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**Global and National Imaginings: Deparochialising the IB DP English A1 Curriculum**

Chin Ee, Loh

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

1 Nanyang Walk

Singapore 637616

[chinee.loh@nie.edu.sg](mailto:chinee.loh@nie.edu.sg)

+65-92776317

**Global and National Imaginings: Deparochialising the IB DP English A1 Curriculum**

Loh Chin Ee\*

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

**Abstract**

In this paper, I argue for the deparochialising of the IB DP English A1 curriculum where teachers as curriculum-makers would critically assess text choice and where students have the opportunities to make critical readings and engage in conversations about issues raised by the text. Through the case study of the implementation of one English A1 curriculum in a Singapore school, I demonstrate the possibilities for a cosmopolitan literature curriculum that is attentive to both the global and the local.

Key Words: Curriculum, Citizenship, Globalization, International Baccalaureate, English

\* Email: [chineeloh@nie.edu.sg](mailto:chineeloh@nie.edu.sg).

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## Introduction

In this globalized world of mass migrations and mass media, the role and shape of education is constantly changing. While teaching and schooling have been “developed as technologies of nation, nationality, and nationalism” (Luke, 2004, p. 1437), international concerns and global flows inevitably shape the construction of national education systems. National educational systems keen to plug into the global market in a neoliberal economy (M. Singh, Kenway, & Apple, 2005) have shifted towards a model of education that emphasize flexibility and creativity as key to being equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (New London Group, 1996). For some nations and schools, turning to international education systems fine-tuned to international movements provide the means and template by which an internationally-minded education that is responsive to globalization may be acquired by its citizens and students.

This recognition of the advantage of keeping an eye on the global is evidenced by the increasing number of schools adopting international programmes such as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), including state and national schools in the United Kingdom (Bunnell, 2008), United States (Conner, 2008), Australia (Doherty, 2009), and the Asia-Pacific region (Guy & Switzer, 2010). The appeal of the IBDP lies in the perception that it may help students become “flexible citizens” (Ong, 1999) able to cross borders for study and work purposes in a globalized world. At the national level, opening national schools to the international curriculum and practices of the IBDP can be seen as the acquisition of a form of cultural and symbolic capital that eventually contributes to a country’s overall worth in a market-driven economy (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004).

Despite the noble aims of the IBDP to construct a curriculum and schooling programme that would develop the moral and aesthetic dimensions of the student and lead towards intercultural understanding (Peterson, 1972; Tarc, 2009), explained in the IBO Mission and Strategy precursor as “an essential part of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (IBO, Mission

and Strategy, n.d.), it may be that such aims are not met in the actual implementation as some educators, parents and students view international education with different, sometimes contradictory aims towards economic benefit as opposed to genuine concern for constructing intercultural awareness (e.g., Aguiar, 2009; Cambridge, 2011a; Doherty, 2009; Weenink, 2008). Even the humanistic aims of building intercultural awareness may be seen as economically-driven and in service to constructing ideal global workers, as educators, parents and students perceive the traits of intercultural awareness as “itself becoming an advantage in accessing progressive (entrepreneurial) universities under the trope of “flexibility” in the (global) knowledge economy (Garrick & Usher, 2000)” (Tarc, 2009, p. 109). In addition and ironically, the openness encouraged by the IBDP may not in fact lead to deep understanding of Others and their cultures. Instead, it may be a superficial emotional multiculturalism that is effective for teamwork in transnational corporations rather than “international understanding or a struggle for peace” (Resnik, 2008, p. 11). Bunnell (2010) has argued that given that operationally, students in IBDP schools tend to be national or global elites, more attention should be paid towards helping IBDP students to be socially consciousness and to take social action in a global world.

