"It makes me feel like part of the world": How children in an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme international school understand international-mindedness

Caroline Joslin-Callahan

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Abstract

This report shares the findings of a doctoral study (Joslin-Callahan, 2018) investigating how children in a Primary Years Programme (PYP) international school understand international-mindedness (IM), the goal of International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes. IM is defined through the IB learner profile, intercultural understanding, global engagement, and multilingualism, but its impact on children is unclear.

The study employed a qualitative phenomenographic framework using focus group interviews and a thinking template to elicit children's views. Data analysis yielded four categories describing children's understanding: IM as friendship, IM as adapting to the world, IM as an outcome of social interactions, and IM as a change in thinking about oneself and the world. Underpinning these categories are three themes of expanding awareness. These are 1) contexts for the development of IM, 2) attitudes, skills and knowledge children associate with IM, and 3) children’s thinking about themselves, others and their place in the world.

Children become aware of IM as they reflect on their experiences. Their friendships, travel and relocation, and social interactions help children learn about the contexts, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and personal, social and global positioning that develop IM resulting in an emerging sense of who they are vis-à-vis the world.
1 Introduction

This is a report of a study (Joslin-Callahan, 2018) investigating how children learning in a Primary Years Programme (PYP) international school understand and articulate international-mindedness (IM). While IM is the goal of all International Baccalaureate programmes, it is sometimes described as a “fuzzy concept” by stakeholders within IB schools who struggle with its meaning, implementation and assessment (Hacking et al., 2017). Without information about how IM impacts children’s thinking, it will be difficult for IB educators to recognise this phenomenon in their students, or plan for its development.

The study focused on the following research questions:

- How do international school children at the end of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme understand and articulate their understanding of international-mindedness (IM)?
- Which factors do children identify as significant to the development of IM?
- Which attitudes, knowledge, and skills do children associate with IM?
- How does IM influence the way children understand themselves, others, and their role in the world?

My interest in this topic stems from my lengthy relationship with the IB and international schools. I am an IB graduate and the parent of two IB graduates. I have been a PYP teacher, programme coordinator and the principal of an IB school. I have supported the IB’s development as a workshop leader, curriculum writer and school evaluator. I engaged in doctoral research in order to learn more about children’s understanding of IM. Based on reading, some of which will be shared below, and my study, my working definition of IM is that it is a conscious and evolving conception that people hold regarding their place within the world. As such, it embodies personal identity and positioning towards others within a global context. It influences individuals’ behaviour, interactions, attitudes, and sense of responsibility for global issues. IM requires knowledge of the world, effective communication skills, a desire to understand others and a concern for their well-being.

2 Literature review

Education systems around the world are considering how to prepare students for a future characterised by globalisation. Permeable national, cultural, economic and linguistic borders increasingly require people to confront and navigate global realities and recalibrate their knowledge, attitudes and skills accordingly. Schools play a critical role in determining the content of the curriculum – the knowledge, attitudes and skills that will be taught and assessed – that will ostensibly develop students’ understanding of the world around them,
enhance their ability to effectively cooperate with others, and ensure future employability (Cushner & Mahon, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, 2005). Including a global dimension within schools’ crowded curriculum requires a rationale for doing so, either a pragmatic appeal for economic competitiveness, or an aspirational vision of global citizenry (Suárez-Orozco, 2005). Since the beginning of the 21st century a variety of curriculum frameworks have emerged that propose how schools might prepare students for a changing world (Jacobs, 2010; Zhao, 2009).

2.1 Curriculum frameworks for an international education

In addition to national curriculum guidelines, frameworks have been formulated by international organisations including the Council of Europe (COE, 2016), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018), Oxfam (2006), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO, 2015), the Asia Society (2011), and international curriculum providers such as the IB (IB, 2013) and the International Primary Curriculum (IPC, 2014). The frameworks offer a variety of curriculum structures and content leading some to caution that “proliferation of diverse models presents a dilemma to educational planners and policy makers who wish to find an authoritative model upon which to base their work” (COE, 2016, p. 27). However, they all aspire to prepare students for a global future with the overarching outcomes variously defined as global citizenship (UNESCO, 2015; Oxfam, 2006), global competence (OECD, 2018; Asia Society, 2011), competences for democratic culture (COE, 2016) and international-mindedness (IB, 2013; IPC, 2014).

A comparison of these curriculum frameworks (Joslin-Callahan, 2018) has revealed some common and seemingly essential components for a global education. All models emanate from a similar quest - to promote students' understanding of the world and empower them to become informed participants of the global society (OECD, 2018). The models generally advocate an interdisciplinary, participatory approach through which to explore significant global and intercultural issues. This should include classroom practices that support student dialogue, collaboration, and agency and develop intercultural skills and dispositions. Most of the models list attitudes and values to be developed, as these may be required for successful interactions with others. In addition to social, interpersonal and communication skills, the frameworks emphasise the importance of accessing and critically evaluating information. While not overly prescriptive in terms of knowledge to be included, the models suggest that content should be relevant to students and address significant global issues. The frameworks envision that students will become empowered as a consequence of learning and will choose to act on behalf of others and the environment.
In theory, students would become global citizens, or acquire global competence, democratic competence, or IM, as a result of their engagement with the curriculum. However, curriculum frameworks are limited in their ability to effect change for a number of reasons. Firstly, the structure of the guidelines does not adequately describe a process of learning that will mobilise the set of curriculum objectives. Secondly, curriculum frameworks are guidelines for educators and schools who are ultimately responsible for their implementation. Thirdly, it may be factors other than the curriculum such as cost, autonomy, commitment, and the political climate surrounding a school, that will determine the impact of the frameworks on student learning.

It is perhaps in the specificity, comprehensiveness, programme support, and prescriptive nature that the IB framework is different from the other frameworks and may have the best chance of influencing international education. Becoming internationally minded is part of the IB’s mission (IB 2012; 2013) and emanating from the learner profile, which embodies the attributes deemed necessary for IM, each part of the IB curriculum framework supports this aspirational vision. The standards and practices that IB schools must adhere to include IM as a core value and schools are required to demonstrate how they are working towards successful implementation of this outcome for accreditation (Hayden & Thompson, 2013b). The IB has considerable global outreach, extending to 6,659 programmes worldwide, across 5,088 schools in 156 countries as of June, 2019 (http://www.ibo.org/en/about-the-ib/facts-and-figures/). As international schools may offer unique contexts for implementing an international education (Barrett et al., 2014; Straffon, 2003), IB schools should be well-positioned to incorporate IM with resulting impact on students.

