THE IMPACT OF TURKISH CULTURE ON INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME TEACHERS

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MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

Department of Educational Sciences
Educational Management and Supervision IB Certificate (With Thesis)
Thesis Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Jale ONUR

İstanbul
T.C. Maltepe University
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JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

GÜNEŞ YURDASİPER DAL'ın "The Impact Of Turkısh Culture On Intercultural Awareness Of Internatıonal Baccalaureate Dıploma Program Teachers " başlıklı tezi 09.09.2025 tarihinde aşağıdaki jüri tarafından değerlendirilerek "Maltepe Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim ve Öğretim Yönetmeliği" nin ilgili maddeleri uyarınca Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Yüksek Lisans/Doktora/Sanatta Yeterlik tezi oy birliğiyle/oy çokluğuyla, başarılı/başarısız olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYUM BEYANI

Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli "Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge" ile bildirilen 6698 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by sincerely expressing my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Jale Onur, for her invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout this research journey. She is a real inspiration with her energy, wisdom, positivity, and experience, and working under her supervision has been a true privilege that shaped both my research and my academic growth.

I also wish to thank the esteemed jury members, Dr. Gökçe Güvercin Seçkin and Dr. Armağan Ateşkan, for their insightful comments and thoughtful suggestions, which enriched the final outcome of this study.

Special thanks are due to the teachers who participated in this research for sharing their time, experiences, and honest reflections. Their contributions gave this study its true meaning.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my family, my mother Necla Yurdasiper, my father Ahmet Yurdasiper, and my sister Ülkü Eylem Fındık, for their endless love and belief in me at every stage of my life. I have also always been inspired by the teachers in my extended family, who have been role models for me since childhood.

Above all, I am very lucky to have my beloved husband and my best friend, A. Orhan Dal, by my side. He has always supported me, believed in me wholeheartedly, and held me up whenever my own energy ran low. He believed in me even more than I believed in myself and shared the weight of this journey's challenges and stress with me. I could not have completed this thesis without his love, patience, and constant encouragement.

Thank you.

Güneş YURDASİPER DAL

September, 2025

ÖZET

TÜRK KÜLTÜRÜNÜN ULUSLARARASI BAKALORYA DİPLOMA PROGRAMI ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN KÜLTÜRLERARASI FARKINDALIĞINA ETKİLERİ

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Bu tez, kültürlerarası farkındalık kavramını ve Türkiye'deki Uluslararası Bakalorya (IB) eğitimiyle olan ilişkisini araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, Uluslararası Bakalorya Diploma Programı (IBDP) öğretmenlerinin bakış açısından, Türk kültürünün Türk öğrencilerinin diğer kültürleri anlama ve takdir etme yeteneğini nasıl etkilediğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmacı, bir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak sınıflardaki artan küreselleşme ve kültürel çeşitliliği vurgulamakta; eğitimin, kültürlerarası farkındalık ve saygıyı teşvik etme ihtiyacına dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çalışma, IBDP'nin kültürlerarası farkındalığı teşvik etmedeki rolüne odaklanmaktadır. Nitel bir araştırma olarak tasarlanan bu çalışma kapsamında, 14 IBDP öğretmeniyle yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla veriler toplanmış, bu görüşmeler transkripte edilip analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, Hofstede'nin kültürel boyutları olan güç mesafesi, kolektivizm ve belirsizlikten kaçınma boyutlarında ortaya konduğu gibi Türk kültürel normlarının, IBDP sınıflarında kültürlerarası farkındalığın gelişimini hem desteklediğini hem de zorlaştırabildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Öğretmenler, IB müfredatının küresel eğitim beklentileri ile yerel değerler arasında denge kuran kültürel aracılar olarak rol üstlenmektedir. Çalışma, IB çerçevesinin kültürlerarası farkındalığı teşvik ettiğini ancak Türkiye bağlamında başarısının büyük ölçüde öğretmenlerin yorumlarına, pedagojik yaklaşımlarına ve mesleki gelişimlerine

bağlı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarının; kültürel farklılıkların kültürlerarası farkındalık üzerindeki etkisine ve uluslararası eğitim programlarının kültürel anlayış ile empatiyi teşvik etmedeki etkinliğine dair mevcut bilgi birikimine katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kültürlerarası farkındalık, Türk kültürü, öğretmen bakış açısı, uluslararası bakalorya diploma programı.

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF TURKISH CULTURE ON INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME TEACHERS

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This thesis explores the concept of intercultural awareness and its relation to International Baccalaureate (IB) education in Türkiye. The study aims to examine how Turkish culture affects the ability of Turkish students to understand and appreciate other cultures from the perspective of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) teachers. As an English teacher, the researcher highlights the increasing globalisation and cultural diversity in classrooms and therefore emphasizes the need for education to foster intercultural awareness and respect. The study focuses on the IBDP and its role in promoting intercultural awareness. Designed as a qualitative research study, data was collected through interviews with 14 IBDP teachers, which were then transcribed and analysed. The findings reveal that Turkish cultural norms, particularly related to Hofstede's cultural dimensions of power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, both support and challenge the development of intercultural awareness in IBDP classrooms. Teachers act as cultural mediators, balancing the global educational expectations of the IB curriculum with local values. The study concludes that while the IB framework encourages intercultural awareness, its success in the Turkish context depends heavily on teachers' interpretations, pedagogical strategies, and professional development. The findings of the study aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the impact of cultural differences on intercultural awareness and the

effectiveness of international education programmes in promoting cultural understanding and empathy.

Keywords: Intercultural awareness, Turkish culture, teacher perspective, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

TÜRK KÜLTÜRÜNÜN ULUSLARARASI BAKALORYA DİPLOMA PROGRAMI ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN KÜLTÜRLERARASI FARKINDALIĞINA ETKİLERİ

Bu tez, kültürlerarası farkındalık kavramını ve Türkiye'deki Uluslararası Bakalorya (IB) eğitimiyle olan ilişkisini ele almaktadır. Özellikle Uluslararası Bakalorya Diploma Programı (IBDP) öğretmenlerinin bakış açısından, Türk kültürünün öğrencilerin diğer kültürleri anlama ve takdir etme becerileri üzerindeki etkileri araştırılmıştır. Araştırmacı bir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak, sınıflardaki artan küreselleşme ve kültürel çeşitliliğin eğitime yeni sorumluluklar yüklediğine dikkat çekilmekte; eğitim yoluyla kültürlerarası farkındalık ve saygının desteklenmesinin önemi vurgulanmaktadır. IBDP'nin temel amacı olan uluslararası bilinç (international mindedness), öğrencilerin hem kendi kültürlerini eleştirel biçimde değerlendirebilmesini hem de farklı kültürlere karşı açık fikirli, saygılı ve empatik yaklaşmasını hedeflemektedir. Bu bağlamda, öğretmenlerin sınıf içindeki rolü yalnızca bilgi aktarıcı değil, aynı zamanda kültürel aracı ve rehber olmayı da kapsamaktadır.

Çalışmanın amacı, Türk kültürel değerlerinin IBDP öğretmenlerinin kültürlerarası farkındalıkla ilgili algılarını, yorumlarını ve sınıf içi uygulamalarını nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma şu üç temel soruya yanıt aramıştır:

1. Türk kültürü, IBDP öğretmenlerinin kültürlerarası farkındalık düzeylerini nasıl etkilemektedir?

2. Öğretmenler, öğrencilerin kültürlerarası farkındalıklarını geliştirmek için hangi stratejileri kullanmaktadır?

3. Öğrencilerin kültürlerarası farkındalık geliştirme süreçlerinde karşılaştıkları zorluklar nelerdir?

Bu araştırma nitel yöntemle yürütülmüş, İstanbul'daki farklı IBDP okullarında görev yapan 14 öğretmenle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar

uygun örnekleme (convenience sampling) yöntemiyle belirlenmiş, görüşmeler transkripte edilerek tematik analiz yoluyla değerlendirilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular Hofstede'nin kültürel boyutlar kuramı çerçevesinde yorumlanmıştır; özellikle güç mesafesi, kolektivizm ve belirsizlikten kaçınma boyutları öne çıkmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, Türk kültürel değerleri IBDP sınıflarında kültürlerarası farkındalık gelişimini hem destekleyen hem de zorlaştıran bir etki yaratmaktadır. Güç mesafesi algısı, otoriteye saygı ve öğretmene bağlılık gibi unsurlar öğrencilerin öğretmene güvenmesini sağlarken, sorgulayıcı ve eleştirel düşünmeye dayalı IB pedagojisi ile çelişebilmektedir. Kolektivist yapı, empati ve topluluk bilincini teşvik ederken, bireysel düşünce gelişimini sınırlandırabilmektedir. Belirsizlikten kaçınma eğilimi ise açık uçlu sorular ve TOK (Theory of Knowledge) gibi belirsizlik içeren öğrenme süreçlerinde öğrencilerin kaygı yaşamalarına neden olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda öğretmenler, küresel IB değerleri ile yerel kültürel bağlam arasında bir denge kurma çabası içindedir. Öğretmenler bu süreçte birer kültürel aracı olarak hareket ederek, hem yerel değerleri hem de uluslararası eğitimin gerekliliklerini sınıfa taşımaktadır. Katılımcılar, IB çerçevesinin kültürlerarası farkındalık kazandırma konusunda etkili bir yapı sunduğunu ifade etmiştir; ancak bu yapının başarıya ulaşmasının, öğretmenlerin pedagojik yaklaşımları ve mesleki gelişimleriyle doğrudan ilişkili olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışma, öğretmenlerin kültürlerarası farkındalık düzeylerinin, kendi kültürel kimliklerinin farkında olmalarıyla yakından ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Katılımcı öğretmenler, kendi değerlerini ve kültürel önyargılarını tanımanın, öğrencilerde açık görüşlülük ve empati geliştirme süreci için ön koşul olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. IB'nin TOK, EE ve CAS gibi temel bileşenleri, kültürlerarası etkileşim ve eleştirel düşünme gelişimi için etkili araçlar olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Sonuç olarak bu araştırma, Türkiye'de IBDP öğretmenlerinin kültürlerarası farkındalık geliştirme süreçlerinde Türk kültürünün çok boyutlu etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Kültürel bağlamın pedagojik kararları ve öğrenci katılımını doğrudan etkilediği görülmektedir. Bu bulgular, uluslararası programların uygulanmasında kültürel uyumun önemine dikkat çekmektedir. Çalışmanın bulguları, eğitimciler, program geliştiriciler ve politika yapıcılar için önemli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Uluslararası eğitim çerçevelerinin yerel kültürel bağlamlarla uyumlu hâle getirilmesi, eğitimin anlamlı ve sürdürülebilir olmasını sağlayabilir. Genel anlamda bu tez, Türkiye'de IBDP uygulamalarına öğretmen

merkezli kültürün etkilerini araştırarak literatüre özgün bir bakış açısı sağlamakta ve eğitim ortamlarında kültürlerarası farkındalığı geliştirmeye yönelik uygulamalara katkı sağlayabilecek bulgular ortaya koymaktadır.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAS : Creativity, Activity, Service

CP : Career – related Programme

DP : Diploma Programme

Ecolint : International School of Geneva

EE : Extended Essay

EYP : European Youth Parliament

GC : Global Citizenship

GCE : Global Citizenship Education

IB **:** International Baccalaureate

IBDP : International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

IBO **:** International Baccalaureate Organization

ICC : Intercultural communicative competence

IM : International Mindedness

ISA : International Schools Association

MUN : Model United Nations

MYP : Middle Years Programme

OECD : Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PYP : Primary Years Programme

TITC : Turkey in the 20th Century

TOK : Theory of Knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

How many people from different cultural backgrounds are you in contact with? None? Just a few? Think again. Hacking et al. (2008) and Walker (2007) state that we experience globalisation on a daily basis. With the ease of technology and social media together with the mobility of people and workforce, we encounter people from different national, racial, religious and linguistic backgrounds (Suarez-Orozco, 2005). Consider the music you listen to throughout the day, the movies you watch, or the books you read. Reflect on your social media feed. How many of the videos you watch or accounts you follow are created by people from different origins? Even beyond media, think about the international brands you use every day, many of which have branches around the world. Whether we realize it or not, we are constantly surrounded by cultural diversity in many areas of our lives.

As an English Language teacher, although I have always worked in my native land, I have worked with international teachers from different countries. In more recent years of my career I have mostly worked at university language prep level where I taught English. I had both Turkish and international students who came to Türkiye from different parts of the world to study in an English medium environment. I have always been interested in different cultures; how people see things differently and how they react differently. At the same time, I have been amazed to see how people are very similar in many ways. I have come to the conclusion that in order to really understand each other, we need to be open minded and as it is stated in the last phrase of the International Baccalaureate (IB) mission statement, we must recognise that "other people, with their differences, can also be right" (International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2022). One of the attributes of the IB learner profile is being open minded which is expounded by the IB as, *"We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience"* (IBO, 2022).

Can intercultural awareness be achieved through international education in a Turkish national school with an international programme like the IB? What role does Turkish culture play in fostering intercultural awareness? Do Turkish students have any difficulties in understanding global issues due to cultural differences? These are the questions that captured my interest.

In order to cope with the challenges of this globalised world we need education. Ian Hill (2015) argues that the roots of international education lie in ancient civilizations, where thinkers like Confucius, Plato, and Islamic scholars emphasized moral development, critical thinking, and intercultural respect. These early philosophers laid the groundwork for international mindedness (IM), promoting values such as ethical behaviour, collective responsibility, and openness to diverse perspectives. The first time the term "international school" was used, dates back to early 20th century when the International School of Geneva (Ecolint) was founded to provide education for the children of international civil servants working at the League of Nations in 1924. The founders of Ecolint had the aim of engendering the values of international understanding and tolerance just like the League of Nations did with the hope of preventing another catastrophic world war. Unfortunately, this was not enough to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War (Hill, 2015). It became clear that more comprehensive and wide-reaching educational efforts were required to foster lasting peace. After the World War II, with the support of United Nations and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an international group of educators began working on a programme aimed at peace-building by nurturing future generations with intercultural awareness, global understanding, and a deep respect for diversity. This movement placed emphasis on international mindedness, seeing it not just as a pedagogical ideal, but as a vital tool for promoting dialogue, empathy, and peaceful coexistence in an increasingly interconnected world. According to Walker (2007), today international education is a synonym for International Baccalaureate (IB), which embodies these values and continues to serve as a leading framework for cultivating international mindedness and intercultural competence.

The curriculum service that was initiated in 1962 by the International Schools Association (ISA) and developed further in 1968 by the IB Office established in Geneva was the IB

Diploma Programme. As of 2025, there are more than 5,900 IB schools in more than 160 countries worldwide accepting the IB mission which states as, "*The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect"* (IBO, 2022). This vision has remained remarkably consistent, as global educational needs have evolved. From my perspective, the enduring relevance of this mission lies in its capacity to bridge local and global concerns through an educational model that nurtures not only academic excellence but also ethical responsibility and intercultural awareness.

Leach (1969, as cited in Hill, 2007) highlights that one of the founders of the IB Diploma Programme at the International School of Geneva emphasized critical enquiry as central to its philosophy, suggesting that students should be encouraged to challenge accepted norms. According to the International Baccalaureate Organization (2017), it was Alec Peterson, who prioritized critical thinking and his philosophy, encouraged students to engage deeply with ideas, analyse information critically, and develop the ability to learn independently rather than emphasizing the memorization of encyclopaedic content. This notion aligns closely with meaningful education: it must empower learners to question, reflect, and reimagine. In an age where the younger generation is exposed to vast amounts of information, often unfiltered and unverified, through digital platforms, it is essential that students develop the critical capacity to evaluate sources, challenge assumptions, and form reasoned conclusions rather than passively accepting what they encounter online.

Walker (2007) observes that the social environment has changed dramatically due to globalization. While international education previously focused on promoting mutual understanding between national groups, today's classrooms reflect a more complex cultural composition shaped by migration, displacement, and transnational identities. These shifts necessitate a re-examination of the aims of international education and its capacity to respond to cultural plurality in learning environments.

Within this context, the discourse surrounding intercultural engagement has become more sophisticated. The concept of merely tolerating others, often criticized as condescending nowadays, is no longer sufficient. As Hill (2015) and others have pointed out, genuine

understanding and meaningful engagement are essential. For this purpose, education is seen as the key to understand our culture as well as the culture of others and to build a bridge between the two. This perspective is increasingly supported by recent scholarship and reflects broader shifts in international education pedagogy. In this light, education becomes a crucial tool for helping learners explore both their own cultural identities and those of others.

Recent research further emphasizes the essential role of education in promoting intercultural awareness. Brown and Jones (2020) note that *"education is often seen as a key vehicle for promoting intercultural awareness and cultural understanding"* (p. 78), underlining its importance in shaping socially responsible global citizens. According to Smith (2018), intercultural awareness involves a mind-set that values diversity and encourages curiosity and empathy toward other cultures. This highlights the view that such attitudes are not innate, but must be developed intentionally through well-designed curricula and teaching practices. Jones et al. (2018) support this, arguing that *"understanding and appreciating different cultures can lead to improved communication and collaboration, and can help to build bridges and foster greater harmony between individuals and communities"* (p. 45). Together, these findings stress the urgent need for international education programmes like the IB to cultivate not only academic skills but also ethical awareness and social responsibility, preparing students to navigate and contribute to an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

Culture is a complex and multifaceted concept often defined as the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that shape how individuals interpret and engage with the world around them (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). In educational contexts, culture influences not only how students learn but also how they perceive themselves and others. It shapes communication styles, attitudes toward authority, learning strategies, and understandings of success or failure (Banks, 2006). Hofstede's (2001) theory of cultural dimensions illustrates how deeply embedded cultural norms can impact classroom dynamics, teacher–student relationships, and approaches to knowledge. Furthermore, both personal cultural background and school culture interact to form a student's cultural lens. This lens mediates their openness to other cultures, their sense of belonging, and their development of intercultural competencies.

Culture plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals' thought patterns, behaviours, and social interactions. In education, cultural values are reflected not only in curriculum and pedagogy but also in classroom relationships and institutional structures. Hofstede et al.'s (2010) cultural dimensions' framework, comprising power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint, offers valuable insight into how these cultural traits manifest in education systems. In Türkiye, the scores attained in measurement of these dimensions tend to fall in moderate ranges rather than extremes, reflecting a flexible cultural profile. The hybridity, shaped by the country's historical positioning between Eastern and Western influences, results in an education system that blends hierarchical traditions with learner-centred practices. Rather than producing sharp tensions with the requirements of international education models like the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP), this cultural positioning allows for a degree of flexibility. Turkish IB schools, implementing international curricula, may experience some adjustment issues, but the moderate cultural indicators suggest that alignment with values such as critical thinking, intercultural engagement, and student agency is both possible and increasingly visible. Recognizing this adaptable nature is essential to contextualizing the development of international mindedness and intercultural awareness within Türkiye's educational landscape.

Many scholars have studied international education, intercultural awareness, international mindedness (IM), global citizenship (GC) and global citizenship education (GCE) (Elerian & Solomou 2021; Fast 2022; Hacking et al. 2018; Held & McGrew 2000; Hill 2012; Jackson 2005; Metli 2021; Suarez-Orozco 2005). In both academic literature and everyday discourse, terms such as intercultural awareness, international mindedness, and multicultural understanding are often used interchangeably, reflecting the shared goal of navigating and appreciating cultural diversity. While these concepts emphasize the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural differences, a critical question remains: to what extent do students' cultural background and the school culture in which they are embedded shape their development of intercultural awareness?

Building upon these discussions, studies in the Turkish context (Cinli, 2023; Keser, 2020; Metli, 2018; Öz, 2025) have highlighted how local cultural values, educational traditions, and exam-focused practices affect the implementation of IB values. Although these

studies offer valuable insights into students' experiences and curriculum analysis, relatively few studies focus on the perspectives of IB teachers themselves, who play a crucial role in mediating intercultural understanding in the classroom.

Moreover, much of the existing research in Türkiye has explored intercultural awareness at the student level, leaving teachers' lived experiences, pedagogical strategies, and cultural negotiations underexplored. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how Turkish IBDP teachers perceive, interpret, and implement intercultural awareness, and how their own cultural backgrounds influence these practices within the IB framework.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

This study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base by exploring teachers' perceptions of their students' competency level of international mindedness and asking whether they see themselves as global citizens or not. Participants' views about the relation of their own culture and their level of intercultural awareness were analysed and interpreted. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact of Turkish culture on intercultural awareness of IBDP teachers in Türkiye.

