

【研究会報告】

The role of international mindedness and multicultural understanding at the British School in Tokyo

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The British School in Tokyo (BST) has defined (within its context) international-mindedness as an ability to appreciate different cultures and perspectives. It refers to communicating and interacting effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. BST believes that multicultural understanding is a crucial aspect of international mindedness.

BST's definitions of international mindedness and multicultural understanding reflect its commitment to providing a high-quality education that prepares students to become responsible global citizens who thrive in an interconnected and rapidly changing world. As critical aspects of the school's educational philosophy, these concepts are reflected in a variety of significant ways at BST, which include the school's:

- guiding statements (mission and vision),
- taught curriculum,
- extracurricular programme,
- pedagogical approach,
- approach to language development, and
- external partnerships.

In permeating much of the school's philosophy and practical approach, international-mindedness and multicultural understanding help create a learning environment that inspires students to succeed academically and socially. Both concepts also develop students' talents and passions and help them recognise their responsibility to each other and the world around them.

History and context

The British School in Tokyo (BST) has a proud history and pedigree as Japan's leading British international school. The school was founded in 1989 by a group of British expatriates who wanted to provide a high-quality British-style education for their children.

Since then, the school has grown and developed with the community it serves into one of the leading British international schools in Asia, with approximately 1000+ students from Early Years to Secondary plus over 200 staff.

The school's academic standards are high, with students leaving BST to join many prestigious universities worldwide, including Oxbridge, Ivy League and the Russell Group.

The school has developed a progressive approach to pedagogy with elements of concept-based instruction, Reggio Emilia education, and inquiry-based learning used strategically throughout different age levels.

A solid commitment to language development, the Arts, Sports and outdoor learning also characterise the school's holistic approach to education.

Now in its fourth decade, BST serves a diverse community, including students and staff from over 60 nationalities. This diversity is one of the school's strengths, allowing students to learn about other cultures and develop intercultural competence.

Guiding statements – mission, vision and values

Underpinning the school's approach are its recently revised Guiding Statements – its mission, vision and values. Indeed, BST has a clear mission and vision that guide its actions and shape its educational philosophy.

The school seeks to provide an inclusive and holistic education in English for the international community of Tokyo, with a modern British identity incorporating a distinctly global outlook. BST is committed to pursuing excellence and lifelong learning, takes pride in instilling a sense of integrity, and values collective responsibility in interacting with the broader world positively.

BST's values reflect its commitment to international mindedness and global citizenship – “BST's core values act as a guide for students, families, alumni and staff and underpin the school community's actions:

- we strive to achieve our personal best,
- we are honest and show kindness, compassion and respect for others,
- we are curious, creative and innovative in our thinking,
- we embrace diversity and celebrate individuality,
- we are internationally minded and culturally aware, and
- we have a sense of social and environmental responsibility.”

The school aims to foster a culture of inclusivity, excellence, creativity, and innovation, encouraging students to take risks, think critically, and pursue their passions. The school is committed to promoting a global outlook and developing responsible, ethical, and compassionate citizens who take personal responsibility and wish to contribute ethically to the world.

Curriculum framework

The National Curriculum of England provides a broad curricular framework and educational standards for BST. As an independent school, BST can adapt the curriculum to reflect its unique context in Japan and the background of its community. BST believes its education improves when school content is adapted, and teachers become curricular developers. School success increases when teachers can adjust the curriculum to students' learning and cultural experiences.

Schools, by their very nature, are intercultural even if the school community is not linguistically or ethnically diverse - members bring various cultural experiences and perspectives. Every school then has cultural capital that it can use to support education for international mindedness.

BST's curriculum allows students to explore multiple cultural perspectives relevant to everyday practice. This influences the texts chosen in English, the artists studied in art, and the music and musicians. The ability to appreciate and consider different perspectives is a skill that requires commitment from the entire school community and deliberate teaching. This means exploring in depth rather than piecemeal awareness of cultures and identities.

It also influences how the schools encourage students to engage with their learning. BST teachers look to provide students with the opportunity to:

- question and understand why people do what they do, including assumptions and biases,
- recognise different perspectives,
- reflect on intercultural experiences of themselves and others,
- engage and empathise with others, and
- debate and dialogue.

It also means that BST allows students to construct understanding through inquiry. For example, BST's Primary school is redeveloping its curriculum and developing a conceptual inquiry-based approach to instruction.

Extracurricular programme

Over the last year, BST has reimagined its extracurricular activities and considered '*what sort*

of activities should a school like ours provide for students' and then put in place a programme to meet that strategic need.

As such, the extracurricular activities and club programme tries to enable students to be globally minded, explore different cultures and perspectives, deepen their understanding of the school's Japanese location, and develop an awareness of the interconnectedness among people, societies and environments around the globe. Activities include but are not limited to Model United Nations, sustainability, cooking, origami, calligraphy and philosophy.