However, the impact of IM may not be as fully realised as it could be. One reason for this is uncertainty about the meaning of IM and how to determine its successful implementation (Hacking et al., 2017). The IB initially relied on defining IM as an overarching concept that is operationalised through the ten learner profile attributes (caring, knowledgeable, open-minded, risk-taker, balanced, principled, thinker, inquirers, communicators, reflective) (Castro, Lundgren & Woodin, 2015). It resisted expanding this explanation of IM ostensibly to encourage schools to explore meaning within their own diverse contexts. With the learner profile the only anchor, the relationship between IM and the learner profile attributes has been scrutinised and found lacking (Hemmens, 2013). Further, the IB recognised that a definition of IM would need to address a number of external forces on the organisation such as increasing global interdependence, greater access to international education, the disassociation of international education with international schools and access to IB programs in different languages (Hill, 2012).
2.2 IM redefined

Towards clarifying its vision of IM and establishing theoretical grounding for the concept, the IB commissioned several studies. This research has focused on defining IM, assessment tools and locating IM within IB documentation (Castro, Lundgren & Woodin, 2013), aligning IM with multilingualism, intercultural competence and global engagement (Singh & Qi, 2013), and implementing IM within various geographical contexts (Sriprakash, Singh, & Qi, 2014; Hacking et al., 2017). A review of these studies (Joslin-Callahan, 2018) points to the challenges the IB faces in creating a coherent vision of IM. The vision must be relevant for curriculum programmes that span a wide age range and for diverse school contexts across the world. If IM becomes too tightly defined, it will prevent site-specific, institutional engagement with the concept that is important to implementation (Hacking et al., 2017). Even when schools commit to practices that support implementation, an individual’s experiences outside of school may influence IM’s development more than the school’s curriculum. The IB has increasingly drawn on research from related fields - such as intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009; Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard & Philippou, 2013) - that have identified components that would support IM’s development, but research moves quickly and IB documentation moves slowly creating a lag in responding to relevant studies. Without more guidance from the IB on what IM means, how to implement it and how to assess its impact, inconsistent implementation and questionable impact on students may become the norm, which is borne out in the limited studies in this area (Roberts, 2013; Cause, 2011).

However, Hacking et al. (2017) present a more encouraging picture of schools that do choose to engage with the concept of IM with some promising results reported by all stakeholders. Perhaps these IB schools are becoming “learning communities in which students can increase their understanding of language and cultures, which can help them to become more globally engaged” (IB, 2013, p. 6). Further, by expanding IM’s definition to include multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement (Singh & Qi, 2013) the IB connects IM to fields such as plurilingualism, intercultural communicative competence and global citizenship where research is current and ongoing.

2.3 IM and PYP children

The Hacking et al. (2017) study sought the views of students, parents, teachers and administrators involved with the PYP. Until then, research into IM had mostly been conducted and concerned with older students whose views on IM were solicited through questionnaires and interviews (Large, 2012; Hayden, Rancic & Thompson, 2000; Sriprakash, Singh, & Qi, 2014). However, there has been a lack of research into IB children’s diversity of
experience and development of values (Caffyn, 2011), leaving “no single coherent picture of the ‘internationalism’ or ‘international-mindedness’ within the individual that, presumably, international education aims to develop” (Gunesch, 2004b, p. 252). Children in the PYP are expected to become internationally-minded, yet educators in IB schools have few descriptions of how children may apprehend this phenomenon. The absence of such research may be attributed to the perceived difficulty of soliciting children’s views on sophisticated concepts such as multilingualism, intercultural understanding, global engagement, and IM. Indeed, some have asked whether children are developmentally capable of understanding IM (Singh & Qi, 2013; Skelton, 2007). Yet children at the end of the PYP, ten- and eleven-year-olds, have been learning through an international curriculum, some of them within an international school for the entirety of their schooling, and can be expected to hold views on what this concept means. Without descriptions of children’s understanding of IM, educators may fail to notice IM within their students, or opportunities to further its development. It is towards this intersection of curriculum implementation of IM and children becoming aware of this dimension of their lives that my research is situated. It aims to understand how children attending an international school with the PYP curriculum perceive themselves becoming internationally minded towards providing IB educators with information that can assist in teaching and learning.

I suggest that, consistent with a phenomenographical stance (Marton & Booth, 1997), which I will explain in the next section, children’s understanding of IM is the aggregate of their experiences and their awareness through reflection on those experiences. Children at the end of the PYP are capable of articulating what IM means to them and their perspectives about IM can inform educators’ understanding of this phenomenon.

3 Methodology

The concern that younger students may not be capable of forming or expressing their understanding of abstract ideas – such as IM – may relate to the challenge of securing their views in developmentally appropriate ways. However, through thinking templates (see Appendix 1) and interviews (see Appendix 2) designed to focus children’s awareness on a phenomenon that surrounds them, they are able to bring their understanding to the foreground and begin to articulate their thinking. A qualitative, interpretive approach suits the quest to understand children’s perceptions of IM, a phenomenon that resists measurement.

While children are constantly immersed in experiencing the world around them, their awareness of particular aspects of reality will be enhanced at certain times, particularly when their attention is directed to these experiences. The researcher, seeking to understand children’s perspectives, can focus awareness on a phenomenon through the use of
appropriate methods. Children were invited to reflect on IM by bringing their experiences of IM to the foreground to begin to articulate their thinking.

Phenomenographical research methods, primarily interviews and open response tasks, align with the inquiry-oriented pedagogical and philosophical values of the PYP, creating coherence between the children’s learning experiences, the research philosophy and the methods selected (Wall, 2008). An ethical consideration of this study was that research taking place in school should further children’s learning through the research process (Clark, 2011). The researcher and participant benefit mutually as the children’s reflections both reveal and enhance their understanding of a particular phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997).

