3RD CULTURE SCHOOLS

International Schools as Creative Catalysts for a New Global Education System.

Joe Hallgarten, Ralph Tabberer & Kenny McCarthy

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"If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow."
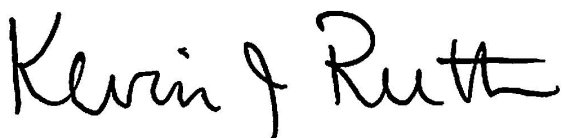
John Dewey

ECIS turns fifty!

Such a momentous occasion in the life of an organisation is a natural point at which to take stock of the successes of the past whilst looking forward to the next fifty years. As part of our Golden Jubilee, ECIS could have chosen to produce yet another booklet that highlights the chronology of the organisation since its germination in Beirut in 1962.

Given the positive global impact—and subsequent recent aggressive growth—of international schools, however, we chose instead to commission this thought piece that looks at international schools and asks what is next in their evolution, including their role on the world stage when it comes to influencing education. For this task, we partnered with a fellow UK thought leader, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (RSA), to encapsulate the trends and, critically, to make a bold proposal regarding the place of ECIS in influencing education on a global scale.

In an age when brief and popular-style commentary have become the norm, you will find here a study that is carefully written, deeply analytical, refreshingly reflective and, at times, provocative. We are at a transformative juncture in international education, and it is the hope of ECIS that this thought piece will become a reference point for all of us, as we engage in reflection and action around its ideas.

Semper ad meliora!

Kevin J. Ruth, PhD
ECIS Executive Director

RSA

About the RSA

The RSA is an enlightenment organisation committed to finding innovative practical solutions to today's social challenges. Through its ideas, research and 27,000-strong Fellowship it seeks to understand and enhance human capability so we can close the gap between today's reality and people's hopes for a better world. This is based on our core belief that all should have the freedom and power to turn their ideas into reality. We call this worldview 'the power to create'.

Aligned to this view, RSA Education's new mission is to close the creativity gap in learning. We believe that cultivating everyone's creative capacities throughout life, working particularly with individuals and communities who lack the opportunities, power and resources to realise their aspirations, is crucial for an adaptive, inclusive society. Our programme of research, innovation and mobilisation aims to inspire debate, influence policy and change practice. For more information, contact education@rsa.org.uk.

About the authors

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Introduction

International education is booming – student numbers are up, teacher numbers are increasing and school numbers have grown sevenfold in the last 25 years. But this growth hasn't happened in a vacuum, the world is rapidly changing. The challenges of globalisation have led to a social and economic need for new learning approaches, premised on the creativity of individuals. The sustained growth of international education has led to a fragmentation of its cause and a dilution of its brand. International education needs a new social mission, one that places the sector at the heart of a transformation in learning. International schools have the freedom to be at the forefront of a new global education system. Reimagining international schools as 'Third culture schools' emphasises the system leadership role they could play in bridging an often polarised education world to support improved learning outcomes for all. The challenge we present to international schools is how in the modern world they can become a 'creative community with a cause', mobilising their knowledge and resources for social good. The opportunity for ECIS as a network is to see itself as a social movement for creative change, not just for its own schools and learners, but to support any teacher, school or system whose practices can be informed by collaboration with its network.

1. International Schools as 20th Century Cultural Artefacts

If we could create a Tardis-like time capsule to represent how education evolved in the 20th Century, we would need to squeeze in at least one example of an international school. Taken together, international schools provide a perfect example of a 'cultural artefact': sufficiently coherent in ethos and practice to make a unique contribution to the education landscape, whilst conceptually diverse enough for people to 'contrive in their own image'[1]. They were built on the four distinct pillars of an international mix of students, international governance, an internationally-minded teaching force, and an international curriculum and/or instructional practices[2]. They also represented a mindset that, perhaps before its time, promoted global understanding and respect.

After the radical but unsustainable 19th century experiment with the Spring Grove school in England (established by writer Charles Dickens, politician Richard Cobden and scientist Thomas Huxley[3]), the first International School to endure, EcoLint in Geneva, began in 1924. It was an educational response to the tragedy of the First World War and a practical response to the schooling needs of children of employees for

1   Greenfield, TB (1973). 'Organisations as social inventions: rethinking assumptions about change'. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science.* 9(5): pp551-574; Hill, I (2014). 'Internationally minded schools as cultural artefacts: implications for School Leadership'. *Journal of Research in International Education.* 13(3) pp175-189.

2   Terwilliger, RI (1972). 'International schools – cultural crossroads'. In: *The Educational Forum*, *36*(3), pp359-363.

3   Interestingly, at the same time the RSA was also supporting education reforms. It's 'One square mile' report explored the state of schools in and around Bethnal Green, whilst our national commission on Education proposed reforms taken up by the 1870 Education Act, which established universal schooling for primary aged children. See www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2014/12/my-favourite-education-book-of-2014-and-1870-habits-of-thrift-and-industry-improving-bethnal-green/

the new League of Nations. EcoLint's creation was fuelled by a clear 'theory of change' (to use very 21st century language): an education grounded in intercultural awareness would create future leaders more likely to sue for peace than shoot for war.

