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ARTICLE

## Environmental scanning in an age of globalisation: Understanding the nature of the education environment

William CHOY<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Education  
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Address for Correspondence: Dr William Choy, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616. Email: [william.choy@nie.edu.sg](mailto:william.choy@nie.edu.sg)

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## **Environmental scanning in an age of globalisation: Understanding the nature of the education environment**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper reviews the necessity of environmental scanning of the education environment in Singapore as a consequence of the dynamic globalisation phenomenon. First, this paper discusses the nature of globalisation and points out how environmental scanning which involves a surveillance of an organisation's external environment, can serve to forecast possible changes to come and detect changes already under way. Successful environmental scanning will alert school leaders and educators in schools and tertiary institutions to critical trends and events that may have positive or negative consequences on their respective organisations. Second, this paper discusses the changes within an organisation that promotes a learning culture amongst its staff members in response to the environmental scanning efforts towards the globalisation phenomenon. Third, this paper reveals the efforts of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to equip and empower students with the core or life skills to meet the demands and challenges of globalisation. An example of life skill – critical thinking, which refers to the disposition and ability to seek contextually appropriate reasons, evidence, clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness – is discussed.

### **INTRODUCTION**

How can schools and tertiary institutions prepare their students for the realities and challenges in an age of globalisation? What are the life skills that characterise a competent student in a global economy? We propose in this paper that school leaders and educators need to, firstly, carry out “environmental scanning” to understand the phenomenon and implications of globalisation. Secondly, in response to the implications of globalisation that are gained from environmental scanning, school leaders and educators need to help students acquire the essential life skills to face the global challenges. The paper begins with an introduction to the phenomenon of globalisation. Next, we expound on the strategy of “environmental scanning”, followed

by a discussion of the organisational learning and life skill. We draw upon a logical linkage that environmental scanning will lead school leaders and educators to reconsider the nature of their organisation towards that of a learning one that is more adaptable to the dynamic global environment. As such, the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE), in acknowledgment of the globalisation phenomenon, highlights the necessity for schools to inculcate essential skills and competencies (through continuous learning) so that students are well prepared for the future. The justification for this paper stems from the fact that the Singapore government recognises that the nation's growth and progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will depend on the capacity of its people to learn. A review of some of the initiatives introduced by the MOE reveals the commitment of the government to develop its youth to meet the challenges of the globalised economy.

## **THE PHENOMENON OF GLOBALISATION**

Globalisation is a worldwide phenomenon in which regions, countries, societies, cultures and communities have become more interconnected through a global network of socio-political ideas, media and communication, transportation and commerce. The trends of globalisation have been predominantly associated with the activities of economic globalisation, that is, the integration of national economies into the global economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital inflows and outflow, migration of skilled and semi-skilled labour, and the spread of technology (Bhagwati, 2004; World Bank, 2011; World Trade Organisation, 2011). Increasing globalisation of the world economy is characterised by declining trade and investment barriers, greater economic integration and interdependency, industrialisation of many developing countries, geopolitical reformation or restructuring resulting in the erosion of boundaries between countries, changing world demographics and major social reformations (Levitt, 1986; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2000; Hill, 2003).

The impact of globalisation comes in various aspects, which will significantly affect the world in several different ways. First, there is greater competition from an economic point of view. This economic aspect of globalisation has resulted in the emergence of a global common market, where there is now a greater freedom of exchange of goods and capital. A closely related development to the economic effect is industrial progress. Because of the intense global competition, survival in the new global market calls for improved productivity for multinational corporations in order to sustain

competitive advantages against their nearest business rivals. As such, firms in various industries have to utilise knowledge and technology effectively so as to upgrade their products and services in order to face the increased competition.

Because of the ease of movement of companies and factories across borders, there will be greater competition in the global job market. Globalisation will have a significant impact on the suppliers of labour services (skill professional and semi-skilled workers), the demanders of labour services (employers), and the resulting patterns of wages, employment, and income distribution. The reason for such developments is because people with relevant skills have become more mobile and this has led to transmigration of skilled labour to various parts of the world where there are better job prospects (International Labour Organisation, 2011).

