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**International-Mindedness: The Implications for Pre-service Teachers**

**Written by Florence Monique Boulard  
James Cook University  
June, 7th, 2013**

## **Abstract**

Internationalisation of education is no longer exclusively an agenda for higher education. Many schools around Australia are modifying their policies and curriculum, with the aim of developing successful cross-cultural communicators and competent internationally minded citizens.

Through a case study approach this research project examined a State High School in North Queensland, to review the impact of the school's internationalisation on students and the wider school community. It was found that the process of internationalising a school is complex and challenging, and often requires transformation at different levels within the school. Of these levels of transformation, it is the development of internationally minded teachers that gives schools one of the greatest opportunities to impact on student international mindedness. Teachers have the greatest impact on student outcomes out of all other controllable factors.

As a result, making its debut into the teaching profession now comes with a new range of challenges. Current literature suggests that the international experience in schools is often tokenistic, such as a cursory celebration of foreign culture or a cultural studies unit with limited scope. In this global century, it is necessary that all Universities around Australia take appropriate steps to internationalise their teachers' education training so that upon graduation, teachers will be capable of assisting schools in creating internationally minded school leavers.

More than ever before, the next generation of teachers need to be explicitly taught what international mindedness is and how they can develop it in their students. This paper will first introduce the concept of international mindedness. It then explains how teachers' perspectives on international-mindedness can be identified. It will conclude with a review of the implications of international education for pre-service teachers in secondary school settings in Australia.

## **Introduction**

International education is represented in different forms. It is often represented with the provision of education services to students who are not citizens of the country. Connelli (2010) argues that in Australia the most visible form of international education is international students studying onshore as there are thousands of them coming each year, bringing over 17 billion dollars in export revenue and employment for well over 100,000 people. International education can also mean a curriculum that explicitly seeks to expand students' worldviews by drawing perspectives and knowledge from an international, and not just from a national context. This paper focuses on the latter, and explores the challenges in internationalisation for the new generation of pre-service teachers. The term 'internationalisation' describes the processes used to obtain an international dimension in an organisation. This process can be different depending on the type of organisation that is involved. According to Knight (2004, p.5):

Internationalization is not a new term. It has been used for centuries in political science and governmental relations but its popularity in the education sector has really only soared since the early 80s.

The internationalisation of Australian education offers pedagogical opportunities for connections between countries (Singh, 2010). According to De Wit (2011, p.6) there are common misconceptions of what internationalisation is in the education context. For example, he explained that hosting international students or going on an exchange program cannot be classified as internationalisation on their own. International-mindedness is an outcome that lies at the core of the internationalisation of curriculum.

This paper first discusses the conceptions of international-mindedness that resulted from a case study undertaken at Callistemon State High School. It then explains how teachers' perspectives on international-mindedness can be identified. It concludes with a summary of the implications for the next generation of teachers.

## **Conceptions of International-mindedness**

Although there may be variations in the literature regarding what constitutes international-mindedness, some common qualities can be identified. Focusing on the common qualities may also facilitate one's understanding of the concept of international-

mindedness as opposed to trying to select one of the many definitions available in the literature.

This study investigated what teachers and students at Callistemon High understood as “international-mindedness”. The project used a case study approach to explore the concept of international-mindedness. The methodological framework in this study was informed by Baker and Kanan’s (2005) research on how to measure international-mindedness, as well as Duckworth, Levy and Levy’s (2005) study on measuring the level of international-mindedness of a group of teachers. This research used two main means of data collection: questionnaires, and face-to-face interviews. This study used the responses of 5 school leaders, 6 teachers and 10 Year 12 students. Table 1 illustrates the common qualities drawn from the literature as well as the perspectives and experiences of the students and teachers of Callistemon High. It offers a framework to develop pre-service teachers’ international-mindedness.

