

# Report on the Alliance for International Education China Gathering 23-25 October 2009

**Theme:** “International Learning: Learning to be International – A World of Views ”

**Venue:** Yew Wah International Education School of Shanghai

## Introduction

The second annual gathering of the Alliance for International Education - China Chapter was held in Shanghai from October 23 – October 25, 2009. Using the theme of the 2010 AIE World Conference in Melbourne, this year’s gathering of the regional China Chapter provided an opportunity to submit papers or working projects for feedback from peers in preparation for the Melbourne Conference.

**Dr Betty Chan, Director of the Yew Chung Education Foundation and Chair of the AIE China Chapter,** welcomed everyone to the conference and noted that the initial signup to the gathering was some 63 people. Sitting in front of her at that moment were 145 people, including a significant number of Chinese teachers. She applauded the obvious growth in popularity of this gathering especially as this was only the second such event. Dr Chan then introduced the first of two Keynote speakers addressing the conference theme: “International Learning: Learning to be International – a world of views” in two plenary sessions.

**Prof. Hu Ruiwen, President of Shanghai Academy of Educational Science,** gave a very informative presentation on conceptions of the ‘International’ from a Chinese viewpoint and the need for Global perspectives. To this end he gave a thorough analysis of the state of education in China and the need for an International perspective in Chinese Education and the particular receptive state of China to the growth of International Schools.

**Dr. Gary Morrison, Assistant Director of Yew Chung Education Foundation and Vice Chair of the AIE China Chapter,** then explained the function of the AIE China Chapter and very rightly praised the generosity of the Yew Chung Foundation for providing such excellent conference facilities, sponsoring the conference fees and all needs. Without such support, these gatherings would be a far more difficult proposition.

The final keynote speaker was **Dr. Zhang Min Xuan, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Education Committee.** Dr Zhang has a long and distinguished history in Chinese education administration. Currently he is a leading member of the Shanghai municipal education commission. Dr. Zhang gave a thoroughly informative speech on how the notion of internationalism had grown in China over the past 30 years. He spoke of the very positive attitude being taken by local education administrators and teachers to fostering international mindedness in students. To this end he explored a common goals of students around the world and how Chinese students were no less interested and involved in pursuing international ideals than all similarly concerned students everywhere. He expressed that these goals were becoming more important as the per capita expenditure on education was growing every year along with the medium income of Chinese citizens. To this end they were able to afford a lot better opportunities for their children. Chinese parents were looking to take those opportunities where ever they could find them, either in China or overseas. It was a very illuminating and interesting keynote speech.

## **The Youth Forum**

Anthony Dang and Jane Harris, two of the AIE China Chapter committee members, organized a youth forum using students from local and international schools. These students assembled as a panel and were shown video clips of views on “International Learning: Learning to be International”. The video clips were created by students at schools, both local and international in the Asian area. They addressed the issue by stating points of views or asking questions. These clips were shown to the panel of students who responded to them with views of their own in front of an audience of over 150 people. Basically, these students saw International learning as a cultural experience and felt that such understanding grew from engaging in and experiencing the cultural experiences of their hosts will if they were International, and the cultural experiences of others through their media and their language. This was an enormously successful function and the diverse backgrounds of the student members gave many interesting points of view. The students on the panel are to be commended for the way they rose to the occasion and spite of being somewhat daunted by the nature and quality of their audience. In the end all spoke bravely and well and put their viewpoints across with clarity and various degrees of ease. It was a truly rewarding experience for those of us in the audience to gain this point of view because we are often bound by our own expectations and need to be reminded about those of others.

Congratulations must go to Anthony and Jane for such an excellent event.

## **The Breakout Sessions**

23 papers were presented in three Strand sessions.

Strand One was entitled **“Curriculum approaches, identity and creative thinking.”**

The papers presented here were ....

“ International curriculum - its meaning and perception in Hong Kong” by Ms. Vicky Wong.

“Internationalisation of the curriculum: a comparison of two early childhood higher education programs in Australia” by Dr. Bonnie Yim and Dr. Maria Lee.

“Mother tongue provision and imperative” by Ms. Elaine Whelan

“ Motivating moments – Scratching the Maths Itch” by Ms Jane Harris

“ The development of creative thinkers through environmental action” by Dr Peter Le Masurier

“ Thoughts on the inception of International education through early childhood education” by Ms Qi Yang

“ A study: the cultural consciousness of kindergarten program against the backdrop of multi culture in the relationship between program and culture” by Ms Zhang Ying

This strand could be summarised in the following manner. The question of **cultural identity** was explored by asking the questions “What is International learning?”, “Why consider International learning?”, “How it might be implemented through an alliance of national and international systems at both government school and teacher level”, “What would constitute a trans National learning program”, and “Why are the provision of mother tongue learning was so important in an international system”.

The other part of the Strand, ‘Creative thinking’ was explored through the lens of “What it actually was and the constraints on creativity”, “Could a business model be transplanted into education?”, “The role of creativity in early childhood international education”, “ and “The relationship between program and culture”.