As children’s experiences and preferences as individuals, should be considered when selecting methods (Clark-Ibanez, 2008; Punch, 2002), the children completing the thinking template were encouraged to use words, concept maps or drawings. Using both thinking templates and focus groups as tools helped to maintain interest, which yields more reliable data (Punch, 2002) and using a variety of tools can capture a particular phenomenon more completely (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

3.1 Data collection

The research was carried out at a large international school in Germany. The language of instruction is English and the teaching faculty is international. International companies pay most of the tuition, but about one-third of the parents are self-paying. At the time of the study, there were approximately 824 PYP students at the school of over 1770 students, spread across three campuses.

I was working as the assistant principal and PYP coordinator at the elementary school during the data collection. The selection of the class, composed of 24 children in one of five grade five classes, was based on the teacher’s willingness to participate in the study. Data was collected through a thinking template (see Appendix 1) for children to record their thinking, and focus groups interviews (see Appendix 2). I worked with the class for four sessions of approximately 40-50 minutes. I introduced the project using a Powerpoint presentation (see Appendix 5) and asked for the children’s permission to participate using a consent form (see Appendix 3). I subsequently met with the class for three sessions to complete the thinking template and with each of the four focus groups once, for approximately 50 minutes.

The thinking template was used to stimulate and collect children’s thoughts about IM. It consists of six prompts that invite either a written or a visual response (see Appendix 1). The template was trialled in January 2013, with 12 children, and some prompts were subsequently reworded and combined based on children’s feedback and analysis of the data.
collected. Templates soliciting children’s views scaffold abstract responses, promote learning and provide rich data (Wall, 2008). Concept mapping (Pearson & Somekh, 2003; Ritchhart, Turner & Hadar, 2009), pupil views templates (Wall & Higgins, 2006), and ‘Sketch to Stretch’ (Short, Burke & Harste, 1996) are examples of classroom based open-ended reflection tools. The prompts are structured to generate, but not restrict, broad thinking (Woolner et al., 2012).

The focus groups probed children’s perceptions of IM through group discussions and elicited their oral comments. The interview protocol (see Appendix 2) allowed a colleague to run two of the four focus groups permitting me to observe and take notes. Each of the focus group sessions was recorded. Focus group interviews support the collection of multiple perspectives (Brotherson in Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub, 1996). Furthermore, they allow the interviewer to engage as an inquirer and construct a deeper understanding of the topic. Finally, the goal of the interviews is not to establish and generalise truths, but to describe the perspectives held by the members of a group on a particular concept derived within a specific context. Focus groups have been used successfully with children (Large, 2001), and allow efficient collection of children’s perceptions in a small amount of time. Punch (2002) found that young research participants enjoyed focus groups because they could explore topics broadly in the company of peers and gain new perspectives.

I transcribed the focus group recordings using Hyper Transcribe software and subsequently used Hyper Research software to create 24 cases, one for each child. Each case consists of scanned images of the children’s text and graphic template responses, and the focus group transcriptions. The software allowed me to analyse and code graphical elements as well as text (see Figure 1).

(Figure 1-screenshot of Hyper Research software)
3.2 Data analysis

I initially coded the data by reviewing each individual child’s responses and selecting comments or images that related to IM assigning a descriptive code to any similar responses and new codes to any novel responses (see Appendix 4). In assigning names to codes, I used aspects of the IB curriculum such as the learner profile attributes, attitudes and transdisciplinary skills, although I did not restrict coding to these features. I coded each learner profile attribute, such as open-minded and caring, separately in order to be able to retrieve these references at a later time. The preliminary coding yielded 60 codes (see Appendix 4). After several revisions, I created broader themes and extracted and clustered examples of children’s thinking that demonstrated commonality and exception that would become the basis for further phenomenographical analysis.

3.3 The outcome space

Phenomenographical analysis culminates in descriptive categories of the phenomenon of interest (Marton, 1988). Categories do not precede data analysis and represent the children’s views as a cohort, rather than individuals’ views. Within phenomenographical analysis, an individual’s expressions of understanding about the phenomenon become decontextualized once the categories of description are established. Further, a child’s thinking may span the categories.

Each category is an attempt to capture IM as understood and articulated by the children and was constituted through a process of sorting and collating examples of text and images until similar exemplars were clustered into categories. Once the categories represented different ways of conceptualising IM, I assigned a descriptive title signifying the category’s distinctiveness. Consolidation of the categories involved multiple reviews of the individual transcripts to ensure that the categories were stable (Marton & Booth, 1997).

The categories represent part of the larger phenomenon, which challenges the researcher “to discover the structural framework within which various categories of understandings exist” (Marton, 1988, p.147), until the “whole system of meanings is stabilized” (p. 155). Once the categories have been established, phenomenographical analysis seeks the relationship between them, which can be represented as the increased awareness of a phenomenon through a linear structure (Åkerlind, 2005), or as variations of the categories through a branched concept map (Bowden, 2005). For educational purposes showing a hierarchy of awareness of IM from less to more complete, from more simplistic to more complex, seemed pragmatically more helpful for educators who often need to consider how to move individuals along a spectrum of understanding. Themes of expanding awareness further explain these differences across categories.
4 Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine the ways that children understand IM in order to share their perceptions about this phenomenon with educators. The result of this phenomenographical study is an outcome space with categories of description that represent the different ways that IM was understood by the research participants (Marton & Booth, 1997).

4.1 Categories of description of children’s understanding of IM

The categories of description (categories) represent the collective range of meanings of the phenomenon of IM found within the study. These will be explained below accompanied by exemplar quotes and images from the interviews and the thinking template to provide texture to the findings, make children’s thinking more visible, and raise the child’s voice within the adult narrative. Additionally, inclusion of quotes and images increases the study’s trustworthiness by enhancing transparency of the analysis (Åkerlind, Bowden & Green, 2007), which allows the research audience to determine reliability and usefulness (Lincoln 1985). The categories provide insight into the ways that children understand IM. Each category represents a different conceptualisation of IM derived from analysis of children’s collective articulated expressions of IM.

Four descriptive categories express the different ways that children understand IM. Each will be explained in turn.