In terms of developments in technology, media and communications, there is now a greater flow of information across international regions and borders. People have more access to informational resources because of the availability of telecommunications infrastructure, and advancement in technology. Evidently, the extensive technological changes are due to the advent of fibre optic communications, satellites, and increased availability of telecommunications networks and World Wide Web/ Internet services. The proliferation of information has allowed the transference and sharing of ideas between peoples across the continents. Consequently, more people now have greater cross-cultural exchanges, leading to the propagation of new ideologies, cultural (perhaps even sub-cultural) identities and awareness. Eventually, societies may experience a diffusion or resurgence of cultural values, traditional practices, religious attitudes and behaviours amongst the different (quite often, the younger) generations, and greater engagement of consumerism, materialistic inclination and other lifestyles in which people have a greater desire to raise their living standards (UNESCO, 1981).

As mentioned earlier, globalisation has also allowed people the opportunity to travel to other countries, either for leisure or work. In fact, there has been more immigration of skilled professionals and semi-skilled workers to other countries in search of better job prospects. As the new immigrants live in the host countries, they may maintain their cultural values without feeling the need to assimilate into the new society. Thus, enclave of new cultures or even subcultures apart from the mainstream community may emerge. However, the new migrants may also encounter various degrees of acculturation as they come into constant contact with the mainstream population from the

host country and are eventually assimilated into the new society. Thus, this may give rise to new levels of multiculturalism in society (United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development, 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

What do these developments mean for schools and tertiary institutions?

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING BY SCHOOL LEADERS AND EDUCATORS**

Schools and tertiary institutions do not operate in a vacuum; they are part of the larger community and thus, need to be responsive to the developments of the external environments. In order to cope with the increasingly uncertain and interconnected environments that confront their institutions, school leaders and educators must be knowledgeable about the dynamic global environment and consider the potential impact such developments will have upon their organisations.

Thus, school leaders and educators must undertake measures to identify the strategic issues facing their organisations. Such strategic issues are fundamentally critical challenges that may evidently affect how their organisations respond in terms of the formulation of the vision and mission, the design of the educational programme and curriculum, training and deployment of staff, restructuring of the education institution, and other essential policy matters.

An approach that school leaders and educators may adopt to understand and appreciate the changing environment is through environmental scanning. Environmental scanning is the act of acquiring and utilising of information about events, trends, and relationships regarding an organisation's external environment, such that the knowledge derived from the gathered information

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1 One needs to be aware that although globalisation may have brought about positive developments across countries and regions, it is also necessary to highlight the negative aspects of this phenomenon. Globalisation has resulted in income inequality between the haves and have-nots; Developing countries are suffering disadvantages in terms of lower prices for agricultural products that they are producing; Brain drain of skilled professionals and semi-skilled workers from developing countries as they seek work opportunities in more developed countries; An increase in exploitation of child labour and the proliferation of sweatshops; Shifts in business process outsourcing resulting in the displacement of certain service sectors, which developing countries may be dependent on; Depletion of natural resources; Effects of population growth on food supplies; Spread of diseases as a consequence in the ease of travel; Financial interdependency and vulnerability of countries and regions. It is essential to take note that these negative consequences are just the tip of the global phenomenon.

would assist senior management in planning the future course of action for the organisation (Aguilar, 1967). Environmental scanning thus entails the process of gathering, analysing, and dispensing information for tactical or strategic purposes for an organisation. The environmental scanning process will include the acquiring of both objective and subjective information about the external environment in which an organisation is operating. Essentially, environmental scanning involves a surveillance of an organisation's external environment to forecast possible changes to come and detect changes already under way. Successful environmental scanning will alert school and tertiary institutions to critical trends and events that may have positive or negative consequences upon the organisation and their respective stakeholders. But, is environmental scanning more than just a basis for organisational survival?

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AS ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING FOR SCHOOLS**

Although researchers such as Pashiardis (1996) have argued that environmental scanning has proved to be successful for school systems and that scanning will provide stakeholders with the opportunity to contribute to the strategic planning process which is of vital importance for the survival of any given organisation, others have taken a step further to highlight the fact that environmental scanning can serve to promote organisational learning for the organisations (Choo, 2001). Choo has explained that as a consequence of constant communication, exchange of available information and discussion about future-oriented issues by people in the organisation, scanning can lead to strategic, generative organisational learning. To further elaborate on the logic between environmental scanning and organisational learning, it is necessary to appreciate the basis of learning/organisational learning.