As one central tenet of successful education is the curriculum (Thompson, 1998), re-examining the curriculum – as it is officially stated and as it is enacted in specific national and school contexts – is one way of examining how the goals of intercultural education may be achieved in one key aspect of the IBDP education system. On the surface, the IDBP English A1 curriculum exemplifies an ideal curriculum to cultivate intercultural awareness with its focus on World Literature designed to encourage students to acquire “an international perspective” (IBO, Diploma Programme Curriculum, n.d.) through their study of literary works from different cultures (IBO, 1999a, p. 4). This article examines the official IBDP English A1 curriculum, particularly as it is situated and constructed in one national school in

Singapore, to explore how much the curriculum in fact fulfils or does not fulfil the intercultural aims of the IBDP, particularly that of constructing socially aware cosmopolitans who possess more than a superficial understanding of the Other. Only by examining the “*actual* global” (Ong & Collier, 2005) on the ground can we begin to understand how the global curriculum is indeed used and practiced at local levels of implementation.

### **Global and National Imaginings through the Curriculum**

The school curriculum as official knowledge contributes to the creation of an imagined national community where literacies, identities and citizenship are closely intertwined. The official curriculum, embedded with the values and beliefs of a dominant group of people, serve to project a particular national identity against which students may imbue a common sense of what it means to be, say, American or Russian (Wertsch, 2002). The projection of a preferred national self is conveyed through the choice of national curricular and textual resources such as basal readers, school textbooks, and canonical literary texts (Collins & Blot, 2003; Corse, 1997; Luke, 1988). These chosen texts are not neutral but represent a “selective tradition” (Williams, 1977), an ideological perspective about what matters to the dominant group in each community (Apple, 1992).

The “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991) is, however, complicated in a globalized world where global flows of people and information move at a much faster pace than ever (Appadurai, 1996; Bauman, 1998; Rizvi, 2008). In the area of education, curriculum flows are no longer limited to national confines (Anderson-Levitt, 2008) but are increasingly subject to global trends and ideas, whether in the form of pedagogical practices (Nichols, 2006), basic literacy packages (Freebody & Freiberg, 2008) or explicitly international curriculum such as the IBDP (Cambridge, 2011b). When such curriculum is transported from other sites across borders and literacy practices are shared across contexts, it is inevitable that particular ideologies and value systems are transported into these new

contexts, and reworked into local forms. The curriculum thus becomes contested space for the social imaginary (Rizvi, 2008) of both nation and world to be negotiated and effected. The construction of actual curriculum in such circumstances becomes, in effect, a negotiation of what counts as knowledge at both national and global levels, and whose knowledge counts. Thus, just as the study of British literary texts in colonial Indian was a means with which to communicate “superior” English values to Indian natives (Viswanthan, 1987), the IB DP curriculum serves to communicate a particular ideology to schools that have adopted its programme, one which van Oord (2007) has argued is dominantly western humanist (also see Poonosamy, 2010).

### **An Overview of the IB DP English A1 Curriculum Structure**

The IB DP English A1 curriculum is divided into four parts and can be taken at Higher Level or Standard Level. Higher level students study more texts and have to complete an additional assessment. Part 1 is the *World Literature* component where students focus on three works chosen from the *Prescribed World Literature List* (1999b), and are assessed based on a research paper. Part 2 (*Detailed Study*) requires students to study three or four works in a different genre category from Part 1. Students are assessed by an Individual Oral Commentary. Part 3 (*Groups of Works*) requires students to study three or four works, including one World Literature work. Students are assessed in a timed essay (Paper 2) for this paper. In Part 4 (*School's Free Choice*), the school can choose its own texts provided the works are of “literary merit”. The assessment is in the form of an Individual Oral Presentation. Finally, students have another timed essay assessment (Paper 1) where they have to write a critical commentary on either an unseen poem or prose passage.

