

‘International education’ in US public schools

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This study focuses on the recent adoption of ‘international education’ (IE) by US public schools. Theoretically, it conceptualises this phenomenon as a social movement and a dynamic arena of knowledge construction and contestation. Methodologically, it combines fieldwork, interviews and critical discourse analysis. The central finding is that multiple meanings are circulating on an asymmetrical field: a discourse of national security dominates the ‘IE’ movement but competing discourses (global perspective, cosmopolitanism, international student body) are found closer to the ground of school practice.

Keywords: international education; global education; national security education; global perspective; cosmopolitanism; student body; discourse

Introduction

In academic, popular and professional settings in the United States today, the phrases ‘our global economy’, ‘our increasingly interconnected world’ and ‘global citizens’ are uttered with ease and abandon. Audiences nod their heads knowingly. Furthermore, a number of public schools across the country are adopting something called *international education* (IE). Some are adding the name ‘international’ to their names – Abraham Lincoln Elementary School becomes Abraham Lincoln International Elementary School. Prizes are given to exemplary ‘international’ schools by private foundations, and an annual IE Week is co-sponsored by the federal Departments of State and Education. National and state coalitions have been formed to advance the movement, and themed issues of journals are devoted to the topic. I ask: ‘*What does it mean?*’ What curriculum work is the movement doing and what forms is it taking?’

I examined this activity from three vantage points: (1) public schools that have transformed themselves into ‘international’ schools; (2) movement activists who are advising these schools and conceiving and implementing various forms of ‘international’ education; and (3) prominent government and foundation initiatives that promote ‘IE’. Theoretically, I deployed social constructionism (Hacking 1999), social movement theory (Eyerman and Jamison 1991), and critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer 2001). To begin with conclusions, I found a plural movement with a jumble of meanings and programmes aimed in different directions. Circulating on the movement’s discursive field is a dramaturgic mixture of hope (e.g., for students who will come to know and care not only about Americans but peoples everywhere), fear (e.g., of the US losing its competitiveness on a new ‘flat’ playing field), and hyperbole (e.g., talk of the school

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system as *key* to the nation's economic salvation). Strong and weak discourses of 'international' education compete for funding and attention from parents, officials and media. Citizenship education, typically focused on the national imaginary, rubs against a second civic imaginary – the global community – and the first is dominant.

I begin with a brief description of today's wave of activity followed by the theoretical framework and methodology of the study, and then the findings, discussion and conclusion.

Today's wave

Over the past 15 years in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Antonio, New York and elsewhere in the United States, a number of public schools have been changing their name and, ostensibly, their mission. In Seattle, for example, an old elementary school closed for remodeling and reopened in 2000 with 'international' in its name. It features partial language immersion: students spend half their school day in English and half in one other language (Spanish or Japanese). Subsequently, a city high school was divided into several 'small schools' with the aid of a Gates Foundation grant, and one opened in 2002 as the Seattle Global Studies Academy. A new curriculum was undertaken with 'global leadership' a central emphasis alongside English language learning. With the help of local non-profit organisations, study-abroad programmes were begun. Next, a middle school not far from the elementary school inserted 'international' in its name with three curricular foci: second language study, 'global perspective' education and international artist residencies. Recently, two more elementary schools in the city have added 'international' to their names with a programme similar to the first, except Mandarin has replaced Japanese in one and only Spanish and English are offered in the other. Also, a newly remodelled middle and high school have added 'international' to their names.

These are not unusual happenings. A new 'IE' movement – actually, a new wave in an old movement – is under way in school districts scattered across the United States, mainly in urban areas. There are networks of new 'international' schools,¹ numerous calls to action,² and an array of NGOs providing advice, materials and programmes.³

Like prior waves, today's is nested in distinct contingencies. Globalisation and War on Terror help describe and inscribe IE activity in today's wave. Globalisation makes demands on schools, mainly because they are held responsible for national economic anxieties about 'flattening' and outsourcing (more on this later). The discourse of terrorism is also accomplishing things: invasions abroad, Homeland Security and the Patriot Act at the federal level; and state legislation impacting schools – e.g., new laws requiring recitation in schools of the *Pledge of Allegiance*, debates over the patriotism of the International Baccalaureate, and revisions of curriculum materials after 9/11. The federal funding of 'strategic language' instruction in some of the new 'international' schools ('Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Farsi and others') may be the most straightforward example (US Department of Education 2008, 1–2).

