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## **EDUCATING THE 21ST CENTURY CHILD: A NEW APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

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Today I am addressing the issue of Educating the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Child and sharing with you our approach to international education – our vision of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a motivating force for the establishment of a new kind of international education, the context of Hong Kong and China from which it emerged, the key features of its content and structures, and a way for us to move forward together for global reform. Let me begin historically by looking back at the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Self-determination and the rise of independent nation states were two major forces that characterized the 20th century, effectively driving us into the dawn of a new era in the 21st century the early years of which can be characterized by a process of internationalization leading to the birth of a global civilization. Traditional societies and cultures are mixing and changing as rejuvenated civilizations clash. In our time, an historic synthesis or a paradigm shift is occurring. Evidence of this is in the newly emerging international cities; the sharp increase in international and multi-national companies; the movement of vast numbers of people across national boundaries changing the nature and dynamic of countries and cultures; the predominance of English as a second language continuing to spread around the world; and, the emergence of Chinese as a significant world language, with China itself taking center stage in business, trade and commerce. Local economies are now firmly part of a global economy. Science and technology have obliterated local and national boundaries and created an international community. In virtually every field – music, entertainment, sports, fashion, architecture, literature, education, and on and on – all are being reshaped, rejuvenated, influenced and created from the fusion of international concepts building what we have so long simply referred to as the global village.

In fact, it is already a cliché to refer to today's world as a global village. Geographical distance no longer separates peoples, when advances in communications and information technology have made neighborhoods of what were formerly regions and states. We care about what happens to the children held hostage in a school in Beslan; about the fate of 12 million people displaced by the flooding of the Yangtze River in China; about the billions of dollars of damage from the hurricanes in Florida or typhoons in Japan, Taiwan, or the Philippines; the displacement of peoples in Sudan and the rising numbers of refugees throughout the world. In this world with almost zero distance and zero time, the Earth has become not just smaller but in reality, one country with one world community. This is the new era of the 21st century, which requires new ways of thinking, new approaches to educating the young, a new concept of world citizenship, a paradigm shift from narrow thinking to world mindedness.

We are experiencing an information explosion of unlimited magnitude, which has impacted new economic structures, generated new cultures, and challenged existing assumptions about learning. In almost all professions, jobs, and trades, the volume of knowledge and the need to factor in sensitivity to cultural values have increased beyond measure and are determinants in productivity and capital. Learning can no longer be about memorizing essential information in a particular discipline, but rather about accessing information, integrating cross discipline knowledge, and understanding concepts and ideas from multicultural perspectives. Cultural, ethnic and racial diversity, multiculturalism, and multilingualism place demands on us not only to be simply tolerant but to understand and become familiar with the strange and unfamiliar and to transform and incorporate the alien into a known and friendly entity.

Indeed, we are challenged to look at the very nature of education, its purposes and delivery systems. In this new era, which has brought about deep and extensive changes that have untold impact on all aspects of our lives, an integral part of the overarching paradigm shift is education, now moving away from its limited 19th and 20th century models and towards a more broadly based, interdisciplinary, and international system. But, even after 25 or 30 years of research, we are still asking, "What is international education?" I would like to take a few moments to explore this question a bit further and to share briefly the experience and practice of our Yew Chung Education Foundation, of which I serve as the Director, in our Yew Chung international schools in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing, and in the United States in Silicon Valley, California.

Coming from Hong Kong, which has always been an integral part of China even through the 150 years of British colonialism until the return of sovereignty in 1997, we were in a position to look at international education in a different light. From our perspective, the so-called "international education" in the 150 years of colonial rule was actually just mono-cultural western national education. It was derived from the national curriculum of particular Western countries to educate their children and prepare them to return to their home countries to continue their further and higher education. Being a Crown Colony, Hong Kong's elite international schools served the interests of the colonial ruling class and provided a British curriculum, basically British-administered schools, a British-based cultural environment to maintain English language, English values, and English behavior and etiquette in an alien, foreign environment. Professor Jeff Thompson and Dr. Mary Hayden have pointed out in

their works that international education in the 19th and 20th centuries merely described national education systems transplanted from Britain, France, Spain, Netherlands, the United States, etc., into foreign countries as a means of preserving national values, customs, language, and academic standards for qualifications for reentry into home country schools and universities.

