

Cultural diversity among heads of international schools: Potential implications for international education

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Abstract

This article considers the influence that regional associations of international schools have on individual school members. The role of heads of international schools is explored in terms of their collective regional community influence on the fundamental school level. A revision of Thompson's model of international education is proposed which addresses the fundamental, local and, specifically, regional community. It proposes implications for the global international school community with a focus on the need for cultural diversity within stakeholder groups.

Keywords

Diversity, heads, international schools, regional associations

Introduction

Education models in national contexts have a long history, and although debates on the fundamental 'ingredients' and emphases within national education systems continue, they have a scope that allows for cohesion: a clear boundary in terms of community – the national community. This history and cohesion is not present within international schools that operate in seeming isolation around the world. It is the need for a collective understanding of international education in international schools that has prompted the development of a number of models for international education. Although these models offer important perspectives they have, to date, failed to address the collective nature of these schools: international schools do not operate in isolation. The analysis at the heart of this article will investigate regional associations of international schools. It begins with consideration of two existing models, and goes on to propose a revised version. The revised model takes into consideration the various communities within which these schools operate. One level of community, the regional community, will highlight that the cultural diversity that generally exists within individual international schools may not be found within regional communities of schools;

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heads of schools, collectively, seem to lack the cultural diversity that is present within other stakeholder groups such as students or teachers. The implications of a homogeneous stakeholder group of heads impacting a culturally diverse international education 'system' will be explored.

It is important to acknowledge that precisely what constitutes an international education 'system' has prompted much debate. Defining both international schools and international education is complex; the fact that neither term is well defined (Hayden and Thompson, 1995a: 327) has led to a 'big terminology debate' (Marshall, 2006: 38). Gellar (2002) emphasizes that, above all, international education is about 'a commitment to universal values' and that while international schools 'can and do get by without the need to wrestle with or even debate the need for universal values', what he describes as 'internationally-minded schools' cannot (p. 35). Hill (2000) has argued that the notion of 'internationally-minded schools' (p. 24) corresponds with the promotion of international education, and notes that a key aspect of such an education is rooted in the promotion of 'intercultural understanding' (p. 34). Although there is ongoing debate about these concepts and the relationship between them, what is important according to Cambridge (2003) is that schools are explicit regarding their values – which are tied to the mission statements that schools espouse. The degree to which schools honour in practice the claims of their mission statements is likely as diverse as the schools themselves. This has been described as the 'macro' or global parameter of international schools, which is lacking in homogeneity (Hayden and Thompson, 2000b). It is also undoubtedly linked to what Hayden (2006) has referred to as the 'pragmatic' and 'ideological' dimensions of international education, and what Cambridge and Thompson (2004) have identified as the competing 'globalist' and 'internationalist' perspectives of international education, suggesting that international schools can be placed on a continuum in terms of the balance between these perspectives, both in terms of what they claim to offer and what they offer in reality. For the purposes of the analysis in this article, international schools will be defined by their mission statements – what they claim to offer. They will be viewed in terms of what they claim to promote. More specifically, they will be defined by their membership of regional associations that include the promotion of 'international education' within their stated aims and/or mission – aims that a school itself adopts by proxy in becoming a member school. Schools that claim to offer an international education and that voluntarily join regional associations which have similar claims are the focus of this analysis. Important issues pertaining to international schools and the analysis which will follow later in this article cannot be discussed without a framework, however, which is linked to consideration of models for international education.

International education models

Although it has been asserted that to some degree the term 'international education' within the context of international schools is misleading and perhaps is no more than the existence of or desire for a 'multinational student body' (Richards, 1998: 173), there is also widespread agreement on the ingredient of cultural diversity as inherent to such an education system. Although the extent of such diversity is not consistent among schools claiming to be 'international' (Hayden and Thompson, 2000b), it is clear that many consider it an important element for international education. Indeed, it is central to the models put forth to date.

The first model considered here is Thompson's (1998) 'Model of a learning environment for international education' (see Figure 1). This model highlights the importance of cultural diversity, although it falls short of considering all stakeholder groups. The model is limited in its consideration of which stakeholder groups actually affect the school environment as it omits to consider the various communities within which international schools operate. The model proposes that diversity among the stakeholder groups within a school can help to ensure 'international education'.

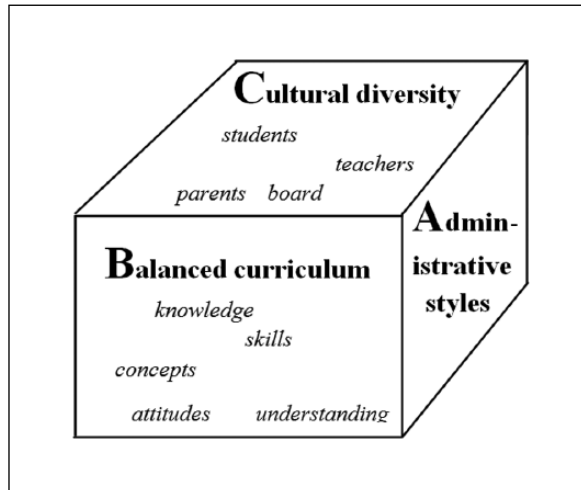


Figure 1. Model of a learning environment for international education (Thompson, 1998).