Meanwhile, as nation-states around the world stepped up their quest for universal schooling, a new infrastructure of state-funded and state-provided schools, nationally regulated and controlled, replaced the patchwork of voluntary and private efforts and became the dominant model of school provision. International schools, growing slowly throughout the 20th Century in response to a gradually globalising and 'elite' transnational workforce, developed their own distinctive approach to education, probably best represented by the invention, in 1968, of the International Baccalaureate at EcoLint. It was a perfect, if polite, complement in education to the other revolts happening at the time.

Much has been written about international schools' distinctiveness. At their best, they have made radical, positive use of their freedoms and resources; liberated (or at least at arm's length) from government control, they have exploited their unique settings to develop fascinating approaches to pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation. As a 'well-kept secret', they may have punched beneath their weight in terms of their broader systemic influence but, in terms of their reputation and outcomes, international schools were a 20th century success story.[4]

But three things have changed. First, the pace of global change has quickened. Second, the appetite for international schools is growing beyond anybody's expectations. Third, with growth has come a greater range of approaches that may be diluting the 'distinctiveness' of the model.

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4   Hayden, M. & Thompson, J (2008). International Schools: growth and influence. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.

2. A Changing Global Context and the Power to Create

The world has changed more in the last fifty years than the previous five hundred, and we know that schools and school systems have struggled to keep up. George Walker[5] has summarised six global challenges that will impact on schooling, teaching and learning.

	CHALLENGE	POTENTIAL IMPACT
DIVERSITY	There are no longer neat lines between nationality, culture and ethnicity. Growing diversity has led to radical changes in our self-perceptions, leading some to react with national and religious extremism.	Increasing diversity is seen by many as a threat to their way of life. Is there a moral responsibility for education to help us adapt to diversity?
COMPLEXITY	Technology has vastly increased our capacity to communicate and share information. This has led to a proliferation of ideas and opinions from around the world.	How do we ensure access to divergent ideas, the skills to make sense of them, and challenge orthodox positions in our schools?
SUSTAINABILITY	Science is now unanimous (almost) in its support of anthropogenic climate change. We will be facing a situation in which governments and their societies will have to make do with less.	The implications are stark, schools have to do more with less resources. What do schools need to do to prepare students for this and change and help the find creative solutions to these problems?
INEQUALITY	The gap between those with and those without has widened. The OECD has demonstrated how inequality is inefficient stating, had it not risen over the last thirty years our GDP would be 8.5% higher and almost everybody in society would be better off.	What impact will inequality have on access to education? How can education compensate for growing inequalities in resources between families?
ACCESSABILITY	Traditional hierarchies have broken down, opening up agency and people's perceived rights to access knowledge and information.	In what ways is accessibility undermining conventional ethical values?
EASTERN-CENTRICITY	Economic and political influence is shifting eastwards, with the strong Chinese and Indian economies rapidly gaining ground on their Western counterparts. Their increasing eastern dominance is opening us to new values which are not based in the Enlightenment.	How can we take a positive view of the decline of Western influence?

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5   Walker, G (2012). 'Tea and oysters: metaphors for a global education'. International Schools Journal Vol XXXI(2) pp8-17.

The RSA's understanding of this context is connected to our own history, a 250 year journey of turning ideas into action for social good, and building our concept of a 21st Century Enlightenment.[6]

We observe that the sheer scale and complexity of the challenges that societies now face are forcing a shift in understanding about how change happens at all. Global challenges such as climate change, an ageing population, community cohesion, demographic shifts and deep inequality render simple interventions ineffective and demand more creative solutions. While national and local government continue to perform vital functions, businesses, the third sector and indeed each of us as citizens, consumers, workers, parents and students have a part to play too. More than ever before, society needs ways of galvanizing these different actors to tackle social challenges.

Fortunately, these challenges come at a time when human capability and appetite for creativity are dramatically rising and more people are prioritising what the World Values Survey calls 'values of self-expression'. Disruptive technologies are also providing new opportunities for creativity and the Internet is enabling easy access to information and tools for communicating, trading and collaborating. In both the world of work and people's everyday lives, dramatic change is afoot, creating a rising demand for a creative citizenry.

At the macro level, we believe that societies need to generate, nurture and affirm the 'Power to Create'. In simple terms, the Power to Create comes from cultivating norms, institutions, policies, supportive networks and systems that enable people to turn their ideas into reality.[7]

At the micro level – recognising the importance of individuals, networks and associations – the RSA recognises that a vast resource of creative potential is going untapped. The Society's basic premise is that it wishes to understand and strengthen individual agency and collaborative power to create the world we want and need. We believe that the potential can be captured through a combination of new leadership, cultural change and renewed institutions based on a strong sense of shared purpose - building 'creative communities with a cause'.

The phrase, 'creative communities with a cause' comes from Charles Leadbeater[8]:

> "*We live in a world in which the capacity to innovate will be more important than ever. Sustained innovation does not come from lone individuals. Sustained innovation comes from creative communities of passionate and committed people, creative communities which share an animating sense of purpose, a cause…. the basic unit of sustained innovation is a creative community with a cause. That is true of great companies, cities, teams and it should also be true of great schools too."*

The challenge we present to international schools is how in the modern world they can become a 'creative community with a cause', mobilising their knowledge and resources for social good. The opportunity for ECIS as a network is to see itself as a social movement

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6   See www.thersa.org/discover/videos/rsa-animate/2010/09/rsa-animate---21st-century-enlightenment/

7   See Mathew Taylor's 'Power to Create' speech www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDQosiH4VAc and animation www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZgjpuFGb_8

8   Leadbeater, C (2014). Learning to Make a Difference: School as a creative community. WISE. Available at: http://www.wise-qatar.org/sites/default/files/wise_matters_learning_to_make_a_difference.pdf

for creative change, not just for its own schools and learners, but to support any teacher, school or system whose practices can be informed by collaboration with its network.