Towards this aim, answers to the questions below will be sought:

1. What is the impact of Turkish culture on intercultural awareness of IBDP teachers?
2. How do teachers promote students' intercultural awareness?
3. What challenges do Turkish students encounter in developing intercultural awareness, as perceived by their teachers?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its ability to contribute to the understanding of the impact of cultural differences on intercultural awareness and the effectiveness of international education programs in promoting cultural understanding and empathy. The results of this study will have implications for educators and policy makers in Türkiye and other culturally diverse countries, as it will provide insight into how to effectively

promote intercultural awareness among students. Additionally, the study will contribute to the field of international education by providing empirical data on the effectiveness of the IB program in promoting intercultural awareness. This information can be used by schools and educators around the world to improve their approach to international education and to better support students in developing an understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Furthermore, as the world is becoming more connected through technology and increased mobility, the ability to understand and appreciate other cultures is becoming more important than ever. This study will provide valuable insight into how education can support the development of intercultural awareness, which is critical for building a more peaceful and harmonious world. Overall, this study will make a valuable contribution to the field of international education and will provide practical implications for educators and policy makers in Türkiye and other culturally diverse countries, helping them to better support students in developing an understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

1.4 Assumptions

This qualitative research is based on the following assumptions:

1. It is assumed that the participating teachers responded sincerely and honestly during the semi-structured interview process, reflecting their genuine thoughts and experiences.
2. IBDP teachers are presumed to possess the professional experience and insight necessary to assess and comment on their students' levels of international mindedness.
3. Participants are considered capable of critically reflecting on the influence of both their own cultural backgrounds and their school environments about their intercultural awareness.
4. Turkish culture is assumed to play a significant role in shaping teachers' pedagogical practices and their approaches to intercultural interaction.
5. The experiences of IBDP teachers are assumed to provide sufficient contextual depth to explore the relationship between culture and intercultural awareness in the Turkish context.

1.5 Limitations

The limitations of this study are outlined as follows:

1. The research is limited to a selected group of IBDP teachers working in Istanbul; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other regions of Türkiye or to international contexts.
2. Data were collected solely through semi-structured interviews; additional methods such as classroom observation, document analysis, or student feedback were not included.
3. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the number of participants is limited, which may affect the representativeness of the findings.
4. Given the complex and multi-layered nature of culture, it was not possible to fully capture or analyse all aspects of the participants' cultural backgrounds.
5. As the research was limited to a particular time frame, it does not explore how intercultural awareness and international mindedness evolve over time for both IBDP students and teachers.

1.6 Definitions

As it is true for most terminology related to education and culture, there is a vast variety of definitions. In order to ensure conceptual clarity and consistency throughout this study, key terms and their definitions frequently used in the context of this research study on international education and intercultural research are given below. These definitions are based on relevant academic literature and reflect the conceptual framework within which this research has been conducted.

1. International Mindedness (IM) : International mindedness refers to the ability to see oneself in relation to the wider world and to act with a sense of global responsibility, openness, and intercultural understanding (Hill, 2007).

2. Intercultural Awareness: Intercultural awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's own cultural identity while being open to, and respectful of, other cultural perspectives (Byram, 2020).

3. Intercultural Competence: Intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds through openness, adaptability, and the capacity to learn from cultural differences (Deardorff, 2006).

4. Culture: Culture is a set of shared values, norms, beliefs, and practices that influence how individuals perceive the world and interact with others (Spencer-Oatey, 2012).

5. School Culture: School culture consists of the shared beliefs, values, and norms that shape relationships, behaviours, and learning within a school (Stoll, 1999).

6. Global Citizenship: Global citizenship entails recognizing one's responsibility as a member of a global society and acting with respect for human rights, sustainability, and social justice (Walker, 2007).

7. International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP): The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is a two-year, academically rigorous curriculum for students aged 16–19, recognized globally for its emphasis on holistic education, critical thinking, research skills, and international mindedness. It includes core components like Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity-Activity-Service (CAS), and the Extended Essay (EE), which together aim to develop globally aware, reflective learners (IBO, 2022).

8. International Education: International education is an approach that prepares students to engage with global issues, understand multiple cultural perspectives, and develop competencies needed to live and work in a globally interconnected world (Hayden & Thompson, 2013).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As outlined in the previous chapter, this study investigates the impact of Turkish culture on intercultural awareness of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) teachers. To provide a strong conceptual foundation, this chapter critically examines the existing literature on international education, international mindedness, and culture in relation to teaching and learning. The review begins by exploring the philosophical roots and global objectives of international education and the International Baccalaureate. It then focuses on the key constructs of international mindedness and intercultural awareness, highlighting their definitions and theoretical framework. Following this, the chapter addresses how culture and cultural dimensions affect educational interactions and pedagogical beliefs. The final section reviews empirical studies on the implementation of international mindedness and intercultural education in IB and international school settings.

2.1 International Education and the IB Philosophy

International education refers to a pedagogical philosophy that aims to prepare learners to operate in a complex, interconnected world by fostering global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and ethical responsibility. It emphasizes the development of skills, attitudes, and values that enable individuals to engage meaningfully across cultural and national boundaries (Byram, 2008; Marshall, 2019). Byram also (2008) argues that international education should go beyond teaching intercultural skills; it should also encourage students to think critically about global inequalities and the power structures that shape international relations.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as globalization continues to reshape economies, societies, and educational systems, international education has become increasingly significant in cultivating global competencies in learners (2018). These competencies include not only knowledge of global issues but also the ability to communicate across cultures, critically evaluate perspectives, and act responsibly as global citizens. Walker (2007) sees global citizenship

within the IB framework as nurturing the values and skills needed to engage ethically and actively in a globalized world. It's not only about acquiring knowledge, but also about building ethical awareness and a commitment to social responsibility.

The International Baccalaureate (IB), founded in Geneva in 1968, has become one of the most prominent global frameworks for international education. As of 2024, the IB operates in over 5,900 schools across 160 countries, offering four educational programmes: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), Diploma Programme (DP), and Career-related Programme (CP). Figure 1 shows the number of the IB programmes taught in each region (IBO, IB Facts and Figures, 2025). Moreover, from 2020 to 2024, the number of IB programmes offered around the world increased by 34.2%

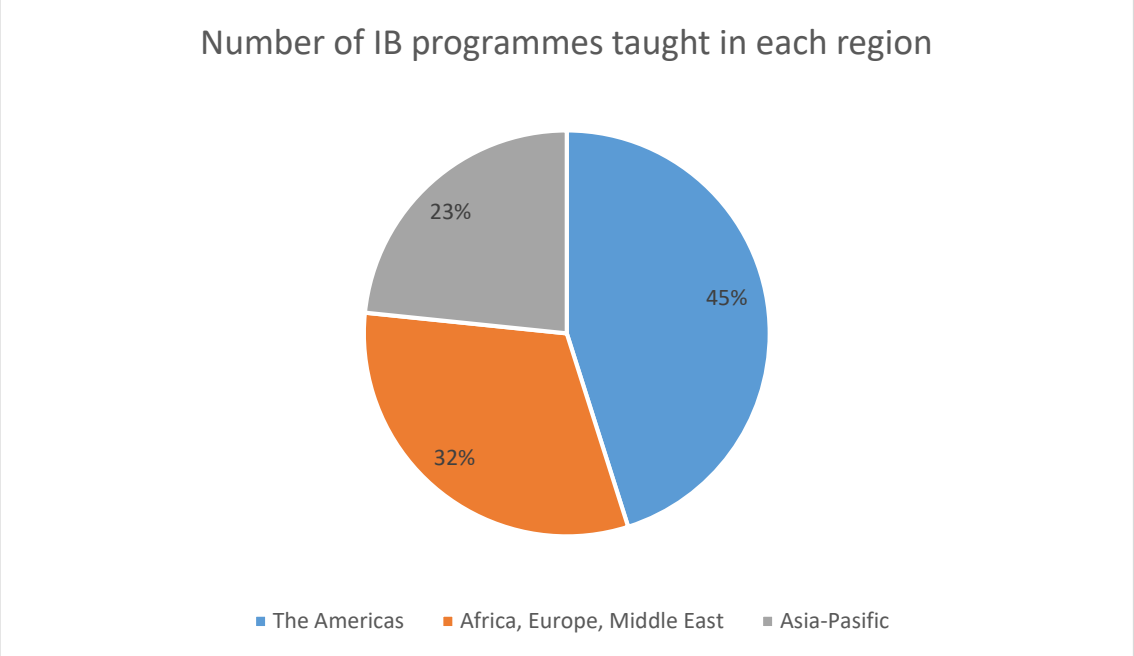


Figure 1 The Number of IB Programmes Taught in Each Region (IBO, 2025)

The IB's distinctive feature lies in its commitment to developing internationally minded learners through a rigorous, inquiry-based curriculum that emphasizes intercultural understanding, multilingualism, and personal reflection. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, the IB framework promotes a holistic model of education that integrates emotional, ethical, and cognitive development. Core components of the IB Diploma Programme such as the Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge (TOK), and

Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) are designed to nurture critical thinking, global awareness, and civic responsibility. These components reflect the organization's broader mission to cultivate students who can engage thoughtfully and ethically with global issues, and who are equipped to contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable world.

According to Hill (2007), the IB represents one of the most coherent and sustained attempts to embed international education into formal schooling, balancing academic rigor with ethical and intercultural objectives. Hayden and Thompson (2013) emphasize that international schools and particularly those following IB curricula aim to foster a sense of identity that transcends national borders, encouraging students to adopt a more inclusive and globally minded worldview. Furthermore, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018) highlights the need for education systems worldwide to promote "global competence," defined as the capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives, and interact respectfully with others.

Marshall (2019) adds that international education is not a uniform or one-size-fits-all model; rather, it is influenced by local contexts, policies, and educational philosophies and called "context-sensitive". This flexibility allows IB schools to adapt international curriculum principles and frameworks, such as those of the IB, to national systems, but it also presents challenges in ensuring consistent implementation of its values such as critical thinking or learner-centred approaches, particularly in systems where teacher authority or rote learning is dominant.

Byram (2008) further argues that language learning and global citizenship are essential components of international education, advocating for curricula that empower students to develop both communicative competence and critical cultural awareness. This conceptual framework aligns closely with the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate (IB). A clear example of this alignment and putting such components into practice is the IB's decision to include an obligatory second language (if possible more by choice) and the core components of the IBDP (Diploma Programme) which are Theory of Knowledge (TOK), the Extended Essay, and Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS).

On the whole, these perspectives indicate that the concept of international education offers not only a set of guiding philosophical principles, such as intercultural understanding, global engagement, and ethical responsibility, but also practical curricular strategies to develop these competencies in students. Frameworks like the International Baccalaureate embody these ideals by integrating inquiry-based learning, multilingualism, and global citizenship education into their programmes. However, the successful realization of these aims depends not simply on policy or curriculum design, but on the interpretive role of teachers; that is, how educators understand, internalize, and apply these values in their daily classroom practices.

Teachers operate within complex institutional and cultural environments that shape their pedagogical choices. As Marshall (2019) and Hill (2007) highlight, factors such as national education policies, societal expectations, school culture, and cultural norms significantly influence how global ideals are translated into local practice. In contexts where traditional or exam-oriented education systems dominate, the critical and reflective elements of international education may be de-emphasized or misunderstood. Moreover, teachers' own cultural identities and professional experiences also influence the extent to which they can effectively embody and facilitate international-mindedness in their students. Therefore, understanding how international education functions in practice, particularly in culturally distinctive contexts like Türkiye, requires close attention to the agency of teachers as both interpreters and implementers of international frameworks.

2.2 International Mindedness and Intercultural Awareness

The concept of international mindedness has gained increasing attention in recent years as globalization has intensified intercultural contact and cultural diversity in both classrooms and societies. Within this evolving context, international mindedness refers to an orientation that values diversity, encourages curiosity and empathy toward other cultures, and promotes respect for different perspectives (Deardorff, 2009; Van der Lans & Beelen, 2018). It is not just about learning intercultural skills; it also shows a wider attitude of being a global citizen and taking part in intercultural experiences. Van der Lans and Beelen (2018) further conceptualize international mindedness as the capacity to understand and appreciate diverse worldviews and to engage in critical reflection on

global issues. Their work situates international mindedness within the context of global citizenship education, where critical thinking, empathy, and perspective-taking are foundational components. Jones et al. (2018) add that fostering international mindedness can enhance communication and collaboration across cultural boundaries, ultimately contributing to greater social harmony and mutual understanding. Within the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework, these ideals are embedded through a curriculum that emphasizes inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding (Leach, 1969). According to Hill (2007), international mindedness lies at the heart of the IB's mission, encouraging students to become globally aware individuals who value cultural diversity and strive for international understanding and peace. It fosters qualities like empathy, open-mindedness, and a recognition of the world's interdependent nature. The IB's pedagogical philosophy thus positions international mindedness not as an isolated educational goal but as a guiding attitude permeating the learning environment.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) plays a central role in promoting international mindedness. Its mission to develop "inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (IBO, 2022) highlights the programme as a strong example of international education guided by core human values. As Hill (2007) and Walker (2007) argue, international mindedness is not an abstract ideal but a set of intentional pedagogical practices embedded in the curriculum, such as the Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), and the learner profile attributes.

Early research on international mindedness often focused on the cognitive and affective aspects of intercultural competence such as empathy, communication, and adaptability (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 1997). Deardorff (2006) frames this as a core dimension of intercultural competence, requiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes that promote effective and appropriate interaction across cultures. It is not merely exposure but involves critical reflection and a willingness to learn from difference. However, recent literature increasingly emphasizes international mindedness as a mindset or worldview that develops over time through inquiry, reflection, and sustained intercultural encounters. For example, Jones et al. (2018) highlight that understanding and appreciating cultural

differences can enhance collaboration, reduce prejudice, and promote harmonious interactions between individuals and communities. Similarly, Van der Lans and Beelen (2018) found that international mindedness correlates with students' ability to engage in critical thinking and adopt multiple perspectives on global issues.

Studies in the Turkish context present varying perspectives. Cinli (2023) found that Turkish IB students demonstrate positive engagement with the IB learner profile attributes and emphasized that the national context does not pose a significant barrier to the acquisition of these characteristics. This suggests that local cultural values and educational traditions may coexist with the IB's international-mindedness goals, rather than contradict them.

In contrast, Keser (2020) reported that while Turkish IB teachers theoretically align with international mindedness, their classroom practices may still reflect local cultural norms and institutional expectations. These findings indicate that intercultural awareness in Turkish IB schools is developed through a dynamic interaction between global educational aims and local cultural practices.

The IB's emphasis on inquiry-based learning, multilingualism, and critical reflection is aligned with this emerging view of international mindedness. Leach (1969, as cited in Hill, 2007) emphasized that students should be encouraged to question assumptions and explore cultural and political realities critically. This approach to teaching supports the development of international mindedness and shows that international mindedness is something that grows and develops over time through understanding and active involvement.

2.3 Culture and Cultural Dimensions in Education

Culture, as discussed in the introduction, is a complex and dynamic system of shared values, beliefs, and practices that influences how individuals think, behave, and interact with others (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Spencer-Oatey (2012) explains that culture is a constantly evolving system that influences how people communicate, learn, and behave. In educational settings, it forms the basis for how teaching is approached and how learning is experienced. In educational contexts, culture shapes teaching and learning

processes, classroom relationships, and institutional practices (Banks, 2015). It affects how authority is perceived, how learning is structured, and how success is defined.

To analyse these cultural influences systematically, Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory offers a widely accepted framework. Although initially developed for organizational contexts, this framework has been applied to educational settings to understand variations in classroom dynamics, teacher-student interactions, pedagogical styles and teaching practices.

2.3.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory in Educational Contexts

Hofstede identifies six cultural dimensions that influence how individuals and groups approach authority, collaboration, uncertainty, and achievement. These dimensions are not isolated but interact with one another, shaping the educational environment in complex ways. The following sections explain each dimension and its relevance to educational practices, particularly in Türkiye.

2.3.1.1 Power Distance

Power distance is a cultural dimension describing the extent to which power differences and hierarchical structures are accepted as natural and legitimate within a society (Hofstede, 2001). In educational settings, power distance shapes how authority is distributed between teachers and students, how discipline is maintained, and how knowledge is transmitted.

In high power distance cultures, classrooms are traditionally teacher-centred. Teachers are viewed as the main authority figures and primary sources of knowledge. Students are often expected to listen attentively, follow instructions, and avoid questioning or challenging the teacher's authority (Hofstede Insights, 2023). In such cultures, learning is perceived as the acquisition of knowledge from the teacher rather than as a process of collaborative exploration.

In contrast, low power distance cultures, such as Finland or the Netherlands, promote egalitarian teacher-student relationships, where students are encouraged to voice their opinions, ask critical questions, and co-construct knowledge alongside their teachers

(Hofstede, 2001). These classrooms tend to be more interactive and student-centred, emphasizing dialogue and inquiry over passive reception.

Türkiye is classified as a moderately high power distance society (Hofstede Insights, 2023). In traditional Turkish classrooms, this cultural trait is evident in the respectful and hierarchical relationships between teachers and students. Teachers are expected to maintain classroom order, provide clear guidance, and act as moral as well as academic leaders. Students often hesitate to challenge the teacher's explanations, and learning environments tend to be structured and directive (Bıçakçı, 2023).

However, private and international schools in Türkiye, including those offering the International Baccalaureate (IB), demonstrate some departure from this traditional structure. In Turkish IB classrooms, pedagogical approaches encourage student agency, collaborative learning, and open-ended inquiry (IBO, 2022). As a result, Turkish IB teachers often negotiate between the hierarchical expectations of Turkish educational culture and the egalitarian ideals of the IB philosophy.

This negotiation places Turkish IB teachers in a complex professional position. On the one hand, they are cultural insiders who are aware of students' and parents' expectations regarding discipline and respect for authority. On the other hand, they are expected to implement IB pedagogical practices that promote critical thinking, democratic classroom dialogue, and student-centred learning (Keser, 2020).

Empirical studies (Gönen, 2024; Metli, 2018) highlight that Turkish IB teachers often exercise pedagogical agency, adjusting their classroom practices to balance these competing cultural expectations. For example, teachers may structure inquiry-based learning in a way that provides clear scaffolding, helping students gradually take ownership of their learning while maintaining the respectful tone expected in Turkish classrooms.

2.3.1.2 Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism versus collectivism is one of Hofstede's (2001) six cultural dimensions and refers to the extent to which a society prioritizes either individual autonomy or group harmony. In individualistic societies, such as the United States or the United Kingdom,

education often emphasizes personal achievement, independent learning, and critical self-expression. Students are typically encouraged to formulate their own ideas and take responsibility for their learning outcomes (Hofstede Insights, 2023).

Conversely, collectivist cultures, including Türkiye, place a higher value on group loyalty, cooperation, and social responsibility (Bıçakçı, 2023). Within Turkish classrooms, these collectivist tendencies are reflected in various ways. Students often prefer group-oriented learning activities, feel a sense of shared responsibility for classroom harmony, and may perceive academic success not solely as a personal accomplishment but as a contribution to their family or school community. Respect for authority and collaborative learning are frequently prioritized over individual initiative.

In the context of International Baccalaureate (IB) education, the curriculum encourages a balance between independent inquiry and collaborative learning. The IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) fosters student autonomy through components like the Extended Essay (EE) and Theory of Knowledge (TOK), while also promoting collaborative engagement through Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) projects and class discussions (IBO, 2022).

In Turkish IB classrooms, this balance manifests as a pedagogical negotiation. On one hand, students are accustomed to working together, valuing harmony and cooperation in line with collectivist traditions. On the other hand, IB pedagogical practices require students to engage in independent research, formulate personal viewpoints, and challenge assumptions — practices that may initially feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable to learners from a collectivist background.

Teachers play a critical role in guiding this process. They scaffold students' independent learning processes while respecting their cultural predispositions towards group learning. Rather than viewing collectivism as a barrier, Turkish IB teachers can leverage this cultural orientation to promote community-based learning projects that align with the IB's vision of global citizenship.

The collectivist orientation of Turkish culture, when aligned with the IB philosophy, presents both opportunities and areas for careful pedagogical adaptation. While

collectivism supports the IB's focus on social responsibility and ethical action, fostering independent inquiry requires intentional instructional strategies that gently expand students' comfort zones.

