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The Effects of International Curriculum on Students' Worldview

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the education of students in international schools, particularly elementary-age students, who grow up in international schools, completing their programs and becoming “citizens of the world.” However, this relatability is constantly seen in international students who have attended an international school. It is as though a person’s people-skills and ability to relate well with others skyrockets as they attend a school where differences are not only accepted but celebrated. It is in these places where it is important to use technology well, think critically, stay current in the affairs of the world, be encouraged to follow one’s own dreams and visions of what can be done to better the world, and emphasize diversity as both important and necessary. These qualities are what makes a person a “citizen of the world,” as he or she can easily adapt and thrive in environments all around the world today. It is truly a strength to be able to relate to people with completely different backgrounds to one’s own, and the Christian perspective on this topic will subsequently be discussed. International schools can be seen as catalysts for these strengths as they foster a community where thinking and living as a “citizen of the world” is celebrated.

Keywords: education, globalization, international school, multicultural education, international baccalaureate, curricula

The Effects of International Curriculum on Students' Worldview

Students who attend an international school are often studied, as the environment conducive to an international school is like no other. This thesis aims to answer the question: “To what extent are students who attend an international school, “citizens of the world” based on the curriculum taught in the Primary Years Program (PYP) and succeeding programs?” International schools are known for their diversity and for celebrating individual differences, as this is what makes them so unique. Such a program as the Primary Years Program, and subsequent ones, are known for providing students with strengths such as being able to relate well with other people, use technology well, think critically about previously accepted ideas, stay current in what is going on in the world, and foster the growth of creative ideas and dreams. All of this is aimed at helping students reach their end goal, develop holistically as an international student, and give them strengths that can be seen for the rest of their life.

The International Baccalaureate (or IB for short), is, as a whole, an *inquiry*-based way of learning. Students learn by asking questions, and then answering them fully, using units that educate the *whole* child and use reflective practice to help students grow to their fullest potential. Practically speaking, “the International Baccalaureate is a non-for-profit organization founded over 45 years ago with the aim of creating a better, more peaceful world through high quality, international education” (Jamal, 2016, p. 22). Thus, the ultimate goal is clearly to influence the entire world through cultivating students who are ‘educated’ in all senses of the word. In fact, in 2016 there were over 1,250,000 students aged 3-19 in the overall IB program, and it was taught in 143 countries in

various schools around the world (Jamal, 2016). Such a growing trend in education should not be overlooked.

International schools that implement such a curriculum stand out a great deal from the typical national school. Students who interact with fellow students from all over the world, grow up to be citizens who think more global-minded, instead of ethnocentric. On the other hand, for those students who hold to a Biblical worldview, there can be controversy with the IB program. Many believe that the International Baccalaureate (IB) as a whole is self-serving and even the concept of being a “citizen of the world” is faulty, whilst others point to the deeper conversations students may have in IB classrooms about philosophy, and explain that this leads to more conversations about who God is and what it looks like to know Him. Overall, the IB curriculum aims to grow and encourage students who are aware and interested in cultures outside their own, and connect what they know from this curriculum into their everyday thought-processes for the rest of their lives.

Definitions

International Schools

International schools are, as a whole, institutions where the learning that takes place is aimed at being globally-minded and unbiased (Hobson & Silova, 2014).

Typically, the students who attend are from a similar background; they know what it means to live in different places in the world, and their families are often transient.

According to Nagrath (2011), international schools are places where the focus is on having an international curriculum and being a global citizen. Many agree that they are so attractive due to their autonomy and the way they implement more flexible curriculum

(Velarde, 2017). Others believe it is the *way* they encourage people to think that is most attractive; that is, both critically and autonomously for themselves (International Baccalaureate, 2018). Thus, the focus of this paper is also the focus of these types of schools, and yet the definition is key to understanding whether or not they are reaching it.

As Hewyard (2002) explains in his work, intercultural literacy is the end goal for many international schools. As they strive to bring students together around one cause, they also change and become more sensitive to cultures around them through this unique educational experience. Thus, an international school is not simply an institution that teaches the International Baccalaureate program, it is an entire community focused on producing students who embody the persona of a “citizen of the world.” However, with a Biblical perspective, it is beneficial to consider that perhaps intercultural literacy is simply a stepping-stone along the way to the end goal of introducing people to the person of Jesus Christ. From this point of view, intercultural literacy is important, and even a key component for Christians, but rather in the sense that they can truly know people better and understand where they are coming from when introducing the gospel.

