

## COMPARISON BETWEEN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

**Dr.P.Karthikeyan**

*Principal, Sri Renugambal College of Education, Ettivadi, Polur-606907, Thiruvannamalai*

### **Abstract**

*The compatibility of national and international education by seeking to define and distinguish some of the terms used, including “national education”, “international” and “global”. It proposes a framework for looking in detail at the substance of specific national and international programmes. Finally, it explores five different answers to the question “Are national and international education in conflict?” and proposes an approach involving a dynamic relationship between the two approaches, in which each can inform and improve the other. Many countries state the purposes of education in law and these can be spelled out in White Papers, Blueprints and the like. There may also be national curricula, at least for the years of compulsory schooling, and these may be assessed by national examinations or tests. The curricula or tests can be required by law and/or can be mandatory in practice by being made a condition for national funding. Another motivation for emphasis on “national education” can be fear of young people developing loyalties to militant radical causes overseas. Similar concerns of international comparability apply to the use of economic data, which are used to calculate education finance statistics.*

**Keywords:** national education, global, international, Fund, Economic, civics

### **Introduction**

In most countries of the developed world, schools are choosing or are being required by their governments to provide education with an international flavor. Some schools - including some represented at today’s seminar - have an explicit international ethos or belong to an international grouping of schools. At the same time, these same schools - particularly if they are financed or run by national or state governments - are increasingly being expected to provide “national education”, with content that is specific to their own country. Indeed, recent years have seen a flurry of “national education” initiatives in several South East Asian countries. What do these concepts mean? Do they denote extra subjects or activities for which schools are expected to find time in an already crowded school day? Or is the whole curriculum somehow expected to deliver these agendas? And is it possible to deliver both international and national education, or are the agendas in conflict?

### **National Education**

It is helpful to distinguish two uses of this phrase. In the first, wider, sense, it simply denotes the education system of a nation-state and the laws, regulations and policies which govern it. Many countries state the purposes of education in law and these can be spelled out in White Papers, Blueprints and the like. There may also be national curricula, at least for the years of compulsory schooling, and these may be assessed by

national examinations or tests. The curricula or tests can be required by law and/or can be mandatory in practice by being made a condition for national funding.

It is important to note that, in this sense of the term, it is quite possible for “national education” requirements to include some international content, and many do. Almost all require teaching of a foreign language, and this can be justified in terms of the national interest, particularly in countries or regions such as Hong Kong and Singapore which seek to prosper as trade hubs, or where the country is seen as economically dependent on others.

More interesting for the purposes of this paper is a second, more specific, usage, where “national education” refers to a subset of the national educational programme, aiming to promote knowledge about the student’s own country and (in many cases) patriotism and commitment to “national” values. We shall consider later the different domains (cognitive, affective etc) in which these aims can be pursued, but at this stage, it should be noted that countries can have different reasons for promoting “national education” in the narrower sense. Vickers (2009) describes the role of “national education” in “state formation”, when a country is redefining itself (for example, Meiji Japan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) or inventing a new, manufactured, identity (Singapore). National education may also be seen as a tool for holding together large nation-states such as China, which has worked hard to encourage children in the newly-returned Hong Kong to “learn to love the motherland”. The negative example of the breakup of the USSR has been seen as motivating national leaders in China, to do all they can through education to avoid the same happening there. Vickers also describes examples where national education has been a tool of “survivalism”, when loyalty and willingness to fight for one’s country was seen as necessary for national survival, as in Singapore in the 1990s. National education in this sense is most commonly reflected in the curriculum content of history, language and literature, as well as “civics” or “social education”, and in the structure of school life around national symbols and rituals of various kinds.

Another motivation for emphasis on “national education” can be fear of young people developing loyalties to militant radical causes overseas. This concern is by no means confined to Asia - in my own home country, the UK, there was considerable shock when we learned that the suicide bombers in London in July 2005 were young Englishmen who had been to school in Yorkshire. Whether schooling alone can prevent young people from becoming terrorists is another matter, but the experience gave added impetus to the wish for education to produce patriotic British citizens.

### **International Education**

Let us now turn to the “international” side of the coin. Some attending this seminar come from “international schools” and this phrase can mean several different things:

- A school run by an international organization, which has schools in more than one country
- A school following a curriculum or preparing for qualifications obtained in more than one country (for example, programmes leading to Cambridge
- International qualifications or the International Baccalaureate). There is no contradiction if all the students in an “international school”, in this sense, are of the same nationality.
- A school intended primarily for children of citizens of one overseas country, often teaching in that country’s language and offering programmes and qualifications in the overseas country’s national system.