- IM as friendship
- IM as adapting to the world
- IM as the outcome of social interactions
- IM as a change in thinking about yourself and the world

4.2 Category 1: IM as friendship

S22: I think I am IM. I have friends from Japan, England and America and Korea, Germany, Swiss and Greece.

S4: That you don’t mind where someone is from. That you can still be friends with them no matter where they are from.

S14: Well your friends are from all different places so you get to meet them and make friends and hear about their culture and language.
Children recognise the importance of friendship in becoming IM. Forming friendships is the motivating force for IM and IM is the consequence of intercultural friendships. Children make friends within the international school community and in the local neighbourhood. Both contexts may differ linguistically and culturally from the children’s homes. Children view intercultural friendships as opportunities to learn about the world and to use their knowledge of the world, including languages which are seen as essential to communication. Being open-minded and caring allows friendships to form and flourish. This conception of IM is primarily focused on face-to-face interactions with peers. The child recognises diversity within the community and adjusts behaviours and attitudes to facilitate friendship. There is little consideration for how intercultural friendships may impact oneself and in projecting how IM extends into the world, children report that friendship amongst people makes the world a better place.

4.3 Category 2: IM as adapting to the world

S18: I live in Germany but I’m born in the Netherlands, so I learn another culture here. I also learn a new language here.

S12: You become IM by going to an international school and know other cultures and live in other countries.

S22: I think IM means when somebody lived in another country and then comes back to his home country it could be that when somebody new comes that lived in that country the person just gets knows how those people behave or what those cultures are and don’t make fun of them.
Children recognise IM as a means to adapt to new contexts experienced through travel and relocation. They view the international school as a place where people become IM as they adapt to this environment and the cultures within it. Culture is described as the uniform and observable features and habits of people, such as their food and traditions. Within this understanding of IM, skills that assist in orientation to new places such as speaking different languages and observing and noticing differences are deemed important. Children suggest that curiosity and risk-taking enable exploration and acceptance of new experiences. Interactions with others and travel are sources for knowledge about people, places and cultures. In describing IM as adaptation, children suggest a cause and effect relationship as if IM develops automatically as a consequence of international experiences. There is little sense of agency in processing these experiences, or consideration of the potential for adaptation to be maladaptive, although children recognise how challenging adapting to a new school or country can be for others and how they might be able to help. This category shows children’s increased awareness of the need to adjust to external factors in the environment encountered through travel and relocation. However, the responses identified are mostly behavioural, such as trying and accepting new things with attitudes playing a supportive role in encouraging these behaviours.

4.4 Category 3: IM as an outcome of social interactions with diverse people

(In response to the question, do you think you are internationally minded?)

S5: Yes, because I have moved a lot, lived and been to a lot of different countries. Meeting people and learning about them helps me to be IM.
S14: But you also learn how they think and then you may think a bit like them and then you might get IM.

S4: Well there are a few cultures I don't really know a lot about, but I know people from there and maybe I could learn more about their cultures and what life is like where they are from.

Children’s understanding of IM in this category focuses on the intercultural interaction experiences through travel, relocation and learning in an international school. These interactions are viewed as opportunities to notice differences and similarities which enhances learning about the world and develops IM. Children express the importance of seeing others as equals and demonstrating respect for ensuring successful interactions. Communication and collaboration skills, especially speaking other languages, are viewed as essential, and knowledge about the world can help when engaging with others. Children can see the potential for successful interactions to extend beyond the immediate context. They observe that using knowledge of time zones, languages and technology can enable collaboration and organisation towards solving global problems. This understanding of IM shares aspects of social interaction from Category 1 and adaptation from Category 2, but the emphasis is on diverse interactions, not just friendships. IM arises from communication between people and it both requires and generates changes in attitudes and behaviour.

4.5 Category 4: IM as a change in thinking about yourself and the world

S14: But you also learn how they think and then you may think a bit like them and then you might get IM.
In this category children understand IM as a comprehensive process that develops new attitudes, knowledge and dispositions as a consequence of experiences. They report that access to new ideas and perspectives, gained through international schools, travel and relocation, allows people to see things differently. However, personal investment is required to process these experiences into IM and further, actions must be compatible with beliefs. IM, in this conception, connects the individual to the wider world. IM requires an open-mind, and an open-mind is perpetuated through opportunities for new learning within novel contexts. IM also requires empathy and knowledge of other cultures in order to understand others' feelings and perspectives. New information gained through interactions and
experiences within the world require thinking skills and possibly new ways of understanding and expressing ideas through languages. Within this conception of IM, people are thought to have agency in how they respond to new contexts and choices can be made about when to adapt, or when to resist adaptation in order to retain one’s identity. Children believe that becoming IM may change their relationships with others who may not share their values. When thinking is leveraged at the global level, it can be used to make the world a better place, especially when people work together. This would include promulgating IM and associated values such as equality and justice. Category 4 is an expansion of Category 3, building on the idea that people’s thinking changes through interactions with others. Children recognize that IM can bring about a pervasive change in oneself.

4.6 Themes of expanding awareness

In addition to the categories of description, children’s thinking about IM is also manifested within the themes of expanding awareness. The categories represent the range of meanings found in the study, but layers of detail that differentiate the categories are added through the themes (Åkerlind, 2005). Each theme will be discussed in turn.

The three themes are

- Contexts for the development of IM
- Attitudes, knowledge and skills related to IM
- Personal, social and global positioning and IM

Theme of expanding awareness 1: Contexts for the development of IM
S5: In my old school … there weren't a lot of international people … you don't get to know a lot of different people from cultures or people from other places which couldn't make them very IM and they also didn't teach a lot of other stuff like let's say the units of inquiry, they didn't have that and we also couldn't learn about any other religions, different places or cultures, like only from there.

S20: About the IM. So, you think differently. So, if you are IM and you just came here you think like, "this is a good experience to learn about another culture", but if you are not IM you will think like, "it's very bad to be in another country and I would like to stay in my home country".

S13:
- different religions
- different than home.
- different language
- different living style.
- different languages
- different rules
- learning a new style of living.

S10:
It helps if you learn to respect others religions so you should travel to different countries, you learn the way the people live and it helps you to understand their culture and history.

