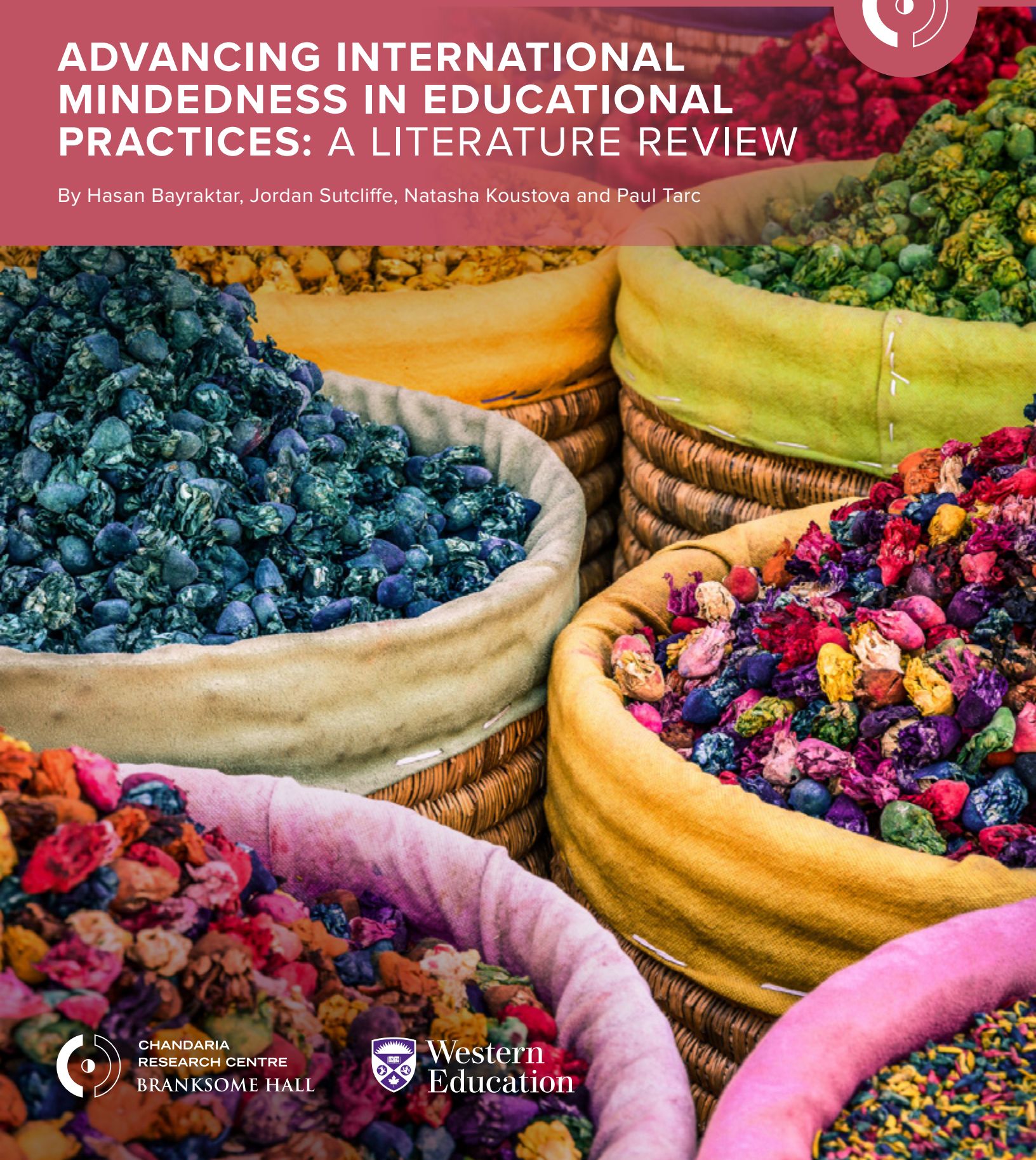
Literature Review

RESEARCH BRIEF

Chandaria Research Centre & Western University

ADVANCING INTERNATIONAL MINDEDNESS IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

By Hasan Bayraktar, Jordan Sutcliffe, Natasha Koustova and Paul Tarc



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Advancing International Mindedness in Educational Practices:
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This research brief explores the multifaceted concept of international mindedness (IM), a cornerstone of global education that prepares students to navigate and contribute to a complex, interconnected world. Through a thorough review of literature, we explore how IM is conceptualized, taught and practised within International Baccalaureate (IB) schools and beyond, highlighting key strategies, challenges and pedagogical considerations. Central to our findings is the understanding that IM transcends academic knowledge, fostering a deep appreciation for cultural diversity, multilingualism and global engagement. By examining successful practices across various educational settings, this brief identifies essential components and innovative approaches to cultivating an international mindset among students. This comprehensive analysis enriches the current discourse on global education and serves as a practical guide for educators, administrators and policymakers aiming to integrate IM into their curricula and school cultures. This work highlights the valuable role of education in developing globally minded citizens who are equipped to contribute meaningfully to more sustainable and just human and planetary futures.

