

# Research summary

## *21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness: An exploratory study of its conceptualization and assessment*

**Extracted from a research report prepared for the IB by:**

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

This study provides an account of the conceptualization of international-mindedness and existing methods for assessing it.

This report is structured so that throughout, clear coherent links are made to International Baccalaureate (IB) documents and “big” IB ideas are drawn together. It describes and captures the evolution of the concept of “international-mindedness” from earlier definitions. The report works towards the development of a concept of “international-mindedness” that is relevant to current situations in 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

This report contains a range of resource materials for use in workshops on the topic of “21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness”.

The IB articulates a particular sensitivity to the risks associated with partisan perspectives and strives to seek a broad range of views. This exploratory study provides resources for critical reflection on the constraints and possibilities of encouraging international mindedness. The study contributes to the IB’s mission to “define international-mindedness in increasingly clear terms, and the struggle to move closer to that ideal in practice” (*Towards a continuum of international education* 2008: 3). The IB commissioned this exploratory study to undertake:

1. a systematic analysis of official IB documents in order to describe and make inferences about international-mindedness in the IB and its programmes.
2. a comprehensive literature review on “international-mindedness” and other related constructs.
3. an examination and synthesis of models based on contemporary theories, components, issues and tools in the field.
4. the identification of methods for assessing or otherwise measuring international-mindedness within the context of Grade K–12 education worldwide.

## Method

The interactive, integrative research design is elaborated upon in terms of the selection and analysis of IB documents and the review of the literature.

The main research questions addressed in this exploratory study relate to conceptualizing and assessing international-mindedness. The study’s research questions are:

1. How is international-mindedness addressed in the educational philosophy of the IB and the curriculum framework of IB programmes?
  - a. What does being internationally minded mean in an IB education?
  - b. What characteristics are internationally minded individuals expected to possess?
  - c. How are values, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills associated with international-mindedness evident in the IB’s commitment to multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement?
2. What are some of the key alternative concepts for international-mindedness from the fields of international education and global citizenship education that are relevant to Grade K–12 education?
3. What does emerging research offer Grade K–12 educational contexts by way of more 21<sup>st</sup> century conceptions and definitions of international-mindedness?
4. What do contrasting models of international-mindedness offer in terms of core elements and related constructs?

5. What are scopes and paradigms of assessment for international-mindedness?
6. What are existing assessment methods of international-mindedness and other related constructs (such as global mindedness or intercultural competence)?
  - a. What are the objectives and components of those assessment instruments?
  - b. What are the formats, techniques and strategies of them?
  - c. How valid are the outcomes of those assessment methods? What are the impacts of using those methods in different educational contexts, in terms of their strengths, issues and pitfalls?

## The IB philosophy of international-mindedness

International-mindedness as addressed in the educational philosophy of the IB and the curriculum framework of IB programmes was analysed. The analysis of IB documentation provides an account of what being internationally minded means in an IB education. Likewise, the analysis of the IB learner profile provides an important indication of the characteristics internationally minded individuals are expected to possess. Further, the analysis indicates that in the IB documents international-mindedness is explicitly associated with the values, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills manifested in:

1. Multilingualism
2. Intercultural understanding
3. Global engagement

The IB definition of international-mindedness has changed and matured. The 2009 definition largely equated international-mindedness to *global/intercultural understanding*. The latest IB definition has incorporated two more dimensions, namely *global engagement* and *multilingualism*. Intercultural understanding is still central to the IB understanding of international-mindedness, while global engagement and multilingualism are considered as contributing to its development.

These three dimensions of international-mindedness are embedded in the IB learner profile. An internationally minded learner is above all a competent communicator, open-minded and knowledgeable. However, these qualities cannot be achieved without the remaining seven attributes, which fall into the two categories of cognitive competence (inquirers, thinkers and reflective practitioners), and disposition (principled, caring, risk-takers, and balanced).

Multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement are evident across the three IB programmes as a developmental continuum. For example, the definition of *intercultural understanding* is developed across the three programmes to account for more nuanced understanding and appreciation of the tensions.

