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DISCUSSION

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Can the International Baccalaureate (IB) make a better and more peaceful world? Illuminating limits and possibilities of the International Baccalaureate movement/programs in a time of global crises

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Welcome to this special issue of Globalisation Societies and Education, which brings together scholars, practitioners, and researchers from all over the globe to address the questions of whether and how the 1968-established International Baccalaureate (IB) may be a legitimate form of educational provision for the betterment of a rapidly changing world. The diverse 'IB World' currently involves 5,760 schools offering a mixture of four programmes from K-12. This editorial begins by identifying the short circuits, limits and enablers with regard to the IB's stated mission:

> The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.
>
> To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.
>
> These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

By also regarding the claims made by the organisation in reference to this mission statement, where:

> The IB develops inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through education that builds intercultural understanding and respect.
>
> We value our hard-earned reputation for quality, for high standards and for pedagogical leadership. We achieve our goals by working with partners and by actively involving our stakeholders, particularly teachers.
>
> We promote intercultural understanding and respect, not as an alternative to a sense of cultural and national identity, but as an essential part of life in the 21st century. (IBO 2022)

It ambitiously sets out to encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. This foreword then outlines the context of our enquiry through the scope of this original special issue and follows by laying out each article in brief. The concluding discussion returns to the aims of the special issue and briefly considers where the contributions collectively leave us.

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Short circuits, limiters and enablers

Can the IB make the world a better and more peaceful place? Some of the more critical arguments in this collection find that in its current incarnation, the IB is unlikely to improve the planet for anyone save for those already advantaged. They do so by illuminating the policy context of the IB to position the evolved 'ontology' of the organisation as fully embedded within neoliberalism. Its potential for 'doing good', therefore, is diminished to its own advantaged networks and sphere. Overall, these arguments reveal how difficult it is to cojoin private privilege with emancipatory global influence (Gardner-McTaggart 2016; Tarc 2023); this problematic teleological ideology – holding to a story of 'doing good' without sufficient reflexivity of the conditions in which good is to be 'done' – is a theme engaged in this special issue by Silva-Enos, Howard, Feinauer-Whiting, Feinauer and Gardner-McTaggart.

In reading these contributions, it must be clear that they consider the IB as it *manifests* in a variety of school types, whether national or international, state or private, established or start up, Anglo-Western, Chinese, and American-Spanish, etcetera. We acknowledge that 'Thanks to the IB, these schools have the thinking in place, yet face unresolved ontological issues of systematic inequity at the organisational level which require urgent resolution in schools' policies' (Gardner-McTaggart 2021a, 342).

Many of the articles presented here, additionally show particular limits acting on the IB that challenge its mission. For example, they illuminate the uneven access to IB based on a number of factors as the high tuition fees in private schools, the choice mechanisms in state education as well as institutional filtering. The IB assessment regime can also be a limiter, as marks and grades do not always align with national measures. Crises such as COVID revealed the IB to be hierarchical and autocratic in operations, in contrast to state forms of education which displayed more communicative rationality in decision making (Fitzgerald 2022). This autocratic governance is confirmed in this special issue by Nick Palmer, who finds a lack of communicative rationality in the decision-making in an IB international school. Further, there is also the increasing competition between schools themselves (Resnik 2020), and rivalry is emerging as a significant structural limiter potentially undoing the notional work of the IB espoused in its knowledge products. The competitive ethos becomes clear when viewing IB expansion into the public sector, and the emancipatory allure of lowering the barriers to an IB education. While this appears a productive expansion, emancipatory measures are rarely achieved when initiated from a non-emancipatory ontology, and this is a key factor in understanding the challenges for IB in the twenty-first Century.

From its beginnings in a wealthy context of private/international schooling the IB has traditionally been able to thrive by fostering creativity, knowledge generation, professionalism and collaborative educational processes. In doing so it has generated a social sphere closely linked with advantage, privilege, and most of all, (educational) 'distinction' (Bourdieu 1984). However, in a context marked by scarcity (the public sector), the IB is emerging more as the Apex animal in the competitive franchised jungle. This positioning is leading to what is reported as a *competition against all*, in a zero-sum game where the strong win and the weak lose (Resnik 2020). Such research is developed in Gardner-McTaggart in this issue, and illuminates the significance of establishing IB's ontological orientation, in order to grasp its continuing evolution and impacts in the world.