2.3.1.3 Masculinity vs. Femininity

One of Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, masculinity versus femininity, analyses how societies balance values oriented towards achievement, competition, and material success (masculinity) with values emphasizing care, empathy, and quality of life (femininity) (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Masculine societies prioritize individual achievement and social status, whereas feminine societies emphasize interpersonal harmony, social balance, and mutual support.

Türkiye exhibits a moderately masculine cultural profile. This reflects a societal context where both individual success and social-emotional well-being are valued (Bıçakçı, 2023). In educational environments, this balance manifests as an expectation that students not only excel academically but also develop their social and emotional competencies. Within the Turkish educational culture, academic success is often regarded not merely as a personal accomplishment but as a source of family and societal prestige (Gönen, 2024). Simultaneously, teachers and school leaders strive to create supportive, inclusive, and empathetic learning environments that address students' emotional needs.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) pedagogy aligns more closely with feminine values. The IB programme emphasizes empathy, collaboration, ethical responsibility, and social contribution (IBO, 2022). Students are not only expected to achieve academically but also to engage in community service, develop a sense of global citizenship, and demonstrate compassion toward others. Components such as Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) provide opportunities for students to develop social responsibility and contribute to society.

In Turkish IB classrooms, a careful pedagogical balance must be struck between these two cultural orientations. On one hand, students may prioritize academic achievement and individual competition due to the influence of traditional Turkish educational culture. Exams, grades, and individual performance indicators remain highly valued by both

students and parents (Metli, 2018). On the other hand, IB educators actively work to balance this achievement-focused mind-set with empathy-building activities, collaborative projects, and social responsibility initiatives. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students to transform their individual success into contributions that benefit the broader community.

Moreover, IB pedagogy seeks to cultivate students' development not only in academic terms but also in terms of ethical and humanistic values. This feminine-oriented approach contributes to the formation of inclusive, supportive, and compassionate classroom environments. For instance, in group projects, not only are outcomes evaluated, but also the process of cooperation and mutual support among students, reflecting the IB's emphasis on feminine values.

In summary, Türkiye's moderately masculine cultural structure and the feminine orientation of IB pedagogy create an area of mutual interaction and adaptation. Turkish IB educators blend these two orientations, supporting students' academic achievement while nurturing values such as social responsibility, empathy, and collaboration. This process transforms Turkish IB classrooms into hybrid learning environments, where local cultural expectations and international pedagogical ideals dynamically coexist.

2.3.1.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance dimension refers to how societies deal with ambiguity, risk, and unknown situations (Hofstede, 2001). In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, people prefer structured systems, clear rules, and predictable outcomes (Hofstede Insights, 2023).

Türkiye is considered a high uncertainty avoidance culture. In education, this tendency is reflected in structured curricula, exam-oriented learning, and a preference for clear guidelines. Students and parents often expect certainty in learning processes and prefer straightforward, correct answers. Open-ended questions or inquiry-based learning activities may initially create discomfort, as they require students to cope with ambiguity (Bıçakçı, 2023).

The IB pedagogy, on the other hand, encourages inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, and engagement with open-ended problems (IBO, 2022). These approaches challenge students to deal with uncertainty and develop intellectual resilience. Turkish IB teachers play a crucial role in supporting students as they gradually adapt to these new learning processes. By providing scaffolding and structured inquiry experiences, teachers help students feel more secure while still encouraging them to engage with uncertainty (Gönen, 2024; Metli, 2018).

In Turkish IB classrooms, the transition from structured to inquiry-based learning is often gradual. Teachers might begin with guided inquiry, offering step-by-step support, before moving towards more independent and open-ended projects. This scaffolding approach allows students to gain confidence and develop strategies to manage ambiguous situations effectively.

Overall, this cultural dimension presents a pedagogical challenge but also an opportunity for growth. By carefully structuring inquiry-based tasks, Turkish IB educators help students build essential life skills such as adaptability, problem-solving, and independent thinking.

2.3.1.5 Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation

This cultural dimension reflects a society's focus on either future planning and perseverance (long-term orientation) or tradition and short-term results (short-term orientation) (Hofstede, 2001).

Türkiye demonstrates a tendency toward short-term orientation (Hofstede Insights, 2023). In education, this often manifests in a strong emphasis on exam success, immediate academic achievements, and respect for traditional teaching methods. Students and parents typically prioritize short-term outcomes, such as grades and test scores, over long-term learning goals (Bıçakçı, 2023).

In contrast, the IB programme promotes lifelong learning, reflective practices, and sustained intellectual growth. It encourages students to engage in long-term projects such as the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge (TOK), which require planning, persistence, and critical reflection (IBO, 2022).

In Turkish IB classrooms, teachers work to broaden students' perspectives from a short-term focus on academic performance to a longer-term engagement with learning. This involves helping students see the value of learning for personal growth and future success, beyond immediate exam results. Reflective journals, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary studies are some of the pedagogical tools used to foster this long-term orientation.

Ultimately, this dimension highlights a cultural negotiation between Türkiye's exam-focused educational traditions and the IB's forward-looking pedagogical philosophy. Teachers play a key role in guiding students to balance these perspectives in their learning journeys.

2.3.1.6 Indulgence vs. Restraint

The indulgence versus restraint dimension explores how societies regulate the gratification of desires and the pursuit of enjoyment (Hofstede, 2001). Indulgent cultures encourage leisure and free expression, while restrained cultures emphasize social norms, control of desires, and a sense of responsibility (Hofstede Insights, 2023).

Türkiye is considered moderately restrained. In educational settings, this restraint is reflected in an emphasis on discipline, responsibility, and self-regulation. Leisure activities and playful learning approaches may sometimes be viewed as less serious compared to traditional academic tasks (Bıçakçı, 2023).

The IB pedagogy, however, encourages students to engage creatively, express themselves freely, and participate in artistic and extracurricular activities (IBO, 2022). Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) projects exemplify this approach, promoting balance between academic rigor and personal enjoyment.

In Turkish IB classrooms, teachers strive to balance the encouragement of creativity with maintaining a sense of responsibility and discipline. While supporting students' creative expressions, they also guide them in managing their impulses and fulfilling their responsibilities. This balance fosters the development of well-rounded individuals who are both imaginative and responsible. Thus, this dimension requires Turkish IB teachers

to negotiate between cultural expectations of restraint and the IB's emphasis on holistic personal development.

In summary, Türkiye's cultural profile, characterized by moderately high power distance, collectivism, and high uncertainty avoidance, creates both opportunities and challenges for the implementation of IB pedagogy. Turkish IB teachers work within a cultural framework that respects authority and values group harmony but must also foster inquiry, intercultural understanding, and student agency promoted by the IB. Rather than experiencing sharp conflicts, Turkish IB classrooms represent hybrid spaces where international and local values are negotiated and balanced

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2.4 Teacher's Role in Intercultural Education

Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also key agents of intercultural learning. They play a vital role in creating environments where students learn to respect cultural diversity, challenge stereotypes, and engage with different worldviews (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009). In international education settings such as the IB Diploma Programme, teachers are expected to model intercultural awareness and facilitate reflective discussions that extend beyond national boundaries (IBO, 2022).

2.4.1 Intercultural Competence as a Professional Standard

Intercultural competence refers to the awareness, attitudes, and pedagogical strategies that enable teachers to recognize cultural influences on learning and create respectful, inclusive classroom environments (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009).

Even in classrooms where students share a common national culture, such as Turkish IB schools, teachers play a crucial role in fostering openness to other cultures, encouraging critical reflection on cultural assumptions, and preparing students to engage with global perspectives promoted by the IB philosophy.

In such contexts, intercultural competence is less about managing cultural differences among students and more about developing students' understanding of cultures beyond their immediate environment. Teachers model intercultural attitudes through curriculum choices, classroom discussions, and their own openness to diverse worldviews.

As Stoll (1999) explains, school culture—the shared beliefs, norms, and practices within a school, or "the way we do things around here"—plays a central role in how schools interpret challenges and implement change. Rooted in a school's history, leadership, and community values, school culture can significantly support or obstruct efforts to embed international mindedness and intercultural learning in meaningful ways.

2.4.2 Professional Development for Intercultural Teaching

International organizations like the IB provide structured training programs aimed at developing teachers' intercultural competence (IBO, 2022). However, several studies suggest that professional development in intercultural teaching is often fragmented or generalized, lacking the depth needed to address complex cultural realities of local contexts (Tai, 2025).

In Türkiye, Keser (2020) notes that IB teachers align with intercultural values but require more localized professional development to effectively apply these concepts in culturally specific classroom settings.

Recent literature also stresses the importance of integrating intercultural competence into pre-service teacher education. For example, Sercu (2006) identifies both the gaps in current teaching profiles and the necessary competencies for developing intercultural competence among foreign language teachers, emphasizing the importance of aligning theoretical understanding with practical training experiences.

2.4.3 Teachers in the Turkish Context

In Türkiye, studies such as those by Bıçakçı (2024) and Keser (2020) reveal that while teachers recognize the value of intercultural education, their practices are shaped by broader cultural norms, including hierarchical relationships and exam-focused instruction. This means that IB teachers in Turkish schools often operate in a space where they must balance global IB expectations with local educational traditions.

Furthermore, Gönen (2024) illustrates how Theory of Knowledge (TOK) teachers in Turkish IB schools value intercultural dialogue but face contextual barriers when implementing open-ended, discussion-based pedagogies. This suggests that even when teachers hold positive intercultural attitudes, translating these into daily teaching practices remains a nuanced process shaped by the cultural and institutional environment.

In summary, teachers are essential in achieving the goals of intercultural education. Their own intercultural awareness, pedagogical strategies, and professional learning opportunities determine how successfully global values such as international mindedness and intercultural understanding are integrated into classrooms. In Türkiye, IB teachers navigate between global educational values and local cultural expectations. Supporting them through context-sensitive professional development and reflective practice is essential for meaningful intercultural learning.

2.5 Empirical Studies on International Mindedness and Intercultural Awareness in IB Schools

Empirical research on intercultural awareness and international mindedness (IM) in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools reveals a complex landscape shaped by teacher agency, school culture, and broader societal influences. While the IB philosophy promotes intercultural awareness as a core educational goal, studies across various countries demonstrate that its implementation varies according to local contexts and teacher practices.

2.5.1 International Studies

Whitmarsh (2023) conducted a longitudinal, mixed-methods case study at an elite IB Continuum school in China to examine how international mindedness (IM) develops in students over time. The study drew upon Bourdieu's (1977) theory of *habitus* and *field*, alongside Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, to frame IM as an evolving construct shaped by nested cultural, institutional, and interpersonal influences. Data collection involved surveys, classroom observations, and focus group interviews with students and teachers across Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP) levels.

The findings revealed that IM was most effectively cultivated in environments where reflective pedagogy, intercultural dialogue, and teacher modelling of open-mindedness were consistently present. While the PYP and MYP fostered IM through inquiry-based learning and dialogic teaching, the DP showed more limited outcomes due to intensified academic pressures and an exam-centric focus. The study also emphasized the role of school culture and teacher autonomy in sustaining meaningful engagement with global and intercultural issues. Whitmarsh concluded that IM is not a static trait but a dynamic disposition that requires sustained, contextually responsive educational practices.

Similarly, Jackson (2005) investigated the role of the host culture in promoting intercultural understanding within a Dutch international secondary school offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. The study employed a qualitative case study design, using classroom observations and in-depth interviews with teachers and administrators. Jackson aimed to understand whether and how the cultural context of the host country was used as an educational resource in fostering international mindedness (IM) among students. The findings showed significant variation in how teachers perceived and utilized the host culture. While some educators actively integrated elements of Dutch history, language, and social norms into their teaching to contextualize global issues and promote intercultural dialogue, others treated the host culture as irrelevant, focusing instead on a generalized model of "global culture." This led to inconsistencies in students' opportunities to engage meaningfully with their immediate cultural environment. The study argued that without an intentional and critical approach to the

host culture, IM risks being disconnected from the lived realities of students. Jackson concluded that local cultural context should not be viewed as separate from international education but as a dynamic and valuable component of intercultural learning.

Ferguson (2024) investigated how international mindedness (IM) and global citizenship education (GCE) are interpreted and enacted by students and teachers in three IB schools—two in Western Europe and one in East Asia. Using a multi-sited ethnographic approach, the study combined classroom observations, interviews, and policy document analysis to explore how interculturalism was positioned within formal curricula and everyday school practices. Ferguson found a wide spectrum of IM interpretations across the schools. In some contexts, IM was expressed through a celebratory multiculturalism—acknowledging cultural diversity without critically engaging with global inequality or power dynamics. In other schools, especially the East Asian site, educators embedded IM within critical pedagogies, prompting students to examine issues such as colonial histories, global migration, and environmental justice. However, even in these settings, structural constraints such as standardized assessments and curriculum time limitations impeded sustained engagement with global issues. The study emphasized that IM is not a fixed construct but evolves within the socio-political and cultural contexts of schools, and its realization depends heavily on leadership philosophy, teacher training, and institutional priorities.

A similar trend was noted by Elerian and Solomou (2022) in their case study. Elerian and Solomou (2022) conducted a qualitative case study exploring how international mindedness (IM) and global citizenship are cultivated in six international schools in Cyprus. The research involved semi-structured interviews with school leaders and teachers from three international schools, complemented by document analysis of school mission statements, curricula, and policy materials. In their quantitative study, the authors wanted to see to what extent various global topics such as politics, economics, cultural differences, religious, environmental, and global issues were discussed in lessons in the secondary school. The findings indicated that although all schools formally endorsed IM through their values and curricular alignment with the IB framework, actual implementation was inconsistent. Teachers often relied on informal strategies such as classroom discussions, extracurricular activities, and school events like Erasmus, Model

United Nations (MUN), and European Youth Parliament (EYP) to address IM, rather than systematically embedding it within lesson plans or assessments. Furthermore, the study highlighted a lack of clarity and training among educators regarding how to translate IM from philosophy into classroom pedagogy. Leadership vision, teacher autonomy, and school-wide coherence emerged as key factors influencing the depth of IM practices. The authors concluded that developing IM requires intentional coordination across curriculum, school culture, and teacher professional development, rather than relying on individual enthusiasm or sporadic events.

Collazo (2023) conducted a qualitative inquiry into how IB Diploma Programme (DP) Visual Arts teachers interpret and apply the concept of international mindedness (IM) within their subject teaching. The study involved 27 IB Visual Arts educators across multiple regions, who participated in a combination of open-ended surveys and in-depth follow-up interviews. The research focused on how these teachers selected content, designed assessments, and reflected on their own positionalities in delivering globally oriented art education. Findings revealed that while teachers broadly supported IM in theory, their practices diverged significantly in depth and intent. Some integrated global themes and intercultural issues into visual analysis and studio work, encouraging critical engagement with power, representation, and cultural narratives. Others, however, treated IM more as aesthetic diversity, showcasing artistic styles from different cultures without engaging with their socio-political context. Many participants expressed concern about balancing IM with the IB's grading criteria, which they felt prioritized technical skill over cultural discourse. Collazo's study highlights both the promise and challenge of subject-specific IM implementation, particularly in areas where personal teacher worldview and curricular interpretations heavily shape outcomes.

Lai, Shum, and Zhang (2014) conducted a case study in Hong Kong to explore how international mindedness (IM) is conceptualized and implemented in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools operating within a high-stakes, exam-driven educational system. The study involved interviews with teachers and administrators from several IB World Schools, along with analysis of curricular documents. The researchers aimed to understand how the ideals of IM—such as intercultural understanding, global engagement, and openness—were reconciled with local cultural expectations,

particularly the strong emphasis on academic achievement and social hierarchy influenced by Confucian values. The data suggested that while school leaders strongly supported the IB's mission, and teachers acknowledged the value of IM, many struggled to embed it meaningfully in daily practice. Teaching practices were often shaped by systemic pressures such as parental expectations, standardized assessment demands, and limited time for open-ended inquiry. Nonetheless, some teachers found ways to integrate IM through discussion of global themes in subjects like language arts and humanities. The study concluded that IM implementation in East Asian contexts often involves a delicate balancing act between global ideals and deeply ingrained local educational norms, and that this tension must be acknowledged in both teacher training and curriculum planning.

Barratt Hacking et al. (2018) conducted a multi-case, qualitative study across nine IB World Schools located in eight different countries, spanning both developed and developing contexts. The study aimed to examine how international mindedness (IM) is conceptualized, implemented, and experienced in schools offering the IB curriculum. Data were gathered through classroom observations, document analysis, and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators. The researchers found that while schools commonly referred to IM in their mission statements and values, its enactment in practice varied significantly. Some schools integrated IM deeply into teaching and school culture, encouraging student inquiry into global issues and promoting intercultural dialogue. Others, however, adopted a more superficial approach, associating IM mainly with cultural celebrations or foreign language learning. The study emphasized that institutional culture, teacher agency, and leadership vision were central to whether IM remained rhetorical or became a lived pedagogical practice. It also suggested that without deliberate and sustained strategies, IM risks becoming tokenistic despite being a core aim of the IB framework.

Collectively, these international studies underscore the complex and context-sensitive nature of international mindedness in IB schools. While IM is universally promoted through the IB's mission and curricular philosophy, its translation into practice varies significantly across cultural and institutional settings. The key variables shaping IM implementation include teacher agency, school ethos, leadership commitment, and

national educational pressures. These findings offer valuable insights for IB schools operating in Türkiye. Given the centralization of the Turkish education system and its exam-oriented structure, the tensions between local norms and IB values are likely to mirror those identified in East Asian and Mediterranean contexts. The research suggests that fostering meaningful IM in Türkiye will require more than curricular adoption; it will depend on whole-school coherence, teacher preparation, and culturally responsive leadership that bridges global educational ideals with local realities.

2.5.2 Studies in the Turkish Context

Demircioğlu and Çakır (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore the perspectives of English language teachers working in International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) schools across five countries—Türkiye, the USA, the UK, New Zealand, and Spain—regarding the teaching of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Based on responses from 60 teachers to seven open-ended questions, the study found that only 15% of participants had received formal education on ICC. Nevertheless, most teachers reported that their own intercultural experiences positively influenced their awareness of cultural diversity and enhanced their openness toward other cultures, which they actively sought to share with students. While some teachers viewed ICC, often referring to it as the "fifth skill", as more important than traditional language components such as grammar or vocabulary, others considered it equally essential. Teachers described using various strategies to integrate ICC into their teaching, including the use of authentic materials, hosting international guests, and participating in global projects or competitions. Daily cultural aspects such as family and community life were frequently cited as key content areas. Importantly, all teachers reported observing improvements in their students' intercultural competence as a result of the IBDP. The researchers concluded that ICC is a fundamental dimension of language education and emphasized the urgent need for structured ICC training in both pre-service and in-service teacher education. They recommended incorporating intercultural teaching components into curriculum design, teacher education programmes, and instructional materials, arguing that such systemic support is essential for effectively embedding ICC into language classrooms.

In a master's thesis conducted in Türkiye, Ece (2019) examined the effect of the International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes on the intercultural awareness levels of teachers and school administrators. The study employed a comparative descriptive design involving 104 educators from two IB and two non-IB schools in Istanbul. Data were gathered using the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), and analysed via SPSS. The results indicated that overall intercultural awareness levels among participants were moderate, with the highest scores relating to respect for cultural differences. However, no statistically significant difference was found between educators from IB and non-IB schools. These findings suggest that the presence of an IB programme alone does not automatically lead to increased intercultural sensitivity among educators. They highlight the importance of structured professional development within schools; without ongoing and contextually relevant training opportunities, the intercultural values promoted by international programmes may remain theoretical rather than being effectively integrated into meaningful classroom practices.

A comprehensive study focusing on intercultural awareness within the context of the IBDP schools in Türkiye is Candan's (2020) mix-methods research, which investigated how the Language A: Literature course contributes to students' intercultural communication competence and how teachers perceive their own cultural competency for multicultural education. The sample included five IBDP schools in Istanbul and Izmir, 39 Language A teachers, and 152 11^{th}-grade students. Quantitative data were collected using validated cultural competency and intercultural sensitivity scales, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Findings indicated that teachers generally considered themselves culturally competent, particularly in terms of knowledge and skills, while reporting slightly lower confidence in cultural awareness itself. Students also reported high levels of intercultural communication sensitivity, though they expressed lower self-confidence in initiating intercultural interactions. The research also highlighted how schools' mission and vision statements influenced curriculum choices, especially text selection. Importantly, the study showed that despite institutional differences, teachers often employed similar pedagogical methods aligned with IBDP frameworks, reflecting a shared commitment to promoting intercultural learning. These findings support the broader claim that the IBDP, through structured literature education,

fosters intercultural awareness and global citizenship competencies, even in contexts where dual curricula (national and international) are implemented simultaneously.