**Table 1: Common qualities of international-mindedness**

<b>Communicate ideas &amp; feelings</b>	<b>Responsible global citizen</b>	<b>Intercultural knowledge</b>
Students communicate their ideas and feelings effectively with a diverse audience.	Students are active citizens who do not just discuss ideas but take actions and responsible risks.	Students are aware of their own culture and demonstrate strong intercultural and interpersonal skills.
Students understand verbal and non-verbal communication in different cultural settings  Communicate clearly and articulate well  Listen carefully to others and think before responding (pay particular attention to the	Students go out of their comfort zone when required to help others  Create and plan together to solve problems or improve a situation  Be courteous to all and reflect on his/her	Students speak more than one language fluently  Explain to others what characterises his/her culture  Embrace different cultures and their people and strive to understand those differences

language used)	actions	Be compassionate and possess deep knowledge of the world
Understand the factors that accompany culture and the way it impacts on one's communication skills	Demonstrate appropriate leadership in a wide variety of situations  Believe he/she can change the world and make it a better place	

To be internationally minded is to be able to understand the diversity and richness of the world through its history, people and cultures. It is to be flexible in various situations yet caring and capable of showing respect towards all cultures and its people. It is also knowing how to interact with all people in a respectful manner irrespective of citizenship. Being internationally minded is more than just being culturally aware. It is a constant learning process; it has no limit and can continue to develop through time and experiences. What differentiates international-mindedness from other concepts such as intercultural understanding and global citizenship is that internationally mindedness moves beyond accepting or tolerating others. It entails an active engagement with international perspectives and diversity in cultures.

### **Teachers' perspectives on international-mindedness**

Teachers can make a difference (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Hattie, 2003). While students' backgrounds, peers, the school and the principal all play an important role in achieving a successful education for all learners, teachers can contribute up to 30% of their students' success (Hattie, 2003). Cause (2009) contends that teachers who want to cultivate internationally-minded students, first need to be truly internationally minded themselves. Teachers therefore play an important role in the successful development of international-mindedness of every student.

In this study a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data relating to teachers' perceptions of international-mindedness (see Appendix One). It was drawn from the Duckworth, R., Levy, L. & Levy, J. (2005) study of a group of teachers' international-

mindedness. It also included the global mindedness scale (GMS) developed by Jane Hett (1993) which was reproduced in another study by Duckworth et al. (2005). Respondents were asked to rate the statements on a five-level scale. It is important to note that according to Hett (1993), participants scoring higher on the GMS also tend to have the following characteristics that are cited in the literature on effective international teachers: (1) female; (2) have significant international educational experience (5+ courses with international focus); (3) participate in internationally oriented activities; (4) possess high political interest and have liberal political orientations; (5) have friends from other countries or cultures; and (6) have experience studying/living outside of home country for more than nine weeks (Duckworth et al; 2005, p.294).

On the surface the results from the surveyed teachers at Callistemon High indicated that most demonstrate very high levels of international-mindedness. Most of the participants exhibit the five attributes cited by Hett (1993) above. They reported empathy towards others, enjoyed spending time with people from other cultures, were willing to learn more and help other citizens of the world. Moreover, all participants strongly agreed that they generally find it stimulating to spend an evening talking with people from another culture. However, curiously, half of the respondents agreed with the statement “I sometimes feel irritated with people from other countries because they don’t understand how we do things in my home country.” This attitude could be explained by the hidden nature of communication. According to Hall and Hall (1990), experts in communication estimate that around 90% of all communication is conveyed through nonverbal language, which is highly driven by a specific culture. They continued by explaining that a high level of emotion is contained within culture specific nonverbal communication. This would explain why people who do not have the knowledge of a particular culture, and therefore would not be able to break down the codes of communication, might misunderstand emotion that is communicated nonverbally and feel irritated as a result.

### **Implications for the future generation of teachers**

Nowadays, it is important that pre-service teachers understand that they are not just teaching a subject but that they are teaching young people. These young people are all part of an interconnected world and will need to be internationally-minded to continue to contribute effectively in our society. Ensuring that the next generation of teachers demonstrates attributes of international mindedness will assist schools in delivering quality education for

all. Below are research based strategies that emerged from this study on how to encourage the development of international-mindedness in pre-service teachers:

- Explicit teaching of the concept of international-mindedness using the information presented in Table 1 *Common qualities of international-mindedness*
- Ensuring pre-service teachers are able to articulate what international-mindedness is
- Providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop their intercultural and interpersonal skills
- Encouraging pre-service teachers to study a foreign language and peace education subjects
- Continuing to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to take appropriate risks and actions to develop their leadership skills
- Using the instrument in Appendix One to measure pre-service teachers international-mindedness at the beginning, middle and end of their training

In this global century, it is necessary that all Universities around Australia take appropriate steps to internationalise their teachers' education training so that upon graduation, teachers will be capable of assisting schools in creating internationally minded school leavers.

