

INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOLING AND  
EDUCATION IN THE  
'NEW ERA'

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# INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION IN THE 'NEW ERA'

Emerging Issues

BY

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# CHAPTER 1

## A PROJECTED DECADE OF UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

### THE NOTION OF A FIELD OF 'GEMIS'

#### The Focus on English-language Medium of Instruction

It would be wise at the outset to make it clear what field of education is about to be explored. This book is concerned with a sub-area of 'International Education', perhaps best described as 'International Schooling' (Bunnell, 2014). This immediately de-couples it from any discussions about Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The internationalisation of universities is a discreet educational phenomenon, and is a discipline worthy of its own study, as is the interlinked growth of 'Global Citizenship Education' (Palmer, 2018).

Moreover, this book is primarily concerned with the current, and substantial projected growth, of an overlooked body of educational institutions that might best be described as *schools with a global outlook located mainly outside an English-speaking country delivering a non-national curriculum at least partly in English.*

This definition, which is mine alone, reveals the complexity and subtlety of operation. I have taken the view offered by Jane Knight (2015) that a definition regarding the field of 'International Education' in general should avoid specifying variables such as actors, benefits or outcomes as these will differ from area-to-area. Hence, the definition seems vague and overly-inclusive. Note, however, the inclusion I make here on 'schools delivering a non-national curriculum in English outside an English-speaking country', as this is the core-defining dimension.

I deliberately use the term non-national curriculum to make the case that the curriculum being delivered is non-local, that is, it is not the curriculum of the host-nation. However, they might use a curriculum based in another country, for example, the National Curriculum of England and Wales, or Province of Alberta.

I will henceforth use the new umbrella term Globalised English Medium of Instruction Schools ('GEMIS') to generically group them. I deliberately use the term Globalised in 'GEMIS' to recognise that they are 'global in outlook', not merely global in location. They deliberately offer an approach to education that is 'globalised', rather than merely being positioned around the world. In fact, a sceptical approach can be added here, as the growth of GEMIS largely involves clusters of schools within a few regions of the world. We need to be careful not to overexaggerate the globally based dimension.

Many of these schools are located in the Global South (Bunnell, 2017a), catering increasingly for an emergent locally based 'Global Middle Class' (GMC), a class-in-formation (see Ball & Nikita, 2014) that has so far received very little attention, although reports are beginning to emerge of the existence of such a new 'class' (e.g., Maxwell & Yemini, 2018), with shared aspirations, outlook and experiences. In the context of

the body of GEMIS, perhaps the term *Globalised Middle Class* might be a more appropriate, nuanced term showing that this body is not just found around the globe, but has a common set of expectations and intentions.

Within this broad grouping of schools, there are several sub-types of schooling institutions. The very diverse body of GEMIS contains a conglomeration of schools loosely termed as International Schools. Many readers of this book will no doubt work in such an institution, as did I for almost 25 years. This body of schools is reasonably well-documented, and described by literature, as quite complex organisations to lead and work in (see Bunnell, 2018, for a leadership lens).

I deliberately use capital letters when referring to this body of schools as some recent literature refers to ‘international schools’ in the context of institutions catering for refugee children in New York (see Bartlett, Mendenhall, & Ghaffar-Kucher, 2017). This offers an immediate example of how the context needs greater clarity of classification.

However, precise classification is problematic, since in many cases the title ‘International Schools’ is self-appointed, allowing schools and their supporters to create their own narrative about mission and task (Bittencourt & Willetts, 2018). The issue of ‘what is an International School?’ is therefore debatable and continues to pose a conceptual hurdle. The concept has never been a well-defined one, and has always lacked a firm theoretical platform. One emerging view is that the aspects of institutional legitimacy of some schools can be seriously questioned, especially in the absence of delivering an international curriculum (see two papers: Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016; 2017).