This has not changed substantially. Even today, most international schools are providing a particular national curriculum for qualifications to enter home country schools, colleges or universities. These are essentially national schools in an international context.

With the powerful push towards self-determination after World War I and the process of de-colonization and subsequent rise in the number of independent nation states after World War II – you might say from the League of Nations to the United Nations – the world has experienced enormous changes from the impact of the Third World and Developing countries, of Northeast and Southeast Asia, of Latin America, Africa, and the Australasian Pacific. Civilizations and cultures beyond the Western frontiers are now rooted in our consciousness even at a basic, almost trivial level. There are mosques in our midst, Chinese restaurants and sushi bars in even the smallest of rural towns, Indian curries and Hindu temples, Mexican restaurants and Brazilian carnivals, synagogues, churches, monumental cathedrals alongside Intel, Microsoft, and the now common HSBC. East Asia's neo-Confucianism, South Asia's Indian eclecticism, Middle Eastern and Indonesia's Islam, Latin America's Catholic Hispanic culture have altered the intellectual, spiritual, cultural, political, social, commercial and economic landscape.

A particular phenomenon of globalization is that Western influences, especially those from the United States, are pervasive. These influences are not limited to the military, economy or diplomacy but are on culture, ideology, values and standards. Many international schools continue to adopt the Western model of education, because they feel it is relevant to the international world in which we live. After all, we are surrounded everywhere by Microsoft and Intel, McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Gucci, Ferragamo, Ralph Lauren, Hollywood movies, rock stars and mega-concerts, the American elections, etc., etc. The significance of the rise of China and the international revitalization of Chinese culture, at this level, is that it provides an alternative model, provides a contrast to the West, and hence it helps to create a balance between East and West.

In spite of the North / South economic divide, the East / West divide is still the most significant factor in the globalization process. China alone has more than one quarter of the earth's population. China is the oldest continuing civilization and culture in the world. China's Confucian roots have grown and influenced the cultures of Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Singapore. It is in this context – a world of powerful and dynamic forces of globalization leading into an emerging visible international culture and civilization – that the Yew Chung Education Foundation developed a brand new model of international education. In the view of Yew Chung, an international school is one that provides a genuine international curriculum, one that merges the essence of the world's major civilizations and brings together the East and the West, preparing students for world citizenship.

My mother, Madame Tsang Chor-hang, embraced the concept of integrating Eastern and Western cultures when she established Yew Chung in Hong Kong in 1932. Many years later, after I returned from my doctoral studies in the United States, I worked in the field of early childhood education. In the 1970s I began to introduce new concepts in education in Hong Kong – the open classroom, learning through play, discovery- and project based learning using individualized learning corners, using music for the development of learning, and introducing English and Chinese dual language learning. In short, I utilized the best of educational philosophies that I examined in graduate school and contextualized them into our Hong Kong schools. My aim was to balance the major cultures of East and West and I knew language was a key factor, and therefore I emphasized not just bilingualism but dual language learning from early childhood.

Historically, Hong Kong was a city under colonial rule that brought Eastern and Western cultures together. By the mid-1980s, it was already seen to be a mature international city. Elite schools had grown up and were providing Western education, preparing students to continue their education in the “mother country”, which referred to England. But Chinese had always comprised the majority of people in Hong Kong. Many were conflicted. On the one hand, they have always been under the powerful influence of Chinese culture, but on the other hand they were under the domination and rule of the British and the Chinese elite were educated through Western models of education. With literally hundreds of thousands of expatriates, Hong Kong’s unique environment was conducive to the growth of international schools. But many of us had questions. Were they truly international? What could they provide families who wanted to enter the international world but retain their essential Chinese character? Could you be educated in English and have a future in China? To what “mother country” do I owe loyalty – England or China?

