DEVELOPING "OPEN-MINDEDNESS" THROUGH AN 11-16 CURRICULUM

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The International Baccalaureate Organisation curriculum is underpinned by a 'Learner Profile' (LP). The Learner Profile ‘is the IB mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes’ (www.ibo.org). It contains ten attributes, of which one is developing 'open-mindedness'. This study explores how schools seek to develop 'open mindedness' in the IB MYP curriculum (11-16 year olds).

The paper addresses the following research questions:

- How do teachers and students 'make sense' of the LP attribute 'open-minded'?
- How do teachers seek to develop 'open-mindedness' in the MYP curriculum?
- What problems are faced by teachers developing 'open-mindedness' in the MYP curriculum?

Within the IB curriculum 'open-mindedness' draws on a philosophical tradition rooted in intellectual receptiveness (Spiegel, 2012), informed by critical thinking (Bertrand Russell's notion of 'critical receptiveness'), whilst also emphasising an openness to cultures other than one's own. The focus on intercultural awareness (Chen and Starosta 1996 and 1997) and intercultural sensitivity is an important dimension of 'open-mindedness' in the IB curriculum. In this context 'open-mindedness' can be represented as both intellectual virtue and international mindedness. This becomes a complex concept to operationalize in a classroom context and this study seeks to better understand how teachers engage in this pedagogical process.

The study adopted a mixed methods approach. A survey completed by over 574 11-16 year olds sought to assess young people's responses in relation to a number of different aspects of 'open-mindedness'. Qualitative data was collected from four case study schools, both state sector and independent. Interviews were conducted with school leaders, teachers and students and focused on the processes associated with developing 'open-mindedness' amongst young people.

The paper identifies a range of different ways in which teachers seek to operationalise the concept of open-mindedness. It argues that teachers develop 'open-mindedness' as both a learning outcome and a pedagogical approach. However, the paper will highlight the particular challenges of developing 'open-mindedness' within the curriculum. In particular it will explore the tensions that emerge within a curriculum based on high levels of teacher autonomy and trust, abutting a culture that increasingly demands evidence of measurable progress.