The context

The International Baccalaureate (IB) seeks to develop the well-rounded citizen capable of imagining a different world and a different society and one who is also equipped with tools needed to analytically untangle complex political and economic realities. However, the IB is operationalised in localised school systems, often with strong post-colonial legacies and reliant upon the agencies and outlooks of individual educators and learners. These post-colonial legacies, IB's elitist aura and the reliance on teachers trained in expensive programs, all question the probability of the IB as a

more progressive or critical alternative to official or alternative curricular options in public schools. This special issue asks if IB can, indeed, make a better world? How does or might the IB navigate the distinction of its brand and privilege of its users alongside its progressive educational mission in a time of increasing global crises.

In its short space of time on planet earth, humanity has witnessed many ongoing challenges to its survival with the COVID crisis a pregnant reminder of 'the shape of things to come'. Now, at the beginning of the third millennia facing a range of crises mired in inequity and exploitation, education to foster ethical global citizenship is more vital than ever. We observe the advancing climate crisis, eight billion human inhabitants, accelerating extinction and decline of species, diminishing habitats, the stratospheric rise of the ultra-rich, and beneath it all, the crisis of knowledge validity in an increasingly online medium of opinion and false facts pushing the rebirth of ultra-right propaganda and unfounded narratives. It is clear that humans need to know and care deeply about their world in order to survive and thrive in it.

As our contribution by Barnard makes clear, the IB has initiated a move towards democratic international education, yet its positionality in this process remains problematic. Education remains key to democratic futures and empowered citizenry with the commitments to challenge injustice and post-truth cultures, in favour of knowledge that is based upon validity, science, and intelligence (Apple 2013; Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1996). Increasingly however, civic agency finds itself expressed in consumer choices, and alternative truths pervade in conspiracies and 'opinion as fact' (Postman 1993). Nevertheless, science and a critical spirit cannot overlook other ways of knowing stressed by the IB – religious and aesthetic – if we are to embrace a cosmopolitan stance that integrates different populations into a dialogical manner of solving problems in the world.

The IB faces a crisis of its own and it is one of representation. Rather than an option impulse by its critical, multicultural and creative characteristics, the provision of the IB is a choice led by neoliberal education constraints such as parent choice and competition between schools or the need to improve students' performance in national and international rankings such as PISA.

The IB has evolved and is evolving under conditions beyond its own making (Tarc 2009). Initially, it was operationalised in a small selection of mostly private international schools. Over time, the IB then branched out into public schools which clustered initially in Anglophone countries, numerically the USA being the largest. IB has now expanded into state schools in South America, the Middle East, and South East Asia. This expansion mirrors the changing landscape of international schooling (Bunnell 2020); alongside the classic international schools are growing numbers of international (local) schools that are international because they teach an international program. These IB state schools (or IB cohorts within state schools) are elitist but in a different way (class driven by neoliberal school competitions and parent choice). Admittedly, this diversification of schools has the potential of making the IB a vehicle to better the world since state schools can reach a much broader cross-section of students in the world.

In the first type of school (IB international schools), the vast majority of teachers in are from Anglophone or other privileged countries. Recruitment policies in IB international schools often favour a small elite club of educators led by a refined cabal of senior leaders, passing and sharing their privilege from one school to another (Bunnell and Gardner-Mctaggart 2022). What these teachers and teacher leaders share is an experience of teacher training (and subsequent teaching) in their host countries under neoliberal finance-driven reforms leading to a de-intellectualisation of the profession. This trend lies in stark contrast to the collaborative, interwoven and intellectual aspirations of teaching and learning in IB programs. However, in the state 'international' schools, the teaching staff is far more likely to be nationally local, they are more accessible to more students and present the affordance of connecting more students with the IB's values and pedagogy.

