Globalisation in International Schools: A Study of four International Schools in Vietnam and Cambodia

Greg Simon Ellis[1], Susan Debra Ellis[2]

[1]Sonoda Women's University and Canterbury University, New Zealand
Email: Greg.ellis {at} canterbury.ac.nz

[2]Canterbury University, New Zealand

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ABSTRACT---- *Globalisation has become an important item on the agenda of many progressive schools around the world. In this paper we examine how the staff of four international schools situated in Vietnam and Cambodia, are encouraging their students to participate in the globalisation process. Globalisation requires students to connect with people from various cultures and parts of the world to work together to study issues of common interest. The schools we visited expressed a desire and demonstrated a practical application to be a part of their local communities, with international links being less prevalent.*

The qualitative nature of this research required in-depth interviews with the teachers and principals concerned. It was apparent during these interviews, that due to the nature of these schools and their international population, it would be more useful to broaden our focus and consider how each school provided opportunities for their students, many of whom were Third Culture Kids, to develop skills and knowledge on becoming Global Citizens.

Keywords--- globalisation, third culture kids, community engagement, teacher education, Vietnam, Cambodia
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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing call for teachers and administrators to ensure students are being prepared at school to become global citizens. While global education or World Studies has been advocated and practiced in schools and colleges across the world since the 1970s, global citizenship education is a relatively new concept. However, as Davies (2008) notes global citizenship education is a contested field, as definitions of 'global citizenship' are not without problems.

The 1991 ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) Yearbook *Global Education: From Thought to Action* will be used as a reference:

> "Global education involves learning about those problems and issues which cut across national boundaries and about the interconnectedness of systems — cultural, ecological, economic, political, and technological. Global education also involves learning to understand and appreciate our neighbours who have different cultural backgrounds from ours; to see the world through the eyes and minds of others; and to realize that other peoples of the world need and want much the same things." (p. 5)

The insertion of 'citizenship' into global education implies something more than, or different from, previous conceptions. It is the belief of these researchers that it is not enough to "know", being a global citizen is about being "outraged" and taking action when and as needed.

This article examines how four International Schools operating in Vietnam and Cambodia support their students to become global citizens. It will consider the influence of being Third Culture Kids on global citizenship and examine how each of these schools utilises the environment and community in which they live to support this educational outcome. Difficulties and boundaries are also explored.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Global Citizenship

The concept of 'global citizenship' has become prominent in government, civil society and educational discourses (Dower, 2003; Richardson & Blades, 2006; Peters, Britton & Blee, 2008; O'Sullivan & Pashby, 2008; Abdi & Shultz

2009, 2011). Different agendas and theoretical frameworks inform these discourses which construct different meanings to the words *global, citizenship* and *education*.

The UK Oxfam Curriculum for Global Citizenship (1991) defined a 'global citizen' as someone who:

1. is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen,
2. respects and values diversity,
3. has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally,
4. is outraged by social injustice,
5. is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place,
6. Participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global (p. 1).

Educators are encouraged to include aspects of global citizenship by 'bringing the world into their classrooms' or 'sending students into the world' through developing school partnerships, fundraising activities, study or volunteer abroad schemes and/or the promotion and deliberation of global issues and perspectives in the curriculum.

Unfortunately, some of the discourses which construct different meanings to the words *global, citizenship* and *education* tend to prescribe the adoption of strategies that very often exclude the complex historical, cultural and political nature of the issues, identities and perspectives embedded in global/local processes and events and in the production of knowledge about the self, the other and the world. Many of these projects seem to reverberate the simplistic us/them, here/there binarisms that have been identified by postcolonial critiques (Andreotti, 2006; Andreotti & Souza, 2008; Souza & Andreotti, 2009; Andreotti 2010; Andreotti, Jefferess, Pashby, Rowe, Tarc & Taylor, 2010; Andreotti 2011). Thus, despite claims of globality and inclusion, the lack of analyses of power relations and knowledge construction in this area often results in educational practices that are symbolic and tend to deficit theorize, pathologize or trivialize difference.