## Concepts related to international-mindedness

Literature on some of the key alternative concepts for international-mindedness from the fields of international education and global citizenship education that are relevant to Grade K–12 education was reviewed. The key concepts relating to international-mindedness reviewed were:

1. Common humanity
2. Cosmopolitanism
3. Cultural intelligence
4. Global citizenship
5. Global competence
6. Global mindedness
7. Intercultural understanding
8. Omniculturalism
9. Multiliteracies—the First Principle
10. World mindedness, peace and development

Based on the literature reviewed, there are two important features of the approach to international-mindedness to be carefully considered. First, there is the concern about deferring the realization of international-mindedness into the future—a quite distant future. The deferral of the realization of international-mindedness leads to constructing it as a utopian project, privileging future-oriented aspirations over constituting it as a present reality. In this regard, international-mindedness sounds quite utopian and futuristic, and does not address the question of what can actually be done today.

Second, there is the question of emphasizing “difference” as a basis for international-mindedness. This could provide a focus for creating solidarity (affiliation, allegiance, commitment) around some form of collectivity. These collectivities of difference—otherness—other races, cultures, civilizations and peoples may be based on any one of the following axes of interest: class consciousness, gender awareness, national allegiance, racial solidarity, religious affiliation or sexual orientation. The formation of these collectives based on a consciousness of a single point of difference (divergence or contrast) emphasizes their unity, homogeneity and shared narratives of memory. The mobilization of these sectional collectivities implies that their particular form of “difference” is as virtuous as it is absolute and impermeable. Where these “differences” are simplified, exaggerated and polarized they provide a basis for antagonism, confrontation, conflict and struggle.

However, it is not clear that this research literature does anything to address the increasingly important issues of reconfiguring “21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness” by bringing together Western and non-Western intellectual cultures.

## Contrasting models of international-mindedness

A series of contrasting models of international-mindedness, which have been constructed from ideas in the IB documents and the literature, were explored and compared. The following models present various theoretical constructs, dimensions and core elements related to international-mindedness:

1. Expanding circles model
2. Progression through schooling model
3. Levels of achievement model
4. Pedagogies for forming the virtues of international-mindedness model
5. Scaffolding achievements model

These models of international-mindedness suggest the possibilities for the concept to be transformed through the actions of teachers and students—cooperating, sharing, and combining Western and non-Western knowledge—to overcome the limitations arising from the privileging of one or another source of knowledge. The international-mindedness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not reducible to fixed rules which specify what educators should do in various classroom circumstances. At best these models can act as guides for debating 21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness as part of the process of interpreting them in order to test their applicability to particular classrooms.

These models bring to the fore the importance of recognizing and considering the developmental and fallible characteristics of international-mindedness, as well as the role of intellectual agency and emotional energy of teachers and students who might engage in the transformative work involved in stimulating its production and uses. There are rich and innovative possibilities for sharing and making public use of different models of international-mindedness. These include:

1. **Public recognition and adding value:** international-mindedness entails the public recognition of and adding of value to knowledge which was previously unacknowledged and undervalued. In particular, this means countering the treatment of non-Western people as ignorant or their knowledge as being intellectually deficient.

2. **Emotional energy:** international-mindedness entails engaging teachers and students' emotional energy productively in extending the uses of forms of knowledge that often pass unrecognized or are undervalued. Emotional energy, the stimulus for intellectual curiosity, is a driving force in the quest to turn previously unknown or partly known concepts, metaphors and images into a repertoire of knowledge for further investigation.
3. **The fallibility of knowledge:** international-mindedness means recognizing the potential fallibility of all knowledge due in part to unknown and unknowable conditions and/or as a consequence of unconscious motives. However, the fallibility of all knowledge can only be revealed through the willingness to confront and break away from intellectual dependency.
4. **Self-consciously exploring one's own collusion in social injustice:** international-mindedness means being alert to the ways in which we—as teachers and students—are in part reproducing the problems about which we share concerns. Knowledge about the ways in which we reproduce these things alerts us to the ways in which these structures endure, while also pointing to possibilities for complex and sustained efforts to transform them.
5. **Maintaining scepticism:** teachers and students must maintain scepticism about international-mindedness and whatever forms of knowledge it mobilizes, helping them to achieve in the present whatever immediate changes they can, while keeping in mind the long-term goals.

Given the complexities involved, it is unlikely that any one of these models would be capable of meeting all the challenges posed by nurturing and developing internationally minded students. Meaningful assessment is necessary for the teaching and learning of international-mindedness.