Since the Second World War there have been two waves of activity in the US – today's and another that began in the 1960s. Artifacts of the earlier wave include influential reports by Anderson (1968), Becker (1969) and Hanvey (1978), and popular books by Fuller (1963) and McLuhan (1962). This wave was dealt a direct blow by the renewed nationalism of the Reagan administration during the 1980s. Before that wave, between the two world wars, was a surge of activity centered on the World Conference on Education in Geneva in 1929; and earlier, in 1893, there was the

International Education Congress of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Indeed, there is a sizeable literature – documentary, analytic and historical – on ‘IE’, and numerous scholars have concluded that it has concerned educators and government officials for as long as there have been nations and their schools (Heater 1996; Sylvester 2002; Tye and Tye 1992).

Theory and method

This study approaches IE as both a social construct and a social movement, and it attends to discourse (language-in-use). Together these three compose the theoretical framework for the study. First, treating IE as a social construct interrupts the ease with which it can be seen to be prediscursive or the inevitable consequence of social forces such as globalisation, terror and the urgent press for school reform. As Hacking (1999) shows, treating a phenomenon as a construct positions it analytically as the upshot ‘of historical events, social forces and ideology’ (2). As such, IE can be investigated as a transient and contingent social category that is caught up in a thicket of practices (institutions, conferences, curriculum development), the built-up material world (buildings, books, wall maps) and emotions (enthusiasm, urgency, hope and fear). Speakers utter particular phrases and audiences signal their resonance. Government and foundations make urgent statements and provide funding and prizes. Professional and academic journals publish special issues. School names change and networks form. This assemblage satisfies Hacking’s condition for claiming that IE is a social construct, that ‘X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable’ (6).

Drawing from the sociological literature on social movements, I treated today’s wave as a case of collective action and ‘contentious curricula’ (Binder 2002). Through this second lens, public education is understood to be a site of struggle over the political and cultural shaping of the next generation and, thereby, the re-imagining of several social categories and institutions. These include no less than the nation, citizenship, culture and education. Seen this way, IE is a collective challenge to the educational status quo; it is therefore a dynamic arena of knowledge construction and contestation (Eyerman and Jamison 1991). The movement lens focuses attention on the ways movement activists produce, organise and deploy meanings or ‘frames’ in relation to political opportunities and constraints, and thereby advance movement goals. Framing is interpretive work: situations do not speak for themselves but must be read, and are read variously depending on actors’ interests and social locations. Public statements are then made (e.g., ‘schools must change’; ‘putting the world into world-class education’) that resonate (or don’t) with target audiences so that participation can be mobilised, solidarities formed and movement goals advanced. Using frame analysis (Gamson and Meyer 1996), I searched in each school and in each interview and document for *problem* frames, *solution* frames and *motivational* or *urgency* frames. The first of these reveals how movement participants diagnose what is wrong; the second, what is needed (this is what the movement is about); and the third, why action is needed now, not later. *Frame alignment* is concerned with how movement actors tailor frames to *resonate* with intended audiences.

Third, I draw on Wodak and Meyer’s (2001) understanding of discourse as working language – language that shapes while it represents, language in connection to circumstance including the constraints and opportunities of its use. A discourse not only conveys meaning; it also makes meaning, reinforcing some practices and slighting

others. Discourse *analysis* is concerned to understand its contents, accomplishments and circumstances; how it is regulated within historical periods, institutions and locales; how it works as ‘both an instrument and an effect of power’ (Foucault 1978, 101). This kind of analysis is ‘always a movement from context to language and from language to context’ (Gee 2005, 14). A ‘strong’ discourse drowns out its competitors, pushing aside other ways of speaking, listening, being heard and making sense. In an asylum, as Goffman (1961) found, the strong discourse is *psychiatry*. In a hospital, *medicine* is the strong discourse; whether you are a patient, nurse, physician or visitor, it is medicine’s vocabulary, conceptual apparatus and practices that regulate, describe and produce the scene. (Someone who introduces shamanism or witchcraft won’t make much sense in a hospital.)