To discuss how international schools in general, and ECIS in particular, can rise to this challenge, we need first to examine how international schools have been changing.

3. International Schools and the challenges of growth

Spurred by societal as much as educational forces of change, international schools are evolving rapidly and, to some extent, anarchically. Over the last 25 years, the International School Consultancy group (ISC) has recorded a sevenfold increase in their provision, growing from under 1,000 to more than 7,545 (by January 2015)[9].

Pupils attending international schools (millions)

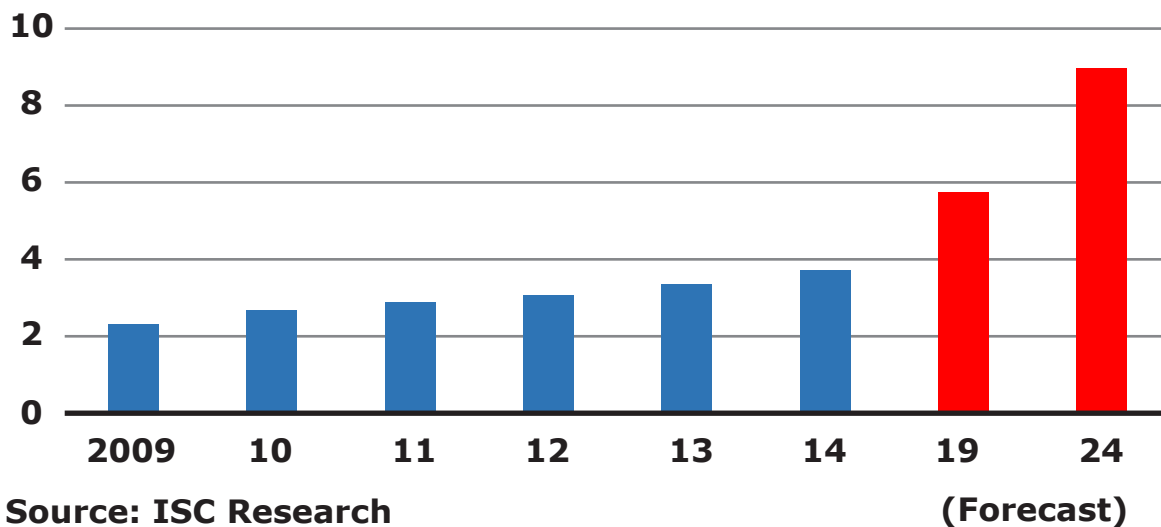Source: ISC Research (Forecast)

Figure 1: The Growth in International Schools

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9   Thanks to Anne Keeling at ISC for providing up to date statistics for this section, based on 2015 data. For 2014 data, see www.iscresearch.com/Portals/0/ISC%20 Publicity%20-%20The%20Economist%20-%20International%20schools%20-%20The%20new%20local.pdf

Between 2000 and 2014, the numbers of students in international schools experienced a fourfold increase, to 3.92 Million (January 2015). During the same period, fee income rose eightfold, to an annual value of $37.9 Billion. The global economic crash of 2008 had no adverse impact on this remarkable pattern of growth.

These are hugely significant changes. If international schools were seen as an OECD jurisdiction, today it would sit between Belgium and The Netherlands in terms of number of pupils. Where it would come in the PISA rankings is not currently possible to predict, but international schools' continued rise up the league tables in terms of pupil, teacher and school numbers looks inevitable. If ISC forecasts come true, by 2025 international schools' fee income ($65 Billion), student numbers (8.26 million), teacher numbers (734,000) and total number of schools (15,100) would give it an education footprint larger than England's state and private schools combined.

Of course, this sustained growth is bringing fundamental changes to the character and nature of international schools and it is worth pausing for a moment to examine the shifts affecting each of the traditional four pillars: international mix of students, international governance, an internationally-minded teaching force, and an international curriculum and/or instructional practices.

a) Mix of students

There are now two drivers of growth. There is a continuing increase in the numbers of professionals with children who are working overseas. Many of them want the assurance that their children will do as well as if they had stayed at home. A second driver, however, relates to local populations and context. A burgeoning middle class in many emerging economies, concerned how state education systems are improving far too slowly in response to an expanding school-age population, is increasingly prepared to pay for schooling, and it is the schools with 'international' in their name that are capturing a large slice of this new market. In Dubai, for example, more than a half of the national population is choosing to leave state education for this wider market.

What are they paying for? Arguably, three inter-related things[10]: quality, the route to a top university, and teaching in the medium of English. In practice, we must expect there to be a more diverse international school market in the future, with some schools (such as those backed by their local Embassy) focused on a specific migrant nationality, others multinational (with more than 50 nationalities, commonly) and others mixed, with national and international students side by side.

b) Governance

The increasing role of private investment in international education has led many new schools away from the traditional model of governance-by-committee to a corporate approach and, sometimes, a very simple model of Owner-to-Principal oversight. There is also a move away from the tradition of single schools to larger school groups. New business models, often operating at lower costs, are confusing the traditional ethos and identity of the international schools movement. Additionally, and largely as a consequence of the growth in national populations choosing international schools, local regulatory bodies are taking a greater interest in the governance of these schools.