Many educators are concerned with 'the fourth industrial revolution', and with China increasingly appearing to lead the world; albeit, IB's take-up in China now offers a new and exciting vantage for considering international mindedness beyond IB's Eurocentric/Anglo-Western foundations. However, experiences of teachers and learners in this niche context are few as is an

understanding of the variance between local and expat teachers in such contexts. South America is also opening up to new state forms of IB education, enticing the middle classes into public schools (Resnik 2014; 2016). More globally, international schools are facing increasing pressure to provide diverse teaching communities representative of internationalism and Anglo-Western 'Englishness', to redress racist hiring policies of teachers (Gardner-McTaggart & Palmer, *Forthcoming*, Gardner-McTaggart, 2021b). By necessity, state schools in urban areas lead the way in equitable and diverse teaching, yet international IB schools claim this ground too. Private schools may be challenged as to how they can meaningfully claim to be multicultural and international, yet it is worth noting that private education in this context can and does deliver excellence in diversity, equity and inclusion and little is really known about it.

To add to the complexities of educating in a globalising space, there is also the resurgence of the far right and the crisis of knowledge and truth affecting teachers and learners alike. The IB reaches the globally influential and purports to deliver critical competence but appears to do so without examining the international school and community contexts in which the learners are to develop critical mindsets. While the IB thrives, the state sector suffers under system issues exacerbated by neoliberal policies, which include: teacher de-professionalisation, colonial legacies, and systemic injustice (Apple 2013; Ball, Bowe, and Gewirtz 1996; Gardner-McTaggart 2023; Ozga and Lawn 2017). These set the broad conditions for assessing the provision, qualities and effects of an IB education. Here, the IB acts as a beacon of hope, with increased emphasis on teacher professionalism, autonomy, collaboration, and diversity in the pedagogical space, despite its apparent alignment with globalising market trends.

It is clear that the IB can offer a fruitful alternative to the melancholy educational situation of many State educational systems; yet, its current ontology has it caught within 'progressive neoliberalism' (Fraser 2019; Tarc 2023) limiting its potential for critical self-reflexivity particularly along the dimension of class inequality. The IB, despite its huge growth in recent decades, still does not have the capacity to fulfil its mission and deliver its 'potential'. It has little depth in public schools (most deliver one programme, and offer the Diploma to few students), and the K-12 Continuum has never reached beyond 5% of all schools, mainly the core 'traditional' international schools who are increasingly abandoning the project (Bunnell 2020). Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind the larger context when thinking on the feasibility of such an expensive and demanding programme as the IB. At a time of expenditure cuts resulting not only from neoliberal policies but also from economic restrictions as consequence of Covid19 it is difficult to imagine how governments will allocate sufficient sums to form future citizens capable of transforming our decaying (physical and social) world. In the private sector, the self-serving issues of marketisation bring their own problems, and so the time is over-ripe for a rigorous critical engagement with this educational phenomenon we know as the IB. This special edition aims to present rigorous theoretical examinations of the interplay between the IB system and its actors, whilst considering the role of the IB and international education under the looming challenges of the twenty-first Century.

With a growing body of empirical work in the area dealing with the International Baccalaureate, this special issue addresses significant gaps in theoretical knowledge on the IB. It presents contributions explicitly grounded in theory, replete with critical methodologies more able to present a balanced and less dominated view of this educational franchise.

The organisation follows in two parts. The first is made up on theoretical pieces, which deploy social theory to develop more cogent understandings of what the IB is as well as outlining threats and limitations in order to provide recommendations. The second part is made up of empirical pieces, with a strong theoretical triangulation of data.

The contributions

The first paper by Mathew Barnard recognises the notional potential of the IB in *resisting* Neoliberalism, fostering epistemological, historical and cultural democracy, and thereby creeping

securitisation of our times. Unfortunately, the same thinking also finds it lacking in any meaningful democratic capital of its own, as an organisation. Barnard uses the theory of Bourdieu and Lefevre to articulate how the IB presents *the affordance* for a democratic global education because of the lived representational spaces and collective knowledge construction it is able to foster. As with the following contribution, Barnard takes issue with the IB's legitimacy due to its emphasis on Western-centric thinking and a pronounced lack of collective reasoning. The main contribution of this paper is to propose the IB as a framework for collective networks providing alternative thinking to neoliberal injustices, escaping cultural and epistemological securitisation.