I gathered three sets of qualitative data between 2003 and 2008, and into each I aimed to bring variation. The first was a sample of the new ‘international’ public schools, which included a celebrated elementary school, a fledgling middle school and a struggling ‘small school’ in a distressed urban high school (these were profiled earlier). The second was a sample of nine movement activists, and these ranged in Gramsci’s (1971) terms from established to organic intellectuals. Some were professors, others worked for NGOs, others were public school officials or parent activists. All were actively conceptualising the new movement and articulating some aspect of the knowledge interests and social vision of the current wave, and some were conceiving and advising the new schools.⁴ The third set of data was a sample of foundation and government statements promoting and/or funding IE. Texts were gathered from the *Congressional Record*, the White House, major foundations, the professional newspaper *Education Week*, the popular professional journal *Phi Delta Kappan*, the Departments of Defense, State and Education, the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, three national news media (CNN, *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*), and some local media. Multiple methods were employed to gather data: in-school fieldwork and document analysis for the first set, structured interviews for the second, and Internet searches of media, government and foundation websites for the third.

In the following section, I present findings from the three sources combined. I aim to present a broad view of the current wave, one that incorporates a range of vantage points assembled to present a holistic interpretation. I do not intend to confuse the result with a *representative* view, as the sample of vantage points I selected do not add up to a representative sample that could claim to generalise to the entire wave today in the United States. Rather, I hope to have opened an expansive window – but only one window – on this movement.

Findings

The movement’s strong discourse

National security is the strong discourse of the current wave as seen from the three vantage points of this study, especially the government and foundation initiatives. To those who expected that world mindedness, global citizenship or intercultural understanding was defining and directing the movement, this may come as a surprise. ‘IE’ as a national-security initiative in the United States has two predominant dimensions: economic and military. The economic way to secure the nation is to improve its economic competitiveness – maintaining it, or regaining it if already lost.

The military way is to strengthen the nation's armed forces, including the intelligence communities that function alongside. In both dimensions, a problem is framed, a corresponding solution is identified and popular anxieties are mobilised to create a sense of urgency.

Economic security

The economic side of the national-security coin is represented by this straightforward statement from former US Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings: 'Through the No Child Left Behind Act, we are committed to having every child in the United States learn and succeed in our global economy...' (US Department of State 2005). Here, school reform is linked directly to success in today's world, which is defined in economic terms; school reform is seen as a technology for accomplishing that goal. The link is also straightforward in a burgeoning number of state reports. For example, according to *North Carolina in the World: A Plan to Increase Student Knowledge and Skills About the World*, 'Improving international education is about providing students the best opportunity for success in the emerging workforce' (Public Schools of North Carolina 2005, 3). Similarly, among the many initiatives of the Asia Society, an NGO deeply involved in US-based IE, is an annual conference:

that brings together high-level delegates from two dozen states . . . to address a significant problem in American education: the wide gap between the growing economic and strategic importance of Asia and other world regions to the United States, and US students' limited knowledge about the world outside our borders. (Asia Society 2005, 1)

In each, 'IE' in the schools is positioned to address the key problem posed by globalisation: the defense of the nation's competitive edge in the new world-wide economy. This is the 'flat-world' problem frame that was popularised in the US during the period of this study in Friedman's best-selling book (2005). Crucial to apprehending the current wave is seeing that schools are constructed as *the* solution to this problem: only they can produce the enterprising individuals who will be successful in the globalised world. Without 'IE', America will lose its edge to Beijing or Bangalore or, if lost already, never regain it. This is plainly put in an influential report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (2005), urgently titled *Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energising and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future*. In this excerpt, both the problem frame ('death of distance') and the urgency of finding a solution ('other nations are gathering strength') are made clear:

Thanks to *globalization*, driven by modern communications and other advances, workers in virtually every sector must now face competitors who live just *a mouse-click away* in Ireland, Finland, China, India, or dozens of other nations whose economies are growing. This has been aptly referred to as '*the Death of Distance*' . . . The committee is deeply concerned that the scientific and technological building blocks critical to our economic leadership are eroding at a time when many *other nations are gathering strength* . . . Although many people assume that the United States will always be a world leader in science and technology, this may not continue to be the case inasmuch as great minds and ideas exist throughout the world. We fear the abruptness with which a lead in science and technology can be lost – and *the difficulty of recovering a lead once lost, if indeed it can be regained at all*. (1–2, emphases added)

Gathering Storm then moves from diagnostic and urgency frames to solution frames. First among four is K-12 education: ‘Enlarge the pipeline of students who are prepared to enter college and graduate with a degree in science, engineering, or mathematics by increasing the number of students who pass AP (Advanced Placement) and IB (International Baccalaureate) science and mathematics courses’ (6).