Such schools are perhaps best described as “overseas” schools.

- A school following the national curriculum of the country in which it is situated, but particularly emphasizing “international” curriculum content and experiences. This might be done, for example, by “twinning” arrangements with a school in another country or by having visiting teachers from overseas. In this sense, quite a lot of schools - whether run by the state or private - might wish to describe themselves as “international”, while some might be selected to give this particular emphasis.

Whether a school describes itself as an “international school” in any of these senses, it may purport to offer “international education”. Malcolm McKenzie (McKenzie 1998) has usefully distinguished five different senses in which the word “international” is used to describe education:

- “Non-national”, referring to matters which are not specific to any particular country. Presumably, abstract subjects such as mathematics might be non-national in this sense, as might highly generic empirical subjects such as chemistry.
- “Pan-national” (applying across all - or most- countries). This sense is important for much of the international education movement, where there is a wish to focus on what unites people across the world rather than what divides them.
- “Ex-national” (expatriate). What I have described above as “overseas schools” (such as “the German school in Singapore”) offer education of this kind, which is really a form of exported national education in my first, general, sense of that term).
- “Multinational”, including examples and experiences relating to more than one country.
- “Transnational”, equipping students to cross national borders physically and mentally in the future. This sense is strongly present in discussions about the implications for education of increasing globalization of employment and trade.

### **Global Education**

Global education can be thought of as a response to “globalization”, which normally refers to the speedy increases in recent years in inter-country industrial and financial transactions, economic interdependence, frequent and easy international travel and communication, cultural diffusion and exposure to ideas and influences from across the world. In the words of Professor Anthony Giddens in his 1999 Reith Lectures:

“The changes are being propelled by a range of factors, some structural, others more specific and historical. Economic influences are certainly among the driving forces, especially the global financial system. Yet they aren't like forces of nature. They have been shaped by technology, and cultural diffusion, as well as by the decisions of governments to liberalize and deregulate their national economies.”

Some welcome these trends, as potential forces for raising the quality of life, world peace, toleration and the spread of social justice in such areas as the rights of women, where, it is argued, international examples and comparisons have led to desirable change in many countries. Others, more disapprovingly, see “globalization” as a euphemism for “Americanisation” or “Westernisation”, and point to the ubiquity of Coca Cola and MacDonal'd's and, more generally, to the American culture of celebrity, including some figures whom we would not normally welcome as role models. Some of the language and literature of “globalization” has been criticized as dominated by Western/US ideals prizing capitalism, representative democracy and social and political rights above all, and it would be understandable for such concerns to lead to caution in introducing Western packages of so-called “global education” uncritically in Asia.

Two phrases including the word “global” are frequently used as labels for international curricula or educational objectives. According to the dictionary, a perspective is “a way of regarding something”, “a point of view”. One presumes, therefore, that an educational programme labeled “global perspectives” aims to increase the points of reference and experience which students may bring to subjects - for example, by enabling them to compare a development in their own country with the way similar problems have been addressed elsewhere. Strictly speaking, if the perspectives are “global”, rather than just “international”, they should refer to the whole of the world, rather than to selected overseas countries. Some of the literature about “global perspectives” talks as if there were a single, identifiable “global perspective” (in the singular), which could be compared with regional, national and local perspectives.

### **Issues Relating to Quality**

A national assessment can provide information about the quality of student learning with to national statements of educational standards, the implementation of the curriculum, public perceptions about what students should be able to do, and

whether or not students are properly prepared for future life. The interest expressed by policy/decision makers will have implications for the design and content of the assessment instrument (eg, does it focus on curriculum content or does it attempt to identify life skills?)

Assessment data can be used to monitor change in achievement over time. Reliable data are necessary if educational authorities are to answer the question, “Is the quality of our education system, in terms of learning outcomes, improving?”

### **Cognitive Domain**

The cognitive domain (knowledge and skills) will include knowledge of national and international governmental systems and of how to exercise the rights and responsibilities of a citizen. The need to understand the civic systems in one’s own country is unproblematic, however much or little the national system allows for multi-party democracy or free speech. However, read with an Asian eye, some of the literature of “international civics” is dominated by the United Nations and its derivatives and reflects that organization’s institutions and ideological priorities.

