

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03057925.2020.1777842>

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## From educational experiment to an alternative to the national programme. International Baccalaureate Programmes in Poland – policy and practice perspectives.

Cite this article

Leek, J. (2020). From educational experiment to an alternative to the national programme. International Baccalaureate Programmes in Poland – policy and practice perspectives. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 52(3), 475–491. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1777842>

### Abstract

*The goal of this study is to examine the distinctive features of International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes in Poland, and the role of IB programmes in the Polish education system. To address this aim, a review of the relevant legislation has been carried out, accompanied by interviews with teachers and students in 9 IB schools in Poland. Results revealed that even though the functions of IB schools differ somewhat from country to country, there appear to be several common features underpinning the development of IB in Poland: (1) the deregulatory policy of establishing international schools after the socio-political changes of the 1990s, (2) the growing demand for internationally validated programmes among students that come to Poland from abroad, and (3) a growing aspiration among students and their parents for a wider selection of programmes to choose from compared to the limited choices available in Poland during the communist era.*

**Key words:** International Baccalaureate, Poland, Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, Diploma Programme, International Baccalaureate curriculum

**Acknowledgements:** The inspiration to write this paper came from the research work I undertook as part of the project entitled “Planned and implemented functions of International Baccalaureate programmes in Poland”, financed by Polish National Science Centre (grant number 2018/02/X/HS6/00596).

### Introduction

International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes, whose main aim is to encourage and develop inclinations towards developing inquiring minds and caring instincts in youth, are being adopted by an increasing number of schools around the world. IB programmes are known for their academic rigour and emphasis on personal development. Studies in different parts of the globe provide insights into the challenges of international schools in Africa (Bunnell 2016), Australia (Cole, Gannon, Ullman,

and Rooney 2014), China (Wright and Lee 2014), USA (Bunnell 2009), Middle-East (Azzi 2018). Even though the drivers of the expansion of IB programmes differ somewhat from one country to another, there appear to be common reasons underpinning their growth in the last 30 years: (1) market-driven expansion of IB programmes (Hallinger, Lee, and Walker 2011), (2) balancing local and global curriculum standards and expectations (Blandford and Shaw 2001), (3) deregulatory policy of establishing international schools (Wright and Lee, 2014), curriculum disconnections (Walker and Lee 2018), (4) a growing aspiration among parents for their children to receive an IB education (Kenway and Koh, 2013), (5) outcomes of higher education destinations to world class universities (Resnik 2012; Bunnell 2009). There is a gap, however, in the research on policy and practice regarding IB programmes in Poland, and this country also has other features that make IB in Poland relevant to my study. Firstly, Poland is a post-communist country and IB education has existed there for nearly three decades, after the social-political changes in East Europe in 1990. As of 2018, a total of 48 schools offered the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) (in 9 schools), the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) (in 11 schools), and the IB Diploma Programme (DP) (in 43 schools) (IBO Fact and Figures 2018). Over the last 30 years, international schools have been in a process of constant development and the very number of IB schools reflects the visible interest in IB education. However, what is unclear, is the policy and practice, how IB education has been developing in Poland and what challenges are being faced by IB students and teachers.

The main question underpinning the research on which this article is based was 'What are features and functions the IB programmes in Poland'? I decided to focus on the policy and institutional dimensions and the following 3 questions were investigated:

- What is distinctive about IB programmes in Poland?
- What is the role of IB programmes in Poland?
- What are the outcomes of IB programmes introduced in Poland?

I argue that IB have been introduced in Poland as an "educational experiment" and have evolved, nearly three decades later, to become alternative programmes introduced in public and non-public schools. This study also shows that the development of IB programmes in Poland is influenced by the deregulatory policy of establishing international schools after the socio-political changes of the 1990s, the growing demand for internationally validated programmes intended for students that came to Poland from abroad and a growing aspiration among students and their parents for a wider range of programmes that contrasts greatly with the limited choices available in Poland in the communist era.

In addition to explaining the features and function of IB education, this paper proposes an approach to the analysis of the policy and practice of IB education: a programme comparative approach where PYP, MYP and DP has been analysed and compared in relationship to the education policy in Poland. Instead of employing a comparative education perspective that focuses on how the policy influences different IB programmes, the programme comparative approach in this study aims to find out how each of the IB programmes fills in the gap within the policy towards international programmes in Poland, also which areas of policy require improvements in relation to IB education (conclusions are accompanied by policy recommendations). In other words, the programme comparative approach in this study attempts to grasp simultaneously the dynamics of IB education development in the last 30 years in Poland, areas of improvements for policy towards PYP, MYP and DP, and current experiences of students and teachers with different IB programmes.

