

Article

# Conceptualizing the Responsible Learning Framework for International Business Faculty Development

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## AIB Insights

Business schools have to deal with complexity and volatility at global and local levels. More concretely, it is the faculty who are at the forefront when it comes to dealing with teaching and research agenda. We bring in a critical perspective about our professional role by recognizing levers and constraints of our sector. We also provide insights on the institutional role by focusing on the nature of responsibility in IB teaching and the factors influencing this responsibility. We believe that this framework could help our fellow faculties to prepare for adaptability and contingency while addressing the needs of society.

### INTRODUCTION

The mobility of students and faculty from emerging and emerged markets has created a diversity in the business schools' landscape. The interconnectedness between global, national and local agenda is thus vital as it is compelling for international business (IB) scholars to focus on resolving real-world challenges around the globe. It is amidst this context of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity (VUCA) that we as IB scholars believe that it is essential to rethink our professional role by recognizing levers and constraints of our sector.

Shrivastava (2010) argues that if we are to expect students and companies to be leaders in sustainability, we would need a holistic pedagogical approach that integrates physical, emotional and spiritual learning coupled with traditional cognitive learning. This implies that topics related to sustainability, ethics and (global) responsibility can no longer be treated as separate electives, rather it is also the responsibility of the IB faculty to integrate this into their teaching and research. Even though much importance has been given to develop global leadership capabilities (e.g., Mendenhall, Weber, Arnardottir, & Oddou, 2017), and studies exist for globally responsible leadership, the topic of responsibility for IB faculty deserves much attention. We thus posit that IB faculty along with business school needs to engage in the learning process to integrate these topics.

Thus, in order to develop reflexivity to deal with changing the landscape in IB, we propose a learning framework which can provide an overall macro-micro level perspective about the various antecedents and outcome factors which may directly or indirectly influence teaching, research and institutional practices of the IB community. Our study is conceptual, designed to open a dialogue with current or future IB scholars, educational institutions and provides insights focusing on:

- What are the antecedents of a responsible IB teacher?
- What is the nature of a responsible IB teacher?
- What are the moderators influencing this learning process?
- What are the learning outcomes for IB students and IB instructors?

These inquiries are relevant for different stakeholders and might influence in the program's design, as well as help university administrators and IB faculty to improve their

curricula and include different pedagogical strategies. To build our framework, our research grounds on reviewing the literature which deals with responsibility of business schools, International Business theories and also include the personal teaching experiences of the authors. [Figure 1](#) shows the conceptual learning framework in which the interrelationship between the antecedents and the responsible IB teacher is based on the four questions shown above. Since it is a human-embedded profession, we highlight the association between the students' and instructors' outcomes and the capabilities of the responsible IB teacher. Furthermore, institutional and country perspectives actively moderate the learning framework.

### FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Within our proposed conceptual model, we identified connections among related concepts. The antecedents have a significant impact on the responsible IB teacher because they determine personality, demographics and idiosyncratic experiences which are innate and developed. Responsible IB teachers have a strong influence on their own and students' learning outcome. It depends on their personal skills and pedagogical competences of applying certain methodologies in class. Overall, we strongly assume that a good learning outcome derives from responsible IB teachers' characteristics and experiences. Furthermore, the current dynamic environment motivates IB teachers to adapt, transform and reflect their learning and teaching approach. On the other side, responsible IB teachers are triggered by changing or improving their knowledge about certain topics, developing a new set of hard and soft skills as well as pedagogical abilities.

We presume that the institutional environment moderates the interrelationships between antecedents and responsible IB teachers because of the development of universities' career plans, assurance of learning metrics and international accreditation matters. In addition, institutions moderate the interrelationship between responsible IB teachers and learning outcomes such as partnerships with companies, alumni, local and international rankings and teaching awards. We believe these processes are continuously ongoing by sense-making and sense-giving learning cycles.