Military security

By contrast, the military dimension of the national-security problem is framed as a communication problem: US civilians and military personnel do not know their new enemies’ languages. The problem and its solution – and again the solution is education – are both expressed unambiguously in the *National Security Language Act* introduced into Congress in 2003 by Rep. Holt of New Jersey:

We need to do more to make sure that America has the language professionals necessary to defend our national security . . . Changing our (armed forces) recruiting methods alone will not solve the problem. To meet new security needs, we need to create a new domestic pool of foreign language experts and we can only do that by investing in the classroom . . . in foreign languages of critical need, such as Arabic, Persian, Korean, Pashto, and Chinese.

Congressman Holt’s bill was a forerunner, first, to Congressional Resolution #100 of 2005, which urged the US to ‘establish an international education policy’ that would, ‘promote a world free of terrorism, further United States foreign policy and national security, and enhance (US) leadership in the world . . .’; and, second, to President George W. Bush’s ‘National Security Language Initiative’ to fund with \$114 million the ‘teaching of language for national security and global competitiveness’ (US Department of Education 2006, ¶ 1). The President himself introduced the new programme in January of 2006 to an audience assembled at the Department of State in Washington, DC. Present were the Cabinet secretaries of State, Defense and Education, the post-9/11 Director of National Intelligence, and a good number of university presidents. In this speech, the President laid out a combined front for the ‘war on terror’ composed of a language-proficient military and intelligence network, a language-proficient diplomatic corps that is able to ‘convince governments’ in their own language, and a language-proficient American people who, all together, can participate with greater effect in ‘spreading freedom’. It is instructive to examine the lengthy excerpt that follows as the problem, the solution, and its urgency are all stated explicitly. The President thanked the groups for joining together on the initiative and then asked:

It’s interesting, isn’t it, that the State Department and the Defense Department are sponsoring a language initiative? It says something about the world we live in . . . And I want to thank you for being here, Margaret [Spellings, Education]. But I also find it’s interesting you’re sitting next to John Negroponte, who is the Director of National Intelligence. In other words, this initiative is a broad-gauged initiative that deals with the defense of the country, the diplomacy of the country, the intelligence to defend our country, and the education of our people . . . There is still an enemy that lurks, that wants to hurt us . . . [The Secretary of Defense] wants his young soldiers who are the front lines of finding these killers to be able to speak their language and be able to listen to the people in the communities in which they live . . . We need intelligence officers who, when somebody says something in Arabic or Farsi or Urdu, knows what they’re talking about . . . We need diplomats to help us convince governments that we’ve got to join together and fight these terrorists . . . A good use of resources is to promote this

language initiative in K through 12, in our universities This program is a part of a strategic goal, and that is to protect this country in the short-term and protect it in the long-term by spreading freedom. (White House 2006, 1–2)

Schools are broken

Undergirding these two national-security discourses is the popular belief that the school system in the US is broken. This is a discourse of derision that broadcasts the claim that public schools are failing miserably to educate the nation's youth for life in the new flat world. At a fund-raising banquet for the celebrated 'international' elementary school in my sample, I listened to the master of ceremonies, a chief officer of a prominent transnational corporation, introduce the school's outstanding principal. As he did so, he reminded the audience that this was a *public* school. Incredulous himself, he paused and then repeated it: 'A *public* school. Do you understand what I'm saying?'

The national security and school failure discourses are tightly linked. This is demonstrated in a statement trumpeting a new education reform project called by the martial name 'Operation Public Education'. It is geared to 'transforming America's schools' so as to respond to 'the challenge of human capital development' in the intensely competitive 'level playing field of the global economy' (Hershberg 2005, 276). Note in the following statement how the two national-security discourses join with the discourse of school failure:

Terrorism and the war in Iraq are high on the list of the nation's concerns, but the greatest danger facing America is, as [former IBM chairman] Louis Gerstner recognized, the challenge of human capital development. Our nation's public schools, the foundation for this effort, are still failing far too many of our children despite an investment of some \$500 billion annually. (276)

The author, an advisor to the Secretary of Education, continued by reminding readers that, 'sadly, we've known about this threat for quite some time'. His reference point was the 1983 government report *A Nation at Risk*, which claimed that the 'mediocrity' of our schools was so profound that had it been imposed by 'an unfriendly foreign power, we might well have viewed it as an act of war...' (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983, 1). This is an urgent crisis-and-salvation narrative. The crisis story is that schools are failing to educate students for the new world order. The salvation story is that only schools can rescue the nation. It is a simple formula: schools caused the crisis and schools can solve it.⁵