While BST's outdoor programme enables students to explore and appreciate the natural aspect of living in Japan, students can hike and learn about indigenous plants and natural vegetation while enjoying geographical features, utilising science and geography skills.

For example, Year 10 students participate in a Miyazaki homestay trip. Likewise, Year 11 students can participate in a trip to Koyasan. These trips allow students to develop their language ability and connect with a different side of Japan: where they can connect with the local culture, explore traditions and experience another way of life.

For students to become globally competent citizens, they need to help shape the local and global communities through actions that positively impact society. Over the last three years, BST has partnered with United World Schools. This provided an opportunity for students to visit schools in Nepal and Cambodia.

A future ambition is to develop and implement "BST GLOBAL", a bespoke online curriculum taught by BST students for partner schools in Nepal and Cambodia via infrastructure organised through a BST initiative with United World Schools and the Internet Association.

Pedagogical approach and the BST Learner Profile

Core to the BST ethos and pedagogical approach is the BST Learner Profile. The BST Learner Profile presents the school's collective educational philosophy by outlining the attributes that will most likely produce lifelong, high-performing learners. These attributes are underpinned by individual descriptors articulating what the school seeks to achieve.

BSTs believes this shared approach will help realise its vision of nurturing each student's unique potential and a strong sense of self built around purpose and passion.

One of the school's strategic aims is to ensure the Learner Profile is used explicitly in team planning documents, lesson planning, and the school's language of learning. Thus, teachers ex-

plicitly plan how these attributes will be developed through aspects of the curriculum and use the underlying descriptors to inform teaching and learning.

Likewise, staff explicitly award merits or House Points against aspects of the Learner Profile. For example, a student may be commended for being ‘Determined’ through participating in the Junior Maths Challenge. In contrast, another might be commended for demonstrating the attributes of a “Thinker” during a reading competition.

The Learner Profile also forms the basis of BST’s Teacher Framework/Standards and staff development. BST’s Teacher Standards articulate the practices and strategies teachers can implement to enable students to develop the attributes of this Learner Profile.

Teachers reflect on this framework each year and identify specific aspects of their practice they will focus on over the coming year. This year, for example, some staff have explored ideas related to metacognition and motivation to enable students to develop the Thinker attribute. Similarly, other staff have been exploring strategies linked to self-regulation and independence to build ambitious students. Annually, at the end of the school year, teaching teams will pause, reflect and evaluate how their practice has enabled students to develop these attributes.

Language development and cultural recognition

One of BST’s core beliefs is that acquiring additional languages allows students to further reflect upon and explore different cultural perspectives and develop international mindedness. Therefore, all students are encouraged to learn a new language at BST.

As an international school in Tokyo, BST is firmly committed to providing students access to Japanese language learning and utilising the host country and community for language and cultural experiences throughout the curriculum. At BST, there is a belief that languages are for everyone and that opportunities should be provided for keen linguists to be able to study more than one language. Equally important to the school is the belief that each student should be able to maintain and develop their home or mother tongue language (s).

In the Early Years, all students learn Japanese. Students are taught in regular class groups with two Japanese teachers in each class to ensure that all abilities are given opportunities to develop their skills appropriately.

From Year 1, all students learn Japanese. Classes are taught in mixed ability groupings within a Japanese as a First/Second Language stream and a Japanese as a Foreign Language stream. Students studying in the First and Second Language streams will work on a programme based

on the Japanese National Curriculum Kokugo materials for the appropriate age and stage.

From Year 4, students can learn French, and then from Year 7, students are introduced to Spanish and French as part of the required curriculum. As an international school which places a substantial value on international mindedness and language learning, students must choose at least one language to study in Years 10 and 11.

BST also maximises children's actual use of the language within the local community, taking advantage of speaking and listening opportunities right on their doorstep. For example, Year 3 children interview people in the local area in Japanese about their hobbies, drawing on what they have learnt in the classroom about describing them.

Additional opportunities and languages are provided through BST's extensive extracurricular programme, as well as through a range of partnerships and programmes established over time with schools and institutions in Tokyo and beyond.

Another critical initiative at BST is the school's focus on celebrating cultural diversity. The school recognises that its student body comprises students from over 60 nationalities and is committed to promoting an understanding and appreciation of other cultures. The school celebrates cultural events such as Diwali, Chinese New Year, and International Day, where students and staff come together to learn and celebrate different cultures. These events help to create a sense of community and belonging among students from different cultural backgrounds.

BST has also explored ways to examine its identity as a British international school in the heart of Tokyo. For example, studying and celebrating Japan's national/cultural holidays - Bun-ka no Hi, Sakura Festival and Tanabata.