Finally, Metli (2021) conducted a longitudinal quantitative study to explore how international mindedness (IM) develops among IBDP students in Türkiye. Using Singh and Qi's conceptual framework, the study involved three schools, two national and one international, and employed a pre-test and post-test design over 14 months. Data collected in October 2016 and again in December 2017 were analysed to assess changes in students' levels of intercultural understanding and global engagement. However, the results indicated no statistically significant differences between the two test periods. This outcome was interpreted in light of the nature of international mindedness itself. As emphasized by Hacking et al. (2017), IM is not a static goal to be achieved, but rather a continuous process involving reflection, learning, and adaptation. Therefore, the lack of measurable progress may reflect the time and depth required for such development. In addition, the demanding academic environment, especially the pressure of the national university entrance examination, was identified as a limiting factor. The exam-oriented nature of the Turkish education system often shifts students' focus toward content-heavy subjects, reducing opportunities for broader intercultural learning. Another possible limitation was students' limited exposure to culturally diverse settings, which may have constrained the experiential dimension of IM. Based on these findings, the study recommends that IB schools in Türkiye adopt more strategic approaches, including professional development for educators and the integration of IM objectives across curricular and extracurricular domains. Ultimately, the research highlights that intercultural awareness is best understood as a mind-set, one that promotes empathy, openness, and a deeper understanding of cultural difference, rather than as a fixed set of skills.

Reflecting on the findings, it may be considered that intercultural awareness is like planting a seed, it doesn't always bear fruit immediately. While the IB Diploma Programme may not provide enough time for that seed to fully blossom, it plays a critical role in sowing it. Often, the real growth happens after graduation, as learners encounter real-life intercultural challenges. Much like a fruit tree that matures over seasons, intercultural competence grows through experience, reflection, and continued exposure.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

The philosophical position underpinning this study is constructivism. Constructivism is a learning theory that posits that knowledge is constructed through the active engagement of the individual with the environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It emphasizes the importance of the learner's prior knowledge and experiences in shaping their understanding of new information. In this study, the constructivist perspective was used to understand how the teachers and students in the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme construct their understanding and appreciation of other cultures, and how their prior experiences and cultural backgrounds shape this understanding.

The constructivist perspective also emphasizes the need for learners to construct their own understanding through experience and reflection (Creswell et al., 2018). This aligns well with the IB programme's focus on critical thinking, inquiry-based learning and intercultural understanding, which are also in line with the development of intercultural awareness as an attitude or mind set. In this study, constructivism was applied in the data collection and analysis, as the researcher tried to understand the participants' perspectives and experiences, and how these shape their understanding and appreciation of other cultures. The researcher used semi-structured interview questions in order to analyse the participant's perceptions and experiences, and looked for patterns and themes that help to construct a deeper understanding of the research problem.

By integrating constructivist philosophy into the research design, we ensure a thorough exploration of how teachers in the IB programme form their understanding of different cultures. This gives us important insights into how past experiences and cultural backgrounds influence intercultural perspectives. Through this approach, the study aimed to improve the understanding of how people learn about different cultures in schools. This can help to create teaching methods that support inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in the classroom (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants in this study were teachers from different private Turkish national schools that offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme. During the data collection process, data saturation, a core principle in qualitative research, was carefully observed. Although the initial plan was to interview 20 participants, saturation was reached by the 14th interview, at which point no new information or themes were emerging. Responses from participants began to repeat existing themes, confirming previous interpretations and failing to generate new conceptual categories, leading to the decision to stop data collection. This indicated that the data had reached a sufficient level of depth and diversity and were adequate to produce meaningful findings aligned with the study's objectives.

As in Patton's (2015) concept of analytic saturation, which views saturation not only in terms of the absence of new themes but also in terms of the richness and completeness of the data. Rather than adhering to a fixed sample size, the researcher evaluated data quality, conceptual density, and thematic repetition as qualitative indicators. After each interview, the coding scheme was updated and reflective notes were taken to track how new data influenced existing themes. Thus, data collection was concluded at 14 participants in a way that was scientifically, ethically, and practically efficient, avoiding unnecessary data accumulation while preserving analytical clarity.

The criteria for selecting sample group: The sample included teachers from different grade levels in the DP program. The sample size depended on the availability and willingness of the participants to participate in the study. The participants were selected through convenience sampling, a non-probability method in which participants are chosen based on their accessibility and willingness to take part (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The participants that were selected were all currently teaching in an IBDP program in an IB World School in Türkiye catering mainly to Turkish nationals and were willing to participate in the study.

Both male and female instructors were considered eligible to take part in the study due to their extensive work experience and educational background. In accordance with ethical requirements, all participants were verbally briefed to explain the study's conditions,

purposes, data collection procedures, and general research agenda. Following this explanation, participants were asked to complete a consent form before the interview commenced. This ensured that participants were fully informed about the study's objectives and procedures, and that their participation was voluntary and based on informed consent.

The point of data saturation was determined when the final interviews no longer revealed new themes or conceptual insights. This methodological approach aligns with Connor et al. (2024), who highlight that in classic grounded theory, saturation is achieved when the "main concern" has been sufficiently captured and no new properties emerge for core categories. The repeating nature of themes at this stage ensured a rich yet conceptually dense dataset suitable for analysis.

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of participants across three experience categories (1–10 years, 11–21 years, 22+ years) for both general teaching and IBDP experience. Each row indicates how many participants fall into each category and their anonymized IDs.

Table 1. Categories of Teaching and IBDP Experience

Experience Type	Experience Range	Number of Teachers	Participants
Teaching	1-10 years	1	S5
Teaching	11-21 years	8	S1, S3, S6, S8, S9, S10, S12, S14
Teaching	22+ years	5	S2, S4, S7, S11, S13
IBDP	1-10 years	6	S3, S5, S6, S8, S12, S14
IBDP	11-21 years	7	S1, S2, S4, S7, S9, S10, S11
IBDP	22+ years	1	S13

Participants' professional backgrounds varied considerably: their average general teaching experience is 22,1 years, ranging from 10 to 42 years, while their IBDP-specific average experience is 10,1 year spanning from 1 to 25 years. This shows that the participants were experienced educators overall, with a wide distribution of IBDP exposure, supporting a diverse range of perspectives within the study.

3.3 Research Method Data Collection

The researcher, in this study, aims to understand the experiences of teachers working in the IBDP programme in Türkiye regarding intercultural awareness, how this awareness is reflected in their teaching practices, and how an interaction is established between the Turkish cultural context and the IB curriculum. For this purpose, the study seeks to analyse the role of intercultural competencies in the pedagogical approaches of IBDP teachers and to examine educational strategies aimed at balancing local culture with international programmes.

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach within a phenomenological design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) teachers to explore the influence of Turkish culture on their intercultural awareness. Each participant was asked 10 open-ended questions designed to capture in-depth perspectives on the research topic. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Throughout the data collection and analysis stages, the study rigorously adhered to criteria of validity and reliability in qualitative research.

In this study, the researcher adopted a thematic analysis approach to deeply examine the qualitative data and systematically explore the participants' experiences and meaning-making processes. Thematic analysis is a flexible, yet structured method that aims to identify recurring units of meaning within the data, organize these into categories, and generate themes that respond to the research questions (Creswell et al., 2018).

Data collection tool for this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers from different IB World Schools in Türkiye that offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The interviews were conducted in person or online using Zoom and Google Meet and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. This variety is compatible with the hybrid data collection strategies frequently used in academic research after COVID-19 (Salmons, 2022). The interview guide included 10 open-ended questions that elicits the participants' experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the IB program in respect of its impact on their understanding and appreciation of other cultures. The questions were designed to explore the participants'

experiences and perceptions of the IB program and its approach to international education, and to understand how their cultural backgrounds shape their understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

After the advisor had given her approval and suggested some adjustments to the interview questions, two pilot interviews were carried out. This was to ascertain that the questions are efficiently designed to find out how educators working within the IBDP framework in Türkiye experience and interpret intercultural awareness, how this awareness manifests in their day-to-day teaching practices, and in what ways the Turkish cultural context intersects with and adapts to the international nature of the IB curriculum. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore how intercultural competencies of teachers influence pedagogical decisions while also identifying the strategies employed by teachers to reconcile local cultural norms with the demands of a globally standardized program.

Subsequently, the research proposal was submitted to the Ethics Committee of Maltepe University. Upon receiving their approval, the interviews commenced. The participants were asked for their consent before conducting and recording the interviews.

3.3.1 Phases of Data Collection:

According to Seidman (2013), Gove (1971) advises researchers to pilot their research methods before beginning interviews. This is because interviews can be unpredictable, potentially leading researchers down unfamiliar and sometimes challenging paths. By piloting their methods with a small group of participants, researchers gain the opportunity to assess whether their research plans are appropriate and to understand how to reach and communicate with the right individuals for their study (Locke et al., 2000; Maxwell, 1996, as cited in Seidman, 2013).

After the piloting phase, researchers should reflect on what they have learned and revise their plans before starting the main study. Just as teachers prepare their lesson plans to accommodate unexpected situations in the classroom, researchers must clearly define what they aim to discover, why they are conducting the study, and how, with whom, when, and where they will carry it out. Seidman (2013), Hyman and colleagues (1954) emphasize that such preparation helps researchers avoid altering participants' responses

based on their own assumptions and allows for a more careful and thoughtful research process.

3.3.1.1 First Phase: Piloting

As advised by Seidman and colleagues, the researcher conducted pilot interviews with two experienced educators in the first stage of data collection. One was an IB coordinator and the other one a CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) coordinator. The primary objective of this piloting phase was to evaluate the clarity, depth, and appropriateness of the interview questions in eliciting the desired information relevant to the research objectives, and there was a reflection and refinement process after it.

The feedback obtained from the participants of the piloting process facilitated the improvement of the interview questions, ensuring that they effectively captured the intended data and provided valuable insights into the research topic. For instance, one participant noted that a question about "promoting intercultural awareness" was too broad and could be interpreted in various ways. In response, the question was revised to: "Are there specific teaching strategies you employ to promote intercultural awareness among your students?" This adjustment helped ensure that responses would be more focused and illustrative. The piloting phase thus helped identify and resolve such ambiguities or redundancies, ultimately improving the coherence, precision, and effectiveness of the interview questions for the main data collection process.

3.3.1.2 Second Phase: Interviews

In the second phase, the researcher conducted the main interviews with the selected participants. The participants consisted of teachers from various subject areas, working at IB-authorized private schools in Istanbul, with teaching experience ranging from 10 to 42 years. A total of 14 participants underwent individual interviews, which were audio-recorded after obtaining informed consent.

The interviews were carried out primarily in English; however, assistance was provided for participants who were not fully comfortable using English. The interviews were conducted both face-to-face (in schools) and online (via Zoom or Google Meet), depending on the participants' availability, and each session lasted approximately 30 to

45 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and then thematically analysed using content analysis technique.

3.4 Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews were first conducted and audio-recorded. These recordings were then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then read multiple times by the researcher, considering not only the explicit content but also underlying, implicit messages conveyed by the participants to decipher their meaning.

The data were analysed using the content analysis method. Content analysis is a reproducible qualitative research technique that aims to systematically identify and interpret meaningful patterns in written or spoken materials (Schreier, 2012).

The data analysis did not commence all together after data collection was completed, but was instead conducted concurrently while the interviews continued. This allowed each new piece of data to be compared with earlier ones, ensuring that the validity of the emerging themes was constantly tested. The researcher segmented the data into meaningful themes and then grouped similar themes to develop broader thematic categories. This systematic process required ongoing review and permitted restructuring of themes. In this regard, the study followed the constant comparative method as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), whereby each new data unit was compared with previously coded content, thus enhancing the analytical depth of the study through continuous interaction with the data.

The software QDA Miner Lite was used to support the coding and analysis process. All transcripts were imported into the software, where themes were assigned systematically to relevant excerpts. The software enabled the researcher to efficiently manage and retrieve coded data, track theme frequencies, identify co-occurrences, and extract representative quotes for each theme. This digital support enhanced both the transparency and traceability of the coding structure and strengthened the methodological rigor of the thematic analysis.

In maintaining analytical transparency and systematic rigor, the coding process was guided by principles of continuous comparative analysis and iterative theme refinement.

This aligns with the approach outlined by Doyer and Ayomoh (2025), who advocate for documenting coding contributions, theme density, and reflective decisions to ensure clarity between raw data and final thematic categories. Their model of quantifying researcher contributions also served as a conceptual guide for reflective tracking throughout analysis.

Regarding validity, the technique of thick description was employed to ensure that the data accurately reflected participants' genuine experiences and perceptions, and themes were constructed while preserving the contextual integrity of their narratives (Creswell et al., 2018). Additionally, member checking was conducted by sharing the analysed themes with the interviewed participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. The interviews were designed to be sufficiently long and in-depth to capture the multifaceted cultural experiences of IBDP teachers, thereby enhancing the contextual validity of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In terms of reliability, the constant comparative method was employed throughout the analysis. Each new data set was compared with previous themes to ensure consistency and coherence in the thematic framework. The coding and theme development processes were thoroughly documented, and logical alignment between raw data and findings was ensured. According to Patton (2015), reliability in qualitative research is measured by the transparency, systematic rigor, and analytical precision of the research process. In line with this, all procedures related to data collection, analysis, and interpretation were explicitly reported, and the researcher engaged in ongoing reflective practice to monitor personal influence and potential bias.

In conclusion, the validity of the research was ensured through the comprehensive and contextual representation of participant views, while reliability was achieved by conducting a careful, consistent, and traceable research process. As a result, the findings reported in this study offer credible and methodologically sound insights into the cultural factors shaping IBDP teachers' intercultural awareness.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

To ensure that the rights and well-being of the participants were protected throughout the research process, the following measures were taken. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of the data that would be collected, and their rights as participants. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions and to withdraw from the study at any time. All data collected were kept confidential and de-identified to protect the privacy of the participants.

The researcher strived to avoid bias in the recruitment and selection of participants and ensured that the study was conducted in a fair and unbiased manner. The study was approached with cultural sensitivity, and attention was given to the cultural backgrounds of the participants. All data were stored securely and remained accessible only to the researcher. No data were shared with any third parties.

The study was reviewed and approved by the Maltepe University Graduate School Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of data collection.

In addition to the ethical measures mentioned above, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the administration of the schools where the interviews were carried out. A formal request letter was submitted, and necessary authorizations were granted. The researcher remained committed to protecting participants' rights and well-being throughout the study and provided support and resources when needed.

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings derived from semi-structured interviews with 14 International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) teachers working in private national schools located in Istanbul. Adopting a constructivist perspective, the study aimed to explore how participants make sense of their lived experiences in IB classrooms, and how these experiences shape their understanding and practice of intercultural awareness.

Data were analysed inductively through thematic analysis using QDA Miner software. That is, themes were derived directly from the participants' statements, based on recurring patterns and meaningful clusters found in the data. No pre-determined conceptual framework was employed; instead, themes naturally emerged from the data itself.

During the data analysis process, fifteen main thematic codes were generated through refined coding of interview transcripts. However, for the purpose of clarity and analytical focus, this chapter presents findings from the top ten themes, which were selected based on two criteria; frequency of occurrence across the dataset and the degree of co-occurrence with other key themes**.** These themes not only appeared most consistently in participants' narratives but also showed strong relational ties with other concepts, indicating their central role in shaping the intercultural awareness of Turkish IBDP teachers. Co-occurrence maps for each theme are also provided to visualize these interrelationships and support the interpretation of qualitative data. The remaining themes, while still relevant, are discussed briefly in the conclusion chapter and listed in full in the appendix for transparency.

4.1 Themes derived from the interviews

The findings are presented according to the most frequently recurring themes providing deeper insight into the influence of Turkish culture on teachers and its role in shaping intercultural awareness. Each theme is supported by direct quotes from the teachers.

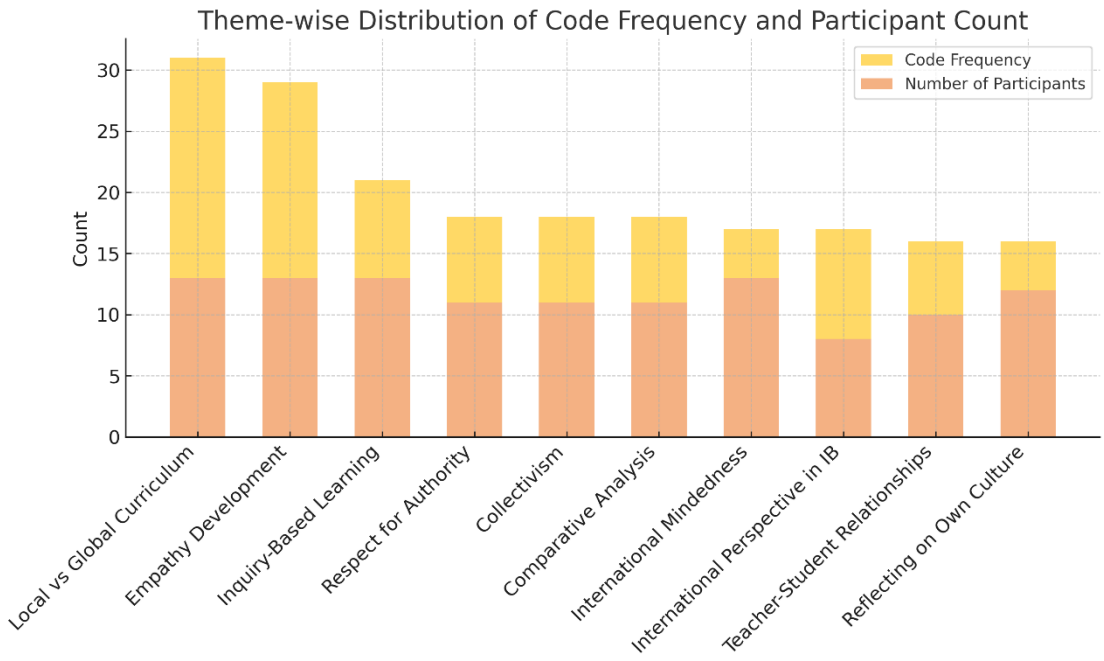


Figure 2 Theme-wise Distribution of Code Frequency and Participant Count

As shown in Figure 2, the most frequently coded theme is *Local vs Global Curriculum*, highlighting the perceived tension or harmony between national cultural content and the international ethos of the IBDP. This theme reflects how teachers deal with balancing Turkish cultural identity while implementing a global program. Following closely are *Empathy Development* and *Inquiry-Based Learning*, which suggest that intercultural awareness is deeply connected to students' ability to understand others and engage critically with diverse perspectives. Other notable themes—such as *Respect for Authority*, *Collectivism*, and *Comparative Analysis*—illustrate how traditional cultural expectations influence classroom interaction and pedagogy. Despite lower frequencies, themes like *Reflecting on Own Culture* and *Teacher-Student Relationships* remain pedagogically significant and reflect deeper shifts in learner identity. Overall, the chart provides a clear overview of thematic priorities and participant engagement across the qualitative data.

Theme 1: Local vs Global Curriculum

("Local vs Global Curriculum" – coded 31 times, highlighted by 13 teachers)

This theme emerged as the most frequently coded in the dataset, reflecting how IBDP teachers navigate the balance between global curriculum standards and the cultural

realities of the Turkish context. Teachers emphasized the importance of integrating local cultural elements into course content while maintaining a global perspective. They highlighted how Turkish cultural norms shape students' cognitive patterns and how connecting local and international content fosters intercultural awareness.

As expressed by one participant,

> Building connections between texts and themes can help raise a certain level of awareness in how different cultures perceive things in different ways. The variations in perspectives are the result of how we are raised and to which cultural contexts we are exposed to. (Speaker 1)

This comment shows that cultural context strongly shapes how students think and interpret material. Several teachers mentioned that literature plays a major role in building these connections like a bridge between cultures. For instance:

> Literature is especially useful in this regard; while we may study authors from around the world, we also examine Turkish texts in translation or use Turkish poetry and essays in support materials to explore stylistic and thematic overlaps. The key is to help students see their culture as a point of departure, not confinement —grounding their perspectives while opening doors to diverse ways of thinking. (Speaker 5)

According to the participants, global themes discussed in class often relate to local issues in meaningful ways. Teachers emphasized that while global issues are international by nature, they also have strong connections to daily life and personal identity. As one teacher explained:

> While discussing global issues related to the works we study in class, there is always room for comparing and contrasting contexts with those of our country’s as Global Issues are topics that transcend national boundaries but also have an everyday, local impact. This helps students understand that despite different local contexts, all human beings are actually interconnected by virtue of having common humanistic traits. (Speaker 13)

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers deliberately pursue a “from local to global” strategy. They use familiar, culturally relevant content to introduce global themes. This strategy helps students relate to international topics without losing their cultural grounding. Students’ reflection on local content strengthens their sense of cultural groundedness, which serves as a foundational layer for developing intercultural awareness. As students reflect on their own cultural frameworks, they become better equipped to understand and respect perspectives that differ from their own. This emergent pattern across the data illustrates how the curriculum facilitates a route from local rootedness to global open-mindedness which is an essential pathway toward cultivating International Mindedness (IM), the end goal of the International Baccalaureate (IB).

