

# IB Research Notes

*Information for the IB research community*

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In this issue of *IB Research Notes* Isaac Quist, a curriculum area manager for the Diploma Programme at Cardiff, looks at George Walker's recently published views on the language of international education and challenges its future direction. Dr Trevor Grimshaw offers a commentary on Quist's article, suggesting the need for critical discourse and an understanding of the political and economic realities that are within international education. George Walker also offers a response to Quist's critique of his views. We are most grateful for each contribution.

There have been two important conferences during the autumn, the Alliance for International Education conference in Düsseldorf during October and the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) annual conference in Nice during November. IBRU was well represented at both conferences and there were many presentations from colleagues throughout the IB world.

Richard Caffyn will be taking over from James Cambridge as editor for *IB Research Notes* from February 2005. Thank you to James who has done so much hard work in developing and organizing the publication over the last few years.

We are looking at reviewing the existing structure and content of *IB Research Notes* and would therefore appreciate some feedback from our readers. Please use a few moments to reflect on your views and use of the publication and fill in the short questionnaire included. Thank you.

Richard Caffyn  
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## Feature Article

Since September 2002, Isaac Quist has been a curriculum area manager at the IBO with responsibility for Diploma Programme (DP) groups 1 & 2, languages, and internationalism. He was born and educated in Ghana, and taught DP English A1 and theory of knowledge (TOK) at the SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College. He started work at the IBO as a subject area manager for DP groups 1 and 2, languages, in January 1998.

# The Language of International Education: a Critique

Isaac Quist

*"When the winds of change swirl, some build windmills, while others build walls."*

Chinese proverb

## Introduction

At the IB Diploma Programme (DP) academic seminar held at the International Baccalaureate Curriculum and Assessment Centre (IBCA) on 5 February 2003, I presented ad lib a critique of George Walker's concluding chapter in *International Education in Practice*. (eds Mary Hayden et al, 2002) In this paper I shall attempt to present that critique in written form. I must acknowledge from the beginning that this paper is perhaps more a "spontaneous" commentary on, rather than a researched response to, the views expressed in Walker's chapter and should be read as such.

I propose to engage three main questions that I hope will enable me do justice to the task:

- ◆ What is George Walker saying in chapter 16 of *International Education in Practice*?
- ◆ How does he say it?
- ◆ What are the implications for those of us involved in the mission of international education?

To fully appreciate the thrust of Walker's argument and the manner of its articulation, it is important to remember and to acknowledge at the outset the context within which it is presented. Walker's essay is the concluding chapter in a much larger and widely ranging work. It bears the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of a concluding chapter in which elements, perhaps already defined and explored in previous chapters, are summarily, sometimes fleetingly, referred to as a means of introducing new proposals and articulating alternative possibilities.

## *Terms of the argument*

Walker acknowledges a “global desire for change” deriving from a clear dissatisfaction with the status quo in a world situation characterized by tensions between cultures and religions, and by wide economic disparities. Using Mathew Arnold’s powerful metaphor of noisy grinding tectonic plates, Walker even more forcefully makes us aware of the violent terrors to which our world seems inexorably to be driving itself.

Against this background, he argues, the “vocabulary of international education” (for example tolerance, compassionate thinking, cultural understanding) is now stripped of its lofty idealism as it acquires immediacy as “the only practical hope” for our world. There is effectively in place, and widely spread across the nations, a shared sense of a need for a new world order based on an education that reaches outwards and embraces the world view of the “other”. International education and its ideals, it would seem, have finally come of age.

However, though the practice of international education is evident in many different kinds of schools, there is as yet no mechanism “to build these different pockets of experience into a worldwide system that begins to change the educational landscape, to convert the micro into the macro, to turn the vocabulary into a language of international education”. The creation and maintenance of such a mechanism, Walker asserts, is the challenge before us.

Unfortunately, the first barrier to this challenge is already at work. It exists in the nature and aims of national education systems which, Walker argues, are informed by the need to sustain cultural identity “in an attempt to maintain the mythology of nation-state self-sufficiency” and thus run counter to those of international education. Consequently, the responsibility for engaging the challenges of international education would more appropriately be given to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the IBO if further progress were to be made. Although such organizations seem to be taking the process forward there is little evidence of significant change to the appearance of the educational landscape. Walker in a brief appraisal of the efforts of international cooperation comes to the conclusion that while such cooperation is very important in providing “international support and comparison and the exchange of effective practice” none of its initiatives seem concerned with international education as such. Commenting specifically on the “mixed success” of the International Education System Pilot Project, Walker asks: “Instead of a template of international education to impose, can the international schools offer a language of international education to share? We have already identified some of the vocabulary; what do we need in order to develop this into a language?”