Alex McTaggart also questions the legitimacy of the International Baccalaureate in a changing and changed planet. He shines the light of enquiry on this world-leading organisation and its corporate claims. The paper questions whether the IB provides value for money to the parent customer, and if it can actually deliver on its own lofty emancipatory aims, or whether these are to be viewed more as normative claims, and if so, what this means. By deploying the theory of Habermas, this article identifies the IB as an organisation that has morphed over 60 years from an international 'old conservative' body, to a 'Neoliberal' one. Analysis finds the IB structurally autophagic in the emancipatory educational context, increasingly beset by deep system issues born of its operating structure. In a systematic review of empirical data on the IB in the social spere, these are reported not only disrupt its corporate mission, but act to intensify, and worsen any sense of social justice or emancipation whether in schools, or in wider educational policy. The paper recommends *communicative rationality*, urging the IB play more of a leadership role in supporting education in less privileged contexts. It suggests the IB can use its considerable influence, economic surplus and educational capital to lead by example: to move beyond telling others and instead 'make the world a better place' *itself*.

Where Bernard and Gardner-McTaggart question more the policy futures of the IB organisation, Lyons and Tarc place the pedagogy of the IBDP centrally in an attempt to theorise how a critically minded educator can operate within it. The paper acknowledges the limitations of education writ large to directly affect political and social structures whether from neoliberal or more critical perspectives. Stepping aside from (the critique of) the performative rhetoric and branding of the IB organisation, this article considers how IB makes or might make a difference at the level of IBDP teacher pedagogy and student learning and self-formation, which was a foundational concern to the creators of IB. The authors argue that, in the context of elite international schools, a relational and critically reflexive pedagogy, responsive to the lived experience of IBDP students, and aware of the 'blind spot' of social class privilege, can support a dynamic of community co-learning with unfolding percolating effects that might indeed contribute to the 'making of a better world'.

With Dulfer and Dawborn-Grundlach, the emphasis of this special issue moves over to Australia, a well-established market for the IB. It reviews data surrounding the growth of the IB there and finds a contradiction in the growth statistics of that country. While the IB may be setting strategic goals with a mind to increasing diversity, this paper makes sobering reading, finding an increasing concentration of IB programmes in areas that are already privileged, to people who are better off, and seeking the distinction that the IB confers, rather than a transformational experience of education for their children. This paper adds further weight to the question of IB legitimacy when parents chose IB schools because the public alternative has devalued by Neoliberal policy and education represents distinction for an advantaged class, rather than an educational good for our world.

In the next article, Nick Palmer takes up the issue of international mindedness with particular reference to research conducted on one international IB school. Habermas's work features to underscore the importance of communicative action in articulating an authentic IB education, yet Nick finds much in the IB which is strategically focussed aligning with 'expanding markets [that] run up against the limits of the planet' (Habermas 2019, 40). As with previous contributions, this paper identifies the transformational potential of the IB, acknowledges the Neoliberal influences that have so changed it, and provides some hope in the form of recommendations on how to ' … offer a relief rather than a rupture of the tension between neo-liberal subjectivity and IM'.

As with Lyons and Tarc, Palmer finds the role of the critically minded, communicative teacher to be central to a successful implementation of the IB.

In contrast to a number of papers finding the franchise nature of the IB to be problematic, this next paper locates the IB as a source of hope, resistance, and positivity in an increasingly autocratic Polish educational context. Joanna Leek, outlines the ongoing post-soviet mentality now subject to a nationalistic turn of polices which align in some part with the concept of cosmopolitan nationalism. Notable in this paper is that Leek finds that IB world schools in Poland provide spaces of educational leadership due to their focus on teacher agency, but also represent a form of cosmopolitanism. Based upon rich interview data, the study shows how education and teachers in IB schools are able to move away from the non-agentic *homo Sovieticus* model still prevalent in the Polish education system, placing emphasis on their own responsibilities and duties, encouraging democratic forms of leadership and collegiality in schools. IB Teachers are found to enjoy increased leadership responsibility, which allied with critical self-reflection is linked to resistance to national forms of indoctrination.