A cornerstone of the English A1 curriculum is the World Literature requirement. The study of World Literature is “to expose language A1 candidates to works from cultures and literary traditions of their own” and aims to “broaden candidates’ perspectives through the

study of works from other cultures and languages” (IBO, 2002., p. 2). World Literature texts are primarily treated as works of art and to ensure “fullest possible exploration, candidates must be made aware of the influences exerted by the particular cultural context(s) of each work on its form and content” (IBO, 2002, p. 3). Standard Level students will read at least five World Literature texts to be distributed accordingly: three works for Part 1, one work for Part 3, and one work for Part 4. Works for Part 1 must be from the *Prescribed World Literature List* (1999b) and translated whereas works for Parts 3 and 4 may be originally written in English if they are from a “place” not represented in the remainder of the course. Students should also be exposed to the different genres of drama, prose and poetry. The *Prescribed World Literature List* was compiled based in part upon “the literary merit of the work” and “broad cultural representation” (IBO 1999c: i), and tends towards Eurocentric traditions (Fox, 1985). The idea of a prescribed list also suggests that certain texts are worth studying more than other texts, and the text list does not include more contemporary authors from young nations such as Mauritius and Singapore. Table 1 gives an overview of the IBDP English curriculum and the texts chosen at Ace Independent, the case study school, in 2008.

[Insert Table 1.]

While innovative in its focus on different cultures in comparison to curricular that are solely genre-based or period-based, it must be remembered that the concept of World Literature is a product of its time, with its roots in the belief of a superior Western canon, and modified in a globalized age to include a wide range of texts from around the world (Choo, 2011). Choo (2011) terms the contemporary modification of World Literature a Global Literature curriculum, and points out that in line with the “instrumentalist demands of globalization”, the focus of a Global Literature curriculum tends to be emphasis on the “acquisition and learning of particular skills associated with communication in a social and cultural context” (p. 12). This focus on skills can be seen in the emphasis of the English A1



curriculum on the students' ability to interpret the text. The critical commentary paper (Paper 1) where students have to critically analyze an unseen passage or poem reflects this focus. Additionally, the emphasis on literary texts as "works of art" focuses on the text as a cultural construct to be studied as opposed to a starting point for dialogue into culturally relevant conversations about self and the world (Applebee, 1996). However, in order for students to become socially and interculturally aware, there needs to be engagement with the text beyond matters in the text. Using *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 2009) as an illustration, focussing on the text usually means that the conversation stops at racial discrimination since that provides the context for understanding the literary text. However, if the literary text is seen as a dialogic space for meaningful conversations, the question then becomes how one can extend the conversation beyond what is meaningful within the text to what is meaningful in current contexts so that the conversation can extend into different forms of discrimination within the nation and even beyond the nation. Such dialogue can only be pursued if time is allocated in the classroom for such exploration. Thus, one issue to be examined in the implementation of the English A1 curriculum is whether the official curriculum and the actual enacted curriculum in schools allow for meaningful conversations beyond the text to take place.

In addition to the strong World Literature component, the English A1 curriculum provides a space for including non-listed texts in Part 4 of the curriculum which allows for "a selection of texts which fulfil local or national requirements" (IBO, 1999) as one of a few options. This recognizes that there may be local texts that are worthy of study and allows schools a degree of autonomy in choosing culturally relevant texts. However, practically it may be that few schools adopt that option. An example of how the local can be ignored is given by Poonosamy (2010) in his description of the IBDP situation in Mauritius. He suggests that despite Hill's vision of an internationally-minded school and the encouragement of the IB Programme to encourage students to "develop a strong sense of their own identity

and culture” (IBO, 2008 in Poonosamy, 2010), the IBDP schools in Mauritius do not in fact exercise that option. He explains that

[N]ot that the texts do not exist, nor that they could not be studied if the IB school asks for permission to do so, but because local teachers and learners have not developed the mindset to acknowledge the rights and privileges that they can do so. They privilege a text whose recognition and popularity is internationally established.  
(p. 23)

While there are spaces in the curriculum structure that allow for, and in fact, encourage the insertion of local cultures into the IB curriculum, teachers may not actively make use of these alternatives because of their mindsets about the superiority of internationally recognized texts. In such a situation, the national (local) is disregarded in favour of the global. The social imaginary is thus limited to texts from beyond the nation. In the Mauritius case, the message conveyed to students is that the cultural capital important for mobility and understanding of human traditions must come from elsewhere rather than from both within and beyond the nation, and that a global literate self must be aware of works from other centres, excluding works closer to home. Imagination of nation is absent in the literary mapping of literary texts from around the world.