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10   Booz & Company (2011). Decade of Opportunity: the Coming Expansion of the Private School Market in the GCC. Available at: www.booz.com/media/file/Booz-Co-Private-School-Expansion-GCC.pdf

c) Teaching force

The distinctive change in the teaching force is its growing size. It has moved from approximately 90,000 in 2000, to 352,900 today and the projections are for it to rise to 740,000 by 2025. It is predominantly 'Western' in outlook and approach, and some estimates suggest that the sheer weight of demand could have an impact on national systems. Given that 100,000 of the current international school workforce were born or trained in England, if teacher numbers grow as anticipated in international schools, and remain the same in England, by 2024 one in three teachers from England will be teaching outside of England.

A key concern – and a feature – in many modern international schools is high teacher turnover and, with teacher demand set to increase, international schools will have to strengthen their all-round offer to staff in order to maintain a high quality, internationally-minded workforce.

d) Curriculum and Instructional Practices

The distinctive approach of international schools in curriculum and instruction has been diluted. The International Baccalaureate has grown, of course, but other models based on the English and North American curriculum systems may be matching or even out-pacing that growth. Whilst none of these curriculum models preclude international schools' historical commitment to interculturalism and bilingualism, they do imply a sustained Western cultural model in the face of countervailing global forces.

Perhaps, with the exception of bilingual teaching where some international schools have still retained an edge in terms of curriculum and instructional innovation, there is less these days to distinguish state schools and international schools worldwide in terms of

educational approach. Whilst the international schools' brand may be diluting, external forces are also having an impact. Many governments in the last 20 years have funded large-scale programmes improving curriculum, assessment, teaching, learning and technology. Most of the developed world's state education systems are experiencing a growing cultural diversity of pupils, and an expanded interest in internationalist approaches to education, catalysed by the connections made possible through new technologies.[11]

Diversifying state school provision, for instance through charter schools in the US and Academies in England, may also be fostering innovative practice, at scale, in the state sector. International schools never had the monopoly on education innovation, but they may be losing their reputation as key educational innovators.

Whisper it gently, but 'international schools' may soon not look so international, in comparison with either their history, or with the other parts of the education sector.

4. A changing education context and closing the creativity gap

The arguments for adopting a different outlook in 21st century education have been well articulated. Andreas Schleicher[12] from the OECD argues:

> "*In a fast-changing world, producing more of the same education will not suffice to address the challenges of the*

11   See, for instance, the British Council's 'connecting classrooms' initiative at www.school-sonline.britishcouncil.org/programmes-and-funding/linking-programmes-worldwide/connecting-classrooms

12   Schleicher, A (Ed.) (2012). Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World. Paris: OECD Publishing.

future…Routine cognitive skills, the skills that are easiest to teach and easiest to test, are also the skills that are easiest to digitize, automate and outsource. A generation ago, teachers could expect that what they taught would last for a lifetime of their students. Today, where individuals can access content on Google, where routine cognitive skills are being digitized or outsourced, and where jobs are changing rapidly, education systems need to place much greater emphasis on enabling individuals to become lifelong learners, to manage complex ways of thinking and complex ways of working that computers cannot take over easily. Students need to be capable not only of constantly adapting but also of constantly learning and growing, of positioning themselves and repositioning themselves in a fast changing world. These changes have profound implications for teachers, teaching and learning as well as for the leadership of schools and education systems."

Connected to the economic imperatives are social goals.[13] Schools and systems around the world are trying to discover how to educate young people so that they acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and capabilities – often summed up in the term 'competences' – to live as active, productive, responsible and participative citizens in modern democratic societies. Young people across the globe today face an uncertain future: economic instability, stubbornly poor social mobility, the challenges of increasing population diversity

and growth, climate change, and the whole raft of pressures that come from rapid globalisation. According to neuroscientist Jay Giedd, the way in which teenagers learn, communicate and entertain has evolved more in the last 15 years than in the previous 570 years.[14]

Today, children and teenagers have access to more information, opinions, and media from across the world than any generation before them. It is these political, economic and social trends that have led to the growing importance of developing personal and social skills, resilience and determination, and cultural capital.

Of all the many words written about the future of learning, The US National Research Council's 2012 report is probably the most comprehensive[15]. It examined all those capabilities that various authors have assigned to the label, "21st Century Skills". The analysis broke down the important skills, attitudes, behaviours and capabilities into three types: (a) *cognitive competencies* such as critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, information literacy, active listening, oral and written communication, and creativity; (b) *intra-personal competencies* such as intellectual openness, flexibility, artistic and cultural appreciation, personal and social responsibility, intellectual curiosity, initiative, grit, citizenship, ethics, integrity and self-monitoring; and (c) *inter-personal competencies* such as teamwork, collaboration,

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13   See the RSA's report on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education at www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/schools-with-soul-a-new-approach-to-spiritual-moral-social-and-cultural-education/

14   Interview at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nEBVtPmeCQ

15   National Research Council (2012). Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century. Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, Pellegrino, JW and Hilton, ML (Eds), Board on Testing and Assessment and Board on Science Education, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

service orientation, conflict resolution, negotiation, responsibility, leadership, self-presentation and social influence.