## Theoretical frameworks

The number of schools around the world classified as International Schools continues to grow rapidly (Brummitt and Keeling 2013; Hayden 2011). By the end of 2018, out of over 5,000 schools, approximately 34% offered PYP, 26% – MYP and 66% - DP. In contrast, out of 48 IB schools, most of them (85%) offered the most popular and also worldwide, DP. Significantly fewer schools in Poland offered PYP (18%) and MYP (22%). The growing number of primary and secondary IB schools shows that across the globe more families and school communities have become convinced of their benefits (Bunnell 2016; Hayden 2011).

IB programmes take a holistic approach towards the education of children and youth, based on curriculums that are thematic and transdisciplinary, focused on learning experiences, foster achievement, open up opportunities for consideration of multiple perspectives and for affective development. The PYP, for children aged 3 – 12, supports socially responsible behaviour and the education of young children. Its main aim is to facilitate the development of young students as caring, active citizens. Early learning in the PYP integrates cognitive, socio-emotional and physical development, by promoting play, exploration and discovery. The PYP places emphasis on critical thinking using the research approach in cognitive development, rather than employing the typical choice testing method. The MYP engages students collaboratively to plan an interdisciplinary unit that involves at least two subject groups. In addition, students decide what they want to learn about, identify what they know already by completing the project, including creating criteria for completing it. All this should support students towards developing a sense of self and personal responsibility in the community. The MYP is underpinned by the context of students' lives and their development, and assumes identities and relationships, personal and cultural identity, orientations in space and time, scientific and technical innovation, fairness and development, globalisation and sustainability. The DP is a two-year curriculum for students aged 16 to 19 that leads to a qualification that is recognised by leading universities around the world. The diploma curriculum consists of six academic areas accompanied by three compensatory courses Creativity, Action, Service (CAS), Extended Essay (EE) and Theory of Knowledge (TOK). All the IB programmes develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people "who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (IBO mission statement 2018).

The IB programmes were developed with cosmopolitan middle-class interests in mind, and are now being strategically deployed to engage the local middle-class consumer (Doherty 2009). As advantages of IB programmes for students, existing studies emphasise the development of the "skill set" (Taylor and Porath 2006; Culross and Tarver 2007), development of critical thinking from an intercultural perspective (Nugent and Karnes 2002), expansion of possibilities better preparation for university (DiGiorgio, 2010; Coca, Johnson, Kelley-Kemple, Roderick, Moeller, Williams, and Moragne 2011), greater academic achievement as compared to their non-IB peers (Poelzer and Feldhusen 1996). As challenging, IB programmes are perceived by students in terms of time consuming and demanding of students' free time (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009), high motivation for learning (Culross and Tarver 2007; Poelzer and Feldhusen 1996; Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009; Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009), greater sense of belonging in the classes (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009), greater level of academic workload (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009).

Studies on IB programmes emerged also around impact of peer relations (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009; DiGiorgio 2010), impact of the teacher–student relationship (Taylor and Porath 2006). A distinctive feature of IB, is building professional learning communities in schools (Verneuille 2011) where teachers are perceived as being better prepared for teaching activities (Culross and Tarver 2007; Foust, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan 2009). A recurrent topic is the improvement of the atmosphere in the school, the positive impact on the feeling of community and the building of relationships within an IB school for students and teachers (Coca, Johnson, Kelley-Kemple, Roderick, Moeller, Williams, and Moragne 2011; DiGiorgio 2010).

To conclude, IB education has been available since the 1960s in more than 150 countries worldwide. The International Baccalaureate is known for being challenging, a demanding international programme for students as young as 3 up to 19 years of age. They aim to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who are motivated to succeed, and are likely to perform well academically, often better than students on national programmes.

### **IB in Poland – 25 years of “educational experiment”**

The first IB programmes were introduced in Poland after the socio-political changes of 1990. At that time, the Polish government wanted, as it did also in other areas of social and political life, to break away from the former communist regime and formulate its education policy along lines which conformed more closely to international trends. Schools in Poland become public and non-public and no longer “national” as this term was used before 1990 in the field of policy of education.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education issued a regulation that allowed teaching in Polish schools according to “non-national programmes”. In the first years after their introduction in Poland, IB programmes were described in the policy documents as an “educational experiment” in Poland, e.g. parliamentary inquiry No. 6247/2008. With IB education, the opening of the new chapter in Polish policy of education, was motivated by the Ministry of Education “*due to the rise in the level of investments from foreign capital in Poland and the emergence of the institutions of the European Union, NATO and other international organisations more education in European Union languages is required*” (parliamentary inquiry No. 6247/2008). With the introduction of IB education into the Polish education system, it was believed that international programmes in Polish schools would support foreign language acquisition among Polish youth and support contacts between Polish youth and young people from other countries.

