questioned whether this arose from conscious decisions or not.

In terms of accomplishing the aims of interdisciplinary learning, our students certainly used skills in transferable

ways. They learnt how bringing together aspects of two different subject disciplines to one task could deepen their understanding and ability to connect with and produce an outcome. As music forms a meaningful aspect of all our students' lives, through the modern music they share and listen to, students were automatically intrigued and interested to find a 'reason' as to why their emotions respond as they do, and why they like the music they like. Given the absolute nature of mathematics, there was a great attraction to use such an 'objective' tool to explain such a 'subjective' emotional reaction. One of the discussions which will stay with us was about how much our culture 'trains' our ears to find certain sounds consonant. We considered if members of an isolated tribe, who only ever heard natural forest sounds and used their own musical instruments, would have the same ideas about which notes sound consonant and dissonant. This led us to question if the very nature of consonance and dissonance is culturally specific. What are the implications of us living in a globally connected world where music is shared in every corner of the world and certain music is 'accepted'?

The process of developing and exploring an IDU between music and maths originated in a genuine interest of our own, was meaningful for the students, and thus gave responsibility and ownership to them. It also involved time and energy commitment from ourselves, but has left us thirsty to explore the link between music and maths more fully. In the words of Guns N' Roses (in the Greek Mixolydian form), 'Where do we go, where do we go now, where do we go .....?'

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# Why bother?

## E T Ranger addresses the case against international mindedness

Why bother with international-mindedness? Yes, I know we are all in favour of it – but have you been faced by a parent asking just that question? Given the unquestionable primacy of exam success, why do we clutter the curriculum with extras such as this? Whether it is they or their employer who pays the fees, it is a fair question for parents to ask. These are intelligent people who may hold important positions and who, as the IB says, ‘with their differences, can also be right’ (2018). It may be salutary to consider their objections, and to clarify our own reasons. Could it just be a marketing tool which deceives us as well as our clients? Or are we following a trend, like ‘language labs’ or like – a fashionable neuromyth – ‘right- and left-brain education’? Or is this an opportunity for Young Turks to write a new agenda, one in which they are more expert than their seniors?

Let’s start by looking at what international mindedness involves. We find Ian Hill (2015) saying from the point of view of the International Baccalaureate that its major concerns are global issues, world cultures, and other languages. What might our sceptical questioner make of these? Let’s consider them, one by one.

**Global Issues.** Climates do change, and some communities will survive while others will not, but is this a justification for abandoning our superior economic system to subsidise less effective economies? If we averaged all our incomes, the world would have to live on \$2,000 per year per person. The population problem is solving itself, in all continents except Africa. It seems foolhardy to sacrifice the prosperity which we could bequeath to our children. Then there are conservation projects which put picturesque mammals before humans in Africa or India; it may be appropriate there, but rich countries will naturally value their land and livelihoods higher than they do those of poorer nations. The present decade has seen localism booming all around the world, and democratic elections in many countries have brought nationalists into power. Even the ideological warfare of Daesh speaks of a ‘state’, and each perceived economic threat makes governments rush to put their national interest first. International organisations are tools for Western world

management, but the UN has not managed to prevent proxy wars being fought in the Middle East, Africa, or even in parts of Europe. The global political dynamic is once again competition between USA, Russia and China for dominance over blocs of client nations. The multinational companies whose employees we serve, on the other hand, operate across borders on moral codes of their own.

**World Cultures.** It may seem bizarre to bother with local cultures when many international schools do all they can to protect children from them. They work to minimise the culture shock for children extracted from their home system, just as airports and hotels strive for the same ‘international style’ and ‘international cuisine’ as can be found in wealthy Western countries. Parents at our schools expect their children to be prepared for senior management positions, not for bargaining in the soukh. Yes, there is a value in the protective and the picturesque, so that they don’t stray into danger abroad and have nice pictures to send back to Grandma, but many host countries are in a category that even presidents do not wish to engage with.

**Other Languages.** Most of the non-English-speaking world is already multilingual, so effectively ‘other languages’ equates with English-speakers learning another language and other-speakers acquiring English. But the spread of English, aided by its dominance of the digital world, means that most of the people we need to speak to can already function in English. Think of your high school peers: how many of them are operating in another language? Even if you work in a non-English-speaking country, what other languages have you used today? Look at this magazine, an example of how English suffices for our professional discourse. Language is a means of communication within a group, but a barrier between groups; in a world in which communicable knowledge is social capital, barriers may be better erased than preserved.

Can we make a case for ‘international’ education? This is a serious question; not mischievous, nor cynical. I, too, feel that we can do some good in the world. But I acknowledge that my view is a local one, and that I need, occasionally, to review and justify my personal measures and aims. It might even help us to do some of those good things better. The only way we can be sure that what we do is worthwhile is if we constantly reflect on it; otherwise we become better and better at doing things, but worse and worse at deciding what is worth doing.

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# Carbon: versatility exemplified

Richard Harwood looks at a chemical element that is essential to everyday life

We are all familiar with several of the different structures of carbon. As we draw with pencil or charcoal we slide layers of graphite onto our paper. At other times we may aspire to give, or indeed receive, diamond in some setting or other! These two structural forms of this pre-eminently important element depend on the versatility in which carbon atoms can chemically bond with each other, forming two- or three-dimensional networks. Our very existence is dependent on the capacity of carbon atoms to form chains or rings; combining together to make the myriad of molecules that function in reproducing and sustaining life. Life is carbon-based.

However, the significance of carbon has expanded even more dramatically in recent years. The discovery of the fullerenes (such as C<sub>60</sub>) and carbon nanotubes fostered to a large extent the development of nanotechnology.

Graphite has a structure in which layers of hexagonally arranged carbon atoms are stacked on each other, and it was the manipulation of such individual layers that led to the development of carbon nanotubes.

Even more recently, a further new form of carbon – **graphene** – has been isolated at the University of Manchester in the UK. It is essentially a single-layered material made up of individual sheets of graphite. The first samples of graphene were isolated in experiments aimed at seeing how thin a piece of graphite could be made by polishing it down. However, thinner material was obtained by cleaning graphite with 'sticky tape' – 'peeling off' the layers of graphite for surface science experiments. This developed into an investigation by Andre Geim and Konstantin Novoselov aimed at determining just how thin the layers 'stripped' from a piece of graphite could be. The first isolation of graphene

flakes was achieved in 2004.

