



## Globalisation and the internationalization of education

Issues related to globalization and the internationalization of education – building your personal capacity to contribute to your country of origin. I am speaking to you today as an educationalist who is Australian and Australian trained, in a college in Malaysia and my audience is substantially African from many parts of the African continent. It is not something that I would have imagined myself doing 10 or 20 years ago.

This scenario is part of a growing trend in education across the world, due to the internationalization and globalization of education and the development of market forces in education. It illustrates how the world is a much smaller place today. It illustrates how we are now moving around the globe in growing numbers and enrolling and working increasingly in diverse places. The impact that this has on the enculturation of all involved in this process shows that increasingly we are all broadening our cultural knowledge and, in the process, learning other ways of doing things.

It allows you, as young people from the African continent, to experience, at first hand, the cultural lives and the systems of a country, which has an historical background not uncommon with your own historical development as post colonial nations.

This surely must be a good thing for you all, especially when you return to your home countries to work alongside your fellow countrymen and women in the process of building and strengthening the services in your country of origin. You will take with you a perspective and experiences, which will broaden the responses you might make to challenges you will experience as you, begin your journeys in life

In reality we have more in common than you might imagine. Australia, Malaysia and the countries of Africa have grown out of colonial beginnings. We are all, despite the ages of the continents on which we live, members of quite young countries on the world stage.

Australia has become a successful developed country since federation in 1901; Malaysia has developed amazingly since her independence, in 1957 and increasingly in the last two decades. Your own countries have gained independence since the early 1960s with varying degrees of stability. You are all members of countries, which have great potential to develop into successful and modern countries. It is vital, too, that your development honours your cultural heritages and cultural mixes.

I was asked to talk to you about how you can best use your acquired knowledge and experience when you return to your countries of origin. This is a weighty challenge and one quite frankly I



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do not believe I am really qualified to meet. I am humbled that you might even ask me to do such a thing.

The provision of quality services, in education, health and other public areas that are expected as basic common rights in developed countries, is a burning issue for you here today.

To this assembled group of privileged youth from many countries across the African Continent, depending on the stage of growth and stability in your countries of origin, will fall the task of rebuilding, modernizing, restructuring and re-engineering, the infrastructures of your countries using the knowledge and skills you are acquiring here in the colleges and universities of Malaysia. You, with your peers, who are enrolled in universities and colleges in all parts of the world, are at a special place in time.

That you have been able to travel from your own country to gain an education, internationally, means that you are already more privileged than many of your friends and family back home. No doubt many of you also carry the heavy burden of expectation and hope of your families and your countries.

What is it that you will gain your journey here? What is it that you will be able to take home with you to your respective countries? Through my speech I hope to give you some “food” for thought in this area. I do not, I am afraid, have any answers for you.

- You are the ones who will have to use the skills and knowledge you gain to help build the futures of your countries.
- You are the ones who will have to face the challenges back home and work to overcome some huge challenges using your problem solving abilities, your creativity, the sweat of your brows and your dedicated hard work.

One Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Malcolm Fraser, admonished Australians some years ago that:

“Life wasn’t meant to be easy.” The full text of this quote by George Bernard Shaw is “Life wasn’t meant to be easy, but take courage child because it can be delightful.”

As you ponder your futures and take up the challenges of your lives these are admirable words to remember.



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Recently in conversation with a young man on sabbatical from Oxford, I mentioned that I was preparing this speech. “You know, Dr Wee”, he said, “One of the great dilemmas I see, working in the academic field in the UK, is that many highly capable and intelligent

Africans choose not to go home to work in their fields but choose to stay in the UK or elsewhere. Thus they contribute to the “brain drain” from Africa itself.” That unsolicited observation is quite telling. If your brightest and most capable choose not to go back, then that certainly is a problem and one, which your governments should try to address. However, one must also put that decision of these highly educated men and women into context. The systems in many African countries are still geared and constrained by the postcolonial intentions of the systems left by earlier colonial administrations. This means that even if these young men and women choose to go back to their countries of origin, depending on their area of study or specialization, the opportunities for advancement or even of putting their specialized skills and knowledge to good use may be limited or non-existent. The number of universities and the ability to carry out research may be severely restricted for them.