That is not to say that all cultural differences should be accepted but rather there should be a willingness to listen and debate different cultural perspectives. Osler (2000) noted that while cultural pluralism propounds openness to all cultures,

> …that openness [does] not mean accepting any position proffered but ...instead being willing to give a genuine hearing to the reasons for any position held. The respect that cultural pluralism calls for is critical respect. The critique must be carried out in practice. The outcome cannot be guaranteed. (p. 56)

How people can "act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place" (OXFAM, 1997, p. 3) is not always an easy issue to resolve either. There is no guarantee that voices calling for change will be heard. There are many examples of protests and marches being held that have not resulted in change.

2.2 Third Culture Kids

The term Third Culture Kid refers to the "third culture" created by individuals who have grown up in multiple cultures when they are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other.

Third culture kid (TCK, 3CK) is a term coined in the early 1950s by American sociologist and anthropologist Ruth Hill Useem, 2009 "to refer to the children who accompany their parents into another society". These included American Foreign Service officers, missionaries, technical aid workers, businessmen, educators, and media-representatives living in India – the first culture being the country from which the parents originated (the home culture), the second the country in which the family was currently living (the host culture), and the third, the expatriate community in the host country (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Useem, 1993).

Terms such as trans-culture kid or Global nomad are also used by some. More recently, Sociologist David C. Pollock also referred to children who had spent a significant part of their developmental years outside of their parents' culture as "Third Culture Kids". "TCKs frequently build relationships to all of the cultures they experience," he writes, "but do not have full ownership of any of them. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background." (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p.19)

Studies show that on average, these kids mature faster, are more independent and introspective, more sophisticated and cosmopolitan, and far more knowledgeable about the world than their compatriots from their country of birth (Sheard, 2008). Acculturation is stressful but the experience of having to fit in and being in contact with different languages and cultures strengthens cultural empathy and open-mindedness. (Radar & Sittig, 2003; Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009)

The following traits of TCKs are general traits observed during several research projects conducted. Naturally they do not apply to all TCKs.Because TCK's have been exposed to change, location, schools, friends and culture they are often able to cope with a new culture more easily. They are in a continual process of adapting and relating the culture(s) they are coming from, with the new cultures they are entering every few years.

Many are able to make friends quickly and importantly maintain established friendships. This has become much easier in today's world of technology. It has become much easier to keep in touch through voice over IP applications on the Internet, like Skype, for free. Internet technology has become a lifeline for TCKs. Children can play computer games with friends across the world, social networking sites offer the opportunity to keep in touch and tweeting and blogging have become common place TCKs on the whole have a clearer worldview and understand that one can hold a personal truth, and still acknowledge the existence of other truths being held in other cultures, without necessarily being impelled to change the views of others to conform to their own (Straffon, 2003).

They are able to view commonalities between cultures, viewing themselves first as humans, in a Global World, rather than being connected to any particular culture (Dewaele & van Oudenhoven, 2009).Because they have friends all over the world, they have compassion, empathy and concern for people who live in other parts of the world, whose culture they have known personally (Eakin, 1998; Smith, 1996).

According to Schaetti (1996) a consequence of their global living experiences means they are not attached to any particular culture. Many TCKs feel at home anywhere on the planet. They also have the capacity to select and integrate aspects from many different cultures that they have experienced. This gives them a strong cultural openness and understanding that is beyond the grasp of mono-cultural children.