The RSA believes that the 'Power to Create' has particular resonance in debates about the future of learning. The RSA agrees that dramatic, four-decade shifts in the global economy have put a premium on informational and interactive capabilities (especially skills and aptitudes that cannot be automated). To stay competitive, countries will need to redesign their education systems to support these broader outcomes. For individuals, greater resilience and adaptability are needed to cope with volatile labour markets and circular career paths, while businesses also emphasise the need for a more creative, rounded, self-motivated workforce.

Knowledge and skills have "ever-diminishing half-lives"[16]: the knowledge and skills needed in the future may not even be known at the time a person attends school, so institutions cannot limit themselves to the transmission of set content. Instead, they need to promote flexibility, openness to new ideas, ability to adapt and courage in the face of the unexpected.[17]

Giving our students the Power to Create is about developing creative capacities and more. There is an emerging consensus, particularly from developmental psychologists, that creativity is innate in all of us and learnable in different ways in specific knowledge domains. We believe that cultivating everyone's creative capacities throughout life, working particularly with individuals and communities who lack the opportunities, power and resources to realise their aspirations, is crucial for an adaptive, inclusive society. Our aspiration is to contribute to a closing of the creativity gap.

Although this is a challenging agenda, there are two clear reasons to be optimistic about our education system's potential to deliver against a higher and broader set of expectations.

First, new technologies offer untapped potential, both to deliver more traditional outcomes more efficiently (leaving space for teaching a broader set of outcomes), and to offer tools that support these outcomes. As yet, there is little evidence to suggest that the potential impact of e-technologies is being realised and there is a growing realisation that the creative potential of new technologies can only be realised through an application of new pedagogies: "approaches based on strong learning partnerships between and among students and teachers which combine the learning of knowledge, collaborative application of that knowledge to real and important problems, and the use of technology as a tool for collaboration, research and monitoring progress".[18]

16   Cropley, A. J (2001). *Creativity in education and learning: A guide for teachers and educators.* London: Kogan Page.

17   Lai, E and Viering, M (2012). *Assessing 21st Century Skills: Integrating Research Findings*. Vancouver, BC: Pearson. Available at: www.researchnetwork.pearson.com/wp-content/uploads/assessing_21st_century_skills_ncme.pdf; Hargreaves, A (2003). *Teaching in the Knowledge Society*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education; Lubart, T and Guignard, J (2004). 'The generality-specificity of creativity: a multivariate approach'. In RL Sternberg, EL Grigorenko and JL Singer (Eds.), *Creativity: from potential to realisation*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp43-56.

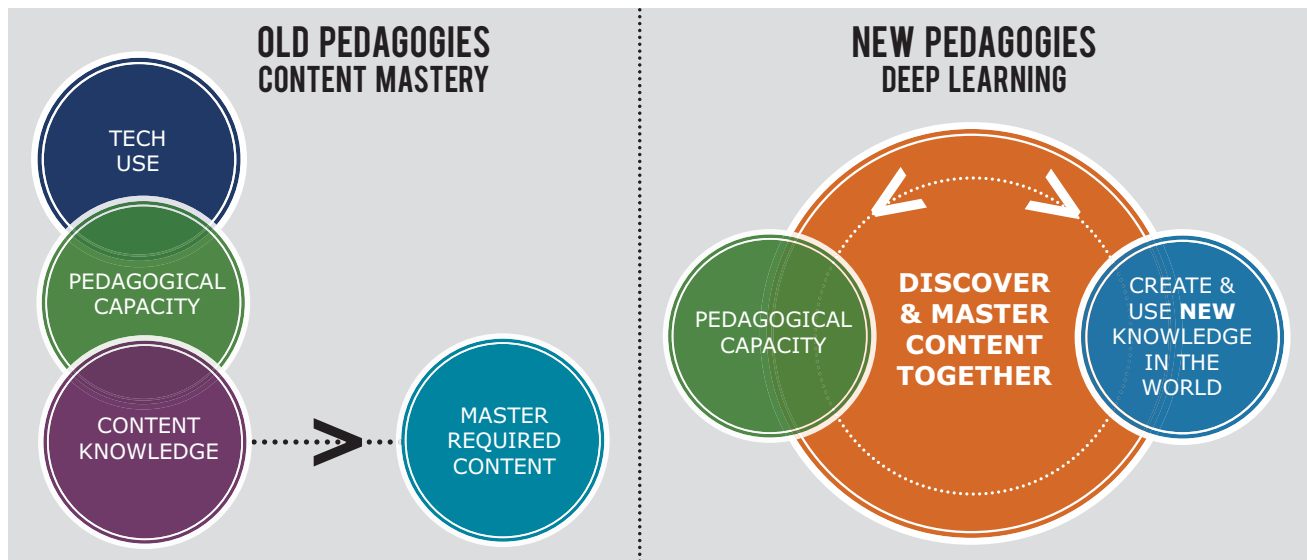18   Fullan, M & Langworthy, M (2014). A Rich Seam: How New Pedagogies find Deep Learning. London: Pearson.

