

The International People's College

Strategy 2012 – 2017

1. Introduction: Purpose of strategy

The International People's College (IPC) has served as a venue for international dialogue and learning since its foundation in 1921. The school has brought people from all corners of the world together demonstrating that national, cultural and political diversity does not constrain human curiosity and ambition to finding common ground and promoting mutual understanding and respect. In fact, IPC is a living testimony that diversity can provide a strong contribution to shared efforts for peaceful and democratic development. This institutional experience is vested with the broad range of IPC stakeholders: students, staff, council members as well as many partners across the world. And the experience manifests itself in the multitude of everyday educational activities: lectures and leisure, debates and dialogue, excursions and exchanges.

Yet IPC also requires direction and determination to guide its future work and to serve as a basis for setting priorities among the many different opportunities on offer for an institution which has remained curious and ambitious to take up new challenges. The new strategy will provide a bridge between on the one hand the overall foundation of the school in regard to its rooting in the folkehøjskole tradition, its core values and relevant legislation and on the other hand its regular operations: short and long courses etc. The strategy has a six year horizon to provide a stable framework for rolling annual plans which will be linked to budgets and specific targets (number of students and their geographical origin, specific projects undertaken with external partners, new pedagogical initiatives, renovation of buildings etc.).

This strategy therefore

- Identifies focus areas to which the school should direct its primary attention
- Establish goals which IPC stakeholders will strive to achieve

The above will allow IPC to position itself and harness its uniqueness relative to other actors. It should also provide an effective platform for communication and marketing efforts directed at potential partners and prospective IPC students. And it is aimed at providing a recurring source of inspiration for staff, council and board members in priority setting in the next six years to come.

2. IPC Foundation

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 continued to give direction to the school's work throughout its history.

IPC is an independent, non-profit foundation and is free of any set political, religious or sectarian ideology. 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 thousands of Danes and people from abroad have been students at IPC, and in that manner the school has fulfilled an important function as a

bridge builder between Denmark and other cultures. In 1988 the United Nations appointed IPC a UN Peace Messenger.

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. Academic insights and learning blend with creative activities and an emphasis on humanistic values and methods. The college's work is, in conformity with the Danish *Folkehøjskole* Law, of a liberal adult educational character.

IPC bases her work on the following six core values

- *Respect and openness*

Today people are exposed to a variety of cultures, views, and opinions different from their own. IPC encourages curiosity and exploration of alternative views to promote knowledge and understanding hence challenging established positions. Eventually the aim is to stimulate reflection and enhanced self-awareness thereby appreciating one's own origin and history.

- *Gender equality*

Equality between women and men is a necessary prerequisite for sustainable development which will enable citizens realise their full potential while enjoying equal rights. Equality does not imply that we are all the same but that individually and collectively we can enjoy similar opportunities not being constrained by traditions and stereotypes which confine men and women to separate and distinct roles.

- *Democratic consultation*

Learning and understanding require involvement and participation. This concerns classroom activities as well as the overall IPC management. The school practice should demonstrate the fundamental value and as well as the everyday practicality of consultation, involvement and empowerment.

- *Respect for life and non-violence*

Diversity and differences are unavoidable in today's complex world, yet IPC believes that any exchange, collaboration and confrontation must take its departure in a fundamental respect for human life and dignity, promoting non-violent approaches to conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence

- *Promotion of community and social responsibility*

Learning and reflection as promoted by IPC is seen as the outcome of combined individual and collective efforts whereby students reflect and work together to gain new insights and broaden their understanding. In turn this serves to instil sensitivity towards the needs of others and a commitment to finding joint solutions to common challenges.

- *Sustainability*

Finding common, peaceful and durable solutions to local as well as global problems require respect for the finite nature of shared natural and human resources and the need to safeguard the interests of future generations.

The above values are tested, demonstrated, challenged and further developed across the IPC community: in class room sessions, during morning fellowships, cultural evenings, on excursions, sports activities and across the dining table and in the kitchen – in short everywhere when students and staff engage in joint activities to learn from one another, gaining new insights and appreciating commonalities as well the diverse contribution each can make to enriching the IPC community.

