**2006 AIE Conference in Shanghai**

**Conference Summary**

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Ni Hao

Ni Hao, Peng You

Those of you, the majority, who do not speak Chinese, should now put on your headphones.

I wish I could go on in Chinese but, unfortunately, I can’t.

I am not quite sure why I agreed to try to review this conference.  I did it last time, two years ago in Düsseldorf.  I found it very difficult then.  Foolishly, I thought that it might be easier the second time.  But it has been much harder.  There is one clear reason for this:  the nature of our thought, discussion and debate has become more subtle and more sophisticated, more challenging, deeper, more flexible and also more committed.  I said last time that the strand sessions were characterized by a rare blend of the committed and the conversational: to this I would add here in Shanghai the open and the intellectual.  That is a very unusual mixture: on the one hand the committed yet open, on the other the conversational but intellectual.  Friends, we have enjoyed a really exciting weekend.

It has, in addition, become obvious to me during this conference that we have a developing sense of connectedness with what has gone before.  Interconnectivity is one of the conference buzzwords and one place where this has local significance for us is within our growing AIE traditions.  Some presenters have referred quite deliberately to papers given in both Geneva and Düsseldorf.  This allows for a layered, richer dialogue than before.  We are building on previous, shared experience and allowing ideas to develop and mature.  What we must guard against, however, is the possibility that this might become exclusive and make it difficult for newcomers to enter our dialogues on collegial terms.  We must ensure that all our conference participants are citizens of AIE first, and then the world!

The theme of this conference has been Global Citizenship.  The word “global”, by itself, has many meanings.  One of them is to describe something big, all-embracing, perhaps planetary in size.  Betty, the banners that have announced our presence in Shanghai have certainly been that.   We have enjoyed a global welcome from you and everyone from your Yew Chung campus and Foundation, as well as from those in Shanghai who have come here in different capacities to be part of our gathering.  I add my thanks to the thank yous that have already been given so appreciatively by others.

You have also added a special dimension to this conference by bringing in so many Chinese colleagues and making sure that we have heard, and learnt, about the amazing changes that are taking place in your country.  I hope that at future conferences we shall have the privilege again of meeting local colleagues and finding out about educational practices, problems and advancements in the host country.  Here, we have become aware of a nation moving at an amazing pace, bursting with pride and apparently little prejudice.  Your thirst for growth is infectious.  In education, the scale of investment and the increase in student numbers at all levels is staggering.  Last night we were told of the further need for about 3000 International Schools in China.  This is unbelievable.  More important, the quality shifts are deeply impressive.  We have been told of teacher reform, of teachers active and outspoken in training workshops, of student-centred learning, of classrooms without walls.  I am humbled by the desire among so many to learn as much as possible, and to learn it from all over the world; by the huge growth in English language skills; by the abundant knowledge of the world outside China; and by the genuine interest in becoming global citizens and what you yourself called “equal members of a world community”. There is much to be learned from this example by those in the so-called developed nations who might not share this sense of urgency about progression.  The East that is China is clearly learning rapidly from the best of the West and the rest; sadly, I am not sure that the reverse is happening.

Now to the strands.  Debate and discussion in the strands, especially in small groups, was intense and provocative.  Many participants clearly would have liked more discussion time.  Should we restrict presentations to two per session in future and try to put all the papers on the website a week or two before we meet?

Although they had been given different areas of focus, there were many overlapping interests that emerged in these discussions.  It is quite impossible to capture the wealth of these sessions in a few words but I shall make some brief comments about each in turn. To jazz things up just a little, I have taken the liberty of giving each strand my own nickname, using some of the many words in the English language that describe friends or groups of acquaintances.  So I start with Strand 1, nicknamed the definition dudes.

**Definition Dudes**

Those trying to define Global Citizenship had both the best and the worst of times and so I shall give them a little more space than the others. At the start, I overheard one saying that his strand was the mother of all strands.  After all, how could the other strands proceed without knowing what the true definition of Global Citizenship was!  Just after lunch on Friday, the definition dudes had reached the pluralistic decision that definitions of Global Citizenship are so highly variable that perhaps they do not exist.  At that point someone suggested ending the conference.  This suggestion was bravely rejected and so they went on to further vigorous debate for another day and a half.    
  