## Assessing international-mindedness

A range of methods for the assessment of international-mindedness, considering their scope and paradigms were investigated, including:

1. The Global-Mindedness Scale
2. The Global Perspective Inventory
3. The Global Citizenship Scale
4. The Cultural Intelligence Scale
5. The Global Competence Aptitude Assessment

Literature providing alternative formats, techniques and strategies of these methods is also reviewed. The validity of outcomes measured by existing assessment instruments, along with the impacts of using these methods in different educational contexts—strengths, issues and pitfalls—was examined.

Assessment of international-mindedness is an under-researched area. There are very limited instruments for assessing international-mindedness. However, the development of international-mindedness assessment instruments needs to take into consideration the existing tools for assessing some related concepts.

Optimal measurement of 21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness requires a combination of instruments, which could reveal the in/consistency in findings across different measuring methods, and also account for multiple competencies inherent in international-mindedness.

Assessing 21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness is important. However, the assessment of its constituent concepts is fraught with concerns about intellectual hegemony of some sort, and always questionable as to its purpose.

## Directions for 21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness

There is an emerging body of research which, although it has not been widely engaged in education or educational research, traces the history of the influences of non-Western intellectual cultures on Western intellectual development. Such research is important for forming and informing 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking with regard to international-mindedness.

Rather than making 21<sup>st</sup> century international-mindedness a project whose goals are to be realized in the distant future, there is historical research across multiple disciplines which demonstrate the operation of global intellectual conversations and borrowings. Such conversations bring into existence the sharing, borrowing and use of knowledge concerning institutional developments, technological discoveries and key ideas across continents, civilizations, nations, classes, religions and other forms of affiliation.

There are five key concepts which are useful for bringing forward and giving shape and substance to a 21<sup>st</sup> century orientation to international-mindedness:

1. *Planetary intellectual conversations* affect the transcontinental, transnational sharing, borrowing and use of resource portfolios that include institutional developments, key ideas and technological discoveries.
2. *Pedagogies of intellectual equality* start with the presupposition of “intellectual equality” between Western and non-Western students, and between Western and non-Western intellectual cultures, then set out to do what it takes to verify this premise.
3. *Planetary education* involves (re)imagining the planet in its entirety, wherein there are no “others”—no “them”—only “we-humans” (Bilewicz and Bilewicz, 2012: 333) who are committed to redressing the impacts of “we-humans” on the world as a whole.
4. *Post-monolingual language learning* works to pull multilingualism free of the dominance of monolingualism through teaching for transfer based on the cross-sociolinguistic similarities between students’ first language and the target language.
5. *Bringing forward non-Western knowledge* works to verify the presupposition that Western and non-Western students can use the linguistic resources of Western and non-Western intellectual cultures to further international-mindedness, and in particular planetary education.

Education for international-mindedness is necessarily social in character and therefore provides a basis for collaborative action directed at sharable existing knowledge and the generation of new knowledge. Here the idea of “knowledge” refers to the concepts, metaphors and images that multilingual students are capable of accessing and reworking into valued and valuable educational resources. The IB programmes have grown from Western intellectual traditions; “non-Western” knowledge—the wealth of concepts, metaphors and images—have not been fully engaged in the task of internationalizing contemporary education nor been sufficiently elaborated to be educationally useful (Towards a continuum of international education 2008: 2).

A 21<sup>st</sup> century conception of international-mindedness must shift “non-Western knowledge” from its position low in the local/global hierarchy of knowledge flows. This means utilizing it to the level required by those who authorize what is valued and valuable educational knowledge. Engaging non-Western people’s knowledge as equal to, and of course as partial as, Western knowledge represents a challenge to efforts to conceptualize a 21<sup>st</sup> century form of international-mindedness.

## References:

Bilewicz, M and Bilewicz, A. 2012. "Who defines humanity? Psychological and cultural obstacles to omniculturalism". *Culture and Psychology*. 18(3), 331-344.

International Baccalaureate Organization. 2008. *Towards a continuum of international education*. UK: IBO.

This summary was extracted by the IB Research Department. A copy of the full report is available at <http://www.ibo.org/research>. For more information on this study or other IB research, please email [research@ibo.org](mailto:research@ibo.org).

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