

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: EDUCATING FOR A GLOBAL FUTURE

Review by Jennifer Watson

“Central to [the] promotion of global citizenship is an understanding of cultural diversity and an emphasis on intercultural learning” (McMahon, 2011: 19).

Writing from the perspective of a teacher educator, Margery McMahon suggests that her book ‘is designed for practitioners who are beginning to engage with international activities in their schools and for beginning teachers looking at International Education and citizenship education as part of their initial teacher education’ (2011: xvi). A great deal is presented in this slim text from definitions of international education and its development as an area of study, through an exploration of how these ideas could be used constructively in classrooms, to concrete examples of such ideas in use. However, the style is clear and should be easily accessible to the target audience, primarily educational policy makers and both pre-service and post graduate teachers.

Each of the six chapters begins with a list of the key ideas to be introduced, followed by a short introduction which provides more information on the ideas and questions to be addressed. Sub-headings within the chapters make it easy to track the main arguments. The first chapter clarifies what is meant by ‘International Education’, the term used in the Scottish context in which the book was written, to refer to the cross-curricular learning area identified as the ‘global dimension’ in England or ‘international dimension education’ in Wales. It is argued that international education can be used as an aid to understanding our complex, heterogeneous society. Where international education is used as a cross-curricular and interdisciplinary strategy, McMahon suggests that it can be inclusive, involving and motivating, thus leading to positive attitudes among learners and improved attainment, school practice and effectiveness. She suggests that ‘initiatives that develop an international understanding can extend pupil learning in a holistic and integrated way’ (2011: 4).

Chapter two considers the context for international education, arguing the need to educate young people about the world and enable them to gain an

understanding of citizenship. While taking note of the statutory obligation to provide citizenship education, subsequent to the 'Crick Report' (1998), it is suggested that in the subsequent years it has become necessary to extend perspectives beyond the nation state to global concerns such as environmental problems, climate change or terrorism. It is argued that 'Central to this provision of global citizenship is an understanding of cultural diversity and an emphasis on intercultural learning' (2011: 19) together with a need in the coming century to move beyond multiculturalism to interculturalism. Attention is drawn to the UNESCO *Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, which suggest that 'Interculturality presupposes multiculturalism and results from "intercultural" exchange and dialogues in the local, regional, national or international level' (2006: 15). McMahon also notes that these guidelines emphasise the need to respect the cultural identity of the learner and provide appropriate cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes both for full participation in society and to encourage respect for other groups and nations.

Each of the nations in the United Kingdom (UK) has a different governing document for implementation of international aspects of the curriculum, but chapter three identifies the commonalities, while largely focusing on the Scottish context (the author is based in Glasgow and has a background in Scottish teacher education). Note is made of the need for Scotland to develop international links following devolution and the parallel recognition that pupils should have international awareness. The presence of international students in further and higher education is noted in terms both of being aware of their needs and of their economic importance to educational institutions. The chapter outlines the knowledge of the rights of children, safeguarding and international perspectives which should be expected of newly qualified teachers, those seeking full registration and of those applying for headships, again in the Scottish context. It concludes with a brief summary of the ways in which non-governmental organisations and development education centres can support international education.

One of the strengths of the book is the way in which the background context is brought to life through case study examples such as those described in chapter four. These demonstrate practical applications of the theory developed in the earlier chapters and illustrate how international education can be used in

cross curricular work to develop ICT and language skills as well as respect and understanding of different cultures through personal contact with pupils in schools in other countries.

Whilst appreciating the experiences of those involved in the case studies outlined in chapter four, the subsequent chapter considers how to evaluate the impact of international education. It notes the difficulties experienced in evaluation of this non-statutory aspect of the curriculum but also considers the relevant part of the Scottish policy document ‘International Education: Responsible Global Citizens’ (2010) and discusses research into the ‘International Dimension in Education in Wales’ (2009). This latter report suggests some self-evaluation tools for schools, but notes difficulties in quantifying results, suggesting that there may be a need to recognise qualitative results as well as those which can be quantified.

The final chapter looks forward, reiterating the need to move from considerations of multiculturalism at home towards interculturalism and an international perspective, but we are reminded of the teacher educator perspective of the author when it is suggested that ‘The quality of the international experiences that pupils will have is highly dependent on the skills, knowledge and cultural understanding of their teachers’ (2011: 67). It is further argued that international education for teachers can provide opportunities to learn from international colleagues and encourage teachers to consider education for the future of world resources, environmental factors, etc., both locally and globally, when they are working in school.

Ideas which recur throughout the book include the suggestion that:

“...the growing emphasis on eco-awareness and activism means that sustainable development education is allied to and intertwined with citizenship education and international education.... For teachers, it requires that pre-service and in-service provision is designed that helps develop the political and eco-literacy that will enable them to get the deeper and critical understandings and professional skills that are needed to teach in a global context and for a future that is both assured yet unpredictable” (2011: 71).

In summary, the book is clearly structured and written to demonstrate a need for teachers to have critical understanding of their responsibilities in developing future global citizens. The author examines ideas about the basis and definition of what can be understood by international education, considers its development as an integral contribution to the curriculum in schools and explores practical implementation through case studies. Although it is written in a Scottish context, this book is clearly structured and written in a way that should be easily accessible to pre-service and, especially, to in-service teachers throughout the UK. The author should be congratulated on achieving so much in such a small volume.

Margery McMahon (2011), *International Education: Educating for a Global Future*, Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.

References

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UNESCO (2006) *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (online). Available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147878e.pdf (accessed 2 January 2013).

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