Citizens of the World

According to Hewyard (2002), international schools equip students to be citizens of the world. This definition is rather broad, but for this paper’s purposes it will be used to mean people who see the differences in others as strengths, use technology to its fullest potential, think critically regardless of how widely accepted an idea is, see the importance in staying current and up-to-date, work to foster their creative ideas so that they come to fruition, and display diversity as though it is the one of the greatest strengths a person can

have. Through these qualities, a student in an international school can be truly called a “citizen of the world.”

International students who experience going to an international elementary, middle, or high school have experiences like no other. Of course, each school is different and just as the cultural diversity varies greatly, so does the curriculum to some extent. However, the heart behind an international school is clearly to integrate students from all cultural backgrounds and heritages, so as to be educated in a way that sets them up well for this globalized, inter-connected world (Hobson & Silova, 2014). In fact, many would argue that international schools are actually more like the world lived in today – as they model for an onlooker what future businesses and companies encounter every day: people from all kinds of cultures working together for one goal. Perhaps it is this one goal that holds international schools together, as children learn to put aside their differences and work for the common good. Controversy has certainly surrounded this idea, and many question whether being a citizen of the world means giving up any national identity. However, as explained by this paper and many other sources, it is clear that in an international school cultures are recognized and celebrated. Indeed, students are taught to see the bigger picture and recognize their fellow classmates as other unique citizens of the same planet. As some might very concisely explain: an international school is like a salad, rather than a soup-bowl or melting pot. Rather than focus on one culture as superior to the rest, or even melting all the cultures into one, most international schools aim to encourage students to keep their heritage and national identity held high, and celebrate it even with those who have differences. For this reason, a citizen of the world would greatly benefit from attending an international school, as he or she both learns and

experiences what is going on in the world and has an awareness towards others around him or her.

Clearly, one major benefit of attending an international school is the social skills gained (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013). A true citizen of the world must be someone who has the people-skills to relate to others, regardless of whether others share the same hometown or not. These skills cannot be taught in a classroom, and although the ideas and morals may be taught worldwide in schools – that everyone should be treated fairly, students in international schools learn firsthand what it means to be truly aware of others' cultures. Of course, the teacher facilitates a great deal of this, but when a child is surrounded by peers from all different backgrounds in the classroom, he or she must learn to be sensitive and understanding towards other people's needs if they are to make friends and really know a person.

For many, but not all international schools, technology is also key to a student's education. In many schools there is an emphasis on technology, and being able to use different tools to convey their points is stressed (Resnik, 2012). As for international schools, many allow children as young as in elementary school to be exposed to the wonders and benefits of technology when it is correctly used. Technology is a large part of the school day in the school day, and students learn to use it whether they are learning a language, making a project for IT class, or simply writing a paper. However, despite this additional point regarding some specific schools, it is often described as beneficial but not absolutely necessary to teach the IB curriculum.

Thinking critically is a key, yet often overlooked requirement of a citizen of the world. Theory of Knowledge, a requirement of the IB Diploma, is a class that aims to

teach this skill, as well as the importance of understanding what ‘knowledge’ truly is, and the philosophical debates that can be had over this broad topic (International Baccalaureate, 2018). Of course, in an international school classroom, the opinions that can be voiced may not always, or even ever, match up well with one another, yet all are necessary and beneficial to be heard. Implementing a Biblical worldview that there is an even greater standard of truth, is not always found in international schools. When all voices are heard and considered equal, following this philosophy can sometimes escalate, eventually turning into the idea that all voices are speaking truth, and that this is subjective.

International schools are often found to be full of current, up-to-date students, who truly want to know what is going on in the world right now (Mitchell, 2014). This is a very beneficial trait to a “citizen of the world”, because they must know what is happening in the world today in order to fully participate and have an opinion in current events. This is partly fostered by the culture of an international school – as the students are truly from all over the world thus they are interested in different current events, but most are willing to share what the latest news is about their country because it makes them the expert. Fellow classmates soon become the most trusted news reporters to find out what is going on elsewhere in the world. Thus, this strength of being ‘in-step’ with what is going on globally, truly sets international students apart. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that not all students value this opportunity. Often international schools are made up of some students who struggle with things like homesickness, missing family and friends, and even a desire to not be so interconnected. This must be mentioned, because although most students graduate having learned the value of knowing current

events and being sensitive to people's cultures because they become your friends, still there are very valid personal difficulties that students may struggle with.