According to Thompson (1998), students, teachers, parents and board members ‘bring [their own experiences] to the institution from their personal cultures and histories’ (p. 288). Administrators too add to the international learning environment as Thompson (1998) also notes that ‘all who work within such an institutional environment’ (p. 288) contribute through their diversity.

Schwindt (2003) developed Thompson’s model and ‘specifically explores the role of host country nationals ... in supporting the promotion of international mindedness’ (p. 67) (see Figure 2). Her work suggests that

considering the multicultural student body and faculty which characterize many international schools, they would appear to be in an excellent position to foster international education through this apparent diversity [and that] ... the non-formal caught experiences, as well as the formal taught curriculum, form essential factors of international education, with the development of an open-minded attitude being a prerequisite. (Schwindt, 2003: 69)

Schwindt’s new model ‘unfolds’ Thompson’s cube and adds the importance of ‘Interface’ (to tertiary education and to jobs), of ‘Motives’ (for enrolment) and of parents, and separates Thompson’s cube side of ‘Cultural Diversity: students, teachers, parents, board’ into two sides: Cultural Diversity (teachers) and Cultural Diversity (students). Thompson’s ‘Administrative styles’ is maintained, but the board is now included in Schwindt’s modified model, where Thompson had included this stakeholder group in ‘Cultural Diversity’. The model then is developed by Schwindt by further emphasizing the role of host country nationals in terms of their role in the promotion of international mindedness. Although Schwindt’s revised model is based on a single case study of one international school, and would at first appear to view this school in isolation, it does in fact have greater reach. Importantly, in further developing Thompson’s model, Schwindt (2003) feels the need to look beyond the individual international school. Specifically, her ‘action plan’ for improvement at other schools sets forth eight imperatives directed at heads and school boards, two of which are to ‘recruit bilingual or multilingual teachers with international experience and education’ and to ‘reflect international experience and education in job descriptions and compensation schemes’ (p. 79), thus placing importance on the human resource potential for increased cultural diversity in the stakeholder group of teachers.

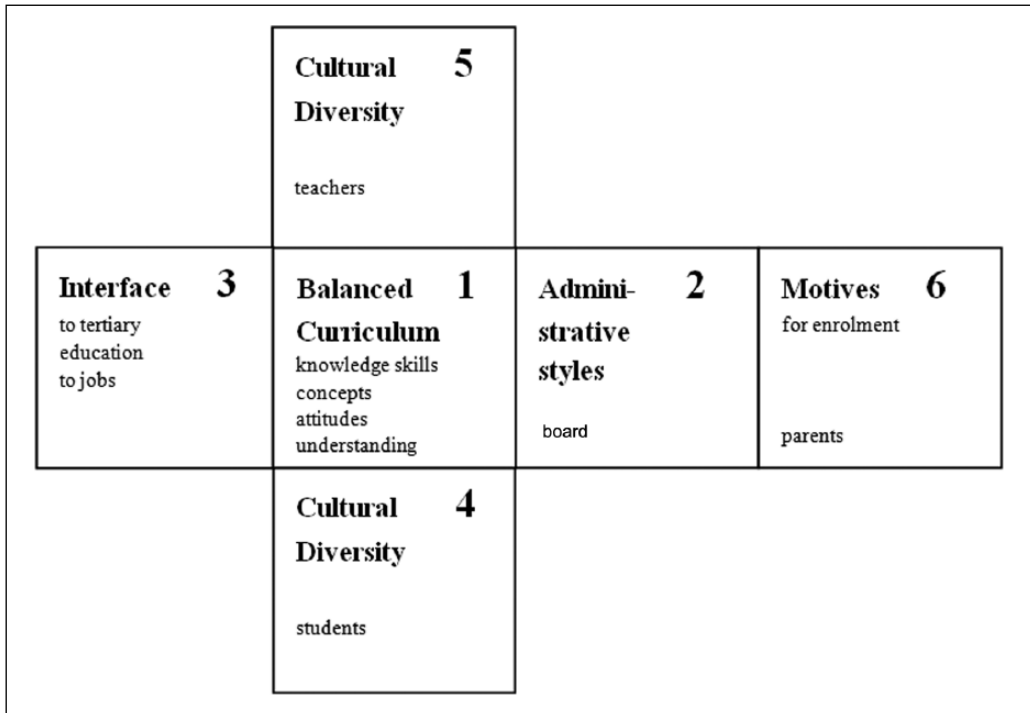


Figure 2. Expanded model of a learning environment for international education (Schwindt, 2003).

Thompson’s focus on the need for cultural diversity in stakeholder groups in order to ensure an environment for international education is important, although his model underestimates the scope for internationalism that exists. Schwindt’s developments of Thompson’s model are equally important at the school community level, and also have implications for the local community level. They do not, however, fully address the regional or global community levels of international education.

I argue in this analysis that international schools do not operate in isolation. Heads of such schools meet and consult on a regular basis, particularly when significant procedural or policy decisions must be made. Although heads of schools do not make decisions for their respective schools autonomously, they do have the power and responsibility to generate agenda items for board meetings, and to propose solutions and/or initiatives. Cultural diversity within administrative teams and different administrative styles at the fundamental school level do not influence the decisions and initiatives that heads bring to the school as a result of the influence exerted at the regional level.