### **The Cosmopolitan Possibilities of the IBDP English Curriculum**

In this section, I discuss the cosmopolitan possibilities of the IBDP English A1 curriculum that may perhaps be more often than not missed in the actualization of the curriculum. Cosmopolitan as a concept has been revived in recent discussions as a way of thinking beyond the nation (e.g., Appiah, 2006; Cheah & Robbins, 1998). Tomlinson (1999) suggests that cosmopolitanism is a disposition where individuals are not limited by concerns of one’s immediate locality but are able to recognize “global belonging, involvement and responsibility and can integrate these broader concerns into everyday life practices” (p. 184).

For Tomlinson, cosmopolitans need to be “simultaneously universalists and pluralists” (p. 194) in their view of and in their relation to both nation and world.

Applying the concept of cosmopolitanism to education, Luke envisions teaching as cosmopolitan work where conversations are not limited to national or parochial ones but move beyond narrow state parameters to examine other conditions to understand local conditions. Teachers should possess “intercultural capital”, defined as

the capacity to engage in acts of knowledge, power and exchange across time/space divides and social geographies, across diverse communities, populations and epistemic stances.” (Luke, 2004, p. 1429)

Teachers must thus be able to access knowledge both local and global in order to understand and to teach in their local conditions, while keeping an eye on the global. In the same way, students need to learn to see beyond their narrow parochial concerns in order to understand their subject position in relation to international flows of knowledge and diversity. From such a viewpoint, the local and the global are intimately interconnected. As Rizvi (2008) points out, a cosmopolitan education must be situated in time and place. It must

must have the potential to help students come to terms with their *situatedness* in the world – *situatedness* of their knowledge and of their cultural practices, as well as their positionality in relation to social networks, political institutions and social relations that are no longer confined to particular communities and nations, but potentially connect with the rest of the world (Said, 1983). (Rizvi, 2008, p. 111)

A truly cosmopolitan understanding of the world thus requires an understanding of the place where one is situated, in order for understanding of Others (Hannerz, 1990). To cultivate cosmopolitan citizens require the deparochializing of education (Lingard, Nixon, & Ranson, 2008) where students are taught awareness of both Self and Other in relation to their own situatedness in particular nations and social classes. Deparochializing education requires the

recognition that both the global and the local are complex and multifaceted, and that there are multiple meanings and responses to globalization. For such understandings, students need to be exposed to a wide variety of texts, and to be taught critical readings that are attentive to the local and the global.

In the area of literature education, Choo suggests that a “Cosmopolitan Literature curriculum” would “promote a ‘deparochializing education’ (Lingard *et al.* 2008) that begins with familiarizing students with the literary traditions of their own culture” (p. 14) and then seek to extend the local to the global in order to promote the aim of global inter-connectivity, and more importantly, develop students’ capacities to be “proactive moral agents” (2011, p. 15). A relevant curriculum keeps the global and the local in mind. More importantly, a relevant curriculum should encourage students to be “proactive moral agents” who see literature as more than a study of art, whether of one or many cultures. Literature should become a space for rich discussions and for thinking and feeling that lead to individual commitment and action. The question then becomes, how much does the IBDP English A1 curriculum encourage such critical readings? Poonosamy’s (2010) example of Mauritius demonstrates how the English A1 curriculum can be a vehicle for unquestioning wholesale adoption of Eurocentric traditions and texts. Moreover, even if teachers select culturally different texts, they may do so in a superficial manner, treating the exposure to texts as a form of cultural tourism, a guided tour into some other culture different from one’s own (Purves, 1997) rather than a way to understand other cultures and to genuinely engage with issues of culture and power through the study of literary texts.

