

Internationalization versus Localization

The Case of Primary Education in Taiwan

Li-Ping Wang¹ & Hsuan-Fu Ho¹

¹ National Chiayi University, Taiwan

Correspondence: Hsuan-Fu Ho, Associate Professor, National Chiayi University, Taiwan. E-mail: hfho@mail.ncyu.edu.tw

Received: May 3, 2012 Accepted: May 14, 2012 Online Published: June 15, 2012

doi:10.5539/ies.v5n4p39

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v5n4p39>

Abstract

Internationalization is receiving increasing attention at academic institutions all over the world. Taiwan is no exception, where the government is promoting internationalization not only in higher education, but also at the primary education level. In this research we identified the key factors of the internationalization of primary education in Taiwan, calculated their relative importance, and determined their relationships with the various internationalization strategies being used in Taiwan. Questionnaires were administered to 300 school teachers, of which 246 were returned. AHP was adopted as the major instrument for determining the relative weight of each factor and strategy, and correspondence analysis was employed to investigate their respective relationships. Based on the findings, we provide suggestions for improving the internationalization of primary schools in Taiwan.

Keywords: internationalization, localization, AHP, Taiwan

1. Preface

The impact of globalization on education is becoming increasingly apparent, and future graduates will face a world very different from that of today. Many governments have thus begun to promote the internationalization of education beginning as early as childhood, hoping to prepare their young for future cooperation and competition in a global marketplace (Erickson, 2009; Bunnell, 2010).

Taiwan is no exception, where the government is promoting internationalization at all levels of education, with a specific focus on primary schooling. By internationalizing education, the government is endeavoring to help students gain a better understanding of the regional and global environment, a process which has reciprocal benefit to the international community. At present, the government's strategy for internationalizing primary school education consists of overseas study trips, encouraging students to participate in international contests, establishing relationships with sister schools abroad, providing signs in English throughout the campus, creating an English-language version of school websites, adding various international elements to the curriculum, strengthening foreign-language education, and internationalizing the professional development of teachers.

While the internationalization of primary education in Taiwan has met with much approval from schools and society at large, a significant minority question whether these efforts weaken the sense of national identity in Taiwan or even undermine traditional knowledge and culture. While much has been written about internationalization in higher education, very little research has been carried out on primary schooling. The present research was designed to identify the key factors of the internationalization of education in Taiwan, to calculate their relative importance, and to produce a perceptual map which displays the relationships between these factors and the different internationalization strategies being used in Taiwan.

2. Literature Review

This section begins with a definition of internationalization, followed by a review of the past research relating to the internationalization of education, the strategies used to implement it, and its shortcomings.

2.1 Definitions

Altbach (2004) sees the globalization of education as being directly affected by broad and largely inevitable economic, technological, and scientific trends. Luxon and Peelo (2009) point out that different groups have different definitions of internationalization. However, any definition of the internationalization of education has

to include explicit reference to teaching and learning, since these are at the heart of education.

Svensson and Wihlborg (2010) warn against seeing internationalization as a political and economic objective, rather than an educational goal. They claim that many people misunderstand internationalization as globalization, which mainly refers to the flow of people, money, goods, and services around the globe in response to political and market forces. By contrast, internationalization is a cultural flow that transcends borders, engenders a deeper understanding between nations, and contributes to an advancement of human knowledge.

2.2 Benefits of the Internationalization of Education

Fortuijn (2002) suggests that the main goal of internationalization is to increase diversity. He further argues that direct contact between persons with different cultural backgrounds can be an efficient, effective, and simulating way to learn about cultural differences.

Carano (1991) claims that most people have an ingrained ethnocentrism, leading them to view their own culture as normal and other cultures as aberrant by comparison. The internationalization of education can help students to perceive their own culture from a different vantage point and to learn to respect and coexist with other cultures in a world that is increasingly interconnected.

Bunnell (2010) asserts that the internationalization of the primary school curriculum helps students to understand and appreciate the views of others and make sense of events from a multi-cultural perspective; it also provides opportunities for pupils to learn from their counterparts in other cultures.