OLD PEDAGOGIES
CONTENT MASTERY

TECH USE

PEDAGOGICAL CAPACITY

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

MASTER REQUIRED CONTENT

NEW PEDAGOGIES
DEEP LEARNING

PEDAGOGICAL CAPACITY

DISCOVER & MASTER CONTENT TOGETHER

CREATE & USE **NEW** KNOWLEDGE IN THE WORLD

Figure 2: How the New Pedagogies are Different [19]

Second, the traditional 'state as purchaser and provider' model has fragmented and diversified. More outward models of schooling, often supported by civil society and businesses, offer possibilities for new approaches to teaching, learning and school organisation that could spawn successful, replicable practices. In the developed world, driven by evidence that high autonomy is a key feature of successful schools, powers are increasingly devolved to schools, moving from what Lant Pritchett[20] describes as a 'spider' model of schooling provision to a 'starfish' model. A decentralised education system should enable both schools and new school providers to innovate and diversify their offering, although accountability systems and dominant management paradigms can stifle innovation and maintain cultures of conformity and compliance.

Barriers to progress are diverse and numerous but, from the RSA's perspective, the biggest single barrier may lie in schools' orthodoxies as institutions. Schools, as organisations, are often insufficiently reflexive. Put simply, they don't think often enough, deeply enough or radically enough about their mission, and the way their organisational form contributes to and inhibits that mission. We need schools to be intelligent communities that see themselves as part of other communities but often they are old-fashioned, isolated bureaucratic hierarchies. If we want schools to possess and teach the Power to Create, they will need the capacity to reflect – within their own institution, and with other schools.

19   Ibid.

20   Pritchett, L (2013). The Rebirth of Education: Schooling ain't learning. Washington D.C: Centre for Global Development

5. Towards a new social mission for international schools

To misquote US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson[21], international schools appear to be building an empire yet need to find their role. The challenge for international schools is to establish a new cause, which unites their rich history with a social mission.

Why is this such an attractive idea now? There are four main reasons.

First, there is the business case. International schools still clearly have a Unique Selling Point, filling local vacuums created by a perceived or real lack of quality in state provision. But the weakening uniqueness in their USP may cause difficulties in the longer term.

Second, the growth of international schools is increasingly attracting the attention of governments who are more likely to welcome and support a cooperative and ethical partner. With increased growth, the consent of government will be ever more important in the movement's development; local pupils in China are still not allowed to attend international schools. Without a broader social mission, international schools may face increasing criticism for super-serving elite young people, further concentrating various forms of capital, and reinforcing national and global inequalities and social immobility.

Third, there is an ethical case. Schools are social institutions, steeped in values that bind student, staff and parental communities. Many international schools have a distinguished record in this area. They must continue to utilise their freedoms and see themselves as communities embedded in the wider education world, working for the common good.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is a system-wide educational case. Our school systems need to go further, faster, together, in particular bridging public, private and voluntary providers to support improved learning outcomes for all. International schools could, if willing, have a vital part to play in this mission, through their unique experiences, contexts and skillsets. Perhaps the best way to summarise their potential public value is to position international schools as 'Third Culture schools'.

'Third Culture Kids' are those typical international school students who have spent a "significant amount of their developmental years in a culture outside their parents' passport culture".[22] This often leads to children who are very adept at understanding the multifaceted nature of global issues, having had experiences that blur traditional social and cultural divides. In this sense, they are able to break down silos and make links between worlds that would otherwise remain separate. Applying this concept to an institutional level, we can begin to perceive international schools as Third Culture Schools. They operate in a zone of inherent ambiguity. They are global institutions operating in national and local contexts but with ambiguity about how they relate to all levels (the global, national and local). They are more likely to wrestle with issues of cultural ambiguity and governance. They may have a built-in capacity for the reflexivity that other schools so need, and lack.

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21   Acheson, D (1962). 'Our Atlantic Alliance. The Political and Economic Strands'. Speech delivered at the US Military Academy, West Point, NY. December 5, 1962. Reprinted in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 29(6), 1963, pp162-166.

22   Brown, C and Lauder, H (2011). 'The political economy of international schools and social class formation'. In Bates, R (Ed.), Schooling Internationally: Globalisation, Internationalisation and the Future for International Schools. Abingdon: Routledge.

6. International Schools as a 'creative community with a cause'

"Whole-system reform alone will not be enough. We need to find ways to integrate into the system a capacity to innovate continuously. Unfortunately, much of the education reform debate in recent decades has set up whole-system reform and innovation in opposition to each other. In fact, the two can and must go together. The key challenge is how to create structures and relationships within systems where information and ideas flow in all directions." [23]

We believe that international schools have the collective potential to become a powerful 'creative community with a cause'; a cause that goes beyond any individual institution, but supports system-wide educational transformation.

The creation of such a community is inevitably challenging. 'Creativity' does not flourish in a vacuum. 'Community' points to the importance of an open, trusting, collaborative culture where different people with different backgrounds, values, and attributes collaborate easily. And the development of 'a cause' requires leadership that is visionary, authentic, open and accountable in relation to goals.

What might bring international schools together? We tentatively suggest four broad options where international schools have the expertise and capacity to innovate, scale up and transfer practice, and where there is an urgent need to support the rest of the education system.