Some years ago, when investigating change in education, we explored the notion that the current era of change in technology and computers could be likened to the change that swept Europe in the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution changed Europe almost over night from an agrarian society to an industrialized one with massive population movements from the countryside and farms to the factory towns and cities of Great Britain and Europe. With the Industrial Revolution came enormous and unparalleled change, unemployment and job diversification.

The impact of the computer age, explosion of knowledge and the impact of new technologies today are impacting on societies, globally, in ways that parallel the changes of the Industrial Revolution.. We were shown a graphic of a steamroller with the caption: “When confronted with the steamroller of change, one can choose to be part of the steamroller or part of the road.”

For you young people here today, this is a choice you can make when you return to your own countries to take up the challenge of rebuilding, restructuring and reengineering of your countries and to help your countries move forward into the future.

You can stand by, as part of the road, and watch the changes in the rest of the world pass you by or you can be part of the steamroller and play an active roll in bringing change and progress to your countries.



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Many countries, in Africa, have difficult pasts often; it must be acknowledged, as a result of colonisation and the difficulties encountered in the political fields in many African countries. The aftermath of independence and the history of many ex-colonial countries have seen troubled and difficult times especially in developing sustainable governments.

Many countries, in Africa, at this very moment are caught up in disasters, which are both manmade and environmental. Civil strife has resulted in economic stagnation and disintegration of services and infrastructure in many places. Religious wars, tribal disputes, political in fighting and public health and educational issues of enormous magnitude can be found at this very moment across the African continent as they are also found in many other parts of the world. The problem of HIV/AIDS is devastating in many areas and has severely affected the ability to maintain services because of the impact on families and trained personnel. As young men and women returning home you will have to help deal with and manage these problems. My advice to you?

- Look around you with a critical eye as you travel around this country and others you may visit. Ask yourself: How might we adapt this model or this process in a similar system back home?
- Be observant and ask questions - talk to people in positions of management, authority and leadership. Use your knowledge of the system in place in your home country and talk to people in similar positions here.
- Learn as much as you can about systems and administrations. Ask questions and gain experience.

In other words, become like sponges and soak up as much as you can about the places around you so that you can integrate these experiences to help bring about change and improvement in your home countries.

With your newly acquired knowledge and the experience of living in another system and culture you will have the capacity to adapt old systems to work more efficiently and effectively and to apply new solutions and even use your own creativity and innovations when you return home.

There is much debate at present on how African states can best react to -providing services and education for all their population. Often infrastructure and services within larger urban areas are adequate but in rural areas the services are not so good if they exist at all. Many African states suffer from the legacies of colonial rule. The infrastructure that was established by the



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colonial rulers as they left Africa was in reality meant to maintain the status quo and intentions of past colonial policies. To maintain a small core elite and an education system which was primarily geared to giving the rest of the population sufficient education to work in low paid, agrarian jobs. There was little attempt at providing for or building up the economies of African countries to do anything other than to extract product from the land. This is the real dilemma for modern day African states. African countries have struggled to provide adequately for their people in education and other areas - much waste has occurred too. Conflict has crippled and devastated many countries in the region.

Of course, it is not as simplistic or as negative as I have painted. Many, many events have occurred on the African scene, which have conspired to hold many African countries back and hamper their development. There are many positives as well.

I believe that the process of sending many young men and women such as you out across the globe to far flung and different environments is an empowering gesture. It is widening your field of reference. You are seeing how other countries deal with their problems. You are seeing countries at many stages along the spectrum of development.

You are being taught by lecturers who have not necessarily worked only in places where resources are plentiful and solutions varied and expensive. Your lecturers have much to offer you of a practical and realistic range of experience, which can be applied without too much adjustment when you get home.

Of course you must know about innovative techniques and best practice and you must be taught the latest techniques. What your Malaysian experience offers you is access to lecturers and an environment, which is in the process of developing, where manpower is still used extensively and solutions and experience can be readily adapted to your home experience.