### **Implementing the English A1 Curriculum in One Singapore School**

In this section, I give a brief account of the implementation of the English A1 curriculum in one national school in Singapore, Ace Independent (pseudonym) as an illustration of how the official English A1 curriculum is actualized in one specific context. By

paying attention to the processes of curriculum construction (through observation, interviews with teachers and students, attention to school and IBO documents), I seek to understand the multiple global, national, school, and individual teacher goals that intersect to construct an actual enacted school curriculum.

### ***The School Profile: Ace Independent***

Ace Independent is a top independent school in Singapore and was the first national school to become an Integrated Programme (IP) school. The IP was implemented in 2002 as a response to the need to allow high-achieving schools more freedom to craft curriculum that would encourage the construction of flexible, mobile cosmopolitan citizens or what Reich (1991) terms “symbolic-analysts” for global markets in a knowledge-based world economy. Ace Independent chose to adopt the IBDP as the programme that was most suitable for its aims towards global citizenship.

At the time of implementation of the IBDP, there were some concerns that the internationalist nature of the IBDP would be at odds with the aims of loyalty to nation (Chew, 2008). The tension between global aspirations and rootedness to home is a recurring theme of political speeches in Singapore, exemplified in a recent speech given by Deputy Prime Minister, Wong Kan San (2011), at the Singapore Perspectives Conference organized by the Institute of Policy Studies:

For Singapore, becoming a global city is not merely an aspiration. It is a prerequisite for our survival... we want to retain the vibrancy and dynamism of a city on the move, without eroding the sense of belonging and pride in our shared heritage.

Clearly, paying attention to both local and global is important in Singapore political talk, and in the much attention has been paid to the need to focus on the national through the implementation of the National Education (NE) initiative in 1997. Designed to promote loyalty to nation in the face of the threat of globalisation (Baildon & Sim, 2009; Tan, 2008),

the cornerstone of the NE initiative was the implementation of a compulsory subject, Social Studies. In addition, subject-matter teachers, including literature teachers, were encouraged to infuse NE into their lessons. Unlike truly international schools that were not tied down by national objectives, Ace Independent as an independent school was still attentive to national initiatives, and the teachers were very much aware of the need to include the local in their curriculum constructions.

### ***Constructing the English A1 Curriculum at Ace Independent***

Teachers at Ace Independent generally applauded the way the IBDP was structured around World Literature and felt that it provided a more coherent structure for text selection compared to a piecemeal approach. As one teacher explained, there was now “coherence for the way [we] choose texts”. They also appreciated the humanistic goals of including World Literature so that students could be exposed to different works from different cultures. The inclusion of translated texts was welcomed, and it was felt that the books chosen allowed students to examine different perspectives. The Dean of the English Department explained that

...because of the international nature of the IB, we have the World Literature component, which is very important... Also, the whole curriculum is supposed to instil in students this ability to empathise with people, especially people’s perspectives that are different from their own, to develop empathy, to develop tolerance and respect for other people’s views. You also learn about other people’s culture.

For the Dean, literature did not just serve as a study of works of art but in fact serve a moral function (Booth, 2006) in exposing students to other cultures, and teaching them empathy through engagement with texts and with stories. Ironically, however, teachers and students reported that because of the lack of time given the multiple texts and assessment

requirements, there was little time to engage with discussions about self and others in the classroom. Within the time constraints, it was important to focus on the texts so that students would be sufficiently prepared for their assessments. One student explained in a group interview that

Yes, we do get exposed to books from different cultures... but at the end of the day, the emphasis is on the text as a cultural construct. So we focus on the text. That's what's important.

The focus remains textual because the discussions in class remained at that level. The moral function of having students develop some form of social consciousness does not become an actuality in the classroom when students are not given the chance to expand on such conversations. This may explain why Hayden and Wong (1997) found in their small-scale study in Bath, England, that students may have been influenced more by the school culture than curriculum in their cultivation of international attitudes.

