A Review of thePhilosophy ofInternational Education inanInternational School Setting

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Abstract: *International Schools have long been thought of as bastions of international education due to many similar attributes that they share. However, international education in the true spirit of its philosophy goes beyond the education that takes place in some typical international school settings that tend to concentrate more on the syllabus of certain international examination bodies. This theoretical argument revisits the notion of international education and international schools using an array of scholarly literature that explicates their history and salient features before weighing up the former against the latter in terms of its applicability. A typical international school is then assessed against the criteria that are definitive of international education. The analysis revealed that despite having met the criteria in some areas, it was found wanting largely in the more significant aspects of the type of holistic education, understanding of diversity and forbearance advocated in international education.*
Keywords: *International Schools, International Education, International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)*

I. Introduction

The objective of education is to give human beings an understanding of reality (Tagore 1985).A sense of reality transcends beyond one environment towards a common ground for harmony not for its own sake, but as a necessary fulfillment of individual, social, and universal growth (Samuel, 2010). Samuel further draws on the educational vision of noble laureate and visionary Tagore by explaining that the purpose of realizing harmony in education is for roundedness which could only be possible when the individual embraces the social and Universal dimensions. The true meaning of living, according to Tagore, is outliving; it is ever growing out of oneself and encounters the other and, thus, achieves universality (Cenkner, 1976).That quest for universality is what international education aims to achieve. It attempts this with an educational framework that does not only offer core academic disciplines but also imbibes a sense of understanding of other people and their cultures. Hence,ultimately, the greater goal is to harmonize variances into a universal culture through which we can peacefully interact and understand one another.Therefore, as globalization is becoming a reality, international education is an imperative (Gutek 1997; Suárez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard 2004; George and Irvine 2005; Noddings 2005; Suárez-Orozco 2007) and education, according to Tagore as quoted by Samuel (2010), should facilitate the growth of the individual, the development of the society, and the enhancement of the international community.

In this era of globalization, the world is flat (Freidman 2005); and this flattened world is fast becoming a global village (Toffler, 1980, 1990; Naisbitt, 1984; Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990; Freidman, 1999, 2008; Merriman & Nicoletti, 2008). In a globalized world, international education is very important (Gutek, 1997; Freidman, 2005; Noddings, 2005; Stewart & Kagan 2005; Suárez-Orozco, 2007).The advancement of technology both in the transportation sector and the cyber world among several other great innovations have continued to shrink the world hence gradually streamlining activities and the general thinking of people alike. Hayden (2006) for example refers to the consequences of changes emanating from communication and technology among many others as "highlighting of the artificiality of the borders that have been built around what we call countries (pp3)". This depicts the true state of the world today and the prominence of, at best, having a common ground of orientation in order to interact peacefully in a global village through the medium of education.

International education has gained ground as a very important tool in today's globalized world and has also gained recognition in many countries around the world. A great body of knowledge exists on what it is, what it involves and what qualifies a program to be categorized as international education. Its emphasis is on a type of education that inculcates the culture of knowing other cultures and ways of living of people and not merely education to pass exams or enroll in Universities abroad. The International Baccalaureate(IB), noted for offering international education, for instance, aptly captures this in their mission and strategy: "IB is more than

its educational programmes and certificates. At our heart we are motivated by a mission to create a better world through education" (IBO). The translation of a better world through education is one in which the uniqueness of the type of multicultural education, which transcends beyond borders, offers. This paper seeks to give a holistic view of international education by describing what it is through scholarly literature, highlight some complexities of the meaning of international education in varied contexts, give a brief history with a few definitions and finally contextualize international education within the framework of a popular international school situated in the Kombo Saint Mary's Division in Gambia.

Specifically, the study seeks to establish whether the literature on the definition of international education fits the syllabus of international schools using the school in focus as an example. Specifically, the following questions guided the inquiry:

What are the salient features of international Education?

What type of education takes place in International Schools?

Does the syllabus of international schools fit the definition of international education?

To clarify these, a general literature review on the subject matter of international education was done after which the school in focus was reviewed using its vision, mission, objectives and curriculum among other policy documents. This paper does not seek to generalize its results because only one school was used as a point of reference against which the requirements of international education were tested. Rather the idea is to highlight, and in the process, re-emphasize that despite sharing the term 'international', international education advocates for a more comprehensive education system beyond merely preparing students to pass international exams as is evident in the international school under review.