If the inherent value of cultural diversity within stakeholder groups at the fundamental school community level is accepted, then it might be reasonable to ask whether other stakeholder groups that assert influence at school level should also be culturally diverse. This analysis explores on a larger scale the premises put forth in Thompson’s model, which were retained in a revision offered by Schwindt. The model proposed here (Figure 3) includes not only the institutional environment at the fundamental school community level but also the regional communities of international schools. The important changes in this further developed model include acknowledgement of the cultural diversity that exists in our global community, as illustrated in side 5. Additionally, the model aims to highlight the important communities within which all fundamental school communities operate:

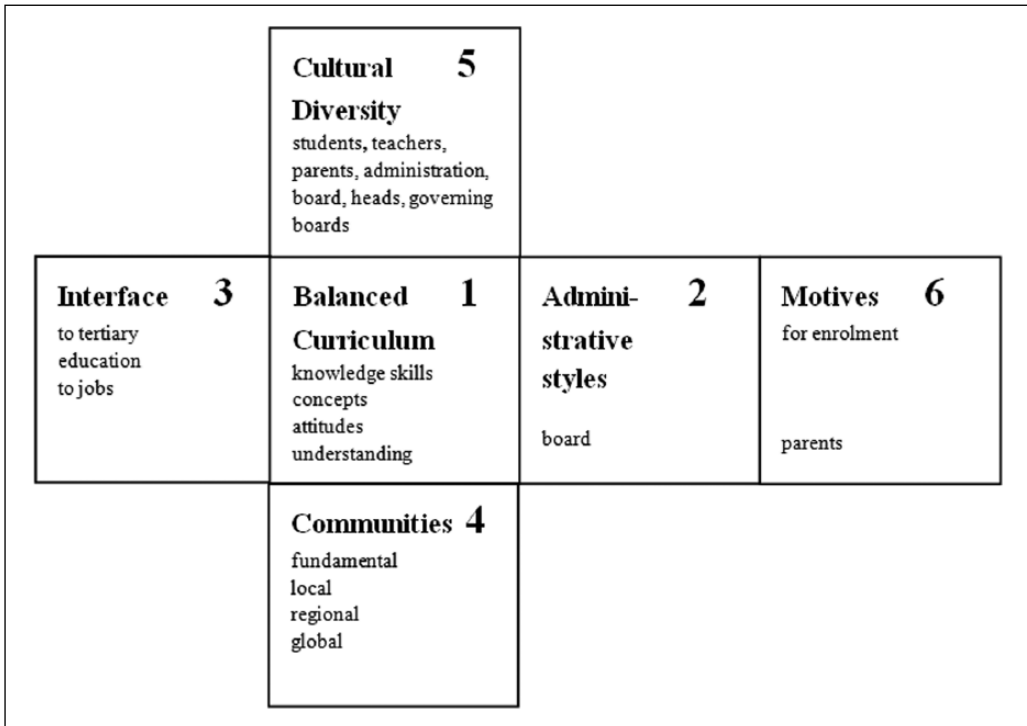


Figure 3. Revised model for international education: considering cultural diversity within stakeholder groups at all community levels.

the local, regional and global (side 4). The revised model contends that any school, national or international, that ignores the communities within which it exists cannot claim to promote international education.

School communities

Allen (2002) has argued that ‘schools *are* communities, schools *exist within* communities, schools *serve* communities, schools *form* communities, and schools *interact with* communities’ (p. 129) (original emphasis). Elsewhere Allen (2000) has asserted that ‘the community can be viewed as a network of reciprocal social relationships within a complex, diverse and changing collection of individuals and interests’ (p. 125). This emphasis on community and networks is an important premise in this discussion. Specifically, within this framework individual schools are defined as *fundamental* communities. At this level, the students, teachers, parents, administration and board comprise the stakeholder groups that impact the school. Schools also exist, however, *within* communities. On a local level, this community includes schools within cities or national borders. Furthermore, schools *form* and *interact with* communities and, on a regional level, these communities include schools within geographical areas such as continents or parts of continents. The all-inclusive community is global. Each level of community contains respective stakeholder groups, which form networks (see Figure 4).

The fundamental school community is addressed in Thompson’s original model. Schwindt’s revision of the model focuses on the role of host country nationals within a school and is therefore