S16: You could still be internationally-minded if you look at the world news and study different countries you can also get an open mind about different countries.
S4: Because you get to bond with other cultures and other people and say I did a project with some people that I don’t really work with in my class I would get to learn more about their culture and how they even do things and do things differently to us.

The international school, relocation and travel emerged from the data as important contexts for the development of IM. These contexts provide children with the opportunity to learn about people and places. The international school offers intercultural interactions with peers and teachers, an international curriculum – the PYP, and institutional celebrations of diversity. Children’s intercultural relationships form as part of their school experiences and are supported by learning strategies that encourage collaboration and project work. The curriculum promotes learning about global issues from a variety of perspectives and the importance of speaking other languages. Children observe their classmates communicating in different languages and non-English speaking newcomers becoming proficient. Beyond the school, children learn from travel and relocation as they contrast and process their prior conceptions with new experiences. Children comment that IM can also develop through encounters with people who are different within familiar contexts, and through the media.

4.7 Theme of expanding awareness 2: Attitudes, knowledge and skills related to IM

S7: Because like when you are IM you have to like think about the whole world and what is happening around the world and sometimes I listen to the news on the radio and yeah, to also be open-minded for new ideas from different cultures and that's really easy at this school so I've got a few Korean friends, a few American friends, a few German friends and so I think I am kind of IM.

S20: I think I am IM and most of my friends too, but I think I could become more IM by trying lots of new things and like, combining, let me see, let me get this, like trying new things in different ways, like if you played soccer, you could play indoor soccer, and if you played baseball you could play like softball, or something like that, and so on, or you could just try new things that you have never done and maybe these things would help you with other things and then like that you would, like, add on to what you already are and it will change what people think about you.

S20: So maybe, I'm Korean and when I came here I was very sad to be here because I was not really internationally-minded. But I'm becoming internationally-minded now. And Erin just came here. And I can understand more about Erin's mind so that I can help her to become more internationally-minded.
I: Could you become more so? How do you become IM?

S4: Yeah, probably. Well there are a few cultures I don't really know a lot about, but I know people from there and maybe I could learn more about their cultures and what life is like where they are from.

S14: If you speak [different languages] you can go to different places and speak to them and make friends.

S16: IM people have friends from different countries. With more languages you can understand what things mean to them – the celebrations, traditions of people in different countries.

S9: They speak different languages so if they met other people from different countries they can speak to them you can also translate for people who don't know what to do. [Diagram]

S6: It means being able to adopt new culture and play with friends from other countries. [Diagram]

S11: Like, if you live in the like, I don't know now, like, if you live in a town that's very, like, caring to the environment you'll get used to doing that and then if you move you'll carry that on to the other places you go.

Children’s experiences within the contexts listed above promote particular attitudes and behaviours. These include open-mindedness, curiosity, inquiry and risk-taking - that support navigation of new contexts - and respect, caring and empathy that enable effective interactions. Children expect that they will acquire cultural and geographical knowledge from
their interactions and through travel and that this, in turn, will support their communication with others. However, their understanding of culture is usually described as observable, static features displayed by national groups including languages, food and customs. Children notice that communication and social skills can initiate and sustain interactions, including friendships. Languages are viewed as especially important for supporting friendships, adapting to new places, interacting with others, understanding different perspectives, and self-expression. Children recognise the importance of these skills within global interactions. Children who have relocated identified that adaptation skills are essential for responding to new circumstances.

4.8 Theme of expanding awareness 3: Personal, social and global positioning and IM

![S4](image1.png)

![S18](image2.png)

![S13](image3.png)
S4: Here it's not focused on one culture, it's all mixed up and um people aren't treated differently if they are from a different place or a different culture, we are all treated the same.

S8: You can become IM by learning something new from them or seeing differences and stuff.
While IM is primarily relational in that interacting with others is the main motivating factor, children rely on a stable identity from which to proceed. Some children associate strongly with national and linguistic roots, which may be common in school settings characterised by diversity (Murdock, Hirt & Ferring, 2014). Children also develop a sense of self through their relationships with others and their travels. In the international school community this seems to involve noticing and responding to difference. Some children claim that all people are equal, while others notice diversity as an opportunity, and yet others observe differences without processing this observation further. Children’s thinking about IM seems to move from an insular perspective to one that sees possibilities in making connections beyond themselves, it situates them within the world. Children report a variety of ways that people act when they are internationally-minded. This ranges from personal service, such as assisting newcomers’ integration into school and sharing IM with others, to the more distant such as contributing to global organisations and charities. The association of IM with particular positive attitudes and skills, such as caring, empathy and collaboration may become generalised to the notion of acting on beliefs in contexts farther afield. However, when children consider how to address global issues their understanding of action can become problematic and relates to charitable benevolence from more knowledgeable people to those less fortunate.
The categories and themes form the warp and weft of the fabric woven from children’s understanding of IM and can be represented in the matrix below, which shows this relationship.

Table 1 Relationship between the categories of description and the themes of expanding awareness

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Categories of description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes of expanding awareness</strong></td>
<td>1 IM as friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contexts for the development of IM</strong></td>
<td>The international school as a place to make friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes, knowledge and skills</strong></td>
<td>Open-minded and caring attitudes and effective social skills assist in forming friendships in a transient community. Language learning extends opportunities for friendships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal, social and global positioning</strong></td>
<td>Understanding of the self is expressed through interactions with others. Helping others within the school environment uses skills and attitudes that perpetuate action. Travel and relocation experiences impact personal identity. Differences are noticed and used as a way of learning about people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Discussion

5.1 Children’s understanding of IM

This study demonstrates that children can and do understand IM. They are able to articulate their understanding of IM through words and images. This includes identifying the attitudes, skills and knowledge that support IM and the experiences that shape its development. Children could identify the different perspectives that might be prevalent within interaction scenarios. They could suggest how people who are internationally-minded might act on their beliefs. The children’s thinking and ability to communicate their thoughts are evidence that IM is a concept that is within their cognitive and communicative grasp.