Aside from *World Literature* considerations, teachers also considered other factors such as gender and accessibility when deciding which texts they would include in the curriculum. The World Literature coordinator explained the rationale for Part 1 texts in the following way:

The books are chosen based on thematic concerns, so they are easy for comparison, but they are from different continents or different time periods so there is enough room for differences. So there's *Medea*, a classic Greek. You can compare that with say, *Hedda* or *House of Bernarda Alba*, and there will interesting differences to explore because culturally, they are different... But thematically, it's about women who are struggling in their oppressed conditions, whether they are oppressed in marriage, or by their mothers, or culturally, by their traditions.

Thus, thematic concerns as well as interesting differences were factors that the teachers took into consideration in choosing texts. Teachers also had to consider their choices within different parts across the entire curriculum. For example, Part 3 works focused on male protagonists (with the exception of *The Colour Purple* (2006), a HL text) while Part 1 works focussed on female protagonists, and this was a deliberate choice to cater to both male and female students. In addition, because Part 1 texts were international texts that the teachers felt dealt with more difficult issues, they chose to balance it with a more contemporary selection of *bildungsroman* novels in Part 3. Having common concepts of feminist theories and growth tie works within Part 1 and Part 3 respectively allowed students to explore concepts in-depth through the study of a few texts. The teachers had clear ideas about what would be accessible to students and were also aware of the need to stretch students' understandings in terms of the types of texts and the ideas raised. As such, text choice was about balancing accessibility and challenge within the IBDP constraints.

For some teachers, the curriculum construction exercise was a personally thought-provoking exercise where they were forced to read works that they did not normally consider. For example, the English department agreed that they would use Part 4 to focus on regional/Asian works, including Singapore works. The teacher coordinator for Part 4 then deliberately read books by Vietnamese writers and by Chinese writers recommended on the World Literature prescribed list in order to find suitable texts beyond her initial expertise (generally Eurocentric she professed). She recommended Lu Xun's (n.d.) short stories as well as Duong's (1993) *Paradise of the Blind*, and eventually, the decision was made to retain Lu Xun. Instead of *Paradise of the Blind*, Salman Rushdie's (1996) *East-West*, a collection of short stories, was chosen, mainly because it was felt that the selection of short stories might be more accessible to the students than another novel (*God of Small Things* (Roy, 2008) was the World Literature text chosen for Part 4). Another teacher explained later that when they



wanted to replace the short stories of Lu Xun in 2009 with another text, they were “constrained because [we] need texts for all parts to be from different continents, so we need an East Asian text, which fits in with Part 4. It’s new so we’re just exploring it”. In fact, because of the necessity of including an East Asian text, most of the teachers were exploring texts that had not been in their repertoires. Coming from academic and teaching traditions that focused on European, British and American literature, they were in fact being forced to look beyond what they were familiar with by the IBDP curriculum requirements.

At the same time, teachers were also constrained at times by their understanding of what makes for good literature and often evaluated literary texts by what seemed to them a neutral term – aesthetic value. One teacher explained: “We don’t include books because they’re from different cultures but they have to be well-written and worthy of study as well.” As such, Shakespeare (Part 2) and Greek drama (Part 1) were seen as inevitable inclusions in the English A1 curriculum. Lest I give the impression of a unified, uncontested picture of curriculum construction, I should point out that there were differing opinions and tensions that were ironed out along the way to finally arrive at the final choices. For example, teachers were divided as to whether they would have considered a Singapore text without the influence of the National Education initiative. The Part 4 coordinator actively supported inclusion of Singapore literature and selected *No Other City* (2000), an anthology of Singapore poetry as a work of “literary merit” worthy of study. The anthology was chosen because “comparatively, Singapore poetry is more matured than the genre of prose” and because of “the multiple perspectives an anthology afforded”. In the end, it was agreed that it was a text that was suitable for study and would be relevant to the students. One deputy Dean explained:

*No Other City* definitely has an NE component because it is local poetry. Singaporean poetry naturally deals with issues relevant to national identity... After-all, literature is

all about one's identity, and we see this in our other texts as well. So it is about understanding others for the purpose of understanding self and nationhood, and that is integral to the issue of identity.