As an organisation seeks to understand and appreciate the environment it is in, it is most likely that it will continuously transform itself in relation to the dynamic situation it is facing, while at the same time facilitate the learning initiative of its staff members to adapt to the changes as well. This will give rise to the notion of the learning organisation as postulated by researchers such as Pedler, Burgogyne, and Boydell (1997), Argyris (1999), Easterby-Smith, Crossan, and Nicolini (2000), O'Keeffe (2002) and others. Argyris (1999) has emphasised that organisations constantly sought to gather more information about new products and services, widen their knowledge about ingenious processes, broaden their understanding of what is happening in the external environment and design innovative solutions to challenges using

the knowledge and skills within their organisation. Such organisational development is inevitable given that management faces increasing pressures to be more responsive so as to sustain competitive advantage in the external business environment, while experiencing structural changes for greater effectiveness and efficiency within the organisation (Pedler, Burgogyne, & Boydell, 1997).

No doubt, an organisational culture of learning can be inculcated amongst the staff members by encouraging them to be actively involved in meaningful learning, that is, acquiring new or modifying existing knowledge or synthesising different types of information. And, as they enhance their personal mastery in the various subject areas through constant exchange and dialogue, this will reinforce the organisational structure for such a learning environment in the first place, as characterised by typically having excellent knowledge management structures, allowing for the creation, acquisition, dissemination, and implementation of knowledge in the organisation (Senge, 1990; McHugh, Groves & Alker, 1998; Wang & Ahmed, 2003). But, to what extent, can such organisational initiative be realised within the education context in Singapore, perhaps in the schools and tertiary institutions?

## **A NATION'S COMMITMENT TO INSTILLING A LEARNING-ORGANISATION CULTURE IN SCHOOLS**

In 1997, the then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced the Ministry of Education's (MOE) vision statement of "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" (TSLN), in which the vision encapsulates the perspective of a nation of thinking and committed citizens capable of facing the challenges of the future, and an education system designed to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The vision was justified, as it quintessentially highlighted the nature of the globalised world that Singapore needed to prepare its students for. In fact, PM Goh emphasised that:

A nation's wealth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will depend on the capacity of its people to learn. Their imagination, their ability to seek out new technologies and ideas, and to apply them in everything they do will be the key source of economic growth. Their collective capacity to learn will determine the well-being of a nation.

We know three things about the future. First, it will be an intensely global future, with diminishing barriers to the flow of goods,



services and information. Competition between cities, countries, sub-regions and regions will be intense. No country or region will have permanent advantages. There is no guarantee that it will always retain its competitive edge.

Second, knowledge and innovation will be absolutely critical. The recent victory of the computer Deep Blue over chess champion Gary Kasparov was not a triumph of machine over man but the triumph of human innovation, of organised human mastery of technology. Companies and nations which organise themselves to generate, share and apply new technologies and ideas more quickly than others will, like the early bird, catch the worm.

The third defining feature of the future is that it will be one of change, and increasingly rapid change. It will be change as a permanent state, not change as a transition to some known, final state. Change will be unpredictable but it will affect everything we do at work, in society and at home.

We have to prepare ourselves for a bracing future – a future of intense competition and shifting competitive advantages, a future where technologies and concepts are replaced at an increasing pace, and a future of changing values.

Education and training are central to how nations will fare in this future. Strong nations and strong communities will distinguish themselves from the rest by how well their people learn and adapt to change. Learning will not end in the school or even in the university. Much of the knowledge learnt by the young will be obsolete some years after they complete their formal education. In some professions, like Information Technology, obsolescence occurs even faster. The task of education must therefore be to provide the young with the core knowledge and core skills, and the habits of learning, that enable them to learn continuously throughout their lives. We have to equip them for a future that we cannot really predict.

(MOE, 2004)

In acknowledgment of the globalisation phenomenon, the former prime minister emphasised the necessity for schools to be developed to promote a

learning culture<sup>2</sup> in every sense, constantly challenging assumptions, and seeking better ways of learner engagement through participation, creativity and innovation (MOE, 2011d). Such schools would be the cradle of thinking students as well as thinking adults, with the hope that the spirit of learning should accompany those students even after they have left school. As for the notion of a “Learning Nation”, the vision statement accentuates a national culture and social environment that promotes lifelong learning in the people of Singapore. The capacity of Singaporeans to continually learn, both for professional development and for personal enrichment, would determine Singapore’s collective tolerance for change in the globalised economy (MOE, 2011d). Given the fact that the MOE has embarked on a vision to prepare the future generation of Singapore, one may ask how the ministry seeks to espouse the relevant initiatives to fulfil such an endeavour?