In 2009, along with the amendment to the Education System Act<sup>1</sup>, the term “educational experiment” was removed from the policy documents in the context of international education, and the IB programmes listed next to the other programmes of foreign educational institutions, as an option for Polish students and as an educational alternative for them, co-existing alongside the national programme.

After nearly 30 years of IB programmes in Poland, IB education is offered in two distinctive ways. The first opportunity is available in the form of “international schools”, in which only the IB curriculum is introduced, the Polish curriculum is not obligatory, but may be introduced as an option and the second option is the so called “international branches” incorporated within public and private

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<sup>1</sup> Law on Education, Ustawa o Systemie Oświaty; ustawa z dnia 19 marca 2009 r. o zmianie ustawy o systemie oświaty oraz o zmianie niektórych innych ustaw (Dz. U. Nr 56, poz. 458).

schools, whereby the IB programmes are offered alongside the Polish curriculum. Public schools are financed by local governmental educational authorities, private schools are financed by local governmental educational authorities and in addition by parents. In 2018, there were 48 IB schools in Poland (IBO fact and figures, Poland, 2018). The most popular in Poland is the DP that is offered in 41 schools in Poland, followed by MYP (11 schools) and PYP (9 schools).

**Table 1.** Schools that offer IB programmes in Poland (2018). Source: IBO webpage (Fact and Figures, Poland)

<b>Voivodeship (city)</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Type of schools: public, non-public</b>
Masovian (Warszawa, Płock)	PYP, MYP, DP	Public schools: 5 Non-public schools: 10
Lower Silesian, (Wrocław, Wałbrzych)	PYP, MYP, DP	Public schools: 2 Non-public schools: 5
Kuyavian-Pommeranian (Bydgoszcz)	PYP, MYP, DP	Public schools: 1 Non-public schools: 1
Lesser Poland (Tarnów Kraków)	PYP, MYP, DP	Public schools: 1 Non-public schools: 5
Pomeranian (Gdańsk, Gdynia)	DP	Public schools: 2 Non-public schools: 0
Lubelskie (Lublin)	DP	Public schools: 1 Non-public schools: 1
Greater Poland, (Poznań, Leszno, Kalisz)	PYP, DP	Public schools: 3 Non-public schools: 1
West Pomeranian (Szczecin)	DP	Public schools: 1 Non-public schools: 1
Podlaskie (Białystok)	DP	Public schools: 1 Non-public schools: 0
Silesian (Katowice, Gliwice)	MYP, DP	Public schools: 3 Non-public schools: 1
Lodzkie (Lodz)	DP	Public schools: 1 Non-public schools: 1
Swietokrzyskie (Kielce, Czestochowa)	DP	Public schools: 2 Non-public schools: 0

IB has had since its inception an egalitarian ethos (Conner, 2008), and is famous for promoting equity in education, in relation to low-income students or students of different ethnic backgrounds (IB Excellence and Equity Initiative, 2019). However, the IB policy on equity does not reference directly the issue of place of residence of students (i.e. those that come from rural areas). Research on IB schools in Australia showed that most schools that offer PYP, MYP or IB are located in affluent communities of large cities, are privately-funded, charge moderate to high fees, and enrol students mostly from privileged socio-economic backgrounds (Dickson, Perry, Ledger, 2017). Other studies in the DP emphasise that the IB education is much less available in rural communities in the US than in metropolitan communities (Perna, May, Yee, Ransom, Rodriguez, and Fester 2015). In the context of Polish education, this study shows that IB schools are located exclusively in urban areas within the country. This reflects the tendency in Poland to have a greater variety of schools in cities rather than in the countryside or in smaller towns.

Equal access to education in Poland is granted in the Constitution, other national laws (i.e. Law on Education) and international conventions (i.e. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). In relation to supporting equal access to educational institutions in the country, the Law on Education states that the system of education aims to “reduce the differences with regard to the standards of education and care, with particular focus on reducing the gap between urban and rural areas”. (Article 1, Law on Education). It is noticeable, however, that the number of secondary schools in rural areas has been kept at a similar level since 2015 (Statistical Office Poland, 2018), and in relation to the Polish educational landscape, there is a significant difference in the levels of access to secondary schools when comparing rural and urban areas in Poland (Nowak, 2006; Matyjas, 2012). Interesting in this context is that the national law in Poland is constructed in such a way that there is “no provision regarding the obligation of public authorities to remove real obstacles for equal access to various services, which makes it difficult for vulnerable or less represented groups to obtain their protected rights to equal access” (Policastro, 2002, 372).