2.3 Implementation Strategies

Citing the arguments of Kwok, Arpan, and Folks (1995), Salehi-Sangari and Foster (1999) suggest that schools should focus on three areas to meet the demand for internationalization: internationalization of the curriculum, internationalization of the faculty, and building international linkages.

Fortuijn (2002) points out that there are many forms of mutually beneficial internationalization, including student mobility, staff mobility, collaborative curriculum development, joint courses in face-to-face meetings, and field courses abroad.

Carano (1991) asserts that travel abroad offers opportunities for students to interact with people from other cultures, increases cross-cultural awareness, and fosters greater appreciation and understanding of other cultures.

Zheng, Hinshaw, Yu, Guo, and Oakley (2001) emphasize the mutual benefit of building international partnerships. The sister-school partnerships that cross national boundaries help to expand faculty and student learning, stimulate collaborative research, enrich the curriculum, and assist student recruitment and fund raising.

Dronkers (1993) proposes that because English is currently the dominant language for international communication, introducing English classes into primary school curriculums is an important part of internationalization. However, he warns that since language has an essential place in passing on local culture, the learning and use of a foreign language must not be to the detriment of the national language. Nukaga (2003) also claims that both multicultural education and the internationalization of education promote the concept of social justice, and that it is important to find a balance between learning about other cultures and fostering national identity.

2.4 Problems of Internationalization

Teichler (2004) points to the potential shortcomings of internationalization, arguing that although it may be mutually beneficial, it can also contribute to the devaluation of local culture, diminishing language diversity, reduced academic and cultural diversity, declining quality, or even neo-imperialism. Jackson (2003) warns that it is important to ensure that internationalization does not become a form of cultural colonization tending to the devaluation of non-Western cultures and the world-views on which they are based.

Focusing on the issue of inequality in globalization, Altbach (2004) suggests that the biggest challenge of internationalization is to recognize the complexities of the modern context and then strive to create a global academic environment that ensures equal academic relationships. Otherwise, globalization runs the risk of becoming the neo-colonialism of the 21st century.

Kondakci, Broeck, and Yildirim (2008) caution that having foreign students interact with local students does not guarantee real internationalization. Their research indicates that a cultural mismatch can exist between local and foreign students, hindering academic cooperation. Gay and Jones (2002) suggest that it is not enough to design the school curriculum to merely impart the skills needed to survive in a global capitalist economy; rather, equal importance needs to be placed on understanding and appreciating one's own culture.

3. Methodology

The main goals of this research were to identify the major factors of the internationalization of primary education in Taiwan; to calculate their relative importance; to determine students' current level of ability in each factor; and to determine how closely these factors are related to the different internationalization strategies being promoted by the government. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was adopted as the main instrument for measuring relative importance, and correspondence analysis (CA) was employed to create a perceptual map.

3.1 The Analytic Hierarchy Process

AHP was adopted for weighting the importance of the factors. AHP is a way of decomposing and streamlining a complex problem and re-forming it into an organized decision hierarchy. AHP has several strengths: it helps to elicit opinions from experts; it appropriately allocates weights to individual elements; it validates the consistency of the ratings; and, finally, it is easily combined with other techniques to perform further analysis (Saaty, 1980; Cheng, Li, & Ho, 2002; Davies, 2001). Since AHP is the best method for calculating the relative importance of different factors, and since importance is a relative measure, rather than an objective, absolute and fixed measure, AHP is highly suitable for the type of data analysis required by this research.

3.2 Design of the AHP Structure

In Figure 1, the main *goal*, located at the topmost level (on the far left), is the Internationalization of Primary Education; the second level of the hierarchy consists of the two *dimensions* of the goal; the third level consists of the four *criteria* of these two dimensions; and the fourth level consists of the eight key *factors* of the Internationalization of Primary Education.