The first may be to take a problem-solving stance and to address, full square, the host of challenges that we are facing as a global education system and that require collaboration "beyond the reach of existing institutions and their hierarchical authority structures".[24] From the growing problem of student disengagement (especially in the West), to the limited 'learning returns', to the huge investment in universal schooling in the developed world, to the education-employment disconnect that has fostered the juxtaposition of mass skills shortages with mass youth unemployment, these 'wicked issues' require new solutions.

As Third Culture Schools in this role, international schools could become vital system leaders in an education system that is not only self-improving, but actually self-transforming, brokering new relationships between different and fragmented part of our education landscape – between state and private provision, local, national and global stakeholders, and traditional and progressive approaches to learning. Although, as Walker[25] comments in his piece on international schools, "we are all occupying the same oyster", international schools could play a role as the grit in the oyster – as much 'irritants in residence' as 'internationalists in residence', far more intimately connected with local, national and global education systems, whilst retaining their unique dispositions – helping the natives, without going native.

Second, international schools could dig deeper, and more systematically, into teaching and learning. In this response, schools would seek

23   Massachusetts Business Allance for Education (2014). The New Oppurtunity to Lead: A vision for education in Massachusetts in the next 20 years. Massachusetts: MBAE. Available at: www.mbae.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NewOpportunity-to-Lead.pdf

24   Senge, P, Hamilton, H, & Kania, J (2014). 'The dawn of System Leadership'. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Available at: www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_dawn_of_system_leadership

25   Walker, G (2012). 'Tea and oysters: metaphors for a global education'. International Schools Journal, Vol XXXI(2) pp8-17.

to develop – collectively – new approaches to pedagogy, informed by research-rich professional development, which enables teachers, as designers of new pedagogical practices, to both build on and build new evidence for learning.[26] This is hardly fallow terrain, but there are particular pressure points in the global education system where international schools could add most value. One example might relate to the educational challenges and opportunities presented by a commitment to bilingualism as a route to deeper learning. Small changes to practices (for instance the approaches to bilingual teaching of Science at EcoLint's Middle School) deserve a careful, rigorous approach to understanding impact, and a systematic attempt to mobilise this knowledge to inform the pedagogies of schools around the world. Similarly, as interest grows globally in 'grit' and 'character education' – as a crucial set of non-cognitive outcomes – international schools may be able to codify existing pedagogies, or develop new pedagogies that could transfer to other settings.

Third, international schools could collaborate on new approaches to curriculum design, combining the best local, national and global curricula to make radical uses of their relative freedom from curricular regulations. Although seductive off-the-shelf curriculum solutions exist, the process through which a school decides and designs its own curriculum, whilst time-consuming, forces and enables schools to think about their aims, ethos, and partnerships with the wider community – all key factors in building great schools.

The RSA's Area Based Curriculum project

supported schools to design curricula democratically – with, for and by their local community – in a way that complemented the national curriculum and built in greater global connections.[27] Andreas Schleicher from the OECD has argued that curriculum design should be seen as a 'grand social project'. Whilst the locus of such a project should be the individual school, a collective approach to curriculum design across a larger number of international schools can enable a useful pooling of risks and scaling up of effective practices. The Common Ground Collaborative, initiated by Kevin Bartlett and Gordon Eldridge from the International School of Brussels, attempts just this, and is a strong emerging example of international schools operating as a 'creative community with a cause'.

The various international school curricula and assessment systems will also need to consider how their frameworks and regulations can inspire rather than constrain curriculum design processes. Although these frameworks still appear benign in comparison to most state systems, they still might need to recognise the imperative for even greater school-level flexibilities. At the local level, international schools should also position themselves as important local cultural assets that should impact on local schools' curriculum offer, supporting their connections to their host communities.

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26   RSA (2014). *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/licensed-to-create/

27   See www.thecgcproject.org.The RSA's own CPD programme Grand Curriculum Designs aims to give the knowledge and skills required to develop curricula that are flexible, innovative and responsive to the needs of every school's students and communities. The programme has worked with over 80 schools in England, and continues to grow a community of educators passionate about curriculum design. The participation of international school leaders in such a programme could be mutually beneficial. See www.ioe.ac.uk/gcd.

Fourth, international schools could focus together on new approaches to relationships, perhaps with a particular focus on transient pupils. International schools often have high student turnover, and good schools are well adapted to dealing with the psychological issues that accompany transition, making them good at creating stable school environments. Some schools, such as the United Nations International School of Hanoi, have introduced transition programmes that involve the whole family through conflict resolution, stress management and dealing with grief and loss. State-funded schools around the world are coping with growing pupil turnover. The RSA's study into in-year admissions in England revealed poor outcomes from multiple movers.[28] Whilst the context may be very different, international schools may be able to evaluate and codify practices that could transfer to other settings.

Partly related to transience issues, international schools may also have practices relating to parental engagement with the potential for broader replication. More radically, The International School of Prague's Edge in Education Group is an attempt to engage parents in discussions about the future of learning and schooling. Given that parental attitudes can be an obstacle to less traditional approaches to teaching in all schools, this is a bold move, which may help create useful 'upward demand' from highly educated parents for different models of education.[29]

These options are intended to stimulate discussion. Any creative community worth building needs to define its own cause and priorities for action. And any community should be judged by deeds, not words. If international schools were to become a successful 'creative community with a cause', how would they begin?