Although almost all SE Asian countries are members of the United Nations (the exception being Taiwan), several (Brunei, Burma, Malaysia and Singapore) have not signed the main covenants that give legal force to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

### **Ethics and Values**

At the level of ethics and values, there is much commonality between the objectives of many national and international programmes. Both tend to emphasize social responsibility and respect for others. A particularly strong bond between national and international education in many South East Asian countries is the need for children to develop inter-racial respect and understanding. The threat of racial conflict is very high on the national priorities of many countries in Asia - as in other continents, including Europe - and recent episodes of international terrorism have heightened the risks from disaffected racial groups. Thus, the objective of developing respect for other races is common ground of many national and international curricula. Some programmes of international education derive from, or seek their legitimacy from particular positions on “global” ethical imperatives such as world peace, universal human rights or promoting sustainable development.

### **Why do national and international education data sometimes differ?**

Education statistics produced by the UIS may differ from those in national statistical yearbooks or other national publications. Most discrepancies are due to differences in the underlying data (population or economic data); methodology used to calculate indicators, or the classification of education systems.

National and international education statistics use the same basic education data (e.g. school enrolment). However, the data used for the denominator can vary (e.g. population estimates). Population estimates are used to calculate a wide range of education statistics based on age, such as net enrolment rates. In most cases, national and international population estimates are extracted from the same data source (a recent census or household survey), but they may not use the same methodology. To ensure methodological consistency across all countries, the UIS uses the United Nations Population Division population estimates. These are based on a single, reliable methodology that is internationally accepted. United Nations agencies use these estimates to calculate a variety of socioeconomic and health indicators, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals. These estimates are updated every two years and disaggregated by gender and single year of age.

Similar concerns of international comparability apply to the use of economic data, which are used to calculate education finance statistics. The UIS uses World Bank economic data on national income and output, such as gross domestic product. Differences between education finance statistics from the UIS and other sources may therefore arise due to the source of the economic data.

### Conclusion

International education or national education will die out naturally, and so the question will answer itself. In the past, some Western sociologists have argued for an inevitable progress of a secular form of international capitalism, linked to the decline of the nation state. Perhaps this was wishful thinking on their part. There is a potential conflict between nationalism and the aims of international education, and it is desirable for international education to prevail. This position should not be discounted, as its supporters include such names as John Dewey (in the quote at the beginning of this paper) and the 1999 Reith lecturer Anthony Giddens. National education should be expected to flourish in the foreseeable future, particularly in SE Asia, as an antidote or balance to the excesses of internationalism. Arguably, international education in the second half of the 21st century would be richer if it were to take on board Eastern concepts of the family, the dignity due to the elderly and respect for the spiritual dimension. And in the other direction, exposure to international thinking could equip young South East Asians to persuade their governments to allow them to play a more active part in their national political and social arenas without this been seen as a challenge to national loyalty or patriotism.

### Bibliography

1. ACARA (2010), [Australian] National Assessment Program - Civics and Citizenship:
2. Assessment Framework, May 2010, downloaded from

<http://www.nap.edu.au/nap-sample-assessments/napsa-assessmentframeworks.html>

3. Beedle, Paul (2000), “How global? How local? Culture as an ingredient in the assessment design mix”, paper delivered to the 2000 conference of the International Association for Educational Assessment ([www.iaea.info/](http://www.iaea.info/)) (copy obtained from the author)
4. Chia Yeow Tong (2012), “What is national education? The origins and introduction of the ‘national education’ programme in Singapore”, in Tan, Jason (ed) (2012)
5. CEE (1998), Education for sustainable development in the schools sector: a report to the Panel for Education for Sustainable Development (Council for Environmental Education (UK), cited in Davies (2006) (below)
6. Davies, Lynn (2006), “Global citizenship: abstraction or framework for action?”, *Educational Review*, 58:1, February 2006, pp 5-25.
7. Dewey, John (1916), Democracy and Education, PDF available online from [pdfbooks.co.za](http://pdfbooks.co.za)
8. Giddens (1999), “Runaway world”, BBC Reith Lectures 1999, by Professor Anthony Giddens, videos and texts at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/)
9. Hayden, Mary and Thomson, Jeff (eds) (1998), *International Education: Principles and Practice*, Taylor & Francis, London and New York
10. Kennedy, Kerry J and Lee, John Chi-kin (2008), *The changing role of schools in Asian societies*, Routledge, London and New York