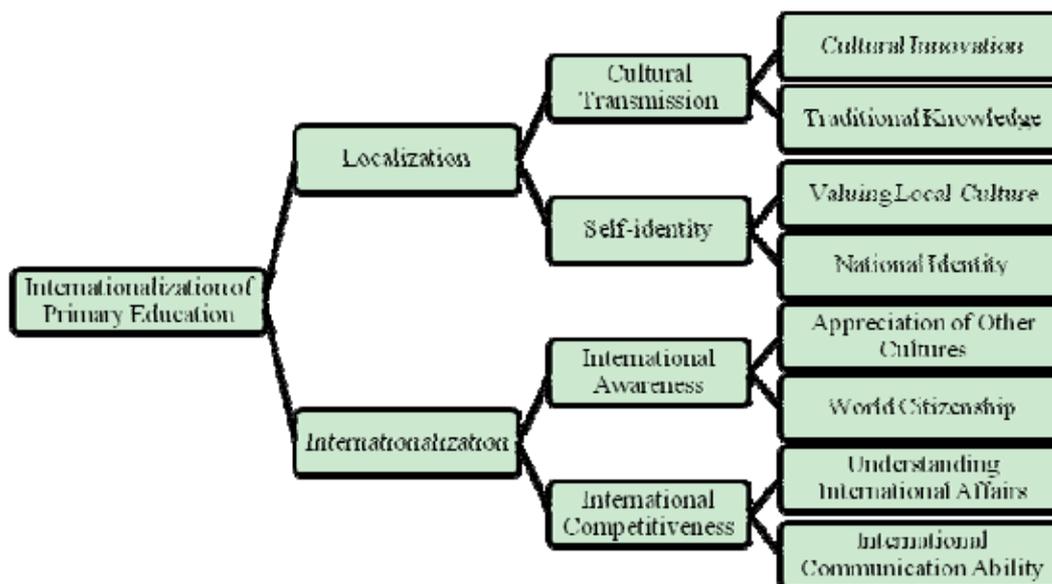


Figure 1. The AHP Structure Used in this Research

3.3 Design of the Questionnaire

A self-developed questionnaire was used as the main research tool in this study. The questionnaire was reviewed by ten specialists in educational administration and comparative education. Based on their suggestions, some minor adjustments were made to improve the clarity and appropriateness of the questions.

The questionnaire contained four parts. The first part consisted of questions about the participant's background; the second part consisted of seven pairwise questions for AHP analysis; the third part contained eight questions using a four-point Likert scale to determine students' current level of achievement in each factor; and the final part consisted of a checklist comprised of the eight factors and eight internationalization strategies, and the participants were asked to check the appropriate boxes to identify which factors are related to each strategy.

3.4 Participants

The questionnaire was administered to 300 primary school teachers in Taiwan. A total of 246 questionnaires were

returned, resulting in an 82% retrieval rate. Of the participants, 89 were male, and 157 were female; 90 were teaching in urban areas, 88 in suburban areas, and 67 in remote areas. As for the sample data, the distribution of each of the background variables tallied with the overall actual distribution.

4. Research Results

This section begins by presenting the results of AHP. This is followed by a presentation of the descriptive statistics indicating the students' level of ability in each of the factors of internationalization. Finally, a perceptual map is used to illustrate the relationships between the factors and strategies.

4.1 Results of AHP

Microsoft Excel was adopted for the AHP procedure. Since each level of the AHP procedure contained only two alternatives, the eigenvector consistency test was not applied.

The results for the second level of the AHP analysis (Table 1) show that Internationalization (.544) was deemed more important than Localization (.456).

Table 1. Weights of the Dimensions of the Internationalization of Primary Education

Dimension	Weight	Order
Internationalization	.544	(1)
Localization	.456	(2)

The results for the third level of the AHP analysis (Table 2) show that International Awareness (.316) was deemed to be the most important criteria, followed by Self-identity (.256), International Competitiveness (.228), and Cultural Transmission (.200).

Table 2. Weights of the Four Criteria

Dimension	Criteria	Weight	Order
Internationalization	International Competitiveness	.228	(3)
	International Awareness	.316	(1)
Localization	Self-identity	.256	(2)
	Cultural Transmission	.200	(4)

The results for the fourth level of the AHP analysis (Table 3) show that Appreciation of Other Cultures (.166) was considered to be the most important factor. This was followed by, in descending order, International Communication Ability (.161); World Citizenship (.149); Valuing Local Culture (.148); Cultural Innovation (.0118); National Identity (.108); Traditional Knowledge (.082); and Understanding International Affairs (.067).