3. External environment

Globalisation

The environment in which IPC finds itself has continued to change throughout the existence of the school. In the past 1-2 decades globalisation has become a concept often employed when characterising the ever more global relationships of culture, people and economic activity. Often, though, globalisation refers primarily to economic activity thereby emphasising issues such as trade, investments, finance etc. Growing trade and investments have served to move hundreds of millions of people out of poverty yet has also implied growing inequity within and between many countries.

For IPC it is critical not to be 'overwhelmed' by such rather massive economic phenomena which may seem beyond the reach of ordinary human action. Globalisation is also associated with expanding communication opportunities providing cultural interaction which may promote growing understanding and respect as well as fear of one's culture being marginalised. Enhanced communication and travel opportunities facilitate human contact and interaction, yet for many people such opportunities have been constrained by strict immigration procedures.

New demands and interest in IPC's curriculum

In a number of respects the above trends provide an encouraging basis for IPCs work as more young people may want to comprehend such changes and their implications for their own lives by actively engaging with fellow students in an international environment such as the one offered by IPC. Yet growing international contacts and travel opportunities also imply that IPC must become better at articulating our uniqueness as the mere opportunity for international engagement with other young people is now offered by a vast range of other institutions across the world.

As a non-formal educational institution IPC moves beyond superficial and rapid encounters and rather offer in-depth engagement and opportunities for reflection and learning. IPC must therefore strive to constantly update and revise its curriculum to address topical issues of interest to prospective students while at the same time ensure that courses have substantive depth providing relevant insights and learning. This calls for carefully composing its educational programme with a distinct thematic focus that provides an effective platform for students to compare and contrast their own experience with those of fellow students.

Legal and financial issues

Considering current government budgetary constraints in Denmark it seems likely that IPC will experience stagnating or declining government funding. Furthermore IPC operates within the overall context of the Danish folkehøjskole legislation and the school is therefore susceptible to changes in its legal framework. In light of the nature of IPCs student composition the institution is vulnerable to changes in Danish immigration procedures as well as to a tightening of the existing exemption enjoyed by IPC regarding the proportion of foreign students.

This calls for IPC to offer an effective administrative support to prospective students in regard to immigration procedures. A challenging financial environment further requires a continuous effort

to supplement regular government funding with raising private and public resources for new educational initiatives and investments in maintaining IPCs attractive facilities and physical environment.

4. Global Citizenship as Thematic Focus

'Global Citizenship' will make up its thematic focus in the period covered by this strategy. The thematic focus constitutes the core of IPCs curriculum and will be reflected in a growing proportion of our activities clearly reflecting the thematic focus. IPC will continue to respond to student interest as well as addressing topical issues on the global agenda, but in prioritising our attention and resources emphasis is placed on working with and promoting issues and themes closely related to global citizenship.

The choice of 'global citizenship' is based on a realisation that across the world citizens are increasingly relating to one another

- socially through media and telecommunication
- culturally through movements of people
- economically through investment and trade
- environmentally through sharing the same resources on our common planet
- politically through international organisations and agreements regulating how we work together

The growing experience of interconnectedness is, however, accompanied by growing tensions and experiences of inequality. Opportunities to gain from globalisation are not equally shared among nations and citizens across the world, and existing political systems at national, regional and global levels are often poorly equipped to deal with these challenges. Citizens may react to rapid changes with fear and apprehension which may in turn lead to passiveness and disengagement – and for some frustration will turn into anger, anxieties and distrust to fellow human beings. To counter such risks IPC offers an international study environment for reflection, joint learning and common action based on almost a century of experience of how to promote respect for diversity and identifying common ground for peaceful and democratic development.