At the coffee break yesterday afternoon, I noticed about 8 people in that strand carrying on discussions so intensely that they never left the room. Perhaps that’s what Global Citizenship is: a stimulus much stronger than caffeine.  But, seriously, the definition dudes really did grapple with a complex topic.  They realized the massive effects of globalisation on our lives and saw the need as educators to understand this phenomenon. As I have already mentioned, they rejected the possibility of any one, fixed definition.  Within the local context, they saw global citizenship as an essential process to be engaged with in learning communities.  Mere checklists will not be sufficient and cognitive dimensions to the concept need to be complemented by affective and emotional aspects, and so knowledge and skills, identity formation and procedural issues and values are all part of a process of realizing global citizenship.  Because of this, a commitment to reflective action is entailed.  In schools, teachers and students are learners equally of such citizenship and so the role of the teacher might need redefinition. Finally, global citizenship does not deprive an individual of any local allegiances and responsibilities.  In fact, in a globalised world where so many are displaced both within and outside their own countries, GC might come to give rights to a few as well demanding responsibilities from the many.

**The Context Crew**

The crew of the good ship “Context” sailed across oceans.  If global citizenship is to be available to all, potentially at least, then it must be capable of being developed in a multiplicity of contexts.  Frequently, the context is that of the other, those whom “we do not see”.  If the other can also be right, this can stretch belief and create difficulties in maintaining personal integrity.  In the context of religious belief, global citizenship has serious challenges that it should not ignore.  In the context of the conference, China, this country has embarked ambitiously on a programme to find its place in the global community.  In the context of International Schools, and other schools that intentionally offer education for global citizenship, huge advances have been made and such schools should be leaders in the further development of this fine ideal.

**The Faculty Friends**

This group of friends was in a questioning, interrogative mood.  How do teachers and administrators (let’s call them faculty) prepare for the challenges of global citizenship development in the way they interact with and teach their students?  Do they have to be global citizens themselves?  If they are, will this infect their students automatically, like a benign virus?  Is the new technology of information processing and computing a major vehicle for conveying global citizenship?  How much does the development of global citizenship in schools depend upon teacher recruitment?  Do faculty have to understand a model for learning internationally?  Must there be ongoing training for teachers in international-mindedness?  Is there a need for carefully designed support materials?  Should global citizenship be promoted in all schools?

**Our Curriculum Cronies**

The curriculum cronies looked at and explored ways in which global citizenship had been injected or infused into curricula at all levels of the educational process.  There is exciting evidence of curriculum related work in some countries but little coherence.

Presenters discussed core elements of a curriculum for global citizenship and both critical thinking and moral reasoning were suggested as being essential skills within such a framework.  But it was also pointed out that Global Citizenship has an affective and emotional component that should not be left out.  An award programme was proposed based around student action, values and attitudes, which rewarded change and development rather than standards reached.  Reflection by students on their personal global footprints might form a part of this.

Aspects of global awareness need to be structured into the curriculum so that something happens.  Schools must make this formal commitment.   There is some evidence from practice that context is more important than content and a curriculum for global citizenship will need to balance competing demands, of which these are two.

**Partnership Pals or Partnership Peng You**

These pals realized that partnerships can be at the heart of creating global citizenship.  At their best, they are practical expressions of the potential of this ideal.  Partnerships and linking programmes of many kinds were discussed. Resources, financing, the student leadership dimension and effective evaluation are all important in developing successful partnerships.  There are many challenges to partnerships and we must seek out those that will promote our desired ends.  Partnerships between international and national schools are especially desirable, as are partnerships where there are language and cultural variations, challenges to be overcome not avoided.  We have seen this morning, in the experimental partnership fair, what has already been achieved in this area and what potential there is still to be explored.

**Institution Inmates**

Those confined to our institutions, strand 6, I have called inmates.  Within our institutions, we should try to see global citizenship as a process and a discursive practice.  It is not static.  We must, therefore, consult within our institutions to help all our members become sensitive to the complex nature and obligations of global citizenship.  Institutions and educators need to model the values and mission of global citizenship so that there is continuity between rhetoric and practice.  Creative practices that are already happening within our schools should be recognized and celebrated and a further critical engagement with them should be encouraged.  The multiple narratives that are emerging in different schools need to be shared in order to promote a dynamic relationship with ideas of global citizenship.  Measuring success is important but how do we assess this, especially in the affective domain?