## **Conclusion**

Becoming an internationally minded school is a complex process and developing internationally minded people is a significant undertaking. Of the many possible levels of transformation, it is the development of internationally minded teachers that gives schools one of the greatest opportunities to impact on student international mindedness. Teachers have the greatest impact on student outcomes out of all controllable factors. Teachers have a critical role to play in the development of students' international-mindedness. More than ever before the next generation of teachers need to be explicitly taught what international mindedness is and how they can develop it in their students. Although at first teaching to develop international mindedness may be considered overly utopic, education is all about creating hope for a better future. Investing in the international mindedness of our pre-service teachers, and their ability to develop international mindedness in their students, should positively impact on the everyday life of the next generation of young Australians.

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## **Appendix One**

### **Instruments Used to Gather Teacher Information at Callistemon High**

## **Information Survey for Staff at Callistemon SHS**

Research project: A critical investigation of the development of international-mindedness of the Callistemon State High School community.

Investigator: Florence Monique Boulard

The following information will assist the investigator to gather data for her research project which investigate international-mindedness within the school environment of Callistemon High. Thank you for being a volunteer and taking the time to answer the following questions.

*Acknowledgment: This instrument was drawn from previous work done by Jane Hett in 1993 and Duckworth, R., Levy, L. & Levy, J. in 2005*

### **Part 1**

#### **International Background**

**Gender:**

**Age:**

**Ethnicity:**

**Country of Birth:**

**Have you lived outside of Australia:      Yes                                  No**

**In the table below, please list the countries in which you have lived / been to, with the amount of time spent in each country.**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Amount of time (in years)</b>


(Please feel free to continue on the backside of this sheet if you need more space)

**Which language(s), other than English do you speak (can you communicate in)?**

**Professional background:**

**Highest degree earned:**

**How long have you been teaching at Callistemon SHS:**

**Have you taught outside of your home country?      YES              NO**

**If so, how long?**

**Why are you interested in teaching? (If you choose more than one, please number by importance)**

**Love of children**

**Professional environment**

**Self-inspiration**

**Travel**

**Inspiration of kids**

**Job incidentals (experience, job opportunities, hours, vacations etc.)**

**Other:**

**International-mindedness**

**PART 2**

In the next 15 questions, you will find a series of statements. Please read each statement and decide whether or not you agree with it. Then write in the response that most accurately reflects your opinion, based upon the scale indicated below:

**Strongly Disagree**                      **Somewhat Agree**                      **Strongly Agree**  
 1.....2.....3.....4.....5

- 1 ---- I generally find it stimulating to spend an evening talking with people from another culture.
- 2 ---- I feel an obligation to speak out when I see my government doing something I consider wrong.
- 3 ----Australia is enriched by the fact that it is comprised of many people from different cultures and countries.
- 4 ---- Really, there is nothing I can do about the problems of the world.
- 5 ----The needs of my home country must continue to be the highest priority in negotiating with other countries.
- 6 ----I often think about the kind of world we are creating for future generations.
- 7 ----When I hear that thousands of young people are starving in Vietnam, I feel very frustrated.
- 8 ----Generally, an individual’s actions are too small to have a significant effect on the ecosystem.
- 9 ----I think of myself, not only as a citizen of my country, but also as a citizen of the world.
- 10 ---- When I see the conditions some people in the world live under, I feel a responsibility to do something about it.
- 11 ---- I enjoy trying to understand people’s behaviour in the context of their culture.
- 12 ----My culture’s values are probably the best.
- 13 ----The fact that a flood can kill thousands of people in Pakistan is very depressing to me.
- 14 ---- It is not really important to me to consider myself as a member of the global community.
- 15 ---- I sometimes feel irritated with people from other countries because they don’t understand how we do things in my home country.

**PART 3**

Please respond to the following statements by inserting an (X) in the box which represents your feeling towards each given item:

Statement	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I I like to be aware of what happens in different parts of				

the world				
2 I am interested to know about other beliefs and points of view				
3 I like to read books and magazines that are related to international cultures				

Statement	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
4 I help organising cultural event such as food festival for my students				
5 I use ICT in my classroom to connect students to the rest of the world				
6 I interact with people who are coming from different countries and have a different culture				