### Research design

In order to examine the features and functions of the IB PYP, MYP and the DP programmes in Poland and the extent to which the unique aspects of these programmes contribute to the school development in which they are implemented, I posed the following research questions:

1. What is distinctive about IB programmes in Poland?
2. What is the role of IB programmes in Poland?
3. What are outcomes of IB programmes introduced in Poland?

The qualitative data has been gathered within the pilot research in 9 out of 48 IB schools in Poland. I utilised a multiple case research design for this study, in part, because of the recognition that case studies are particularly valuable when a researcher seeks an in-depth understanding of a specific problem, or situation (Patton, 2001) which is the understanding of the function of PYP, MYP and DP in Poland. I selected a total of ten schools (cases), two with a PYP, two with an MYP, and six with an DP, following the principle of literal replication and replication logic of cases (Yin, 2003). I used a purposeful sampling method to identify a variety of school types (public schools, non-public schools) and a range of length of experience as an authorised IB programme ( $\leq 3$  years). School demographics and geographical areas were also a factor in choosing the cases. I selected three schools from voivodship Masovian (eastern-central Poland) one from Lower Silesian (southern Poland), one from Silesia region (southern Poland), three from Greater Poland (western Poland) one from Kuyavian-Pomeranian (north-western Poland) and one from Lodzkie area (central Poland).

I conducted on-site interviews (of one-hour duration) with IB teachers (N=36), and students (n=37) from 9 schools. 90% of teachers (n= 40) and 90% of students (n=39) were of Polish origin. The site visits took place throughout the fall and winter semester. For interviews, I firstly contacted the IB coordinators in each of the schools, which helped me with the process of organising the interviews, and choosing respondents. For students' interviews, I requested that they will be scheduled to include different students' grade levels and for teachers' interviews I asked the IB coordinator to select teachers with the longest experience of working with IB programmes that represent different subject areas of teaching. For all interviews, in order to gather the requested information, a set of interview questions for both students and teachers, was developed. The open-ended nature of the students and teachers' responses, allowed other important issues not initially considered, to be addressed.

The main topic was the IB programmes, thus I asked teachers to tell me about their first experiences with IB programmes, what, for them, was challenging about IB curricula, what is the role of IB programmes in the Polish education system. The next main issue that was discussed with teachers was the distinctive features of IB programmes at their school. With regards to this, I asked about what knowledge, skills and attitudes are needed by a teacher to work with IB programmes, how the school supports the implementing of IB curricula. Another area of questions that was discussed with teachers was the IB school, teachers' perception of IB programmes in their school, also of schools' community, relations with other IB and non-IB teachers in the school. The final topic that I discussed with teachers were skills and attitudes that are useful for them to acquire when following an IB curriculum. In interviews with students, I asked about their experiences with IB programmes, motivations for IB, teacher-student relations, learning approaches that are used by them when working with an IB curriculum, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are developed within the IB curriculum of different subjects. Interviews were recorded and transcripts made.

**Table 2.** Sample schools. Participants in group interviews with teachers (n=36) and students (n=37)

Schools	Number of teachers participating in the interviews	Number of students participating in the interviews
<b>Voivodeship Masovian</b>		
School no. 1 DP	3	3
School no. 2 DP	4	4
<b>Voivodeship Lower Silesian</b>		
School no. 3 MYP	5	5
<b>Voivodeship Kuyavian-Pomeranian</b>		
School no. 4 PYP, MYP, DP	3	3
<b>Voivodeship Greater Poland</b>		
School no. 5 PYP, MYP	3	4
School no. 6 DP	2	2
<b>Voivodeship Silesian</b>		
School no. 7 DP	6	5
School no. 8 DP	5	6
<b>Voivodeship Lodzkie</b>		
School no. 9 DP	5	5
<b>In total</b>	<b>Teachers n= 36</b>	<b>Students n=37</b>