For the Deputy Dean, while other texts also allow for conversations about identity, a Singapore text does allow for discussion of culturally specific issues. On the other hand, he also pointed out that although he made attempts to bring in the local in his use of both Singapore and non-Singapore texts (for example, using World War One poetry as a springboard for discussion about National Service, a compulsory two-year military stint for Singaporean males, and war in current contexts), bringing in such conversations really depended on individual teachers.

This brief overview of the process of curriculum construction at Ace Independent gives a sense of the centrality of teachers' roles as curriculum-makers (Craig & Ross, 2008) who negotiate the parameters of what counted as literary knowledge. Unlike the Mauritius situation, the English A1 curriculum structure was actually interpreted by Ace Independent teachers as an open call to rethink their curriculum blinkers in light of the World Literature requirements. The IBDP curriculum as a global curriculum served to provide rules and guidelines that determined the kinds of knowledge that would be relevant to the English A1 curriculum, and the *Prescribed World Literature List* (1999c) provided a canon of texts that helped with text selection. The requirement for texts from different continents encouraged expanded readings and position-takings by key teachers at Ace Independent as they read texts they were unfamiliar with and chose to situate Part 4 texts in a regional context. While the National Education initiative may have done its part in encouraging the consideration of Singapore texts, teachers were also informed by current conversations about the merit of including Singapore literature on the syllabus (see Holden, 1999; K. Singh, 1999) to negotiate and select Singapore and other regional texts for Part 4.

### **Conclusion: Deparochialising the IBDP English A1 Curriculum**

The case study shows how a transported international curriculum is localized in one specific context, demonstrating the power of the IBDP curriculum as a “compacted” concept (Freebody & Freiberg, 2008, p. 21) to shape definitions of what it means to be a literate person in the Ace Independent school context. The emphasis on World Literature, with requirements to include different translated texts from different continents, in fact forced teachers to look beyond their comfort zone to texts that they themselves were unfamiliar with in order to find suitable texts for study. At the same time, the teachers continued to work within their own constraints of what they knew, selecting European, British and American texts that they were familiar with for other parts of the English curriculum while consciously expanding their repertoire to include unfamiliar works situated within Singapore, the region and globally. What the study clearly demonstrates is how central the role of the teacher is in fulfilling or expanding curriculum aims, particularly when contrasted with the description of the Mauritius situation where dominantly Eurocentric texts were chosen. At Ace Independent where teachers undertook to situate the curriculum in the Singapore context and include both Singapore and regional works. The personal knowledge and willingness of the teacher to move out of his or her comfort zone as mediators of the official curriculum contributed to the success of a curriculum that is both globally and locally relevant.

The English A1 curriculum that eventually emerged is not neutral or value free. Rather, it is driven by multiple motivations and desires of the IB as an international body, the nation, school, and students towards the construction of a global literate citizen. While English A1 paper aims towards the construction of an internationally aware, intercultural individual, I have suggested that the curriculum as it is structured may be limiting in some ways. While there is room for the local texts, it depends on individual schools and teachers to see the potential and to make the connections between the local and the global. As such, it is

very much dependent on a school culture and teacher willingness to explore. The teacher must draw on his or her own intercultural capital— knowledge of global flows of information and technology – and situate them in local contexts to guide their text choice and instructional practices in such a way as to allow for imagination of both nation and world. Only when the educator is aware of both the local and the global in his or her planning can deparochialising of literature education take place.