Furthermore, as some of the schools that would strongly describe and identify themselves as ‘International Schools’ are located in English-speaking countries (e.g., Atlanta International School, International School of London), the

language of instruction needs to be backed up by an appropriate 'Institutional Primary Task' (see Bunnell, 2016a, 2016b; Bunnell & Fertig, 2016). Such a task might be seen as the delivery of an international curriculum which facilitates international mindedness, and ultimately aims to deliver global responsibility, ethical action and global peace.

The motto of the 1963-founded Copenhagen International School offers a good example of this: *Educating champions of a just and sustainable world*. In other words, it is not enough merely for some schools to deliver an international curriculum for 'pragmatic' reasons, for example, the school is 'failing' and requiring a novel educational approach. There should be a definite commitment towards delivering a model of progressive or idealistic education, based on a specific process of teaching and learning.

A dwindling minority of this body of GEMIS deliver, indeed developed and pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s, the irenic and idealistic mission-driven programmes of the Geneva-registered International Baccalaureate (IB) which facilitates international mindedness in practice (see Barratt Hacking et al. 2017; and 2018), and hence these schools might best be described as 'Internationally Minded Schools' (see Hill, 2014). These schools have a strong theoretical base for being classified as a distinct set of institutions.

Many of these 'Elite International Schools' can be safely categorised within the emerging 'premium' sector of activity, operating in 'Tier-1' cities such as Bangkok, Paris or Shanghai. These schools aim to deliver the values and attributes deemed necessary for the future 'global citizen', showing respect, empathy, creativity and a willingness to take risks, and be critical in thinking. This is the essence of the 'human rights logic' (Parish, 2018), although the internationalisation of creativity as a 'global attribute' has been critically discussed (Jules & Sundberg, 2018).

This body of schools has a similar ‘organisational culture’, which ‘is conveyed via ceremony, symbols, etiquette, rituals, heroes, stories, and so on’ (Hill, 2018, p. 12). One might add ‘artefacts’ and ‘images’ to the list, as such schools are often visibly different from other types of institutions. An under-reported fact is that the graduates of these schools are now noticeably clustered in a small body of elite universities, primarily in UK (e.g., Bath, Exeter, Sussex, KCL), US and Canada (e.g., UBC).

There is also a very large, and growing, body of schools that deliver a UK-based curriculum outside of an English-speaking country and pragmatically aiming to facilitate, sometimes even replicate, ‘British-style’ schooling. This body of schools might best be described as ‘Internationally British’.

Dulwich College International (DCI) is the management arm of the Dulwich College (London) brand overseas and is still very much the leader of the pack of this body of schools. Founded in 2003, it moved into Myanmar in 2016, marking a new watershed in post-colonial British overseas education. One commentator (Jones, 2018) observed that: ‘It’s a business where it pays to have a British heritage.’ The perpetuating of ‘Britishness’ is an under-reported global cultural phenomenon (Crawford, 2015). Such is the growth of this sub-sector that it was reported in November 2018 that 45% of all GEMIS are ‘Internationally British’. It was said (Wright, 2018, p. 25) that ‘more than 3,700 are “British” schools – schools with a British national orientation, and/or using elements of the UK national curriculum.’

Many of these schools deliver the skills and knowledge deemed necessary for the future global worker to be ‘globally competent’, showing competence in languages, etiquette and being equipped to facilitate the needs of global trade and transnational Capital. Thus, some of these schools might better be classified as ‘Global Competency Schools’.

In addition, new curricula developments have occurred, creating a body of GEMIS that might be best deemed as 'Internationally American'. Many American-ethos GEMIS have pragmatically implemented the 'Common Core' curriculum framework which has 'supported the building of US culture within their institutions and supported students' transitions between international and US schools' (Mahfouz, Sausner, & Kornhaber, 2018).

