

International Schools' Role and Impact on Local Education Development

Huyen Nguyen (M.A)*

Education Committee, Nguyen Hoang Education Group, 49 Pham Ngoc Thach Street, Ward 6, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City

Abstract

Even though the first international school in Vietnam had been established before the government passed the Resolution 29 on 'Basic and comprehensive innovation of education and training', many localities have raised a question: "What is the role and impact of the international schools in educational development in Vietnam?". By using participant observation research methodology and personal experiences, from the individual perspective of the author who used to teach at many international schools in Ho Chi Minh City combined with the emic and etic approaches, I try to answer this question. Through participant observation and analysis, the result shows that the international schools not only play a role as a reference for the Vietnamese schools to shape their identity, but also create cultural and educational impacts, contributing to promoting the innovation process through cohesion, cooperation and integration, as a result it enhances international understanding of local education. This impact process is proactive, positive, based on sharing and highly consciously select reception.

Key words: International school; Vietnamese school; local education; identity; education; interculture; sharing; selection.

1. Introduction

Facing up to the inadequacies of Vietnamese education that need to be solved, the greatest challenges that need to be overcome, and the urgent need to innovate Vietnamese education basically and comprehensively, the government have passed the Resolution 29 to meet the requirements of industrialization and modernization in the context of socialist-oriented market economy and international integration.

* Corresponding author

Thus, international integration is proactively identified as one of two important attributes of the innovated environment. This determination is significant, because scientifically, an absolutely isolated system cannot change itself. In order to improve any system, it is necessary to select suitable elements for the environment surrounding that system, to create a new Subject-Environment system. Then the previous isolated system becomes the subject of innovation and the interaction between this new subject and the elements of the environment play as the driving force for system change. As a result, the emergence of international schools acts as an important environmental element for fundamental and comprehensive innovation of the education system both local and national. In education, Subject - Environment interaction manifests a very interesting trait i.e. sharing. Sharing takes place between objects that may vary in forms, methods, scopes and scales, but it is always essential because '*we share a common responsibility*' [11]. The relationship between the international school and the local education is not exclusive of that sharing relationship. Recently, given the fact that Coca-cola bottles are overwhelmingly available in grocery shops in Tibet globalization is no longer a craze but a trend that has spread everywhere over the entire world. In terms of economy, a nation's education development not only meets the needs of that nation in accordance with its traditional standards and customs, but also it must refer to requirements of a global citizen and international standards as A. Schleicher states that 'a global economy is not developed by only national standards.' In this regard, an international school in a developing country will play as a lively entity of referring criteria for local education development. This reference carries both reflective direction, manifestation, sharing and exchange, which exhibits interactive and developing traits. From a philosophical perspective, every innovation process begins with determining what we are and what we will be. Both questions need a standard to shape the identity (what we are) and determine the future (what we will be), and then we can identify our direction. And this logic premise involves educational innovation. In this essay, through participant observation and personal experience of an insider combined with an objective perspective in the study of outsiders, i.e. emic and etic approaches, we aim to study the role of the international school as a reference for local schools to shape their identity; then we hypothesize that the international school plays an impact role in local education, for example, impact in education, promotion of cohesion, and strengthening international understanding. Applying case study, the author chooses two schools in Ho Chi Minh City: SSIS, Southern Sai Gon International School as a representative for international school and Dinh Thien Ly School as a typical example for Vietnamese school to study the international schools' role and their impact on local education development. The result of this study will be used to relate and compare with the practical situation in Quang Ngai.

2. Theories And Practice Of International School

2.1. International School

It first began in the 17th ca. CE that, Comenius who studied the benefits of cultural diversity in learning, was a pioneer in promoting cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture; in the second half of the 19th ca. CE., Charles Dickens, a successor, outlined a plan for a series of international schools across Europe for students to spend a year or longer exchanging among a network of schools which offered the same class placement, learning methods and curriculums in his work 'International Education' published in 1864; International school had undergone the long development process before it emerged as a phenomenon in the mid 20th ca. CE. The international schools had rapidly increased and reached the number of 1,000 in the end of the