How International Schools work to give Opportunities

Students enrolled

Perhaps the most unique part and the greatest strength of an international school is the diversity (Gabrielson, 2014). Students at these schools are often from all over the world and represent many different countries. When a child arrives in a new country, missing his or her homeland, it is often such a blessing to be welcomed into a community where one's differences are celebrated, and where it is interesting to hear about one's home culture and how it is different here. Rather than force kids to assimilate and to point out one another's diversities as though they are something to be ashamed of, the culture of international schools is not one of conforming, but of learning how people are all quite alike in many ways at their core. In turn, the diversity of the teachers cannot be discounted, as international schools often attract and hire teachers from all over the world (Velarde, 2017). As students watch these teachers interact with one another, respectfully and with interest in one another's lives, they seek to model after this and play the same role in their peer-groups. Thus, diversity is such a key part to an international school, and it most accurately represents the world these students live in and will work in someday.

Community

International schools foster a community where an individual's differences begin to seem "normal", or at least are more readily accepted by their peers. In fact, many students describe their international school as a place where diversity was considered a strength, and finding out more about where people came from and how it can be

celebrated at the school is common (Marymount International School London, 2017). It is clear that when a classroom is made up of diverse young people, students must be stretched out of their comfort zone and meet others who do not perhaps look like them in order to survive and make friends (Mayes, Cutri, Goslin, & Montero, 2016). This is such a valuable lesson in life to be learned at a young age: that one must look past the outside to find the true interior of a person, and their character will be discovered along the way. This is a strength that makes international students truly ‘citizens of the world’ as they do not think of their home country as the only or the best country in the world, but find joy in finding differences in their peers and their home countries as well.

Special Events

International schools have the unique opportunity to be catalysts for individual cultural identity, and also collective community within cultures, and henceforth the school as a whole. Because so much of the world is usually represented in an international school, very unique opportunities are suddenly possible for the school to implement. There are many examples of these, one being the way schools celebrate national holidays in other countries, as well as hosting a Model United Nations, athletic tournaments, and even unique celebrations such as “international day” (Marymount International School London, 2017).

It is important for schools to celebrate international holidays, and holidays central to the culture of other cultures, so that all students feel valued and their cultures considered worthy and appreciated. Often, international schools hold a school-wide assembly, at which current events are discussed and this can often mean a presentation of

a specific holiday. Thus, even the lesser known holidays that religions and countries celebrate can be mentioned and even learned about as an entire school community.

One highly coveted opportunity offered by international schools is that of the Model United Nations (Marymount International School London, 2017). This event allows students to play the role of ambassadors from all the world. Then, they proceed to hold a meeting where all voices are heard and controversial topics are discussed and explored. The United Nations is already such a diverse group of people, that it is certainly unique and celebratory that a school full of middle or high-school students could host something like this. This is a wonderful way to incorporate all countries, even the smaller ones, into an event where decisions are made and changes are discussed. It is also a wonderful way to get students to put themselves into other countries' shoes, and to know a country much more simply because they have to represent it.

Athletic tournaments are typically places where more than one school gets together to play a sport against each other. Normally, these schools are local and are very similar in demographic and ability. However, athletic tournaments between international schools have the unique ability to bring together schools that are not necessarily close by. Indeed, many international schools play local schools and non-local schools in tournaments that span entire continents. This is almost a glimpse into the worldwide Olympic games, and thus these athletic events give students a tiny picture of what it would be like to compete for your country as a representative of their national sports team.

Finally, individual schools have the opportunity to hold events that are unique to their own community. One example of this is simply hosting the previously mentioned

‘international day’, a day when students come dressed in their national costume or clothing, and celebrate what it means to be from their own country (Marymount International School London, 2017). Often there is even a time of sharing of national dances and drama; groups of students show the rest of the school what it means to from a certain country. Identity is something to be proud of on days such as these, and often whole communities come together to make it something even more wonderful. In one international school, on their “international day”, parents played a huge role in making the day run smoothly. They baked food from their unique country, and often got to school hours in advance to make sure the food would stay fresh and their child would be dressed appropriately in their national costume. For example, many Japanese mothers would come to help their daughters wear the national ‘kimono’ for this special day. Finally the best national skits and dances (from that day’s performance) would be showcased at the “International Day Parents’ Banquet”, a time for parents to celebrate with their child over their national identity (Marymount International School London, 2017).