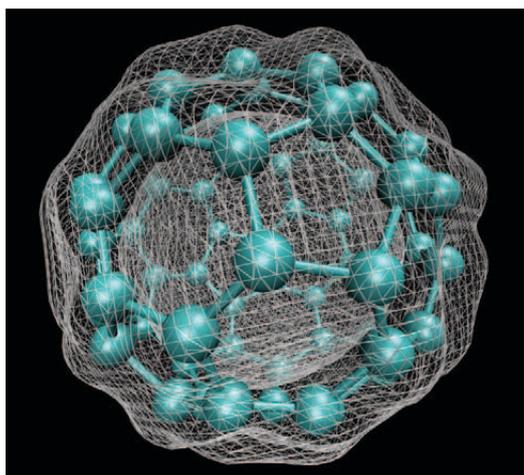
Subsequent studies were carried out on these thin graphite layers and methods devised for reproducibly forming graphene monolayers. Geim and Novoselov were awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2010 and the potential for this novel material has generated immense excitement.

Graphene is also, in fact, the structural unit of fullerenes and nanotubes. A sheet can be viewed as a very large aromatic molecule formed from many fused benzene molecules. High-quality graphene is strong, light, and almost transparent. It is an excellent conductor of heat and electricity (300 times better than copper). Its interactions with other materials, with light, and its two-dimensional nature give rise to unique properties.

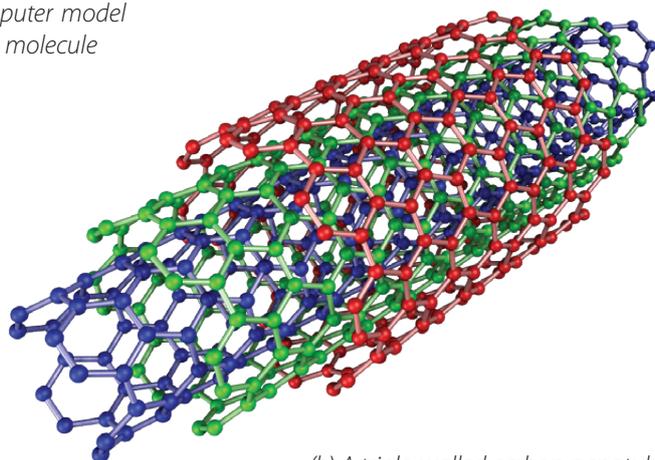
Graphene can be prepared, as described above, by removing monolayers from a sample of graphite or, alternatively, by heating a sample of silicon carbide (SiC) to remove the silicon. Recently, a method has been devised of treating a suspension of graphite powder in a blender. This offers the potential for producing graphene on a large scale for use in industry.

Graphene also has many interesting properties. For example:

- its tensile strength is 200 times greater than steel and is incredibly flexible;
- it behaves as a semi-metal, making it very suitable for electronic devices; and
- the introduction of about 1% content of graphene into plastics could make those plastics electrically conducting.



(a) A computer model of the C<sub>60</sub> molecule

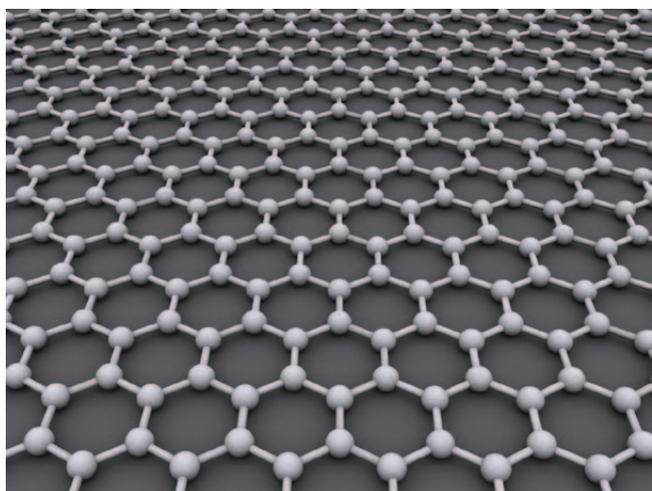


(b) A triple-walled carbon nanotube



A piece of graphite (top left), a graphene transistor, and a tape dispenser used in the experiments that led to the first layers of graphene isolated in 2004. (Items donated to the Nobel Museum in Stockholm)

**Our very existence  
is dependent on the  
capacity of carbon  
atoms to form  
chains or rings.**



Graphene is a single-layered molecule consisting of a hexagonal grid of carbon atoms.

Of the different allotropes (structural forms) of carbon, graphene is the most chemically reactive. This is because of the reactive edges of the structure where there are carbon atoms with unoccupied ('dangling') bonds. This reactive form has potentially important uses too. For example, membranes of graphene oxide have been shown to be preferentially permeable to water, suggesting possible uses in desalination and water purification. This application is highly significant as current methods of large scale desalination by distillation or reverse osmosis are economically expensive.

In the UK the National Graphene Institute (NGI) has already been established in Manchester, and that university's second multi-million pound centre – the Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre (GEIC) – will open in 2018. Further information on this exciting, revolutionary material can be found on the Nobel Prize website: [www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/physics/laureates/2010/popular-physicsprize2010.pdf](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/2010/popular-physicsprize2010.pdf)

and on the dedicated graphene research website set up by the NGI:

[www.graphene.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.graphene.manchester.ac.uk)

which outlines the history of the discovery and the projected uses of this novel form of carbon.

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# Navigating border crossings

Colleen Kawalilak and Sue Ledger share their experiences of teaching in internationalized contexts

## **Stepping Beyond: Comfort and Caution**

Globalization, internationalization, advancements in technology, ease of travel, and access to international study opportunities have all contributed to the world feeling much smaller – and to our work and learning spaces being significantly more diverse. As a consequence, those who respond to the privileged call, the vocation of teaching, are now thinking more broadly to consider teaching opportunities that extend beyond their own local and national borders. Indeed, although many entry level teachers will choose to take up their teaching practice close to home, others set their sights on stepping beyond what they know to teach in far away, international destinations. This choice takes courage and commitment and many, in spite of the excitement in anticipation of stepping beyond their culture of comfort and familiarity, feel caution as this involves much more than a geographical border crossing. Rather, this step includes letting go of tightly held and often faulty notions, assumptions, beliefs, and biases to clear space to experience other ways of viewing, knowing, and being in the world. In response to a world that is much more accessible, many universities around the globe are expanding the formal and informal teacher education curriculum to include opportunities for students to acquire cross/intercultural competencies as part of their pre-service teacher education program. Cross/intercultural competencies refer to “the knowledge and comprehension, skills, and values that inform behaviours enabling individuals to adapt and interact effectively in cross-cultural environments” (Kawalilak & Strzelczyk, 2017: 6). *Teaching Across Borders* (TAB), an optional program component for students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education program in Western Canada, is an example of supporting pre-service teachers to live and practice in diverse education contexts whether they choose after graduation to teach in their local surroundings or abroad. Drawing from a partnership between two Schools of Education – the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, Canada and the Murdoch School of Education, Perth, Western Australia, – we describe here a program initiative available to pre-service teachers that promotes cross/intercultural engagement as well as personal and professional growth and development.