20th century [4]. Along with globalization, the world's international schools nonstop increased with about 4,179 English-Speaking international Schools in April 2007 available in 125/195 countries, accounting for 65% of the world's countries and attracting more and more many people's concerns. Analyzing Ian Hill's definition on international school [6], Mary Hayden's [3], Heela Goren and Miri Yemini's [7], we see that they have common characteristics. They all refer to criteria: (1) Students from different nationalities; (2) Teaching staff from different countries; (3) World's most popular language teaching medium; (4) International Value Qualifications; (5) Accreditation of international education institutions; and (6) Modern facilities. Criteria (1) and (2) involve multicultural environment. The criterion (5) includes the rest criteria (3), (4) and (6), which gain full accreditation from an International Accrediting Organization. In fact, schools are identified and recognized as international schools only if they are recognized by the international school association, which will accreditate the criteria, for example, instruction medium, qualifications, and facilities quality. Regardingly, we draw our own working definition: **An international school is a training institute with multicultural environment accredited by an international education accrediting organization.**

2.2. International Schools And Innovation Process Of Local Education

The document of the 11th National Congress affirmed the government's commitment to fundamental and comprehensive innovation of education and training, meanwhile it offered solutions to improve people's intellectual standards, develop human resources and foster humanity talents, contributing to the country's development, and building Vietnamese people as well as culture. Thus, for universal education, there are only two feasible solutions: either policies to support and manage the learning and training of Vietnamese students abroad with state funds or incentive plans to encourage educational institutions with foreign elements in Vietnam. The first solution is too difficult to implement and faces a series of challenges i.e. both the budget and selection of an appropriate model. More importantly, highschool students have not enough experience and determination to actively acquire culture selectively; they will be confused facing with the risk of identity crisis, which makes them become "a banana generation with yellow skin and white core" as R. Tagore concerned about children who were picked off Asian forests and put in a European flower vase in the previous century." Regardingly, it turns out that the second solution, incentive policies to encourage educational institutions with foreign elements in Vietnam, is more feasible and practical. As studying with international schools in situ will help learners reduce costs; in the mean time it reduces the risk of losing identity. Especially, when international schools enter a host country, they will more or less change and adapt themselves to harmonize with the indigenous cultures. Looking at a larger scale, the international school, as significant factor, has a big impact on local education. That process of influence and interaction, in terms of space (closer), time (longer), scale (for many objects) is more favorable and sustainable than referring to other models in another country.

3. International School – A Reference For Shaping Identity

To orientate and innovate national education fundamentally but comprehensively, we first need to re-examine ourselves and answer the question: Who am I? In other words, it is the journey to shape our identity – self identifying. It is true in the case of education, too, the local and national educational culture is open to question. How to identify oneself? In our opinion, it is easy for us to realize ourselves when we are placed in a position

among others. Accordingly, the international school is a reference for local education to shape its identity.

As Heela Goren and Miri Yemini affirm: "*Traditionally, international schools are to serve a diverse number of students and provide them with international qualifications.*" [7], the community in International school is multicultural, which is from another culture or well established on the basis of thinking of other educational cultures. It is so, how is international school's educational culture different from that of Vietnamese school so that it plays as a reference? First of all, it is necessary to review some concepts of educational culture. According to Genesee Keevil, there are two educational cultures: compliance culture and empowerment one, in which empowerment culture is "*a culture where every individual including students is empowered to think and act in ways that enhance their learning*" [2]. While for Compliance culture, supervisor control what we do; students are guided and instructed to prepare by their teachers; it focuses on teaching students as a center, such as individual compulsory requirements rather than collective exploration [2]. Rosenberg, MS, Westling, DL, McLeskey [4] in their work '*The Impact of Culture on Education*' analyzed the impact of culture on education and educational culture. By comparing between children from individualism culture and those from collectivism, the author points out the differences between the two educational cultures. If students come from individualism culture, they like to work independently, they want to be alone and quiet in class room, whereas students from the collectivism culture prefer to work with friends and actively participate in discussions; accordingly, teachers of individualism culture manage the learning environment indirectly, encourage students to self-control, while teachers from collectivism culture strictly control their students; Parents in the former culture actively participate in the learning process of their children while parents in the latter culture completely depend on the teachers. Besides, M.S. Rosenberg, D.L. Westling, J. McLeskey sought the effects of culture on education, affirming the two educational cultures: individual education culture and collective education one. The authors also compare the differences between these two educational cultures [9]. This view is close to Geert Hofstede's, given that "Culture is a collective mental programming, separating members of one group of people from another group." [6], G. Hostede divided the educational culture into: individualism and collectivism; education culture has a great power distance in some countries and small power distance in others. Thus, looking at the superior and inferior relationship, managers – employees, teachers - learners, we can divide educational culture into compliance culture and empowerment one. If viewing from the relationship between students and students, students and teachers, teachers and parents, we have individualism and collectivism culture, a great power distance and a small power one. According to the results of our study using the cultural dimension model of G. Hofstede, the international school in Ho Chi Minh City reflects a compromise between collectivism culture and individualism, between large power distance and small power one. How has local education been affected in the process of shaping its identity through referring to international schools? Specific and transparent evidence for this issue is reinforced by the findings of insiders and outsiders i.e. to identify the first roots to apply advanced methods with completely Vietnamese education program, to train global citizens including world citizens and national ones. In terms of culture, when establishing Dinh Thien Ly school, the culture of education was brought up to discussion first. Many difficult questions, for example, 'What does Dinh Thien Ly want to become?' and 'How is culture shaped?' need to be answered. They all are compared with Saigon South International School (SSIS). Cultural symbols of the two schools such as platforms, classrooms, seating diagrams, and daily routines, teacher and student interaction, movement, behaviour are reviewed and compared. That comparison is to shape