For these stories to be uttered and then resonate requires a cooperative network of discourses – a discourse formation (Foucault 1980) or a common sense (Geertz 1983). Most importantly, the school system is construed to be an institution capable of rescuing society. Schooling cannot be seen as embedded in society, mirroring and reproducing it, but as an autonomous arena outside the fray. Cremin (1990) observed that this 'device' (103) has been used repeatedly across the history of the US public education system. It was used by proponents of vocational education early in the twentieth century, by the post-Sputnik proponents of math and science education in the 1950s, in the 1980s by *A Nation at Risk*, and now in the 'IE' movement. The discursive accomplishment is to lay the burden of the nation's international competitiveness – both military and economic – at the schoolhouse door.

The movement's marginal discourses

While the discourses of national security and school failure may together dominate the movement, pushing other meanings and programmes aside, they have not jettisoned them from today's wave. Percolating at the edges and, in these data, closer to the ground of school practice – well below the power-and-funding heights – are other interpretations of the problem and the solution. Inside the new 'international' schools of my sample and in interviews with movement activists I found some indications of the national-security discourse but mainly three marginal discourses that provide sharp points of contrast to it. None of them engages the discourse of derision. One, *global perspective*, gives IE a transnational cultural meaning; another, *cosmopolitanism*, gives it a transnational political meaning; a third, *international student body*, gives it a cultural meaning again, but in a decidedly student-centered way.

Global perspective

The first emerged in an earlier wave of excitement about IE in the US, which occurred in the 1960s–1980s amid the constant background noise of the Cold War. Photos of Earth taken from space first appeared on television, and new terms such as 'global village' and 'spaceship Earth' were coined. Congress passed the International Education Act of 1965, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare published an influential report on 'IE' in the nation's schools (Becker 1969). That report proposed a number of curriculum goals including developing the capacity of students 'to view the world system as a whole', to comprehend 'the interrelatedness of the human species *qua* species', and to think in ways that are 'free from the influence of ethnocentric perceptions' (268, 271).

That wave's high-water mark was reached in 1978 with the publication of Hanvey's popular *An Attainable Global Perspective*. It argued for a transition from 'pre-global' to 'global consciousness'. The latter entailed understanding that we live in an interconnected world system, and developing what Hanvey called 'perspective consciousness' (5). These two emphases more or less summarise the conceptual framework of this earlier period. First, the dynamic interconnections of the world system, Hanvey wrote, needed to be learned in their totality and complexity: the political, the ecological, the economic and the cultural. And, these would best be studied through problems that cut across them and any national boundaries that might get in the way. (The systems approach was rarified then and remains so today [Dunn 2010].)

The second emphasis in Hanvey's global consciousness, 'perspective consciousness', was the recognition of profound cultural difference:

awareness on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared, that this view of the world has been and continues to be shaped by influences that often escape conscious detection, and that others have views of the world that are profoundly different from one's own. (5)

Both emphases are pivotal in the Global Perspective discourse in the US today. They appear mainly as a re-scaling of 'multicultural education' from the national arena, where traditionally it has been kept, to the global arena. This entails an extension of one of multiculturalism's key principles – knowledge of and recognition and respect for diverse cultures – from *within* the nation to cultures outside the nation. The slogan

‘celebrate diversity’, so popular in US schools, is taken out of the national container and extended to peoples everywhere. The problem this approach wants to tackle is the cultural provincialism and exceptionalism of American society along with its high school graduates’ slim knowledge of the world.

One example of the Global Perspective discourse in today’s movement can be found in the public ‘international’ middle school of my sample. Its faculty embraced what it called ‘global perspective’ as the defining characteristic of the school curriculum. At the school’s website was posed the question, ‘What do we mean when we say we are teaching a global perspective?’, and a response: ‘These are the types of objectives in global education that we are striving to meet in our school’. Both perspective consciousness and the world system are evident:

- (1) Global Challenges: Examine and evaluate global issues, problems, and challenges (e.g., students understand that global issues and challenges are interrelated, complex, and changing, and that most issues have a global dimension).
- (2) Culture and World Areas: Study human differences and commonalities (e.g., students understand that members of different cultures view the world in different ways).
- (3) Global Connections: Analyse the connections between the United States and the world (e.g., students can describe how they are connected with the world historically, politically, economically, technologically, socially, linguistically, and ecologically).