The first step towards developing a language of international education, Walker continues, is to reach agreement on what he defines as the “‘deep structure’ of international education”, which is the values we must all share if we are to have any chance of understanding what each other is saying. Arguing that the problems with its implementation are no real reason for ignoring it, he calls for renewed engagement with and commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to bring it back forcefully into the public consciousness.

The next step “must be to seek a structure that will encourage us to build our values into a balanced educational experience that is appropriate to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. This step, Walker argues, is crucial if we recognize that we live in a global arena in which our individual destinies are inextricably intertwined. He draws our attention to the four pillars of international education proposed by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (UNESCO, 1996): learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together.

Having agreed a set of values and a viable structure within which to operate a balanced educational experience, we are better placed to construct a language of international education. Pursuing his effective use of meta-language, Walker further proposes that to ensure that the language “conveys its intended meaning with conviction and clarity, we need a grammar that describes its whole system and structure”. He then informs us, “... it is with a description of that system that many chapters of this book [*International Education in Practice*] have been concerned.” Reminding us that the teacher is at the heart of such a system, and that the training and orientation required for the “international teacher” are crucial to the success of the enterprise, he argues, consistent with his thesis relating to the role of international schools in the construction of a language for international education: “If national governments are to be helped and encouraged to develop more internationally-minded teachers, then this is surely an area where the international school community should speak with a clearer voice. What is their own experience and what can they recommend as their best practice?” Turning to the governance of schools as another crucial component in the system, he is of the view that national systems have an advantage. He feels their particular circumstances compel them to engage more critically with the philosophy of international education as they try to rationalize their motives for its introduction. In that process of engagement such systems tend to spawn, through their particular goals and mission statements, their own dialects of the language of international education.

With such a development already emerging, Walker turns his attention to the future. He identifies, describes and evaluates three different future paths opening up for international education:

- ◆ a globally branded product (standard and predictable, regardless of the culture within which it is found); here Walker echoes Cambridge’s view of international education as comparable to “other globally marketed goods and services such as soft drinks and hamburgers; a reliable product conforming to consistent quality standards throughout the world”. (Cambridge, 2002:227) Such a branded product, according to Walker, would offer “a truly international system of international education with internationally monitored standards: safe and reliable” wherever it is found. However, it carries with it the danger of being perceived, in this era of “increasing emphasis on cultural distinctions”, as an “unwelcome threat” to different national identities
- ◆ a system that remains in international schools but which is then exclusive and elitist and, one might add, hardly capable of influencing the educational landscape let alone changing the world
- ◆ a system relevant to the development of all young people around the world which has the power to transform national education and is inclusive.

In conclusion he reaffirms the belief: “No one can impose a template of international education; no one can police a system of international education.” What is needed is a system of productive collaboration among the growing number of players in the field “to develop and share a language of international education so that others can be encouraged to learn it, to adapt it to their cultural environment and then to speak it back to us.”

Cast in these terms Walker’s argument is cogent, salutary and persuasive. The thread of logic is carefully sustained and enhanced by a structure that is effective, and almost poetic in its construction and coherence. The use of imagery, analogy, descriptive and analytic detail all work together to make his argument clear and accessible. The metaphors of plate tectonics and volcanic action, for example, enable us to visualize clearly the ever-intensifying polarization that characterizes the present world situation and the violent destruction that is imminent. The extended metaphor of language construction and learning is instrumental in shaping Walker’s argument through the ample opportunities it provides for scope and sequence.

## *Comments on the argument*

Still, there are some disturbing elements embedded within the articulation of Walker's argument; and it is critical for the reader to be aware of them if he or she is not to be lulled into unqualified agreement. This is even more important because these elements, while playing key roles, both in the conception and formulation of the main argument, reflect assumptions and contradictions that beg both detection and interrogation.