Seeing Hong Kong as an international city already gave us a concept of the future global village. We could see the rapid changes brought about by science and technology, which would create a new era in the coming 21st century and hence demand new educational objectives to prepare the next generation for responsible citizenship in a global society. I asked more questions. Could we incorporate high technology, combine the best of Western lifestyle and ways of thinking with traditional Chinese values and character, and produce citizens fluent in English and Chinese, thereby creating new opportunities for the younger generation no matter what changes occurred or what country these young people would have to adapt to?

In this context of the 1980s social, intellectual, and political ferment, and witnessing the rapid changes in Hong Kong brought about by technology, finance, commerce, and the political climate, the needs of the 21st century global community became clear. I felt strongly that we needed a new kind of international school. But there were more questions. Is an international school international only by virtue of having Western operators, staff and students? Does having a multi-cultural setting automatically define international education? What is international education? It was clearly contradictory to equate “international” with “Western style”. I was convinced that we needed an international school with a new set of assumptions and focused on the education of future citizens of the world. Our vision was to create a new type of citizen for the 21st century where acquisition of these two dominant cultures, Western and Eastern, was essential. All the unique features of Yew Chung educational philosophy derive from this basic premise.

Yew Chung educational philosophy has not changed substantially over the past two decades, although it has evolved and been implemented more systematically over time. We equate the notion of “international” with an individual’s internal transformation of their worldview. We define an international education by what goes on inside the student. It is about the internal transformation of the child. This is affected by the international school’s culture, which is created by the teaching and learning environment, the administration, the overall curriculum content and educational delivery processes which directly impact the character formation of the child.

A Yew Chung International School utilizes English and Chinese languages as the vessels which hold these two cultures and through which the substance of Eastern and Western civilizations or cultures may be integrated. The two cultures, though distinct, share equal status. We create a school environment that harmonizes Eastern and Western culture and nurtures global children who will eventually be the cream of both cultures.

The essential point is that cultures are treated as equal. We chose Chinese as representative of Eastern culture, as it has had, and continues to have, extensive influence on the entire region of Asia. We chose English as representative of Western culture, because it has effectively spread around the world and, as stated in a conference on World Languages held at the University of Hawaii in 1996, it has established itself as the first *lingua franca* in history now to have more non-native than native speakers of English. Moreover, our context was Hong Kong, always a part of China but under British colonial rule also a part of and influenced by Britain. It can be any two diverse cultures, and in our case the context was Western and Chinese cultures.

To be international citizens of the world, individuals need to be comfortable moving in and out of languages and cultures, particularly in what will be the 21st century multilingual, multicultural, plural society of what we call the coming global village. Where do we begin? Our assumption is that by becoming fluent in two languages to the extent that you literally enter into and absorb two cultures, you gain the skills and comfort level to move in and out of other languages and cultures. This level of cultural integration involves cultural traits, philosophies, ideologies, non-verbal as well as verbal behavioral patterns, ways of thinking, etc., much of which comes from role modeling. It cannot be accomplished by merely taking a second language. So, we started in Hong Kong in the non-Western context of Chinese culture and civilization to create an international curriculum based on the amalgamation of two cultures, Western and Eastern.