## **Stepping In: Context and Culture**

TAB provides pre-service teachers at each of the partner universities the opportunity to travel to the partnering host country, to explore similarities and differences with respect to cultural norms, traditions, socio-economic and geographical

influences, the education system, and teaching and learning pedagogies that inform the K-12 curriculum. School visits, participating in cultural activities, living with host families, traveling to remote and rural sites of education, learning about Indigenous history and inclusive education, and volunteering hours in schools and youth centres are examples of activities undertaken by students. TAB is not the same as a traditional travel study or study abroad program, in that the latter typically involves formal study by way of coursework completion at a university abroad. The focus of TAB is somewhat different in that it is guided by the belief that students who live and volunteer teach in another country will have greater awareness and appreciation of diversity and global understanding (Teaching Across Borders, 2018). TAB provides space, away from formal coursework, for students to immerse themselves in the culture and context of their host destination and to become familiar with how people live and learn within that context. TAB participants engage in an array of educational activities outside of the formal classroom that contribute to their informal and incidental learning. While immersed in another culture, many acquire basic language (conversational) skills simply through immersion, versus formal study. Currently, research is underway at the University of Calgary, Werklund School of Education to determine the impact of TAB on teaching practice. This research involves work with TAB participants pre-travel, throughout their international placement, and after they return home. The focus of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how participating in TAB informs teaching practice.

## **Stepping Up: Potential and Possibility**

Up until recently, limited pathways existed for those at the pre-service level to experience teaching practice in international destinations. Emerging programs such as the International Baccalaureate Educator Certificates and other International Teacher Education (ITE) program offerings provide evidence of a growing interest in preparing students to travel and teach beyond the national context. In response to the rapidly shifting, diverse landscape of teaching and learning, we advocate that mainstream pre-service teacher education programs provide coherent and continuous spaces in the formal and informal curricula to educate and support the pedagogy of teaching and learning in diverse cross/intercultural contexts. In this way, *all pre-service teachers* will benefit from opportunities that promote increased awareness, understanding, and responsiveness to diversity. Burnell and Schnackenberg (2015) asserted that cross-cultural



competencies need to permeate the curriculum as a whole, and also be anchored in the fabric of our organizations. Expanding the curricula to include international contexts and cross/intercultural competencies will better prepare and support pre-service teachers who, when entering their teaching practice, will inevitably traverse complex cultural contexts that influence and impact their personal and professional lives. We are also reminded by our returning TAB students that one need not always cross a geographical border or an ocean to experience and authentically *engage with differences*—sometimes we simply need to cross the hall.

After having returned from a border crossing experience, students reflect on significant learning moments—challenges experienced along the way and newly discovered aspects of self—personally and professionally. Through reflection, meaning is made of insights gained and students are supported to reflect, even more deeply, on how newly acquired knowledge gained from their border crossing experience will inform and possibly transform their teaching practice. TAB provides another pathway for teachers to navigate diverse landscapes contoured with challenges and opportunities—cultural contexts vastly different from their own that provide the power and possibility for personal and professional transformation.

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# Reflections on the international boarding school market in Asia

Gabriel Ernesto Abad Fernández explores some current trends

The title of Denry Machin's article (*International boarding schools in Asia – a white elephant?*) in the last issue of *International School* caught my eye, as I have worked in boarding in an international school in Asia for the last fourteen years. Machin explores why some of the traditional British schools that have opened up campuses in Asia have not been as successful as they were planned to be in terms of enrolment. I read the article and then re-read it, as something did not quite sit right with me. I found what it was when I went back to the title and the subheading, which seemed to imply that international boarding schools in Asia equate to traditional UK boarding: 'Denry Machin considers whether the traditional UK boarding experience can be replicated across the world'.

Much has been written about the meaning of 'international education', with the editors of this journal having contributed significantly to this academic debate. In what follows I will use the three type classification of international schools they offered in a book edited by Richard Pearce to mark the 40th anniversary of the International School of London:

- Type A, 'Traditional': 'established principally to cater for globally mobile expatriate families' (such as the International School of Geneva or Yokohama International School).
- Type B, 'Ideological': 'established principally on an ideological basis, bringing together young people from different parts of the world to be educated

together with a view to promoting global peace and understanding'; and

- Type C, 'Non-Traditional': 'established principally to cater for 'host country nationals' – the socio-economically advantaged elite of the host country who seek for their children a form of education different from, and perceived to be of higher quality than, that available in the national education system' (Hayden and Thompson, 2013: 5).

If we consider Machin's article through this lens, it becomes apparent that the schools to which he refers are mainly Type C, with a dash of Type A (in the case of schools that are both day and boarding). A quick online search for 'international boarding school in Asia' will provide us with a list of schools, most of which are indeed connected with traditional British boarding schools, as well as some North American counterparts.

Hayden and Thompson later (2016: 13) acknowledged that the Type C group 'incorporates a number of different subtypes that could arguably be better represented separately'. Rather than creating a subgroup, I would like to posit the existence of what might be described as a Type D group, which could be defined as traditional international schools that cater to both the expatriate families and host country nationals who can afford access to them. Prior to Hayden and Thompson's typology, Bunnell (2008: 385) classified schools such as these according to chronology: the first wave of most prestigious HMC schools (the Headmasters' & Headmistresses' Conference: a UK professional association of heads of independent schools) and second wave (that included non-HMC schools). He sees this expansion as a response to the Charities Act of England and Wales 2006 and the previous Charities Bill 2004, which questioned the

charitable status of some independent schools in the UK. Bunnell uses the term 'satellite college' to refer to them, and explores their expansion as a good business model with consequences that may not have been fully considered, including the failure rate of some franchises, the potential for cultural dissonance and the potential objections to using overseas offshoots of the 'parent' college, amongst others (2008: 388).

Going back to the issue that prompted the reflection in this article – the perhaps unintentional equating of international boarding schools with one particular type (we could describe them as 'Type D' in the classification above – British) – perhaps '*British-style satellite colleges in Asia – a white elephant?*' would have been a more appropriate title? Aside from that implied equivalence, Machin did not consider in his piece the possibility that those families who want their children to be educated in traditional British boarding schools (*Harry Potter* has much to answer for, in this respect!) may have preferred to send them to the 'original' instead of the 'satellite' campus, no matter how similar in their buildings they are or whether the uniform is the same (or as close as possible given the different climates). The weaker pound may have made this option more attractive than in the past. For example, one British pound could be exchanged for a little over 3 Singapore dollars in late 2004, but for only 1.8 in early 2018.