Throughout the strands, as well as in our main addresses, a few key words or phrases that emerged for me are these: transformation, relationality, imagination, state of mind and duality.  They are not new words but they have been used in unusual contexts and given new dimensions.

I heard teachers and educators talk of the transformative nature of the global citizen experience, that moment when we feel that we have been touched by someone different, someone who has not previously entered our experience.  This type of transformation can be an “existential awakening”, to borrow an overheard phrase.  We encounter, meet, and can be moulded by, the other.  This leads me directly to “relationality”, one of Professor Rizvi’s epistemic virtues.  Concerned not so much with the other’s culture, fixed as a commodity, nor with where we are located, but more with the relationship between the two, we enter a process of becoming globally “citizened”, if you will excuse the grammar.    
  
Relationality changes our perception of the other.  This frees us to employ our  “imagination” in novel ways, to enter an attitudinal “state of mind” that is neither merely skills-based nor values-based but that produces a qualitatively new form of global citizenship.  In this state of mind so many of the dualities that were located as points of creative tension in papers and discussions can be fused: particular and universal; local and global; nation and world; patriot and cosmopolitan.  Or perhaps we should call it a “state of heart”.  That would bring together neatly another oppositional duality that came up again and again in stereotypical form, that of West and East.

A feature of this conference was partly the fact that we broke new geographical and cultural ground, and this was important for many from the West.  Let me rather say many of us who had not been to China before, or whose knowledge and experience of Asia was limited.  This has been a transformational experience for us.  I hope that we continue to break new ground in our choice of conference venues in the future.  There has been much talk of East and West this weekend but little of the South, or even the Middle.  Those gaps might give a clue as to where we might go soon, I hope.

It was pointed out in one of the strands that the phrase “global citizenship” had only one mention in the programme notes four years ago in Geneva.  It has not taken long for it to move from relative insignificance to become our conference topic.  In looking through the titles and notes in this year’s programme, I wonder if there are other new words or phrases that are just beginning to emerge.  I have spotted one.  You will not guess what it is, although we have all drunk much of it from plastic bottles this weekend.  “Water”, mentioned only once, like global citizenship four years ago.  But the water project described late yesterday afternoon by Richard Harwood raised the burning issue, literally burning, of the environment, touched on from time to time by other speakers.  There is, it seems, not enough water to put out this fire.  As many strands felt a need for some call to action, perhaps environmentalism, or education for sustainable life and living, might be a future conference topic.

Let me end with some thoughts about action. It may be the case, as was suggested more than once, that global citizenship is a predominantly western construct.  If that is so, let’s open up a narrow concept, not throw it away.  It certainly seems right that we should talk of global citizenship not only in cultural terms but that we must include economic, political, social and other related factors.  If we do not, how do we even dare to talk of global citizenship on our globe that is so divided into the very few that are rich and the huge numbers that are so poor and that never travel outside their immediate locality?  Jeff spoke at the beginning of the possibility of “better intercultural understanding and world peace” and Professor Yip reminded us that “in an era of growing interdependence we still have not been able to develop a system in the interests of humankind”.    
  
One speaker said that global citizenship was “being part of a community where people can make a world of difference by being empowered to work internationally with their peers to develop solutions for global issues”.  Let’s make this true and do so urgently.  Perhaps we need to perform actions at our conferences in addition to talking about issues.  Perhaps we need to set up working parties, take resolutions, decide on action statements that can be followed through between conferences.  Practice and action are just as important in global citizenship as are habits of mind.  We must use our conference topic as an instrument to make a difference, and we must encourage our colleagues and students to do the same.

We have heard mention this weekend of ancient sages, reminding us that interest in global citizenship has a long and distinguished history.  Confucius was concerned with harmony, balance and sustainable living for all species on our planet.  Diogenes the Greek first used the word “cosmopolitan” over two thousand years ago.  One speaker mentioned the old Japanese tradition of “kyosei” or sharing.  Another spoke of an anonymous Arab poet who concluded, because he was made of dust and would return like us all to dust, that “all humans are my relatives”.  I leave you with an old Sanskrit saying: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world is one family.

Let’s act on that.

Thank you.  Xie Xie.