Walker's argument seems all too typical, I think, of the nature of current discourse on international education. This is often a discourse characterized in the main by the western (developed) world talking to itself and demonstrating an unwillingness or inability to fully engage with the relevant perspectives and demands of colonial/post-colonial discourse. The end result is a conversation in which the much larger majority world (described variously as "underdeveloped" or "developing" or "the Third World") is, at worst, largely absent or, at best, hanging rather perilously on the periphery. The opening paragraph of Walker's chapter is telling and the choice of Arnold is both illuminating and revealing in this regard. When Arnold needs, as it were, to "look outside", it is to continental Europe he turns. There is nothing wrong with conversations among those who share a lot in common; except that in the context of what we are now conceiving of as "international education", we run the risk of a rather narrowly defined conception of two key terms: "international" and "otherness". To argue that international education is necessary to the very survival of a world driven dangerously apart by remarkable differences in culture, religion and wealth, and then to turn to those whose world view and approach to life is little different from ours, in the attempt to understand and address the issues that polarize the world, is hardly an approach that convinces or is likely to be productive. Such an approach only ensures that the search for viable ways to address and overcome the very differences that threaten our collective security is primarily informed and driven by the concerns and interests of the dominant, and essentially dispossessing culture.

I will argue that the problems that divide our world have well-known root causes and that for international education to make a significant difference in resolving these problems it must adopt a radical approach; "radical" is used and intended here in the Latin sense of going to the root of the problem. To answer the question why our world is so divided and poised on the verge of violent destruction must be to grapple with the reasons why so few people have so much and so many so little. These reasons, historical and contemporary, are not hard to find. Again, Walker's choice of the analogy of Arnold's travel to continental Europe is instructive. And, here, some reading against the grain is necessary. What was it that necessitated Arnold's trip and why continental Europe? The answer to the first, Walker tells us, lay in Britain's declining economic supremacy at the time. Of continental Europe itself, Arnold, we are told, reported a "spreading ferment of mind ... liberalised by an ampler culture ... living by larger ideas ... its intolerance cured, its pettiness purged away". Is this the same Europe that was busy impoverishing the majority world from Africa, through South America to Asia and the Pacific to enrich itself? Is this the same Europe that in 1884 and within two decades of Arnold's visit was busy carving up Africa to serve its own ends? Indeed, is this the same Europe that was busy creating and exporting war and its hardships to all corners of the world, including the farthest-flung colonial outposts? As to the then declining economic supremacy of Britain, no doubt the impoverished majority world would have had a fair bit to say about the very building of that economic supremacy. For the discourse on international education to be relevant, its responses and strategies must of necessity derive from and be articulated in terms of the root causes of the problems that beset our world. The tendency to ignore or not to recognize the historical and contemporary realities of our cultural 'others', I believe, makes the discourse somewhat hollow.

It is hardly surprising, then, that to the tensions generated by differences of culture and religion, and the wide disparities of wealth, the immediate and logical recourse for the vast majority of international education theorists and practitioners is the search for world peace through peace studies and conflict resolution initiatives. The vocabulary of international education, as evident from the list Walker provides early in his essay, is full of impressive words like “tolerance”, “sympathy”, “empathy”, and “a shared humanity”. While these seem worthy values, some are problematic. “Tolerance”, “sympathy” and “compassionate thinking”, for example, could in certain contexts be seen as condescending and patronising. As the English poet, William Blake pertinently reminds us in his poem “The Human Abstract” (Blake, 1794):

*Pity would be no more  
If we could not make somebody Poor;  
And Mercy no more could be,  
If all were as happy as we;  
  
And mutual fear brings peace,  
Till the selfish loves increase ...*

More obvious, though, is the rather remarkably eloquent absence of “justice” and “equality of opportunity” from that list. Where is justice explicitly stated as an avowed aspiration? The truth of the matter is that for the majority world, the experience of the encounter with the west has been, by and large, one of dispossession on all fronts and no less than the proverbial handshake with leprosy. As the Igbos of Nigeria rightly remind us, “when a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it has turned into another thing”. (Achebe, 1964:13) So once again, the discourse on international education reveals the western developed world advocating a search for peace in an essentially unjust world, yet without being willing to acknowledge justice as a fundamental value and guiding principle if the search must be productive. It is essentially talking to itself, and well might Peter Tosh remind us all in the lyrics of his track and album of the same title, *Equal Rights* (Tosh, 1977):

*Everyone is crying out for peace  
No one is crying out for justice ...  
  
