

## Why this generation in our schools must take a world view

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A well travelled New Zealand teacher I met in Singapore noted that only the British talk about going *out* to work somewhere, as though implied in the phrase is that the coloniser will then return to Blighty. And a teacher from Buenos Aires observed that the Brits have a peculiar habit of referring to the Far East, even when they are working in it.

The 19th century may have 'belonged' to Britain and the 20th century to the USA. But the 21st will surely belong to south east Asia.

Throughout Malaysia, Singapore, China and Indonesia young people demonstrate a hunger for education that is both inspiring and humbling. If an average kid in the world could choose where to be educated today, she would surely be wise to select one of these countries.

Niall Ferguson in his panoramic book *Civilization* argues that the power shift from West to East (a western construct, let it be noted) is inexorable. China and the other countries are now adopting the things that after 1500 made Europe so successful.

First, was the idea of competition in economic as well as in political life. Second, the notion of science that underpinned the 17th and 18th centuries. Third, was the notion of the rule of law based on private property rights. Fourth, came modern medicine, the branch of the scientific revolution that doubled and then more than doubled life expectancy. Fifth, was the consumer society; and sixth, the work ethic.

What we are witnessing in our global community in the 21st century is the adoption by the rest of the world of ideas and institutions that worked really well for Europe and the west. So far so good. Look closer and the bad news is that even as the rest of the world is getting better institutionally, we in Europe and the west appear to be getting worse.

We are suffering from a strange institutional decline.

Political gridlock in the United States, the most powerful nation on the planet for now, offers neither an attractive nor efficient way of governing. China's emergence as a powerful modern state with a different ideology and values has raised serious questions about how fit for purpose the western liberal democratic order is in the 21st century.

Messy democracy, rooted in short-termism, is arguably not fit for purpose to solve the great challenges of the next fifty years: ageing populations, environmental degradation and mass south-to-north migrations.

It is as true in Sweden and Germany as it is in Spain and the UK that political leaders and the native populations are learning to share their landscapes with those from other lands. The 21st century is a restless era where peoples migrate to find peace and work, share in other cultural experiences, and search out a better life for their families.

Young people in particular have the globe on their mobiles and cannot resist physically crossing borders to find out whether what they see on their iPhone is really happening.

The celebrated reggae artist Bob Marley sang in the 1970s of 'Exodus, movement of Jah people'. Let's get used to it, shape it carefully yes, capitalise upon its positive aspects, and certainly model to young people that global movement and global employment are here to stay.

**Roy Blatchford's most recent book is *The Three Minute Leader*.**