As it stands, the cosmopolitan possibilities of the IBDP English A1 curriculum remains buried unless unearthed by forward-thinking educators in specific contexts. Even then, as pointed out by some teachers and students in *Ace Independent*, given the large number of assessments, the lack of time would force a focus on only the texts instead of the potential conversations that could be raised by the texts. Possessing a “global literate English” (Wallace, 2003) should include the ability to critically evaluate and understand texts from different contexts and to raise conversations about culturally relevant issues. While the IBDP English curriculum may provide a cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Guillory, 1993) in equipping students with knowledge of western and global literature, it is questionable whether it is a limited capital that neglects the relational aspect between the global and the local. Students too need to be equipped with intercultural capital and learn how to make critical connections between the local and the global from their situatedness within the nation and world. Literature then will become personally meaningful as students make use of the dialogic spaces within texts to think about their relation to nation and world, and their own positioning and stances with regard to contemporary issues.

If the IBDP really wishes to fulfill the aims of international education, it may need to work more explicitly into its training structure ways for teachers to examine the kinds of texts they choose, and to question the ideological underpinnings for their choices, given their own stances and positioning. Curriculum construction thus becomes a critical exercise for self-

reflection and understanding. This training should not be limited to educators from postcolonial countries – *all* educators should question their text choice and under the power politics of canonization in order to avoid a surface understanding of the Other. Literary texts as such must serve as much more than works of art; they should encourage conversations about culturally relevant matters, significant at both national and global levels, if the IBDP and Literature educators wish to aim towards constructing globally mobile *and* socially responsive national and world citizens.

## School texts

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| Part | Strand Name                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | School Texts for English A1                                                                                                                                                                                             | Assessment Mode                                   |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | World Literature<br>Three or four texts, originally written in a language different from that which is being studied, are chosen from a prescribed list for study.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Strindberg's <i>Miss Julie</i> (Sweden)<br>IBO<br>'s <i>Hedda Gabbler</i> (Norway)<br>Lorca's <i>House of Bernada Alba</i> (Spain)<br>Euripidis' <i>Medea</i> (Greece)*                                                 | Comparative Essay, externally moderated           |
| 2    | Detailed Study<br>Extracts to be chosen from two or four different texts of different genres. There is no need to include a World Literature text.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Extracts from:<br>Shakespeares's <i>Twelfth Night</i> and <i>King Lear</i> * (England)<br>Wole Soyinka's poems (Nigeria)*<br>Maya Angelou's <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> (USA)<br>War Poetry (United Kingdom) | Individual Oral Commentary, externally moderated  |
| 3    | Group of Works, Paper 2<br>Choice of three or four texts, of a different genre from Part 1 texts. One World Literature text must be included.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Hesse's <i>Siddhartha</i> (Germany) – WL<br>Twain's <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> (USA)<br>Doyle's <i>Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha</i> (Ireland)<br>Walker's <i>The Colour Purple</i> (USA)*                       | Written Commentary, external assessment           |
| 4    | School's Free Choice<br>Schools are free to choose their own texts, and must include one World Literature text. Suggested approaches include "a selection of texts which fulfil local or national requirements" and "a study of a local literature, with the World Literature requirement being met by a work from a minority language or a second language of that region" (IBO 1999a: 18). The only recommendation is that "while teachers are free to choose all the works to be studied for this part from their own sources, they should always ensure that works of literary merit are chosen, as the best interests of students may not be served if the works are either obscure or of little literary value" (IBO 1999: 18). | Lee & Pang's <i>No Other City</i> (Singapore)<br>Lu Xun's short stories (China) - WL<br>Rushdie's <i>East-West</i> (India)<br>Roy's <i>God of Small Things</i> (India)*                                                 | Individual Oral Presentation, internal assessment |
|      | Paper 1<br>Critical commentary of either an unseen poem or prose piece.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Individual prose passages or poems selected by teacher for study.                                                                                                                                                       | Written Commentary, external assessment           |

\* Higher Level Texts, WL = World Literature Text

Table 1: IBDP English A1 Texts Studied in 2006.

### Biographical Details

Chin Ee, Loh is an Assistant Professor in the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. Her interests are in literature curriculum and instruction, globalization and literacies and teacher education.