Vietnamese school's identity. In essence, access to materials, visiting models in other countries is also one of the proactive ways to shape the identity. However, there is a lively reality that international schools are located in the host country and of course they have reconciled and changed themselves more or less to harmonize with the local culture, so we think that the reference process will become easy and much more useful. In term of sharing - the process arises inevitably in the reference process. The verb "share" describes the division, participation. It means that there is something that is shared with others with the dependent degree of acceptance and the two sides are still different; while sharing "communion" is a noun that expresses a close relationship with someone in which feelings and thoughts are exchanges. It takes place in complete organization. For example, in a group, it may not be just a division of a result but it should be a situation in which staff work together, sympathize with one another and have the common achievements. Here it is used with the former meaning of "share". In the reference process, in order to shape identity, schools in particular and local education in general need to select values that are appropriate for them. Where there is sharing, there is choice, and there is culture. At that time, culture is formed, so identity is identified. Culture affects people's conceptions and thoughts. After all, to change the educational methods fundamentally is to change our concepts, our thoughts i.e. to change the culture of education.

4. International Schools And Their Impacts On Local Education

In this essay framework, international schools' impact on local education is examined in two aspects: impact on education and promotion of cohesion as well as international understanding.

4.1. Impact On Education

In here, examining international schools' impact on Vietnamese schools in term of education is indeed a process of transferring concepts, teaching methodology and technology. Generally, the presence of international schools in the locality will enrich school structures, facilitating the process of internationalization and global integration to take place more rapidly. In reality, at schools in Ho Chi Minh City in general, at SSIS and Dinh Thien Ly in particular, this transfer process takes place from time to time i.e. at the establishment of the school and regularly through the professional learning community and workshops, seminars, and conferences. Professional Learning Communities (or PLCs) are organized from small scale (group level) to medium scale (school level) and large scale (inter-school). With small scale, PLC sessions are held weekly (once a week), the average scale taking place monthly (once a month) and quarterly (every 3 months' time) with large scale. In addition, there are active seminars organized by both sides and it is often the case that SSIS hosts and invites other schools to participate. What is transferred varies from perspective and theory (diverse intelligence, Bloom's awareness scale) to teaching methods and techniques (project-based teaching, group collaboration), classroom management (set up rules and procedures). That transfer process takes place from the collective to the collective. In addition, through the participant class, observing the classroom, the transfer process can take place from individual to individual. In addition, this impact also occurs in term of organization. With different contents such as Community Program, Global Day, International Food Festival, etc., international schools also affect Vietnamese schools and indirectly cause Vietnamese schools to change or supplement to organizing school activities. As mentioned above, education is sharing. International schools, with the advantages of using advanced programmes, diverse cultural

communities and open thinking will be a useful and practical source of sharing. In addition, this source of sharing is sustainable (taking place over a long period of time), and easily accessible to (within the geographic space). However, in order to share it also needs importing thinking i.e. importing differences in technology, methods and especially viewpoints. Besides, it is emphasized that receiving should be selective. An advantage of international schools situating across the country in general, in Ho Chi Minh City and Quang Ngai in particular reflects that they have more or less adjusted themselves to harmonize with the local culture. So, this selection process, perhaps, will be relatively smoother. Finally, as mentioned above, where there is sharing, there is culture; Where there is choice, there is culture. Looking at the whole city / province, these impacts and sharing will form the common culture of local education.