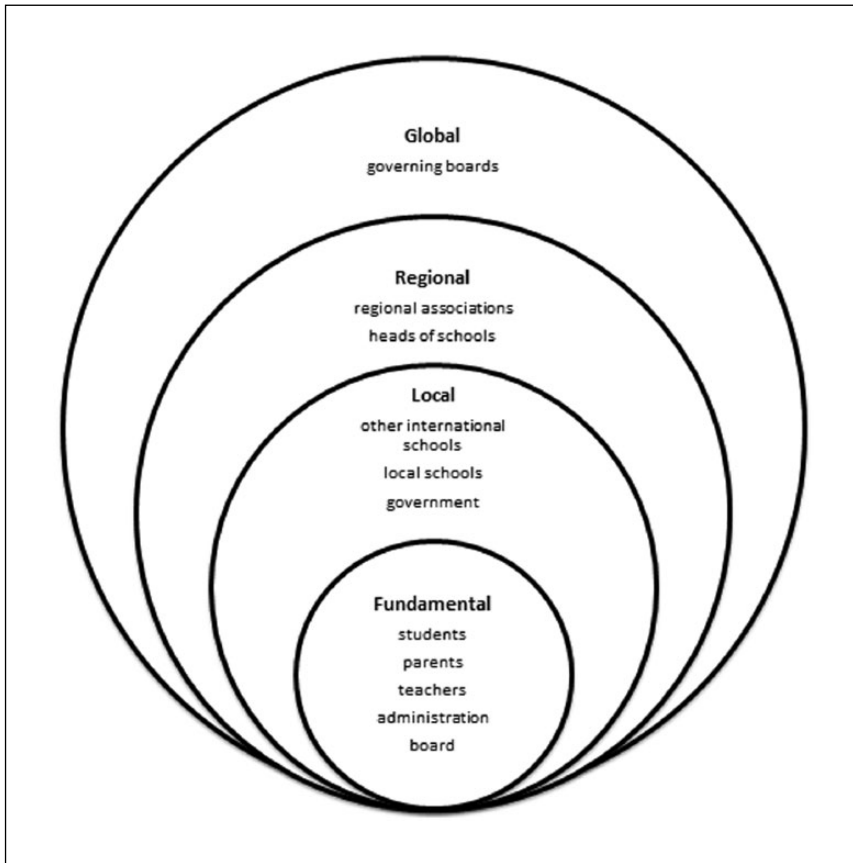


Figure 4. School communities and stakeholder groups.

also primarily based in the fundamental level. Both models consider international education within the individual school community alone, arguably as isolated entities.

The importance of the local level of community of schools has been addressed by others. Garton (2002) notes that a school that 'isolates' itself from the local community within which it is located 'would need to review its international credentials seriously' (p. 155), thus echoing Allen's (2000) strong encouragement to 'interact locally' (p. 138) and 'invest heavily in *local* connectedness' (Allen, 2002: 141, original emphasis). Little, however, has been written about the regional level of school communities. In fact, Garton (2002) reminds us of the importance of 'the location factor', arguing that international schools form 'strong links with other international schools', that 'major regional associations of international schools have played, and continue to play, an important part' and that 'their overall importance in the spread of international education has perhaps not been fully recognized' (p. 54).

The analysis in this article focuses on the regional communities of international schools and the stakeholder group that is the collection of heads of schools, where the term 'head' is used as defined by Hayden (2006) as 'the most senior academic administrator' (p. 94). Further research is suggested in relation to the proposed revised model with the inclusion of the global community through the stakeholder groups of governing boards of existing and potential future global associations.

School communities and cultural diversity

The need to consider school communities is linked to the cultural diversity within stakeholder groups at each level. Culture, in this context, is most appropriately defined in a broad sense. Just as international education does not necessarily imply the participation of individuals from various nations (as international education can take place in a national context), neither does cultural diversity (in an educational context) refer only to nationalities. Culture must be interpreted as containing many facets: ethnicity, gender, age, language and so on. Diversity is used to indicate differences, which subsequently marks the importance of heterogeneous grouping. The implication is that a diverse group is more likely to have differing opinions, and thereby *possibly* arrive at better informed conclusions. Although this is a bold assumption, it seems likely to be true in discussion pertaining to the concept of 'international'.

The premise is based in Pearce's (2003) question of 'Who are "we"?' Pearce (2003) suggests that 'a community's common values are the essence of its culture', and when one examines the creation of values in the international school setting, he argues 'it would be perfect if we could recognize a set of ideal or universally shared values, to satisfy all our client families ... in reality, it cannot be denied that different values are sincerely held by different people', concluding that 'the fundamental question is not "What values are best?" but "Who are we"?' When our community is defined we may look for an empirically shared or freely negotiated set of values' (p. 64). A set of shared values is presumably what international school mission statements are derived from. Most of these statements purport to offer an international or internationally minded education, reflecting in terms of international schools the diversity in 'Who they are', and, more broadly speaking (including all schools), an internationally minded education reflecting the universal 'Who we are'. In either case, our values which are our shared culture are based on diversity – be it on a fundamental, local, regional or global level, each level comprising a community.

Fundamental community

On the fundamental level, international schools are diverse; there is diversity within the stakeholder groups. Hayden and Thompson (2000b) have asserted that

There would be few ... who would take issue with the underlying premise that the community of those involved in the world of international schools is a diverse one. A striking feature which most of us would associate with our mental picture of international schools or international education is a lack of homogeneity. (p. 1)

As well as the premise that diversity exists in international schools, most would agree that this diversity is beneficial. The contributions that a culturally diverse student body (Walker, 2000) and teaching staff (see, for instance, Cambridge, 2002b; Hardman, 2001; Schwindt, 2003) can have on the promotion of international education has been noted. Furthermore, 'the parent body in international schools in general, and possibly even in an individual school, is fairly heterogeneous' (Hayden, 2006: 36). However, it is true that the contributions of this particular stakeholder group to international education will vary from school to school. It has also been noted that school boards 'include a wide range of personalities and perspectives' and 'that's how it should be if there is to be healthy debate on important policy issues' (Bowley, 2003: 22). Notably, in many international schools parents sit on and/or chair the board. It must be acknowledged that some have argued that cultural diversity among board members can present problems for school heads (see, for example, Hawley, 1994, 1995); however, this argument

is based on the concept of culture as defined by nationality. Furthermore, it has been suggested that having parents as board members is not necessarily desirable as ‘some cannot see beyond their own children’s needs and interests’ (Schoppert, 2003b: 12). However, this too does not necessarily have relevance to the assumption that differing perspectives can lead to a ‘healthy debate’, since the criticism is aimed more specifically at board members who have personal agendas concerning their own children.

