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## *Roles of International Schools in International Relations: Albanian Case*

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### **Abstract**

International schools are phenomenon and providing quite diverse education in order to meet nearly the entire educational model of many countries. Hence, their students come from families who are in their countries for a limited period of time. These families want their children to be educated in these schools on one hand; and on the other hand, when they go back to their countries of origin or other countries, their children's education should not be interrupted. As a result of these demands and circumstances, international schools are partial when education is concerned, democratic when recipients are concerned and international when impacts are concerned.

The role of democratic education has been discussed and suggested as a part of peaceful coexistence for many years. It seems that international schools and democratic education have been linked and provided an example for other educational institutions.

This research paper has investigated an international school based in Tirana in order to understand and see how much their education is partial, democratic and international.

The paper uses qualitative methods with structured interviews. The structured questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers and parents. Subjects' syllabuses were investigated for assessment on partiality, democracy and international. The paper used content analysis in this part within the framework of the qualitative method. The respondents had diverse backgrounds which were very important to provide a wider perspective.

The whole research was conducted according to the ethical code of The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

SPSS 20 and the Nvivo10 were used to find and analyze collected data. The syllabuses met the criterion of partiality, democracy and international of education. The responses of the teachers and students were considered an addition to the syllabuses.

The results of this study show that international schools play an important role in term of democratic values, international peace and diversity. It can be suggested that more

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schools adopt international schools' curriculums in order to help democratic understanding and international cooperation and peaceful cohesion.

Key terms: education, democracy, partiality, peaceful cohesion, peace, international cooperation.

## **Introduction**

Education provides a means through which all people can become aware of their rights and responsibilities, which is an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality and peace. In a global world, maintaining peace becomes more important than other goals or education. In this concern, an international education may be an essential tool of means.

In the international educational environment, it is clear that students can learn foreign languages, customs, history and their way of living. This helps students have a diverse world views that they cannot gain from any other educational environment. As one states that international schools allow students 'for the reintegration of students into their own culture or for integration into other cultures' (Walker, Not Stated, p. 3) which obviously help to maintain the peace and prosperity in the world.

Unlike the more generic concept of a school in local or national framework, international schools are different. These schools usually provide education for children of families those who move abroad as well as local residents. Children who attend these schools teach and learn from each other. This is not a voluntary choice for many, but circumstances force these children and parents interact in an international school environment.

This paper highlights the importance of these schools in education which is partial, democratic and international. Secondly, role of democratic education as a part of peaceful coexistence has been investigated in these schools in general, particularly in Tirana. Thirdly, this paper has analyzed the role of Memorial International School of Tirana (MIST) as a case study, based in Tirana concerning of how much their education is partial, democratic and international. Finally a conclusion has been drawn from the study.

## **Literature Review**

It is known that there are many studies on international education and schools. All these sources and studies are mainly about the importance of these institutions and educations. However, it is difficult to hold many academic studies on these institutions' provided education linked with democracy, peace and cultural diversity and cohesions. One of these rare studies is done by Hayden, who tries to give a respond to this question which was asked as 'how can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don't know each other?' (Pearson, 1957) by stating that 'promoting international understanding and peace through education young people from many different countries' (Hayden, 2006, p. 18) in international schools.

Another source on this subject is conducted by Reynolds, he insists that peaceful place is very important for the students, because they come from different cultures and countries and chaotic environments (David Reynolds & Schaffer, 2002, p. 63). One of the goals of international schools is mentioned by as to understand something of the nature and role of social justice and equity, and peace and conflict (Shaw, 2001, pp. 36-37). It is also pointed out that international education should maintain and create a peaceful and cultural nation, and to realize the ideals of democracy, freedom, and equality (W.L.Boyd, 1993, p. 151).

Gardner describes five intellectual minds that people will need if they are to 'thrive in the world during the eras to come'. One of these minds is called 'the respectful mind notes and welcomes differences between human individuals and between human groups, tries to understand 'others', and seeks to work effectively with them'(Gardner, H, 2006, p.3). This mind can be obtained only from an international educational environment. Consequently, international schools are the means to build bridges among countries like international organizations are the bridge among the states (Wendt, Spring, 1992, pp. 391-425). Especially, the children who attend international schools they learn how to appreciate other cultures, other languages, national history of other countries, the problems and contributions of other countries.