Design

A literature review and documents analysis within the qualitative paradigm was the method used for this theoretical argument. The documents used were the strategic plan of the school in question, information on its website, school's brochure, curriculum, magazines and the four-year annual review/report. Guided by the research questions, an initial exploration of the key issues that dwell on as well as impact international education were focused on. A further analysis of the budding issues was engaged before conclusions were drawn on how the school fared against the test of offering international education in the true reflection of the term.

International education

International education is a broad description that connotes different things and hence contingent upon the specific aims, meaning or context we choose to describe or define it. For instance, international education despite existing well over a century (Walker, 2002; James, 2005) has yet to acquire a single, consistent meaning (Hayden and Thompson, 1995a, 1995b; Pasternak, 1998; Hayden et al., 2000; Cambridge and Thompson, 2004; James, 2005). The reason for the uncertainty, confusion and disagreement lies partly in the many interpretations of the term and because the word 'international' itself is equally ambiguous(James,2005)

For instance, international humanitarian bodies like UNESCO look at it from the notion of fostering the recognition, appreciation and development of universal human values. International corporations and business on the other hand look at it as an equipment of knowledge, skills, aptitude and the attitude to both apply and interact in various geographical environments with ease. These two examples of how international education is viewed by international humanitarian bodies on one hand and international corporations and businesses on the other show how the idea meanders through various educational plans in the twenty first century due largely to the recognized benefits it offers. Although it has attracted many writers who also choose to refer to it with different terms, international education in any nomenclature and context principally deals with an education system that looks beyond the geographical scope of the place it is being held and has a global focus in mind. It does not look at one country but several countries, not one race but many races, not one way of doing things but many ways of doing things by different people. It is thus not a specialist education but a holistic education that *inter alia* brings forth the humanistic perspective of tolerance and co-habitation by understanding not only one's environment and way of living but that of others from different geographical locations.

The history of international education as a formal area of study within the wider educational sphere is a recently short one and the evolution of the concept is consequently at a relatively early stage (Hayden & Thompson, 1995). The history of 'international schools' and of 'international education' is in each case a relatively recent one in formal terms, with the last 50 years having seen particularly rapid developments resulting in substantial diversity with respect to both areas (Hayden & Thompson,1995). Similar to Hayden and Thompson's line of thought, many people trace the development and interest in international education after the Second World War with the development of international cooperation as a means of avoiding further large-scale conflict (Hayden & Thompson, 1995).Scanlon (1960) documented the vision of those inspired by UNESCO after its founding in 1942, of a concept of 'the promotion of mutual understanding among nations, educational

assistance to underdeveloped regions, cross-cultural education, and international communications' (Hayden & Thompson, 1995).

The concept of 'international education' is a well-used one, both in common vocabulary and in educational discourse. It is not, however, well defined (Hayden & Thompson, 1995). Hans de Wit (1995) points out that one of the fundamental problems faced when dealing with International Education is the wide diversity of terms used such as international education, multicultural education, intercultural education, peace education, cross cultural education, international exchange, comparative education, globalization of education, area studies in education and internationalization of higher education. For instance, when universities offer study abroad programs they call it international education; likewise, when a course is offered on European studies by African universities or when a study focuses on comparing people of varied cultural backgrounds, it is still called international education. Therefore, various authors use different terms in writing about international education thus compounding the challenges of clarity in the area. As a result, it is not surprising that many definitions of international education abound each tied to the goal with which it operates. Notwithstanding the many nomenclatures of international education, the fact remains that it is recognized in today's world as very important owing to the positive expectations it is expected to achieve especially when properly applied within the lore of fostering human interaction.

