



Global citizens

A SCHOOL, AS THE LATE, GREAT HEDLEY BEARE CONTENTED, IS A SET OF LEARNERS GOING WHEREVER IT'S APPROPRIATE TO LEARN. DAVID LOADER LOOKS AT AN AUSTRALIAN AND CHINESE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP THAT SHOWS HIS CONTENTION IN ACTION.

Sadly, we recently lost a great Australian educator, Hedley Beare. Not only were his achievements outstanding as an administrator, he was also a person who provided leadership and mentoring to many of us. Fortunately, his inspiration and insight remains available to us. I draw your attention to one of his statements, reported in the book, *Our School Our Future*, Brian Caldwell and I published last year.

'Schools,' Beare explained, 'are brokers of learning, and they'll gather in the materials for learning from whatever area they will; so it's an active unit rather than a premise. It's a set of learners going wherever it's appropriate to learn, rather than going into school premises at nine o'clock and having a set school day.'

The context for Beare's statement was a discussion on the need for schools to create global citizens. He was arguing against any isolationist setting for schooling and expressing concern that a national Australian curriculum could be too inward looking. It's very hard to get a global perspective if you only experience one culture and study one history. For instance in the past Australians have been notoriously reluctant to learn other languages, as though we can't see why we need to if all the people we know can speak English.

Recently I came across a school which is addressing this challenge of global citizenship in an interesting way. The school has literally placed itself in the hands of another school – in China. School principal, Bruce Simons, uses the phrase 'one school, two campuses' to describe his dual domain life,

one in Victoria and one in the province of Jiangsu in China.

Bruce is Principal of the Hamilton and Alexandra College in the Western District of Victoria. His school provides a different experience for their Year 9 students: living and studying in a school in Gaoyou, an industrial city in Jiangsu Province, China. His school has established a working partnership with Gaoyou Middle School that allows Australian students, their teachers and even the students' parents to live in the boarding house of Gaoyou Middle School for two weeks. This may not sound attractive to some, but the Hamilton and Alexandra College experience is that there's a waiting list of parents and teachers wishing to participate! While in China the students are integrated into the school, attend classes and relate fully with their Chinese peers. Students teach English and learn Mandarin, and then invite their new Chinese friends to visit them in Australia.

What's amazing is that Gaoyou Middle School has provided this facility especially for the Australian students, which means the Australian students are in a Chinese school, not just visiting an Australian college in a foreign land. Even more amazing, Gaoyou Middle School covers the living costs for the Hamilton and Alexandra College students while in China, even including a cooked English breakfast if necessary! The partnership between the schools is such that they each refer to their 'twin campus' in the other's country and both principals carry the title of Honorary Principal of the other campus. China

is looking to see how to create more of these types of partnerships, but are we in Australia equally interested and active in seeking overseas partners? Do we see our students' future being lived solely in an isolated island nation or as members of a global community working in and for a number of countries?

Other questions come to mind. In two weeks, the experience is limited, so could the China experience be extended further, to one term, one year or even a few years? What degree of language development and cultural sensitivity could be achieved during a longer stay? What might be achieved if the final two years of school were parallel in both schools, with the chance for students to study the same curriculum regardless of which campus they attended?

The Hamilton and Alexandra College and Gaoyou Middle School partnership may be the forerunner to a new model of multi-campus education, in this case in China and Australia. If we are to live in a global world and harness the goodwill and exuberance of today's youth, their experience of other cultures is best from within that culture, even though this could be augmented by virtual visits through technology, digital books and mobile devices.

As Hedley Beare reminded us, schools are not just physical premises but 'groups of learners going wherever it's appropriate to learn.' The Hamilton and Alexandra College experience is that Gaoyou is a place where it's appropriate to learn and to create global citizens.

Where is your school's horizon set? **T**

REFERENCES

Caldwell, B.J. & Loader, D.N. (2010). *Our School Our Future*. Sydney: Education Services Australia.

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