Aims for IPC work with 'Global Citizens'

For IPC the concept of global citizenship involves promoting knowledge and understanding relating to Social justice and equity, Globalisation and interdependence, Sustainable development, and Peace & conflict. It is, however, important to emphasise that our work goes beyond passive learning. By focusing on 'Global Citizenship' IPC aims to instil in our students

- an **understanding** of the dynamics affecting global development
- an **awareness** of the wider world and a sense of their own role as a global citizen
- an interest to **participate** at relevant levels, from the local to the global
- a **commitment to act** by addressing social injustice and promote a more equitable and sustainable world

Thereby IPC employs a platform of knowledge and understanding to promote shared responsibility and a willingness to engage jointly with others. Global citizenship can lead to an engagement in global action as well as providing motivation for local community engagement. Global citizenship should motivate students to address political agendas and looking for ways to promote greater accountability and transparency in governance systems. The thematic focus should encourage students to emphasise values such as respect for diversity and appreciate new opportunities to develop their own identity and confidence as a basis for being better able to engage in cooperation and conflict resolution. As such IPC shall offer a unique transformative

experience involving a holistic approach to personal reflection and growth as well as opportunities for collective action.

Promoting the concept of global citizenship and using inclusive and participatory pedagogical approaches IPC aims to move beyond merely observing and analysing globalisation. Rather our objective is to motivate our staff and students for joint endeavours that will promote global citizenship.

How we will work with 'Global Citizens'

IPC will strive to address the thematic focus in the following ways:

- Short and long courses will be planned to incorporate key elements of the concept of global citizenship
- Staff with key competences in the field of global citizenship will constitute the core of IPC tuition staff
- Marketing efforts will brand the school around the core concept of global citizenship
- In its search for external partners IPC will primarily engage organisations and learning institutions which can complement IPC competences in the field of global citizenship (see 7 below).

For IPC efforts involved with our thematic focus shall include concurrent emphasis on humanistic values and methodologies, including language skills and creative arts as key to being able to express oneself. Thus, we emphasise the importance of culture and communication as essential in promoting the human interaction and collaboration which is at the heart of our work with 'global citizens'. Only when individuals become their true selves can they fully enter into a living democratic human community.

During the course of the coming six years a growing proportion of IPC activities should clearly relate to the thematic focus.

5. Students

IPC offers unique opportunities to students from across the world. It is our aim that student composition should ensure that a diverse range of countries and regions are represented and that IPC attracts students with a varied professional and cultural background. In the coming six-year period IPC will work towards achieving a balanced geographical composition of participants from the various regions of the world while striving for more students from Denmark. Likewise, we will continue to strive for a gender-balanced participation and we will aim to have a more balanced enrolment of different age groups

As IPC is free of any religious or political affiliation we also aim to have a wide diversity of views and values represented across the student body. We encourage students to demonstrate curiosity as well as respect and tolerance for other views, and we expect from them that they will be ready to engage and reflect, to share and to listen. As such students are challenged to consider and articulate views and values hence being able to appreciate their own origin and the contributions they can bring to the shared efforts of the wider community.

Students may come to IPC as part of a wider aim of pursuing further academic or vocational education and using their stay at IPC to test ideas and further reflect on their future career. The non-formal educational approach free of tests, exams and marks provides an ideal environment for personal growth and contemplation.

IPC offers itself as a venue providing students aspiring to become global citizens with ideas, methods and networks to engage in social action promoting global equity and community empowerment on the basis of peaceful and democratic development.

As a folkehøjskole IPC offers itself as a stepping stone to maturity and self-knowledge to help students grow wiser – both about themselves and about the world.

6. Approaches to learning

Pedagogics

The school's pedagogy is based upon dialogue and respect for the opinions of others, and we meet each other with positive expectations. The teaching challenges students to reconsider their own opinions and relate to views and values of others, and enables students to respect rules for sound argumentation and to distinguish between facts and assertions. Through the teaching 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. 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.

IPC promotes experiential learning as an integral part of its educational offers with the aim that students:

- are actively involved;
- reflect on their experience;
- understand and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience; and
- are able to apply decision making and problem solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience.

In line with the Danish folk high school tradition students at IPC are active partners in a free and dynamic dialogue among different but equal individuals. Every person has the right to free expression, to be heard, to remain different, and to shift opinions. A variety of different points of view mean multiple sources of knowledge, wisdom and inspiration.

Competences

Skills acquired at IPC would focus on different aspects of social action, while knowledge and understanding objectives would emphasise student societal engagement and shared responsibility.