## **COMPETENCIES FOR A CHANGING WORLD: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE**

The MOE has continuously sought to examine how the nation can best prepare its youth to thrive in a future driven by globalisation and technological advancements. As such, the education ministry has implemented a new framework that has identified 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies essential for the development of Singapore’s youth. This underpins the holistic education that Singapore schools will provide to ensure the students can thrive in a dynamic and highly-connected globalized world. For example, to position them to take advantage of opportunities in a globalised world, students are required to acquire life-ready competencies such as creativity, innovation, cross-cultural understanding and resilience (MOE, 2011e). Figure 1 illustrates the Desired Student Outcomes and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies.

### **THE FRAMEWORK EXPLAINED**

The framework revolved around the four desired student outcomes which have been identified by the MOE. The desired outcomes include:

1. *A confident person* who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows him/herself, is discerning in judgment, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> In other words, schools are to serve as learning organisations where students can engage in active learning.



Fig. 1. Desired student outcomes and the 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies.

2. A *self-directed learner* who questions, reflects, perseveres and takes responsibility for his/her own learning.
3. An *active contributor* who is able to work effectively in teams, is innovative, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks and strives for excellence.
4. A *concerned citizen* who is rooted to Singapore, has a strong sense of civic responsibility, is informed about Singapore and the world, and takes an active part in bettering the lives of others around him/her.

(MOE, 2011e)

In addition, the ministry has acknowledged three core skills that students ought to have in order to fulfil the three desired student outcomes: 1) Civic Literacy, Global Awareness, & Cross-Cultural Skills; 2) Critical & Inventive Thinking; and 3) Information & Communication Skills. To further elaborate:

#### 1. *Civic Literacy, Global Awareness & Cross-cultural Skills*

As the Singapore society is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan and as more Singaporeans are living and working abroad, it is essential that Singapore's youth have a broader worldview and are able to work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, with different ideas and perspectives. At the same time, they should be informed about national issues, take pride in being Singaporean and contribute actively to the community.

## 2. *Critical and Inventive Thinking*

To be future-ready, Singapore's youth needs to be able to think critically, assess options and make sound decisions. They should have a desire to learn, explore and be prepared to think out of the box. They should not be afraid to make mistakes and face challenges that may at first appear daunting.

## 3. *Information and Communication Skills*

With the advent of the Internet and World Wide Web, information is literally just a few clicks of the mouse away. Hence, it is important that Singapore's youth knows what questions to ask, how to sieve information and extract that which is relevant and useful. At the same time, they need to be discerning so that they can shield themselves from harm, while adopting ethical practices in cyberspace. Furthermore, they should be able to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

(MOE, 2011f)

Embedded within these outcomes and skills are the following Social and Emotional Competencies:

1. *Self-Awareness* – this is where the individual understands his/her own emotions, strengths, inclinations and weaknesses.
2. *Self-Management* – this is where the individual can manage him/herself effectively if he/she has the capacity to manage his or her own emotions. The individual should be self-motivated, exercise discipline and display strong goal setting and organisational skills.
3. *Social Awareness* – this is where the individual has the ability to accurately discern different perspectives, recognise and appreciate diversity, empathise with and respect others.
4. *Relationship Management* – this is where the individual can manage relationships effectively if he/she has the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships through effective communication, and is able to work with others to resolve issues and provide assistance.
5. *Responsible Decision-Making* – this is where the individual can make responsible decisions if he/she has the capacity to identify and analyse a situation competently. The individual should be able to reflect upon the implications of decisions made, based on personal, moral and ethical considerations.

(MOE, 2011f)

Last but not least, at the very core of this framework are values which shape the beliefs, attitudes and actions of a person, thus defining the very character of the individual. The values are Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Care, Resilience, and Harmony. To further explain these values:

1. *Respect* – concerns the child’s demonstration of respect when he/she believes in his/her own self-worth and the intrinsic worth of all people.
2. *Responsibility* – concerns the child’s sense of responsibility, whereby he/she recognises that he/she has a duty to himself/herself, family, community, nation and the world, and fulfils one’s responsibilities with love and commitment.
3. *Integrity* – concerns the child’s sense of integrity in which he/she upholds ethical principles and has the moral courage to stand up for what is right.
4. *Care* – concerns the child’s demonstration of being a caring individual whereby he/she acts with kindness and compassion, and contributes to the betterment of the community and the world.
5. *Resilience* – concerns the child’s level of resilience in which he/she demonstrates emotional strength and perseverance in the face of challenges. He/she would manifest courage, optimism, adaptability and resourcefulness.
6. *Harmony* – concerns the child’s efforts to maintain harmony as he/she seeks inner happiness and promotes social cohesion. It is understood that he/she would appreciate the unity and diversity of a multicultural society.