Everybody want to go to heaven  
But nobody want to die ...*

Early in his argument for a system that changes the educational landscape and turns the “vocabulary into a language of international education”, Walker laments that “international education has already hit a barrier because every government in the world has in place its own national system of education, which sustains its own cultural identity, often in an attempt to maintain the mythology of nation-state self-sufficiency.” Even a cursory appraisal of education systems currently in place in the vast majority of what used to be European colonies will show that Walker is simply assuming, and quite erroneously, a homogeneity of national education systems across the world. Not surprisingly, the net result of colonization in general, and of colonial education policy in particular, is that the design of educational systems in the majority of former colonies is still more heavily informed by a need to win the approval of the Cambridges, Oxfords and Sorbonnes of the metropolis than with any credible agenda to foster a sense of cultural identity or “maintain the mythology of ... self-sufficiency”.

The fact that the languages of the former colonizers are still the primary languages of instruction in the educational systems of the majority, if not all, of the former colonies is instructive. In 1957, Ghana became the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence from British rule. Yet, until very recently, the



educational system there still insisted on more than a casual acquaintance with Chaucer in middle English and Shakespeare in Elizabethan English as the high point of a pupil's literary experience; the rocks of the Pennines were certainly more worthy of the pupil's studies in geography as were the fortunes of the Kings and Queens of England when it came to history. Add to these, especially in the more exclusive schools, cricket, the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, and the enlightened observance of Valentine's Day and the picture is clear. Against this reality, Walker's assumption on the subject is important for two reasons. Firstly, it seems yet another example of the apparent unwillingness or inability on the part of international education theorists and practitioners to engage with the demands of colonial and post-colonial discourse. Secondly, and as regards his main argument itself, the sweeping generalization used to develop a significant segment of that argument must have implications for the whole. How might the search for a language of international education and for educational experiences that instil "international mindedness" recognize and be relevant to those who already live the lives of their cultural "others" and largely at great cost to themselves? That is a challenge, the nature and dimensions of which will be lost on us if we assume that national education systems for the former colonies are motivated by the same impulses and share the same characteristics as those for the former empires.

In an essay that is concerned with the language of international education, it is perhaps disappointing that Walker offers no clear conceptual definition of the phenomenon for which he so articulately argues that a language must be created. Given that "international education", with all its slipperiness, is a key term in both the title and focus of the paper, a more explicit definition would have been helpful. Perhaps this omission demonstrates what happens when a piece that is part of a larger whole, in this case a conclusion, is read as though it were self-contained and independent. Still, it is something of a concern that Walker endorses Terry Haywood's position that "if the term 'international education' is to have any value beyond the parochial, then its definition must be an inclusive one which all schools that describe themselves in such terms should be able to identify". (Haywood, 2002) This, to me, seems a curious position to endorse in a paper that acknowledges, even if only in passing, that many schools labelling themselves as "international" have never fully explored the implications of the label and its philosophy. For the same reason, I find Walker's earlier suggestion that it is "international" schools that should "offer a language of international education to share" rather puzzling.

We seem confronted with a situation not unlike that found in the parable in which six blind men try to identify an elephant. The first touches the tail and believes he is dealing with a rope; the second touches one of the legs of that massive creature and believes it is the trunk of a tree and so on. If nothing else, that parable illustrates the dangers inherent in Haywood's idea, cited in the previous paragraph, of an all-inclusive definition with which each "international" school should be able to identify. To be anything to anybody is indeed to be nothing, and that is not an option available to international education if it is to remain relevant, indeed essential, to the survival of a troubled world. Contrary to the impression created throughout the paper, international schools, so-called, are neither the preserve of nor the experts on the education that encourages "international-mindedness".

We may learn to know, learn to do, learn to be and perhaps even learn to live together (UNESCO, 1996) but of the last one must ask: in what spirit? Is this to be a living together of nervous containment, of mutually contemptuous accommodation and tolerance, or is this to be a living together founded on a relationship of equality as humans standing shoulder to shoulder? Are we prepared to extend to all those we perceive as our cultural "others" the productive practice of stepping outside "to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange and to act on that change of perspective"? (Byram, 1997)