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL MINDEDNESS?

International mindedness (IM) is a core concept in international education, especially emphasized in International Baccalaureate (IB) programs (Norman, 2022). It embodies an understanding and awareness that collective action and shared knowledge can enhance global understanding and foster responsibility towards global and local realities (Singh & Qi, 2013). The IB organization aims to develop internationally minded individuals who acknowledge their shared humanity and responsibility for the planet, thereby contributing to a more inclusive community (Hill, 2012).

In IM, students are encouraged to appreciate their own cultural and national identities and to respect and understand diverse perspectives (Culross & Tarver, 2011). This perspective-taking fosters global citizenship and helps to overcome limited worldviews informed by singular experiences of nationality, culture or personal experience. IM is about identifying and engaging with the world's diversity, promoting empathy and developing self-awareness while respecting different cultural elements (Harwood & Bailey, 2012).

We note here that different practitioner, academic and policy communities use different terms and expressions to describe the pedagogical heart of international and global education. Beyond and alongside the IB—and its favoured term, IM—Tarc (2023) identifies a number of other "vocabularies" of global education. First, coming out of more psychology-based adaptation studies is the stream of *intercultural competence* that has generated considerable literature (Bennett, 2015; Savicki, 2008) and critique (Dervin et al., 2012; Marginson & Sawir, 2011). Educating for intercultural competence can be seen as an antecedent to educating for global competence, which is the term of choice in the OECD's recent and influential intervention, "Preparing our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World: The OECD PISA Global Competence Framework" (2018). Arguably, the most notable

contemporary variant of global education is *global citizenship education* (GCE), which has emerged as its own field of research (see Andreotti, 2014; Andreotti & de Souza, 2012; Goren & Yemini, 2017; Oxley & Morris, 2013; Pashby et al., 2020; Shultz, 2007). In relation to other terms, such as educating for global competence, GCE tends toward a more justice-oriented approach (Oxfam, 2015; Tarc, 2012; UNESCO, 2013). GCE has been advanced in such key policy statements as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2016), as well as within state ministry policies (Franch, 2020).

Key components of *international mindedness* include multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement (Singh & Qi, 2013). *Multilingualism* involves using multiple languages effectively and connecting with various cultural histories and experiences (Singh & Qi, 2013). This approach not only broadens perspectives but also aids in forming global identities and strengthening cultural awareness, which are essential to inclusive participation. *Intercultural understanding* involves recognizing and reflecting upon one's own and others' ideas and experiences, and appreciating shared human traits, diversity and interconnections (Castro et al., 2013). Finally, *global engagement* is concerned with being aware and ready to address global challenges, integrating aspects of local, national and global citizenship (Castro et al., 2015).

The IB Learner Profile (see Fig. 1) outlines desired student dispositions in IB schools, aiming to develop qualities such as inquisitiveness, open-mindedness and balanced judgment. These attributes are crucial for fostering international mindedness and creating better, more inclusive communities. The learner profile offers a practical component to IM, promoting the following learner dispositions: inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, open-minded, caring, balanced and reflective (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013).

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LITERATURE ON TEACHING FOR IM

The research on teaching international mindedness, as detailed in one comprehensive IB-funded study by Hacking and colleagues (2017), provides insights into the development of IM in IB schools globally. This study encompasses an in-depth analysis of nine schools and identifies key practices crucial to fostering IM, including professional development, leadership, language learning, the IB curriculum, extracurricular activities, hidden curriculum and community engagement.

A central finding of the study is the emphasis on interpersonal relationships in cultivating IM, rather than merely increasing knowledge (Hacking et al., 2017). The schools that focused on changing student attitudes, encouraging interactions with diverse perspectives and adapting to new cultural contexts were more engaged in IM. Such an approach is intentional and requires strategic integration into educational frameworks, policy and teaching methodologies. Staff training and the recruitment of IM champions (i.e., leaders that embrace and represent international mindedness) were identified as effective approaches to enhancing IM classroom activities.

Figure 1: IB learner profile. International Baccalaureate Organization (2013)

Figure 2: 5 Fs of intercultural understanding

There are also social and cultural events and activities (such as music, theatre and sports) that are effective in promoting IM by enabling cross-cultural interactions and experiences. These events, often encompassing the "5 Fs" (flags, food, festivals, fashion, and faces, see Fig. 2), are seen as opportunities for students to engage with diverse cultures and perspectives (Bunnell, 2019). As an example, activities within programs such as Model United Nations (MUN) were noted for their effectiveness in fostering IM.