The importance and goodwill of international education is established beyond doubt in many countries all over the world. The continuous spread of international staff mainly with the United Nations and its subsidiary organizations, international NGOS, the spread of peace missions and even the zeal for local parents to send their children to International schools have all helped expand this area. Over the past 10 years, the pressure to "be international" and to "internationalize" has dramatically intensified in all aspects of education spurred on by the contested processes of globalization (Dolby & Rahman 2008; Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor,1999). The pressure to be international is even more pronounced today than ever before with an unprecedented wave of multinational organizations increasing by the day prompting the movement of more people to other countries where they expect to send their children to schools offering at least a semblance of schooling comparable to the philosophy of international education. The influential advantage added by the cyber world has also made international education easier to pursue with virtually all facets of knowledge, cultural practices and religious beliefs abundantly, and if you like, infinitely available on the internet for free access around the globe.

Various scholars, organizations and agencies have defined International Education within the context of its use. A few definitions include:

➢ International Education is a cross-disciplinary study of international and intercultural problems in education (Husen, 1994, pp108).

➢ International education teaches about the lives and natural and social contexts of people living in other countries and cultures, actively promotes immersion experiences in other countries and cultures and explores interactions and connections among nations, especially the ways in which other people and cultures impact our daily lives (Uranek, 2002, pp2).

➢ an international orientation in knowledge and attitudes and, among other initiatives, brings together students, teachers, and scholars from different nations to learn about and from each other (Epstein,1994, pp918)

➢ International education embraces analytically, creatively, and enthusiastically diverse worldviews. It strives to include issues relevant to the larger world and connect them to the local arena. It challenges students and teachers to identify pluralistic perspectives, to demand deeper analysis, to research more reputable sources, and to question any result deemed final. Inclusion, scrupulous assessment, acceptance, and tolerance are the instruments to employ in the pursuit of global understanding (signatureschool.com).

A resounding theme of other people, other cultures and the diversity of the ways of life of people of different countries is emphatically portrayed either directly or implied in the aforementioned definition. International education, as its name implies, seeks an education involving multiple nations, people of different cultural settings and ways of living, a standpoint similar to the authors' thoughts about the concept.

Importantly all the quoted definitions emphasize the diversity of ways of life and socio-cultural aspects of the local as well as the wider international context with an ultimate aim of addressing issues that are relevant to the larger world. Interestingly, none of them looked at international education from an international exam or syllabus perspective but rather from the wider scope that involves all human beings and by extension a greater interest for all mankind. This importance will come to bear when a typical international school is examined against the requirements advocated in international education. As would be seen, international schools mostly advocate international related education but most often are a little shy of the core attributes of international education.

Some international schools would for instance score high when assessed on diversity in terms of their student and staff populations but would fare poorly in extending that rich attribute in their curriculum as their central focus is often in the western orientation and syllabus. The misinterpretation of some international schools, like the one under focus in this article, as projecting international education when the salient features of greater understanding and diversity is short in their curriculum has greatly hampered the chances of generalizing international schools as bastions of international education.

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) defines international education through the lenses of the following criteria: "Developing citizens of the world in relation to culture, language and learning to live together ;Building and reinforcing students' sense of identity and cultural awareness; Fostering students' recognition and development of universal human values; Stimulating curiosity and inquiry in order to foster a spirit of discovery and enjoyment of learning; Equipping students with the skills to learn and acquire knowledge, individually or collaboratively, and to apply these skills and knowledge accordingly across a broad range of areas; Providing international content while responding to local requirements and interests; Encouraging diversity and flexibility in teaching methods; Providing appropriate forms of assessment and international benchmarking" (IBO).

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) founded in Geneva in 1968 purely as a non-profit educational foundation has been central to the development of international education in a practical context. Its original purpose was to facilitate the international mobility of students preparing for university by providing schools with a curriculum and diploma qualification recognized by universities around the world (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). Many scholars choose to use IBO as a classic example of what International Education entails especially the criteria it employs to define it.

II. Background of International Schools

A great body of literature traces the establishment of International schools to the end of the First World War when the League of Nations was established. Hill (2001) suggested that the first International School was the International School of Geneva, founded in 1924. Walker (2000) corroborated this premise by explaining that the school was established to serve the families of the employees of the new League of Nations and consequently had a student population drawn from nations throughout the world. But as other scholars would later argue Hill and Walker's descriptions were based on a pragmatic notion rather than a foundational philosophy. To that effect Sylvester (2002) named the Spring Grove School founded in London in 1866 as the first international school explaining that while the student population was not geographically diverse, the school was established with the goal of promoting cooperation between nations (Dolby & Rahman,2008). Hence international schools were created mainly to cater to the needs of breaking the geographical boundaries between nations by fostering cooperation and understanding through the lenses of a common educational framework represented by a student and staff population of diverse people.