We certainly need a language of education; but it must be made up of a vocabulary that is truly shared and valued within a system genuinely committed to the pursuit of justice and fairness as fundamental pre-requisites for peace and stability in our world. To this end, the grammar of international education must of necessity go beyond the descriptive. It must be a purposeful and unapologetic agenda-setting grammar that defines and offers a range of viable approaches, not templates, I hasten to add, for creating the “international-mindedness” that we agree must be “taught, not caught”. It is only through a grammar of this kind that international education can have any hope of a positive and significant impact on the educational landscape. Systems and schools subscribing to this grammar then become “international” not only in name but also in purpose. It is only then that they can generate and live the meanings of dialects that truly enrich the language of international education. For me it is the creation, promotion and maintenance of such a grammar that constitutes the challenge for international education in our time if we are serious about changing the world. Anything less and we are building walls, not windmills as the winds of change swirl menacingly all around us. As they say: “Utopian ideas are the drivers for making the world a better place—simply massaging the status quo is not an option to put in front of youngsters.”

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## *Response to Isaac Quist's article: 1*

**Trevor Grimshaw PhD, applied linguist, lecturer at the Department of Education of the University of Bath, coordinator of the MA in education (ELT and language in education) and director of the International Summer School**

I will begin by stating that I find Quist's paper to be both eloquent and persuasive. It exhibits a refreshing degree of insight into the role that is played by language within the world of international schools. I find myself in agreement with almost everything Quist says. However, I wish to pick up on a number of the points made by Quist and to elaborate upon some of the issues that his paper raises.

The first issue I would like to address is the nature of language. In the culture of international schools, as in many contexts, I have noted a widespread yet naïve assumption that language can function as a neutral medium of communication: a mere "tool" that can be disconnected from the cultural, political and economic context in which it originated. However, in recent literature of the social sciences there is an increasing awareness of how language is manipulated to shape world views and maintain unequal power relations. There is a growing acknowledgment that dominant groups within society tend to represent the world in ways that reflect their own interests, thus sustaining structures of domination. Fairclough, in his examination of language and power, observes that: "There is constant endeavour on the part of those who have power to try to impose an ideological common sense which holds for everyone". (Fairclough, 1989:86) For this reason "we should guard against the (commonsense) assumption that language is nothing more than a clear, pure medium through which our thoughts and feelings can be made available to others". (Burr, 1995:34)

Quist (like Walker before him) writes of the need to develop a "grammar" and a "vocabulary" of international education. However, as an applied linguist I feel obliged to point out that this understanding of language is fundamentally flawed. The meaning of language is not dependent on either vocabulary or syntax alone. Rather, it is dependent on the context in which the language is used and the interpretations of those who use it. Meanings are the products of social and cultural relationships; and the use of language is intrinsically bound up with relations of power. Language is always written or spoken from a particular ideological perspective, regardless of whether the speakers or writers are conscious of their bias. For this reason, I beg to differ with Quist's claim that Walker's "use of meta-language" is "effective". In assuming that language is composed of words and grammar alone, Quist reproduces Walker's error and thus perpetuates a dangerous myth.

As to the "creation, promotion and maintenance" of a "language of international education", we may wish to note that in the past there have been attempts to design and propagate artificial languages. One example was Esperanto. But the limited success and rapid demise of Esperanto demonstrated that the growth and sustainability of language communities is determined not by intellectual idealism but by political and economic realities. This leads us to another key issue: the cultural politics of language use.

## *Linguistic imperialism and international education*

Another widespread yet equally naïve assumption is that the teaching of international languages (especially English) is necessarily "a good thing". One of the most commonly cited justifications for foreign/second language learning is that it promotes intercultural awareness and (to use a key term from Quist's paper) "international-mindedness". While it cannot be denied that the motivation to learn other languages is often linked with an interest in their associated cultures, a growing body of research also reflects upon the political and economic realities of language use.

When Quist (echoing Walker) calls for the establishment of “a language of international education”, he appears to ignore the fact that we already have one. That language is English. Furthermore, the current popularity of English as an international language is not attributable to the idealism of “international-mindedness”. It is the historical consequence of imperialism. Once the language of administration of the British Empire, English is now the language of its successor, the American Empire; and of the transnational corporations whose political and economic influence now exceed those of many nation states.

In a landmark publication, Phillipson defines “English linguistic imperialism” as the process in which “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages”. (Phillipson, 1992:47) Phillipson argues that the global trend towards linguistic homogenization is closely related to other forms of imperialism (educational, cultural, scientific, etc), which perpetuate international relationships of dependency between the “centres” of politico-economic power and the marginalized, exploited people of the “periphery”.