In preparing for this speech, I was overwhelmed by the wonderful boost to the image of African women in the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2004 to Wangari Maathai in recognition primarily for her work on environmental issues in Kenya. Highly educated and articulate, she demonstrated her dedication and commitment to country through her untiring work for the Kenyan community. Surely an inspirational woman who through her award will inspire others in the African community to know that they can and will be recognised and acknowledged for their contributions and effort.

I found comfort, also, in a report I read by Daniel Sifuna who reported some positive trends and



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attempts in various countries across Africa, to develop alternative and innovative strategies to improve the educational provision and living standards in their countries. These programmes involved working with communities from the grass root level and finding solutions, which were unique to and relevant to the needs of the specific African communities.

In the Australian context, a problem we have is the poor standard of living and poor health of our indigenous aboriginal population. Our government has tried unsuccessfully to improve the lot of the indigenous aborigines through throwing large sums of money into countless schemes to improve housing, health and education – mostly with little success. Currently the Aborigines themselves at the grass root level are developing strategies to deal with their problems locally with increasing success.

Past experience has demonstrated that relying on building educational structures that mimic western systems and replicate the systems of the countries of the ex-colonial powers have not necessarily improved the lot of whole populations, in Africa. They have in fact perpetuated the academic and book based educational systems, which suit the industrialized nations of the former colonial masters but are not necessarily providing the answer in present day Africa. Hence my friend's observations about your "brain drain" of talent.

Malaysia, as an ex-colonial country and a young nation, has developed a strong sense of national identity and communal spirit and through her strategic visions for the future has become a successful developing country. She is in the process of ensuring that her educational system caters for the needs of her own population and that her varied cultures are valued within the country. In the past 20 years, they have also sought to strengthen the use of the Malay language while recognising the value of using English to empower her students in the areas of Mathematics and Science and in international education. Malaysia is building her technical and industrial base in manufacturing and technology.

International scholars recognise that countries everywhere, and in particular Africa and developing countries, must develop their own research capacity in education, technology, health management, in fact all areas of public need to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Targeted and viable in-country research allows a country to develop relevant and meaningful solutions and approaches to common problems and difficulties.

- How to provide educational opportunities and improve standards,
- How to develop employment options and opportunities
- How to provide healthcare and management



- How to build awareness to deal with the havoc of HIV/AIDS.
- How to build ICT capacity and competence without marginalizing large sectors of the country.

In Ghana and other African countries for instance, the provision of ICT as a positive government policy has tended to emphasize the divide between the “haves” and “have-nots” in education which is primarily a disparity between the urban “haves” and the rural ‘have-nots”. Research indicates too that lack of technical support is a major problem as is the lack of infrastructure, generally, resources and qualified teaching staff. I am pleased to relate that many of you in this theatre are undertaking computer studies and will therefore be able to contribute meaningfully to your countries needs when you return home. Dr David Stasavage, from the London School of Economics and Political Science in a report on political systems and education in Africa argues the type of political system in place can positively improve standards and service provision. He argues that:

- The processes of democracy have lead to increased spending on primary education in many parts of Africa
- The reemergence of multiparty democracy has had significant impact on individual policy areas throughout Africa

The reasons are quite simply that when politicians have to gather support from constituents then they have to be more open to public opinion and more ready to address problems of basic need such as education and health.

Earlier this year, there was an APEC Summit on Education in Beijing. All twenty-one APEC leaders agreed that to fully participate in the 21st Century world, students must develop a common set of skills.

The common set of skills agreed to by the APEC leaders are that students must have:

### **1. Mastery of core knowledge in mathematics and science as well as a foreign language, which includes:**

- Conceptual comprehension, that is understanding, of the content knowledge being learnt;
- Procedural competency to use concepts that is the “how to” for applying learnt conceptual knowledge



- Problem solving ability to apply knowledge in a real-world, global context, both individually and as members of teams. i.e. it is critical that students can work cooperatively and jointly within a group or a team.