International schools are therefore relatively new since they can only be traced to the 19th Century. Even in the 19th century only a few schools matched the criteria for categorization as international schools. Hayden and Thompson (1995) noted that the *1964 Yearbook of Education* identifies approximately 50 schools worldwide that could be classified as international. The situation has increased dramatically in the twenty first century with international schools blossoming around the globe mostly as a response to the realities of globalization and internationalization. The current estimated number of International Schools around the globe is 5400 (ISC, 2010) and this number is steadily rising every year with more new countries adding to the list. According to the ISC Research (2010) every year around 500 new school records are added to the database of online systems of international schools around the world and judging by the rate of growth there will be well over 8,000 International Schools by the end of 2015 and 11, 000 by 2020.

International education continues to gain a stronghold in virtually all countries worldwide and governments are increasingly encouraging international schools that have a different curriculum from the national ones due its benefits. For instance the International Baccalaureate's annual statistics reports indicate that the number of students has been consistently rising in the international schools all over the world (IBO 2006; Pont, Chamizo et al. 2007; IBO 2008; IBO 2009; IBO 2010; Prasad 2011), Zajda (2005) posits that the erosion of the earlier model of the welfare state and the global spread of the present conservative neoliberal models, characterised by 'state withdrawal, privatisation, and localisation' (Astiz, Wiseman & Baker, 2002) may have legitimized the 'often pervasive and exploitative' dimension of the capital-labour-market organisational system. Zajda further contends that this economic aspect of globalisation, coupled with institutional and ideological spheres tends to force nations into a tighter connection to a global market (Astiz, Wiseman & Baker, 2002).

International Education in the context of International Schools

To many and indeed rightly so to some extent, international schools and international education are clearly linked together on the common assumption that international education takes place within the confines of international schools. Mathews (1989a, 1989b) in discussing the nature of International Schools made only a small number of references to its relationship with international education and perhaps deliberately made no attempt to define the latter. But Belle-Isle (1986) made a succinct challenge to such a premise with the following strong distinction:

"*An international school whose diploma serves as a passport for admission to universities and colleges at large is not necessarily providing an international education ... The ... mission of international education is to respond to the intellectual and emotional needs of the children of the world, bearing in mind the intellectual and cultural mobility not only of the individual but, most of all, of thought*"

International education in this paper is reviewed using the medium of International schools and as such it is prudent to highlight what constitutes an international school or in other words what are the salient features that qualify a school to be categorized as international. Hill (1994) made useful distinctions between national and international schools by portraying international schools as those whose students and staff are representative of a number of cultural and ethnic origins and where the International Baccalaureate (IB) or other national curricula and examinations are offered with an ethos of internationalism as distinct from nationalism. He further distinguishes international schools with the following attributes:

➢ may serve a local and varied expatriate community of business people, diplomats, armed forces personnel;
➢ may attract resident students from all over the world;
➢ are usually either proprietary schools, owned and controlled by one or two individuals, or are private schools governed by a board of directors consisting mainly of parents; and
➢ are usually fee-paying or scholarship-funded (such as the United World Colleges) or both.

Hayden and Thompson (2001) leaning on research from the University of Bath and elsewhere posited that the appropriate style that leads to the development of the student characteristic which is believed to be rooted in international mindedness is essentially experiential in nature. They thus suggest three dimensions which must be concurrently offered for students to gain the envisaged experience as follows:

➢ An appropriate balanced curriculum;
➢ Exposure to cultural diversity through human resources; and
➢ An institutional administrative regime value consistent with international education principles

A balanced curriculum just as its name suggests, richly combines the indigenous and international curriculum in a fashion that can prepare students to comprehend their immediate environment, but more importantly, the wider world in general such that if they were to settle anywhere they could at least understand the basics of diversity of views and ways of interaction. The cultural diversity adds another dimension in that it exposes students to what goes on beyond their environments and also helps them to appreciate that cultures and values of others are equally as important to them. The international administrative regime requires international schools to have administrators who not only hail from different countries but also understand cultural diversification such that it impacts on their administration of the school for greater gains.