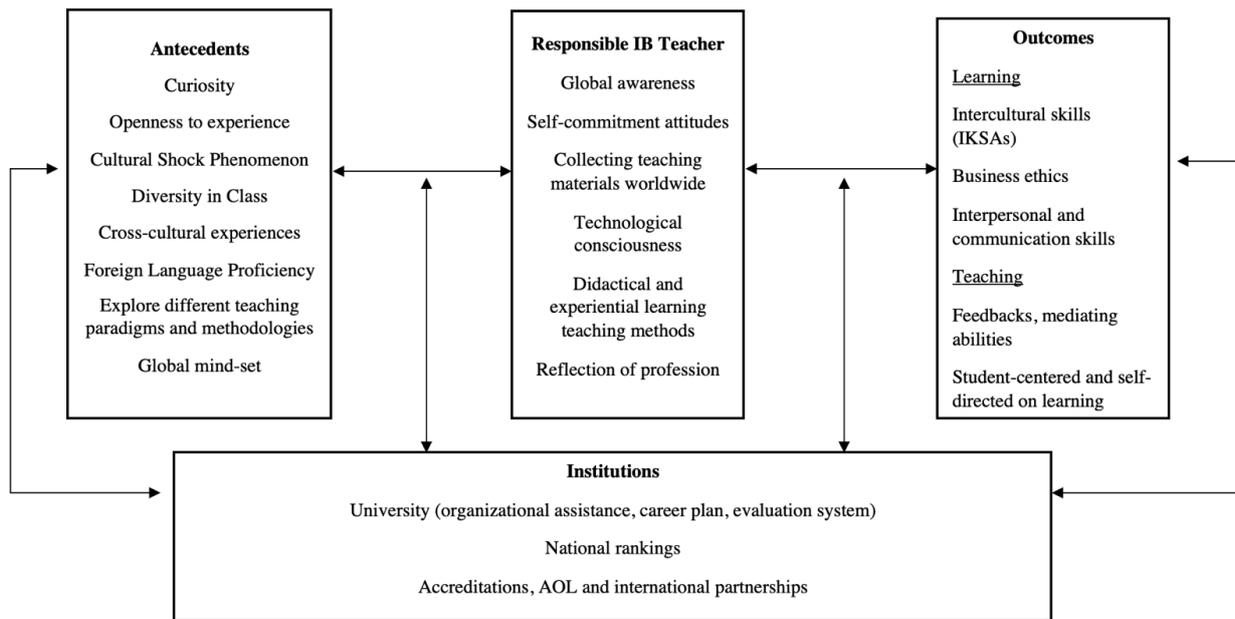


Figure 1: The Learning Framework for Responsible IB Teaching and Research Practices

ANTECEDENTS OF A RESPONSIBLE IB TEACHER

We believe that choosing the profession of IB as a teacher shows some personality styles of higher scores on curiosity, extroversion and openness to experiences. We argue that the self-selection of this profession shows some teacher’s learning and reflection capabilities and his or her willingness for fundamental personal transformation because culture determines the individual behavior and needs continuously revising one’s mindset.

We assume that responsible IB teachers are aware of their cultural roots and worldviews and domestic education systems and that the educator has personally experienced what is called the “cultural shock phenomenon.” What was ten years ago a mono-cultural class with domestic students to teach the topic of IB is now a real multicultural classroom with different students’ perceptions, interpretations and sense-making of the contents provided in the course. Nowadays, the classroom is mixed with cultures and thinking patterns which makes it more difficult for the teachers not to follow one path of ontology, epistemology and cultural roots.

To our understanding, it is one crucial precondition to have gained different first-hand experiences by working and living abroad, not only limited to the academic environment by short field studies or ERASMUS programs. Thus, real cross-cultural experiences such as done for an expatriate assignment with strong interaction and networking with local foreigners. Gaining a foreign language proficiency is another capability necessary for a responsible IB teacher.

Moreover, the educator must explore different teaching paradigms and needs to consider different cognitive and learning styles of their students. Therefore, the scholar would be flexible in applying field-based experienced learning, classroom-based, flipped, blended and simulation-based learning. Finally, we believe a particular stage of global mindset or at least experienced transformational experiences, or cosmopolitan outlook is part of the current IB job description.

NATURE OF A RESPONSIBLE IB TEACHER

We believe that an IB teacher with a global mindset and global awareness can close the gap between the global–local dilemmas in class. In order to do it, an IB teacher also needs some motivation and self-commitment attitudes. In a multi-faceted IB lecture, teachers need to critically reflect their unconscious cultural biases in the classroom and get aware of them. They confront students with their national values, moral compass, knowledge, attributes, belief system and cultural norms. The responsible IB educator can achieve this by applying techniques such as contrast and conflict exercises, attribution theories, highlighting value barriers, and by employing role-plays to get consciousness of beliefs, morals, and business ethics aligned with value systems, judgments and feelings.

Teachers tell stories about cultural adaptation, and cultural shock with personal *in-vivo* experiences gained abroad. The goal of a responsible teacher is to optimally enrich students’ IB learning and cross-cultural awareness, understanding and intercultural competences and support them in their dynamic global mindset transformation process so that IB strategies become “instinctive” (Kedia & Englis, 2011).

This can only be achieved by applying different learning experiences with classical and innovative teaching approaches and not with a one-size-fits-all pedagogy. These teaching materials need to be collected from different parts of the world with different learning and cognitive styles included (e.g., “holistic thinking” versus “problem-based”) and not a pre-determined one-way western solution. Moreover, the teacher is a facilitator and cultural coach in developing cross-cultural competencies, skills and abilities of their students.

Educators also need to continuously reflect and improve course concepts by working with new technology and need awareness on social media skills and global knowledge and be willing to work with more experiential teaching methods such as simulations and role-plays. Furthermore, all course concepts need to be understood, continuously improved

and course content adequately adapted in a customized style.