The foundation of Western civilization comes out of Christianity. Much of what we call Oriental civilization is based on traditional Chinese Confucian culture. Western Christian culture has shaped concepts of individual freedom, democracy, human rights and science. With the notion that we are all the children of a loving God by birth, Western values focus on equality, individual choice, personal dignity, mutual respect between individuals, independent and critical thinking, self-confidence, creativity, law and order. Western culture has gradually yielded a distinct mindset around common core values. Chinese culture evolved from Confucianism as the base but infused with Taoism and Buddhism. It amalgamates these three

philosophies. Over time this has changed into what is called today neo-Confucianism. Its core values revolve around clearly defined relationships within the family and in society, deference to authority, filial piety and respect for elders and teachers, strong attachment to the family unit in society, the importance of working in groups, excellence in every endeavor, honesty, faithfulness, and the importance of social order and respect. Western cultural traits such as critical thinking, a high level of self-esteem and independence are tempered by Eastern emphasis on character formation, respect for elders, self-discipline. Language is the tool to enter the cultures, and our students gain command of two languages allowing them access to these two cultures. Since both cultures have many good qualities, we take advantage of the commonalities to build a new culture that is an improvement over both. When put together, these two cultures share common values of love, forgiveness, respect, appreciation, filial piety, integrity, etc. All these have become common truths or virtues accepted by all peoples.

The international education ethos that Yew Chung reflects can be seen in the content and process of education that leads our students to an inner transformation whereby they are both Eastern and Western. From the beginning, the Yew Chung philosophy, motto, and practice integrated Eastern and Western cultural elements. The Yew Chung curriculum was not simply an adopted foreign system, but rather a curriculum that focused on Eastern and Western dual culture learning. We conceptualized a new form of international school administration. We created the Co-Principal system, employing one Chinese and one Westerner of equal status as co-principals working in consultation and with a consensus decision-making process. We created a Co-Teacher system, also using one Chinese and one Westerner in the classroom using English and Chinese dual language learning and classroom management. We carefully selected staff through the recruitment process from different countries and from different ethnic groups to promote an international cultural learning environment for children from an early age and among the staff, themselves. Over time a unique bi-cultural and interconnected administration, teaching and support system has taken shape.

In our method of teaching we adopt an integrated or enquiry approach that may be identified as Western. Looking at a Chinese approach based on the Confucian model, for example, his taking students out to learn in the field, we have created what we call the World Classroom whereby learning takes place beyond the confines of the traditional classroom and most of our students travel and study overseas. We inspire students to become self-learners by focusing on individual needs and interests. The Western way of analytical thinking, based on fact-finding and logical deduction, is practiced. With equal emphasis, the Chinese way of philosophical, conceptual thinking is encouraged. Here Western and Chinese teachers working together in a co-teaching situation may become models of two styles blending into one.

At Yew Chung student character formation and discipline are integrated, fusing traditional Chinese culture and the Christian spirit. We have adopted a guidance approach, a mentor system to guide students in their character formation and to strike a balance between the Eastern emphasis on control and authoritarianism and Western liberal practices. We emphasize the Eastern cultural trait of maintaining the group spirit; at the same time we value Western individualism and independence.

In the process of implementing and practicing our concepts and international education, Yew Chung has developed an effective model and a set of successful experiences that allow our students to move freely in and out of Eastern and Western cultures, the hallmark of being an international citizen. Fluency in English and Chinese is a key factor. We do not teach English or Chinese as second language, but through our unique co-teaching system we employ dual language learning in the classroom. For us, language is the tool to open up a culture into which a student can pass. To enter into a culture, understand it, absorb its primary traits, the school has to pay equal attention to the two languages and to make both as the native tongues of the students. We have a through-train system whereby students can enter at 6 months old and progress through the Early Childhood Infant and Toddler Learning Program through kindergarten, primary and secondary levels.