Another complication is the current political climate of the UK. As Vincent and Hunter-Henin argue, 'the fixation on Britishness is likely to generate suspicion toward the "other"' (2018). Could it be that there is a counter-reaction which is making some families think twice? While in the past families may have believed they could access the best of both worlds (a British education in an Asian context, with their children





based closer to home), perhaps nowadays the option is seen by some as the worst of both, being neither 'purely' British nor purely Asian, thus failing to engage with either of them completely.

Some of the well-regarded traditional schools are already trying to *glocalize*, finding ways to combine their tradition with the values and culture of the host country – for example by offering bilingual instead of monolingual English programmes. A bilingual education is clearly better at preparing a student for a globalised world, and the OECD is correct in identifying 'global competence' as a key principle for educating future citizens (OECD/Asia Society 2018:10). In that sense, we need to go back to Hayden & Thompson's taxonomy of international schools: some Type B schools offer an international education that is not directly connected to a national system or culture and is focused on what some may argue is the goal of a truly international education: to 'help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect' (IB Mission Statement, 2018).

A quick online search for international boarding schools in Asia will show that United World Colleges (arguably the archetypical Type B schools) have extended their presence in Asia, adding schools in Thailand, China and Japan to the existing UWC South East Asia in Singapore. Granted, many of their students are selected via the UWC movement's National Committees, but they also accept direct entry students. A comparison of the types of students who seek admission to them with the types of students who seek admission to what I have called Type D schools would be of relevance

and useful in understanding current trends in the boarding market in Asia.

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# My first experience of an international school in Malaysia

A personal viewpont from Vahid Javadi

Originally I am from Iran, where I was an English teacher. In fact, English language teaching (ELT) is a huge business in Iran. This background motivated me to achieve my CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) in August 2007, as a 'passport' certificate to the global ELT market. Only a few months after my course, I was offered a job at a university in Malaysia, which involved teaching English to adolescents prior to enrolment on a degree programme. I was not alone – my wife and three-year old son were also with me. We had bittersweet moments: we cherished our new life in Malaysia, but we also found it challenging as we had limited experience of life outside Iran. In short, we were not ready for it, and this was one of those moves that once you make, you then have to go with it – as if you have fallen into a river and your options involve either swimming or drowning.

An aspect of overseas settlement that we had not seriously thought about was our son's education, mainly because he was still too young. With hindsight, I feel we were 'blind' in 2007 when we relocated – totally unaware of our needs in a foreign country, especially considering that Internet-based communications were not as advanced as they are today. I had heard from a friend that an international school in Kuala Lumpur which her children attended was looking for teachers. I applied for that position with absolutely zero knowledge of what an international school meant. As a foreign national I was obliged to have a work permit for employment in Malaysia. During my interview the principal agreed to provide me with the necessary documents. However, weeks passed without any news. In fact, although I had begun work at the school, I still had the old employment pass in my passport. I was really under pressure from the HR department of the university to get the school to apply for a new work permit, but to no avail – the school would not cooperate, and all I could do was procrastinate. As weeks and months passed, I gradually realised that the school principal had not acted with complete honesty. I recall the day that my colleague, who was also newly recruited, told me that she was leaving because the school would not provide an employment pass, and that if the Immigration authorities found out she would be in serious trouble. However, I did not heed these warnings and continued work until May of the following school year (2009) when my old employment pass expired, I had to leave the country and we moved to Vietnam – which is another story.

Although I now hold a doctorate in educational leadership and management, I learnt my best lessons during the weeks and months I worked in this school. My intention in writing

about my experience is not to disparage the school, but rather to share with current and aspiring international school teachers ways in which informed judgments can be formed prior to accepting an offer. Recently, I have conducted an extensive study of all the international schools in Malaysia, and have reached useful conclusions, which I hope to publish in another article in the near future. In this study, I divide the international schools in Malaysia into three categories: (a) expatriate-teacher majority/local-teacher minority; (b) expatriate-teacher minority/local-teacher majority; and (c) a balanced ratio between the expatriate and local teachers. My study suggests an implicit connection between the teacher status of an international school and the fees it charges its clients. In other words, a school in category A tends to demand higher, and in some cases far higher, fees than a school in category B. This indicates that a school that enjoys better revenues is in a more powerful position to meet the financial needs of its expatriate teachers than a school in a less strong financial position. Eight years since my first experience of work in an international school in Malaysia, I am now in a well-informed position to declare that my school belonged to category B. In fact, I recall that there were very few non-Malaysian teachers for a typical international school, and that its fees structure was very reasonable, reinforcing my earlier observation about a connection between the teacher status of an international school and its financial strength.

Most teachers these days rely on the Internet to seek employment in international schools, which may include visiting the dedicated websites of these schools. I would advise those who intend to teach in international schools in Malaysia to study seriously the teacher status and fees structure of these schools to determine which category their intended school fits best. This way they may be able to better engage in educating the students in whose hands our future lies.

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# Creative adolescents: exploration, expression, entrepreneurship

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## My Story

My passion to evolve the current education system towards honoring the human in each student, especially during the adolescent stage, was inspired by my great-grandmother, who was an education pioneer in her community, and by my own educational and professional journey. I was successful both at school and in my career, yet always felt that there was something critically missing.

I was part of a schooling system that honored academic achievement, focused on developing the rational mind and preparing us for higher education, while neglecting the creative self. With each step in my journey, I could see the mismatch between the acquired learning scope and the applied life field. I, like many people, had been oriented towards jobs and careers that are safe and bring the security of survival. In 2006, I had my final wake-up call. I realized that my success was not based on

the knowledge I had gained at school and university, but in fact was a consequence of who I am – my creative life force! My voice and creative expression emerged, and I authored a journal book: 'into the dance of life'. I became an entrepreneur, developing a 'creative leadership' program for adolescents and adults, and initiating nSite – a creative community space in Beirut, Lebanon.

## Context

Both my children are International Baccalaureate (IB) graduates, and my family owns international schools in England and Qatar. Through their experiences, I witnessed a positive change in approaches to learning with the potential for a great deal more room for further development of human capacities. The strong calling now is for what I term the graduation of 'the scientific artist' and 'the artistic scientist', the graduation of 'creative individuals'.