There is a fact that not all international schools meet certain conditions in order to be described as international school due to circumstances of countries and cultures. In reality schools describe themselves as international schools for a different of reasons including the nature of the students' population and the programs offered, marketing and competing with other schools (Hayden, 2006, pp. 2-10). Sometimes international schools may give more priority to the host country's children and local schooling may not be perceived as alternative while international schools may have more choice.

In short, while there is a wide variation of international schools, it is right to accept that majority of these share common characteristics as Murphy says:

International schools serve the children of those international organizations and multinational companies whose parents are called upon to work in many different countries and to change their assignment at frequent intervals ; the schools also educate the children of the diplomatic corps , and offer educational opportunities to children of host country nationals who want their children to learn English or prefer the greater flexibility which an international school offers over the national system (Murphy, 1991, p. 1).

Lastly, the majority of international schools have a parent body consists the parents of the students. Most of those parents are well educated, professional people who value education. These parents share their experience and expectation with others that would generate wider acceptance of their culture, belief and respect. All these are part of peace and prosperity which ever part of the world need to be experienced with those of such a background (Hayden, 2006, p. 9).

## **Method of the Study**

This study has two parts. One part is about general information about international schools. This information has been taken from secondary sources. The sources have been treated documents as a source of the study.

The second part of the study is an empirical case study. The data has been collected from an international school which is based in Tirana, namely Memorial International School of Tirana. The school subjects for year 9-11 has been analysed in order to understand what these subjects have in common and how much they aim to provide an international democratic education. The subjects are: Civic, Geography, World History and. The research uses Nvivo 10 in order to analyse these subjects, all together is 12, thematically to measure up their contribution to internationalisation, democratic culture, respect other culture and living togetherness.

## **The Importance of These Schools**

The international schools help the parents and children recognize the children of different nations, live in a peaceful and democratic environment (Thompson, 2008, p.17). For example, by learning foreign languages can emphasize the importance and value of other cultures (stated n. , 2008, p. 20). Further international schools teach the children how to behave towards the other nations, cultures and the children of diverse countries (Hayden, 2006, p. 9). International schools have to prepare children to take responsibility in a society, to understand each other and other nations, to have a peace and tolerance towards each other. According to the international school curriculum pupils should be able to develop intercultural understanding and a sense of global citizenship (Shaw S. B., 2001 p.36).

In short, international schools are one of many vehicles for the delivery of international education and are growing in number and variety. International schools are, therefore, becoming an important and growing area of Education.

## **Role of Democratic Education in These Schools**

Democratic education is very important in these schools. For example, in 1946 US encouraged Japan to set up a Parent-Teacher-Association in order to have a democratic education system for Japan. (Sears, 1998 p.29). German education system is also designed to make the system work on the lines of participatory democracy. Through democratic ideas it is possible to have a developed and successful international education (Sears, 1998 p.222).

Hill goes further to give some depth to his interpretation of intercultural understanding as:

Intercultural understanding, as an element of international education at school level, goes beyond, but includes, utilitarian objectives and cognitive knowledge; it also embraces the affective domain of empathy and respect, and being sufficiently open-minded to acknowledge the existence and necessity of a range of perspectives (Hill, 2006 p.12).

These schools help these international students learn together, get on with each other, interact with the host community and then in most cases. It can be pointed out that international education should be designed to break down the barriers of race, religion and class and also it should provide peace and democracy among various nations (Walker, Introduction: Past, present and future, NA).

## **Memorial International School of Tirana (MIST)**

History of Memorial International School of Tirana

Memorial International School of Tirana (MIST) is a private, coeducational day school which offers an educational program from Junior-Kindergarten through grade 12 for the students of the Albanian and international community residing in Albania. It was established in 2001 to meet the international education need in Albania.