In the next six years IPC will provide more attention to 'real competences', a concept which has received growing recognition in Danish and international education debates – in the English speaking world often referred to as 'Recognition of Prior Learning'. The aim is to further explore new ways of helping focus IPC efforts and enabling students document their learning achievements as many high school students would like to use this learning as part of their broader education and career strategies.

This is a response to the situation whereby many international students are unfamiliar with informal adult education principles as practised at IPC and other Danish folk high schools. IPC will be streamlining course objectives and documenting learning outcomes to provide a more

professionally challenging environment focusing on skills set which the students can take along as they depart from IPC to continue their further education. Enhanced global knowledge and understanding are competences students shall acquire at IPC alongside experience and motivation for collective learning and action. As a folkehøjskole IPC offers a unique contribution to lifelong learning which began long before students arrive at IPC and which shall continue as they take up new challenges equipped with a strong baggage of substantive insights and renewed curiosity.

7. Partners

In accordance with its mandate as a folkehøjskole IPC's core business is to provide non-formal residential adult education to students from across the world. IPC therefore emphasises a physical framework for learning and regular tuition staff with the competences and experience required by its thematic focus. Still, the school emphasises the importance of working with partners outside of IPC to fulfil its mandate. Thus, the school needs to engage itself locally, nationally and internationally in order to enrich and develop its methods of teaching, its strength as a cross-cultural institution and its position in Danish and international society. It cannot develop in a vacuum but needs long term partnerships for mutual development with Danish or international organizations or institutions. This will help IPC strengthen its leverage through linking with organisations or institutions with solid standing in Danish or international community. More specifically, such partnerships aim

- a. To complement IPC pedagogical / tuition approach, e.g. by
 - i. Working with other institutions to offer IPC students opportunities for experiential learning by exchange visits in Denmark and abroad
 - ii. by identifying opportunities for short internships with other organisations in Denmark
 - iii. By organising joint symposia and seminars
- b. To enable exchange opportunities for IPC tuition staff and staff from partner institutions who would use sabbaticals and study leaves to acquire new skills by staying and working with like-minded institutions and IPC respectively
- c. To provide support from IPC to NGOs through scholarships or joint projects to develop staff competences and organisational capacity thereby offering an outlet for use of IPC's unique experiences
- d. To market IPC and recruit students for our courses
- e. To provide an outlet for use of IPC's excess capacity

IPC will work to establish a select number of partnerships with relevant institutions in Denmark and abroad to further the above aims.

8. Human, Financial and Physical Resources

In order to fulfil its mandate IPC relies on human as well as financial resources. It is essential for the quality of services provided that IPC can work with a stable framework. However, a number of uncertainties affect IPC planning in this field

- Incomes to a large extent depend on the number of students IPC can attract on its long and short courses as this determines not only the income from student fees but also the government subsidy from the Ministry of Culture
- To cover its tuition programmes IPC relies on a core staff serving on longer-term contracts. However, IPC also requires expertise to cover special needs and staff on short-term contracts also serve to balance fluctuations in student intake.

IPC will continue to rely on self-paying students as a foundation for its financial position. However, IPC needs to raise additional funds to pilot new courses and other tuition programmes outside of the regular folkehøjskole framework and to be able to offer scholarships for students unable to pay the regular fees.

It is envisaged that incomes in the coming six years will come from the following five main sources

- a. regular government contribution
- b. tuition fees from students
- c. project funding
- d. private fundraising
- e. renting out our facilities mainly to other like-minded organisations

with the bulk of our incomes coming from the first two sources above.

As an institution for learning IPC aims to attract high calibre individuals with strong professional credentials in working in an international tuition environment as lecturers, teachers and facilitators. Our staff shall combine relevant technical expertise, broad professional experience and strong interpersonal skills in order to engage and challenge our students to embark on joint reflection and learning. IPC's administrative and support staff are essential in sustaining our regular operations and instilling a sense of responsibility and responsiveness across the school community.

IPC aims to recruit and retain staff who combine Danish and international experience and who are dedicated team players willing to respond to student interests and ideas while supporting fellow colleagues. We aim to provide a stimulating work environment with relevant opportunities for our staff for professional growth and development in order to respond to the many challenges of developing our curriculum, engaging in partnerships, servicing new students and maintaining IPC as an attractive venue for reflection and learning.

