Citation for published version:
Hayden, M & Thompson, J 2016, International schools: the developing agenda. in M Hayden & J Thompson (eds), *International schools: current issues and future prospects.* 2 edn, vol. 26, Oxford Studies in Comparative Education, no. 2, vol. 26, Symposium Books, Oxford, pp. 9-16. <http://www.symposium-books.co.uk/bookdetails/99/>

Publication date:
2016

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication

University of Bath

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Download date: 15. Mar. 2026

INTRODUCTION

International Schools: the developing agenda

MARY HAYDEN & JEFF THOMPSON

Early Influences

This is a particularly interesting time to be writing about international schools. As a still relatively new phenomenon in the history of education over the centuries, international schools are currently experiencing unprecedented growth as a number of historical developments conjoin with the effects of the forces of globalisation in the early twenty-first century to give them an increasingly high profile as an attractive form of education for young people worldwide.

We will not rehearse here in detail the history of the creation and development of international schools, already well documented elsewhere by, inter alia, Sylvester (2015). Suffice to say that different interpretations are to be found in a relatively ill-defined field of the concept of an international school, and thus of the dates of the creation of the first such institutions. These are variously considered to include, for instance, schools established for the children of colonial administrators, and a school, the International College at Spring Grove in London, established in 1866 by luminaries including Charles Dickens, Richard Cobden and T.H. Huxley that closed in 1889 (Sylvester, 2002). It is arguably, however, the International School of Geneva and Yokohama International School, both founded in 1924 (Hayden, 2006), that can be considered with some justification to be the first international schools of the modern era.

Since that time the numbers of international schools continued to grow at a relatively steady pace: though of different sizes, catering for different age ranges, based in different locations worldwide and offering different curriculum programmes to different mixes of student nationalities, for many years the majority of schools that would describe themselves – or be described by others – as international schools had a similar purpose: the educating of school-age students away from their home country and home

education systems, often moving between countries and schools at relatively frequent intervals as a result of a parent's occupation. Some such schools would capitalise on the multicultural nature and global mobility of the student population by embracing an ideological vision (in addition to the pragmatic focus on providing support for the globally mobile) of promoting international understanding and encouraging their students to become what might be described as global citizens.

Influential in the growing sector of international schools were two major developments in the 1960s. The founding in 1962 of Atlantic College in south Wales, for the first time – other than when the short-lived Spring Grove initiative had arguably a similar goal – brought together young people from different countries on scholarships to live and study together for two years at pre-university level, with a view to breaking down the barriers that grow up through ignorance and prejudice. Later known as the United World College of the Atlantic, Atlantic College was to be the first in a group of (as of 2016) 15 United World Colleges worldwide based on the philosophy of Kurt Hahn, and exemplified by Lester B. Pearson, Prime Minister of Canada, in his 1957 Nobel Peace Prize lecture: 'How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don't know each other?'

The 1960s also saw the early stage of developments, spearheaded by the International School of Geneva, that led to the first examination of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma being offered in 1970 (Peterson, 2003). Subsequently extended to include the IB Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Career-related Programme, the take-up of the IB Diploma and its sibling programmes has enabled many international schools to offer a curriculum that is not nationally affiliated and is thus more in keeping with a school that claims to follow an international, rather than national, agenda. As programmes created afresh (Thompson, 1998), compared with international programmes that are essentially adapted versions of existing national programmes such as the widely offered International GCSE (IGCSE), the IB programmes have been a major influence in many international schools worldwide over the forty-plus years of the IB's existence, and could be considered to have set a precedent for the concept of an international curriculum later built upon by other organisations including Fieldwork Education, which launched in 2000 the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) and, subsequently, the International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC) – both also now offered in international schools worldwide.

With increasing professional mobility, ease of travel and the desire of parents for their children to travel with them rather than remain in boarding schools in the home country, the numbers of international schools continued to grow in the second half of the twentieth century. Though diverse in curriculum, size, age range, mix of student nationalities and in being residential or otherwise, the vast majority of international schools have always

been English-medium, founded (with the exception of the United World Colleges) as individual institutions to provide for a particular local need, and established on a not-for-profit basis. As the number of such schools grew, they began to attract interest from researchers and to become the focus of books and articles commenting on and analysing this relatively new phenomenon. Leach's 1969 book was arguably the first with international schools as its focus, and Jonietz and Harris's *World Yearbook of Education 1991*, together with Hayden and Thompson's first article in this area (1995), were two further major stepping stones in publications focusing particularly on international schools as an area of research interest. The founding, in 2002, of the *Journal of Research in International Education* represented a further opportunity for those conducting research specifically in this area to disseminate and discuss ideas in the developing field of international schools and international education.