They do not feel separate or isolated, as they move around the planet. They carry an inner confidence that if necessary, they could survive anywhere (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). There are enormous benefits that these kids discover, as they grow up and become 'Global Citizens', who know how to be equally at ease anywhere in the world. They are truly 'Inhabitants of the World' - Global Citizens who can take a job in any culture, and fit in.Third Culture Kids tend to grow up within a globalized culture marked by well-travelled parents and friends, international schools and vast future opportunities. They are influenced by highly educated parents and research validates that most excel in higher education and future careers (Hill, Useem, Baker & Cottrell, 1999). However, this nomad lifestyle is not only accompanied by advantages, there are disadvantages too, which this report wishes to acknowledge. For the purpose of this study the focus is on positive attributes that being a TCK bring to becoming a Global Citizen.

It's interesting to note that President Barack Obama was a TCK.

3. METHOD

Four International Schools were visited. Information regarding the research and an outline of topics and questions to be asked and discussed was sent prior to the meeting. Interviews were carried out with the principals of each school and tours of the buildings and observations of programmes offered were undertaken. Interviews were taped to ensure all relevant information was collected. Permission was also sought for further contact if needed for clarification or additional information.

Two schools were in Vietnam. One school was in Hanoi, and the other school was in Ho Chi Minh City. The other two schools visited were in Cambodia, both in the city of Phnom Penh.
In each of these schools the international TCKs were expected to speak English. English was the main form of tuition, however all schools offered English language support as well as opportunities to learn another foreign language.

Parents had chosen these schools to maintain linguistic stability and to ensure that their children would not fall behind due to linguistic problems. Also in many instances the local education system was not deemed suitable which is typical for many parents when opting to send their children to International schools whilst living abroad (Hayden, 2011). Also the curriculum had been chosen to ensure relevance and easy access to higher academic study in "home" countries.
Where their own language was not available, families had chosen English-speaking schools for their children. They had done this because of the linguistic and cultural opportunities being immersed in English might provide their children when they were older.

The population of these schools was expatriates and children from the local upper middle class. Lauder (2007) refers to this group of children as "aspirant indigenous elites" (p. 442).

4. RESULTS

There were some clear similarities between all schools.

When looking at the literature review it was clear that many attributes of a TCK fit the criteria for a global citizen just by the nature of the experience they are having. This international experience ensures they are aware of the wider world.

All students mixed with a large number of students from a variety of cultures. There was strong evidence in all schools that diversity was respected and valued.
This was certainly the cases in the four schools visited.

Principal 1: Most students at this school fit very quickly into the new school environment and establish friendships within a short period of time. They are very adaptable. This is especially so when they are moving regularly with their families from country to country.

Principal 2: Friendships are formed across cultures. Language barriers can inhibit communication initially but I love watching children find new ways to communicate and have fun together. For a long time communication can be difficult then suddenly it all happens and the children are talking.

Principal 3: Racism is rare and there have been very few reports from teachers of it. The children are very accepting of each other and appear to enjoy the diversity the school offers. School lunches cater for different cultural requirements but often students choose food and drinks from cultures other than their own.

In all schools there was evidence of the cultural backgrounds of both staff and students celebrated through photographs, wall displays and signage.

Local community support received far greater emphasis than international links which were often "hit and miss" depending on contacts or associations individual teachers or schools may have had.

Principal 2: There are no formal relationships with schools from another country. However, if a teacher or student has a contact from a previous school then there are times when some ongoing communication occurs. This is difficult to maintain due to the transient nature of staff and students alike.

Each school had a range of programmes in place for community involvement. All students participated in and contributed to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global. As expected there was a clear differentiation in the expectations of this involvement depending on the age of the child. Activities to participate in the local community and to support different causes and charitable organisations were expected throughout all year levels. There was a greater involvement and support given by the teacher to the younger children.

Principal 2: Every year group has a special project that involves supporting a community charity. These charities are selected on their suitability to the particular age of the students. For instance the juniors are involved in an animal charity. We do not want them fund raising and just giving money however to the cause. We don't want this involvement to be symbolic. Students need to have some involvement in the charity and support it in more ways than just financially.

This response was typical of the other three schools.