Curriculum

As referenced throughout, the international school curriculum is divided up into three parts: the Primary Years Program (PYP) for grades K-5, the Middle Years Program (MYP) for grades 6-10, and the International Baccalaureate (IB) for grades 11-12. These three programs work together to complete a holistic learning experience for any student who works through the program. The PYP focuses greatly on becoming a lifelong learner and developing as a whole. The MYP focuses more on connecting what is learned in the classroom with the real, outside world. Finally, the IB focuses on giving students both breadth and depth of all that they are learning (International Baccalaureate, 2018). As a

whole, these three programs work together to shape students' outlook on the world around them.

The Primary Years Programme (PYP), in particular, sets the tone for the rest of this curriculum-program, and its ability to help develop students into lifelong learners who are globally-minded. Its aim is to set these students up for success in finding connections between the different subjects being taught in school (Cankar, 2014). Likewise, this program also sets the tone for the rest of the curriculum that is written by the International Baccalaureate, as it reminds writers of its roots. International schools that implement such a curriculum stand out a great deal from the average national school. Students who interact with fellow students from all over the world grow up to be citizens who think more global-minded, as they have experienced simply being friends with people who are very unlike them in terms of culture. Overall, the PYP aims to grow and encourage students who are aware and interested in cultures outside their own, and connect what they know from this curriculum into their everyday thought-processes for the rest of their lives.

A huge component of an international school's program is the emphasis on building on one's own creative ideas and inspirations. This is truly fostered in the Middle Years Program, and particularly through the participation in the Personal Project (International Baccalaureate, 2014). This project gives students the reins to do a project of their choice that they will work on throughout the year. This way, they are truly satisfied with the end product – because it is something they chose. Students continue this skill in the IB Diploma, where although there are more restrictions and requirements, students can choose a topic they are interested in and write an extensive essay about it,

called the Extended Essay. These two projects are merely examples of how international schools foster internal growth and self, or internal-motivation. Thus a “world citizen” is a person must be willing to put their dreams into action so that they can come to fruition as he or she follows their own drive and motivation to complete it.

The PYP, or Primary Years Programme, is a sub-set of the International Baccalaureate, aimed at educating specifically 3-12 year olds. It is very similar to that of the typical IB high school curriculum, yet it is clearly adapted for a much younger age group. However, IB curricula in general aims to educate *all* aspects of the student. According to Savage & Drake (2016), “The PYP is grounded in a strong transdisciplinary framework based on the work of Ernest Boyer and others. The framework is holistic in nature with an emphasis on the whole child and authentic and significant inquiry” (p. 3). Clearly, the PYP is on the same mission statement as the IB, and both aim to give students ample opportunities to grow and become more of themselves, through many experiences and reflecting on what they can improve upon. Reflecting is an integral part of these schools, as it matters more that students identify in themselves what they can do better, rather than simply reading teachers’ comments on what can be improved. Self-reflection sticks with students much more than anything else, and it even creates habits of change that the student initiates.

Another key element to the PYP curriculum is that it is merely a framework. Teachers must take it and make it their own, adapting what they need to fit the specific learning styles and attitudes of their classroom. According to Savage & Drake (2016), meeting the standards is important, but more emphasis is placed on how the teacher documents student learning. Using hands-on projects helps the large population of

students who are learning English in IB schools. Because so many students are from all over the world, and may even be sent to these schools simply to be immersed in and learn English fully, teachers must make accommodations to the PYP curriculum to fit their classroom's unique needs. Although this requires more work, having the curriculum be merely a framework or backbone gives teachers more freedom and creative rule in the way they run their classroom.

PYP curriculum is also committed to providing transdisciplinary education, possibly one of the most unique and celebrated parts about it! Schools that implement the PYP are often looked upon to provide a good example of how to overlap different school subjects in a successful transdisciplinary way (Cancemi, 2011). The PYP is certainly not perfect; however, aiming to show how all the subjects are inter-connected, and combining assessments with one another is an honorable goal and one that shows in child success. Rather than separating math from science, and history from languages, it seems that immersing a student in a particular overall theme is a wonderful skill to be taught. For example, one International Baccalaureate school in London, England teaches a unit on Africa every year that stretches across multiple subjects (Marymount International School London, 2017). An African drumming workshop is provided for experience in music, African art is taught, along with traditional African drama in theater class. Furthermore, the history of Africa, as well as the geography and traditional texts from Africa are read and studied. Although this takes work and planning on the part of the teacher, immersing students in this 'world' of learning helps them make connections in their brains about how all they are learning relates to one another.