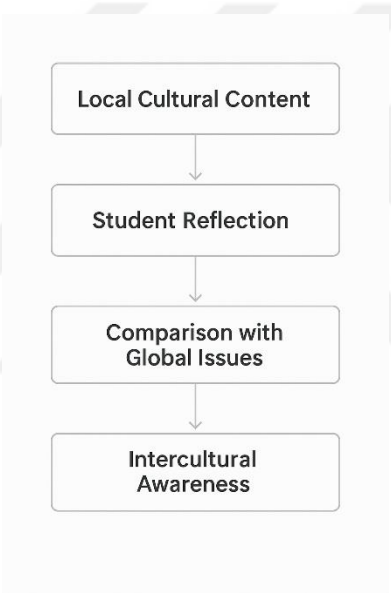


Figure 3 Teachers’ strategy for connecting local and global curriculum elements

Figure 3 presents a conceptual flowchart that illustrates how teachers implement a “local to global” strategy in classroom practices. According to the interview data, many teachers begin with culturally familiar content, such as Turkish texts or local issues, to establish a foundation for student engagement. This is followed by reflective classroom discussions that help students explore how their cultural background shapes their thinking. By comparing these local insights with international themes or global problems, students gradually expand their perspectives. This process contributes to the development of intercultural awareness by linking personal identity to broader global understanding.

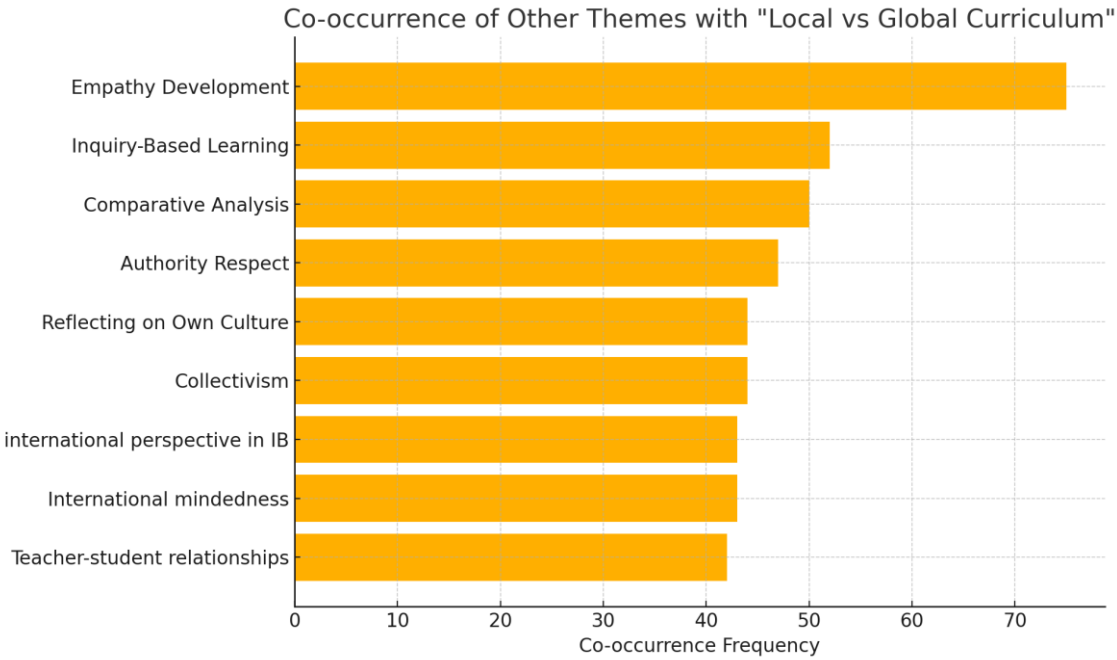


Figure 4 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “Local vs Global Curriculum”

Figure 4 above illustrates the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Local vs Global Curriculum* during the coding process. This theme is central to understanding how IBDP teachers in the Turkish context interpret and teach intercultural awareness. Data shows that this theme frequently appears together with *Empathy Development* (75 co-occurrences), *Inquiry-Based Learning* (52 co-occurrences) and *Comparative Analysis* (50 co-occurrences). These patterns suggest that *Local vs Global Curriculum* is strongly linked to both pedagogical strategies and cultural values. This implies that teachers often integrate these themes into activities where students explore, question, compare and reflect on cultural differences through critical thinking.

Other frequently co-occurring themes include Authority Respect, Re*flecting on Own Culture* and *Collectivism* together with *International Perspective in IB, International mindedness* and *Teacher – student Relationships*. These links indicate the role of cultural grounding. Teachers may create a classroom which is a hybrid space where local norms and values meet global perspectives.

Overall, the presence of these themes alongside "Local vs Global Curriculum" suggests a teaching model where intercultural awareness is not treated as a separate goal, but embedded in everyday classroom practices. Teachers appear to promote global

understanding while respecting local cultural contexts, helping students become informed, reflective, and open-minded individuals.

Theme 2: Empathy Development

("Empathy Development" – coded 29 times, highlighted by 13 teachers)

This theme indicates that empathy is seen as an essential component of intercultural awareness in IBDP classrooms. According to the participants who frequently described empathy as a key dimension, it is both a goal and a tool in education. It helps students recognize cultural diversity not just on an intellectual level, but also through emotional understanding. Teachers emphasized that developing empathy allows students to move beyond stereotypes, identify their own biases, and engage with other perspectives in a more open-minded way.

One teacher summarized this idea by stating:

> Intercultural awareness plays a significant role in both the academic and personal development of students. IBDP students in Türkiye often aim to be part of a multicultural world. This awareness helps them develop empathy, stay away from prejudices, and become more open-minded individuals. (Speaker 11)

Other teachers highlighted how empathy changes students' thinking over time. It is not only about learning facts about different cultures, but about forming real emotional connections. For example, one participant explained:

> Developing empathy has become one of the most fundamental steps in both the academic and personal development of my students. It's not just about 'knowing' different cultures, but about forming emotional connections with them and understanding them within their own realities. This creates a significant impact. Through this, students also begin to notice their own prejudices; they start to rethink patterns they may never have questioned before. As a result, they become more universal, more genuine individuals. (Speaker 2)

Empathy was also closely linked to the broader educational goals of the IB. Teachers described how empathy supports the IB Learner Profile, especially the attributes of being "open-minded" and "caring." One participant stated:

> As an IBDP teacher in Türkiye, I believe intercultural awareness plays a critically important role in students' education. The IB's foundational principles of international understanding and global citizenship aim to develop students not only academically, but also socially and culturally. Exposure to different cultures enables students to build empathy, question prejudices, and develop multidimensional perspectives. (Speaker 6)

The same participant emphasizes the social development of the students:

> This awareness prepares them not only for exams, but also for multicultural workplaces, international education opportunities, and responsiveness to global issues. In a culturally rich country like Türkiye, this awareness also helps students understand their own identity and respect others'. In short, intercultural awareness helps cultivate a sense of both individual and social responsibility. It directly supports IB's Learner Profile attributes of being 'open-minded' and 'caring'. (Speaker 6)

Additionally, several teachers noted that empathy development is closely linked to students' emotional growth through community service, volunteer work, and service learning activities. These activities give students the chance to interact with real people and real-life problems. As a result, many teachers saw empathy as a sign of emotional maturity and a point where students move from passive learning to active involvement in social and human issues.

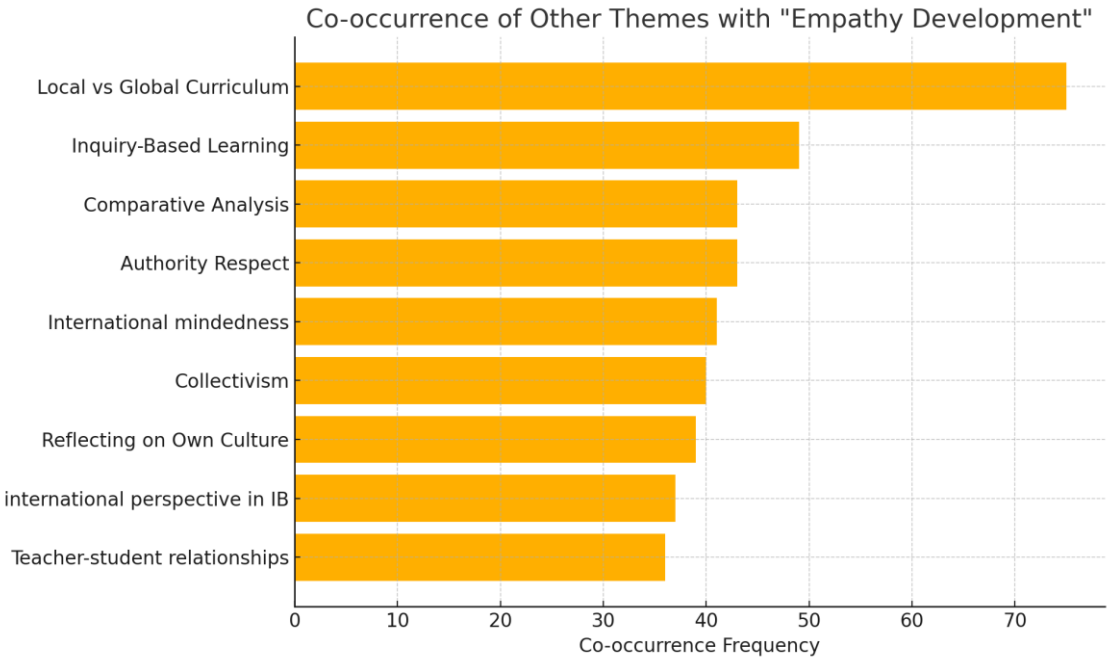


Figure 5 Top 10 co-occurring themes with "Empathy Development"

Figure 5 above illustrates the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Empathy Development* during the coding process. These associations provide insight into how empathy is discussed in relation to other themes in the context of IBDP classrooms. As shown in the chart, *Local vs Global Curriculum* (75 times), *Inquiry-Based Learning* (49 times) and *Comparative Analysis* (43 times) are the three most common co-occurring themes. This suggests that empathy is not treated as a standalone concept, but rather as an essential part of building intercultural competence. This aligns with the broader IBDP mission of developing internationally minded individuals who exhibit empathy, respect, and openness.

Other frequently co-occurring themes include *Authority Respect*, *International Mindedness*, *Collectivism*, *Reflecting on Own Culture*, *International Perspective in IB* and *Teacher-student Relationships*. These links indicate that empathy development is strongly connected to students' emotional maturity and their engagement in socially meaningful activities.

Overall, the co-occurrence data reinforces the idea that empathy serves as both a cognitive and emotional bridge in intercultural education. It connects students' academic learning

with real-world awareness and contributes to their development as globally responsible individuals.

Theme 3: Inquiry-Based Learning

("Inquiry-Based Learning" – coded 21 times, highlighted by 13 teachers)

This theme reflects how teachers in the IBDP program use questioning and critical thinking activities to develop students' intercultural awareness. Unlike traditional systems based on memorization, the IBDP encourages students to explore ideas, analyse different viewpoints, and question cultural values. According to the participants, this process helps students to look at their own and other cultures more critically and empathetically.

One teacher highlighted the program's influence on students' thinking habits:

"We work within a program that instils a global perspective and allows deep inquiry. The advantages this program offers—such as analytical thinking, a global mind-set, and university preparation—are recognized and lead to positive attitudes." (Speaker 11)

Teachers also described how inquiry helps students challenge norms and assumptions about culture. For example, one participant said:

"Yes, asking them to consider issues from various perspectives is one way. Another way is to get students question concepts like 'normal', 'acceptable', 'values' and the like." (Speaker 13)

Ten out of 14 educators discussed the practical tools they use to promote inquiry. These include case studies, reflective journals, and discussions on cultural issues. One teacher mentioned:

"Inquiry-based discussions, cultural case studies, and cultural journals are my core tools." (Speaker 2)

These statements show that inquiry-based learning is not only about academic achievement, but also about developing ethical sensitivity and cultural reflection.

Teachers view this approach as a way to turn students into active thinkers who are more aware of social and cultural diversity. Through inquiry, students become better prepared to deal with global complexity in both their personal and academic lives.

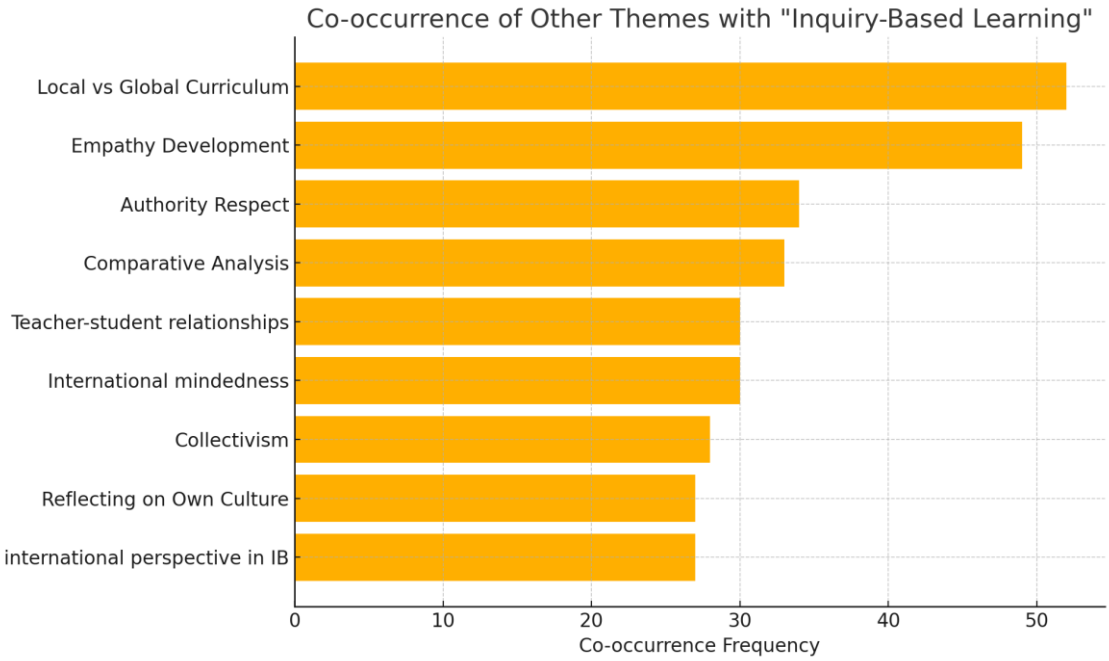


Figure 6 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “Inquiry-Based Learning”

Figure 6 shows the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Inquiry-Based Learning*. This visual representation highlights the themes that are most conceptually linked to inquiry practices within IBDP classrooms. Notably, *Local vs Global Curriculum* (52 times) and *Empathy Development* (49 times) are among the most frequent pairings. This suggests that teachers associate inquiry-based methods with the development of students’ analytical skills and their ability to understand diverse cultural contexts.

The presence of themes such as *Authority Respect*, *Comparative Analysis*, *Teacher-student Relationship* and *International Mindedness* reflects the holistic impact of inquiry on learners. These links indicate that inquiry is not limited to cognitive outcomes but it encourages students to ask meaningful questions, examine their assumptions, and engage with global issues in a thoughtful and informed way. It also influences students’ values, attitudes, and ability to reflect on cultural differences. Moreover, themes like *Collectivism, Reflecting on Own Culture* and *International Perspective in IB* demonstrate that inquiry supports cultural awareness alongside academic growth.

In sum, the co-occurrence data supports the view that inquiry-based learning is a powerful tool for fostering intercultural understanding and critical engagement in IBDP education.

Theme 4: Respect for Authority

("Authority Respect" – coded 18 times, highlighted by 11 teachers)

This theme reflects how the traditional value of respect for the teacher, a deeply embedded norm in Turkish culture, can shape classroom communication and students' willingness to participate. In Turkish educational settings, the teacher is often viewed as the unquestioned authority figure. As a result, students may hesitate to express opinions or engage in open debate, especially in courses such as Theory of Knowledge (TOK), where critical questioning is central. This cultural perception of *questioning as disrespect* can create tension with the inquiry-based, dialogic pedagogy promoted by the IBDP.

One teacher described this challenge in the following way:

> To be honest, the traditional respect for authority can sometimes limit the freedom of discussion in class. Especially in courses like TOK, I notice that students tend to be hesitant when it comes to expressing their opinions. There is a tendency to confuse criticism with disrespect. For this reason, creating a safe space in the classroom and reinforcing that 'questioning' is not just a right but a necessity becomes crucial. (Speaker 2)

Another teacher shared a similar observation, but also emphasized the importance of scaffolding to help students develop confidence:

> Yes—particularly the emphasis on respect for authority can initially hinder students' critical thinking skills. Many equate 'questioning' with criticizing or correcting the teacher. However, as we establish a safe space for classroom discussion, this resistance gradually fades. Over time, students learn that expressing ideas is not disrespectful, but a key part of intellectual growth. (Speaker 3)

One participant also discussed how the teacher's role in modelling open dialogue helps change students' perceptions of respect and authority:

> (…)At the same time, Turkish students often come from educational backgrounds where the teacher is viewed as the unquestioned authority, so while they initially show a strong sense of respect and formality, I gradually guide them to engage in critical dialogue and question ideas—even mine. This shift requires careful modelling and reassurance, so they begin to understand that challenging perspectives is not a sign of disrespect, but a valuable skill. (Speaker 5)

These findings indicate that IBDP teachers actively work to shift classroom norms by creating supportive learning environments. While the cultural value of respecting authority may initially limit student voice, many educators use modelling, scaffolding, and classroom dialogue to help students redefine questioning as a form of respectful intellectual participation. This transformation is especially critical in TOK and similar courses that promote critical reflection.

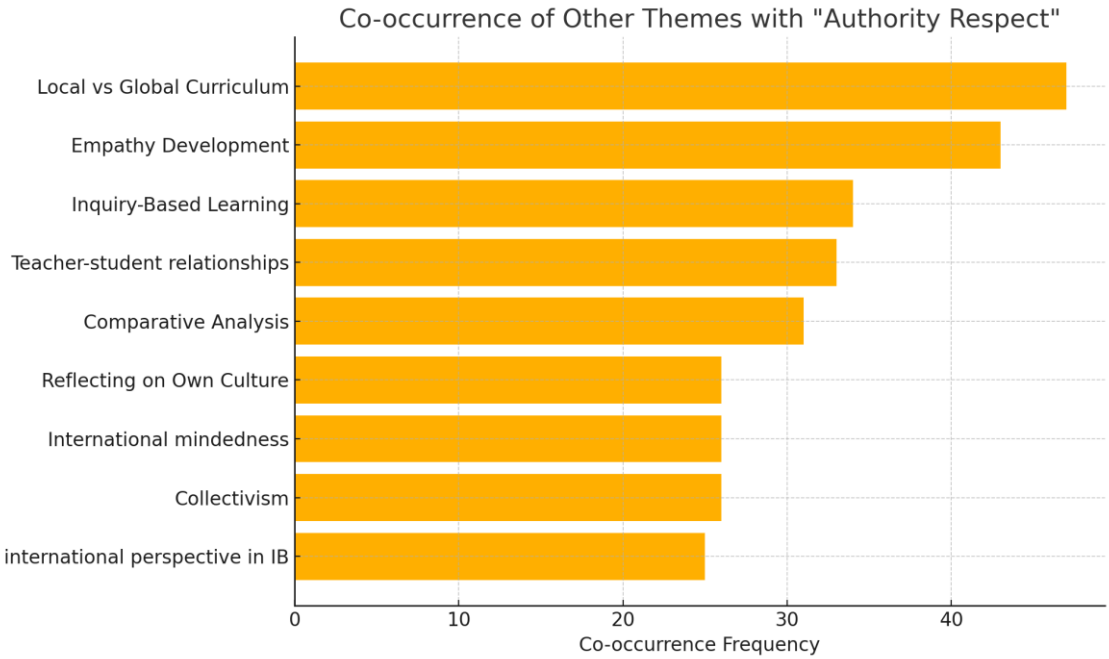


Figure 7 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “Authority Respect”

Figure 7 presents the top ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Authority Respect* during the qualitative analysis. This chart illustrates how cultural respect for teachers, as a form of authority, interacts with various pedagogical and interpersonal themes in the IBDP classroom. Notably, themes such as *Local vs Global Curriculum* (47

times), *Empathy Development* (43 times) and *Inquiry-Based Learning* (34 times) appear prominently. This supports the idea that while respect for authority may initially suppress student voice, it is closely tied to the conditions that eventually allow for confident expression specially to get approval from the teacher.