The IPC physical facilities are a key resource and the basis for future development of school activities. The facilities comprise of the park and the buildings with their location on the outskirts of the town of Elsinore. The buildings comprise of classrooms, student quarters, library, kitchen, offices, leisure and sports facilities as well as of IT and other equipment to support smooth and efficient running of the school as well as supporting activities of students and staff.

The size and quality of these facilities determine the working environment for students and staff, affects the ability of the school to rapidly adapt to changes in numbers and composition of the student body and forms part of the schools competitive 'edge' with respect to attracting students and teachers.

Changes in approaches to learning and in the types and sizes of courses offered may ask for changes in the use of facilities or in a need for their rebuilding and refurbishing. Rising prices on energy for heating and light may establish a need for more efficient systems and the rapid development of IT technology may call upgrading in order to offer the best opportunities for integrating IT in the approaches to learning we choose.

The number of students is expected to rise during the strategy period and the strategy itself will induce changes in the approaches to learning as well as in the composition of the student body. The IPC will closely monitor the condition of its facilities and strive to adapt them to the changing needs.

9. IPC governance

IPC is governed on the basis of its values and with reference to relevant Danish legislation and rules. Like other folkehøjskoler IPC is an independent institution with its own management. Its operations are supported by government subsidies and hence fall within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Law of Free Boarding Schools. IPC strives to have a transparent governance system in place promoting accountability by clearly identifying goals and priorities and the responsibility of respective IPC stakeholders in fulfilling their respective mandates.

The *School Council* is IPC's highest authority and 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 council convenes for regular meetings twice a year and considers IPCs overall strategic direction as well as its financial position. The Council appoints the Principal.

Council members are invited to participate in special events and regular activities at the school and are expected to take an active part in developing IPC plans and priorities as well as providing linkages to relevant national and international debates and institutions. In the coming six years IPC will strive to engage council members bringing a variety of professional experience and personal engagement to the school hence achieving an enriching and diverse council composition.

The *Executive Board* has the overall responsibility for IPC management and is accountable to the School Council as well as the Ministry of Culture. The board appoints and dismisses teachers, according to recommendations from the Principal. The board further is responsible for overall financial management and approves budgets while preparing annual audited accounts for the consideration of the School Council.

The *Principal* has overall responsibility for the school's pedagogy and the operation of IPC according to its objectives, a task which is carried out in dialogue with staff. As such the Principal is responsible for regular course plans and putting in place adequate monitoring systems to ensure that plans are adhered to and targets achieved.

The *Teacher's Council*, consisting 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 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 participation of all employees.

The students organise themselves in the *Student Council*.

10. Implementing and Monitoring the Strategy

The IPC strategy provides the overall framework for IPC planning and priority setting in the 2012-17 period. The paper has been prepared by the Executive Board and it is the responsibility of the Board to oversee its implementation and report on goal accomplishments and deviations.

In implementing the strategy the Board reports to the regular biannual meetings of the School Council and tables major substantive and strategic discussions for the Council to address.

The strategy is complemented by rolling 2-year plans which list actions and activities that shall be put in place in order to ensure that the regular operations of IPC contribute to fulfilling the strategic objectives. The plans shall be subject to an annual update and will further be accompanied by a 2-year budget framework. The budgets shall provide a detailed one year budget combined with indicative figures for the following two years. The 2-year plans and budgets provide a prioritised list of actions and resources required to achieve IPCs strategic objectives. This planning framework further provides indicators to assess progress and goal achievements.

Detailed annual plans are prepared by IPC staff led by the principal and presented to the board listing actions and timelines for regular operations and new initiatives with clear targets and responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of the Board to assess the need for amendments and updates to the 6-year strategy. The Board may also recommend to the School Council that the duration of the present strategy is extended if the paper remains a relevant planning framework for IPC's development and priority setting. It is envisaged that the Board will initiate an extensive and substantive reflection on IPC achievements and future orientation, including its core values, vision and mission prior to the school's 100 year anniversary in 2021.