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*Who is this addressing?*

In this era of instantaneous change, there is an invitation to develop the creative qualities of our present and future leaders: the new generation. International schools, the hosts of diverse students of the world, have an edge and can make a major contribution to participating in awakening those capacities and putting them into practice.

*When will existing learning environments respond to our current times, full of intensity, rapid changes and shifts in directions?*

The time is now.

### **The Stakeholders – adolescent youth**

Many of today's adolescents are gifted, passionate creatives. Many feel disconnected from their authentic inner life force, and constrained by current learning environments and the expectations placed on them. This creates dilemmas even if they are academic achievers, which translates into social, emotional and mental diseases and traumas. Their needs are simple but have been very difficult to meet, until now:

- Being empowered in their creativity and passions.
- Having a safe space to share their gifts and vulnerabilities.
- Understanding the value of what is so precious to them.
- Being able to live a life of joy and excitement.
- Learning the practices and skills that support and enable their wellbeing, social relationships, and capacities to innovate.

### **Creative Learning Environments – the vision in action**

Since 2007, I have been working with communities and schools to bring forth a new vision for learning, through various creative processes. In 2010, I initiated a creative community learning space, nSite. I invited the community of learners to participate in envisioning it together. nSite was launched in 2011 with the potential of creativity as a significant force for our world – a model for the new classrooms of our time. In the following years, the values that support emerging learning spaces were crafted. The capacities of the educators and facilitators were also strengthened, through workshops hosted by specialized practitioners in areas that support creative learning environments. In 2016, I consolidated all the previous preparatory activities into a new education practice: 'the Teacher Host'. By 2017, the educators, practitioners and facilitators were ready to host and teach at the same time. The outcome was our first creative learning experience with students, described below.

### **Creative Exploration Day – a prototype**

In October 2017, a Creative Exploration Day for youth between 14 and 19 years was organized at nSite. They came from different schools in Beirut. Some were joined by their mothers and teachers. They were all welcomed into a creative learning studio. It opened the space for exploration into various areas that inspire and expand them beyond schooling programs. The schedule was flexible and offered different activities to choose from. The morning sessions took place in parallel, and included collective art making, creative envisioning, introductions to hackerspaces and biomimicry (10 am to 1 pm). These were followed by a community lunch and an afternoon session of spoken poetry and mindful movement (2 pm to 3:30 pm). The sessions were hosted by practitioners in their field, who had also acquired

the art of creative hosting through working with me. My role was to co-design the activity processes, to set the tone of the day, to cultivate a nurturing creative learning space, to hold the welcoming and closing of each activity, and to harvest the generated collective wisdom.

On this vibrant creative expression platform, science and art met, the senses including imagination were activated, and the youth celebrated themselves and each other. Here, they put what they learnt in their regular classes into practice, learnt how to operate and express both individually and collectively, and were free and connected at the same time. All attendees, youth and adults, were energized and empowered after the experience. Following are a few reflections from participating youth:

*'My experience at nSite was very interesting... I had the opportunity to gain a broad perspective by exploring through creative stations'* (student, 16 yrs)

*'I felt the gathering was very eye-opening and pushed the boundaries of creativity, as well as helping express ourselves on a multitude of levels'* (student, 14 yrs)

In creative learning environments, the skills and practices are learnt experientially. How can schools respond to this invitation?

### **Bridging Learning with Life – a possibility**

When the creative expression, whether in the arts or sciences, crystallizes, it is essential to nurture it as an evolving, core driving force; otherwise it would be relegated to the status of 'hobby', with its real influence dissolving. The first step is to make it visible – to showcase both students' creative work and the process of creation. There is a possibility for youth to create an appropriate platform that enables the outreach of their work. During this process, they will learn about the importance of appreciation, how to set a value for their work and the various available forms of exchange – financial and resource-based. Those active principles will prepare them to be entrepreneurs. An example would be for the youth to develop and manage an online platform (creativity) where they exhibit their creations, and receive financial appreciation which goes towards organizations or causes they want to support (service). By connecting academic learning with their creative energy, adolescents are empowered in their relationship with real life.

### **Creative Leadership: the way forward**

I have collated all the elements I introduced in this article under one framework which I call 'Creative Leadership'. When we recognize that creative learning environments are the cornerstones of a healthy, thriving future for our children and future generations, the question becomes, what will schools choose: the status-quo, or expanding and evolving to bring those qualities into reality? I choose the bridging of 'creative leadership' with existing systems and engaging all stakeholders in the process. I have a model and methodology to put this into practice – to cultivate internal cultures that support the development of creative leadership. I choose co-creating practical applications with leaders, educators and entrepreneurs in the education and community development fields. What will you choose?

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# Different experiences leading international schools in China

Barry Speirs answers questions about recent research by RSAcademics into international school leadership in China

## **What did the research involve?**

We spoke with 20 people who have detailed experience of international schools in mainland China – ie schools which teach at least part of their curriculum in English. We visited current heads at their schools, as well as speaking with former school leaders, board members and recruiters.

## **Why focus on China?**

We had heard how leadership challenges and short tenure of heads, which is a feature of many international schools, is an even greater issue in China. Also, nearly every week we hear of a new school setting up in China or a leadership vacancy

there, and as we at RSAcademics are increasingly involved in helping schools find the right candidates, we wanted to better understand the environment, challenges and rewards of working in that country.

## **What's different about China?**

Most people we spoke to had led schools in different countries, but several described their experience in China as their most challenging or most different to previous experiences. Whilst every country has unique features, it would seem that China's are particularly marked. Comments included:

## People and places

'I have 30 plus years in international schools but arriving here I realise I am like a babe in the Chinese woods.'

'Whatever you know and wherever you have worked, China will surprise you and challenge you in every way possible'

'What's different about China? In my experience it's issues to do with regulations, foreign passport Chinese, the role of the Chinese Principal, dual curriculum and support staff outside your control.'

### What's it like leading an international school in China?

It depends! Early on in our research, from speaking with just a few leaders of international schools, we quickly discovered significant differences in the reality of their roles. Many of the leaders we met described their role and their school as 'an exception'. A key conclusion from our research, therefore, is that leaders find themselves in a huge variety of situations. Most information on China refers to different types of school, such as expat schools, Chinese private schools and branches within state schools, but we found that there were significant differences beyond these distinctions. Two leaders, for example, of similar sized, joint-venture, for-profit private schools in the same city, both offering dual curriculum to Chinese pupils, may actually have very different experiences.

'I have visited about 50 international schools in China and I don't know that I have ever seen two that are the same.'

Part of the report arising from our research therefore focused on trying to understand the factors that contribute to differences. These factors could be seen as a due diligence checklist when investigating a job opportunity or investment.