The frequent co-occurrence with *Teacher-student relationships* (33 times) suggests that teachers are actively using pedagogical strategies to reshape the traditional student–teacher dynamic. Instead of eliminating respect, they aim to redefine it within a framework that values open dialogue and critical inquiry.

Additionally, the presence of *Comparative Analysis, Reflecting on Own Culture, International Mindedness, Collectivism* and *International Perspective in IB* in the co-occurrence network reflects the broader sociocultural background of Turkish classrooms. These elements highlight the nuanced role that cultural expectations play in shaping students' academic behaviour.

Overall, the data suggests that while teacher authority is a respected norm in Turkish culture, IBDP educators are finding ways to maintain that respect while also promoting student agency and intellectual freedom.

Theme 5: Collectivism

("Collectivism" – coded 18 times, highlighted by 10 teachers)

This theme explores how collectivist values embedded in Turkish culture, such as belonging, cooperation, and social responsibility, affect the dynamics of the IBDP learning environment. Teachers noted that Turkish students tend to build emotionally meaningful and sincere relationships with their teachers, and how this sense of mutual trust contributes positively to learning. While such closeness is culturally appreciated in Türkiye, it may be misunderstood in more individualistic cultures.

One teacher reflected on his cultural contrast that can arise from differing communication norms:

> For instance, Turkish students appreciate building genuine communication with their teachers and being cared for by them, however in other cultural contexts

> this might be found too intimate and unnecessary from a student's perspective. In other words, students of collective and individualist cultures may not give importance to the same values and even find some communication styles, and interactions overwhelming or unnecessary. (Speaker 1)

Another teacher described how they intentionally use cultural values to build classroom culture:

> In my classroom practices, I aim to enrich the learning environment by blending Turkish culture's ethical and community-centred understanding with IBDP's inquiry-based and liberating instructional processes. For instance, when I begin a topic, I start by conversing with my students to strengthen our bonds. When someone gets the right to speak, I emphasize the importance of not interrupting them by giving examples from our cultural traditions and customs. (Speaker 10)

The collectivist emphasis was also linked to increased motivation and student engagement, especially in the area of service learning:

"Additionally, Turkish culture's community spirit and collectivism enhance students' commitment and volunteerism in CAS projects." (Speaker 6)

These examples show that collectivism in the Turkish culture contributes to building respectful, emotionally supportive, and collaborative learning environments. It also encourages students to take part in group-based projects and to develop empathy and responsibility—values that align with the IBDP Learner Profile attributes of being "caring" and "principled." In this way, cultural values strengthen the relevance and emotional impact of international education in the local context.

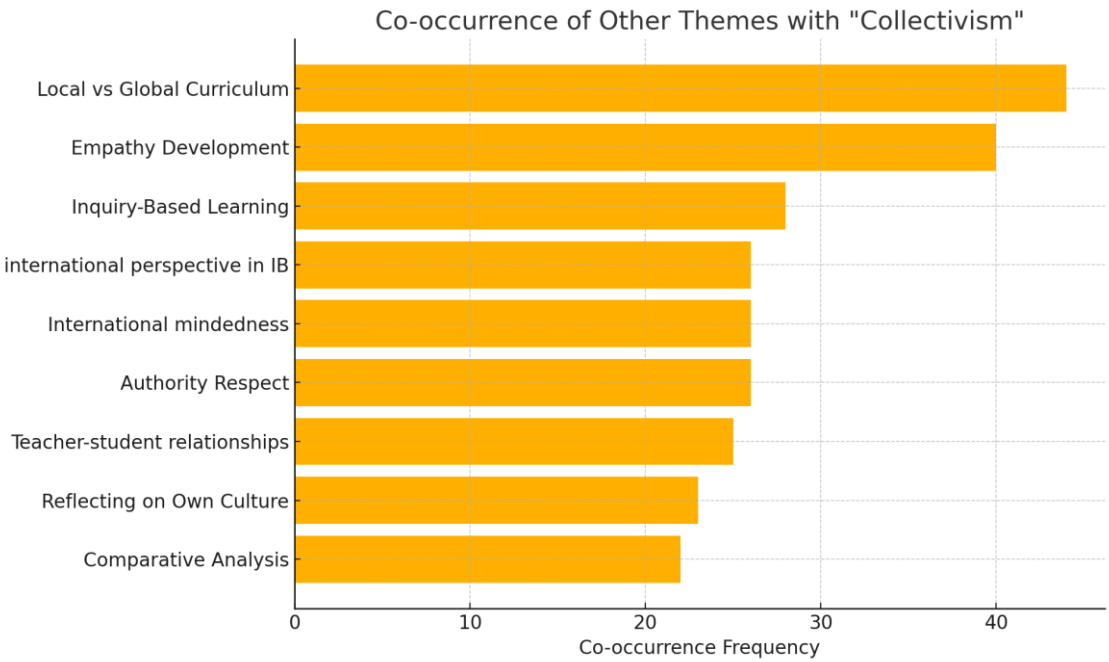


Figure 8 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “Collectivism”

Figure 8 presents the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Collectivism* in the dataset. This distribution highlights how culturally embedded values like social belonging, cooperation, and interpersonal closeness intersect with key pedagogical themes in IBDP classrooms. These values foster a supportive learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and collaborating with peers. Notably, the themes *Local vs Global Curriculum* (44 times), *Empathy Development* (40 times), and *Inquiry-Based Learning* (28 times) appear among the most frequent associations, reflecting how collectivist values align with both emotional and ethical aspects of international education.

The frequent co-occurrence with *International Perspective in IB, International Mindedness, Authority Respect, Teacher-student Relationships, Reflecting on Own Culture* and *Comparative Analysis* suggests that teachers actively draw upon local norms to enhance engagement and build meaningful learning environments. In this context, collectivism is not seen as a cultural barrier but rather as a strength that supports the goals of the IBDP, such as fostering caring, principled, and community-minded learners.

Furthermore, the data indicates that collectivist values can serve as a foundation for global awareness and intercultural understanding. These findings reinforce the idea that

students' local cultural experiences are essential in shaping their responses to international education frameworks.

Theme 6: Comparative Analysis

("Comparative Analysis" – coded 16 times, highlighted by 9 teachers)

This theme highlights the way IBDP teachers help students develop intercultural awareness through the comparison of cultural values, perspectives, and practices. Teachers explained that comparative methods, especially within literature, Theory of Knowledge (TOK), and global issues, allow students to critically evaluate not only other cultures, but also their own assumptions and beliefs.

One teacher explained the range of strategies they employ to support comparative thinking:

> To enhance intercultural awareness in my students, I particularly use strategies such as comparative discussions, cultural reflection essays, and multicultural media analyses. For example, in TOK lessons, we discuss how moral values take shape in different cultures, and in TITC (Turkey in the 20th Century), we debate globalization from both Turkish and global perspectives. (Speaker 10)

Another participant noted how analysing texts and global issues comparatively allows students to recognize universal human traits alongside cultural idiosyncrasies:

> While discussing global issues related to the works we study in class, there is always room for comparing and contrasting contexts with those of our countries as Global Issues are topics that transcend national boundaries but also have an everyday, local impact. This helps students understand that despite different local contexts, all human beings are actually interconnected by virtue of having common humanistic traits. (Speaker 13)

A similar view was expressed by another teacher who links comparative analysis directly with reflective thinking and bias awareness:

"One of the most effective ways I do this is by using comparative discussions that prompt students to examine how cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions differ across societies." (Speaker 5)

She gives the example, when analysing literature or global issues, she encourages students to consider how characters or authors might be shaped by their cultural contexts and how a Turkish reader's interpretation might differ from someone elsewhere. She says that she also regularly uses international news articles, TED Talks, and documentaries to expose students to diverse perspectives and then asks them to reflect critically on their own biases or assumptions.

These examples suggest that comparative analysis is not just about identifying cultural differences. It also helps students understand cultural relativity, explore shared human values, and reflect on their own positionality. Through this strategy, students gain a more flexible and balanced view of global issues, which supports the IBDP's aim of nurturing open-minded and ethically aware learners.

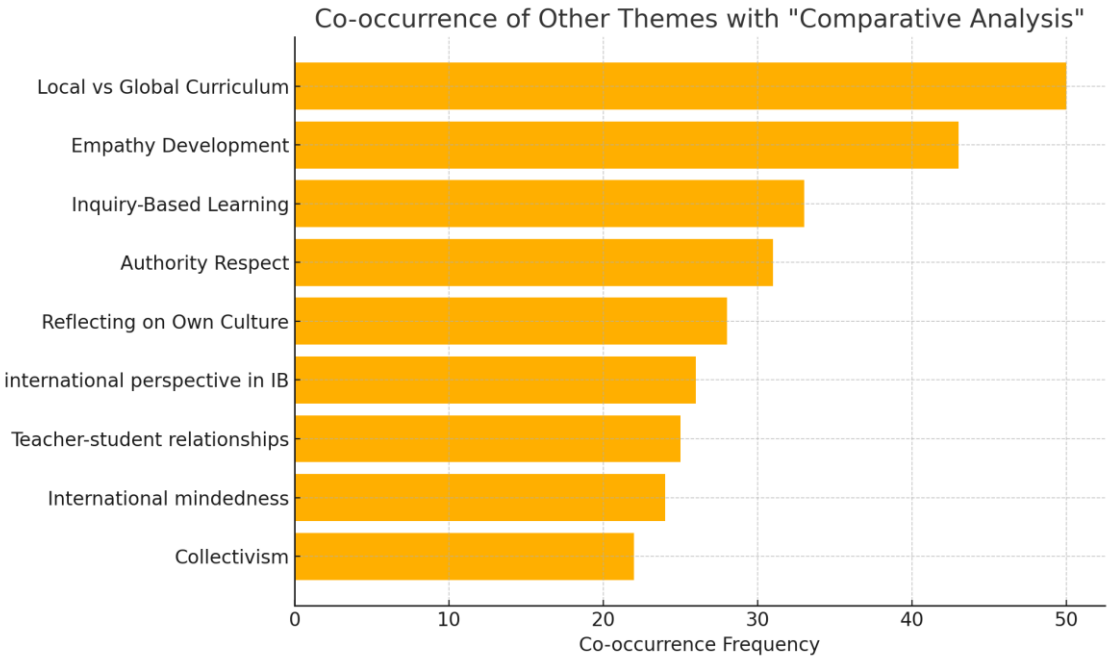


Figure 9 Top 10 co-occurring themes with "Comparative Analysis"

Figure 9 displays the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Comparative Analysis*. The close association with themes such as *Local vs Global Curriculum* (50

times), *Empathy Development* (43 times), and *Inquiry-Based Learning* (33 times) suggests that engaging in cross-cultural comparison supports both emotional and cognitive dimensions of intercultural learning. Teachers appear to use comparative strategies not only to highlight differences between cultures, but also to foster deeper understanding of universal values and individual perspectives.

Other frequently co-occurring themes include *Authority Respect, Reflecting on Own Culture, International Perspective in IB, Teacher-student Relationships, International Mindedness* and *Collectivism.* This indicates that comparative analysis is a central tool in helping students adopt a more multidimensional worldview. By encouraging students to consider multiple interpretations of cultural texts and global issues, teachers help develop the kind of reflective, open-minded learners envisioned in the IBDP Learner Profile.

Overall, these findings highlight that comparative thinking supports the development of intercultural sensitivity, empathy, and ethical awareness which are essential attributes for students navigating a globalized world.

Theme 7: International Mindedness

("International Mindedness" – coded 15 times, highlighted by 9 teachers)

This theme captures the development of international mindedness through intercultural awareness, emphasizing students' growth into individuals who value universal ethics, global responsibility, and global citizenship. Teachers highlighted that the IBDP promotes not only academic achievement, but also multicultural thinking, problem-solving abilities, and respectful engagement with differences. These attributes were seen as essential for nurturing students' global sensitivity and their capacity for critical empathy.

One teacher described intercultural awareness as both a pedagogical tool and a life skill:

> As an IBDP teacher, I see intercultural awareness not only as an ethical value but also as a pedagogical tool. This awareness enables students to become individuals who can communicate effectively, understand differences, solve problems, and develop sensitivity to global issues—beyond mere academic

> achievement. I am confident that these skills will provide significant advantages both in their education and future professional lives. I can observe examples of this development in my students. (Speaker 10)

Another teacher noted that intercultural awareness leads students to become more engaged with the world around them:

"When students begin to understand other cultures, this awareness transforms them into more sensitive and engaged individuals. It particularly helps them develop a sense of active citizenship in response to global issues." (Speaker 3)

This broader purpose of the IB curriculum was also highlighted by another teacher:

> As an IBDP teacher in Türkiye, I believe intercultural awareness plays a critically important role in students' education. The IB's foundational principles of international understanding and global citizenship aim to develop students not only academically, but also socially and culturally. Exposure to different cultures enables students to build empathy, question prejudices, and develop multidimensional perspectives. (Speaker 6)

These findings suggest that international mindedness develops as a natural outcome of various educational practices, including cultural exposure, comparative reflection, and critical dialogue. Teachers view it as a long-term process that helps students become globally aware, socially responsible, and ethically grounded individuals; qualities that align with the IB Learner Profile attributes of being "open-minded," "caring," and "principled."

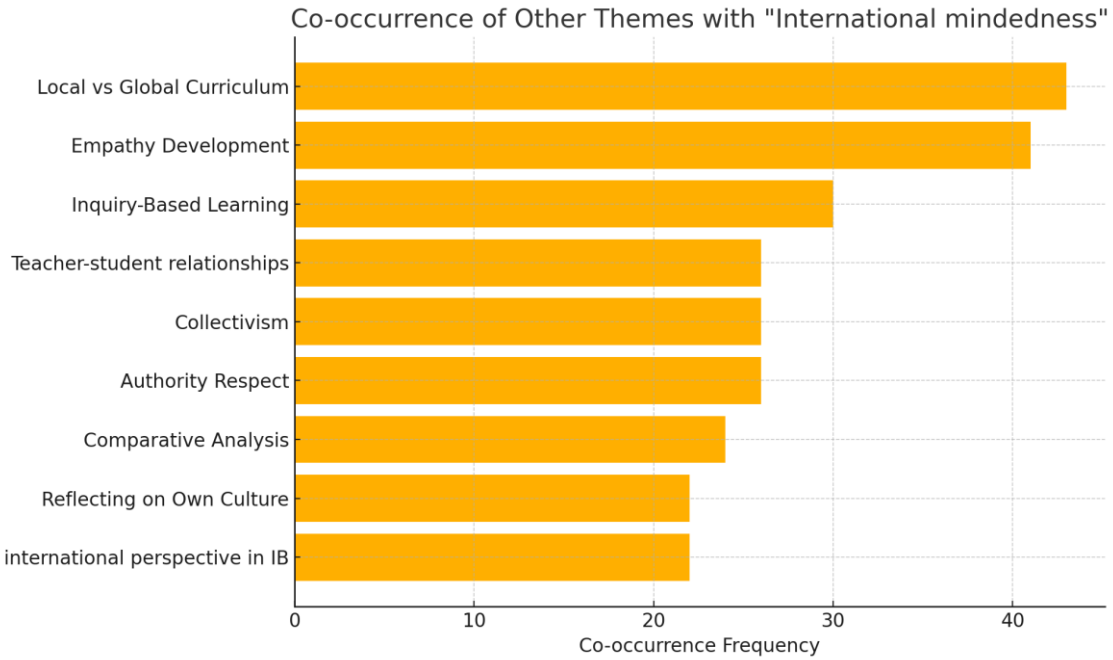


Figure 10 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “International Mindedness”

Figure 10 illustrates the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *International Mindedness*. These associations suggest that the development of international mindedness within the IBDP context is deeply interconnected with values such as *Local vs Global Curriculum* (43 times), *Empathy Development* (41 times), and *Inquiry-Based Learning* (30 times). Teachers appear to view these areas not as separate educational goals, but as overlapping dimensions of intercultural learning.

The frequent pairing with *Teacher-student Relationships*, *Collectivism* and *Authority Respect* reflects the emphasis on inclusive and respectful classroom environments. The presence of *Comparative Analysis*, *Reflecting on Own Culture* and *International Perspective in IB* indicates that international mindedness requires both cognitive and emotional engagement. Students are encouraged to examine their place in a global society while reflecting on their own cultural identity and ethical responsibilities.

Overall, these findings reinforce the idea that international mindedness in the IBDP is not an isolated construct. Rather, it emerges through a network of educational practices that promote global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and ethical understanding, all of which are aligned with the core principles of the IB Learner Profile.

Theme 8: International Perspective in IB

("International Perspective in IB" – coded 15 times, highlighted by 8 teachers)

This theme illustrates how the international perspective of the IBDP is perceived and applied within the Turkish educational context. Teachers emphasized that exposure to diverse cultural perspectives enables students to develop multidimensional thinking and a broader worldview. This international perspective was seen to enhance students' awareness at both local and global levels, preparing them to be more informed and active individuals across cultural and national boundaries. Participants also noted that parents value the international dimension of the IB, citing university access abroad, English-medium instruction, and critical thinking as major factors in their program preference.

One teacher explained how cultural exposure fosters complex thinking and global consciousness:

> Students who are introduced to different cultural perspectives learn to approach issues not from a single direction but through multidimensional thinking. As an IBDP teacher in Türkiye, I believe intercultural awareness is not just an 'IB requirement' but a core skill for the humanitarian, academic, and professional development of students. This awareness helps students contribute more constructively to both their own society and the global community. It also offers a competitive advantage in the global arena. (Speaker 12)

Several teachers observed that many families in their school context are already aligned with international values and view the international character of the IB as a strategic advantage. One teacher commented:

> In the context of an international school in Türkiye like mine, many students and parents are already familiar with or open to global perspectives, so the international elements of the IBDP program are generally welcomed and even sought after. Parents often view the IB as a pathway to prestigious universities abroad and appreciate its emphasis on critical thinking, global citizenship, and English medium instruction. (Speaker 5)

A similar point was made by another participant, linking parental motivations to global academic aspirations:

> This is actually one of the main reasons parents choose the IBDP. The program prepares students for international university applications, and parents want their children to go abroad well-prepared. That's why they support the international dimension of IB. (Speaker 7)

These findings reveal that the international perspective of the IB is seen as valuable not only in terms of academic outcomes but also in relation to students' social and cultural development. Teachers observe that this global outlook nurtures openness, adaptability, and a sense of global responsibility which are qualities that resonate strongly with the IB's mission of developing globally aware and principled individuals.