Phillipson describes the dominant position of English in terms of a non-coercive hegemony. (ibid.:73) That is to say, “the pre-eminence of English is legitimated as being a ‘commonsense’ social fact, thus concealing whose interests are being served by the dominant ideology and dominant professional practice”. (ibid.:76) Thus is sustained the myth of international language education as “a non-political activity”. (ibid.:65–7 and 250–6) The tendency to regard language in purely instrumental terms (as a neutral “tool” or “mechanism”) only serves to disguise this ideological process.

Quist demonstrates a clear awareness of these issues. His critique of the neo-colonial relationship within international education is pointed and highly articulate. He is justified in emphasising the “root causes” of the “problems that divide our world”: inequalities that have their origins in the colonial period, and which continue to be reproduced by the institutions of the present day. We would do well to recognize that international language education is a fundamental element of the neo-colonial process; and that the international schools’ network plays an important part in perpetuating linguistic and educational exclusionism. (While I acknowledge that the IBO publishes documents in other languages, I would also remark that French and Spanish are rival neo-colonial languages.)

Quist’s observation that “the language of the former colonizers is still ... the primary medium of instruction in the educational system of the majority of former colonies” is of key significance. I would add, however, that it is not only in the “former colonies” that one may witness this phenomenon. Nowadays we see it echoed in an “expanding circle” of countries that were not formerly subject to anglophone colonization, such as Greater China and the former Eastern Bloc. (Kachru, 1992; Graddol, 1997)

Quist’s use of the term “discourse” in relation to “international education” is also, I believe, very significant. I shall pursue this line of thought in my next section, where I shall present the notion of a “dominant discourse of international education”.

### ***The dominant discourse of international education***

If we consider recent discussions of the relationship between language and power, one notable feature is the increasing use of the term “discourse”. (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999; Grimshaw, 2002, 2004; Holliday, forthcoming) Within this paradigm, a *discourse* may be defined as:

“A body of ideas, concepts and beliefs which become established as knowledge or as an accepted world view. These ideas become a powerful framework for understanding and action in social life.” (Bilton et al, 1996:657)

Discourses are expressed through various forms of symbolism, the most common of which is language. Social life is characterized by competing discourses, with individuals and groups making representations and seeking acceptance for their constructions of the world.

In all walks of life it is possible to discern a “dominant discourse”: a way of perceiving the world that tends to be accepted as “common sense” by the majority of people. I wish to argue that there exists a “dominant discourse of international education”. Furthermore, I believe that this discourse is constantly reproduced in the spoken and written language of international schools, including the pages of this publication.

Quist identifies and challenges certain “disturbing elements” of the currently dominant discourse of international education, as exemplified by Walker’s article. Indeed, in my view, the greatest strength of Quist’s paper is his highly articulate critique of this discourse, which he sees as ethnocentric. It is, to use his words, “a discourse [that is] characterized in the main by the western (developed) world talking to itself and demonstrating an unwillingness or inability to fully engage with the relevant perspectives and demands of colonial/post-colonial discourse”. I agree wholeheartedly with Quist’s assertion that the discourse “is primarily informed and driven by the concerns and interests of the dominant, and essentially dispossessing, culture.”

In such statements we find confirmation of language as the product of a specific political, economic and cultural reality. Moreover, when we consider the notion of a “language of international education”, we must recognize that this “language” reflects the assumptions and preoccupations of the “dominant discourse of international education”. This discourse is Anglo-centric (promoting the use of English as the dominant international language), ‘western-centric’ (tending to take Anglo-American culture as the point of reference) and neo-colonialist (reinforcing the inequalities and dependencies of the imperialist past).

Of course, all of this seems very different from the “impressive words” and “worthy values” that Quist highlights as characteristic of the dominant discourse of international education. But, as we saw in the previous section, the most dangerous thing about ideology is that it disguises its own invention.

### ***Conclusion: the need for a critical international education***

So, what can be done to tackle this disparity between the ideals and the realities of international education? What can we do to ensure that the language of international education truly reflects the needs and the wants of the majority, rather than those of a privileged elite?

Quist points the way forward. He writes of the need to “detect” and “interrogate” the “assumptions and contradictions” within the discourse of international education. He calls for “a radical approach” to resolving “the problems that divide our world”. He stresses the need for “reading against the grain”.