### Which key factors vary between schools that influence a leaders' role?

Firstly, there are the more obvious factors relating to the type of school:

#### Three main types of schools

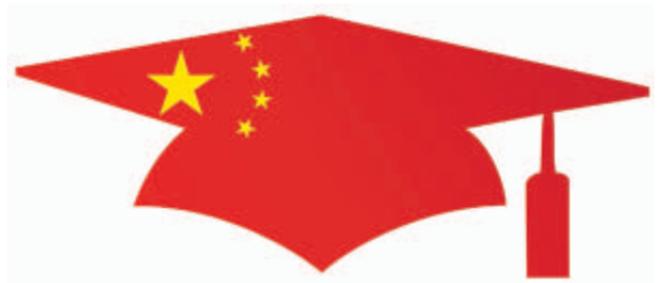
Expat schools: officially called 'Schools for Children of Foreign Workers', they are not allowed to enrol Chinese nationals – but now include a large number of Chinese families with foreign passports. These schools can teach 100% international curriculum, and account for about a quarter of international school students in China.

Chinese private schools: aimed at Chinese children, these follow a bilingual curriculum to cover the compulsory national curriculum in Years 1-9 whilst meeting the desire for international qualifications. They include joint ventures between a Chinese owner and a foreign school. These are the fastest growing sector with over half the international school student population.

Chinese state schools: international streams teaching a bilingual curriculum as a branch or programme within a state school. About a quarter of the international school student population.

A number of factors can vary within and across these categories:

**Regulation.** The extent of influence of the provincial or national education ministry in the operation of the school. This may vary depending on the type of school, location, connections within the government, and its history –



e.g. when and how the school was established. Local government, for example, may adjust regulations to support the setting up of a new school to attract inward investment or to develop a new commercial area:

'When investors approach schools in the UK for franchising opportunities, the first question the UK school should ask is – do you have the necessary connections?'

### International or bilingual curriculum – and how this applies.

All schools in Years 1-9 except expat schools should be bilingual. However, there are variations in how integrated the Chinese and international curricula are. They may be integrated at all years, for example through each class being run by two co-teachers, or through alternating semesters. Alternatively, in Years 1-9 the focus may be on the Chinese curriculum with add-on English language lessons and tutoring, and the international curriculum only operating fully at Years 10-13.

'A bilingual curriculum can mean many different things. The two questions I always ask are: how many English lessons do you have, and how many lessons in English?'

**For-profit or not-for-profit.** For-profit includes Chinese investors and foreign joint ventures, franchises or other licensing arrangements. This may also include public sector schools with an element of profit paid to the international partner as a fee. Not-for-profit includes Chinese benefactors or certain international organisations and trusts:

'A board needs others who are representing the views of the franchisor, the brand, to support the head in ensuring the right balance between profit and education.'

**Single or joint venture and how this operates.** Joint ventures (JVs) are typically between a Chinese owner and a foreign education company or school. The foreign organisation generally provides the teaching and learning expertise, while the Chinese partner provides the land and financial investment. JVs may have different arrangements and degrees of quality control or oversight by the education partner – for example, it could be more like a franchise with strict quality controls, financial stake and board membership, or more of a branding or licensing set-up:

'Understand the nature of the relationship with the foreign brand. See the contract between the Chinese investor and the foreign school. In my case this had to be re-negotiated.'

**Type of Chinese investor.** There is a wide range of investors from construction companies wishing to establish a school simply as a magnet for real estate buyers, to government-sponsored companies seeking to develop a region or attract inwards investment, to benefactors with long-established interests in education and nation building. Some schools

have a governance structure, whereas others operate in a similar way to any other part of the investors' business. Who the investor is and how s/he runs their organisation are absolutely key to the role of the school leader:

'There are more companies moving into education with no knowledge or experience of the sector. You get this elsewhere but perhaps even more in China.'

'The investor owns 46 businesses and made over 1 billion USD profit last year.'

'An investor may declare a wish to be in education, but will, for example, have no interest to be involved in any social programmes that educate lower classes. There is a very clear profit motive and it's important that this is understood.'

**Dual Leadership.** In many (but not all) schools with an international head, there is a requirement for leadership to be shared with another leader who is a Chinese national. Schools may also have a Branch Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party to represent the interests of Chinese staff members who may, in some cases, double up as a co-principal. The relationship between the expat and Chinese leaders varies considerably. In some cases, the international head is the clear school leader, with the Chinese principal in the background managing governmental relations and statutory responsibilities. In other cases, the two heads have a peer relationship and work closely together, or the Chinese principal will have primacy and the international head will have a delegated set of leadership responsibilities such as solely focusing on the international curriculum and expat staff:

'There is real danger that in some set-ups the Chinese principal runs the school and you are simply a puppet.'

**Position of support staff and Chinese academic staff.**

In some schools these staff report to the expat leader (via Leadership Team members); in other schools, support services are centralised, provided by an affiliated Chinese organisation, or the investor's organisation. Similarly, Chinese academic staff may be managed separately, either by design or in practice. This could mean that half or even the majority of staff are not within the head's scope of responsibility:

'A wonderful thing about working here is the highly qualified local support staff. They are a delight to work with. There is no cynicism – just real enthusiasm and pride for what we are creating together.'

'You may find out that you have no control at all over areas such as finance and admissions which are all support services provided by the owner's people.'

**New schools and pace of change**

Perhaps more so than any other country, China is currently setting up new schools and looking for founding leaders. These roles can be unpredictable in relation to the above elements, with real challenges arising in understanding how things will operate in practice. The situation is also dynamic in other ways. For instance, a new school's governance may mature as the owner releases the reins and recognises the value of including more specialists on the board. The local market can change quickly as new schools are established, and the relationship with the state regulator may change in line with new regulations or a change in personnel.