Less emphasis has been placed in studies to date on the contributions that a culturally diverse administration can make. Indeed, some have suggested that this is of little importance. Hayden and Thompson’s (1995b) research, for instance, indicates that according to students, this is not an important factor in international education. When students were asked about their perceptions of the importance of different factors in contributing to the promotion of international education, ‘the attitudes of senior management were ranked last in order of importance’ (Hayden and Thompson, 1995b) – although Hayden and Thompson (1995b: 398–399) go on to note that while

[a]n impression is ... given of the perceived lack of importance of the attitudes of senior management in schools ... it might perhaps be argued that students are not really in a position to comment on the extent to which such attitudes influence the overall ethos of a school and therefore determine the environment in which an international education may or may not flourish.

This assertion seems persuasive when one considers that having a culturally diverse student body and teaching staff (which students ranked highly in the same study) is directly related to various school policies such as admissions, recruitment, language, professional development, enrolment and so on – all of which are policies influenced by the school leadership. It is clear that on a fundamental community level, cultural diversity within stakeholder groups exists and contributes positively to international education.

Local community

Cultural diversity on the local community level has been discussed by Caffyn and Cambridge (2006) who contend that ‘frameworks that conceptualize culture as a discourse offer scope for the development of understanding of management and intercultural relations in international school contexts’ (p. 46). This challenge to view culture as a discourse is important. Culture on the local community level cannot be ignored by school heads. Expatriate managers in particular, who may not understand the complexity that exists at this community level, may be in ‘danger’ as further noted by Caffyn and Cambridge (2006):

The danger for management is that, by having grand school visions and strategic plans, they can lose sight of subtle complexities of cross-cultural exchange and the covert resistance that such monocultural innovations can cause ... rather than looking at management as a technical process for imposing the maintenance of existing power relationships, ... a critical approach to research in international schools should be adopted that addresses management in terms of gender, ethnicity and economic equity in ways that emancipate people. (pp. 49–50)

This warning can also be viewed in terms of the potential benefits arising from a discourse based in cultural diversity. Not only should this be the way forward for individual schools and management within local circumstances, it should also be a consideration at the level of regional associations which exert external control on schools with ‘grand visions’ that are found in their mission statements.

Regional community

Regional communities are made up of schools in proximate geographical locations that correspond to continents or portions of continents, and are as diverse as international schools themselves. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to list and analyse the numerous regional associations of international schools that exist, a brief description is necessary of the role these organizations play. Although little has been written to date about these organizations and what impact they may have on the day-to-day activities of individual schools, a brief overview highlights possible implications for the schools in question. Some key characteristics of regional associations include voluntary membership; the encouragement of collaboration of students, teachers, administrators and heads; the requirement of member schools to adhere to certain specifications in order to be accepted as members; the payment of fees by member schools; national affiliations of some regional associations; and collective sports and activity competitions for students. The governing boards of such associations are generally elected from among member school heads. Regional associations are not only collections of schools, they are communities.

Global community

Global associations also exist and have been referred to in the literature pertaining to international schools. While these associations fall beyond the scope of the discussion in this article, one important consideration pertaining to 'political globalization' as noted by Hayden and Thompson (2000b) is the need for a 'mechanism for dynamic change' in order to avoid the 'rigidifying' of these associations (p. 10). This cautionary note may also be relevant in the analysis of regional associations.

On the fundamental school level, as well as on the local community level, cultural diversity within stakeholder groups is evident and has been addressed as either problematic or perhaps rich in possibility for international education. If one considers the stakeholder groups that impact individual schools from a regional or global level, however, less diversity is apparent. Although the 'world' of international schools may collectively be a diverse one, homogeneity may be present within some of the various stakeholder groups that exist. No matter which regional association is put into focus, one important factor lies within the concept of membership itself. Regional associations not only offer individual schools partnerships for various stakeholder groups, they also create an additional stakeholder group that impacts individual member schools. Through the regional association of school heads, another level of influence is created. School heads tend to meet annually or biannually in meetings facilitated by the regional associations, and they thus have a network of peers with whom they can consult throughout the year. We must question to what extent these interactions impact individual schools. To what extent does a regional association constitute an additional stakeholder group for each individual school? A more detailed look at the role of heads, and who it is who hold these leadership positions, is necessary.