Effective IM practices extend beyond these traditional approaches and include fostering dialogue, discussion and critical engagement with personal biases, and embracing diversity.

Moving forward, effective IM practices extend beyond these traditional approaches and include fostering dialogue, discussion and critical engagement with personal biases and embracing diversity. Model United Nations (MUN) and the IB's Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) program were highlighted as key components in developing IM, emphasizing the role of thought, action and reflection. With each of these approaches, teachers and leaders have a substantial role in providing IM initiatives.

Leadership plays a central role in promoting IM, particularly strong endorsement from educational leaders and the creation of dedicated roles for IM coordination (Hacking et al., 2017). The involvement of students in decision-making processes is essential for developing a global perspective and the values integral to IM. To ensure teachers are confident in developing initiatives alongside students, it is critical to offer them professional development opportunities to learn about embedding IM in educational practices (Hacking et al., 2018). Schools should prioritize staff discussions regarding IM relevance and develop strategies for supporting students in adopting this mindset. Current literature calls for more comprehensive professional training in IM, in addition to existing IB workshops.

Language learning is also integral to IM: learning and attending to multiple languages is a gateway to cultural understanding and global engagement. The importance of preserving first languages and mastering new ones for effective communication and cultural respect cannot be overstated (Hacking et al., 2017). Multilingualism, as part of a school's educational policies, enhances cultural sensitivity and communicative competencies.

Overall, research by Hacking and team (2017, 2018) provides a helpful understanding of IM, highlighting the need for intentional, strategic and comprehensive approaches to help foster global citizenship and intercultural competence in educational settings.

IM PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study of IM in the IB curriculum highlights strategies for fostering IM through various subject areas and pedagogical strategies. In particular, the literature emphasizes Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS, see Fig. 3) as a cornerstone of curricular IM (Singh & Qi, 2013). In the IB Diploma Programme, CAS helps students develop and reflect on their IM capacities, with community-based social activities to deepen IM engagement. CAS is important in buffering academic pressures and is an accepted approach to promoting an international mindset through an emphasis on thought, action and reflection. CAS programs encourage genuine behaviour change and action around IM, especially through community connections.

CAS PROGRAM

CREATIVITY	ACTIVITY	SERVICE
Experiences that encompass original thinking, including artistic activities and other learning and teaching experiences	Experiences that contribute to a healthy lifestyle through participation in forms of activity that focus on physical exertion	Experiences that involve interactions with groups that develop a deep commitment to providing benefits to the community

Figure 3: Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) program in IB

Teachers may also consider embedding discussions related to IM in adjacent subjects. These dialogues encourage understanding diverse perspectives, preventing bias and promoting student-led learning (Hacking et al., 2017). Teachers are encouraged to incorporate IM in lesson plans, instructional methods and extracurricular activities. The Hacking study also highlights the influence of a school's hidden curriculum in developing IM, which is shaped by indirect messages from schoolmates' attitudes, teacher-student interactions and the overall school climate (Hacking et al., 2017). The diversity of the student population and the interaction among students from various backgrounds are seen as implicit ways of fostering respect, tolerance and acceptance. The literature suggests that exposure to a diverse student body is crucial for developing IM, but it also stresses that mere exposure is not sufficient; reflective practices and purposeful initiatives are needed to strengthen IM effectively (Belal, 2017; Van Oord, 2007). Role modeling by teachers is identified as another key factor in cultivating IM, with teachers encouraged to share their experiences, use real-life examples and foster open and respectful classroom conversations. Conversely, the hidden curriculum can work against the development of IM, where actual practices misalign with IM values. Tarc (2019) offers a salient example: "...on the one hand, in the name of IM, students may be hearing or learning about the importance of racial and class equality. But, on the other hand, they may also be learning from the division of labor at the school and its effects on social relations. For example, people of color are the 'low class' and precariously employed service workers that are inside the school gates but not 'insiders' of the school community..." (p. 487).

EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN WITH IM

By emphasizing the importance of understanding and valuing diverse perspectives, IM encourages young women to become proactive leaders who are not only aware of global challenges but are also equipped to address these issues creatively and empathetically. When young women are exposed to different cultures and global issues through formal leadership initiatives, they are able to see that women's empowerment is not just a local or national issue but a global imperative (e.g., Segovia-Pérez et al., 2019). This global awareness cultivates in young women a sense of responsibility and a desire to contribute positively to their communities and the world at large.

Furthermore, IM promotes the development of the critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for leadership (Wasner, 2016). Young women are encouraged to engage in discussions, participate in internationally focused projects and take on community leadership roles. By fostering global citizenship, IM instills the values of respect and inclusivity in young women, preparing them to be compassionate leaders who advocate for gender equality and the rights of women and girls around the world (Penny, 2019). Through IM initiatives and education, young women are empowered to envision and work towards a more equitable and just world, where their voices are heard and their leadership is valued.