### Data analysis

Analysis of the qualitative data for this study was carried out in three steps. In the first phase, I became intimate with the data by reading each interview multiple times, marking important or

interesting passages. In the second step of the interview analysis, I developed case study narratives of each school, looking more closely at students and teachers' perceptions of the IB programme, experiences with IB programmes, the challenges and benefits of their school's IB programmes, the community and for themselves. In the third phase, a cross-analysis was developed, using a thematic analysis technique to analyse the interview data both deductively and inductively. Based on this information, I developed a coding scheme related to common and emerging patterns in the schools. I reduced inductively large amounts of the interview data into a smaller number of analytical units based on similar themes (Miles and Huberman 1994), that had been identified in the second phase, in order to identify particularly interesting parts and used coding passages. During the reduction I looked for phrases to identify categories, following the template strategy approach to facilitate comparability across sites (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Finally, I sorted data into categories and coded them. In the analysis, each word-processed transcription was read, and then the common strings of text were analysed and compared. This allowed for the identification of code segments which were then grouped by each interview. The code segments were used to develop an event category, 'IB feature', and to several other themes and subthemes. An 'IB feature' was coded as any situation in which the students told a story about an activity in their school, a student-teacher relation, the curriculum, peers, skills, knowledge, the programme, teachers or learning. Finally, I summarised the data from each of the topics listed into analytic memos on IB functions. Once all of the data had been coded, the quotations were examined again, classified by the student/teacher mix, and summarised in writing.

## Results and discussion

With the interviews of teachers and students from 9 IB schools in Poland, I identified several common themes related to the distinctive features, functions, outcomes of IB programmes in Poland.

**PYP and MYP in Poland.** The PYP and MYP targeted initially, after issuing the programmes, the needs of international schools (Hill 2007). Over the years, the PYP and MYP has become popular and been deliberately chosen for different reasons. The advantage of PYP in Australia is that it provides greater motivation and cultivates positive learner attributes than the Australian average (Gough, Sharpley, Vander Pal, and Griffiths 2014), greater international-mindedness, inquiry skills and action than students in New Zealand national schools, relatively high satisfaction of PYP in Columbia (Lester and Lochmiller 2015), and greater parental programme choice in the US context (Spahn 2001). A group of PYP and MYP students who came from abroad with their parents and took part in my interviews, had no previous experience of IB education. They told me that their parents were looking for "*a programme taught in English in Poland*". With the IB programmes choice among those students, there were no connotations associated with the brand or the 'hot' reputational knowledge of the IB programmes (Ball and Vincent 1998), as parents were not necessarily "*dealing with knowledge about the IB*", as one teacher told me, however, according to MYP and PYP teachers, parents who were satisfied with IB were considering carrying on with IB in another country.

Another group of PYP and MYP students I interviewed also included some that had no previous experience of the national curriculum in Poland. Research works, for example, of MacKenzie (2010) confirms that the decision of students to opt for international school is influenced by parents that see the advantage of international programmes when comparing them with the national curriculum. Students who were asked about satisfaction with PYP and MYP told me they appreciate how the



programmes are organised. One of the MYP teachers explained that to her knowledge parents of students from their schools were disappointed with the Polish programme. Also, MYP students mentioned their bad experiences with the national education system. To the question, what was the reason you changed from the national programme to the IB curriculum, students were telling me for example, that the *“Polish programme is mainly memorising”*. To the same question about possible reasons for deciding to go for the IB programme, one teacher explained, *“Parents of children from our school, they actually like we all, were growing up in Poland, and as adult Poles (recalling our experiences) we didn’t have such schools when we were of school age as there was only one type of national education and only one curriculum. There is a group of parents in this school, for which the programme choice is a way of deciding about education, a choice that their parents didn’t have in Poland”*. Another teacher also said: *“I know some parents, they had bad experiences years ago as students with Polish education, and now they have the feeling, nothing has changed over years. Thus, they decided to start or carry on with MYP IB as they believe it is the best option for their children”*.

**Benefits of DP in the opinion of teachers and students.** A different picture of IB education in Poland emerges from the interviews with DP teachers and students from five public schools and two non-public schools. The distinction feature of the IB programmes in Poland is the constant professional development of teachers, in the course of teaching activities in the classroom. Teachers explained it in this way: *“For me, when I teach, the IB is one permanent learning activity”*, or *“I have the feeling that I’m learning all the time when I am working with students”*, and *“what was new for me in the IB was that I am constantly learning, but not only about students or new teaching methods, but I have to search for the newest information for students regarding the topic we will work on in the following days”*. To the question concerning what teachers learned or are learning when working with DP, they responded, *“new for me is the readiness to be open to answers and the interpretations that our students make”*. When discussing professional development, teachers pointed out *“innovative concept of teacher training”*, as a significant component of the IB programme.