Developing students who are eager to inquire about different topics is another goal for the PYP curriculum. This curriculum firmly believes that students should not be spoon-fed information, but rather should find out information based on their interest and curiosity for knowing more. Students are, therefore, often given creative reign, or multiple options when they are assessed in a subject. This responsibility helps them connect what they are learning to a way they will remember it in their own particular, unique way. Inquiry is not unique to simply the high school IB education, but also is adapted for young students enrolled in the PYP as well.

Aiding students in their personal and intellectual growth is key to any curriculum, and the IB/PYP is no different. Because integration is so common and so easily seen implemented throughout the PYP curriculum, it is important to note that this method of education is focused on the whole child, and preparing them for their future in the best way possible. The IB is fully aware that some students do not receive moral education and life-skill discussions at home, and thus these should be integrated seamlessly throughout the curriculum.

One example of how this looks in-action is found in an article from Savage & Drake (2016):

We also have a school store that third graders have to apply to run and we link it to IB, they have to tell what IB attitude would help them with this job or why they should be the one, or how they can show leadership by working at the school store. It's like an application, like a real job application. We have been able to have 30 of our 100 students do that this year. (p. 13)

Even simply the idea of having a student-run store that third graders are practicing life-skills at, shows the goal and mindset of the overall IB curriculum, particularly the PYP here. Having students apply for such a job, and explain the role of their attitude in the project helps students develop reflective skills that most would not otherwise develop until much later.

It is interesting to also note that having a variance in cultures leads to differences in moral values as well. Some schools are international in name, using the PYP/MYP/IB curriculum, and then also incorporate a major religion, such as Christianity. Thus, the curriculum itself seeks to help students creatively think and come to their own conclusions about why things are right and wrong, and yet a framework from a belief-system provides more moral education than simply this alone.

As for personal growth, it is no secret that all IB students are taught to aim at developing and showing the ten IB learner profile attributes: “inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013). These ten attributes show a student who is competent and educated in all aspects of the words. Students are taught to aspire to grow in themselves these qualities to the maximum of their potential. Thus, growing as a *person* is not overlooked by the IB curriculum, and in fact the IB/PYP does not merely mention that teachers should teach character and positive qualities, but rather encourage the students themselves to aim to achieve the ten attributes in all that they do.

The uniqueness of the PYP curriculum should not be overlooked. As mentioned previously, integrating the subjects taught, along with life skills and aims for personal growth affects a child’s development in a significant way. As Cancemi (2009) puts it,

“the PYP writes of its commitment to a transdisciplinary model, that is, ‘themes of global significance that transcend the confines of the traditional subject areas’” (p. 33). Thus, every single unit and over-arching theme that a standard or curriculum aims to point to something greater: that is, the global significance of the matter. Even beyond the classroom, this integration of the curriculum can be seen, as students graduate thinking in more ways about how their subjects interact with one another all the time. Each subject is not an isolated island, but rather they all bridge and grow off one another. Greater understanding can be expected when students *see* the connections between what they are learning.

In the Primary Years Programme, the idea of themes and units of one focused topic are rampant in the curriculum. In order to explain this most clearly, Jamal (2016) states that there are six units of inquiry that focus on one transdisciplinary theme. These six themes are then discussed and interacted with all year long, and they include: Who we are; Where we are in place and time; How we express ourselves; How the world works; How we organize ourselves; and Sharing the planet (Jamal, 2016). Of course these 5-6 week long units may, at first glance, seem extremely broad, and that many over-arching topics fit under these categories. However, they also point to a student with greater understanding, a curiosity that leads to them constantly asking questions, and finally understanding more about how the world works more and more each year of their education in a PYP school. This is perhaps the ultimate example of how the PYP curricula aims to point to shape students toward becoming more globally-minded. For example, “sharing the planet” as a unit forces students to realize that they are not the only

people on planet Earth, rather they share it with all other human beings, and must take care and responsibility for their actions.