Our emphasis is on liberating the joy of learning in every individual student, so the open classroom, learning through inquiry and projects, using problem-based learning approaches become important. Then become more formal and introduce the International GCSE for years 10 and 11, and the International Baccalaureate Diploma program for years 12 and 13. Our approach has not hindered our students from achieving high results in both. Our average scores are consistently higher than the world averages. Our students invariably achieve A\*-distinction in First Language English and First Language Chinese in the IGCSE, and 6's and 7's in First Language English at the end of I.B. To reach this level, we spend a lot of effort and resources on creating a dual language environment and a unique bi-cultural atmosphere on campus from early childhood through I.B. secondary. Our students have gone on to Cambridge, Imperial, LSE, UCL, Warwick, Leeds, Leicester and Bristol in the U.K., to Cornell, Yale, Northwestern, University of California, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the U.S., and to Waterloo, Queen's, and the Universities of Toronto, British Columbia and Western Ontario in Canada, as well as to top universities in Hong Kong and mainland China. I merely mention this to indicate that it is possible to make radical reforms within our educational systems to produce 21st century international citizens without jeopardizing their chances of going on to great universities. We will enhance rather than diminish their academic futures.

School is about more than academics and knowledge accumulation, however. School is a part of the education and socialization process, and in this process our characters are formed, our values are shaped, and who we are in life is greatly determined. A real school teaches students more than sciences, mathematics, and the arts and languages. It teaches students to love their fellow human beings, to love the society they are a part of, and to care for the people around them and the planet that is the one home of all humankind. Overcoming fear, prejudice and hatred and learning to love is not easy, but it is what life is about. One has to learn to love and accept oneself, one's own people, and one's own society and culture, and in doing so learn to respect the diverse peoples and cultures outside one's own.

These core values are of even greater importance today than in previous centuries, because this is a new era of globalization. In the ideology of globalization, the advancement of high technology, the rapid spread of media and information, the production and mass distribution of material goods and services, and the general development of a world economy must have one aim, and that is to benefit global civilization. Education in this new era must have one aim, and that is to produce

responsible and caring world citizens prepared to protect, preserve, and perpetuate the environment of our planet, advance the progress of globalization that will bring together the East and the West, and contribute to the advancement of human civilization.

Looking at international education from this perspective, the cultural dimension becomes extremely important. We are not talking about the so-called third culture kids. When we refer to third culture kids, we are often thinking about not fitting into either the native culture or the new culture. We are focusing on something more profound. By becoming fluent in two languages, allowing students to absorb cultural perspectives, traditions, values, standards, behaviors, thinking, students learn to move in and out of language or cultural situations, becoming more accepting of other languages and cultures. In Hong Kong, for example, our students become used to what we call “switching channels”, speaking in Cantonese or Putonghua Chinese and easily switching to English if the situation requires it, or speaking in English and reverting to Chinese with ease. We are not talking about “Chinglish”, a term some use for the mixing of two languages, a bit like pidgin Chinese. It is about dual language ability, fluency in different languages. With this level of fluency the style, gestures, manner, behavior, and thinking of the speaker change. They become quite different from their Chinese monolingual, mono-cultural counterparts. They can be both very Chinese and very Western. Effective world citizenship is going to require this level of sensitivity, interaction, communication, and transformation so that people are comfortable switching channels in language and culture.

A Western colleague shared with me how he was surprised to see for the first time a Beijing opera performance by our students from the Yew Chung International School Shanghai when they entered an all school performance day at the Shanghai School of Drama. Our two leading performers in Beijing opera costumes and elaborate makeup sang with such perfect pitch, had the inflections, gestures, and manner of seasoned Beijing opera students that my colleague was convinced we had pre-selected well-rehearsed Chinese students to stand out. However, he was shocked to find out later that the girl was from Romania and the boy was from Ireland. Having absorbed both Chinese language and culture, these European students experienced a transformation that will prepare them for the international context of the 21st century. Learning a second language is not the issue, but the second language that takes one into and allows the student to absorb the cultural dimension is what matters. This is why schools cannot be confined to their own culture. Direct exposure, interactive communication, and direct involvement within the context of other cultures is a key to world awareness and international mindedness.