MIST provides a safe and caring learning environment where students are challenged to make use of their potentials and integrate into a multicultural world community and continues to serve for international education with qualified teaching staff in its modern and well equipped school building.

Some degree of proficiency in English is desirable for admission to all levels above grade 5. There is a strong ESL program in the school. The faculty consists of qualified, certified teachers; some of the teachers have Master's Degrees.

## **Mission Statement of Memorial International School of Tirana**

MIST endeavours to provide a safe and caring learning environment where students are challenged to make use of their potentials and integrate into a multicultural world community.

MIST sets a good example of educational excellence.

1. To provide the best curriculum, faculty, learning facilities and environment for our students to acquire their highest potentials at MIST.
2. To give every student access to coherent English- type international curriculum.
3. To prepare our students for a life-long learning, equipped with skills and adaptability to cope confidently in a rapidly changing world.
4. To promote high standards of behaviour and to foster caring, tolerant, supportive and respectful relationships between all members of our international school community.
5. To strive to attain the highest standards of international education in order that students respond to challenge and integrate into a multicultural world community.
6. To provide a broad based curriculum which emphasizes strong academic and creative expressions and which facilitates entry to schools with similar program.
7. To recruit and retain suitably qualified, experienced and highly capable teachers.
8. To develop an understanding and appreciation of diversity of cultures within the community.
9. To build respect for people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.
10. To prepare the students to grow up with self – confidence, self – discipline and high ethical standards – ready to communicate and operate within today’s global community.

## **Philosophy of Memorial International School of Tirana**

It is believed:

1. that each child has a unique talent and potential, so we encourage each child to explore his/her talent and help to bring out the best in them.
2. in dignity and worth of our school community and recognize the importance of our mutual
3. responsibilities to each other and to others in the world community.
4. that knowledge is acquired through a constructive process; and therefore our curriculum should emphasize experimental learning at all levels.
5. that education in an international school with o community of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds should provide and promote understanding and appreciation of all creeds and cultures.
6. that education should be student centred and is a partnership among students, teachers, parents and broader community.
7. in measuring our value as human beings by our humanity towards others. Goodness, generosity, tolerance and honesty cannot be forced or ordered. They can function only by being modelled upon. MIST is the embodiment of all good features and qualities.

Students' profile of Memorial International School of Tirana (Administration, 2012)

<b>Nationality</b>		<b>Total number</b>
1	Turkish	107
2	Albanian	88
3	Greek	8
4	Italian	7
5	Albanian-American	5
6	American	4
7	Montenegrin	4
8	Albanian-Turkish	3
9	Australian	3
10	Indian	3
11	Kyrgyz	3
12	Palestinian	3
13	Australian-Albanian	2
14	Egyptian	2
15	Serbian	2
16	Serbian-Turkish	2
17	Albanian-Lebanon	1
18	Albanian-Netherlands	1
19	Bulgarian	1
20	Canadian	1
21	Georgian	1
22	Hungarian	1
23	Russian	1
24	Singaporean	1
25	Turkish-Albanian	1
26	Uzbek	1
<b>Total</b>		256

Result of the Study Interview with the Parents and Teachers

*Parent 1:*

Do you think the Memorial International School of Tirana gives enough education to your child?

Well, for the time being we satisfy with the education the school gives. I'd like to mention something: We cannot compare the school with other schools, because the school does not do any general exam with the rest of Turkish schools that the schools do among themselves.

What can you say about the school discipline?

The school discipline is very good. Discipline is very important for education. If we compare with the previous years it is becoming better and better.

What can you say about the relationship your child has with other nationalities?

My child is in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. There are many Turkish students in my child's class. My child has only made friends with Turkish students. I think my child can make friends with other nationalities for the following years.

*Parent 2:*

Do you think the Memorial International School of Tirana gives enough education to your child?

I hope yes. Concerning the social subjects the school is successful. The school especially teaches the English language very well. The English teachers are all native speakers. They help them learn English well. It is a great advantage for my child to learn English from the native speakers. Concerning the science subjects especially for the primary school the education should be given by the branch teachers.