Table 3. Weights of the Eight Factors

Competence	Criteria	Attribute	Weight	Order
International-ization	International Competitiveness	International Communication Ability	.161	(2)
		Understanding International Affairs	.067	(8)
	International Awareness	World Citizenship	.149	(3)
		Appreciation of Other Cultures	.166	(1)
Localization	Self-identity	National Identity	.108	(6)
		Valuing Local Culture	.148	(4)
	Cultural Transmission	Traditional Knowledge	.082	(7)
		Cultural Innovation	.118	(5)

4.2 Student Ability

In the next step we had the participants evaluate their students' current level of ability in each of the factors of internationalization, as measured on a four-point Likert scale, with "4" indicating "high," and "1" indicating "low." Student ability was rated as follows, in descending order: Valuing Local Culture (2.44); Appreciation of Other Cultures (2.30); Traditional Knowledge (2.28); Cultural Innovation (2.11); National Identity (2.02); World Citizenship (1.77); International Communication Ability (1.54); and Understanding International Affairs (1.33).

Table 4. Student Ability in the Eight Factors

Factor	SD	Mean	Rank
International Communication Ability	.62	1.54	(7)
Understanding International Affairs	.57	1.33	(8)
World Citizenship	.73	1.77	(6)
Appreciation of Other Cultures	.74	2.30	(2)
National Identity	.74	2.02	(5)
Valuing Local Culture	.75	2.44	(1)
Traditional Knowledge	.69	2.28	(3)
Cultural Innovation	.76	2.11	(4)

4.3 Results of the Correspondence Analysis

The final step was to use CA to produce a perceptual map which displays the relationships between the eight factors and the eight strategies for internationalizing primary education. The X^2 of 354.46 and the CR value of .000 indicated that the perceptual map created by CA was feasible.

In the perceptual map (Figure 2) it can be seen that the internationalization strategies and factors roughly form into five groups. The map shows that Overseas Study Trips had the most bearing on Appreciation of Other Cultures; Adding International Elements to the Curriculum had the most bearing on Cultural Innovation and World Citizenship; Internationalization of Teacher Professional Development had the most bearing on Valuing Local Culture and Traditional Knowledge; Participating in International Contests had the most bearing on National Identity; and Strengthening Foreign-language Education had the most bearing on International Communication Ability.

Understanding that different internationalization strategies have different functions can help schools to select the most appropriate strategy for a given purpose.

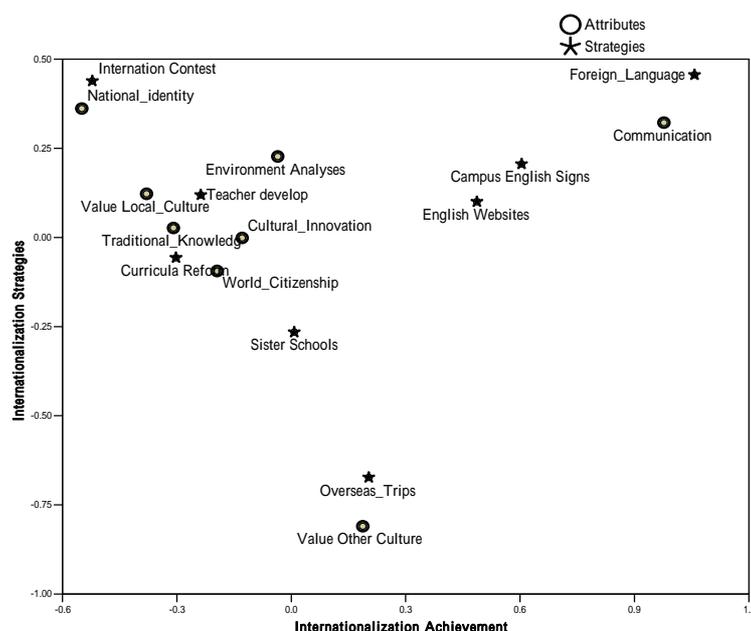


Figure 2. Perceptual Map of the Relationship between the Factors and Strategies

5. Conclusions and Implications

This research was designed to identify the key factors of the internationalization of primary education, to calculate their relative importance, to determine students' current level of ability in each factor, and to determine how closely these factors are related to the different internationalization strategies being promoted by the government.