One aspect of international schools to draw researchers' interest since the second half of the twentieth century has been the different types of school considered to fall under what has been described as the 'umbrella term' (Hayden, 2006) of international school. With no overall body having worldwide authority to determine whether a school may describe itself as such, and with schools having different reasons for judging whether the use of the term in their titles would be advantageous or otherwise (Hayden, 2006), the lack of a clear definition of what merits the description of international school has been one of the factors prompting researchers to attempt to bring order to the diverse range of schools that might be considered to belong to that grouping. We use the term broadly here, to describe schools that are not national in their location, composition and focus, including for instance the many French *lycées* abroad. Attempting to bring order to the growing number of diverse schools described as international schools, Terwilliger was the first, in 1972, to propose prerequisites for a school to be described by that term. Other researchers focused instead on attempting to categorise the existing schools. Leach's four categories of international schools in 1969 were followed by Sanderson's proposal of seven categories (1981), and in 1987 by Pönisch's eleven-category proposal. Matthews' 1988 suggestion that such categorisations serve little purpose and that instead a dichotomy of market-driven versus ideology-driven schools would be preferable led to a subsequent proposal (Hayden, 2006) that in fact a spectrum from market-driven to ideology-driven might be even more useful than a dichotomous representation. The growing number of researchers taking an interest in international schools, many being teachers and leaders in the schools themselves who were studying for masters and doctorate qualifications, focused also on a range of topics of particular interest in the international school sector, including the implementation of international programmes such as the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge International Examinations' IGCSE and Fieldwork Education's IPC and IMYC. Their research interests also included the nature of the globally mobile student

population (and the so-called global nomads or third-culture kids), questions of language and support for students' mother tongue when increasing proportions of students in English-medium international schools are not first-language English speakers, and issues relating to recruitment of teachers and leaders for international schools when teachers were (and largely still are) trained and certificated within national education systems and expectations of leadership style can vary according to cultural context. While the focus of research groupings in a small number of universities worldwide (the University of Bath being one notable such institution) and of a growing body of small-scale research projects, what has been lacking for international schools during this period – and indeed to this day – has been any large-scale external funding to support the type of longitudinal research project that could generate outcomes likely to be valuable and informative to the growing international school sector.

A Step Change in the Sector

Until arguably around the turn of the century, the growth in the international school sector was relatively linear. Catering for increasing numbers of globally mobile expatriates, many international schools also accepted a smaller proportion of so-called host country nationals who found the form of education offered in international schools attractive, for reasons including the perceived desirability of an English-medium education in a world where English has become the dominant global language, the cachet of an international programme such as the IB, and the perceived competitive edge an international school education would give their children over peers educated in the national education system.

What has happened more recently was perhaps, with hindsight, predictable but nevertheless has taken many commentators on the international school context largely by surprise. From a situation where in the late twentieth century the ratio of expatriates to host country national students in international schools was approximately 80%:20%, by 2016 the ratio has reversed, with some 80% of international school students now from the affluent aspirational middle classes in those countries where international schools are authorised to accept the country's own citizens. In a small number of countries the participation of national citizens is not permitted, Singapore and China being two cases in point (though China is now developing a different form of international school aimed particularly at Chinese nationals), and Thailand provides an intriguing case study of a country which previously forbade Thai nationals from attending international schools and, after deregulation, saw an explosion in numbers to the point that in 2016 there are around 120 international schools in that country (International Schools Association of Thailand, 2016).

The growth in demand for international schooling from aspirational host-country middle classes has seen a response in the form of new schools

aimed largely at that, rather than the expatriate, market. And where what might be described as 'traditional' international schools catering for expatriates were essentially not-for-profit, individual institutions responding to a local need and often run by parent-dominated boards, the massive growth in very recent years has been in a different type of school: often more commercially focused, run on a for-profit basis and, commonly though not exclusively, forming part of a chain or group of such schools either in a particular region or across the world. International schooling is clearly now a commodity, and the large growth observed in the international school sector in very recent years – ISC Research, for instance, predicts that by 2025 there will be at least 15,000 international schools teaching over 8 million students (Keeling, 2015) – is undoubtedly in this newer 'non-traditional' form of international schooling worldwide.

