

## INTERPRETING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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### **International Education in an Era of Globalisation: What's New?**

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#### Introduction

Thank you for inviting me to address this conference. It is an honour to be here because I hold the IBO in high esteem. My close contact with the IB and IB students began in the mid-1980s on a visit to Lester B Pearson United World College in Victoria, British Columbia. Catherine, my younger teenage daughter, accompanied me and while I was addressing one group of students another group took her out in a Zodiac to visit the underwater nature reserve for which the College is responsible.

She returned with stars in her eyes and, as soon as we were alone, she said that her ambition was to attend this kind of school. We found out what was required and two years later she went off to the United World College of the American West, in Las Vegas, New Mexico, with a scholarship from Ontario. It turned out that we gained two IB graduates from that experience because one of her classmates, Ian Chisholm from Saskatchewan, later married her older sister.

Not long after that visit to Pearson College I was invited to join the Council of Foundation of the IB and thus began an association that lasted through the 1990s. It was a stimulating responsibility to steer the fortunes of the International Baccalaureate Organisation during a period of rapid geographical, numerical and curricular growth. Later in the decade I had the privilege of serving as vice-president of the IBO during the first part of the presidency of Greg Crafter. We had to steer the IBO through some difficult changes in its governance and management. Thanks to Greg's vision, wisdom and diplomatic skills the IBO emerged from that process with the management and the constitution needed for the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

So this is an organisation and a cause that I am proud to be associated with. I had to step down from the IBO Council in 1999 because of pressure of work at the UK Open University, of which I was then vice-chancellor. But I was pleased to find that when I moved to UNESCO as Assistant Director-General for Education last year, I was once again involved in an association with the IBO. Thirty-five years ago UNESCO facilitated the creation of the IB. Last year you did me the honour of inviting me to cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony of the new Peterson Building in Cardiff. UNESCO, like the IBO, has a close interest in everything to do with international education.

#### Globalisation in question

My title today is *International Education in an Era of Globalisation: What's New?* A year ago, almost to the hour, we were watching our TV sets in disbelief as the drama of September 11 unfolded in the USA. Inevitably, the magnitude of the event spawned hyperbole in the media. It was called 'the day that changed the world' and the rhetoric of globalisation was expanded to include the 'globalisation of terror'.

A year later our assessments can be more sober. We can now see that September 11 didn't change the world that much. Certainly, the shock made faltering western economies take a further dip, but they were recovering nicely earlier this year until the rash of discoveries of corporate chieftains fiddling their accounts cast doubt on the integrity of large parts of the capitalist enterprise. Meanwhile American politics has returned to normal after six months of abnormal bipartisan rhetoric.

Even to talk of the globalisation of terror now seems wide of the mark. The focus of Al Qaeda seems to be the USA rather than the world as a whole, its key operatives come mostly from Saudi Arabia and it buries most of its activities in the anarchy of a few failed states. Since September 11 terrorist incidents around the world do not seem to have risen above the level of the background noise of terrorism that, sadly, seems to be part of modern life. Israel is, of course, a special case.

Indeed, it seems that globalisation generally has taken a step backward during the last year. The most developed aspect of globalisation is the international flows of capital. The volume of those flows may have dropped during the year as the business climate has deteriorated and many emerging markets, such as Argentina, have become notably less attractive. The second most developed aspect of globalisation is trade. The drive to freer trade also slipped backwards as the USA slapped tariffs on steel and massively increased its farm subsidies.

But I get ahead of myself. Education is a long-term activity. It is silly to talk of reorienting education because of the ephemera of any one year. We need to look at the longer trends. When I chose my title, *International Education in an Era of Globalisation: What's New?* I wanted to look with you at what is new for international education in the era of globalisation, not to examine the detailed evolution of the phenomenon of globalisation in the last year.

Indeed, we do well to take a long view of globalisation because we are in danger of being stampeded by the press into exaggerating the phenomenon of globalisation generally. Ten years ago you never heard the term globalisation. Now it is a staple of political speeches. In one of the leading German newspapers, for example, the frequency of use of the term globalisation increased by a factor of 30 between 1999 and 2000.

Faced with this sort of hype and faddism intellectuals should reach for their scepticism. A few years ago my former Open University colleague, Grahame Thompson, co-authored a book with the title *Globalisation in Question*. His research showed that on some measures international capital and trade flows were actually proportionately greater in 1900 than in 2000. Furthermore, the international movement of people was, in principle, much freer in 1900 because there were no passports. I say 'in principle' because it was only the rich who had the wherewithal to travel.

The point remains, however, that today's globalisation is the globalisation of money, images and products rather than the globalisation of people. In fact, governments are going to greater and greater lengths to prevent the movement of people. Is there not a contradiction between the notion of globalisation, with its implication of roaming the world freely, and the reality of movement being more and more tightly controlled through passports and visas.

### Gandhi and Mandela

My job at UNESCO requires me to make many speeches. However, daily life in a large international bureaucracy leaves me little time to prepare them. It is often while I am on trips away from Paris, grandly called missions in UNESCO jargon, that I get a chance to think about the talks I have to give in future. Furthermore, these trips often generate stimulating experiences.

