



Evolution International School

Internationalism and Interculturalism in Evolution International School

A Definition

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It is recognized by the school that Evolution largely serves the local community of Egyptian families who desire an international education delivered through the medium of English. However, having curriculum objectives that come from other countries and teaching in English do not in themselves develop the concept of internationalism or interculturalism. So, how then do we define these two terms at Evolution and how are they brought to life?

Internationalism as defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary is “the state of being international” or “the belief that countries can achieve more advantages by working together and trying to understand each other than by arguing and fighting wars with each other”. The first of these definitions does not fit for Evolution as over 95% of its students and staff are Egyptian, however, it is the second of these two definitions that chimes with the school’s beliefs. At Evolution we passionately believe in the benefits of nations understanding each other and working together in harmony. We believe in the advantages to be gained by learning new languages, developing dialogues with people in other countries, and having open dialogues with other nations to understand their viewpoints and resolve conflict.

Interculturalism as defined by Wikipedia refers to “cross-cultural dialogue and challenging self-segregation tendencies within cultures”. It also makes reference to the requirement in German universities to have a section on intercultural competence, that “involves students being able to be open to listen and communicate with people of different cultural backgrounds, have knowledge of the backgrounds of cultural groups, knowledge of existing stereotypes and prejudices involving cultural groups...”

This requirement within German universities beautifully sums up Evolution’s position on interculturalism. We believe that students should be able to listen to the opinions of others in a way that is not hostile but with an open mind, a questioning attitude, and a desire to learn. We are not looking to change students’ opinions, we are merely seeking to open their minds to new ideas, concepts, attitudes, opinions and beliefs and to do so with tolerance and openness. We believe that students should be able to communicate their own opinions in a non-threatening way and in a way that is open to challenge and question. They should be strong enough in their own beliefs to defend them but at the same time open enough to accept the beliefs of others. We want the students and staff of Evolution to be exposed to different cultures from around the world and within those cultures; different beliefs, attitudes, politics and customs.

With both definitions in mind, what does this look like in practice at Evolution? The curriculum has been carefully curated to include subject objectives from North American, European and Asian countries. In combining these objectives, subjects have been integrated in such a way to ensure that all taught units contain elements of cultural integration. This means looking at concepts and ideas that exist in Egypt and comparing and contrasting with other parts of the world. Sometimes the unit is studied from an



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Egyptian perspective and then the comparisons take place with other countries and sometimes it is the other way around with another country studied first and then comparisons made with Egypt. The intercultural element is a requirement in every unit studied in grades one to eight. In grades nine and ten where the IGCSEs are studied, teachers are required to include the intercultural element in their planning for each of their subject units. Students in all grade levels may be comparing cultural elements such as attitudes to health and fitness, politics, climate, conservation, manners, lifestyle, customs and traditions, rules, equality, beliefs, work, education, conflict and resolution, ethics, refugees, social justice and globalization. Students are required to learn about different countries, to use research techniques, to open dialogue with people from other countries/cultures, to debate, to present, to critique and to explain. All these aptitudes have to be displayed in end of unit presentations as well as during the unit itself.

It is Evolution's fervent belief that by allowing students to access information and ideas from other countries and cultures from a young age that they will become the open-minded tolerant people that we hope will lead to developing a country that thrives on a diversity of ideas and openness.