Eliciting and describing children’s conceptions of IM has enabled me to propose an answer to my original question: *How do international school children at the end of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme understand and articulate their understanding of international-mindedness (IM)?* Becoming internationally-minded is a process whereby children - through critical introspection of their life experiences and global realities - grow more consciously aware of this phenomenon. By reflecting on their friendships, their experience of adapting to new situations such as travel and relocation, their social interactions, and their emerging sense of who they are vis-à-vis the world, children learn about the contexts, knowledge, attitudes, skills and personal, social and global positioning that support the development of IM. Skilful educators can enhance this learning.

For children within the study, IM began with interactions with peers. It developed through travel and relocation where children notice the different ways that people live their lives and recognise that certain attitudes and skills are helpful to integrating. IM’s development is supported by an international curriculum that promotes collaboration and learning about different perspectives. As children recognise the diversity around them and how this shapes their thinking and actions, they are able to consider how IM, as a phenomenon, can influence people towards taking positive action in the world.

The categories of description representing children’s understanding of IM may provide new insight into how children experience the social world, especially within an international school context. Each category can be thought of as a pathway through which children can engage with IM. Children’s friendships, travels, and experiences of relocation can be catalysts for thinking about IM and lead to reflection on their evolving sense of their place within the wider world.

5.2 Accessing children’s understanding
Children’s thinking about IM can be accessed through reflection tools such as a thinking templates and focus group interviews, which are readily available to classroom teachers. Before the research project started I suspect that IM was not prominent in the children’s thinking. However, once the children began to share their views of IM, they became aware of its relevance to their lives and could reflect on their experiences through this lens. Formative reflection tools may be more effective and impactful in raising educators’ and students’ awareness of IM than large scale assessments such as the PISA assessment of global competence (OECD, 2018) that attempt to quantify and measure this phenomenon. In classrooms committed to intentionally implementing IM, children could process and document their experiences in an ongoing way through similar tools allowing educators to observe the development of IM and readily identify areas with the potential to become problematic if left unaddressed.

The choice of methodology, phenomenography, was selected to reflect the PYP’s pedagogical approach whereby children develop their thinking and understanding as they consider meaning both individually and through dialogue with others. The study was intended to enhance children’s learning about IM as a consequence of participation. In turn, children’s documented words and images generated through participation were used as the basis for my understanding. Phenomenography proved to be a methodology that supports learning.

5.3 The role of an international curriculum

Within the study, the children did not strongly associate IM with the PYP curriculum. Children reflected on IM through their experiences which often extend beyond the school grounds. IM resides within individuals and is expressed through their attitudes and behaviours and the choices they make. This points to the limitations of curriculum frameworks, which can - at best - raise awareness of a phenomenon such as IM and encourage educational experiences that may enhance the development of relevant skills and attitudes. A child’s development of IM results from experience and awareness, which can be heightened through an international curriculum implemented with intent by skilful educators.

5.4 The revised vision of IM

The IB added three pillars – multilingualism, intercultural understanding, and global engagement (Singh & Qi, 2013) to expand the definition of IM beyond the learner profile. This change is not well recognised within IB schools (Hacking et al., 2017) and has occurred with little guidance from the IB on how to use the pillars and their relationship to IM, except for a short introduction in the IB document entitled, *What is an IB Education?* (2013). The potential contribution of these pillars, based on this study, will be discussed below. However, this study affirms the importance of the learner profile (LP) in framing IM, which was also
noted in other PYP contexts by Hacking et al. (2017). The LP attributes provided children with common terms to describe the attitudes, skills and values associated with becoming internationally-minded.

**Intercultural understanding**

This study indicates the importance of interactions in children’s understanding of IM. Friendships are the prime motivation for developing the dispositions - the attitudes, knowledge, and skills - needed for effective intercultural understanding. The desire to connect with others leads children to extend beyond themselves and their interactions, becoming the primary means of knowing about others. Becoming internationally-minded in an international school can be likened to the process of acquiring a new language through immersion rather than through formal instruction. The children believed that their intercultural context influenced their development of IM, leading to open-mind relationships with diverse people. Hacking et al. (2017) note that within international schools “students learn, in a very implicit and subtle way, that difference and diversity is the norm, which creates a feeling of respect, tolerance and acceptance, in line with the IB learner profile” (p.93). Children’s conceptions of culture were limited and indeed, Castro et al. (2015), critique the IB’s formulation of intercultural understanding because it fails to address relational aspects and positions outside of the learner, falling short of developing a critical approach by questioning values and attitudes. Further, promoting intercultural understanding by focusing on human differences can lead to problematic cultural assumptions as it creates the expectation that differences can be attributed to culture, which can become viewed as a static and definable entity (Van Oord, 2008). Educators need to provide guidance as children develop important beliefs about themselves and others within an international environment (Skelton, 2015).

Perhaps a more critical approach to cultural knowledge is warranted along with an understanding of how this knowledge contributes to the process of becoming internationally-minded.

**Multilingualism**

Children believe that languages play a significant role in becoming IM and languages are a prevalent factor in the lives of the children who may be living in a country where the language is different to the home languages, and may be learning English as the instructional language. Children recognise the strong connection between learning languages and developing intercultural understanding through awareness of different perspectives. However, multilingualism is important for self-knowledge, not just interactions, and should emphasise the affective, personal impact that comes from questioning one’s own language and culture (Castro et al., 2015). This is an aspect of multilingualism that would need to be
explored within the curriculum. The children are beginning to recognise that knowing languages supports collaboration at a global level, which can be enhanced through their understanding of global engagement.

**-global engagement**

Children’s understanding of how IM contributes to a better world begins with caring and empathy at a personal level to respond to classmates’ needs, especially newcomers to the school. It expands into recognition that collaborating with others, joining thinking and effort, can be a powerful force for taking positive action within the world. The children identified the importance of social responsibility and had some knowledge of significant global issues, but their understanding of service became more limited when it extended beyond personal action. The IB’s conceptualisation of global engagement is not rooted in intercultural understanding, but does suggest that people will act responsibly if they are knowledgeable about others (Castro et al., 2015). Castro et al. (2015) criticise the IB’s non-political stance of global engagement and claim that students need to critically evaluate their own beliefs and values to fully understand this aspect of IM. Children’s understanding of global engagement may require critical evaluation and processing of service learning at the local community level to begin with before extending to global service projects.