So it was that I was in Durban, South Africa, a month ago and had a morning free. I had heard you could visit the Phoenix Settlement where Mahatma Gandhi used to live in and set off to see it. It was interesting for what it was not, rather than what it was. I suppose I had expected a small century-old farmhouse with Gandhi's desk and bed and so on, rather like the usual museums created in the former homes of famous people.

Instead, I discovered that what Gandhi called his 'place of peace' had been burned to the ground in the bitter inter-communal violence that swept the settlement in 1985. Member of the same community that burned it down have been paid to rebuild it and President Mbeki reopened it two years ago. However, it is still completely bare, save for a few framed copies of fading newspapers and posters, and therefore rather sad. What made the visit worthwhile was an article by Nelson Mandela that I found in a free newspaper given out to visitors.

In the article Mandela compared his experience in jail on Robben Island with Gandhi's experience of jail in South Africa over fifty years earlier. Both of them began their prison life in the fort in Johannesburg. His first conclusion was that the physical conditions of prison had changed hardly at all over that period. The prison uniform given to Mandela in 1962 was identical to that given to Gandhi in 1908. General Smuts had tried to work out a settlement with Gandhi to save the embarrassment of having him in prison, just as P W Botha tried to do the same with Mandela in the 1980s. The parallels between the prison experiences of these two great men of peace, at the beginning and end of the twentieth century, are quite remarkable.

What had changed dramatically was the legal and constitutional environment in which they had each offended and gone to prison: To quote Nelson Mandela himself:

*'On all four occasions, Gandhi was arrested in his time and at his insistence. There were no midnight raids. The police did not swoop on him, there were no charges of conspiracy to overthrow the state, of promoting the activities of a banned organisation or instigating inter-race violence. The state had not yet invented the vast repertoire of so-called security laws that we had to content with in our time. There was no Terrorism Act, no Communism Act, no Internal Security Act or detentions without trial. The control of the state was not as complete.'*

*'Gandhi was arrested for deliberately breaching laws that were unjust because they discriminated against Indians and violated their dignity and their freedom. He was imprisoned because he refused to take out a registration certificate and instigated others to do likewise.'*

*'When apartheid was still in its infancy, we too, like Gandhi, organised arrests in our own time through the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign, but by the end of the sixties, the violence of the state had reached such intensity that passive resistance appeared futile. We were literally pulled out of our beds and dragged into prison. Our Defiance, instead of bringing relief, provoked the Government into passing the so-called security laws in a bid to dam up all resistance.'*

We can rejoice that South Africa is now a democracy in which all people are constitutionally equal. But Mandela's statement warns us of two ever-present evils to which all states must remain alert. The first is the temptation to categorise citizens as 'we' and 'they'. The second is to create situations where 'passive resistance appears futile'.

In this respect the intellectual aftermath to last September 11 may have changed the world. After an all too brief period when Americans stopped to ask themselves why some people could hate the USA so much, they took refuge in the comforting thesis of a 'clash of civilisations'. Even those many intellectuals who repudiated this thesis framed their discussion with reference to this paradigm. Some pointed out, quite rightly, that Al Qaeda is a manifestation of conflict within Islam, more specifically of the policy contradictions within

Saudi Arabia over many years. It is not a conflict between East and West or between Arab and Christian.

However, the concept of a clash of civilisations has stuck in the public mind and these are not good days for internationalism. That must be a serious concern for the IBO. The IBO and UNESCO share the same intellectual roots. UNESCO was created after World War II in a spirit of enlightened humanism, reflecting the belief that a better world was possible.

#### The intellectual roots of the IBO and UNESCO

UNESCO is a member of the United Nations family that has as its core texts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the many international conventions and declarations derived from it.

UNESCO's constitution begins with the ringing assertion, so consistently ignored but so very true:

*That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.*

It continues, referring to the Second World War:

*That the ... war ... was made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of inequality of men and races;*

I pause there to point out that talk of the clash of civilisations brings us rapidly back to the doctrine of inequality of men and races. Let me come back to that in a minute. UNESCO's constitution goes on to say how these causes of war can be countered:

*That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.*

It continues with another statement, absolutely true but usually ignored:

*That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace that would secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.*

Starting from these principles, the constitution gives UNESCO a simple mandate for action:

*For these reasons, the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives.*

I suspect that those pioneers who created the IB would have subscribed to all that, and I imagine that those words still resonate with those of you who implement the IB and its associated programmes today. You could say that the UNESCO constitution was a charter for enlightened globalisation long before the word globalisation was coined.

The main threat to these ideals today comes from a combination of woolly generalisation about the 'clash of civilisations' and post-modern relativism. Talk of the clash of civilisations exaggerates the distinctions between cultures and undermines the notion of universal human values. Postmodernism, with its stress on relativism and fragmentation, denies the

idea that there are universal human rights. If all cultures are equally valid, then why should the idea of a human right that developed in one culture be applied within another?

