

**5 March 2011**

**Insights to the current trends in Education around the World and what we might learn from these in the UK**

Following the formal BPA AGM, Mark Anderson, a parent at the school spoke about the major trends in education he is experiencing in his work with Pearson, where he is responsible for International Development Strategy.

His talk was driven by three major themes, the extent of English Language education across the World, the demand for good quality Tertiary Education and the impact of technology on learning.

Mark emphasised that the acquisition of English is a major theme in many emerging countries, illustrating this by telling us about the largest single English Language examination that takes place in China each year, where around 16 million school children sit a country wide test. Across all subjects teaching materials in English are in demand, with many British based organisations such as the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses continuing to maintain a global brand status. Despite this prevalence of English, Mark along with a number of the questioners in the audience, emphasised that understanding a language does not equate with understanding a culture and that cultural education should play a greater role in our children's lives.

Rapidly expanding middle classes in many countries, particularly across Asia, are driving increased demand for good quality university education. An increasing number look to send their children to the top universities in the United States and the United Kingdom and expect to spend significant amounts of money in doing so. In general, people in countries beyond Europe expect to pay at every level for better education for their children. Mark's view was that this would bring greater participation from the private sector in the provision of education generally, even impacting university education in this country. With reduced Government funding going directly to universities, he speculated that regulation around the provision of higher education by the private sector may be relaxed so that struggling universities could be bought out by private companies.

Technology continues to have an impact on teaching methods. Mark described the increasing use of interactive learning programmes and computer based tests with immediate result feedback. He talked about online tutoring already taking place using interactive white boards over the internet and how our children, who are internet 'natives' view these approaches as completely intuitive.

A picture emerged of an environment where there is rapidly increasing demand for better education, where innovation is accelerating, where the best universities will be choosing from a worldwide group of students, but where culture may still be at the root of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.