**The role of educators**

The role of educators in implementing an international curriculum is to develop children’s critical understanding of IM and to facilitate and practice the skills and attitudes associated with it. Learning about IM must be oriented to the child’s experiences of the phenomenon, otherwise “learning is very likely to fail” (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 140). Children’s experiences provide a rich curriculum resource for the development of IM and their observations and wonderings can easily be directed towards the development of IM. PYP children from the youngest ages can consider and develop the skills and attitudes that will support successful interactions and collaboration. They can learn about differences, similarities, and perspectives. However, they will need guidance to develop critical thinking skills to address the complexities of identity, culture, relationships and social responsibility.

Singh and Qi (2013) caution that IB educators should not wait until IM is well-articulated by the IB or their own schools to engage their students with the concept. Students need support in understanding themselves, their relationships with others, and their place in the world. Without guidance from knowledgeable educators, IM risks becoming an exclusive, elitist concept that primarily brings pragmatic benefits to privileged IB students. Within this study, while acknowledging the children’s developmental stage, their understanding of culture,
service to others, and the value of IM indicates the need for the development of a more critical perspective and nuanced views.

The three pillars – intercultural understanding, multilingualism and global engagement – may support educators in implementing IM. Each pillar expands the definition of IM and provides new contexts through which to explore the LP attributes and others facets of the IB curriculum. The IB would do well to issue documentation to this effect.

6 Summary

This study explored IM’s meaning for children learning in an international school with the PYP. It was based on the belief that children may develop IM through the curriculum and through experiences outside of school and that children’s identification of factors that contribute to the development of IM could support educators implementing an international curriculum. By accessing, interpreting, and describing the range of ways that children perceive IM through a phenomenographical framework, using a thinking template and focus group interviews, I have gained insight into the way this phenomenon has meaning within children’s lives.

I found that children’s understanding of IM can be represented through four categories of description

- IM as friendship
- IM as adapting to the world
- IM as the outcome of social interactions
- IM as a change in thinking about yourself and the world

which are supported and differentiated by three themes of expanding awareness

- Contexts for the development of IM
- Attitudes, knowledge and skills related to IM
- Personal, social and global positioning and IM

The categories of description provide a unique insight into children’s experiences of the social world encountered within an international school. These descriptions of children’s understanding of IM may help educators to use children’s experiences to raise awareness of IM. Children describe IM as developing through experiences, mostly relational, that they have while attending an international school, relocating and travelling. Children associate open-mindedness, risk-taking, empathy and caring, respect, curiosity and inquiry with IM. They report that IM is supported by cultural and geographical knowledge, most of which is
learned from interactions, travel and relocation, but can also be acquired through the curriculum. Children identified communication, adaptation and social interaction skills as significant to IM’s development. Children’s portrayals of their sense of self are connected to an affiliation with home countries, to travel and relocation, and to social relationships. Their articulations regarding social relationships reflect viewing others as equal, viewing others’ perceived differences as opportunities, and viewing others as different. Children’s sense of social responsibility included helping others at the personal level, helping others at the global level, and transmitting IM as a form of action.

The categories of description and the themes of expanding awareness lead to the following researcher interpretation of children’s understanding of IM within the research context. IM arises through children’s growing awareness of the phenomenon. It begins with social interactions with children from different countries at the international school. Children recognise that particular skills, knowledge and attitudes can initiate and support successful social interactions within this community. Travel and relocation provide further opportunities for children to interact with others and to learn about the different ways that people live. When these experiences are supported through the curriculum by knowledgeable teachers, they can lead to a globally-oriented personal and social positioning.

This study is bound by time and context and investigates the articulated experiences of a small group of children in a specific PYP school. Children’s words and images were captured in a brief moment of their lives and can only represent their attempt at that time to express their thoughts. Further research would need to investigate how children in non-IB schools or international schools that are not IB schools would respond to similar questions. It will also be important to track the influence of the three pillars of IM towards further programme enhancements within schools with educators, parents and children who are directly impacted by the phenomenon.
Appendix 1 IM “thinking template”

Name:
Date:
Class:

The goal of PYP schools is to create students who are internationally minded. Use words, a concept map, and/or pictures to show what international-mindedness means to you.

How does being internationally minded influence the way you think about yourself? Draw and label a symbol that represents you.
What helps you to become internationally-minded? Use words and/or pictures to explain your ideas.

At school

Outside of school
What does a person who is internationally minded think and say when they meet someone new?
What does a person who is internationally minded do to make the world a better place?
Appendix 2  Focus Group Moderator’s Guide

Introduction: I am [...] And I’m interested in learning about your thoughts on what it means to be international. You all come from different places and families and have had different experiences, but you are also all here at FIS here in Germany, so you share some experiences too. There are no wrong answers to the questions I am going to ask. Your answers will only be recorded for Ms Joslin-Callahan to use them in understanding what it means to be internationally-minded in a PYP school. Your answers will not be marked and your parents, teachers, other grade 5 classmates, or anyone else in the school will not know how you answered any of the questions. If you have any questions about what I have said so far, please raise your hand.

When I ask a question, you don’t need to raise your hand to answer, but it is important that I hear all of your answers. This is why we are recording the session. When you have something to say, please wait until the person stops talking or wait until I call your name. I want to remind you of one more thing before we begin. Some of you may agree with some of the answers you hear others saying, and you may disagree with some of the answers people give. It is important that you let me know when you agree and when you disagree with each other. Are there any questions about this?

Clarification of terms: I am going to ask you questions about international-mindedness. When I use this word I mean the way that you think about yourself and your place in the world. The goal of PYP schools like ours is that students become internationally-minded. The questions will ask you about how being internationally-minded influences the way people behave with others, as well as how it makes you feel about yourself. I will also ask you about how you think people become internationally-minded. You have your templates in front of you to remind you of the thinking you have done about this. You can change your mind from what you put down on the template. Can someone share what they think it means to be internationally-minded? Are there any questions about the term internationally-minded?

Okay, here’s my first question.