With Wright, Lin and Lu the focus of this special issue moves over to the People's Republic of China, and IB education there. This article is significant as it develops the concept of cosmopolitan nationalism in conjunction with increasing regulations in China, with regard to what it means to educate for an international audience. The Chinese mainland market has become one of the fastest growing and most relevant to the IB in its international school form, and so the legislation enacted from 2021 casts a deep shadow over the future of the IB in that country. This contribution provides a concise yet authoritative overview of the varied schooling reality of IB in China, which will be helpful for any researcher or practitioner interested in this context. The authors conclude by commenting on the IB's flexibility, juxtaposing it with the increasing tensions rising in the Chinese context. As in so many educational contexts where emancipation and freedom of thinking suffer repression and containment, the authors call for more research on how the schools can remain 'resilient'.

Silva-Enos, Howard, Feinauer-Whiting, Feinauer bring this issue's theoretical focus to bear on an empirical study of a central American international school offering the IB. The authors pick up on the issue of access to international education more generally the privilege associated with it, referencing a tiered elitism, of increasing and graduating distinction in social and academic capital among the global elite classes (Ingersoll 2018). The authors find that the students in this school understand internationalism (and concepts of emancipatory endeavour) through a lens of privilege. This manifests in a way that truncates cognitive dissonance. The students can be seen as being taught about making the world a better place with a blindness towards (their) privilege, and the negative effects this can and does have on the social and environmental world around them. In analysis the authors report an uncritical internalisation of elitism coexisting with the emancipatory and progressive values of the IB school, in other words, the system facilitates the lexis and self-concept of equity, without the critical competencies with which to use them. The authors conclude by highlighting the overarching need for all school stakeholders to prioritise students' critical consciousness, confirming a significant weakness of the IB in franchise.

Beech, Guevara, and Del Monte provide a Peruvian and Costa Rican loci, also with a thoughtful discussion of privilege and international education. Unlike the previous American work on a private international school, this paper regards the IB in its public school manifestation and how the concept of equity and opportunity has been promoted in these two countries through the medium of the IB. They draw on the work of Law (1992) on socio-material assemblages and Resnik's (2016) use of it in examining the IB. This paper also articulates through the theoretical framework of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (field theory) and the subordinate field mechanisms of capitals. It provides helpful insight into the imaginations of social actors in understanding the IB's societal contributions and linking them with doxa and commonly disseminated fabrications of meritocracy. By considering the IB in public schools through elitism and privilege, it is found that the IB has increased the privileged access to opportunity and thereby increased the

meritocratic access to privilege, in a limited number of people. The IB emerges from this enquiry with potential to legitimise structural inequalities in line with neoliberal ideology of meritocracy. This last lies in direct opposition to the initial reasoning behind its inception and celebration by regional supporters.

Our special issue concludes with a piece that shifts focus to Kent in England, and the IB's professional Career Programme (*CP*). This is an important place to conclude our contributions, as the CP is not only a significant addition to the IB's portfolio, but also one that receives less attention. Hopfenbeck, Johnston, Cresswell, Double, and McGrane redress this with an insightful view into the implementation of the programme in a context of some disadvantage. The authors provide a set of key findings on the implementation of the CP, which are all positive, but rely on supporting human factors, without which these effects would be questionable. It is also worth considering that the added status of an 'International' qualification worked positively to motivate teachers towards the programme, particularly in this pilot phase. The authors find that such inspiration of staff (and students) on local knowledge, civic responsibility and personal growth was central confirming the value of civic education in schools, in contrast to dominant education policy which sees this as the remit of the individual (Flecknoe 2002). Vital to this process is the ability of social actors to develop enduring networks with each other, to communicate and mediate their way through all educational processes together. This contribution shows the important impact the IB can make when it is implemented in a socially constructed way, confirming the power of a communicative rationality as the educational mechanism of social transformation and emancipation (Gardner-McTaggart 2022).