We categorized the Internationalization of Primary Education into two dimensions: Internationalization and Localization. Although some scholars stress that localization needs to go hand-in-hand with internationalization, the results of this research show that teachers in Taiwan believe that if internationalization is to be successful, localization should be given less emphasis. This is reflected in the relative importance given to the eight factors, the four most important of which were deemed to be, in descending order, Appreciation of Other Cultures, International Communication Abilities, World Citizenship, and Valuing Local Culture. On these four, only the last one belongs to the Localization dimension.

As for current ability, students were rated highest in Valuing Local Culture, Appreciation of Other Cultures, and Traditional Knowledge. By contrast, they were rated lowest in Understanding International Affairs, World Citizenship, and International Communication Ability; yet the latter two factors were deemed to be most important by the respondents. This reveals that there is much room for improvement in Taiwan's efforts to internationalize education, and that more attention needs to be given to foreign language skills and imbuing students with a sense of their role in the world community.

As shown by the perceptual map, different internationalization strategies address different factors. For example, Overseas Study Trips are very effective in enhancing Appreciation of Other Cultures; and Participation in International Contests is effective in enhancing National Identity. By contrast, it was found that setting up an English Website, establishing relationships with Sister Schools Abroad, and putting up English Signs on Campus don't have a strong bearing on any of the factors of Internationalization.

Understanding that different strategies have different functions can help schools to select the most appropriate strategy for a given internationalization purpose. The results of this study show that in the internationalization of primary education in Taiwan the factors most in need of improvement are International Communication Ability and a sense of World Citizenship. The most effective way of addressing the former is by enhancing foreign-language instruction, and the best way of addressing the latter is by augmenting the curriculum with a wide range of international content. At present, enhancing these two strategies would be the most effective way of improving the effectiveness of the internationalization of primary education in Taiwan.

References

- Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education and Management, 10*, 3–25.
- Bunnell, T. (2010). The momentum behind the international primary curriculum in schools in England. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 42*(4), 471–486. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2010.487315>
- Carano, K. T. (1991). By planning a trip abroad, students learn about foreign countries. *Curriculum Review, 30*(7), 187–192.
- Dronkers, J. (1993). The causes of growth of English education in the Netherlands: Class or internationalization? *European Journal of Education, 28*(3), 295–307.
- Erickson, P. W. (2009). Global ideas: Do school designs support global education reform initiatives? *American School and University, 82*(3), 235–238.
- Fortuijn, J. D. (2002). Internationalising learning and teaching: A European experience. *Journal of Geography in higher education 26*(3), 263–273. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/030982602.2000.019855>
- Gay, B., & Jones, J. (2002). Classics and modern foreign languages: Their part in educating pupils in a world of increasing globalization from a PGCE student perspective. *Westminster Studies in Education, 25*(2), 137–146. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/014067202.2000.029168>
- Jackson, M. G. (2003). Internationalising the university curriculum. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 27*(3), 325–340.
- Kondakci, Y., Broeck, H., & Yildirim, A. (2008). The challenges of internationalization from foreign and local students' perspectives: The case of management school. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 9*(4), 448–463.
- Kwok, C. Y., Arpan, J., & Folks, W. R. (1995). A global survey of international business education in the 1990s.

Journal of international Business Studies, 25(3), 605–623.

- Luxon, T., & Peelo, M. (2009). Internationalisation: Its implications for curriculum design and course development in UK higher education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 46(1), 51–60.
- Nukaga, M. (2003). Japanese Education in an Era of Internationalization: A case study of an emerging multicultural coexistence model. *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 12, 79–94.
- Salehi-Sangari, E., & Foster, T. (1999). Curriculum internationalization: A comparative study in Iran and Sweden. *European Journal of Marketing*, 33(7/8), 760–771.
- Svensson, L., & Wihlborg, M. (2010). Internationalising the content of higher education: The need for a curriculum perspective. *Higher Education*, 60, 595–613. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9318-6>
- Teichler, U. (2004). The changing debate on internationalization of higher education. *Higher Education*, 48, 5–26.
- Zheng, X. X., Hinshaw, A. S., Yu, M. Y., Guo, G. F., & Oakley, D. J. (2001). Building international partnerships. *International Nursing Review*, 48, 117–121.