(MOE, 2011f)

From the above discussion of the framework, it can be seen that there has been a consistent and deliberate effort initiated by the MOE to enhance the curriculum of Singapore schools to focus on skills development and values inculcation for Singapore students. The inclusion of the skills and values draws on the fact that the ministry is reviewing the curriculum and assessment system to empower students to have greater understanding and appreciation of the impact of globalisation upon the wider community. It is perceived that the student-teacher engagement during class will nurture Singapore students to become socially responsible as they are now more aware of the socio-political, economic and technological issues within and beyond Singapore.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBALISATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING: DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING IN SCHOOLS**

Environmental scanning of the phenomenon of globalisation informs us that students are confronted with the realities and challenges of a highly competitive global market. Competent students are those who are able to constantly create and utilise (new) knowledge and technology, solve complex problems, and relate well to people of diverse cultural and ideological backgrounds (as espoused by the MOE's desired outcomes for Singapore students). Unsurprisingly, schools and tertiary institutions are expected to nurture students with the requisite life skills and knowledge in a global and knowledge-based economy. This, no doubt, reinforces the fact that schools and tertiary institutions are reinventing themselves as learning organisations that encourage a culture of individual/team learning that is capable of capitalising on implicit and explicit elements of learning and knowledge within the education context. While there are a number of life skills needed by Singapore students, this paper only focuses on one essential life skill (as identified within the MOE's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and knowledge framework) – critical thinking.

### ***Concept of Critical Thinking***

What is it about globalisation or global citizenship that demands skills like critical thinking? More than ever before, students need to be critical thinkers in an age of globalisation. We have already noted that globalisation brings with it a new economy, which depends on knowledge, ingenuity, innovation and mobilisation of the talents of all. In addition, environmental scanning will allow educators and students a better understanding and appreciation of the political, economic, social and technological events and trends, which may have a significant influence on society, country or even, a region. Thus, in a globalised environment characterised by rapid changes and paradigm shifts, critical thinkers are needed to make informed and evidence-based judgements. But what does critical thinking entail? Critical thinking is more than just a set of quantifiable skills. After all, a critical thinker is one who possesses the disposition and ability to seek contextually appropriate reasons, evidence, clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness (Tan, 2006; Siegel, 1988; Ennis, 1987; 1996; Paul, 1988). Rather than providing a checklist to measure critical thinking, we would like to elaborate on what critical thinking means, which will inform us on what a critical thinker looks like.

We adopt Matthew Lipman's definition of critical thinking as a form of thinking that facilitates judgement because it relies on criteria, is self-correcting and is sensitive to context (2007, p.428). First, critical thinking does not mean passing one's judgement in an arbitrary way. Rather, critical thinking is a form of judgement that relies on specific criteria. The "criteria" may include definitions, principles, assumptions, presuppositions, standards, methods, conventions, norms and policies (Lipman, 2007, p.428). Secondly, critical thinking is not equated with criticism where the student becomes judgemental – being negative, harsh and mean spirited, or cynical – doubting or discounting everything one reads and hears (Case & Daniels, 2002). Instead, as noted by Lipman, it is self-correcting in the sense that the thinker constantly reflect on his or her own thinking (metacognition), with the aim to discover his or her own weaknesses and rectify what is at fault in his or her own thought process (p.429). Finally, critical thinking always takes place in a particular context in response to a particular task, question, problematic situation or challenge (Weinstein, 1996; Tan, 2006). Part of the requisite attitude and disposition of a critical thinker is to know what and how to question. Therefore, it is pertinent for educators to go beyond a set of universal and context-free critical thinking skills to focus on the specific *context* in which the questioning and thinking take place. The teaching of critical thinking should be set within a larger framework where factors like the political, social, economic, and cultural factors and the alternatives are taken into account (Puolimatka, 1996). Knowing the context will guide the educator and students on what, how and when to question. While critical thinking is essential, students should also learn about the fallibility and finiteness of critical thought. Puolimatka (1996) rightly points out that "the dogmatic presumption of man's self-sufficient rationality ... paradoxically tends to make thinking uncritical in its basic orientation" (1996, p.114).