The unprecedented growth in international schools has emerged so quickly that commentators and researchers are struggling to keep up with the changes that are taking place on literally almost a daily basis. In 2013, for instance, we proposed a new categorisation of international schools that, we felt, would better represent the status quo than earlier categorisations: Type A (the 'traditional' form of international school catering principally for globally mobile expatriates), Type B (the more ideologically focused schools such as United World Colleges, founded for that particular purpose and not created to respond to a market need) and Type C (the newer, non-traditional type of international school aimed largely at host country nationals and, very often, operated on a more commercial footing than has tended to be the case for Type A and Type B schools) (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). Already, in 2016, we are aware that our Type C category incorporates a number of different sub-types that could arguably be better represented separately. Groups of commercially operated schools, for instance, are of a different type than the growing numbers of schools, emerging in South East Asia and the Middle East in particular, that are what might be described as 'satellites' of well-established and prestigious schools including Dulwich College and Harrow School in England as just two examples of a growing number that are branching out into the international marketplace. Such is the nature of researching and writing in an area that is developing at an unprecedented pace.

The Role of Research

As the number and diversity of international schools increase, so too do the researchable issues. Fortunately there are also increasing numbers of teachers and leaders keen to undertake research in the context, largely – as already observed – through masters and doctoral programmes, as well as university-based researchers and others who have been centrally involved in different aspects of the developing international school sector over many years and who are well placed to analyse and comment on current developments. As

the sphere of international schools has become more diversified in its composition, so concurrently have the approaches to research been developed in order to engage with the range of issues that clearly cross boundaries with other cognate areas including comparative education, multicultural education, globalisation, cosmopolitanism and global citizenship education, to name but a few. A recent publication, *The SAGE Handbook of Research in International Education*, draws together accounts of research from differing traditions which focuses on international education and – in parts – on the development of and issues relating to international schools (Hayden et al, 2015).

As a consequence of the increased activity in research in the area, the literature base of books and articles on international schooling has been steadily building up, and we hope that the contributions from the experienced authors of chapters in this collection will help to illuminate and inform this still relatively under-researched context. Thus our own Introduction begins with a brief overview of the foundations of the international school movement and the important role that research has played in developing our understanding of the current status of international schooling, which we intend will set a context for the subsequent chapters. In the first part, Nick Tate follows with a reflection on the international school sector, asking just what (in the changing environment) international schools are for, while George Walker – another well-known, experienced and well-respected author in this field – raises questions relating to the relationship between the concept of international school, in recently opened international schools in particular, and the nature of the curriculum they offer. A number of pertinent and increasingly important issues concerned with the curriculum and with learning and teaching within international schools are raised by Tristian Stobie, Martin Skelton and Judith Fabian. All are names well known to anyone who has had involvement in international schools, or read international school-related literature, in recent years, and all are experienced in developing one or more of the international programmes that are so central to many international schools today: the IB, Cambridge International Examinations and Fieldwork Education's IPC and IMYC – still relatively new on the scene since Martin Skelton and colleagues launched the IPC in 2000 and, subsequently, the IMYC.

In the second part, which comprises chapters concerned with the organisation of international schools, Michael Fertig and Chris James' chapter on the complexity of leading and managing international schools will resonate with many international school leaders, and arises from their roles as university researchers with many years of supporting masters and doctoral researchers from international schools. Margaret Halicioglu's analysis of the place of the residential dimension in some international schools and Neil Richards' reflections on a career as teacher and head/principal in a number of international schools are both grounded in extensive experience over many years in this fast-growing sector. The third and final part deals with the

identification of current trends and future developments that arise from the burgeoning interest in the international school sector. In raising and discussing issues arising from the founding of a new international school in China – one of the new 'types' of international school developed to cater for aspirational Chinese families who have not to date been permitted to attend international schools in China that cater for expatriates – Sally Booth, Malcolm McKenzie and Edward Shanahan draw on a wealth of experience gained not only from the founding of Keystone Academy, but also from the range of other schools internationally in which they have played key roles as leaders and managers. Also focusing on issues arising from and relating to the fast-changing nature of international schools, in their respective chapters Mark Waterson and Tristan Bunnell – both experienced international school teachers and researchers – highlight just how quickly and how fundamentally these changes are coming about, and speculate on what some of the changes might mean for the developing international school sector.

Inevitably in such a fast-changing context, new issues will be arising and new questions being asked between the contributors' writing of their chapters and this book appearing in print. Such is the nature of researching and writing in a dynamic and exciting educational environment. We hope and anticipate that those reading these chapters will experience some of the enthusiasm and motivation to engage with the range of stimulating issues and ideas that our contributors bring to this volume – and that at least some readers will themselves feel moved to engage in further research and writing in order to contribute to the growing literature and research base, and to our increasing understanding, of the important and influential sector that is international schools worldwide.

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