The task of international education is to counter this threat. It is to stand for the principles that there are universal human values and universal human rights and to educate young people to uphold those principles. As a line in the prospectus of one IB school, Atlantic College in Wales, puts it: *We cannot save the world but we can produce people who want to save the world.* What does that mean in practical terms?

### The goals of international education

International education, as exemplified by the IB, should seek two goals. In principle those goals are at least compatible, at best mutually reinforcing. However, I learned in my time on the IBO Council that life is not always so simple.

The first goal is pragmatic. Many employees are now internationally mobile. Their children may move from country to country during their education and need to be able to adapt quickly to new schools. In particular, when they make the important transition from school to university, they want a qualification that will be immediately recognised, accepted and valued by universities around the world. The IBO has done a remarkable job in creating such a qualification and managing the steady expansion of its use around the world.

It wasn't until I got to UNESCO and became more closely involved issues related to the international recognition of qualifications that I realised just how remarkable the IB was. I hesitate to use the word unique, but I know of no other example where an international body independent of any government assures the quality and credibility of a broadly based qualification in use around the world. It is a great tribute to everyone involved in developing and sustaining the IB over many years.

It was ironic – but, I suppose, predictable – that three of the countries whose nationals were most closely involved in starting the IB, namely France, Germany and the United Kingdom, should have been the most refractory to its use in their jurisdictions. I guess you put that down to the clash of educational civilisations. But I note that even in these countries the good, consistent work of the IB is steadily winning converts.

Getting the IB to its present status as an admired qualification has been a struggle, but it was conceptually straightforward. The same cannot be said about the second goal pursued by the IB. If the first goal, that of a universally recognised qualification, was pragmatic, the second, that of a curriculum inspired by universal values, is avowedly idealistic. It is not enough that the bright young people who obtain the IB should be mobile citizens of the world. They should also be, in the words I quoted earlier, people who want to save the world – and are equipped to do it.

I do not know whether you have done surveys to discover how IB graduates, either at graduation or more importantly later in life, differ in their attitudes and actions from non-IB people. The small sample of IB graduates whom I know seem to attach more importance to helping others than to helping themselves, but I wouldn't put too much reliance on that sample.

There was a survey of university graduates in the United Kingdom that produced some interesting conclusions in this area. The aim of the research was to define the notion of 'graduateness'. How does doing a university degree change people? A large sample of graduates from different universities was surveyed and with one exception the results were similar. The exception was the Open University. Its graduates were older than the others but they reported, much more than the younger graduates, that university study had changed their lives.

Above all, it had given them more self-confidence and this, in turn, had made them more interested in helping other people and getting involved in the cultural, social and political life of their communities. Does the IB have a similar effect in instilling the greater self-confidence that encourages people to become agents for development?

### Agents for development

Agents for development – what do I mean by that? Development is an overused word. What do you understand by it? Is it developing the emotional, physical and intellectual aptitudes of individuals? Is it improving the economic performance of a community or nation? Is it creating societies in which people live together harmoniously? You would probably say that it is all of these things – and more. But how can we summarise all this?

Nobel prizewinner Amartya Sen has done it brilliantly for us in his book *Development as Freedom*, whose title sums it all up. He argues that the purpose of development is simply the expansion of freedom. Development, in his words, ‘consists of the removal of the various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency’.

Furthermore, the expansion of freedom is not only the primary purpose of development. It is also the principal means of development. That is, first, because free people are the most effective agents of development and, second, because freedoms of one kind promote freedoms of other kinds. For example, economic and political freedoms reinforce one another. Freedom from disease gives people freedom to take initiatives in overcoming deprivation. In his book Professor Sen explores these linkages in detail.

But his key thesis is simple. First, freedom has a constitutive role in development. This is the importance of substantive freedom in enriching human life. Such freedom starts with avoiding under-nourishment and premature death and continues through the freedoms associated with being literate and numerate to the enjoyment of political participation and free speech. This means that the key criterion for assessing the progress of development is whether people are becoming increasingly free.

Second, freedom has an instrumental role in development. The achievement of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of people. The creation of opportunities makes a direct contribution to the expansion of human capabilities and the quality of life. These in turn enhance people’s productive and creative potential and thus promote economic growth and cultural enrichment.

Which brings us back to the passage from the UNESCO constitution that I quoted earlier:

*That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.*

To fulfil this sacred duty nations must rely on people. Our collective task is to educate people who have the desire, the knowledge and the skills to be agents of development in this sense.

My part of that task at UNESCO is to help the nations of the world to bring that kind of education to everyone. There are 100 million children who do not go to school at all and another 100 million who leave before they have learned anything useful. On top of that there are 900 million adult illiterates, the unschooled of previous generations. If we could give them all an education of quality and make them agents for development the world would be transformed.

Your part of this task is to sustain and develop the IB as a beacon of enlightened globalisation, a model for international education and a vehicle for inspiring young people to go out and change the world. I wish you well and I thank you for inviting me.

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