Cosmopolitanism

A second marginal discourse is uttered frequently as ‘global citizenship’ or ‘world citizens’, but its usage is in disarray. It is more marginal than Global Perspective, and I suspect this is because it sidesteps nationalism as straightforwardly as the strong national-security discourse embraces it. Perhaps for this reason it is found more often in academic symposia than in my samples of public schools, movement activists and government and foundation initiatives. Compared to the others, it hovers above practice, influencing it only sporadically. Still, it is a presence in the movement both in the casual talk about ‘world citizens’ and in more deliberate talk about forging a new kind of American presence in the world. Boldly, it shifts the territory of ‘IE’ to world citizenship (*kosmou-politês*) and in so doing raises political questions about allegiance and scales of belonging.

In contrast to putting the nation first, cosmopolitanism puts humanity and Earth first. In a celebrated essay that has drawn wide attention in the US, University of Chicago ethicist Martha Nussbaum (2002) proposed a cosmopolitan civic education for students in American schools. She wants to transform civic education so that children are taught not that they are, above all, citizens of the United States and stewards of its interests, but that ‘they are, above all, citizens of a world of human beings . . .’ (6). It is an ‘accident’ of birth, she believes, that one is born in Sudan, Mexico or the United States, yet we treat nationality as a source of pride and affinity. To identify oneself as a ‘citizen of the world’ breaks the old habit of loyalty to a ‘fatherland’ being defined primarily or solely by local origins and membership. It frees us, she argues, quoting Seneca, to dwell instead:

in *two* communities – the local community of our birth and the community of human argument and aspiration that ‘is truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun’. (7)

If the Global Perspective takes *cultural* education beyond the national container, Cosmopolitanism does the same for *political* education. Its interpretation of the problem tackles not only American provincialism and exceptionalism but also nationalism. World citizenship, significantly, is more a political concept than a cultural one. In most states, recitation of the *Pledge of Allegiance* (to the nation) in public schools is required by law (Piscatelli 2003). The cosmopolitan teacher or school board member will ask if it is not time to pledge allegiance also, or instead, to a larger political community: humanity. In one school this may be expressed by quietly dropping the morning national *Pledge* ritual and in another by stronger forms of global environmental education (e.g., teaching the *Earth Charter*, integration of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, or introducing students to the International Red Cross’s curriculum on *International Humanitarian Law*).

Cosmopolitanism is, of course, subject to intense debate. Voting against House Bill 266 in Utah, which would have provided more funding for the International Baccalaureate program in Utah’s schools, state Sen. Margaret Dayton said she is, ‘opposed to the anti-American philosophy that’s somehow woven into all the classes as they (IB courses) promote the U.N. agenda’. Aligning herself with the first of the two national-security discourses and against cosmopolitanism she clarified: ‘I would like to have *American citizens* who know how to function in a global economy, not *global citizens*’ (Fulton 2008, 10). Sen. Dayton’s antipathy to IB is in stark contrast to the National Academies’ support for it, but *both* operate within the strong discourse of economic competitiveness.

International student body

A third weak discourse brings the meaning of ‘IE’ back to culture again but, in contrast to Global Perspective, focuses on the cultural composition of the school’s student body. Some public ‘international’ high schools serving high-need students in resource-starved urban areas – places where race, poverty, migration, and formal education intersect institutionally – have created a form of ‘IE’ that rests on the demographic tapestry of the school. Immigrant students, some of them refugees, add a new kind of diversity to the school’s already diverse student population. School leaders seize the opportunity and claim to have an ‘international’ school because it has an ‘international’ student body.

Compared to Global Perspective and Cosmopolitanism, this approach side-steps the school’s explicit curriculum and stakes its claim on the implicit curriculum: student-centered by both necessity (the dearth of other resources) and a progressive pedagogy centered on culturally responsive teaching (e.g., Au 2010; Gay 2000), the approach takes advantage of the global student population of the school, focusing on the cultural and linguistic characteristics of students. ‘Culture fairs’ (also called ‘heritage fairs’) are held, where students showcase to one another their home cultures. English language learning (ELL) continues to be a central focus, as before, only now it is advanced to the central mission of the school. ELL is, in effect, re-framed as IE. The stresses on such schools – structural inequality, the discourse of derision, institutional racism – contribute to this re-framing. IE can be deployed to mobilise enthusiasm, new

resources, and media attention and, as one parent activist told me, ‘to attract market share back to the public schools’.