These over-arching themes, help show how the PYP truly teaches students to be lifelong learners even outside the classroom. Learning about how we express ourselves is not something that can be taught merely out of textbooks, but rather by experiences and reflections from the student him or herself. Outside of the classroom, connections are seamlessly made about how a person expresses themselves, and what can be done to further this. These transdisciplinary skills are indispensable.

Another aspect of the IB/PYP curriculum is that of how students grow in their own communities. Firstly, units such as ‘How the world works’ and ‘Sharing the planet’ all point to students being involved in their local and home communities. Students cannot help but grow to be learners that are interested in and active in their communities.

According to Luddecke (2016), “While the PYP curriculum does not specifically advance community participation in curriculum planning, its aims derive directly from meeting the educational needs of a global community conceptualizing education as a public good” (p. 510). Thus, pointing to a more global community in the six units does wonders to help students take that first step and look into their own communities for ways that their world can grow a little wider.

In conclusion, students in the IB/PYP use all of these aspects to become more global-minded. Students are taught to be inquirers and not simply take information at first glance. This helps students in the future to read information and news and think critically about what it is discussing, rather than become biased based on the portrayal of one particular view. Likewise, the transdisciplinary element of the IB/PYP helps students

make connections about how all their knowledge fits together and overlaps with one another. Intercultural understanding and global-mindedness also comes with the six themes that over-arch the entire IB/PYP curriculum. These broad questions force students to look beyond what they are taught in the classroom, and into the real-world for more examples and clarity. Finally, the ten learner attributes that students are encouraged to strive for help students as they grow personally. Global-minded adults begin their education with striving to become the best they can be, and showing the best learner-character qualities. Finally, perhaps one of the most powerful qualities in a student's education is the peers that surround them. International schools are full of kids who are from many different countries and cultures around the world. Simply being immersed in this culture and learning to accept everyone around you regardless of their ethnicity or background works wonders for students who are being molded into more global-minded people. Despite this, international school programs are known for being very expensive. Although some schools provide scholarships or financial support, the majority of students come from a middle/upper-class background. Thus, the cultural understanding of students will be of a different type than someone who has actually visited the country. For example, students who come from countries that are extremely poor but are themselves more well-off, will give off a different impression of their country than is perhaps more accurate.

Overall Goal: Holistic Growth

The goals of the International Baccalaureate are ones that focus on the ‘whole’ student, and not simply their academics. Hence, there are 45 points that make up the grading system, and although 42 of these points come from the 6 classes IB students take, the remaining three points come from elsewhere. These come from the students’ Theory of Knowledge (or TOK) class and from their Extended Essay (consisting of 4,000 words), and there is a pass/fail grade from their Community Action Service projects completed over these final two years of high school (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013). These three areas are places where students realize they must be educated as a whole person, and not simply their mind, an idea culminating what was founded in the PYP.

In the ideals behind the creation of such a rigorous curriculum, the founders chose ten specific IB learner profile attributes: “inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013). These ten attributes are incorporated into the making of the standards, the objectives taught, the projects teachers create, the events a school puts on, and so forth, simply to name a few. Thus, the international baccalaureate is very in-tune with making sure that not only the minds of its students are being grown and stretched, but also every aspect of their being. Reflective practice is encouraged so highly that students become very adept at thinking critically about themselves and their own learning. Overall, international schools equip students to be “citizens of the world”; through the attributes of the IB Learner Profile, and the way that cultures interact.

The Students that Emerge from the Program

In this section the idea of a global citizen will be discussed and debated. As a whole, this concept has both its advantages and disadvantages. Having a holistic mindset whilst being educated, having teachers who are passionate about teaching the whole child, and constantly being around other students from all over the world has both its strengths and weaknesses for the way a child grows up thinking.

At an Advantage

Students who graduate from the International Baccalaureate are, in many ways, a step ahead in their college career. Firstly, the curriculum, as previously discussed is extremely holistic, and students find themselves being educated as a *whole*, and not simply their minds. The Community Action Service section of their diploma is one that particularly highlights the activities that students do outside of merely their classes. Every class is challenging in its own way, then adding a minimum of 150 hours of community, action, and service opportunities gives students a plethora of holistic opportunities to grow. Likewise, the program itself is extremely challenging, and lends itself to give students the education they need to succeed in further education or careers.