In relation to other IB schools in Poland, teachers told me also that they stay in contact with colleagues that teach the same subject in Poland, to share ideas in teaching, and this openness for collaboration with other schools, as one teacher explained, *“is not as common among non-IB teachers”*. Another teacher added *“I got more support in the first months from one IB teacher from a school 200 km away in Poland, then from IB school 5 streets away from here”*. Other teachers also admitted that they didn’t collaborate with teachers that much both in their school or with other teachers from different schools in Poland, until they started working with the IB programmes. The cross-disciplinary collaboration is, in the opinion of the teachers from IB schools in Poland, strongly supported by the programme and the programme is perceived as a strong contributor to their professionalism.

Teachers who were asked how students benefit from the IB programme, mentioned *“maturity in learning”*, *“unconventional approaches to learning”*, *“creative thinking”*, *“analysis, deductive and inductive problem solving, and focus on inquiry in the approach to learning”*. Students responding to the same question mentioned *“writing papers and follow the rules in writing papers”*. To the question, what surprised students in the DP, one student said, *“It was surprising that what I was being taught at school is negotiable. I got used to the national programme - that there is one answer to every question I ask in the school”*. Another student told me, *“I can present my point of view or a different point of view, there is never one answer correct or wrong. This is what I like about DP”*.

DP as a narrow instrument for university entrance, rather than a progressive form of education, has already been emphasised in previous studies (Brunold-Conesa 2010; Resnik 2009). During interviews, students reported that as a consequence of an emphasis on academic skills, in their opinion, preparation for non-academic future life, outside of the university, might be under-prioritised in the DP. Students identified the lack of relevance of the students' learning outside the school environment. There is the CAS core component in the DP, however, as one student explained, *"we do not feel it is that important for us at the moment, as we want more to engage in the learning in the school"*, *"I don't have now too much time for doing something like volunteering outside of school"* added another student. In the opinion of some students, the DP does not help students to make connections between what they learned in the classroom and real-life situations but they emphasised the relevance of DP for future academic life. One student gave an example of this: *"When I graduate from this school, I will know how to make an academic analysis of different topics, but what about writing a love letter for example"*. Interesting was also that teachers identified gaps in the DP curriculum in relation to non-academic skills. They were appreciated the focus on academic skills within the DP, however, they also described the skills that the DP is focusing on as being, as one teacher said, *"far removed from everyday life"*. A teacher in another school added, *"we need to learn how to write text, or formulate the sentences not only in the academic style"*. As regards engaging with school activities in the long-term, students told me about how challenging the workload within the IB programmes and the skills that are needed to organise learning, like management skills, or planning are for them. The workload was also mentioned by students in the context of lack of time for activities in out of school time. According to students, DP seems to allow an increased opportunity to make friends, which conforms with past studies of Coca, Johnson, Kelley-Kemple, Roderick, Moeller, Williams, and Moragne (2012), DiGiorgio, (2010), *"as we share the same programme and motivations"* explained one student. However, due to the small groups and different subjects that students choose individually, it is difficult for DP students to have closer relationships with peers.

**Mutual motivation as part of the DP school community.** What is interesting is that both teachers and students felt being motivated by each other to set up aims within their participation in the DP. Teachers told me they felt aware of students' expectations towards their professional learning, which teachers described as *"motivating pressure for personal and professional development"* or *"the challenge to meet students' expectations"*. *"The DP forces me to learn and this learning protects against becoming burned out"* added one teacher.

Poelzer and Feldhusen (1996) report that IB students, compared with non-IB students, show high levels of motivation towards learning. Students from schools I visited for interviews, have been also described by their teachers as highly motivated for learning, compared to their peers from non-IB programmes. They also mentioned having the feeling of working independently in comparison with students in general education. When I asked what motivates to learn, students appreciated the IB teachers support of their positive attitudes towards learning *"in particular when we lose the motivation to learn once in a while"*, said one student. Also, concerning their relationships with their IB teachers, students described themselves as being *"motivated"* during different activities within the curriculum.

In relation to motivation, both students and teachers clearly saw the importance of good teacher-student relations in the IB programme. Students stated that they felt that their teachers trust them

more and they are treated with more respect with regard to their learning needs. *"I have the feeling teachers believe in me"* was a typical student comment. When describing the relationship with teachers, several students told me that it is easier for them to build up a positive experience with teachers. For example, one student one said, *"I have the feeling teachers care about me, not only how I am doing with the subject but in general"*. My respondents attributed the improved classroom learning to small groups of students. They emphasised that the IB curriculum had empowered them to take responsibility for their own learning, for developing time management skills, and improved attitudes for being an active learner that participates in their own education.