Questions:

1. What does being internationally-minded mean to you?
2. How do you think people become internationally-minded?
3. What are some experiences that happen in school that help you to become internationally-minded?
4. What are some experiences that you have outside of school that help you to become internationally-minded?
5. Is becoming internationally-minded always a good thing, or are there some downsides?
6. How do you know if someone is internationally-minded?
7. Can you give examples of kids or adults who you feel are internationally-minded?
8. For those of you who remember being in other schools, is there something that we do in this school that helps students to become internationally-minded in a way that your other school did not?
9. Are there some things that the school could do to help you to become even more internationally-minded?
10. Are there some things that you would like to be able to do outside of school to become more internationally-minded?

Wrap up: Unfortunately, we are almost out of time. Let me share with you some of the main ideas I heard.

Member check: I am going to ask each of you how you feel about some of the big issues we have just talked about. We are not going to discuss these points like we did with the questions I just asked you. Instead, I just want you to tell me your feelings about the issues. If there is anything that you feel would be important for us to address here at school, let me know.

Closing statement: I want to thank all of you very much for coming here and talking with me today. I really enjoyed talking to all of you and your answers have really helped us to understand what being internationally-minded means to you. Again, I want to remind you that your teachers, parents and classmates will not know your answers. Do you have any last questions?

Appendix 3 Consent Form

Doctoral Research Project on International-Mindedness

Informed Consent Form

I, ________________________________

have been told that Ms. Joslin-Callahan is completing a project for her doctoral thesis for Durham University, U.K. on how grade 5 students feel about being international, one of the goals of the school’s Primary Years Programme (PYP) curriculum. I have been asked to be part of this project. Students who agree to be part of the project will complete a template, “a thinking sheet”, with prompts asking for reflection and response on what it means to be international. Ms. Dupre, our assistant head of school, and Ms. Joslin-Callahan will also interview students in groups about their opinions and perspectives.

I know that whether or not I take part in the project is up to me and that whatever I decide will not affect what my teacher or others in the school think of me, or my report card. No one except Ms. Joslin-Callahan, Ms. Dupre, and the professors at Durham University will know how I answered the questions and they will not report on my answers by my name. I know that these papers with my answers will be kept without my name on them until Ms. Joslin-Callahan finishes her project. I also know that even if I decide to be part of the project now, I can change my mind at any time and this will not affect my report or anything else at school.

Ms. Joslin-Callahan will share the results of her research project with the Frankfurt International School community, and I will be invited to come. If I have left the school, I can leave an email address with Ms. Joslin-Callahan and she will send me her presentation.

I want to be a part of the project. I agree to complete the thinking sheet and to be interviewed.

Sign your name       Date

Parent signature       Date

Please return this form to Ms. Joslin-Callahan.

Caroline Joslin-Callahan

Elementary School Assistant Principal/IB PYP Coordinator

Student information form

Please complete this form and return to Ms. Joslin-Callahan. Your parents may help you if you need.

Name:

I hold a passport from:

The country I consider to be my home is:

My mother is from______________________________.
My mother speaks__________________________ to me.
My mother speaks__________________________ to my father.

My father is from______________________________.
My father speaks__________________________ to me.
My father speaks__________________________ to my mother.

At home we speak:

I speak the following languages well enough to hold an extended conversation and to read a simple book:

I have lived for more than six months in the following countries:

I have attended the following schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Place/Country</th>
<th>Grades or years attended</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurt International School</td>
<td>Oberursel, Germany</td>
<td>Grades 1-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4 Initial codes

1. Behaviours: sharing knowledge or IM with others
2. Characteristics of IM - knowledgeable
3. Characteristics of IM - curiosity
4. Characteristics of IM - empathy
5. Characteristics of IM - inquirer
6. Characteristics of IM - inquirer
7. Characteristics: open-minded
8. Characteristics: respect and tolerance
9. Ease of being with own culture
10. Formation of IM: friends as an influence
11. Formation of IM: going to an IS (international school)
12. Formation of IM: living in a new country
13. Formation of IM: socialising
14. Formation of IM: sports and clubs
15. Formation of IM: working and interacting with others who are international or IM
16. Formation: festivals and events
17. Formation: international teachers
18. Formation: learning about cultures and countries at school
19. Formation: travel and learning
20. Identity: cognitive aspect of IM
21. Identity: friendship transcends nationality
22. Identity: national affiliation and origin
23. Identity: sum of international experiences
24. Identity: sum of social relationships
25. Identity: think about and connect with the world
26. IM and IB
27. IM and the importance of language
28. IM and the importance of technology
29. IM as a result of background
30. IM as action: helping/giving money/charity
31. IM as action: making friends
32. IM as action: working internationally
33. IM as adopting new traditions and behaviours
34. IM as an attitude
35. IM as caring
36. IM as change
37. IM as communication
38. IM as equality of all
39. IM as ethical behaviour
40. IM as knowing and solving world problems
41. IM as knowledge about the world
42. IM as learning
43. IM as new thinking and learning
44. IM as noticing behaviour
45. IM as promoting peace
46. IM as respect for difference
47. IM as risk-taking and trying new things
48. IM as sharing and exchanging ideas
49. IM as the ability to form relationships
50. IM as understanding others
51. IM as understanding perspectives
52. IM develops confidence
53. Image: hands around the world/heart as world
54. Intercultural exchange: contrast between IM and not IM
55. Intercultural exchange: curiosity
56. Intercultural exchange: helpful
57. Intercultural exchange: making friends
58. Intercultural exchange: noticing difference
59. Intercultural exchange: noticing differences and similarity
60. Intercultural exchange: positive attitude
Appendix 5 PowerPoint Introduction to IM

**International-mindedness**
- Ms. J.C. and research

**Much has been written**
- ...none of it about what students your age think about it.

**We are an IB PYP school**
- You go to an international school
- What is international-mindedness?
- Mindedness=thinking

**What does it mean to you?**

**International-mindedness**
- Words
  - I think that international-mindedness is...

**International-mindedness**
- Concept maps

**International-mindedness**
- Pictures
  - My picture shows how...

**How does being internationally-minded influence the way you think about yourself?**
What helps at school?

What helps outside of school?

Think and say

How do people who are internationally-minded make the world a better place?

If yes...

- Please take the form home and fill it out with your parents.
References


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