International school heads

It has been noted that there is 'no shortage of literature relating to the importance of the role of school head' (Hayden, 2006: 95). However, less has been published regarding the role of heads of international schools. Blandford and Shaw (2001) suggest there is a 'paucity' (p. 9) of information available regarding the leadership of international schools. More recent publications, however, outline the ideal role of school heads. Tangye (2005), in a discussion concerning 'the board and best practices' in international schools, reminds boards that 'the day-to-day management of the school is the responsibility of the head assisted by the school senior management team' (p. 15). Furthermore, Chuck (2005) notes that 'the head of the school is charged with the responsibility to

establish an administrative and departmental structure to develop and implement the curriculum, and assure the smooth running of the school, within the school's stated values and principles' (p. 21). And importantly, in regards to emphasizing the influential nature of the role of heads, Vinge (2005) notes that heads 'are largely responsible for preparing board agendas' (p. 35). Bowley (2003) further highlights the potential power of heads in his discussion of the recruitment of new board members, noting that 'the ideal is for the school head to serve assertively as a member of the board nomination committee' (p. 23). The role of head of school is central.

Haywood (2002) has explored the 'international dimension' of the role of head in terms of 'pragmatic management' and 'visionary leadership'. With respect to pragmatic management, he notes that heads have benefited from their involvement in regional associations which provide 'an exchange mechanism whereby successful problem-solving in one school could be a learning experience for others' (Haywood, 2002: 177), thus clearly indicating the regional level of influence on a school's fundamental community level. There is great potential among this stakeholder group for 'exchange'. In terms of visionary leadership, Haywood cautions that on a fundamental level, individual school leaders must 'ensure that the philosophy statement does not exist just on paper' and that it may be 'a healthy phenomenon' that 'local circumstances call for a different approach', thereby calling into question the various 'cultural interpretations of schooling' (Haywood, 2002: 181–182). In this case, the potential for 'problem-solving' may be dependent on the cultural diversity of this stakeholder group. Finally, Haywood (2002) calls for the 'creation of a forum to address "international education"' (p. 183). This analysis is rooted in the role of heads at perhaps even a global level. It does not, however, address who heads are – which has implications for the 'visionary leadership' they will provide.

Who international school heads are has been discussed in part by Littleford (1999), who offers a profile of school leaders based on leadership styles. He stresses the need for long-term heads in international schools, and notes that those leaders who are 'Analyticals' are the most effective leaders and stay in post the longest. Although 'Analyticals' are referred to as 'people', it is interesting to note the characteristics that comprise the successful leaders in his analysis. They 'reveal little', are 'poker players', 'do not reflect anger', are 'emotionally stable', are 'predictable', are not 'control freaks', 'appear at times to be "god like"' and 'also have the ability to see the handwriting, to test the waters, to understand and manipulate the culture' (Littleford, 1999: 31). Although such characteristics can be found among many people, it could be argued that this profile is somewhat male and Western. The extent to which this argument can be made is important and calls for further analysis, as Littleford (1999) establishes that 'many successful long-term heads have launched other successful heads' (p. 31), suggesting that they may perhaps form a self-perpetuating network. This issue has been addressed in terms of gender. Thearle (2000), for instance, has noted that 'women are under-represented in senior management positions in international schools' and that international schools offer 'stereotypical' role models to students (p. 112). She explores the importance of mentors and the exclusive nature of networks, and in her final analysis stresses the need for more equitable recruitment and for women to create their own opportunities.

Others have alluded to the need for more than simply a Western style of senior management. Al Farra (2000), for instance, asserts that 'a danger exists that international education could become "Western education"', and calls on those of 'other cultures and ideologies' to 'participate fully in deciding the paths that curriculum development and other initiatives affecting the future of international education should follow' (p. 56). Although Al Farra's (2000) analysis is rooted in bilingual education in a national setting, and focuses primarily on teachers, the discussion is important in warning that 'it is too easy for a school to pay lip service to the concept of internationalism without having to make its practice a fundamental part of the education it offers' (p. 55). This suggests that on the fundamental school level, there is a need for schools that claim to be international to be genuine in their proposed missions, and to allow for culturally diverse perspectives.

Implications of a lack of diversity among heads of school

Unfortunately, a culturally diverse perspective may not be of primary concern to individual schools when considering the appointment of school heads. Rather, what might be considered more important is the length of term served by heads which, in the international school context, is often surprisingly short. Hawley's research raises issues in regards to the characteristics of heads of international schools. He indicates that, in his research

Only two school head characteristics were found to be predictive of duration: *the number of years teaching experience in international schools, and the nationality of the school head*. The school head's age, educational background, number of dependants, gender and salary were not found to be predictive of duration. (Hawley, 1994: 16, original emphasis)

Further findings of this study, based on 336 international school heads, note that 'women are not well represented among international school heads ... only 40 were women (12%)', and 'non-U.S. nationals, on average, remain longer than U.S. nationals' in their posts at international schools (Hawley, 1994: 16). Importantly, 'on average, the employment duration of school heads in international schools is remarkably brief' – averaging 2.8 years (Hawley, 1994: 13). Although a more recent study suggests 3.5 years of international school headship on average, similar factors relating to the short-term nature of international school headship were noted (Benson, 2011).

There is much to question in the status quo concerning the candidates for international school leadership. It would appear that those appointed to headship positions are not always those who are most likely to succeed. Schools seem likely to benefit from considering cultural diversity, a point addressed to some degree on the fundamental school level by Hayden and Thompson (2000b), who argue that

The organizational basis for any school is clearly crucial in determining everything else that arises within that school; management styles, decision-making processes, and school mission statements being among the explicit features into which diversity can be built. The more 'hidden' dimensions such as relationships between colleagues, or gender and cultural balance in senior positions, are also features where awareness of the importance of diversity can contribute to a richer experience for the student in terms of encouraging the development of an international outlook. (p. 5)

If the present situation with respect to heads in international schools is not ideal, how has it developed and how can it be rectified? The relationships between schools may be 'hidden' due to the present focus on the fundamental individual school level. Those who have responsibility at this level are the school boards who appoint heads, a responsibility which Schoppert (2003a) has noted is 'the most important decision' a board must make and which needs to be made with 'wisdom and thoroughness' (p. 122).