Principal 4: Our students need to develop an awareness and knowledge of their local community and feel that they can be active in making a difference to an injustice or act to improve a situation that they identify. It's not enough to find out about it – we have to help to do something about it.

Principal 3: Parents have come to work in this country mostly through church and charity based organisations. Many children are involved in projects outside the school supporting the local community because of the importance their parents place on this work.

Although each school in this study used a different curriculum, based generally on the home country they were linked to, every school had adapted this to fit with their local community and the population they served. Content was developed according to age, curriculum requirements and to support learning about how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally.

The relevance of content is inherently connected to students' motivation to participate and learn (Frymier, 2002). When introducing global issues through relevant content, students formed links between the international world and their own lifestyles and communities. This engagement supports local and global awareness (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009).

Principal 2: "It is really important that we adapt our curriculum to ensure the learning is relevant and part of the students' experiences and interests. It has little relevance if we don't make learning applicable to where we are living"

Principal 1: We consider the curriculum, what needs to be covered and then look at the topics and events happening locally and internationally that might be of interest or benefit to our students to decide what will be covered at certain times during the year.

Teachers were open and interested in Global Citizenship.
Principal 4: "Because of the nature of the teachers, and their own experiences of living in an unfamiliar culture, all are open, positive and constructive when discussing Global Citizenship."

4.1 Barriers to community engagement

There were some barriers and difficulties noted.

Principal 3: There are some parents within our community that believe their children have enough exposure to the local community just by the fact that they live in it. We have to be careful about the programmes we plan so that we don't create negative community backlash. Also we have to be sensitive and ensure we don't expose children to situations that are frightening and outside their ability to cope. Living in a third world country can provide some pretty disturbing situations."

Principal 2: It is not always easy to plan visits and get access to sites we wish to visit. For example some of our older students were contacting an organisation they wanted to work with and help but this proved impossible. There are a number of reasons for this happening.

Pollock and Van Reken (2001) found that TCKs are often less prejudiced due to their time among culturally and ethnically diverse people. They report that a few TCKs, however, become more prejudiced as a result of their experiences and go on to suggest that this increase is related to their position of privilege in the host culture.

Principal 2: We are working hard with a small group of students and parents who do not wish to engage with the local community at any level. There is definitely a sense of superiority that we are working hard to overcome. Also some of the local students who attend this school do not want to mix with their compatriots.

One principal reported the importance of ensuring one nationality didn't dominant the school population.

Principal 4: We never allow more than one third of any culture to dominate our school population – both across the school and within any particular class. This stops language or culture clicks from occurring. I have worked in a number of International schools and it has always been a good approximate rule to go by

5. CONCLUSION

The four schools visited have a focus on ensuring all people in their school community, many from different cultures, races, religions, and nations develop partnerships of cooperation and dialogue. There are strong programmes and expectations in place that value this diversity. Existing evidence around TCKs empathy for other cultures was reflected in the observations of these researchers.

Programmes are in place that develop the students' ability to understand how the world works and their preparation for active participation. These were expanded and developed based on age appropriateness.

If we consider the OXFAM definition that draws attention to the 'active' role of global citizens then these schools are providing knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to change the world to make it more just and democratic. They are beginning the process of ensuring their students will develop into global citizens who will be able

to work together to solve the world's intractable problems. They are in a privileged position to be able to do this due to their international community.

It is the hope of these researchers that this knowledge about diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives will guide action that will create a humane and just world.

Educators observed are working to help their students formulate possibilities for action to change the world to make it more democratic and just. Critique without hope may leave students disillusioned and without agency (Freire, 1997).

5.1 Future Research Possibilities

Student voice would add depth to understanding about students' outrage around social injustice and their commitment to "action" and "making a difference" to ensure the world is a more equitable and sustainable place.

An in depth look at Inquiry learning would also be useful in these schools-the extent to which teachers direct the learning and "action". It would also be interesting to discover how much control the students felt they had over their own learning and making decisions about important issues and how they could respond to them.

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