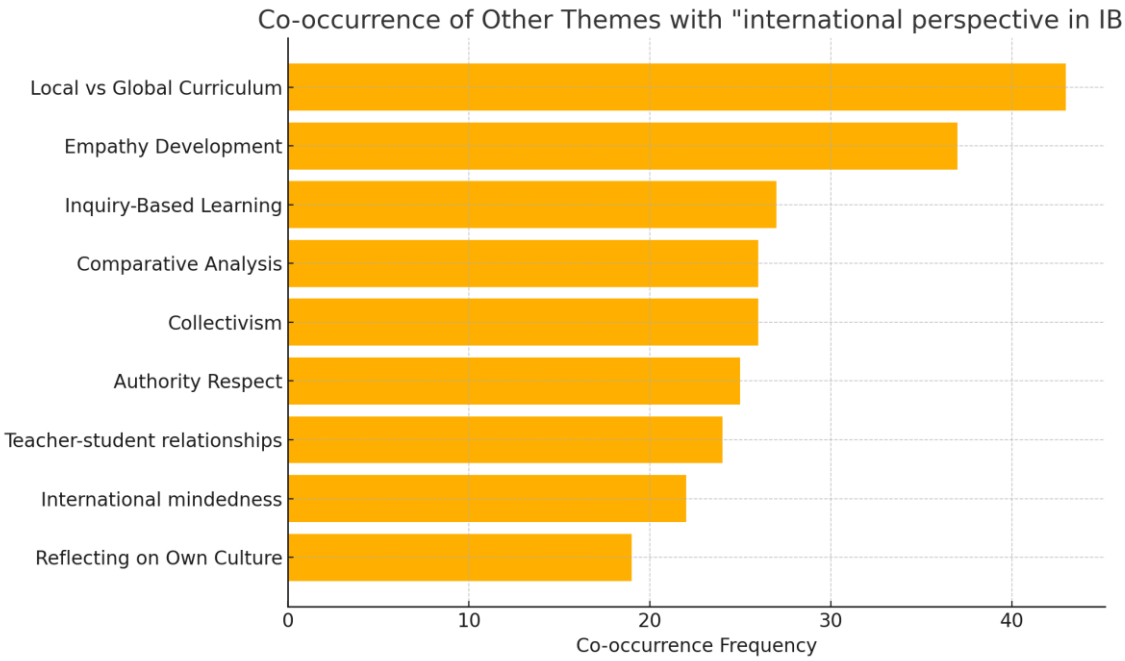


Figure 11 Top 10 co-occurring themes with "International Perspective in IB"

Figure 11 presents the ten most frequent themes that co-occurred with *International Perspective in IB*. Among them, *Local vs Global Curriculum* (43 times), *Empathy Development* (37 times), and *Inquiry-Based Learning* (27 times) appear most prominently. These associations suggest that teachers link the international perspective of the IB not just to academic goals but also to emotional and cultural growth. Students

are encouraged to understand diverse viewpoints, ask critical questions, and collaborate with peers—core elements of intercultural learning.

Finally, themes like *Comparative Analysis*, *Collectivism*, *Authority Respect*, *Teacher–Student Relationships*, *International Mindedness* and *Reflecting on Own Culture* show how international perspectives are connected to identity exploration and ethical responsibility. Teachers use comparisons and reflective practices to help students connect their local culture to global contexts. Overall, the co-occurrence patterns demonstrate that the IB's international perspective is deeply interwoven with personal development, classroom dynamics, and cultural reflection.

Theme 9: Teacher-Student Relationships

("Teacher-Student Relationships" – coded 14 times, highlighted by 9 teachers)

This theme examines how culturally shaped teacher-student relationships in the Turkish education system influence classroom dynamics within the IBDP. Participants noted that Turkish students often perceive teachers as both authority figures and emotional caretakers. While this dual role creates strong relational bonds, it can also generate a mismatch with the IBDP's emphasis on student independence, inquiry, and the view of the teacher as a facilitator rather than a director. As a result, students may initially expect clear-cut answers and feel hesitant to question or express independent opinions.

One teacher highlighted the ongoing negotiation between cultural norms and IB philosophy:

> In Turkish schools, teachers are often seen as authority figures but also as caretakers, and this dual role influences how I guide students—not only academically but emotionally as well. However, this cultural influence can also create tension with the IBDP's emphasis on student independence, inquiry, and critical thinking. Turkish students may initially expect more direct instruction or definitive answers, especially if they are used to traditional methods. I sometimes find myself needing to reassure them that it's okay to explore ambiguity or to challenge ideas, even mine. Balancing that cultural expectation

> of ‘teacher knows best’ with the IB principle of being facilitators rather than authorities is a constant negotiation. (Speaker 5)

Another teacher described the difficulties students face when transitioning from teacher-centred models to inquiry-based learning:

> The culture in which children are raised directly influences how and what they learn at school. Students who have been educated in a more traditional, teacher-centred system can initially struggle to adapt to the IBDP’s inquiry-based, student-centred structure. After ten years of passive learning, the transition to IB presents a drastically different environment, which naturally causes some initial challenges. When students are introduced to independent learning and inquiry—particularly those new to IB—the adjustment process takes time. That’s why I proceed slowly but steadily. Over time, they adapt. (Speaker 7)

This hierarchical perception of teachers was also noted in classroom behaviour:

> In my classroom, I notice how students tend to wait for teacher approval before sharing ideas—an echo of the hierarchical teacher-student dynamic in traditional Turkish education. I work with this by creating structured opportunities for students to take intellectual risks, such as anonymous reflections or group discussions where everyone must contribute. (Speaker 8)

These reflections indicate that Turkish students face a significant cultural adjustment when shifting toward independent learning. To support this transition, IB teachers emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need to establish structured environments that allow intellectual freedom. In this way, educators are constantly balancing their pedagogical roles with the cultural expectations that shape student behaviour, positioning themselves as both guides and adaptive facilitators.

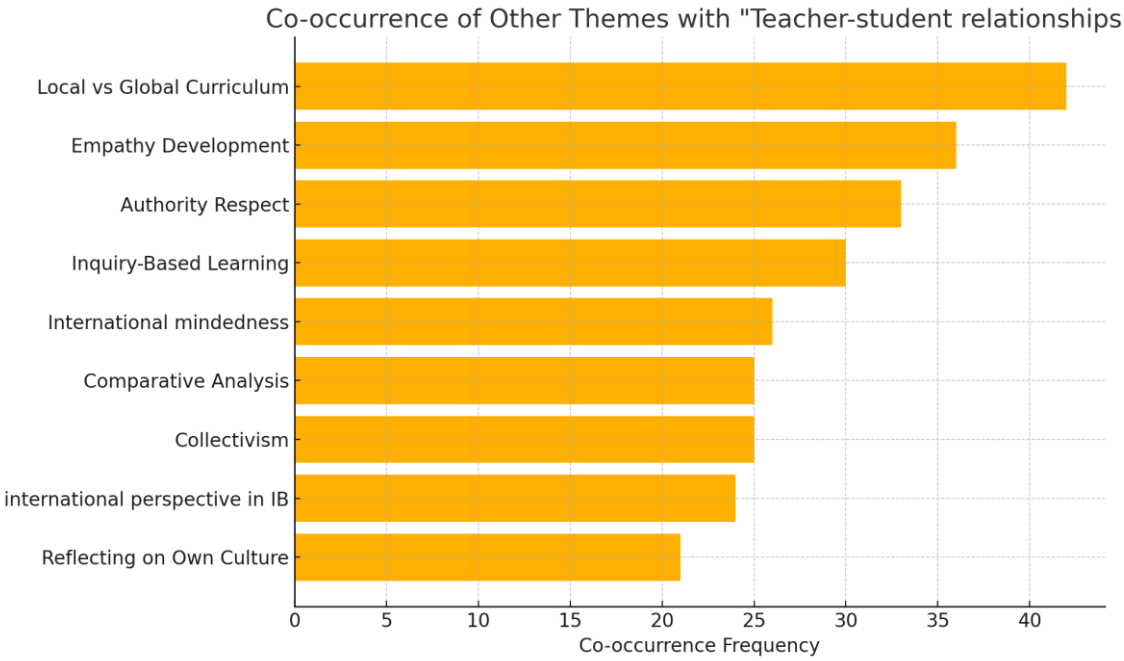


Figure 12 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “Teacher-student Relationships”

Figure 12 illustrates the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with *Teacher-student Relationships* during the coding process of interviews with IBDP teachers. As shown in the chart, *Local vs Global Curriculum* (43 times), *Empathy Development* (37 times), and *Authority Respect* (33 times) are the top three co-occurring themes. This suggests that teacher-student relationships are not only rooted in classroom behaviour or discipline but also embedded in broader educational conversations about international education and moral responsibility.

Other frequently co-occurring themes include *Inquiry-Based Learning, International Mindedness, and Comparative Analysis*, *Collectivism*, *International Perspective in IB,* and *Reflecting on Own Culture*.

Together, these connections reinforce the view that teacher-student relationships in the IBDP are not merely interpersonal but are intellectually, culturally, and emotionally significant. They cultivate open-mindedness, promote reflective thinking, and foster meaningful student engagement.

Theme 10: Reflecting on Own Culture

("Reflecting on Own Culture" – coded 14 times, highlighted by 8 teachers)

This theme centres on the process through which students come to recognize and question their own cultural identities before engaging meaningfully with others. Teachers emphasized the importance of reflective activities that encourage students to examine Turkish cultural values through a critical and universal lens. These introspective efforts were seen as vital for increasing students' self-awareness and fostering greater openness toward diverse cultural perspectives.

One participant described this dual awareness as essential to cultivating globally grounded individuals:

"What matters in this process is being able to interpret Turkish cultural values through a universal lens and support students' development as individuals who are both rooted in their culture and globally responsible." (Speaker 10)

Another teacher highlighted how connecting personal identity with cultural exploration deepens students' understanding of both themselves and the wider world:

> We also feel the need to help students connect with their personal histories, identities, and societies during lessons. This awareness not only helps students understand the outside world but also contributes to their understanding of their inner identities and a deeper exploration of their own culture. (Speaker 12)

A third teacher likened the practice to holding up a cultural mirror:

"I particularly ask students to evaluate their own cultural behaviours from an outsider's perspective. It's somewhat like holding up a cultural 'mirror.' A student who questions their own habits becomes much more open to understanding other cultures." (Speaker 2)

These findings suggest that intercultural awareness is a two-way process—rooted not only in recognizing the "other" but also in redefining the "self." Reflecting on one's own culture allows students to ground their identities while simultaneously stepping toward global citizenship. It creates a space where cultural ownership and openness can coexist.

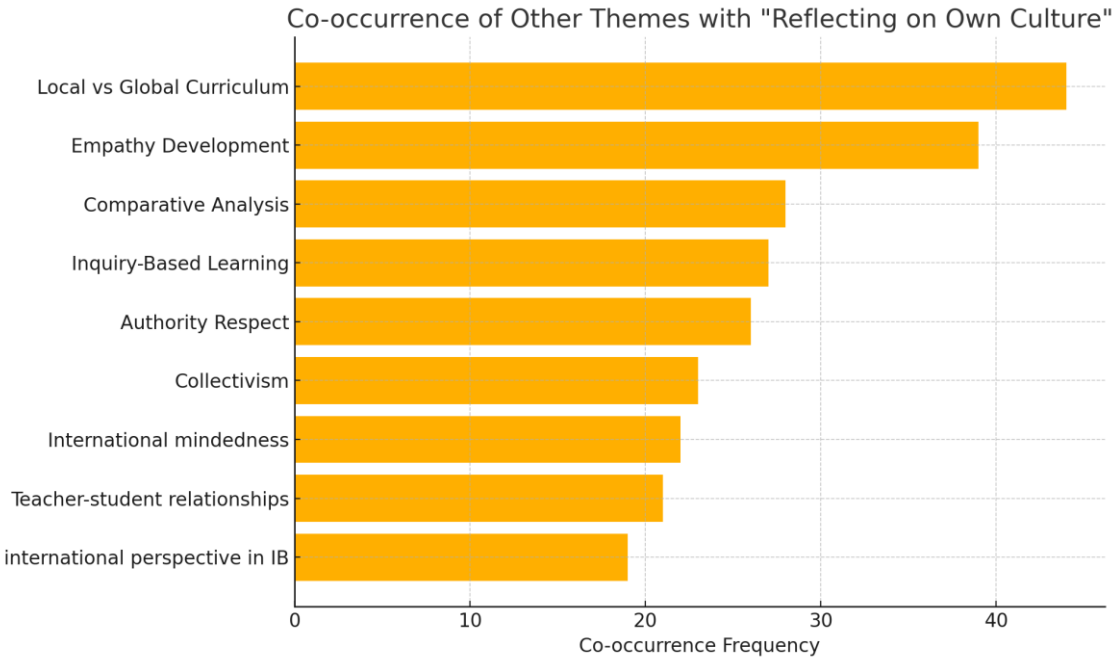


Figure 13 Top 10 co-occurring themes with “Reflecting on Own Culture”

Figure 13 shows the ten themes that most frequently co-occurred with R*eflecting on Own Culture* during the coding of semi-structured interviews with IBDP teachers. *Local vs Global Curriculum* (45 times), *Empathy Development* (41 times) and *Comparative Analysis* (29 times) appear among the most frequent associations, highlighting how cultural reflection is connected with both educational and emotional dimensions in the classroom.

Other related themes include *Inquiry-Based Learning*, *Authority Respect*, *Collectivism*, *International Mindedness*, *Teacher-student Relationships*, and *International Perspective in IB.* These indicate that cultural reflection is not only about personal identity but is also shaped by how learning is structured and how group values are discussed in the classroom.

Overall, the data suggests that Reflecting on Own Culture is a key part of intercultural awareness in the IB classroom. It helps students connect personal understanding with academic learning, while developing openness, empathy, and global awareness.

4.2 Discussions on Study Findings

In this section, the findings of the study are analysed and interpreted in relation to the research questions. The data are derived from the responses of participating teachers, the majority of whom have over a decade of experience in IBDP. The teachers' perspectives on intercultural awareness within the context of the IBDP are examined through pedagogical approaches influenced by Turkish cultural values. The themes emerging from qualitative analysis are discussed in relation to existing literature and their potential contribution to the field is considered.

While this chapter emphasized the top ten themes for in-depth discussion, it is important to recognize that several additional themes including Global Citizenship, Pedagogical Approaches for promoting Awareness, Cultural Bias Awareness, Family Role and TOK Strategies also emerged during the coding process. These less frequent themes revealed subtle but meaningful cultural tensions that coexisted with dominant patterns. For instance, occasional references to family role or cultural bias awareness were found to intersect with broader issues such as authority respect and empathy development. These peripheral insights, though not the primary focus, add interpretive depth to the study and indicate potential directions for future research, especially regarding how external sociocultural factors shape classroom-level intercultural awareness.

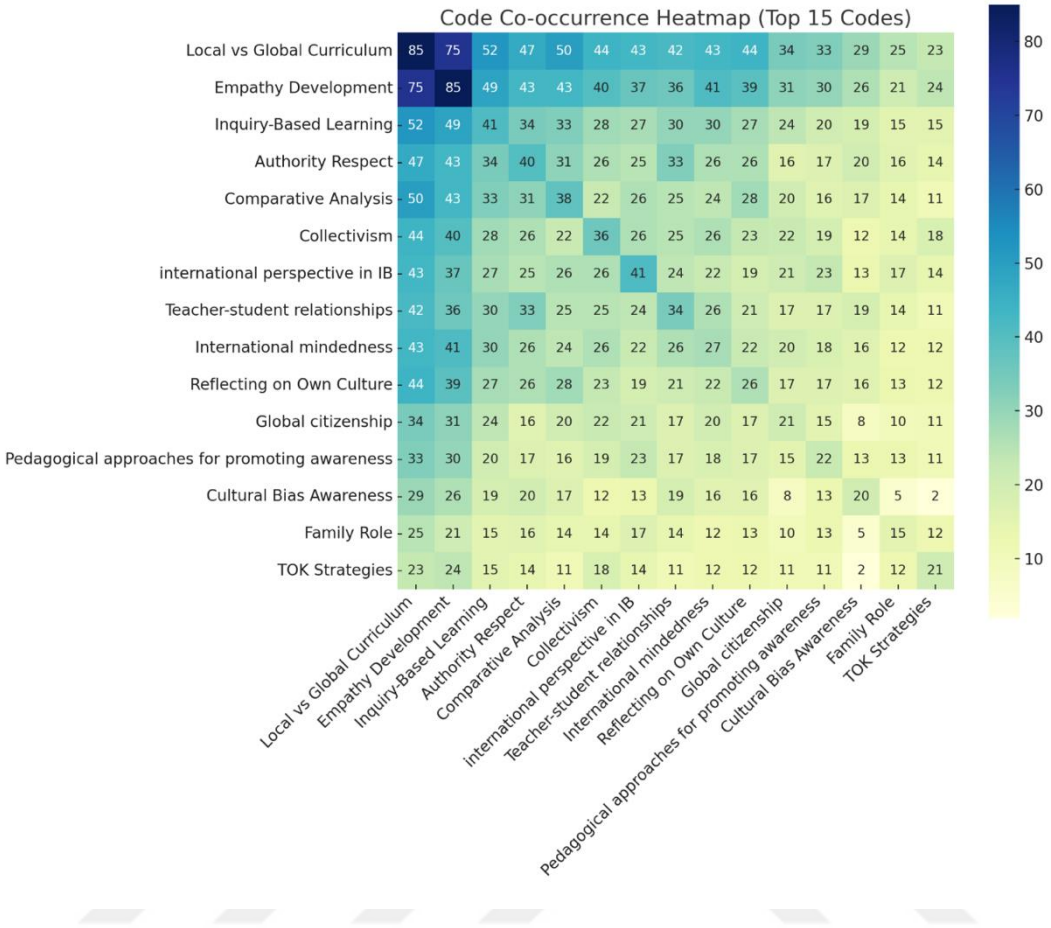


Figure 14 Theme Co-occurrence Heatmap of the Top 15 Themes in Interview Data

Figure 14 illustrates the co-occurrence patterns among the top 15 themes. It highlights how frequently discussed themes such as "*Local vs Global Curriculum*" and "*Empathy Development*" often intersect, while also showing how less frequent themes like "*Family Role*" or "*Cultural Bias Awareness*" relate to broader pedagogical patterns. This visual supports the layered nature of intercultural awareness discussed in this chapter.

4.2.1 Discussion on findings in terms of research question 1 – The Role of Turkish Culture in Shaping Intercultural Awareness of IBDP Teachers

The findings of this study show that for Turkish IBDP teachers, intercultural awareness is not just a theoretical idea. Instead, it becomes something very real and practical—something they experience and manage every day in their classrooms. These teachers often find themselves trying to balance two worlds: the values and traditions of Turkish culture, and the global educational principles promoted by the International Baccalaureate

(IB) programme. Rather than seeing these two worlds as opposite or in conflict, many teachers see them as complementary. They try to build bridges between local and global perspectives, creating a more meaningful and culturally relevant learning experience for their students.

This approach reflects what Marshall (2019) calls “context-sensitive international education.” According to this view, it’s important that global education programmes like the IB are flexible enough to fit into local cultures and traditions. The use of Turkish cultural values, especially collectivism and respect for authority, as starting points for class discussions illustrates how local values are not discarded but reinterpreted in light of IB ideals. Similarly, Cinli (2023) found that Turkish IB students are able to embrace international values, like being open-minded or caring, without feeling like they are losing their own cultural identity. In this way, teachers and students are not just “following” the IB curriculum—they are adapting it in a way that makes sense within the Turkish context. The majority of the participant teachers mentioned that they use the core values of the Turkish culture such as collectivism as a starting point to begin a discussion, interpretation or critical analysis. As Marshall (2019) states that some culturalists criticise The McDonaldization of international education ending the cultural diversity, this study shows that it can be referred to as "glocalization", meaning the blending of global ideas with local values.

This dual role of Turkish IB teachers as both representatives of national educational norms and implementers of global pedagogical frameworks requires a uniqe set of competencies. Rather than merely applying the IB curriculum, teachers in this study demonstrated an ability to interpret and adapt it to culturally specific classroom practices. This finding resonates with Sercu’s (2006) argument that intercultural teaching requires both theoretical understanding and practical training. Nine teachers reported that their professional learning both cognitive and emotional enabled them to navigate cultural tensions with sensitivity and intentionality. These findings suggest that fostering intercultural awareness is not simply about following a global curriculum. Instead, it requires teachers to think critically about their own teaching within the cultural realities of their classrooms. In this sense, what matters is not applying a model as it is, but adapting it in a way that makes sense for both students and the wider social context.

One of the key cultural values that shapes this experience is respect for authority, which is a strong part of Turkish educational traditions. As identified by Hofstede (2001), Turkey has a relatively high power distance, meaning students are usually expected to listen to the teacher, follow instructions, and avoid challenging authority. At first, this can make it harder for students to participate in open discussions or ask critical questions—especially in IB classes like Theory of Knowledge (TOK), where questioning is encouraged. Even a simple act like standing up when the teacher enters the classroom is a striking example of showing respect and students are not only taught to respect teachers but are also socially conditioned to seek their approval. This dynamic often makes students hesitant to express disagreement or engage in open debate, especially in contexts where questioning could be perceived as disrespectful or disloyal.