Truthful and accurate as they are, it seems to me that all of these ideas can be summed up in a single word: “critical”. The time has come for a “critical international education”: one that engages with the political and economic realities that underpin the dominant discourse of international education; one that is aware of its own biases and is prepared to acknowledge the valid claims of others. In their efforts to address these issues, I feel that international educators could learn much from the tradition of critical pedagogy. (Freire, 1970, 1985; Giroux, 1983, 1992) International language educators in particular could benefit much from literature that offers critical and transformative perspectives on foreign/second language teaching. (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 1994, forthcoming; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999; Ramanathan, 2002; Cummins, 2000; De Mejia, 2004)

We should indeed pay serious attention to the language of international education, since this language serves as the means by which we represent ourselves and others. And I believe that the best way to interrogate our own modes of expression is through the application of critical discourse analysis and critical language awareness. (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Pennycook, 2001)

Quist's article is important because it suggests a way in which international education can play a constructive role in the postcolonial world. Perhaps international education really can be about something new and different: the achievement of those higher ideals that are enshrined in George Walker's "The Language of International Education". But if we are to achieve these higher ideals, we need a few more writers like Quist.

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## Response to Isaac Quist's article: 2

George Walker, Director General of the IBO, and author of the views critiqued by Isaac Quist

I should have realized that any reference to Matthew Arnold would be a mistake. Those who have not read his essays, but more importantly his poetry, will not understand why the cultural disorientation caused by the loss of God that was implicit in Darwin's recently published *The Origin of Species* speaks as powerfully today as it did 150 years ago. The fact that Arnold caught a steamship to Calais rather than a 747 to Kinshasa to look for solutions is neither here nor there. He could smell change in the air and wanted to understand what it might mean for education.

Arnold's influence can be traced directly to the subsequent legislation in 1870 that established state education in the United Kingdom. His influence on events in Africa, Asia and South America during his lifetime was probably zero but he had the sense to work in an area where he could make a difference. Today, as my chapter implied, he might well be employed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

I should also have realized that the merits of a list are judged by what is missing from it. I failed to include the word "justice" in my vocabulary of international education yet I did include "responsible citizenship" which is difficult to understand in the absence of the concept of justice. I did not use the two "worthy values" of which Isaac accuses me, namely sympathy and empathy, but I rather wish I had used the latter. Without the capacity to know what the other person is experiencing, most of the high-flown words of international education are meaningless. As Joseph Conrad (who did catch boats to Africa, Asia and South America) wrote in his short story "An Outpost of Progress":

*But about feelings people really know nothing. We talk with indignation or enthusiasm; we talk about oppression, cruelty, crime, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words.*

Isaac describes the recent national education scene in Ghana: Chaucer and Shakespeare, the geology of the Pennines and the kings and queens of England. This is the legacy of imperial rule from Oxbridge, but what relevance does this have to international education? I remember an IB conference in Accra in 2000 and the fascinating and wholly persuasive account we were given by senior students of the importance of proverbs in their daily lives. The IBO is not concerned to preserve cricket (which needs no preservation) and Gilbert and Sullivan, but to encourage the flourishing of the local indigenous culture (the different dialects as I called them) and this should be a particular strength of the Middle Years and Primary Years Programmes.

Isaac is right to question the influence of the west on the education of other nations. He is right to question an international education that is dressed up in the sheep's clothing of international humanism, embracing values that have been embedded in western culture since the Enlightenment. But the two years that have elapsed since I wrote this chapter have confirmed everything that I described in its introduction, in particular the grinding together of the "tectonic plates of different cultures and religions". With the inspiration of Matthew Arnold's vision and pragmatism in mind, I suggested three starting points for reform: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNESCO publication known as the Delors Report and the IBO's programmes of international education.

Exactly where is Isaac proposing to start?



## IBRU News

IBRU has continued to see further changes this year.

Beatrice Miller joins the team to replace Sally Ann Mann as the new project secretary. Beatrice previously worked as an administrator at the Maison Francaise d'Oxford research centre, an associated institution of the University of Oxford. She provided administrative and marketing support for the research team and for the organization's series of lectures and seminars. She has enjoyed her time here so far and looks forward to being an active member of the research team.