#### MODERATORS: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS

It is important to note that teachers will be influenced by institutions in order to structure not only the classes but also their global career. Universities have their own evaluation system and are mission-based, which will be different from research or teaching focused schools. If university privileges research to obtain the tenure, teaching will be considered a subordinate role for professors. At the organization level, organizational assistance such as physical and financial resources, incentives for transformation processes for teachers as conferences and opportunity teaching abroad plays an essential role in the outcomes. At the national level, universities need to follow specific requirements to achieve the highest positions in the ranking. The impact of figuring on the top is to attract the best scholars, a large number of students and get access to national funds.

Besides, many universities develop partnerships around the world, and the practices change due to the internationalization of the program and its international students. Furthermore, accreditation systems can provide legitimacy to be part of a selected group of universities. Those systems developed standards to be followed by universities to guarantee consistency. Assurance of Learning (AOL), for example, has specific metrics, and teachers need to prepare their classes to meet these criteria. Therefore, those factors will moderate the outcomes of a responsible IB teacher in learning and teaching, but also the cycle of reflection and their possibility of learning from those experiences.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR IB STUDENTS

The instructor must be flexible and customize the IB course content for different students, such as bachelor and master's degree, postgraduate or executive classes. The teaching style should be more student-centered and self-directed on learning, and the teacher provides exercises to work multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives in teams on IB content, providing constant feedback to students on their experiential learning journeys, helping to solve conflicts in the classroom, showing mediating abilities, empathy and respect in a cross-cultural classroom.

The ability of the students would be learning from experience as the ultimate outcome (Aggarwal & Goodell, 2016). Therefore, the scholar needs to deliver cutting-edge knowledge on campus and must expose students out of their comfort zone and let them acquire, reflect and apply challenging in-vivo experiences of other national, academic and business cultures. It will broaden students' cross-cultural sensitivity, cognitive structures, business ethics, global awareness, global understanding and finally global competence.

Within the IB programs and curricula, students develop some skills such as interpersonal and communication, team working and teambuilding. In our opinion, the ultimate task of the IB educator would be to impact students' (global) mindsets and extend them beyond the simple conveying of facts and concepts with more experiential interactions. Thus, a mix of personal and professional development, competency and character-oriented elements by teaching with declarative, procedural and contextual IB knowledge (Lane, Bird, & Athanassiou, 2017).

According to Lane et al. (2017) declarative knowledge deals with the facts, data and concepts; it is about *what* to learn and can be taught with lectures, texts and exercises.

Procedural knowledge is to know about *how* to do things which means to apply methodology, analytical skills and techniques in doing cases studies and role-plays. Contextual knowledge is the *when* and under which conditions declarative and procedural knowledge is applied or must be modified. Importantly, the contextual knowledge has an experience-based learning character, and the others are more from a didactical teaching paradigm. The learning output would be letting the students well prepared for the job market; they would be capable of replicating and adapting international knowledge, skills, abilities (IKSA) learned and be productive in the global workplace of the future.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR IB EDUCATORS

We argue that responsible IB teachers are on the edge to seek out for novel business cases and engage their students in class. Especially when IB scholars are not teaching in their home country, they need to adapt and develop associations with businesses in the resident country, understand the university's requirements and evaluation system and also find the best way to provoke students' interest. This process results in new teaching methods, novel content for classes adjusted to local reality and might drive different research projects with local stakeholders. Depending upon the institutional incentives an IB faculty may get to scale up teaching or create lack of motivation to teach in cases of universities that overemphasis on research publications.

#### CONTRIBUTION

The 2019 *Financial Times* Special Report on Responsible Business Education highlighted that business school graduates are showing orientation towards real social purpose beyond just making money whereas faculty teaching, and research practices are "in danger of trailing behind" (Financial Times, 2019). Therefore, by presenting the responsible learning framework, we posit that business schools and IB faculty need to engage in the learning process to reconfigure their practices. To do so, they need to have a better understanding of the antecedents and outcomes which might constrain or catalyze the actions as IB scholars. In doing so, we are contributing to the ongoing debate questioning the responsibility of different actors within the business school.

The crux of our contribution is the sense-making and sense-giving nature of the framework, is to represent the evolving role and responsibilities related to IB teaching practice. For the IB scholars, the framework might help on evaluating the influence of their cultural lens on their curricular and pedagogical choices, a critical reflection of their practices. Also, it might be beneficial to program directors or IB faculty who may eventually switch to administrative functions, since they are closer to understand the students and market dynamics. Finally, it can help on the development of interculturally proficient graduates, since they will be exposed to transformative learning process based on declarative, procedural and contextual IB knowledge. It will prepare them for real life outside the classroom and improve their professional capabilities in multicultural contexts, which will benefit society with skillful global managers.

We are three IB scholars from different continents (Asia, Europe and South America) who have engaged with business schools not only in our home country but abroad in different countries (Germany, Austria, Ireland, France, Brazil, UK and India). We do recognize that this framework is at a nascent stage, and it still needs to be enriched via theoretical and empirical reasoning, and we hope that the IB com-

munity would subject it to further analysis. Finally, the list of antecedents, moderators and outcomes are not weighted with relevance, since we believe the impact of each factor might vary depending on the university's context and country of analysis.

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