***Barry Speirs is Head of Leadership Consultancy at RSAcademics and author of the report 'Leading an International School in China' (www.RSAcademics.co.uk).***

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# International Schools, Teaching and Governance

## An autoethnography of a teacher in conflict

by Carmen Blyth

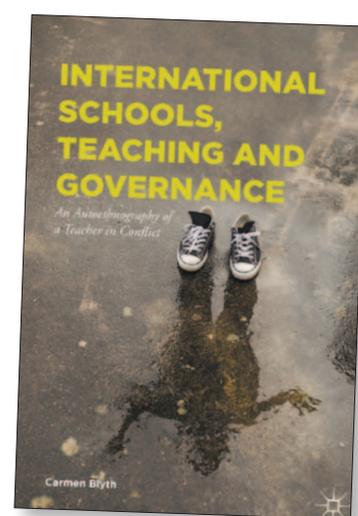
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2017)

Reviewed by Lina López Valls

In **International Schools, Teaching and Governance**, Carmen Blyth reflects on the experience of a teacher in one international school in Hong Kong. The story is related to her feelings and emotions when her position as teacher and Head of ESOL was in jeopardy. The book is organized in two parts consisting of six chapters. In Chapter 1, Blyth tells her story with many irrelevant details, exaggerating the references in order to justify her point of view. This is characteristic of the entire book. Chapter 2 explains conflict from a post-humanist point of view, postulating how parts are 'entangled' in a conflict from different perspectives. Carmen Blyth explains the interactions between 'one', who belongs to the school, and the 'other', who does not belong to the school. She considers herself the outsider. Chapters 3 and 4 are more engaging and on topic. They are about international schools and the challenges they have experienced. She also explains the context of the school where the conflict happened and, eventually, how it can emerge in schools. Chapter 5 is focused on the emotions she experienced and their impact. The general idea in this chapter is relevant, but the justification from a philosophical point of view makes it confusing and diminishes impact. Finally, in Chapter 6 the author proposes a more reflexive conclusion, highlighting that 'Conflict not only challenges what we know but who and how we are becoming' (p152). The bibliography is very complete, perhaps overly extensive in treating what is mostly an autobiographical story. Another weakness in the bibliography is that the references are not recent.

The purpose of the book is 'to explore the teacher's position in an international school as subordinate and how [the teacher] is wronged on three counts; epistemically (*sic*) for being wrongfully mistrusted, ethically for being wrongfully excluded and ontologically for being wrongfully positioned as a lesser human being' (p.xv). It is important to point out that the title is misleading. Only in one chapter does Blyth provide highlights as to how conflict arises when managers and teachers have different perspectives about a situation.

Worth commenting on is the approach relating to one teacher's perspective on conflict in one particular international school. Being a teacher from a western society in an Asian country brings into consideration many cultural



factors. These necessarily intervene in the understanding of any situation. Blyth does not make reference to the cultural differences that are a part of the decision-making process or of the organizational structure of the school. As the book moves forward, the reader may observe prejudices and bias when the author explains how female teachers are silenced and not taken into account. However, the idea of writing about the teacher's position and conflicts in international schools is valuable. As Blyth points out, citing Hayden (2006), there are very few resources available on the teacher's perspective of organizational culture and the impact of management in an international school.

There are key ideas in Chapter 3 that allow further reflection on organizational culture, leadership and management in international schools. In this chapter, the author explains how the number of international schools has increased throughout the years and this would impact teachers' movement around the globe. She states that school governance should keep in mind the school's mission, vision and values in order to lead and not to manage. Another idea worth commenting on from Chapter 3 is related to the presence of emotions in the school context and how these determine some of the interactions and relationships among teachers, and between teachers and managers. Those who have a leadership position in the educational context may well find it interesting to review what Blyth says in this chapter.

Chapter 4 could be noteworthy because it tells the story of how the English school system works and how the system functions for schools abroad. It explains the author's story, linking it to the relationship between the United Kingdom



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**The purpose of the book is ‘to explore the teacher’s position in an international school as subordinate and how [the teacher] is wronged on three counts; epistemically (sic) for being wrongfully mistrusted, ethically for being wrongfully excluded and ontologically for being wrongfully positioned as a lesser human being’**

and Hong Kong. It was during this period that Hong Kong was handed over to China. This is an interesting chapter for principals or heads of school because it explores how power is handled and its impact on school management. The author provides ideas on how to think forward on school governance, looking for different organizational structures. She overlooks the fact that, nowadays, schools are changing their models in looking for a more horizontal administration. Her perspective on schools as power structures omits more recent literature that sees schools as interactive and dynamic systems where interactions are more fluent and leadership is distributed. For further information on this topic, research by Professor Alma Harris could be consulted.

It cannot be denied that this book focuses on the author’s personal experience. As noted above, the title is misleading because the main argument and most of the references are not actually about school governance. Rather than being a book about teaching and governance in international schools, it is an autobiographical story of the experience, feelings and emotions of this particular teacher facing conflict in one particular international school.

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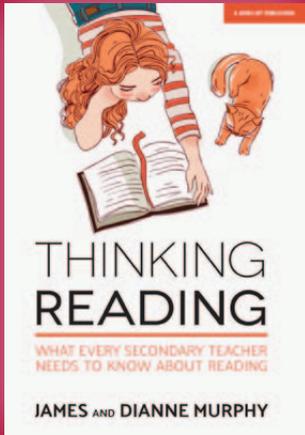
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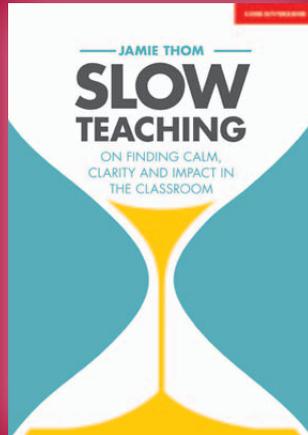


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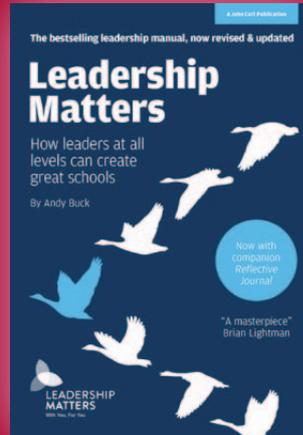


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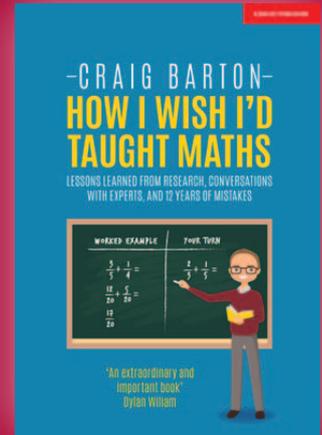


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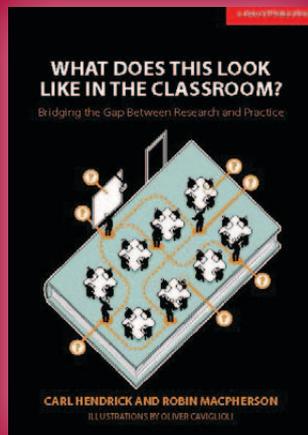