An International school in focus

A reputable international school was selected as a base to gauge the standards inherent of international education. Familiarity with the school, the syllabus they offer and ease of accessing relevant documents required for this assessment were the main reasons for its selection. The school's strategic plan, brochure, website and magazine were the main reference materials. Since anonymity was assured to its management when documents were sought, the main information pertaining to the school's objectives were slightly altered by changing certain words where appropriate, using estimates instead of direct figures and paraphrasing some sentences to safeguard its identity. The international school in focus is discussed, first, by highlighting some of its stated objectives and goals relevant to the philosophy of international schools before proceeding to critically compare it against the description of International schools within the greater requirements of an ideal one.

The following include the objectives and goals of the institution in question:

• To provide a learning environment that meets the highest international standards
• To develop and promote awareness and tolerance, mutual respect for cultural and religious differences.
• To develop the whole person through intellectual, creative and sporting activities
• To encourage full participation in school and community life
• To encourage all students to attain their potentials in all facets of life

- To maintain high standards of behavioral and ethical patterns
- All students take the IGCSE recognised by academic institutions and employers around the world; The Cambridge IGCSE is recognised as equivalent, grade-for-grade, to the UK GCSE

Scaled against some of the core requirements of schools to qualify being recognised among the ranks of International schools, the school under focus has many matching attributes which among others include the following:

There is a significant population of staff and students from various regions. There are over 2000 students in the school out of which 56% are local students. The remaining 44% come from over twenty different countries and across all the continents. The staffs likewise are diverse and hail from different countries providing a rich blend of internationals. In terms of interaction, a great deal of it is spread across all facets of the school's activities including the curricular and co-curricular. This is characterized by an annual cultural event aimed at exposing the cultures of students through the show of clothes, food, dance, beliefs as well as school trips to areas of academic and cultural interest.

The curriculum largely follows the IGCSE syllabus and its examination. The IGCSE is noted as the world's most popular international curriculum for the ages ranging from 14 to 16 as it has a good track record of developing successful students by preparing them well for tertiary and higher education. Also IGSCE students easily progress to the Cambridge Advanced stage and is globally recognized by all universities and employers. Students who pass through the IGSCE generally do not need a lot of Pre-University work especially when they enroll in the IGSCE advanced level courses compared to many other students who go through other systems. All these important attributes make the IGSCE an important examination within the global international education thinking as it readily prepares students for academic work and employment in any geographical location.

However, when the school is measured against the distinction of what International Education is not by Belle-Isle (1986), one is inclined to believe that it is too skewed towards getting entrance into universities rather than serving the global intellectual and humanistic quest that international education is expected to embark on. The curriculum for instance, except for the excellent preparations for external exams, does very little to nurture intellectual needs as well as the cultural appreciation of others. Granted, there have been documented cultural oriented activities outside the curriculum, but within the mainstream curriculum students are only prepared to pass the IGCSE. In tertiary and higher educational settings in the local context, cases of students finding it extremely difficult to cope with other subject areas is often a common complaint especially from parents whose children have had to transfer at some stage to other schools which are not following the IGCSE program of study. The school management also lays strong emphasis on the need for pupils to start with them at the foundation level and also to commit to continue with them to ease the trouble of encountering difficulties of late arrivals and often coping issues with those transferring from and to other schools especially with different curriculums.

An observable shortcoming is the total neglect of the national syllabus of the home country in its entirety especially in subject areas geared towards the knitting of the societal fabric, health, culture, fraternal relations and civic education. Drawing on the type of intellectual and cultural plurality advocated in international education, which does not exclude the home front where the school is located, one is inclined to believe that a good opportunity is lost by totally neglecting significant facets of the syllabus of the home country.

Another apparent shortcoming is the total neglect of a morals related teaching, religious or inter-faith teaching which yet again points to the school's zealous concentration on a syllabus specifically tailored to ease admission into universities above any other goal. Again, international education looks beyond ordinarily having an education system that easily facilitates a quick transition into higher education institutions. The socio-cultural and religious dimensions are also equally important and worth giving due attention. A balanced curriculum requirement is therefore short in this respect as it ignores significant aspects of the syllabus that would have made students to be "rounded" and sentient of the practices both in their immediate environments and beyond.