This brings us to a key challenge. It may be that at the very moment that international schools are expanding in numbers and changing in form, the 'community' that they could form becomes harder to recruit and the 'cause' even harder to secure.

28   RSA (2013). Between the Cracks: Exploring in-year admissions in schools in England. London: RSA. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/between-the-cracks/

29   Bieber, A (2012). Parent Focus Group and Project Based Learning. School21C Blog. Available at:
www.school21c.org/2012/03/08/parent-focus-group-and-project-based-learning/

7. The role of ECIS

"If we are to move toward catalysing creativity in international schools, we need to focus more intentionally on nurturing the core capabilities of system leaders." – Kevin J Ruth, ECIS[30]

There is a great opportunity in this moment. It is easier to see the steps in system leadership that could be taken by an established group like ECIS than it is to see all the steps that should be taken by the international school movement as a whole. It is easier to see how ECIS could form first as a 'creative community with a cause', and as a first step towards the wider community that should be built.

Fortunately, principles of system leadership align well with ECIS' values of Collaboration, Professional Growth, Innovation and Excellence. However, these values are not in themselves guardians against myopia, or drivers to supporting international schools' broader mission.

How might ECIS carry forward a system leadership role?

As a membership organisation with over 27,000 Fellows, the RSA is challenging itself to move from a didactic and transactional model of membership (where our fellows were grateful recipients of our 'products'), to one predicated on engagement with and contributions to our thinking, aligned to an agreed mission. RSA's journey towards a 21st century membership organisation is by no means complete, but in its early stages we have found that a sharper mission ('the Power to Create'), supported by distributed leadership and expectations on both sides about deep engagement, has begun

to increase our real-world impact, and even (to our surprise) supported a growth in the number of people wishing to become or stay as Fellows.

The beginning should be in practical, inclusive and focused debate.

Our first recommendation is for ECIS to work with its members to develop a new 21st century account of what internationalism means in an educational context. If brave, this account would be, to some extent, applicable to any school in the world, regardless of resources or intake, but would also exclude some schools which have the 'international' word on their front door and letterhead, but little of substance once you go through the front door. The answers that ECIS creates will not be set in stone; such debate must be dynamic and, through its media of conference and publications, it must carry this discussion on and find its practical outcomes.

Our second recommendation is for ECIS, again with its members, to select two or three distinctive educational themes – such as bilingualism or creativity – that its network will seek to champion, and exemplify, year in and year out, to drive change as system leaders. The themes should be chosen to separate the schools from the usual preoccupations of state-funded schools, but it should not be a bar to improved communication between state-funded and international schools.

Our third idea is for ECIS to develop a dynamic account that supports the first two suggestions. We recommend that ECIS should work with its school leaders, governors, and proprietors to pilot a different form of accreditation and peer review system for international schools that puts a social mission at the heart of judgements about quality. This should not be seen as another inspection regime, but something that is celebratory and affirming,

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30   Ruth, K (2014). *Creativity and System Leadership*. ECIS Blog. Available at: http://www.ecis.org/page.cfm?p=826&eid=16
http://www.ecis.org/page.cfm?p=826&eid=16

if still rigorous and interrogative, continuously improving standards and expectations over time.

The scheme could recognise and reward innovation, especially when it leads to a widespread impact in the selected area right across the school, in the school's interactions with its community and with other schools. One of the elements would require deep partnership between an international school and less fortunate students elsewhere, who do not have equal access to a high quality education.

The RSA is currently planning to trial a new 'power to create' whole-school review framework, which will help schools to understand where they are at against a broad range of outcomes, and agree priorities and next steps. This will be achieved through a mix of documentary and data analysis, peer review, student and parent voice and external challenge. It will aim to unearth and share practices that can influence other schools. We would be delighted to work with ECIS or other partners to co-design a similar framework for international schools.

These recommendations are made in order to help carry ECIS into a new role but it is important to recognise that the ultimate goal should be to build a broader set of norms, institutions, networks, associations and systems.

System leadership always requires new connections – with schools and system leaders in locality; with other international schools; and with schools and system leaders globally. It requires subtle, sophisticated ways to collaborate and transfer practice, beyond the tyranny of 'sharing best practice'. ECIS, working in partnership with its schools, has the potential to secure different kinds of places at different kinds of tables in order to maximize their impact and shape education in the 21st century.

8. Conclusion

"Whereas 'islands of innovation' may emerge within existing systems, the education system of the future will need to develop a systemic capacity to innovate…All schools and colleges will need to experiment with original approaches or become early adopters of cutting edge practice elsewhere, so that they can get better at responding to changing needs more quickly than ever before."[31]

In marking the 90th anniversary of EcoLint this year, Director General Vicky Tuck[32] claimed that "we still embody an education without frontiers".

In truth, the jury is currently out on whether this holds true for international schools as a whole.

Nonetheless, their potential remains. With leadership and commitment at all levels, from the smallest school to the largest membership organisation, they could still become important cultural artefacts of the 21st century, offering a high quality education to their students, but with an irreplaceable role in broader educational transformation.

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31   RSA & British Council (2013). Rebalancing the UK's education and skills system: Transforming capacity for innovation and collaboration. London: RSA. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/rebalancing-the-uks-education-and-skills-system/

32   Ecolint December 2014 Newsletter

Notes