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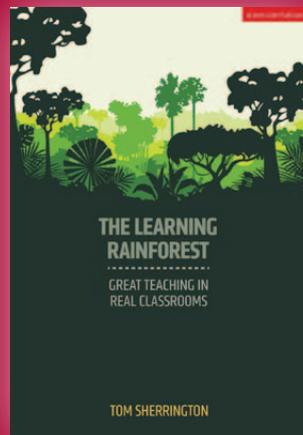


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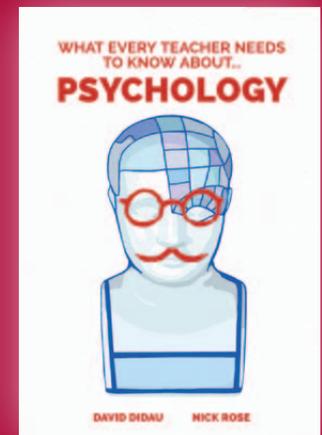


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# The Global Education Race

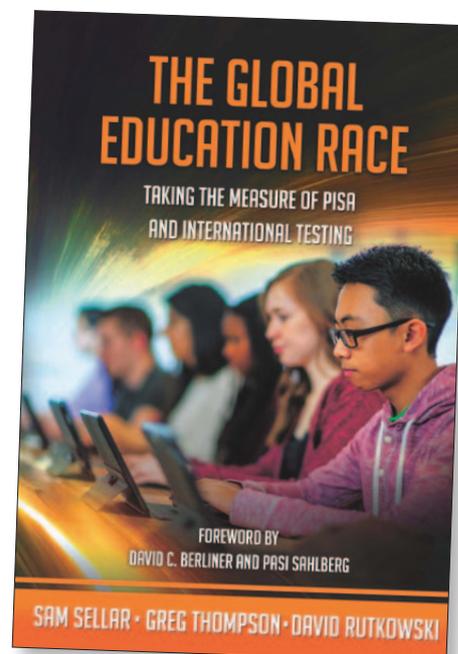
## Taking the Measure of PISA and International Testing

by Sam Sellar, Greg Thompson and David Rutkowski  
Brush Education Inc (2017)  
Reviewed by Wayne Jones

This book focuses on what is currently the most highly influential educational assessment tool for making comparisons between educational systems on a global scale. What its authors do not do, however, is to offer an unequivocal answer to the question as to whether or not the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a testing panacea or pandemic since it neither unduly vilifies nor heaps undeserved praise on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) high-profile test. Instead, Sellar, Thompson and Rutkowski aim to provide key stakeholders such as school leaders, teachers and parents – who may have little knowledge of PISA and only indirectly experience its effects via changes in educational policy – with important information about the test. By enhancing their assessment literacy in this way, it is the authors' hope that these stakeholders will be better informed and better placed to engage with the test and the public debates it engenders.

To achieve this aim, the book endeavours to educate readers on many aspects of PISA such as the test's design and administration, and the analysis of the actual results. It also provides us with a better understanding of the role and motives of the OECD in PISA's development and growing global prominence. It is noticeable and commendable that there is a marked absence of testing jargon throughout the book, even when the discussion turns to the more technical aspects of PISA; concepts related to areas such as sampling theory, achievement estimation and statistical analyses are clearly explained, thus enhancing rather than obfuscating readers' understanding of the strengths and limitations of the test.

From the outset, the authors are at pains to stress that they are neither anti-testing in general nor against large-scale international student assessments such as PISA, since they fully accept the need for and value of Global Learning Metrics as a means of providing comparisons between education systems. The basic idea behind PISA is sound: providing data to enable governments, school leaders and citizens to evaluate their education systems, assess students' preparedness for future employment and act as a catalyst for educational reform. The authors also fully recognise the impressive amount of work that culminates in an examination which



adheres to standards of high quality, as well as the validity, reliability and depth of analysis of the information contained within the technical reports. These qualities notwithstanding, the test does have its limitations, particularly when it comes to making the all-important comparisons between results of participating countries.

In terms of comparative data, it is the global rankings based on participating nations' test scores that steal the limelight in the media frenzy surrounding the release of test results and form the basis of discussions about the effectiveness of educational systems and reform agendas. The lively debate about these league tables highlights serious caveats that need to be carefully considered when analysing the rankings, and can severely limit the interpretations that can be made from the rankings as a result of measurement errors and the multitude of variables that could potentially affect students' test performance. Moreover, the fact that information within the global rankings represents a mere 1% of the PISA test reports underlines both the disproportionate attention given to the rankings and the narrowness of the discussion surrounding the results.

While the OECD has to take some responsibility for encouraging the high-profile media publicity which reduces complex concepts and findings to simple messages and sound bites, it is argued that participating countries also have a responsibility for rigorously assessing the use and consequences of the test results within their own countries. The writers caution governments, for example, against a tendency to isolate a single cause related to the results that can be addressed through policy solutions without taking into account many other factors within complex educational environments. Furthermore, as key stakeholders such as

**This eminently readable book certainly lives up to the authors' claims that it represents an accessible introduction to PISA, and is largely successful in its aim of raising readers' awareness of the benefits and limitations of the test.**

school leaders and teachers have a better understanding of these educational contexts, the writers make a compelling argument for their inclusion in thoughtful and meaningful discussions about the data and how they are to be interpreted and used to improve educational outcomes.

This eminently readable book certainly lives up to the authors' claims that it represents an accessible introduction to PISA, and is largely successful in its aim of raising readers' awareness of the benefits and limitations of the test. However, arming these stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the issues will not necessarily guarantee their active involvement in the shaping of educational thinking and policies, which has traditionally been undertaken at government level.

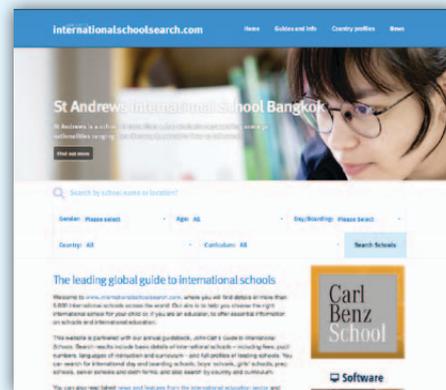
The opening chapter of the book begins with a metaphor of a 'global education race' in which the often-reluctant

participants are not always sure where they are going, or whether the race is the best way of actually getting there. Above all, they are fearful of losing their position and falling behind the other competitors. This metaphor is used again at the end of the discussion to call upon countries to run their own race, and upon policy-makers and educators to search for their own track; one that can help them achieve their desired educational outcomes. Engaging with the issues raised in this book may well contribute to providing the support needed by policy-makers, planners and educators in running their own race and finding their own track.

**Wayne Jones is Director of the Academic Bridge Program at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates. Email: wayne.jones@zu.ac.ae**

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