Counter Argument

In some ways, students from international schools may be argued as *not* being “citizens of the world.” This could be because of many reasons, one being a struggle with their own identity. When all cultures are celebrated, and the school focuses on being together and agreeing on what they can, students may struggle to truly remember their own culture, and may even identify as being a “third-culture kid”, someone who has lived in two places growing up and does not have a secure base to call “home”, or a place

where they are from (Linton, 2013). Students in international schools, although celebrating days such as international day as a whole school community, may find it difficult to answer the simple question, “Where are you from?” because their school was extreme in teaching students about all different types of identities and cultures. This can lead to a loss of national identity or identity confusion.

Certainly, from a Christian perspective, it is easy to see how being completely open and accepting of all religions can lead to wonderful conversations about what people believe, but can also make it hard to discern what makes Jesus Christ different. This often leads to a stronger faith, and a distinct realization of the balance between respecting other people who practice different religions, loving people for who they truly are. However, students may also realize that not everything can possibly be true, and that believing there is only One way, truth and life points to one true God alone. Students are often stretched in their faith in communities such as this and realize they must make the leap from simply knowing *about* God, to truly *knowing* God.

This leads back to the original question, ‘Are international school students who are studying the IB truly ‘citizens of the world?’’ In the beginning, when the International Baccalaureate was first being founded in Geneva, Switzerland, the goal of the program was to give each student:

An understanding of his past as a common heritage to which all men irrespective of nation, race, or creed have contributed and which all men should share...an international education: should give him an understanding of his present world as a world in which peoples are interdependent and in which cooperation is a necessity. In such an education emphasis should be laid in a basic attitude of respect for all human

beings as persons, understanding of those things which unite us and an appreciation of the positive valued of those things which may seem to divide us, with the objective of thinking free from fear or prejudice. (Hill, I., & Saxton, S., 2014, p. 43)

Thus, at the root of the discussion, students who attend international schools are completely immersed in an open and accepting culture towards others students' backgrounds. This mindset of wanting to know people's stories and sets of traditions plays a huge role in encouraging learning as well as people skills of simply getting to know other people for who they are, not whether or not they have the same hometown or share the same culture.

From a Biblical perspective, this is controversial. Many believe that the PYP/MYP/IB programs are at odds with Christianity, as they cause students to believe everything is truth, as it is simply to do with your culture and upbringing. International schools encourage deeper thought, however, at times they can go too overboard with striving to show open-mindedness. Christ calls us to a balance: understanding where people are coming from is key to introducing them to their Creator. However, not all truths can possibly be right, and the Bible is clear that people need God's discernment, as there is only *one* way, truth and life. Thus, although a Christian curriculum and an international curriculum may appear to be in direct opposition, they can be reconciled in the final conclusions they make about the world around us.

Conclusion

Through looking at the evidence, it seems that students who graduate from international schools have a very large view of the world. This is to say that they have had an extremely unique experience, attending a school where their fellow students are

typically from all different places throughout the world, and learning from a curriculum known for its rigorousness in educating students about the topics that will help them learn subject matter holistically as well. Students with all different needs find commonality and support on the way international schools include them through trying to know the whole person. The curriculum itself is a strength of its own, and helps students' worldview to become more open. Likewise, schools have the opportunity to individually put on events, and foster community that makes students who graduate feel as though they truly are a "citizen of the world." This is seen in the workplace as well, because international schools are extremely preparatory for the workforce that students will be applying and working for.

In my own personal experience, attending an international school has shaped who I am today in various ways. Firstly, I feel that I am more globally-minded, and meeting people from different cultures and countries gets me excited. I enjoy finding common ground with people I interact with, and I have noticed that I feel open-minded when speaking to people with different beliefs and thought-processes. Studying in an IB school helped me even to grow in my faith, as I could see that some views in my school and about God were conflicting and even controversial. I turned to Christian literature, my Bible, and other Christians in my life to ask them questions I had, and in the process my faith emerged stronger. I know that it was worth the struggle to determine what I truly believed (and I am still growing in this!), as it completely grew and even transformed my relationship with God.

Citizens who understand a number of cultures, and who grew up immersed in such a unique culture are able to relate well with people from all sorts of backgrounds,

and likewise are a huge asset for companies and organizations who hire them. Students from international schools often find that putting all of this together helps them realize it is more important to know people for who they are as a fellow ‘citizen of the world’ than simply knowing which country they are from, thus putting aside difference and focusing on the traits that bring all people together. Overall, international schools, although controversial in the way they present truth, truly produce “global citizens” and students who are able to think for themselves when it comes to discovering knowledge.

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