**Students' drives for IB.** This study confirms the findings of Taylor and Porath (2006) that claim that the DP can provide an "intellectually stimulating curriculum" (p. 152). As with PYP, MYP students, DP students also raised the point about the lack of satisfaction with the national education, as the issue that influenced the IB programmes. They said that the IB choice was deliberate as they want to study at the universities of their choice. DP has been described as challenging or interesting as a *"programme for everyone"*, and *"not only for intellectually gifted learners"*. Many students emphasised that they enjoyed the broader range and deeper understanding of the topics that IB provides.

Teachers also agreed that an advantage of DP is the privileged admission of IB graduates to the university of their choice. The current policy of most higher education institutions in Poland supports IB diploma holders, being privileged within the admission policies. The DP has been also described by teachers as being for diligent and conscientious students and for the creative and ingenious, those open to trying out new ideas within the educational sphere, for those that possess management skills and can organise their own learning process. *"For me IB is for those youth that work without a teacher's supervision, however, with teacher support and feedback,"* said one teacher.

**Who is IB for in Poland?** A recurrent topic in interviews with teachers and students has been the issue of the recipients of IB programmes in Poland. The DP in Poland, in opinion of students, was considered rather as *"an uncommon education"*. For teachers, IB programmes were understood in terms of education *"for the few"*, *"not chosen by all"*, *"different from the mainstream national education"*. An IB coordinator in one of the schools told me, *"Our school is a public school. Thus, the DP offered in this school means public programme, "public"- this means for me, available for or accessible by anyone, without any conditions, just like the public education in our country is"*. Other teachers were also telling me that the IB in public schools is for any student that is fluent in English. Both teachers and students of DP from public schools, admitted feeling challenged having to teach and learn in a foreign language, which requires skills and some experience in using the language in writing, speaking and reading by both students and teachers. According to DP students the efficient command of English language in DP determines whether or not a person chooses the IB programme.

In Poland, as in other countries globally, there are both public and non-public schools that offer IB Programmes. The numbers are similar, since there are 48% of non-public schools with IB programmes in Poland and 47% worldwide. Reading the series of studies concerning the public schools that implement the IBDP (Doherty 2009; Weenink 2009), a local public school offering the IBDP might appeal to parents of the higher socio-economic strata in their quest to position their children in what they perceive to be an advantageous programme for higher education admission and the future global employment market. In relation to costs that students need to cover when

participating in the IB programmes, fees have been introduced in non-public schools, which are covered by students. In the case of public schools, IB coordinators were telling me that because the municipalities are in charge of financing schools in Poland, and because Polish educational law that says that public education is free of charge in Poland, all of the public schools that I visited for interviews were financially supported by the municipalities and the costs for IB education like student's fees were covered by the local educational authorities. In addition, depending on the municipality, extra expenses related to school books, or tools (e.g. math's' calculators) have also been covered. For Beckwitt, Van Camp, and Carter (2015) the IB costs that need to be covered, are indeed most challenging for IB students. Establishing IB schools as part of the public system is consistent with internationalisation processes visible in national education systems in Poland. Additionally, in the case of Poland, implementing the DP in public schools offers this programmes for a bigger audience and this confirms also the findings of Caspary, Woodworth, Keating, and Sands (2015) that IB programmes have become more accessible for students from low income families, as is the case of IB education in public schools.

### **Conclusions & policy recommendations**

Although the study was conducted in one country and only in 9 IB schools in Poland, it has implications and raises questions that are relevant internationally for studies on IB programmes and education policy within Poland. The themes I identified in this paper relate to the overall picture of PYP, MYP and DP in Poland and emphasise the development of the policy concerning the establishment of international schools after the socio-political changes of the 1990s within Poland, the role of PYP, MYP, and DP in public and non-public schools, benefits of IB programmes for students and teachers, and policy recommendations for education in Poland.