The main emphasis of the approach, as another activist said (this one the superintendent of another urban school district), ‘is making students and teachers aware of the diversity within their midst and finding ways to help them value that and trace that to wherever it originated’. He continued:

Being a magnate for so many different kids to come together seems to me to be an advantage. . . You can’t avoid it. The kids are going to experience it on the playground, they’re going to experience it in the classroom, in the lunchroom, on the bus. They’re going to see kids who are different from them. It becomes almost a way of living. Even though kids may never leave this city, the world has come to them.⁶

Discussion

‘International education’ is a fertile site of knowledge construction and contestation in the US today. It is a movement containing a disparate mix of meanings and goals. It is being deployed to bolster the nation’s economic and military defenses, to extend multiculturalism outward from the nation, to promote world citizenship, and, in some urban schools, to seize the opportunities afforded by a vibrant immigrant population and to make the best of a chronic, structural, resource-scarce predicament. I presume these are only some of the alternatives in the current wave of IE activity, but even these few display a range. The first two add up to a national-security discourse, backed by no less than the federal government, major foundations, the National Academies, and a popular drumbeat of derision for the ‘broken’ school system. The other three aim in different directions and are on the periphery mainly because they lack this kind of institutional power to advance their goals. Deeply held values are woven into the alternatives, including conflicting understandings of patriotism and competing visions of what purposes schools serve. Contention can be expected not only in schools and district meetings, but as we have seen, in legislatures and academic symposia. Table 1 summarises the five variations on ‘IE’ reported here, and then I turn to two questions.

Is the meaning of ‘IE’ anchored somewhere? The short answer, looking through the window opened here, is ‘no’. Looking at today’s wave in US public schools, it would be a gross oversimplification to assert that ‘IE’ is nothing but a continuation of national-defense education under an assumed name. It is partly and strongly that, but it

Table 1. Some strong and weak discourses of ‘IE’ in US public schools.

Strong	<i>National economic competitiveness</i> : ‘IE’ will revitalise the school system while ensuring that the US will retain (or regain) its competitive edge in the new global economy.
	<i>National military readiness</i> : Teaching strategic languages in schools, K-12, will assure that America has the language professionals necessary to defend our national security. Mandarin and Arabic are priorities.
Weak	<i>Global perspective</i> : Multiculturalism is re-scaled from the nation to the globe, and some attention is paid to global connections and systems.
	<i>Cosmopolitanism</i> : Schools should shift students’ primary allegiance from the nation to the human family and Earth – from national citizen to global citizen.
	<i>International student body</i> : Immigration is putting the world into the classrooms, hallways, cafeterias and playgrounds of public schools today. Seizing the opportunity, an ‘international’ school is formed on the basis of its ‘international’ students.

is more accurate to portray the movement as plural and discordant. There are multiple meanings, programmes and practices underwritten by multiple ideologies. 'IE' is a solution on the loose; it solves a variety of problems, mobilises a range of participants, serves an array of masters, and expresses diverse and sometimes conflicting values. I found no coherence to the movement, only an illusion of coherence conjured by the common use of a name.

Is there room for cosmopolitanism in today's wave? There is some room, as we have seen, but nationalism has crowded cosmopolitanism to the edges. Moreover, the cultural discourse of Global Perspective is probably more resonant than Cosmopolitanism with educators who, as a whole, appear already to have adopted (somewhat) the basic tenets of educational multiculturalism. The political discourse of cosmopolitanism, with its daring views on allegiance and loyalty, its intimations of world government, and its rescaling not merely of recognition and respect but of citizenship and membership, is, for the most part, a solution frame in search of advocates. Not so with multiculturalism whose advocates, by comparison, are many and whose urgency frame is tied to the popular (national) discourse of 'achievement gap' along with the rapidly changing demographics of the (national) student body.

Nussbaum's cosmopolitan proposal was opposed, we should note, by most of the scholars who responded to her essay, from both the left and right; and those who were not opposed outright searched for middle ground, such as Appiah's (2002) hybrid: 'cosmopolitan patriots'. Amid the many liquid flows of modern global life, the divide between patriotism (loyalty to the national scale) and cosmopolitanism (loyalty to the global scale) is apparently quite solid, at least sometimes in some places (Calhoun 2007; Mitchell and Parker 2008). Seneca's plea for a world in which we 'measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun' was answered rather concisely two thousand years later by the senator in Utah.