International Education beyond international Schools

The benefits of international education especially when practiced in the lower levels of educational settings such as secondary schools bode quite significantly in life for the beneficiaries and society beyond the international school settings. Higher educational institutes quite clearly benefit from international school settings because the majority of the graduates of these schools feed into them. As highlighted earlier, most international school syllabuses aptly fit into the higher education setting. However, the fit is somewhat a partial one concentrated only in the subject element and thus leaving behind the more important humanistic ethos that a fully operational international education mold would have offered. As James (2005) indicated, international education approached from the top-down angle can help address global and national needs whereas the bottom-up approach leads to the development of the individual. The purpose served by international education is not merely, if at all, to provide aneducation for internationally-mobile students in 'international schools (Walker,

2002; James, 2005). Rather it encompasses understanding, and peaceful coexistence among many positive attributes. Beneficiaries of international education are expected, in particular, to have attitudes and values such as 'international understanding'(Mayor, in Peel, 1998; McKenzie, 1998; Hill, 2003; Schwindt, 2003; ISA, 2004), tolerance, acceptance, respect and cooperation (Mayor, in Peel, 1998; McKenzie, 1998; Norberg, 2000; Hansen, 2002; Lam and Selmer, 2004).

Hence while international education isnurtured in the educational settings at the lower level and can have more lasting significance and benefits in these levels such as in the secondary schools because of the age categories of the students(youths) involved at such level, its immediate advantage is felt more by higher education institutes, corporate bodies and society at large. If utilized to the full extent of its philosophical underpinning its benefits are way above imagination to societies in knitting a social fabric reflective of understanding and tolerance.

III. Recommendations/Conclusion

Despite its categorization as an international school, the school in focus falls a bit below the core requirements to be regarded as a good exemplar of executing the requirements of international education. To follow an international syllabus like the IGCSE is quite within the ranks of meeting standards of international education. However, engaging in co-curricular activities especially those geared towards cultural interactions that are rich is equally in line with the general requirements of International education. For this school and any other that solely concentrate on the syllabus of international examination bodies to meet the requirements of international education, balancing of the curriculum to go beyond those requirements of the IGCSE for instance is equally as important.

The philosophy behind International education is not only the ability of students who come through its system to fit into other institutions or programs but their ability to understand and appreciate diversity, and to be able to live among others with respect and harmony. However, the school under review is wanting in this important aspect of international education hence justifying why some scholars do not feel comfortable equating international education with international schools. Some international schools are just tailored to suit the European environment for their students but in this era of globalization, all other environments count and should be given the same degree of prominence to better prepare students for challenges around the globe.

Over and above harping on the need for cultural and religious teaching, which is not part of the curriculum of the school under review, the new global thinking demonstrates a need to incorporate cultural and religious teaching or perhaps some sort of capstone subject such as cultural/inter-faith studies. Such a subject can enable students to have a general understanding of how to appreciate cultures in addition to getting a gist of all major faiths in order to prepare them better to be global citizens especially in the area of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. The bane of recent international conflicts can somehow be linked to cultural misunderstanding and religious intolerance and international schools/education could serve as an important medium to address such issues. Without doubt, the foundation of peace in the world today and probably in the future would rest more in the understanding and appreciation of cultures and religious tolerance than anything else and the ideals of international education, if pursued vigorously, stoutly works in support of this.

In conclusion, therefore, a concentration on aspects of the overall wellbeing, understanding and appreciation of the various cultural orientations and religious differences is equally as important and worth incorporating in the curriculum of international schools to befit a balanced status. If schools succeed in addressing these, they can soon leap towards not only being categorized as international schools but ones that offer international education. As mentioned before, this study is not intended for generalization as only one school was used as an example to illustrate the type of education that takes place in it and how this education might not necessarily be in synchronicity with the generic notion of international education. Additionally, it was meant to demonstrate that the philosophy of international education transcends the syllabus of international examination bodies which the international school under review focuses on.

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