However, the teachers interviewed in this study do not see this cultural value as a problem. Instead, they use it as a starting point. They build trust with students and slowly guide them toward more interactive and inquiry-based learning. In this process, they act as cultural translators—respecting the traditions of the Turkish classroom while also opening space for global thinking. By intentionally creating safe learning environments, using scaffolding techniques, and setting an example of how to engage in respectful dialogue, teachers help students reinterpret the idea of "respect." Over time, students come to understand that contributing ideas, even opposing ones, is not a challenge to authority but a valid form of academic participation. Importantly, students begin to recognize that true teacher approval in the IBDP framework is not based on obedience, but on their ability to think critically and engage respectfully. These findings support the work of Metli (2018) and Gönen (2024), who also observed that Turkish IB teachers often mix traditional roles with more modern, student-centred teaching approaches. They don't reject the idea of authority, but they reshape it into something more dialogical and flexible. This balancing act also reflects the OECD's (2018) emphasis on developing global competence, which requires both intercultural knowledge and the ability to interact across cultural contexts. In this sense, Turkish IB teachers are not only adapting pedagogy but also actively preparing students for participation in a globalized world. Similar to Jackson's (2005) findings in the Dutch context, they integrate elements of the host culture, in this study teachers integrate Turkish traditions such as respect for authority into intercultural education, transforming local norms into pathways that support international

mindedness, nurture intercultural awareness, and gradually build intercultural competence.

Another important aspect of this cultural negotiation is teachers' self-awareness. Out of fourteen, twelve teachers said that working within the IB programme helped them reflect more deeply on their own cultural values and assumptions. For some, it was the first time they really questioned how Turkish cultural habits, such as valuing hierarchy, avoiding uncertainty, or prioritizing group harmony, affect their own teaching. This echoes Byram's (2008) theory of intercultural competence, which means the ability to understand one's own cultural position before understanding others. In this way, intercultural awareness begins not from learning about other cultures, but from reflecting on one's own culture with new eyes. In fact, as an English language teacher, this idea reminded me of a similar process in language learning. Just as being aware of one's first language can enhance second language learning, cultural reflection deepens intercultural understanding. This personal connection I observed aligns with the notion of *metalinguistic awareness*—the ability to think about and reflect on language—which researchers have linked to more successful second language acquisition (Roehr-Brackin, 2018). While these are distinct domains, I believe both share a common foundation: meaningful learning often begins by turning the lens inward.

The findings of this study also highlights the importance of distinguishing between international mindedness, intercultural awareness, and intercultural competence. As outlined earlier, international mindedness reflects a broader worldview and sense of global responsibility (Hill, 2007), intercultural awareness emphasizes understanding one's own cultural position while being open to others (Byram, 2020), and intercultural competence involves the practical ability to interact effectively across cultural contexts (Deardorff, 2006). Turkish IB teachers in this study move between these levels; they encourage international mindedness through global themes and IB philosophy, foster intercultural awareness by prompting students to reflect on their own cultural assumptions, and begin to build intercultural competence by modelling and scaffolding respectful dialogue. This shows that intercultural learning does not happen all at once or in a single step. It is a process that moves through different stages, where teachers first encourage students to adjust their attitudes, then guide them to think more deeply about

their own and others' cultural perspectives, and finally support them in gaining the skills they need to communicate and work with people from different backgrounds in a respectful and confident way.

In summary, Turkish IB teachers do not simply "apply" the IB framework—they adapt it through a culturally responsive lens. Their teaching becomes a dynamic process of negotiation, reflection, and redefinition. This process does not dilute the IB's international values; instead, it makes them more authentic and sustainable within the local context.

4.2.2 Discussion on findings in terms of research question 2 – How IBDP Teachers Foster Intercultural Awareness

In the Turkish IBDP context, teachers are more than just deliverers of a curriculum. They act as intercultural guides who help students understand different perspectives while still staying connected to their own cultural roots. They are constantly navigating between global ideas brought by the IB and the cultural expectations shaped by Turkish society. This makes their role both complex and powerful.

One of the strongest themes in the findings was empathy. Teachers described empathy not only as something nice to have, but as a core part of intercultural education. According to them, helping students understand how others feel is the first step toward building awareness of different cultures. Teachers use a variety of strategies to develop this empathy. For example, they introduce literature from many cultures, encourage open conversations in the classroom, and guide students in community service projects. These activities are designed to help students go beyond simply "knowing" about other cultures; they learn to feel with others, to understand lives that are different from their own. This approach reflects Deardorff's (2006) model of intercultural competence, where changing one's attitude, like becoming more open-minded and respectful, comes before gaining intellectual knowledge about cultures. It also matches the IB Learner Profile, which promotes values like being "caring" and "open-minded." Teachers like Speaker 2 and Speaker 6 gave clear examples of this transformation. They shared how students started to notice their own biases, became more self-aware, and developed more thoughtful and respectful ways of thinking. This emotional change often led to a deeper form of learning. It supports Banks' (2015) idea that multicultural education should not only focus on

information or skills, but should also help students grow emotionally and ethically. The strong focus on empathy in this study connects well with what Jones et al. (2018) and Van der Lans and Beelen (2018) describe as the core of international mindedness: being able to see things from another person's perspective, staying open to different views, and building understanding based on respect. The way Turkish IB teachers bring these into their classrooms shows that their work goes beyond teaching knowledge and supports students in developing the attitudes that make intercultural learning meaningful.

Another key method used by Turkish IB teachers is inquiry-based learning. This style of teaching encourages students to ask questions, challenge ideas, and think critically. However, many Turkish students are not used to this approach at first. Their previous schooling experiences; specially when they do not have Primary Years Programme (PYP) or Middle Years Programme (MYP) experience, are often based on memorizing facts and preparing for exams. They may feel unsure or uncomfortable when they are asked to think independently or deal with open-ended problems. Teachers in the study said they understand these challenges. That's why they often start with guided inquiry, offering structure and support at the beginning. Over time, students become more confident and comfortable with thinking critically and dealing with complexity. This shift supports what Hill (2007) and Leach (1969) describe as the foundation of IB philosophy: education that is built on reflection, questioning, and inquiry. It also connects well with Hofstede's (2001) theory of uncertainty avoidance. In cultures like Türkiye's, people tend to prefer clear rules and well-defined tasks. So when students face uncertainty in learning, they need time and guidance to adjust. IB teachers in the Turkish context meet this need by carefully designing lessons that gradually introduce ambiguity; through journals, discussions, or case studies, in a safe and supportive class environment. This gradual move from guided to independent inquiry reflects what the OECD (2018) describes as global competence: the ability to examine real-world issues, consider cultural perspectives, and communicate across differences. It also connects with Banks (2008, 2015), who argues that multicultural education should not only give students information but also help them form values and commitments for living in diverse and democratic societies. Turkish IB teachers' approach shows how inquiry can serve both purposes at the same time.

Teachers also said they often use comparative strategies to help students become more aware of cultural differences and also similarities. They ask students to look at global issues or literary works from different cultures and compare them to their own experiences and values. This technique helps students understand not only others, but also themselves. For example, when discussing a global topic like climate change, teachers might ask students how this issue is discussed in Türkiye compared to other parts of the world. Or when analysing a novel, they might ask how the values in the story compare with traditional Turkish values. This approach supports the work of Lai, Shum, and Zhang (2014), who argue that intercultural learning is strongest when students are encouraged to both reflect on their own culture and compare it with others. This dual process, often referred to as "cultural mirroring", helps learners go beyond merely noticing that cultural differences exist. Instead, it encourages them to ask deeper questions about where those differences come from and how they influence the way people think, act, and relate to the world. In my view, this reflective comparison is essential for moving from surface-level awareness to a more meaningful, empathetic understanding of cultural diversity.

While this study does not include teachers from non-IB schools, it is still useful to consider findings from earlier research for comparison. For example, Ece (2019) found that there was no significant difference in intercultural awareness levels between educators working in IB and non-IB schools in Türkiye. Although this study does not include teachers from non-IB schools, the IB teachers who participated clearly demonstrated more intentional, reflective, and sustained efforts to develop both their own and their students' intercultural awareness. This contradiction may be due to differences in research design and focus. While Ece's study used quantitative survey methods, the present research employed qualitative interviews, allowing for deeper insights into teachers' beliefs, strategies, and classroom practices. It is also possible that the IB programme's impact becomes more visible over time, especially in schools where teachers are actively engaged with intercultural pedagogy. This highlights the importance of considering teacher agency and school culture, rather than assuming that structural programme membership alone determines intercultural competence.

4.2.3 Discussion on findings in terms of research question 3 – Challenges Faced by Turkish Students in Developing Intercultural Awareness

The findings of this study reveal that while Turkish students show strong potential for developing intercultural awareness, they often face cultural and educational challenges during the transition to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). These challenges are not due to a lack of interest or ability, but rather reflect deep-rooted habits from the local education system and broader cultural expectations. Teachers play a key role in helping students navigate these tensions.

One of the most commonly reported challenges is the difficulty students experience when asked to engage in inquiry-based learning. In many Turkish schools, students are used to teacher-centred instruction, where the teacher gives the information and students are expected to memorize and repeat it for exams. As a result, when they enter the IBDP, where they are expected to ask questions, reflect, and think independently, they generally have difficulty in adapting at first. Although teachers did not explicitly frame their experiences in these terms, the challenges described here can also be interpreted through Hofstede's (2001) masculinity versus femininity dimension. Türkiye has been identified as relatively masculine in orientation, with a strong emphasis on achievement, competition, and measurable success, while the IB philosophy is more aligned with feminine values such as cooperation, empathy, and balance. This contrast helps explain why students accustomed to exam-oriented, competitive learning environments may find it difficult at first to adapt to activities that prioritize collaboration and reflection. Seen in this way, the findings are consistent with earlier cultural analyses and underline the importance of guiding students as they shift from competitive to more cooperative modes of learning. Moreover, several teachers described how students initially struggle to express their opinions, especially in courses like Theory of Knowledge (TOK), which demand open discussion and critical thinking. Some students are afraid of saying the "wrong" thing. Others are simply not used to being asked for their opinions at all. This reflects Hofstede's (2001) concept of uncertainty avoidance; in cultures like Türkiye, learners prefer structure and clarity, so unfamiliar tasks that involve ambiguity or multiple interpretations can be stressful. Teachers address this by creating safe learning environments where students feel supported and encouraged. As some participants

explained, they begin with small, structured tasks and slowly move toward more open-ended discussions. Over time, students gain confidence and become more comfortable with the idea that there is not always one right answer. This process supports the development of intellectual risk-taking, a key component of the IB learner profile.

Another major challenge for Turkish students comes from the cultural value of respect for authority. In Turkish classrooms, the teacher is traditionally seen as the primary source of knowledge and moral guidance. This is consistent with Hofstede's dimension of power distance, which describes how societies accept and expect unequal power relationships. In the IBDP, however, students are encouraged to see the teacher more as a facilitator or learning partner rather than a distant authority. This change can create confusion. Some students may feel uncomfortable questioning their teachers or disagreeing in discussions because they fear it will be seen as rude or disrespectful. Teachers in the study noted this tension and described how they work to shift students' mind-set. They emphasize that respectful questioning is not the same as disrespect. By modelling open dialogue and validating student opinions, they help students understand that critical thinking and respect can go together. This slow cultural shift encourages more democratic and interactive classroom relationships, as described by Keser (2020) and Gönen (2024). The hesitation to question authority also resonates with the OECD's (2018) framework of global competence, which underlines the importance of engaging with diverse perspectives in respectful ways. If students are not given opportunities to practice this skill, intercultural awareness may remain at a surface level. Banks (2008, 2015) similarly stresses that multicultural education must address both cognitive understanding and affective development. The fear of appearing disrespectful may create an emotional barrier for the student leading to be seen as simply lacking knowledge. Teachers play a crucial role in reducing this fear through modelling and reassurance.

Another challenge is related to collectivist values, which are strong in Turkish culture. Students often prefer to work in groups, seek harmony, and avoid standing out too much. While this can lead to strong teamwork and community feeling, it can also make it harder for students to speak up individually or take strong personal stances especially when these views are different from those of the group or the teacher. This tension reflects what Bıçakçı (2024) describes as the challenge of individual voice in collectivist cultures.

Students may hesitate to express disagreement or take risks, especially in front of peers or teachers. However, IBDP learning encourages students to develop their own perspectives, engage in debate, and become independent thinkers. These findings are also in line with Marshall's (2019) view of context-sensitive international education. The challenges Turkish students experience are not signs of resistance to IB values but outcomes of a different educational culture. When teachers design strategies that build on students' collectivist strengths while slowly expanding space for individual voice, they create hybrid practices that allow intercultural awareness to develop in ways that make sense in the local context.

Teachers in the study try to build on the strengths of collectivist culture, such as collaboration, empathy, and community responsibility, while also helping students build the confidence to express themselves as individuals. Activities such as reflective writing, small group discussions, and peer feedback allow students to practice speaking up in low-risk settings, gradually building their individual agency within a supportive environment.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion:

While many previous studies have focused on student development or broad curriculum analysis, this research places the teacher at the centre, not only as a curriculum implementer but as an intercultural mediator who actively navigates between global ideals and local cultural realities. In doing so, it offers a unique contribution to the existing literature on intercultural awareness in international education by exploring how Turkish IB educators blend traditional values like authority and collectivism with IB values such as inquiry and global citizenship. This blending process introduces the concept of "culturally hybrid classrooms" – not in terms of mode of delivery, but in terms of cultural orientation – that are shaped by negotiation between global and local values. Moreover, the study also provides a rare perspective from the Turkish context, which remains underrepresented in global IB discourse. In doing so, the research helps expand our understanding of how international education can be locally meaningful while remaining globally relevant.

This study aimed to explore the impact of Turkish culture on the intercultural awareness of teachers in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). The findings revealed that teachers do not operate in a cultural bubble; rather, they work at the intersection of local cultural values and global educational goals. IBDP teachers in the Turkish context actively reflect on and reinterpret cultural norms such as collectivism, respect for authority, and uncertainty avoidance in order to support the development of intercultural awareness, both in themselves and in their students.

The results also highlight that intercultural awareness is not only a cognitive process but also an emotional and reflective journey. Teachers employ empathy, comparative analysis, and inquiry-based strategies to cultivate learning environments where students feel safe to explore different perspectives. However, students also face challenges rooted in prior educational experiences and cultural habits, such as hesitancy in questioning authority or discomfort with open-ended inquiry.

These findings align with key intercultural education literature including Byram (2008), Deardorff (2006), Hofstede (2001), and Marshall (2019), but they also provide a unique contribution by highlighting how Turkish educators act as cultural mediators in IB classrooms. This ongoing negotiation between international curricula and local expectations creates classrooms that reflect a blended educational identity.

Overall, the development of intercultural awareness in Turkish IB classrooms depends on how well teachers and students are supported in making these cultural and cognitive transitions. Rather than focusing only on curriculum design, schools must also invest in professional development, reflective teaching, and culturally responsive leadership. Only then the IB's vision of creating globally minded, open-hearted learners can become an everyday classroom reality rather than just a policy statement.

In addition to its practical relevance, this study also makes a theoretical contribution by clarifying the distinctions between international mindedness, intercultural awareness, and intercultural competence. These three concepts, often used interchangeably in the literature, emerged in this study as complementary but distinct dimensions. Turkish IB teachers demonstrated how they foster international mindedness by encouraging openness to global perspectives, promote intercultural awareness by helping students reflect on their own cultural assumptions, and support intercultural competence by guiding them to practice respectful interaction. This layered understanding enriches the conceptual framework of intercultural education.

Like all qualitative research, this study has its limitations. The findings are based on a small group of IBDP teachers in Istanbul, and the reliance on semi-structured interviews means that classroom dynamics and student voices were not directly observed. The complexity of culture and the limited timeframe of the study also mean that not all aspects of intercultural awareness could be fully captured. These limitations, however, do not diminish the value of the insights; rather, they highlight opportunities for further research and provide a basis for the recommendations that follow.

Recommendations for Practice and Future Research:

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for educators, policymakers and researchers:

For IB Schools and Educators:

- Teacher training programs should include modules on cultural self-awareness and culturally responsive pedagogy, helping teachers actively engage with their own values as part of intercultural development.
- Schools should provide structured but flexible inquiry scaffolds, especially for students transitioning from traditional educational models to IB's inquiry-based approach.
- Classroom practices should balance collectivist values (e.g., harmony, collaboration) with opportunities for individual voice and independent thinking.

For Policymakers and IB Leadership:

- Local adaptations of the IB framework should be encouraged and supported, recognizing that international mindedness develops best when rooted in local cultural understanding.
- National teacher accreditation systems can consider integrating intercultural competence as a professional standard, especially for globally-oriented programmes like the IB within the national systems.

For Researchers:

- Future studies could explore student perspectives to better understand how intercultural awareness is experienced from the learner's point of view.
- Comparative studies between Turkish and non-Turkish IB contexts could shed light on how cultural variables shape intercultural learning across different national settings.

- Longitudinal research could track how intercultural awareness develops over time, especially across multiple academic years or grade levels.

Implications:

The findings of this study carry important implications for the practice of international education in Türkiye. Although the IB Diploma Programme is designed as a global curriculum, in Türkiye the vast majority of IB schools are not international in composition; most of their students and teachers are Turkish. This means that similar cultural challenges such as adapting to inquiry-based learning, negotiating respect for authority, and balancing collectivist traditions with individual voice are experienced collectively rather than in isolated cases. Creating structured platforms for dialogue where teachers and students can openly share strategies, struggles, and reflections would transform these shared challenges into opportunities for collective learning. Such exchanges could help normalize the difficulties of transition, reduce feelings of isolation, and foster greater intercultural awareness by making the adaptation process itself more visible. Ultimately, these implications highlight that in the Turkish context, international education is most impactful when it acknowledges the local cultural majority and actively supports collaborative meaning-making, ensuring that global ideals are not just imported but rooted and sustained through shared practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Etik Kurul Kararı

"Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli *"Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge"* ile bildirilen 6698 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. As an IBDP teacher in Turkey what can you say about the importance of intercultural awareness in the education of students?
2. In what ways do you think Turkish culture may be influencing your teaching approach and interactions with students in the IBDP program?
3. Can you provide examples of how Turkish cultural values or norms have shaped your classroom practices?
4. How do you incorporate elements of Turkish culture into the IBDP curriculum while maintaining its international focus?
5. Are there specific teaching strategies you employ to promote intercultural awareness among your students?
6. Do you encounter any challenges when trying to balance Turkish cultural influences with the international aspects of the IBDP program? If yes, any examples?
7. How does your school support you in fostering intercultural awareness among your students?
8. How do students and parents in the Turkish context perceive the international elements of the IBDP program?
9. How has your own perspective on intercultural awareness evolved or changed since you started teaching in the IBDP program?
10. What have been the most significant lessons you've learned about promoting intercultural awareness?

Appendix 3: Full List of Thematic Codes

Theme number	Theme Name	Description
1	Local vs Global Curriculum	Balancing Turkish educational norms with IB framework.
2	Empathy Development	Use of emotional strategies to build understanding of others.
3	Inquiry-Based Learning	Promotion of critical questioning and independent thinking.
4	Authority Respect	Frequent emphasis on teacher-student hierarchy and traditional respect.
5	Comparative Analysis	Cross-cultural comparisons in classroom discussions.
6	Collectivism	Emphasis on group harmony and social cohesion.
7	International Perspective in IB	Views and experiences related to understanding different cultures through the IB global curriculum.
8	Teacher-student Relationships	The nature of interpersonal dynamics and communication between teachers and students.
9	International Mindedness	Openness to diverse cultural values and the willingness to engage with global perspectives.
10	Reflecting on Own Culture	The process of becoming more aware of one's own cultural identity through intercultural interactions.
11	Global Citizenship	Discussion of international responsibilities and identities.
12	Pedagogical Approaches for Promoting Awareness	Teaching methods used to develop intercultural understanding, such as discussions, role-play, and comparative tasks.
13	Cultural Bias Awareness	Recognition and reflection on personal or societal cultural prejudices that may affect learning.
14	Family Role	Influence of family values and parental pressure.
15	TOK Strategies	Specific Theory of Knowledge techniques (such as knowledge questions and perspectives) used to foster intercultural thinking.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Güneş YURDASİPER DAL

EDUCATION

Degree	**Year**	**Institution**
MA	2022 -	Maltepe University, Graduate School, Department of Educational Sciences Educational Management and Supervision IB Certificate (With Thesis)
BA	1998-2003	Gazi University, Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	**Institution**	**Enrolment**
2008 -	Maltepe University	English Language Instructor
2005 – 2008	TUDEV (Turkish Maritime Education Foundation)	English Language Instructor
2004 – 2005	Doğuş University	English Language Instructor
2003 – 2004	Wall Street Institute	English Lab Teacher