The force of nationalism in today's wave should, on reflection, come as little surprise. As social scientists have made abundantly clear, public schools everywhere have been serving national purposes (e.g., Green 1990; Mitchell 2001; Schiffauer et al. 2004). In a nation's early years, the school system devotes its powers to nation-building and cultural integration – to developing a national community unified⁷ by common beliefs, ideals and customs. Later, the system turns to reproducing these in subsequent generations and to making adjustments that may have wide political and cultural resonance. 'IE' is caught up in this grammar. An adjustment is now being made – this is the current wave – but apparently it is not an adjustment that is reforming this grammar in any considerable way. Why? Writing between the two world wars, in 1937 in a volume entitled *International Understanding through the School Curriculum*, Isaac Kandel cautioned that an 'IE' that wants to be more than national-security education operating under an assumed name will have to emerge from *within* the national school system, recognising and complying with its logics. It cannot be transplanted wholesale from another orbit. In the same vein, economist Kenneth Boulding, himself a movement activist in an earlier wave of 'IE' in the US, said in 1968 that the question is not whether an alternative to nationalistic education can be imagined, but:

whether we can develop an image of the world system which is at the same time realistic and also not threatening to the folk cultures within which the school systems are embedded; for if educators do not find a palatable formula, the 'folk' will revolt and seek to divert formal education once again into traditional channels. (650)

Conclusion

As Foucault demonstrated, ‘relations of power, not relations of meaning’ (1980, 114) furnish the history of the present moment. As this study has shown, the several meanings of IE in its current formation in the US do not operate freely but circulate in relation to one another, with economic and military competitiveness more urgently valued and resourced than the others. While this national-security discourse was dominant, it lacked the totalising force of, say, psychiatry in the asylum or medicine in the hospital. Other voices were present and, to a limited extent, making sense and getting work done. Still, the dominant voice, bolstered by a discourse of broken schools, could be heard over the loudspeaker systems of no less than the White House, Cabinet secretaries, the National Academies and major foundations. By contrast, Global Perspective, Cosmopolitanism and Student Body were weak, the latter being the weakest, perhaps, for lacking any loudspeaker system at all.

One must be sceptical of the glib usage of the terms *global citizens* and *world citizenship* in such a milieu. This is historically the case, as Kandel’s and Boulding’s comments suggest, due to nationalism’s lock on the school system in the US and elsewhere. But scepticism is especially warranted in the case of the US. Recall that during the period of this study (2003–2008), unilateralism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism took hold of much of the country and its leadership. To speak of educating *global citizens* in such a milieu turns the meaning of the term on its head. Utah’s Senator Dayton set the record straight: ‘I would like to have *American citizens* who know how to function in a global economy, not *global citizens*’.

Global Perspective and International Student Body, in tandem, may stand the best chance of challenging, if only somewhat, the dominant national-security tide in the ‘IE’ movement in the US, partly because both are easily yoked to the instrumentalism of the national-security discourse and to the urgency of the schools-are-broken discourse. Also, both already are comfortably nested in mainstream practices of US multiculturalism. The challenge they can pose to the dominant discourse, then, is moderate; yet, both of these do move away from the national container: Global Perspective towards the world at large and International Student Body to the world at home – to the ‘glocal’ scene of the underfunded and overstressed urban public school. ‘IE’ is likely to continue as a busy site of knowledge construction and contestation in the US for the foreseeable future, and these marginal voices will be well worth watching.

Notes

1. E.g., *International Studies Schools Network*, www.asiasociety.org/education/issn/index.htm (accessed October 3, 2009); *Center for Teaching International Relations – International Studies Schools Association (ISSA)* www.du.edu/issa (accessed October 3, 2009).
2. E.g., Asia Society (2008); Council of Chief State School Officers (2008).
3. E.g., One World Now (www.oneworldnow.org), Facing the Future (www.facingthefuture.org), Asia Society (www.asiasociety.org).
4. See Parker and Camicia (2009) for a detailed report on these interviews.
5. On the crisis narrative, see Sears and Hyslop-Margison (2007); on the salvation narrative, Grubb and Lazerson (2004).
6. Perhaps this statement, more than others in these data, captures the ‘view from the ground’ (Hansen 2010) that understands cosmopolitanism not in universalistic or abstract, paranormal terms, but as critical receptivity to difference as it exists locally.
7. This unity can be sheer pretense. See, for example, Allen (2004) on the United States, Hong and Huang (2008) on Singapore and Bryan (2010) on Ireland.

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