

ENABLING
THE NEXT
GENERATION OF
GLOBAL LEADERS?

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

As they embark on their careers, today's school-leavers and new graduates will be navigating a world of global opportunities. **Rebecca Marriage** looks at how international schools around the world are preparing the next generation of global citizens for the challenges that lie ahead.

There is no denying that today's graduates and school-leavers are entering a truly global marketplace. Expectations of graduates are higher than ever before, and the skills that are demanded of new recruits are evolving fast to compete in this 'boundary-less' business world. While children of parents making an international move might find the upheaval and change of school unsettling, experts suggest that the international-mindedness and cultural agility that naturally follow a successful international relocation could help to equip them with the skills required to succeed in a global business world.

"I think we're starting to see a particular generation where they think of themselves as, quite literally, world citizens," a spokesperson from Prudential said in the report *Global Graduates into Global Leaders* by the Council for Industry and Higher Education. "I don't mean conceptually. I mean they see the world as boundary-less: that they are able to move, shift, work anywhere, and do anything."

By virtue of the pace of technological change and their evolving world view, today's generation of schoolchildren seems to be well poised to take advantage of an expanding global marketplace. But, argues Rachael Westgarth, director of development at Round Square, an association of globally

networked international schools, students at international schools are at a distinct advantage.

"Arguably, the 'iGeneration', regardless of schooling, is entirely unencumbered by geographic boundaries," says Ms Westgarth. "Via Facebook, any young person is as likely to be effortlessly communicating with someone on the other side of the world as with someone in the next street.

"However, Round Square would argue very strongly that there is no substitute for learning by doing. In our experience, in general, students in international schools have a broader knowledge and understanding of the world than their non-international-school counterparts. At its most basic level, the process of daily school life – living and studying alongside students from other countries and cultures – brings with it freedom to develop a degree of intercultural understanding and acceptance that cannot be replicated through any other means."

Equipping children to become global citizens

One of the most popular options for families relocating with children is an international school teaching either the curriculum of their home country or an international

curriculum such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), owing to the ease of transition and the international transferability of the learning programmes offered.

Speaking at this year’s Council of British International Schools (COBIS) annual conference, Mick Waters, professor of education at the University of Wolverhampton, spoke about his belief that international schools had the right skills and philosophy to help develop true global citizens. “Across the globe, international schools deliver that ‘rounded’ school experience,” he said. “They are really good at the things that are often left out of state schools across the world – how you use contacts, network, develop the etiquette to take you across new thresholds and help you cope with new experiences.”

Rachael Westgarth also believes that student’s exposure to different cultures is a powerful force in advocating and promoting international understanding. “Students from all nationalities are welcomed into each school,” she says. “They are taught to appreciate, value and respect all cultures, religions and languages. Students learn to see themselves as global citizens and are asked to look beyond gender, class, race, nationality and culture to understand human nature.”

What employers want from today’s school-leavers

Speaking at the Worldwide ERC Global Workforce Summit in Shanghai this year, Kimberly-Clark’s HR director for China, Naomi Monteiro, outlined what she believed were

the qualities required of today’s graduates and school-leavers. “We are looking for top talent who want to be global leaders. We certainly don’t want them to be worried about what country they live in. Quite often, these young people don’t have a conception of where they come from, because they were born somewhere different from their parents, and now live somewhere else.” In the future, she predicted, people will be even more ‘agnostic’ about where they come from, and that, she felt, is great for building global leaders.

Claire Snowdon, UK co-chair of Families in Global Transition, has observed the close alignment between the key competencies needed in the world of work and the International Baccalaureate Programme, which is taught in many international schools across the world. These include, says Ms Snowdon, “the ability to work collaboratively with teams from a range of backgrounds and countries, excellent communication skills, both speaking and listening, an ability to embrace multiple perspectives and challenge thinking, and an ability to influence clients across the globe from different cultures. Time and again, we find that some of the key skills and competencies are the focus of the IB programme.”