What can you say about the school discipline?

When my child started the first grade, it was really difficult. It was difficult to control my child. The school had different nationalities and different languages. The following years it became easier. The school discipline is much better than before.

What can you say about the relationship your child has with other nationalities?

My child has good relations with Turkish and Albanian students. My child has good relations with Albanian students because my child knows Albanian. There have not been any troubles with other nationalities.

*Parent 3:*

Do you think the Memorial International School of Tirana gives enough education to your child?

I find it rather successful especially last few years. It is a good school. My child does not know the Albanian language, because of that my child is not taught in Albanian. All the students are equal at MIST. They learn English from scratch. They learn English very well. It is a great opportunity for us.

What can you say about the relationship your child has with other nationalities?

My child has good relations with other students. I have not got any complaining about my child. Since the second grade they communicate in English, so it helps them to become friends with others.

## **Curriculums**

The paper has investigated courses which have been taught at the school. The school's home page gives this information about the curriculum as:

Our curriculum is partially based on the National Curriculum of England and

partially on American curriculum. The school has enhanced its curriculum with many international practices. Therefore, we are able to recognize children transfer to and from very many different school systems and bring with them a varied educational and cultural background (MIST, 2012).

Among these courses, civics is taught at year 10 and 11, The World History is taught at year at year 9, 10, 11, and 12, Sociology is taught at year 10, 11 and 12. These three courses have information about partiality, democracy and international. The details of these courses are more dependent on teachers who deliver the courses. However, there are text books and annual plans of the course which clearly identify certain area of topics. This paper selected the topics and objectives of the course from the school’s annual course plans. Below, there is only information about the Civics course. The researcher intentionally did not make any table about other courses, namely the world history, the world geography and sociology. The reason is that the Civics course provides enough information to prove the hypothesis of this research. The other courses also provide additional information about the school that complies with partiality, democracy and international. The result of partiality in these three courses can be seen in the following **Table 1**.

**Table 1:** Partiality, Democracy and International in Civics Course Year 10

	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>Civics</b>
<b>Hours</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
1	Course Introduction/Overview	Course Overview/Introduction
1	Utilitarianism, Socrates, Einstein, Dignity and Integrity	Understand the basis of “The Good Society”
1	The bases of human dignity and integrity	Understand the values that these are based on
1	Values in conflict?	Understand if five basic values are in conflict
1	Positive and Negative Values	Understand the difference between these two
1	Positive and Negative Rights in Practice	Understand the reality of these two types
1	The Holocaust -- why did this happen?	Understand the roots and reality of the Holocaust
1	Oppression in the modern context	Where is oppression happening today
1	The Good Society -- a dream or real possibility?	Understand whether positive change is possible
1	The Good Society -- debate	Organize a serious debate on this question
1	Democracy -- a work in progress	Understand what democracy is
1	Democracy -- a work in progress	Understand the alternatives to democracy
1	Democracy -- a work in progress	Understand how democracy can function better



2	Race and segregation	Understand the history of segregation in the US
1	Resisting oppression and injustice -- what are the methods?	Understand the tools available to fight oppression and see if violence is ever justified
2	The struggle for desegregation	The role of mass movements in achieving social change
2	Can young people change the course of history?	Understanding the role of youth in social movements
2	Neo-Nazism -- What it is and How to Fight It	Understand about the existence of these groups and how people mobilize against them
1	Individual Choice in the Context of a Troubled World	How the personal values we adopt influence our role in society
1	Debate: The Individual is Helpless to Bring Change	Carry out a serious debate on this question
2	Project : Types of governments	To make different research about types of governments
26		

This table shows that there are 26 hours of teaching time which is devoted to teach students the topics which have closer connection with partiality, democracy and international. Table 1 also informs the teaching topics and objectives of this course.