If rapid turnover of international school heads persists, what is the wisdom with which boards appoint heads? Is their reasoning sound? Canterford's (2003) research on international schools focuses on teachers rather than administrators, yet many of his findings can inform the consideration of heads in this context as he concludes that 'it is clear that international schools are operating various levels of discrimination and are thus working in segmented labor markets' (p. 63). Teacher nationalities data were obtained by Canterford from associations that assist international schools in recruiting not only teachers but also administrators and heads of schools. These data lack information on the nationalities of teachers, and one association – International Schools Services (ISS) – which provided data for Canterford's study 'reinforces a perceived domination' of certain nationalities based on their categorization of 'American', 'British', 'Other' and 'Host' (Canterford, 2003: 51). Assuming that this categorization extends to the profiling of headship as well as teaching post candidates, the emphasis of Western domination becomes explicit.

Canterford's (2003) analysis is based on segmentation theory, which considers both pre- and post-market discrimination. Pre-market discrimination may highlight some of the issues brought forth in this discussion. Canterford (2003) notes that 'pre-market discrimination considers those conditions that exist prior to the "worker" (in this case teacher) entering the labour market' (p. 54). In the case of the head, it may be that access to headship positions is available only to a segmented labour market. This may relate to the exclusive nature of networks alluded to earlier. It may also be the case that associations that assist boards with the hiring of heads do not actively seek non-Western candidates or do not shortlist them – a point that would seem to require further investigation.

In analysing the post-market discrimination, Canterford (2003) focuses on 'customer discrimination', 'employment and occupational discrimination' and 'wage discrimination' (p. 55). Of these 'forms' of discrimination, the first can be linked to the question of who is the head of an international school. In terms of customer discrimination, Canterford suggests that 'wherever possible, schools recruit people (teachers) who the customers (parents) will like because they fit the description: western-trained English speaking, preferably with international curriculum and examination experience'. In effect, this situation may be self-perpetuating as parents who either sit on the board (or exert pressure on the board) appoint heads who 'fit' this description, and heads then hire teachers who 'fit' the description. This is seen by Canterford (2003) as a contributing factor to the segmented teacher market:

Given the fact that most senior administrative positions within international schools are held by those from a narrow band of western nationalities, it may well be the case that heads are looking for teachers with experience of certain curricula and an ability to 'fit in' with existing staff ethos. (p. 59)

It is telling too, that Canterford had difficulty obtaining data on teacher nationality, which would also be difficult to obtain for heads; ideally, it would be helpful to know 'who they are' not only in terms of nationality but also in terms of their cultural identity more widely. As Canterford (2003) points out, 'many aspects of the international scene are a closed book' (p. 61). These contributions are noteworthy on the fundamental school level as they point to a single board's possible preferences for appointing heads who 'fit' within their fundamental community.

Some, however, have argued that boards of international schools have a responsibility beyond this community level. Wilkinson (2002), for instance, has called on international school boards to consider international education in the global community, but cautions that perhaps boards alone should not be given this responsibility. He notes that the board must understand the implications for the school in including the word 'international' in its title:

For international schools, the place of the 'international' ... cannot be taken lightly and ought to be understood explicitly. Yet this is not often the case; the very terms that appear in mission statements or statements of a school's philosophy – terms such as 'international understanding' and 'multiculturalism' – cannot be simply taken for granted. They carry different values in different circumstances and certainly by the very people (board members, school heads, faculty, parents and students) who form the school community. (Wilkinson, 2002: 186)

Relevant in this discussion is the responsibility of individual school leaders in a wider sense. The assertion that governing boards must play a 'leading role' in ensuring that international education develops in terms of the values inherent in the concept of 'international' requires individual schools to look beyond their fundamental communities as 'isolated entities' and consider their global responsibility. Wilkinson (2002) concludes, as others have previously (Hayden and Thompson, 2000a), that 'it is clearly time for a formal body concerned with governance of international education to be established' (p. 195).

This call for global community governance is important, and is addressed in the proposed revised model for international education (shown in Figure 3). However, there are essential implications as numerous regional associations are now in place. It is at this level, where international education is being contemplated by heads of individual schools, *collectively* as a stakeholder group, that the demands for a re-evaluation and further commitment to international values can be applied immediately. It will take time for global change, but regional change is possible now.