The growth of 'Internationally Canadian' schools has been especially discrete, yet: 'Canada is one of the leading countries offering offshore schools worldwide, particularly in China' (Wang, 2017, p. 523). Maple Leaf Educational Systems (listed on the Hong Kong Stock market) had, since 1995, built up by 2018 a body of 78 schools across 19 cities in China. A total of 19 GEMIS overseas, including eight in China, are authorised to deliver the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. A further 37 schools in China are designated as 'British Columbia Offshore Schools'. There are 14 'Alberta Accredited International Schools' overseas, employing 350 Alberta-certified teachers.

A further growing body of schools are 'Internationally Australian'. The Australian International Schools Association was established in Kuala Lumpur in 2012, and had 10 members in 2018. The well-known 'global peace movement' of 'United World Colleges', which is also continuously growing (17 in 2018), adds to the complex mix of English Medium of Instruction (EMI) schools operating beyond the boundaries of English-speaking nations. Seven schools in Vietnam are designated as 'Singapore-style International Schools', revealing the growing appeal of non-Western EMI provision.

At the same time, there is a large underbelly of 'non-premium' schools, which defy clear classification, some offering a fusion of different curricula, for example, mixing the IB programmes with the Chinese National Curriculum. This

reveals their intended attraction to a localised middle class, as well as the emergent GMC. Many of these schools operate in ‘Tier-2’ cities such as Chengdu in western China, far beyond the normal gaze of academic researchers or media commentators.

A key point to observe at this point is that not all GEMIS are best labelled or classified as ‘International Schools’. Indeed, most are best not described as such. We now need a much more nuanced and stratified approach. We can now make few assumptions about identity, or purpose and task, and this fact epitomises the ‘New Era’.

Now that the nexus of discussion has been located, the reader needs to know the ‘journey’ that this book will take. This book has five chapters. The aim of Chapter 1 is to set the scene, and bring events up-to-date. This chapter has already started to identify the research terrain. I will move on to develop my new growth thesis, and reveal the growth figures in detail. In Chapter 2, I will fully explain and develop my notion of the ‘New Era’. In Chapter 3, I will develop the demand-side factors driving growth and in Chapter 4, I will develop the supply-side factors. Chapter 5 will bring together the main issues, offering a framework for a critical ongoing discussion as we head towards substantial further growth until at least 2027.

### The Broader ‘Globalisation’ Context

My use of the term Globalised in ‘GEMIS’ further aims to make the point that the main driving force in all the cases mentioned above is the current phase, or stage, of ‘globalisation’ (i.e., post-General Agreement on Trade in Services of 1995, which marked the ending of the World Trade Organization’s Uruguay Round of trade negotiations).

In short, this is characterised by free trade and movement in goods and services (Robertson, 2017).

The emergence of Dulwich International College in Phuket in 1996, the first replication of elite English private schooling abroad, epitomised this new freedom of trade and movement of services, brands, and the general commodification of 'International Schooling and Education' (ISE). This has opened up the supply. Dulwich pulled out of the initial Thailand venture in 2005, meaning that Harrow Bangkok is the oldest established, with 20 years of existence. At the same time, more people are seeking a transnational lifestyle (Doherty, 2018), facilitating greater demand.

An added ingredient has been the emergence of English as the *lingua franca* of global and regional trade (Low & Ao, 2018), and the successful emergence in 2017 of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) customs union trade bloc is a good case in point. The re-emergence of English is problematic (Milligan & Tikly, 2016) especially in post-colonial contexts such as Myanmar or Malaysia, which are becoming 'hotspots' of GEMIS activity.

A further interconnected phenomenon involves the ability for schools globally to replicate (and 'sell') 'middle-class Englishness'. There is a definite demand for this form of cultural distinction as noted by Gardner-McTaggart (2018, p. 109), who says that 'in competitive times, the "Brand of Britain", drawing on the advantage of English, may be well set to exploit a global market that seeks the distinction and advantage of Englishness'. The word 'distinction' here is a key to a sociological analysis, and my book will begin to offer insights into such an approach.

At a macro-level, there is the growing globalisation trend towards global assessment of educational attainment and standards, led in part by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and its controversial