By fostering global citizenship, IM instills the values of respect and inclusivity in young women, preparing them to be compassionate leaders who advocate for gender equality and the rights of women and girls around the world (Penny, 2019).

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR IM

This section summarizes various effective activities and practices for fostering international mindedness in schools, as identified by students and teachers (Hacking et al., 2017; Sriprakash et al., 2014):

- *Strategic curriculum integration:* Incorporate IM into the school's long-term curriculum planning, ensuring it permeates various subject areas.
- *Leadership and school culture:* Develop responsible leadership that shapes a school culture conducive to IM, emphasizing global issues, environmental conservation and human rights.
- *Student-centred activities:* Engage students in activities like Model United Nations (MUN), theory of knowledge (TOK) forums and linguistic Olympiads, to foster critical and creative thinking.
- *Experiential learning through CAS:* Utilize the CAS program for hands-on learning experiences, focusing on community engagement and reflection.
- *Multicultural and language education:* Offer diverse cultural celebrations, language immersion programs and integrated language learning to encourage appreciation of different cultures.
- *Promoting diverse perspectives:* Facilitate forums, discussions and seminars that encourage the exchange of multiple viewpoints and reflective thinking.
- *Student empowerment and voice:* Create systems to amplify student voices, such as student councils, peer support and mediation groups.
- *Inclusive environment and symbolism:* Use cultural symbols, diverse seating arrangements and school events to represent and celebrate the school's multicultural environment.
- *Community and parental engagement:* Involve parents and the local community in school activities, promoting a collaborative approach to IM.
- *Diversity in admissions and staffing:* Maintain a diverse student body and teaching staff, including educators with international experience.
- *Global awareness and communication:* Distribute newsletters on global events, offer a variety of religious studies and organize international trips to enhance global understanding.
- *Role modeling and respectful interactions:* Encourage educators and staff to model IM behaviours, fostering an environment of respect, tolerance and inclusive interactions.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: CURRENT CHALLENGES IN IM

One continual challenge is the superficial approach some schools often take toward IM, with scholars often emphasizing the need for deeper integration into the school's social dynamics and consideration of the hidden curriculum (Hacking et al., 2017). These scholars advocate for creating an inclusive atmosphere that values all community members, which serves as a natural model for IM. This involves immersing students in genuine sociocultural experiences by balancing IM with local and national perspectives to foster a positive self-image alongside an appreciation for local and host cultures.

Respected scholars in the field have offered a range of reflections on integrating international mindedness:

- Singh and Qi (2013) highlight the importance of integrating non-Western intellectual cultures to counter the dominance of Western knowledge in education, suggesting a reorientation of IM for the 21st century. This includes concepts like post-monolingual language learning and international knowledge sharing, development and collaboration, aiming to synthesize multiple perspectives without losing the value of humanist education.
- Castro and team (2015), as well as other researchers, point out that the IB's approach to IM often overlooks personal characteristics such as intercultural citizenship and resistance to social injustices. Sriprakash and team (2014) align with Rizvi's (2009) concept of cosmopolitan learning, focusing on ethical engagement and understanding global transformations. They propose a process-oriented approach to IM, moving away from fixed dispositions or mere cultural knowledge accumulation. This approach encompasses reflexivity, ethical engagement and intellectual equality, aiming to enrich IM frameworks through continual interaction and dialogue.
- Wasner (2016) introduces a critical participatory pedagogy in service learning, emphasizing transformative learning experiences that integrate IM, global citizenship and critical pedagogy. This approach involves students as researchers, fostering empowerment and engagement in line with IB's educational perspectives.
- Finally, Hill (2012) calls for further research on non-Western perspectives of IM, suggesting that education for IM should focus on global issues, critical thinking and collaboration for intercultural understanding and sustainable development. This approach requires a localized perspective, allowing teachers and institutions to explore contextually relevant models and pedagogies.

CONCLUSION

This research brief presents recent literature on the conceptualization, development and practice of international mindedness (IM) in IB schools, aiming to identify challenges and best practices. One key finding is that the process of exploring and practising IM is prioritized over the end result. Hacking and team (2017) highlight the importance of inclusive discussions and actions involving the entire school community in defining and reconceptualizing IM.

Intentionality also emerges as a crucial characteristic of effective IM practices. IM is understood as focusing on relationships, including both external social interactions and internal reflections about others. While various frameworks provide structure, schools have the freedom to design their own IM models to suit their unique situations. This iterative process of exploring IM practice involves continuous reflection and adaptation to both local and global changes. Strong cooperation among all stakeholders is essential, including students, teachers, parents, staff and the local community.

In conclusion, IM is not a fixed destination but an ongoing, socially constructed journey, embedded in the school system and learned through teaching and unconscious observation. This process requires acknowledgment and reflection on personal and institutional assumptions and limitations, making IM a dynamic and evolving practice.

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