**2. Personal responsibility and excitement about learning, so that students will acquire:**

- Life-long learning skills - it is understood that in this century students will train for and move through at least 3 job changes in their life-time and also face the prospect of increased leisure time in their later years as life expectancy increases across the globe.
- A work ethic that encourages both independent learning and team participation - the ability to work in and participate effectively in teams will become increasingly important and a required skill for employment.
- Global citizenship through knowledge of the culture, language, and background of others - that you are listening to this speech highlights the growing importance of this point.
- Skills to communicate clearly with others, both orally and in writing

- Employers rate this ability highly in fact more highly than paper qualifications once you are employed

**3. Ability to use 21st Century tools (ICT) so that they can**

- Use appropriate technology to motivate learning and facilitate communication - rapid advances mean that new skills must be acquired constantly
- Demonstrate computer literacy skills in real world situations - in this century those who are not computer literate will be discarded and marginalized in the employment stakes.

Many of these skills are skills, which you are acquiring through the courses you are undertaking here at INTI College and elsewhere. It is a list of skills, which you would all do well to know and understand. These skills will certainly help you as you move back into your countries of origin. These skills are important skills to be taught and focused on in your home countries.

I have spoken of some of the problems in educational provision, ICT management as well as the



effects of postcolonial structures.

### **Which of these skills do I believe are most important?**

- The ability to solve problems and to construct new knowledge - these two are extremely powerful and critical abilities as they are the means to advancing your countries.
- The ability to use 21st century tools as the challenges raised by rapid advances in information and communications technology (ICT) will mean the difference in being actively involved in this century or being mere by-standers watching helplessly from the side lines- remember the steamroller analogy?
- Sensitivity to the culture and the context in which you live and work so that solutions you develop in your teams are relevant to the people you are living and working with and not merely externally imposed solutions that might be better suited to another culture and another context. Just because a scheme, an idea or a project worked very well in another area, or country, does not necessarily mean it will work in the situation in which you find yourself. This is where you need to be creative and innovative to adapt the useful to work in your particular setting.

### **Other areas of importance for you to consider are:**

- Recognizing the importance of collaborative research and partnerships between “insiders” and “outsiders” - that is that where solutions are built through partnerships that objectivity must be employed to prevent vested interests “taking over” the decisions or conspiring to thwart development.
- Building research and development capacity, in your countries, so that solutions are sensitive to local, social constructions of reality. In other words, if you have a problem, locally conducted research to understand the problem and engineered solutions based on the real needs of the community may be far more effective than attempted solutions that have worked well in overseas countries but which may only be partially relevant to the needs of your country. This requires investment and support for your own universities and colleges hopefully full of your most intelligent and smartest researchers



- One important characteristic, which is not mentioned in the APEC list, is the importance of building capacity for leadership in our youth and at all levels of society. As part of your college life, you should use every opportunity to involve yourselves in leadership opportunities. It could be as grand as organizing something like this conference or it could be as small as organising a study group of your fellow students. Every opportunity no matter how small is building your capacity to lead and influence others when you arrive home full of enthusiasm and new knowledge to share with your communities.

Globally there is an understanding that rethinking is needed in educational provision. Findings by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicate that:

- A transformation of schools on a dramatic scale will occur in the early years of the 21st century with the core business of schools, teaching and learning, being transformed.

It is predicted that 21st century schools are going to be quite different to the old, existing models of schools around in the globe. Perhaps this prediction provides an opportunity for African countries to develop innovative and flexible approaches to the provision of teaching and learning, in the coming years in the primary, secondary, technical and tertiary areas. It may require no more than for some one to follow that famous quote from the film, “Dead Poets’ Society” to “Seize the day.” Instead of just providing schools and educational institutions along old and outdated models, the opportunity exists for a transformation of educational institutions to occur in line with modern and flexible approaches to educational provision. Even the developed world and supposed leaders in education are searching for the way forward at the present time.