**Table 2:** Partiality, Democracy and International in Civics Course Year 11

	<b>Year 11</b>	<b>Civics</b>
<b>Hours</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
1	The Law and us	Understand our relation to the law
1	Are there unjust laws?	Be able to name controversial and potentially unjust laws
1	How can we change the law?	Determine possible means of getting laws changed
1	The Albanian Constitution	Gain familiarity with the key portions of the Albanian Constitution
1	The potential limitations of the Constitution	Discuss whether following the Constitution is enough to ensure the “good society”
1	The family as a key social unit	Understand the history of the family and its role in contemporary society
1	Problems with and in the family today	Understand the problems that can and sometimes do emerge in families today
1	Education -- its role in society	Understand the history of education and controversies surrounding it today
1	Children -- their rights and the laws concerning them	Understand the rights that children have and the laws which concern them

1	Debate: The Employment Relation is / is not just	Carry out a serious debate on this question
1	Employment -- how to find a job	Understand how you can maximize your chances to find work
1	Environmental protection and humans	Understand the relationship between the environment and people
1	Current global environmental problems and their solutions	Understand the different threats that exist to the environment and how they could be dealt with
1	Debate: Is Intensive Resource Exploitation Necessary for Economic Growth?	Carry out a serious debate on this question
1	The development of a sustainable environment	Understand if environmental sustainability is a feasible goal
1	Drugs, alcohol and smoking	Understand the causes and consequences of drinking, smoking and taking drugs
1	Debate: Health care is a basic right of all people	Carry out a serious debate on this question
1	Project: The development of a sustainable environment	

This table shows that there are 18 hours of teaching time which is devoted to teach students the topics which have closer connection with partiality, democracy and international. Table 2 also informs the teaching topics and objectives of this course as well as some local connection, namely Albania. The reason should be given some kind of insight for international students who live in this country and need to know what its constitution and the law and order. At the same time, the school wants to be attracted by the local people and students.

These two tables provide information which support partiality, democracy and international. In other words, the topics and objectives indicate that the school guide students to be a world citizen who have tolerance towards others. In addition, if there is a problem, they could compromise in order to solve the problem rather than insisting on their own idea.

The world history course has a wide range of topics including ancient civilization, modern civilization, and eastern, Islamic and African civilization. Further, there is information about global challenges the two world wars. World wild terrorism and global interdependence, there for this course supports partiality, democracy and international aspects of education.

To sum up, the school shows that it is unimportant rule to educate its students who would gain wider perspectives on world affair, democracy, dialogue, and peace which is essence of living together in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Discussion of the Result

The results in the Civics course show that a great amount of time spent at the MIST to teach this course which might have a positive impact. This research did not measure what kind and degree of the impact of the course put on the students. However, there are other national and international schools which adopt same courses for their students who advocate that the civics course teaches students ‘to recognize individual’s responsibilities as a citizen as well as his or her rights’ (Baldwin, 2003 ). Right education and right courses have great effects on students. Teaching civics course, help the students obtain reliability among other nations. (David Reynolds & Schaffer, 2002, p. 9). The school also provides the local families with different courses, so it helps the families benefit from the MIST who have international business backgrounds. (Sears, 1998, p. 8)

## Conclusion

International education began as an experiment a way to serve the emerging needs of a changing society and it continues to innovate as it leads the way into a complex 21st-century world. Furthermore, international schools help the students and parents gain awareness of international cultures, which enable them to understand and respect each other. It is very vital that children from diverse backgrounds benefit from the larger educational program that come from high-quality, international-based education content.

This research advocates that, international schools not only teach students to recognize an individual’s responsibilities but also teach students to be a good citizen as well as to recognize other people`s rights because of maintaining world peace. Teaching civics, the world history, and the world geography and sociology courses as part of the curriculums is very important. Thus, the topics and objectives of these courses have an international dimension that makes big difference than the national curriculums.

Sustaining world peace and adopting peaceful manner to problems require for the tomorrow`s world leaders to have diverse educations and spend their childhood and youth hood periods with their peers who are from different nationalities, creed, languages, and religions in educational environment. Therefore, this educational environment could be an international school in general. Particularly concerning Albania, the MIST provides an international education which includes all these things that this paper has investigated, analysed and concluded. For example, one parent states in the interview: ‘...so it helps them to become friends with others’.

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