IB programmes have been developed with cosmopolitan middle-class interests from the late 60s onwards. They evolved, as Hagoort (1994) claims "from a programme for international schools, to an international programme for schools" (p. 11). In Poland, IB programmes were introduced in schools after the socio-political changes of the 1990s initially as an educational experiment in the field of policy of education, and became within the next 30 years an educational alternative to the national curriculum. The number of schools offering the PYP and MYP is growing constantly in different parts of the world, while the DP remains the most popular. This tendency is also visible in Poland. The first programme to be introduced in Poland was the DP in 1993. By the end of 2018, 7 schools offered PYP, 11 schools - MYP and 41 schools - DP. The biggest growth of DP is noticeable among national schools in Poland who wish to offer their students an international education in addition to their national systems. After nearly 30 years of socio-political changes in Poland, the educational landscape has changed, facilitating the setting up of international programmes in schools. In Poland in particular, secondary level international education (DP) has developed, there are fewer schools in Poland that have implemented PYP (18% of the 48 IB schools within Poland) and MYP (22% of the 48 IB schools within Poland) compared to the worldwide implementation of the PYP (34% of the 5175 IB schools within the world) and MYP (26% of the 5175 IB schools globally).

In many regions of the world, IB programmes are offered mostly in private school settings (Bunnell 2009). For example, 80% of IB schools in Canada, and more than 90% of all IB schools in the US are public (Cole, Gannon, Ullman, and Rooney 2014). In contrast, in Australia most of IB schools in Australia are private (Cole, Gannon, Ullman, and Rooney 2014), also in China the IB programmes are

delivered mainly in private schools (Wright and Lee 2014). In Poland, the tendency towards an equal number of public (52%) and non-public (48%) schools that offer IB education is noticeable. Out of 47 IB schools in 2018 in Poland, 24 were public schools and 23 were non-public schools. Empirical evidence in IB education shows that schools that offer one or more of the IB programmes typically share some characteristics, for example, the location. In the US, schools that offer IB programmes are more likely to be located in cities and their suburbs than in small towns or rural areas (Dickson, 2017). The distribution of the IB in Poland shows the tendency to locate IB schools in big cities, in different parts of the country, however, the biggest concentration of IB schools is noticed in particular in the capital city Warsaw. In order to ensure equitable IB education and to improve the IB accessibility to non-urban areas, several changes in education policies are necessary. Referring to international education within Poland, it is recommended that the educational landscapes towards an alternative educational model in rural areas and smaller be re-designed. Attention should be drawn towards the promotion of policies that ensure equitable school locations.

A distinctive feature of PYP and MYP in Poland is that both programmes are mainly implemented in non-public schools. The PYP and MYP provide options for students that came with their families from abroad and are looking for education in English. When discussing the choices available within the education system, the literature focuses on the choice of school where the curriculum comes as part of the choice (Ball and Vincent 1998; Ball 2003). My study conforms to these findings and shows that also in the case of Poland, what is noticeable is the growing number of IB students, in particular, those of Polish origin that have had different experiences with the Polish programmes and dissatisfaction with it and were thus motivated to look for something different, like the PYP or MYP. Motivation among DP students is the opportunity to choose a programme that offers opportunities to study abroad but also in Poland, as the IB diploma in several Polish universities is privileged within the higher education institutions policies in that they can help secure admission and advanced placement credits at certain Polish universities. The IB choice is driven by the Polish perspective, and also by the opportunity to decide about the programme, after years of being under communist rule with only one national programme. Both opportunities, to choose an educational programme different than the national one and to study abroad, were limited during the communist regime in Poland. In the field of policy of education, up to 1993, there was only the national programme available for students. In addition, the opportunity to go abroad to study at that time, was restricted for many Poles, also courses in English in Polish schools were rarely offered in public schools (there were no private schools) and priority was given to the Russian language, which was taught as a compulsory subject. Public and non-public schools operate in Poland under the same legal conditions, defined by the state. The educational policy in Poland should be focused on alternatives to national programmes for those students seeking an education that will prepare them to study abroad, within the international academic environment.

This study shows that the IB curriculum in public and non-public schools serves the same conditions for greater autonomy in teaching and learning, which has been appreciated by teachers and students. In this understanding, this autonomy allows the programme to evolve under the influence and guidance of the students who learn from it and in tandem with the teachers' professional development. The teaching content is for students not that that much relevant, however, the design of the teaching programme, how teachers create their teaching activities, motivation for learning, and creativity has become a distinctive feature of IB programmes. Curriculum implementation is

carried out through co-learning and this implementation become more responsive to the needs and desires of students. A distinctive feature of IB programmes in Poland is that IB schools have become professional learning communities where teachers feel a sense of ownership of the leadership responsibilities (cf. Harris 2003; Katzenmeyer and Moller 2001). In the case of Poland, the learning community is built not only within one school but among teachers from different schools, as teachers feel the support of colleagues from other IB schools. Looking at education policy in Poland, it is recommended that the efficient use of pedagogical practices and innovation based on collaborative learning within a school community and between schools is supported.

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