## Practitioner Research Project

The Practitioner Research Project (PRP) is an IBRU investigation into the needs of researchers based in schools throughout the IB world, and into what kinds of support they require. It will look at the following:

- ♦ the ways that teachers and school staff working in IB schools can be supported and encouraged
- ♦ the needs and perceived needs of research practitioners working in schools
- ♦ the possibilities of online learning, the use of the Internet and other distance learning systems.

Research in this context is any reflective study done by practitioners—academic, professional development or otherwise. It will involve schools and practitioners worldwide.

The primary focus will be a study of the research needs of those working in schools, be they teachers, administrators or support staff. It is intended that this will lead to the creation of a support network, which will have a strong link to the strategic plan and will enable IBRU and eventually the IBO to offer support for teachers in schools.

The PRP is at the pilot stage and a questionnaire has been sent out to a sample of practitioner researchers. The data collected will enable IBRU to test and revise the method. The main research will begin in January 2005. This will include extensive mailing of questionnaires to IB schools, as well as several visits to interview staff.

## Feedback Questionnaire

We would greatly appreciate your feedback on *IB Research Notes* as we aim to review and redevelop its structure during 2005. The following questionnaire is aimed to elicit response from our readers. Please do take time to write a few comments so that we can use your ideas and feedback in the publication's development.

Please photocopy the page and send your completed questionnaire to Richard at the following address: Richard Caffyn, Head of Research Support and Development, Department of Education, University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath, England, GB BA2 7AY. Alternatively please send it as a fax to IBRU: +44 1225 383 277. Please add any extra comments on a separate sheet and attach it to the questionnaire.

Many thanks.

## Questionnaire

1. What aspects of *IB Research Notes* do you find the most useful?

2. What aspects of *IB Research Notes* could be improved?

3. How could *IB Research Notes* develop or change?

4. How could it become more user-friendly?

5. Where do you access *IB Research Notes* from?

# Research Noticeboard

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## Journal of Research in International Education

Information about this journal can be found at: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk>

## Research literature

Grillo, R D (2003) "Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety". *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 157—73.

*"Culturespeak" (Hannerz) is everywhere, but what is "loose on the streets", says Wikan, is typically an "old model" of culture, which "anthropologists have done their share to spread". Whereas she wants to denounce this model (and reproach anthropologists for endorsing it), we should try to understand how and why, not just culture, but essentialist versions of culture have such a popular grip; and why anxiety about "our" culture now seems ubiquitous, permeating much contemporary political and media rhetoric, among both "majority" and "minority" populations, and across political and religious spectra. This is a complex issue, and this article is a preliminary study, set mainly within the context of contemporary Europe, of a set of issues that require systematic, local-level, and comparative investigation. Not particularly concerned with anthropology's own internal arguments, the article ends with some pessimistic conclusions about the room for anthropological intervention in contemporary public debates about culture.*

Ferner, A and Quintanilla, J (1998) "Multinationals, national business systems and HRM: the enduring influence of national identity or a process of 'Anglo-Saxonization'". *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9:4, 710—31.

*This paper discusses the "nationality effect" in human resources management (HRM) by multinational companies (MNCs). After reviewing relevant literature in the institutionalist tradition and on "national business systems", it assesses the elements of national environments that are most likely to influence MNC behaviour. It explores the tensions arising between the requirements of "globalized" operations and the characteristics MNCs have adopted from their home environment. It is suggested that MNCs respond to such tensions by using various adaptation strategies, the most important of which may be termed "Anglo-Saxonization": a convergence of MNC behaviour around a model typical of highly internationalized British or American MNCs. The argument is illustrated by findings from two German case studies, one of a large manufacturer, the other of a major bank; evidence is found of the Anglo-Saxonization of international HRM in these companies, but it appears to be taking place in a distinctively German manner.*

## International education research database

An updated version of the international education research database has now been launched and currently contains nearly 3,000 research articles on international education and International Baccalaureate programmes. The international education research database can be accessed at [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org). Access the shortcuts menu to go to the research pages, which provide a link to the searchable research database.

### **IBO public web site**

The IBO's main web site (<http://www.ibo.org>) provides general information about the organization and its programmes.

### **Online curriculum centre**

The online curriculum centre (<http://online.ibo.org>) is available to all teachers in IB schools that subscribe to the site. The online curriculum centre is a valuable source of information for those considering research related to the IB programmes.

### **CfBT Project**

This project has now been completed. Please contact Paul Fairbrother for further details at the following e-mail address: [paulf@ibo.org](mailto:paulf@ibo.org).