***Why must the lead come only from the West and established countries?  
There is no reason why African countries cannot develop innovative approaches, which could become models of excellence for others to follow. It requires only the will and imagination and hard work of some dedicated members of the community.***

Think of the example of Wangani Maathai. The major reforms in educational decentralisation



which have taken place in Australia, UK, Canada and many European countries in recent years had their humble beginnings in the smallest state in Australia, Tasmania, where two academics wrote the definitive book on self managed schools which provided the “bible” for others to use, worldwide. It is an amazing testament to the rapid dissemination of knowledge and the impact ideas can have quite quickly and rapidly. One of those authors went on to become the Dean of Education at The University of Melbourne. It is highly feasible that some bright and innovative thinkers from Africa could write the “bible” for the rest of us to follow in transforming educational provision or developing innovative solutions to major problems found in many countries during the 21st century. This is a very possible. Could this not be something I could be making a speech about 10 years from now? That some of you sitting here today might possibly be the ones “to seize the day” in building a bright and positive future for African countries. I hope so! The transformation of schools? – The transformation of knowledge? Jointly with the expansion and development of the information technology sectors? These are wonderful opportunities for African countries to grasp and to develop a new mindset to allow research conducted by your universities and your brightest scholars and students to explore ways to accommodate change based on the values, skills and knowledge that are relevant to the African environment. Instead of pushing ahead with systems and models which have proven to be unsuited and unsuccessful in the African environment, the opportunity exists to provide education and services which suit the particular needs of particular communities rather than continuing to provide education and services based on models that are no longer relevant, if indeed they ever were.

How does one do this? How does one encourage a community to be innovative, to develop creative solutions?

I believe one needs to look to educational strategies which:

- Encourage creativity,
- Encourage understanding and critical thinking in the curriculum.

Of course the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics, science and technology are needed and are vitally important. Critical, too, are the skills of cognition and teaching and learning strategies which:

- Encourage and allow learning for understanding,
- Encourage students to explore, to be innovative and flexible in their



thinking.

- Develop and encourage the use of problem solving skills and abilities.

Of critical importance is the support of government, though, to construct new and viable ways of providing education and other services. It needs the collective cooperation of governments, the private sector and the encouragement of your most skilled workers and thinkers who can provide the vision for action. I wish to close my speech with this thought: Education is the most powerful gift that can be given to our youth. However, that education must be relevant and it must be useful for the 21st century. That education must build not only character but also strength of character. It must empower our youth to solve the problems of the future. It must train our youth to think and to think critically. It must teach our youth to be thinkers and problem solvers, to be creative and innovative and above all it must teach our youth to have persistence and resilience. For what use is knowledge and education if the character of the man is not honorable and just, is not strong and resourceful. Education must also allow our youth to delight in the world. Not just any education. But an education that will allow our students at all levels of performance and ability to “Seize the day.” And enjoy the wonders of our world, which is increasingly open to us all as part of the global and international community.

Let me leave you with this quotation as you ponder the complexities and the enormity of the tasks ahead of you. “Life wasn’t meant to be easy, but take courage child because it can be delightful.”

I have referred to selected works of Professor Daniel N. Sifuna, Jamil Salmi, and Dr David Stasavage in writing this speech. I have drawn also on my own educational knowledge and background in preparing this speech.

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Dr. Julie D Wee completed her doctoral studies at the University of Melbourne, in 1999. Her interests are in the areas of decentralization, global issues affecting education and quality teaching and learning.



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Since 1999 she has worked as a Senior Researcher in the School Effectiveness and Continuous Improvement Unit, Victorian Department of Education (now DE&T) as an Early Years Co-ordinator, Acting Principal, Assistant Principal and trainer of teachers in one of the metropolitan regional offices, in Victoria. Since coming to INTI College, Sarawak,

Dr Wee has worked as a lecturer, Assistant Head of the School of Languages and Liberal Arts (SOLLA) and as Head of Staff and Professional Development. Her last office was Dean before she left for an assignment back to Australia in 2005

Publications include:

Wee, Julie, 2004, Curriculum Auditing: A case study of an audit of a mathematics programme in a primary school, INTI Journal, Vol.1, No.4, 2004.

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