Many very interesting and thought provoking points and discussions were raised especially around the role of culture in international education both from the viewpoint of identity and the capacity for creativity.

#### Strand Two was entitled : **Multi-Cultural Education**

The papers presented were

“Animations with Early Years” by Ms. Helen DOUGLAS

“Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships in Yew Chung Early Childhood Section (Hong Kong) by Ms. KAM Oi Ping

“Challenges of Chinese Kindergartens with the International Education” by Dr. Ammilou PELAYO,

“Co teaching: making it work!” by Ms. Che QING & Ms. Jackie JENSEN,

“Co-cultural teaching in early childhood international education: The impact of social and intercultural competence” by Dr. Grace Choy

“Rethinking the Definition of Multicultural Education - Discussing the construction of multicultural education in preschool education” by Ms. XIA Zhuyun, East China Normal University

“Third Culture Kids and the Int'l School Environment” by Mr. Christopher VIVIAN,

“Introspection and Feedback: Hong Kong’s Fine-tuning of Medium of Instruction” by Ms. WONG Shuk Yee, Hong Kong Baptist University

“Inclusive Education: A kindergarten curriculum with propensity for internationalization” by WANG Xiang,

In Strand Two issues of multicultural education or examined further. The main themes to arise from this strand were that multicultural education is quite a broad topic, as it not only deals with issues of different nationalities, culture, language, bias, but we also looked at the culture of the old and the new and the generation and adoption of technology. The culture of Hong Kong where families are often raised by those other than the parent shows that multicultural education differs in different contexts.

The key points were that multicultural education is challenging; that transition is a norm; that international education differs in different cultural contexts; multiculturalism is all about communication and collaboration. In this we are all learners. It is through a process of synthesis and fusion that we create multicultural global citizens and global leaders.

### Strand Three was entitled **Higher Education**

*Paper:* Education - an avenue of social mobility? by Ms. Pepe PURCELL

Ms Pepe Purcell : presented the notion of education as an avenue of social mobility for all parties: students, parents, teachers and administrators. This included an assertive critique of the 'flip top' education process, where the focus is on the teacher is the 'all knowing' and moving into a more student centred direction of learning. Recognition of the students as a whole person – endowed with culture, minds, hearts, spirits and emotions.

*Paper:* "International Learning in the Transition from Secondary to Tertiary: The Rocks on which International Learning in Yew Chung Community College is Founded" by Dr. John CLARK

Dr Clark Access to Higher Education YCCC: Students are able to demonstrate their various levels of abilities – the idea of the ten rocks, the essential tools. Ideas like the appreciation of cultures, recognizing some students as weaker than others, allowing for 'difference', understand learning that promotes independent thinkers, etc

*Paper:* "International Learning in the Transition from Secondary to Tertiary: Social Sciences and International Learning in Yew Chung Community College" by Mr. Simon LI

Mr Simon Li: Identifies the need for a context in learning – YCCC. He pointed out that previous teaching practices of taking isolated pieces of knowledge and delivering it in an ad hoc manner to students was being phased out. Instead more beneficial teaching practices are adopted that will produce healthy independent learners, able to critically analyse conceptually, various life occurrences.

*Paper:* "Is Cultural Diversity being sacrificed on the alter of Internationalism?" by Mr. Mike IZZARD

Mr Mike Izzard : Looked at different international experiences, like the Shanghai High School's international experience grounded in Chinese culture. Another view is where a culture is the idea of 'internationalism' itself. The IB curriculum is given as a case study. Education viewed as a business and education for itself with ethical values. IB started as a liberal world view philosophy – where students could develop a 'world humanist ethic'. Where is the IB in that stance now?

*Paper:* "Internationalization of Higher Education and Building World-class universities in Mainland China: a Case of Shanghai Jiao Tong University" by Qi WANG

Experiencing Jiao Tong University – standards as a gage of performance, improving the quality of education within the university sector and bringing a university into an internationally recognized standard of performance. She raised concerns about the connection between policy-making and policy-implementing and the type of barriers to be overcome.

*Paper: Postdoctoral trainees—A truly international currency?* by Dr. Andrea L. STITH, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Dr Andrea L Stith: Postdoc trainees are valued as highly skilled labor and also the future leaders in science and technology. Do the increasing numbers and 'mobility' of these researchers over-emphasize (as a commodity) their research skill-base and de-emphasize their role as thinkers and educators. As China's S&T system advances, how do they consider these issues?

*Paper: Shanghai High School International Division: International Exposure for Local Students (SHSID)*

Mr Zhu Zhenyi: Shanghai High School experience and how it has dealt with International education from a local perspective. SHS was the first to employ foreign staff. They were the first TOEFL testing centre. First AP school and first SAT testing centre. First local school to use school based textbooks in China. China's current and future leaders are being groomed and prepared.

**Strand Three** could be summarised as a very full exploration of issues surrounding how to prepare students to enter an international market, especially when issues of cultural identity and cultural practice differed. There was a strong desire expressed by all those in this strand to see that a true international currency was developed by which students could realise their aspirations and their goals. This international currency could be found in the desire of universities to enter a more level playing field as far as performance and international recognition went either from the viewpoint of the University all from the viewpoint of its products. Concern was raised about the capacity of certain cultures to control the nature of this international currency through the gateways it set up. This could be either in the form of examination standards, entry tests, or other forms of gateway provisions.