BST's recent Sakura Photography Festival saw over 200 entries across five categories. The winning photos were displayed at Temple University Japan (TUIJ) and shared with the community. Events such as these enable students to deepen their understanding of the school's Japanese location and participate in community-wide events encouraging dialogue and exploration.

BST is exploring a new cultural series, loosely titled 'yattemiyou' or 'Let's Try', with its partner schools on campus. This programme will enable students to experience cultural and traditional customs such as the Tea Ceremony and the Ikebana. Also, students from BST regularly engage with students at Showa High School as part of their Global Stream and engage in conversations and discourse on different topics. Recently a BST student-led a discussion group which included Showa High School students and BST students on meritocracy and the implications for schooling.

Educational partnerships

BST also promotes intercultural understanding through its partnerships with other schools and organisations. The school has a strong and mutually supportive partnership with Showa Women's University (SWU) and affiliated schools such as Showa High School.

BST also partners with Shibuya Kyoiku Gakuen (SKG), a local Japanese school. The partnership allows BST students to collaborate with students at SKG. The association provides opportunities for BST students to learn about the Japanese language and culture and to engage in cultural exchanges and community service activities.

As an example of the collaboration between BST and its partners over the next 12 months, BST will be working with Showa High School (SHS) and Earth Company to explore issues connected to sustainability. Additionally, BST's annual language exchange programme with SHS allows students to spend several days immersed in a Japanese school.

Last year in partnership with SWU and TUJ, BST held an inaugural international symposium themed 'The Future of Japan, The Future of the World – The Responsibilities of Living in a Global Society.' Students from all three institutions and those from SWU High School participated and discussed the future of Japan and the world to deepen their multicultural understanding. A second symposium is scheduled for June this year, exploring sustainability issues more deeply.

Likewise, teachers and students at BST have been involved in the development and implementation of a "Twentieth Century Britain: History and Society" undergraduate course at SWU. The course introduces twentieth-century Britain's most significant events and cultural and political movements.

Within the broader community, once it was known that the Rugby World Cup, Olympics, and Paralympics had been awarded to Japan, BST set out to create a vision for capitalising on these significant global events. As a result, the 19:20 Project was established soon after. This project delivered unique experiences and resources for students in the lead-up to the Rugby World Cup and the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in three areas:

- educational programmes that promoted the values of sport
- opportunities to participate in a wide variety of Olympic and Paralympic sports, projects and events, and
- to increase access to elite coaching experiences and visiting international athletes.

Motivated by environmental issues, BST has partnered with world-renowned artists and the campaign group Green Power to develop an installation piece that will be displayed in Tokyo - using recycled materials and engaging with the community on issues connected to environmentalism.

Also engaging with a local textile artist – Satoru Aoyama, BST will produce an installation for its new campus that reflects the diversity of its multicultural community and place at the heart of Japan.

Additionally, BST has either been accredited or is a member of several national and international organisations, including:

- The Council of International Schools (CIS)
- The Council of British International Schools (COBIS)
- The Federation of British International Schools in Asia (FOBISIA)

BST's involvement in such organisations reflects the school's commitment to promoting internationalism, collaboration, and educational excellence.

CIS is a global organisation that provides membership and accreditation to international schools that meet its rigorous standards. The accreditation process involves a comprehensive evaluation of the school's performance in curriculum, student learning, and intercultural understanding. It also provides extensive professional development for staff in various areas, including international mindedness.

COBIS is a membership association representing more than 450 British international schools and organisations globally. COBIS schools educate over 165,000 students and employ more than 17,000 teachers, which can be found in more than 80 countries worldwide. The Chief Executive Officer of COBIS, Mr Colin Bell, is a BST Board of Trustees member.

While FOBISA is a regional association of British international schools, FOBISIA provides a platform for member schools to collaborate, share best practices, and participate in regional events and competitions.

BST is also a member of the Japanese Council of International Schools (JCIS), which is an organisation that promotes international education and collaboration among its member schools in Japan. There are 29 member schools of varying sizes with the oldest celebrating 150 years.

Conclusion

International mindedness and multicultural understanding are core to BST's ethos and approach. At the school, there is a genuine desire for students to acquire intercultural competencies and dispositions that will allow them to thrive and flourish wherever they find themselves in the world. The school provides various opportunities and experiences that cultivate an understanding of similarities and differences between cultures, thus promoting meaningful and lasting understanding and respect.

BST students from diverse backgrounds and cultures ponder their individuality, cultural heritage, and role in the global community. Thus the ability to appreciate and consider different perspectives is a skill that is prized and thoughtfully cultivated at the school from the youngest year groups to the oldest. However, the school recognises that international mindedness is a lifetime process rather than a final goal and that school is a stage in that journey.