4.2. Promotion Of Cohesion And International Understanding

In the age of globalization, international cohesion and promotion are the requirements and advantages of individuals in particular and organizations in general. However, the reality in Ho Chi Minh City indicates that the presence of the local international schools, even with large numbers, is not sufficient to promote intercultural interactions, as a result, it causes spontaneously international understanding. In order to promote this process, there should be plans and initiatives of schools and educational institutions. Accordingly, the programs are organized with specific objectives, thorough plans with different scales, participants and regularity. It could be a large-scale program, for all international and Vietnamese schools to participate, which will take place regularly as a culture (a global village); it could be a close-knit program between two schools - an international school and a Vietnamese school - taking place in a long run, supporting and interacting to each other in many ways such as pairing and learning programs as in case of SSIS and Dinh Thien Ly school. Aimed to enhance understanding and cultural exchange, the Global Village event is celebrated annually in Ho Chi Minh City to link international schools and Vietnamese schools. In 2015, as the host country for the "Global Youth Conference", the program was expanded with the participation of more than sixty countries. Coming to the program, young people had a chance to access to and learn about other countries' cultures through songs, dances, cuisines, customs, stalls, etc. Programmes like Peer-pairing and Cooperative learning between Dinh Thien Ly school and SSIS will help change and increase the heightened awareness of both teachers and students in two schools, especially Dinh Thien Ly gains more benefits from these programmes. In this global era we need to teach our students to think about differences with open minds to embrace and welcome differences. When it exposes to SSIS's multicultural environment, the differences are no longer in stories, but they are lively realities that are happening, as Allameh, J. (1996) shared:

For the first time I have realized that all the concepts and ideas I have learned from other cultures are not only stories but also real facts. I think that although I talked about cultural differences in a number of my classes, I have never really stopped to realize what I am learning is going on at the moment. [1] One of the good reasons for 64.000 Vietnamese parents to invest USD 3 billion [5] in their children's studying abroad is to enhance cultural understanding. As mentioned above, Quang Ngai is completely able to implement this process sustainably and smoothly with the advent of a series of International Schools in May 2019. Cooperative learning is a more advanced, deeper and more detailed level of Peer-pairing. With chance to work together helps one's awareness change. Therefore, the impact takes place through the transfer of methodology and teaching techniques; in fact, in

Ho Chi Minh City, international school also transfer their concepts and awareness, especially awareness of differences, reduction of prejudice and open-thinking development. In our opinion, that is the major and decisive factor, reciprocally governing and forming teaching techniques and methodology. As noted above, promoting intercultural and international understanding should be an active process. In fact, in a study of international pupils and students in New Zealand, Chen and Chieng's survey over 224 Asian students at Canterbury and Lincoln universities reported that 23% of respondents did not have New Zealand friends and they only approach other Asian students if they have difficulties or problems for help [11]. Such evidence suggests that even if Asians are brought to other communities, they tend to gather together; as a result, intercultural understanding process will be ineffective. Thinkingly, with the local international school system, in a proactive way, Quang Ngai can completely promote and conduct exchange and cultural activities through the Global Festival, through the Peer-pairing Program and Cooperative Learning in a long-run and sustainable way. In addition, in a proactive manner, the selective consciousness of students, students and teachers will take place more effectively, avoiding the risk of losing identity or hybridization.

5. Conclusion

Finally, we can claim that in the current context, sharing is inevitable in all fields in general and education sector in particular. International and Vietnamese schools are not exclusive in this trend. International schools' impact on the local education development is reflected in two aspects: it is a reference for the local education to shape its identity; and it influences on local education through transfer of education with professional learning community and conferences, promotion of cohesion and intercultural understanding. A school will develop and orient well when answering the question: Present and future, what will be the school like? International schools are the reference source for identity-based local education, which in that sense plays a very important role. Especially in the context of Vietnam education is changing strongly, changing with the goal of international integration. In addition, the impacts through workshops, through building a learning community ... both create a foundation and introduce a close, practical model for local education to develop. This transfer and impact should be proactive as it is the process of sharing and for culture not just of one school but of the whole locality. In the process of impact and interaction, in turn, international schools also exchange and receive cultural differences from Vietnamese ones. However, this issue is not included in this essay. Looking at Quang Ngai, the advent of international school's system is one of the premises and favourable conditions to sustainably develop and innovate its education fundamentally and comprehensively. As international integration is the positive and active process, both Quang Ngai and international school's system ought to take bold steps and thorough plans in order to promote this interaction, as a result, it brings in achievements and successes in innovating local education basically.

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