Mrs. Beatrice Larose and Mr. Terry Haywood stated in their letter to participants, “one of the most profound aspects of our profession is that international education is no longer the privilege of an elite group of expatriate or visionary schools.” Professor George Walker in his vision for the International Baccalaureate Organization sees “the prospect of expanding to a ‘realistic target audience of 100 million students.’” China alone, with more than a quarter of the world’s population, is undergoing major education reform, and its leading universities, Tsinghua University and Peking University, have launched plans to internationalize their student bodies within the next five years. All over the world young people are aspiring to be fully integrated into a world community of commonalities, participating in the cultures of others. As educators, we need to move beyond being just a group of enthusiasts and really

focus on international education and its objectives to socialize students into the culture of the 21st century where they will be world minded global citizens.

So today I want to call on all of you here to consider the cultural dimension of international education, that in your own schools you bring in the local culture and integrate it into the curriculum. If local schools are mono-cultural, then you can find ways of bringing in and including whatever different cultures are within your midst. If you are in India, bring in and integrate both Western and Indian cultures. If you are in the Middle East, bring in and integrate Western and Arabic cultures. If you are in Latin America, bring in and integrate Hispanic and Western cultures. If we leave here and have even just 20 different schools committed to a fusion of East and West, North and South cultures we could begin a movement to really internationalize our schools. Not just at the private or international school level, we could reach out and influence local schools, perhaps develop joint programs and become involved in the community together. The more schools the larger the force in the world to educate and socialize international citizens.

In Chinese we have a character 人 (Rén), which means “human being”. If we think of the masses at the base, the two limbs representing education and socialization into future society, and the upper limb representing the global community we can easily understand how the more the masses enter into the process the greater the number of world citizens produced for the global society. Another character in Chinese takes the root character for human being and adds another stroke to become 大 (Dà). This means “big, mighty”. When combined it means that the greater the numbers of students being educated and socialized through international education systems, the bigger and stronger the impact on the future world society. If international education is about giving students the ability to switch channels in languages and cultures and enhance a comfort level with multicultural differences, skills in negotiation and consultation for peaceful resolutions to problems, the greater the impact on developing a peaceful world civilization.

This Alliance for International Education could become an annual event where we can share together our best practices and experiences in language and cultural integration. This is, indeed, a 21st century model of education. We have successfully implemented it through Yew Chung in China, but it is not just a Yew Chung model or for Yew Chung. It is for every school, because it hits at global reform. It is at heart a move from a national curriculum to an international curriculum, from narrow mindsets to world mindedness, from local perspectives to international perspectives, from languages as simply linguistic structures to languages as channels for the absorption of cultures.

With a global network of educators, the Alliance can be an important force for change. Annual meetings would allow us to share our experiences, learn from each other, and to stimulate us to find new ways of exposing our children to the diversity of cultures. We can hold our conferences in not only Europe but also Asia, Latin America, or Africa. Member schools or organizations can host annual conferences in these different parts of the world. As Director of the Yew Chung Education Foundation, I can say that our Foundation would be pleased to host an annual meeting in Hong Kong, Shanghai, or Beijing, and I offer our services as the working committee for local planning and organizing of such a forum.

For a preview of what it might be like to hold such a conference in China, I extend an invitation to all of you to join us in Shanghai next month for a major public symposium, "Educating the Global Child", which will be held on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Yew Chung is sponsoring this first of a kind conference in Shanghai, and we have invited Professor Jeff Thompson and Dr. Mary Hayden to be our guest speakers. They were with us last year at a similar event in Hong Kong and visited the Yew Chung International Schools in both Hong Kong and Shanghai, so I am sure they would be happy to share with you their enthusiasm for what is happening in education in China. We have flyers with conference registration details available at our table.

Let me close by thanking the Alliance for International Education working committee for this opportunity to share with you the Yew Chung experience of international education as it has evolved from a non-Western context. I believe we have much to contribute to the development and growth of international education, and I welcome the opportunity to join together with you in this great task ahead of us. And I look forward to the continuing support and involvement of the Yew Chung Education Foundation in the Alliance for International Education.

Thank you.