McDonald (2002), too, has called for change, and has boldly argued for boards to be ‘architects of educational evolution’ (p. 206). He notes that ‘the issue of synchrony – the notion that the current institutionalized structure of education is a balanced eco-system that cannot be upset – is at the root of the greatest paralysis in educational evolution’ (2002: 200). How boards are selected and how they govern is questioned by McDonald. In terms of selection, ‘diversity is necessarily compromised’, he argues, by having smaller boards that do not necessarily reflect the ‘broadest possible diversity’; diversity ‘can provide vital breadth of thinking and creativity’ (2002: 201). This argument for the benefits of diversity in decision-making is important. McDonald points out, in relation to how boards govern, that a number of ‘parameters’ must be addressed by boards that are in ‘gridlock’ in ‘their structures and habits’ (2002: 203). That boards may need to change how they govern has also been alluded to in his work; what McDonald suggests, however, may not be within the board’s responsibilities. The existing paradigms ‘that can and must be challenged’, including parameters of place, time, content, context, expectation and resources (2002: 203–204), do not necessarily match what the board’s responsibilities entail (Powell, 2003). In fact, they fall more directly into the day-to-day management of schools, which represents an administrative component better left outside the realm of board involvement or influence (Tangye, 2005). What boards can do, however, that is bold and visionary – and may in fact be ‘dynamic’ in allowing boards ‘to play a formative part in the evolution of innovative and responsive educational models’ as McDonald (2002: 206) suggests they should – is to consider who they appoint to headship positions. The parameters identified are determined by heads, and perhaps the change that has been called for will occur when there is change in who holds the headship positions. This change may not need to occur at the fundamental school community level of all individual international schools; the change may be spurred by the collective cultural diversity of heads in collaborating at the regional community level.

Limitations to increased cultural diversity

There are limitations to increased cultural diversity. Overall, there is a shortage of candidates for headship in international schools, and this seems likely to continue given the projected growth of international schools (9000 schools by 2020, according to Brummitt, 2007). It has been noted that years of experience is an indicator of success for heads of international schools (Hawley, 1994), although no estimate of the ideal age for headship has been proposed. In regards to nationality, there seems to be a persistent dominance of Western candidates, which may be the result of the national affiliations of many international schools. As well, some schools have policies that require heads to be of a particular nationality. Preference for first language English speakers is also likely to persist given that most international schools are English-medium, as well as the fact that parents – who often influence headship appointments – overwhelmingly note that their primary reason for choosing international schools is for the English-medium education they provide (Hayden et al., 2003).

Limitations to increased cultural diversity among heads of international schools may be linked to the underlying ‘globalist’ values of many international schools (Cambridge, 2002b). That is, although schools and regional associations often identify themselves as having ‘internationalist values’, they

are in reality offering a 'product' (Cambridge, 2002a), and a school's voluntary membership of regional associations may be an effort to enhance their 'brand'. Perhaps their membership of associations aspiring to international values is not truly taken to mean much at the fundamental school level. Does this assertion, however, necessarily impede cultural diversity among those in leadership positions both within schools and in regional associations?

Conclusion

In the proposed revised model for international education (Figure 3), international schools are no longer viewed as autonomous entities. Regional associations play an important role as they provide an additional stakeholder group for individual schools. It is suggested that these associations should do more to promote cultural diversity within their own organizations, and that present school heads should consider succession planning in relation to promoting greater diversity – not only in terms of gender but also in terms of factors including ethnicity, age, nationality and language. As well, it is argued that school boards have a responsibility to international education beyond the fundamental school level.

A model for international education must address the concept of international, in terms of both community levels and the individuals who make up these communities. Thompson (2002) has asserted that 'the claims made for the development of the traits associated with international education (such as the characteristics of "international-mindedness," tolerance and cultural sensitivity) abound in the informal publications arising from, for example, mission statements' (p. 6). Mission statements, of both individual schools and regional associations, can be better reinforced in practice. According to Thompson (2002), international education must

involve consideration of the most appropriate forms of recruitment, preparation, induction and continuing professional development of teachers and administrators working in partnership with other members of the school community, both within the institution and as part of the local and regional human environments. (p. 8)

All stakeholder groups that impact the evolution of international education are important. In particular, according to Walker (2006), what must be considered is that 'at the heart of international education lies the appreciation of difference, in the sense both of valuing diversity and of calling into question previously unchallenged assumptions and prejudices' (p. 8). It is not only the claims made by international schools and regional associations but also the centrality of cultural diversity, that are at issue. At each community level – fundamental, local, regional and global – there is need to consider 'who we are'. There is need to ensure that stakeholder groups that impact international education reflect the communities they represent.

Specifically, cultural diversity among heads of international schools is necessary. It stands to reason that if all other stakeholder groups who participate in the fundamental school community and affect policy and procedure (either directly or indirectly) should be culturally diverse, then school heads – as a collaborative entity – who can affect policy and procedure both directly and indirectly at the individual school level, should also be culturally diverse. A lack of cultural diversity is not appropriate in terms of providing an environment for international education within any other group that impacts the daily operation of international schools. Clearly, Thompson's (1998) 'Model of a Learning Environment for International Education' could move closer towards an ideal environment if it not only indicated the need for culture diversity within a school's administration but also considered the context within which schools operate – particularly, the context within which heads of school operate.

Ensuring the promotion of international education, and thereby staying true to the espoused mission of international schools, is demanding and complex. However, it has reached this stage of complexity under the guise of a rather homogeneous group of heads at the regional community level. Perhaps it is time for new perspectives. Heads who educate their clientele to understand the value of diversity, and who promote and provide professional development opportunities and encouragement to new heads who are culturally diverse – perhaps non-Western, perhaps non-native English speaking, perhaps female, perhaps younger – may open up a new era of international education.

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