An international curriculum

Clive Pierrepont, director of communications for school group Taaleem in the United Arab Emirates, believes that, in an IB school, these competencies are fundamental and are lived and taught as part of everyday life. In fact, says



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Tim Waley, principal of Taaleem’s Uptown School, Dubai, “The whole cultural basis for our existence exemplifies these ideals. Staff, students and parents relate very closely to them, and as such they remain shared and expected outcomes from an education here. We see these, and others, that provide an ethical, civil and internationally educational package for young people as being integral to success in the world in which our graduates will live.”

“The IB, by design, provides students with a greater understanding of the world around them, so that they can live and work in a rapidly globalising marketplace,” agrees Stephen Spahn, chancellor of the Dwight Group of international schools. “Dwight families have for some time understood – and embraced – the concept of preparing their children to be internationally minded and equipped with a rich skillset that will enable them to be successful in the global marketplace.

“The IB measures students around the world against the same universal benchmarks, and inspires them to become well-rounded, culturally agile, respectful, and internationally minded citizens of the world. As such, IB graduates are well-prepared to succeed as global leaders.”

Henk van Hout, head of education services for Shell, oversees the company’s education policy and maintains nine Shell Schools around the world, which provide education for the children of Shell staff. He believes that parents of children in Shell Schools already have an international



attitude; they’ve chosen an international career and so tend to have an international mindset to learning.

“Most of Shell’s international workforce are doing multiple international assignments, and this is why the curriculum the children study needs to be compatible wherever they are based, and also needs to be designed to help children to adapt to different education systems. When the International Primary Curriculum was designed, one of the underlying objectives was the adaptability of learning so that it would be relevant for all children of all nationalities.”

British education: global expansion

In a recent report, *International Education Strategy – Global Growth and Prosperity*, the UK government went some way to

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acknowledging the importance of an international element to British education, including welcoming overseas students into schools and higher education institutions in Britain.

In 2012/13, there were nearly 26,000 international students studying at over 1,200 independent schools in the UK on a fee-paying basis, and the Independent Schools Council believes that international student numbers in independent schools could increase by 3 per cent per annum in the near future.

The UK government is keen to increase those numbers, and also recognises the diversity international students in the UK bring to the education sector, helping to provide an international dimension that, it believes, benefits all students. "Engagement in international education enhances the reputation ... of UK institutions," says the *International Education Strategy* report. "The experience of students in UK education helps to create good relations that will enable successful engagement with the next generation of global leaders. International education also helps to strengthen overseas business, research, social and cultural links."

But not only are British institutions welcoming international students into the UK, branches of highly regarded independent schools are quickly establishing foreign campuses, and many British-run schools have been offering a British education to globally mobile families for years. In 2012, there were 1.4 million pupils studying at British Schools Overseas; this includes around 19,000 who

were studying at overseas campuses of UK independent schools. The number of students at English-medium schools worldwide is forecast to increase to over 4.4 million in 2017 and to nearly 6.2 million in 2022.

John Bagust, a member of the COBIS executive committee and head of primary schools at Prague British School, said at this year's COBIS annual conference, "With a perpetually changing world, there are now more people working abroad than ever before, and that change in work patterns has created a huge need for high-quality British schools abroad. As leaders of these schools, we have been given a huge challenge to ensure that these 'global nomadic' families, not only from Britain but from across the world, have access to the best British education can offer."

Whether they offer a British education adapted for the international market or a learning programme designed around the successful transferability of learning for globally mobile families, what schools teaching international students seem to have in common is a level of adaptability and flexibility to meet ever-evolving needs.

"The core questions for many schools at this time are 'what do children need to be successful in the 21st century?' and 'how can we adapt our school to change our learning in order for our children to be successful in the future?'," says Henk van Hout. "Some international schools are already leading the way in developing these qualities in children's learning."

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