### **Questions:**

*How are ethical values determined? Whose ethical values are they?*

Is the International space a meeting place for diverse practices, etc? Should we have rules or guidelines if people want to participate? An example is the IB curriculum assessment, where there was a possible 'code of morality' that could have a cultural base or be an effort to not offend any such code. Is it possible to do this in a 'liberal-conservative' world of cultures?

*Notion of 'participants' e.g. parents*

Do parents need educating as well as their children? How do we balance out what is needed? Parent teacher conference – three way communication is an essential commitment. Parental involvement in local Chinese schools: teacher relationship with both students and their parents is close, often much closer than in International Schools. International schools share with parents how things are going with their children – success stories. Social activities are organized to bring the three parties together- parents, students, teacher, to help present student progress. In Yew Cheung Pudong the philosophy is to encourage the education of all three parties: parents, students and teachers. Engaging parents allows for transparency.

**Question:**

*Isn't it a good thing that we have parents that have a different way of thinking from their children? Isn't it possible that this will help create 'critical' discussion?*

Administrators are part of the 'international' education community, it is important to include this role to gain understanding. This is linked to the idea that in international schools there are three basic systems: administrative system, learning management system – not clearly defined, personal learning experiences.

*Critique of the teacher, student relationship in an IB school.*

It identified that there was a fundamental difference in the way Westerners and Easterners view their role. There was a cultural conflict in that the Eastern view allowed for a 24 hour care package for the students. The teachers were considered guardians of the children. They guided them through their educational experience almost like a parent. Parents placed their faith in teachers as a legitimate guide for their children. However, the Western view did not include a 24 hour care package. In fact caring for the students took place within particular hours. Free time was considered as time separate from and not to be shared with students and their families.

There is a movement to make IB to be the 'international' power house curriculum, however .why? When talking we seem to accept the IB as an international programme. However Mike raised a lot of questions around the issue of assessment: Who is doing the assessment? It could be argued that IB curriculum assessment is not culture free, it is limited by the people who are in control of the assessment procedures, etc. IB is only one programme there are many others that are available for our international schools. Learning to be 'international', it's in questioning this that we become 'international' minded. Critical thinking is essential not just for our students, its important for all parties, including teachers.

**Question:**

*What do we want the students to have before they go to University?*

Admission officers look through all the applications. Do we need to make sure that the students can continue their learning wherever they go? The idea is to prepare students to 'survive' socially, academically, culturally and economically. What would be in this 'survival kit'? Perhaps the ability to conceptualize and critique where they are; being able to produce a personal statement that reflects 'critical thinking'; the need to show that as credible 'university' students or potential market workers they possess the skills and knowledge that universities require. Included is the ability to use these skills and knowledge appropriately when needed; ensure that they are able to present themselves in an appropriately 'unique' manner [X factor], ability to solve various types of problems. Ten rocks raised in John Clark's paper.

In previous years an individual could have one occupation for a long time, however this is changing students will have various occupations in their life time. This is possibly reflective of the ever changing composition of society.

**Strand three** participants were each asked to write one question at the end of the session that they would like to think about based on what was discussed. The questions are listed here.....

1. Where will students go when they graduate from Yew Wah?
2. Can YCCC type be carried out in Shanghai?
3. How is the experience of teaching critical thinking in Yew Wah (to the local students)?
4. How do students themselves value their international education?
5. Speaking of international education, what should teachers expect of their students in such a classroom?
6. What can we learn from the Chinese education system?
7. How do educators ensure students actively pursue internationalism in their own education?
8. Does education always have to be competitive? How can we have a more cooperative view?
9. Concerning international education, how can the teachers teach values, develop characters if we don't share common assumptions, goals, etc?
10. Can these ever be an "international education"? Can we only ever teach international awareness?
11. In international schools, what can we do to make the students have global view and leadership?
12. How can we help Chinese students to learn from the best of eastern and western culture without affect them negatively in their growth?
13. How can teachers build a good relationship with parents in the international schools?
14. How can we balance different values of education between teachers and parents?
15. How do you compare the Eastern and Western education styles? Which one is better to build a better world?
16. How does international education influence the future developments or directions for the tertiary institutions in the world?
17. How do higher education organizations in China equip the students with the ability to meet the challenge in their lives?
18. What are the requirements / characteristics / standards that determine truly international education? Are they teachers, students, school policies, curriculums, systems, e.g. a school with foreign teachers equal international school, etc?
19. What are the distinguishing characteristics of a student who receives international education vs. local education?

**Conclusion:** This gathering turned out to be a great success. The issues raised and the quality of the submissions were thought provoking and well received. It was excellent to have so many local school teachers involved; evidence of the growth in the wish to participate in considering the growth and the future of International Education. It augers very well for the future of the AIE China Chapter. Again, our sincere thanks to the Yew Chung foundation for it's support and organization. It is our intention to publish as many papers as possible on our website.