

# International People's College (IPC)

## Conceptual Framework

*"The International People's College is a home to stay,  
a home for different colours, a home for different cultures,  
a home for different nations, but a home for one soul.  
IPC is a place to share, a place to laugh, a place to make friends,  
a place to express your talent, a place for happiness,  
a place to learn about the world and about yourself."*

Tirhani Maluleke, student from South Africa, Autumn 1997

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## 1. Purpose

The International People's College works within the Grundtvigian/Kold *folkehøjskole* (non-formal residential adult education) tradition to advance dialogue and understanding between peoples. The College's work is based upon the principles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and aims at enabling its students to actively support peaceful and democratic development in the world and to work for social and economic justice. The International People's College offers a pedagogic content and physical framework where students from different countries live, work and study together. The college's work is, in conformity with the Danish *Folkehøjskole* Law, of a liberal adult educational character.

## 2. Background

The International People's College was established in 1921 as a direct result of the First World War. The founder of IPC, Dr. Peter Manniche, had as a point of departure for his work a conviction that cultural diversity was a positive quality, and that the best means to counteract enemy images and xenophobia was a direct meeting in respect and dialogue between representatives of different cultures. Through meetings between cultures not only knowledge of other cultures was increased, but also understanding of the special and valuable nature of one's own culture.

These attitudes have given direction to the school's work throughout all of its history. With a basis in the Danish *Folkehøjskole* Law, IPC has functioned as a centre for international dialogue where *folkehøjskole* activities have been supplemented with international conferences and seminars. Throughout the years more than 60,000 foreigners have been students at IPC, and in that manner the school has fulfilled an important function as a bridge builder between Denmark and foreign cultures. In 1988 the United Nations appointed IPC a UN Peace Messenger.

The school's activities are carried out in close contact with the local community. In addition, internationally composed teaching staff and guest teachers at IPC cooperate actively with organisations and institutions all over Denmark. Gradually the school has built up a national and international network with adult educational institutions, experts engaged in international affairs and with broad based non-governmental organizations in Denmark and in the world.

### **3. Basic Principles for IPC Activities**

All activities around the school should reflect the following six core values:

- Respect for and openness to cultures, views, and opinions different from one's own (not closed-mindedness or intolerance)
- Gender equality (not sexism)
- Democratic consultation in matters affecting the community (not authoritarianism)
- Respect for life and non-violence (no harm to others, not force over principled discussion)
- Promotion of community and social responsibility / sensitivity to the presence and needs of others (not selfish individualism)
- Sustainability / stewardship over community resources (not wastefulness or abuse of natural and human-made resources)

#### **Pedagogy, Education and *folkehøjskole* Environment**

The school's pedagogy is based upon dialogue and respect for the opinions of others. The teaching challenges the students to reconsider their own opinions and relate to views and values of others, and it teaches the students to respect the rules for sound argumentation and to distinguish between facts and assertions. Through the teaching the students are thus inspired and encouraged to believe that social conditions can be changed through their own efforts after their stay at IPC.

The students' very different backgrounds demand a high degree of differentiation as regards subject matter and methods of teaching, and a flexible structure which makes it possible to change the school's teaching plan in step with the changes taking place in the world and the changes in the students' needs and wishes.

A comparative and cross-cultural perspective along with a humanistic commitment should pervade all offers of teaching and activities, including questions of values and ethics. Importance is placed upon skills for working to improve concrete social conditions and to stand up and communicate one's point of view. Within the profile of the subjects taught, global and regional studies should have a central place along with introduction to Danish language and culture. Theoretical and practical-creative elements shall, as far as possible, be integrated in all subjects, and there should be room for creative subjects and sports to stand

independently in the teaching plan. The teaching plan and the subjects offered should be organised so that the subjects support and complement each other with the objective that the school can offer as broad and differentiated a teaching programme as possible. The pedagogical variation between, for example, lectures, discussions, project work, group work, practice, student presentations, excursions and study trips, is important. The experience and the differences of the personnel and the students are resources that should be utilised in the teaching.

IPC attempts to reduce the barriers between intellectual and manual work. It is expected that the various types of staff cooperate actively so that the practical personnel can be included in the pedagogic work as far as possible, just as IPC teachers support the practical staff in the daily life of the school.

In agreement with the fundamental principles in *folkehøjskole* thinking, the International People's College wishes to build up an environment, which strengthens the sense of community among the students and between students and staff. Besides the normal teaching, IPC and its staff should offer a broad spectrum of activities, which both in form and content strengthen the school's overall objectives. In order to strengthen the *folkehøjskole* environment, it is a high priority to offer a significant number of the staff modern housing facilities at campus. All staff living at campus are expected to be willing to participate to a certain extent and outside of their normal working hours in the social life at IPC.

### **Development and Economy**

The school seeks a stable and positive development by systematically developing its activities and teaching offers and by coordinating its pedagogic, marketing, technical and economic planning and administration. In order to strengthen its work to further peace and international understanding and to contribute to the school's economy, the school will seek collaboration with NGOs and educational institutions internationally. As an extension of its international engagement IPC will continue to play an active role both in the local society and at a national level in Denmark.

In order to have a sound basis for the further development of the school's work, intermediate aims and indicators for the various activities have been established, and continuous evaluations are undertaken in relationship to these aims and indicators.

IPC operates on the basis of a long-term economic strategy where a healthy operational economy makes it possible to further develop the school's facilities and the teaching courses offered, provide a good level of maintenance for the grounds, buildings and inventory, and reduce the debts. Purposeful marketing is an element in the school's activities and contributes to securing the school's economic consolidation.

## **4. Organisation**

The School Council, which is IPC highest authority, consists of people who support the school's purpose and who are interested in the school's work. The Council elects from among its members an Executive Board which is responsible for the overall leadership and economy of IPC.

The Executive Board appoints and dismisses teachers, according to the recommendation from the Principal, who is appointed by the School Council. The Teacher's Council, which consists of the Principal and the teachers, has the right to express itself to the Executive Board in relation to appointments and dismissals of teachers.

The Principal is the daily manager of IPC in dialog with the staff and has overall responsibility for the school's pedagogy and the operation of IPC according to its objectives. The individual teacher is however responsible for the pedagogy and the subject matter content of his/her teaching, and that it lives up to the school's objectives.

IPC staff include the Principal, the teachers and the staff of the following three departments: the administration, the kitchen, and the service department. Each of these is led by a department head.

The overall coordination of the work of IPC takes place at the Liaison Committee, which according to the Articles of Association of IPC, consists of the Principal and the representatives of the teachers and of each of the three departments. Staff meetings are held regularly with the participation of all the employees, so it is the practice that the department leaders are elected to participate in the Liaison Committee meetings.

Statements from the Liaison Committee and from the Teachers Council are requested and are taken into consideration in all cases directly affecting the work and well-being of the staff. In addition, the daily management shall take place in cooperation with the staff and the students.

The students organise themselves in the Student Council.