What then must teachers do or change the way they teach to bring about critical thinking in students? Teachers can promote critical thinking in three main ways. First, through *service learning* – an approach whereby the students not only serve the community, but also learn to identify with the needs of the community and reflect on their own experience in working with the community. Through their contributions in such community work, students can develop lasting friendships with one another, become more socially responsible and develop their strong sense of belonging and commitment to the community (MOE, 2011a; 2011b). Service learning can be introduced when students of various social backgrounds participate in school or community projects and practically reflect on their learning experiences. Through working on shared projects, such as environmental

or community endeavours, they will be able to build friendships with those who have different worldviews. Such experiences help students and young people to understand cultures and belief systems of others, and move beyond their preconceptions of other cultures or faiths, dispelling prejudices and stereotypes and cultivating greater rational autonomy along the way.

Second, educators could promote critical thinking by incorporating *ill-structured problems* on global issues into the school curriculum. While most problems that students encounter in class are well-structured problems, the problems they encounter in real life are mostly ill-structured problems. Jonassen (1997) explains that solutions to ill-structured problems are not predictable or convergent; ill-structured problems have “many alternative solutions; vaguely defined or unclear goals and constraints; multiple solution paths; and multiple criteria for evaluating solutions; so they are more difficult to solve” (Jonassen, 2002, p.3). Solving problems, especially ill-structured problems, require the problem solvers to be engaged in critical thinking processes, such as questioning assumptions and considering alternative perspectives. In a digital age, asynchronous online discussion is particularly appealing to young people. The permanent storage of messages from asynchronous online discussions provides support for reflection and extends the available time for interaction and learning (Ng & Tan, 2006; Hammond & Wiriyapinit, 2005; McConnell, 2000; Salmon, 2002; Macdonald & Twining, 2002; Meyer, 2003). The comments posted during the online discussions allow the learners to read, reflect and respond at their own pace.

Third, through *critical dialogue*. It involves dialogues planned deliberately for participants to discuss global issues; for example, societal topics that throw up cultural similarities and differences (Tan, 2010). It is premised on an empathetic awareness of and critical approach towards various worldviews. Usually a facilitator will set the rules and help the participants to move between the perspectives of the insider and outsider (Leganger-Krogstad, 2003). Cultures need to be approached both from the “insider” as living sources for life and values orientation, as well as from the “outsider”, as objects for critical investigation (Leirvik, 1999, p.83, cited in Leganger-Krogstad, 2003, p.179). The emphasis on similarities calls for a search for shared values such as love, truth, respect for human dignity and good works.

But critical dialogue should go beyond highlighting the commonality in societies and cultures. It should also draw the participants’ attention to the differences and disagreements among the different traditions without judgement. Such a dialogue is based on the common understanding that



there exists a variety of moral traditions and legitimate moral differences (Runnymede, 2000; Ipgrave, 2003). Dialogues that draw our attention to the ambiguous, controversial and dangerous are necessary if we want our students to be informed, engaged and confident global citizens. Students can develop their own beliefs and values critically by understanding and reflecting on the conceptual differences in worldviews and their influences on the motivations and behaviour of believers (Erricker, 2006; Ipgrave, 2003).

## **CONCLUSION**

As schools and tertiary institutions seek to excel in a progressively changing education environment, school leaders and educators need to be able to monitor the environment and respond and adapt to the new developments in order to sustain a high standard of education in an age of globalisation. Given the dynamic environment that schools and tertiary institutions are in, it is necessary for school leaders and educators to carry out environmental scanning to take any necessary action quickly, to take advantage of opportunities presented before them, and to respond to the environmental challenges by minimising potential problems. They have to reconsider how they can promote a culture of the learning organisation and encourage staff members to adapt to change. No doubt, the MOE, in acknowledgment of the globalisation phenomenon, deems it necessary for schools to inculcate essential skills and competencies (through continuous learning) so that students are well-prepared for the future. This aligns well with the Singapore government's recognition that the nation's growth and progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will depend on the capacity of its people to learn.

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