Crises, the IB and making the world a better place

This special issue is notable in exploring the *material* processes and effects of IB in relation to its symbolic mission. The contributions have been particularly concerned with the issues and problems currently facing our world. We probed our contributors on matters relating to postcolonialism, Anglo-Western hegemony, and class and a reported lack of internationalism/diversity in leaders and educators teaching an international curriculum in international spaces (Gardner-McTaggart 2021a). Multiple contributions discuss the pervasive issue of social class as it manifests among students, a matter considered in this issue in Australia by Dulfer and Dawborn-Grundlach and in Central America by Silva-Enos, Howard, Feinauer-Whiting, Feinauer. These contributions highlight how a blindness to privilege is operationalised through the IB programs and IB as a social movement; organisationally it is intellectualised in abstractions, and only notionally reflective. In a similar vein, Beech, Guevara, and Del Monte find the IB has expanded access, but a more granular analysis shows new dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that privilege (upper) middle-class families; again, the organisation does not seem to critically engage with these newer dynamics. In some sense, this may be expected given the dominant imaginary of meritocracy within neoliberalised schooling, where IB takes for granted the filtering function of schooling. The contribution by Beech et al. illuminates how the IB works in line with the meritocratic ideology. More broadly, our contributions have been able to deepen understandings of the IB as a business, a franchise, a belief system, and a network. As Barnard, Gardner-McTaggart and Palmer all make clear, the IB is more than its knowledge products, just as Apple is not its iPhones. It is a franchise with a suitably effective and efficient approach to doing business. This brings IB's larger mission to a point of potential short-circuit, raising questions as to how indeed a progressive pedagogy can bloom under corporate branding.

As the contributions illustrate, there are also positive elements and potentialities of IB, which lead us to consider the enablers of IB's aim of 'making a better world'. Barnard, for example, is clear on the value of collective knowledge construction and the IB's promotion of it. Palmer also identifies a powerful (unrequited) affordance for communicative rationality (Habermas 2019) in an international school of some privilege. Indeed, for anyone who has taught or been taught in

the IB, there is a welcome focus on inquiry, and knowledge generation; the IB can enact communicative rationality so helpful in fostering democratic thinking. Lyons and Tarc locate great potential in the IB Diploma itself for facilitating positive futures for students who are taught to think and learn reflexively and critically. Gardner-McTaggart highlights the qualities of the IB that make it world-leading as a de-nationalised form of progressive education, also bringing the affordance of a renaissance in teacher professionalism: also explored in (Gardner-McTaggart 2021a); he also unpacks *why* the IB is viewed so dualistically. Such positive teaching practice and thinking around pedagogy in an otherwise barren and disenchanted educational settings as reported on by Beech, Guevara, and Del Monte in the Latin American context and Joanna Leek's research in Poland. They demonstrate compellingly how the IB provides emancipatory resistance against post-soviet positivism in the educational space. In Joanna's work, it becomes evident how the IB is more than merely a curricular movement, but also a social movement of 'mindedness', (international, democratic, peaceful, self-determined/creative) in a world beset by crises of manifold origin. In Kent, England, Hopfenbeck, Johnston, Cresswell, Double, and McGrane explore the IB in the guise of its professional qualification. Here they find it spurs teachers and learners to new motivational heights, bringing light into otherwise gloomy social and educational settings, and increasing prospects for non-academically inclined students, providing a significant contribution to what is known about the professional arm of the IB.

In our initial call, we identified an increase in nationalism and authoritarianism along with the fourth industrial revolution. Wright Lin and Lu's paper takes stock of an increasingly nationalist space dependent upon globalised trade facing ever more regulations and restrictions on international education. This contribution provides helpful insight into the flexibility and adaptability of IB, even in this more constrained scenario. Much like Leek's paper, this confirms the IB as a vessel for cosmopolitanism (and all the benefits that go with it), and one which is robust enough to weather and even adapt to forces levied against it. Both of these contributions make clear how important the IB is for educators and students who are beset by policies and mindsets which aim to control and reduce the influence of internationalism.

Is it time that this matter of the role and purpose of the IB be re-imagined? The following contributions can additionally be read as material that might inform such a re-evaluation and re-imagining. This is because as the IB moves further into the twenty-first Century, it will require a robust strategy which balances its product's emancipatory aims, with its corporate orientation. As such, a teleological orientation (one that based on strategic reason, not communicative reason) finds the historical context irrelevant or impotent. A corporate philosophy of goals over people is counter-intuitive to the kind of teaching and learning in the IB and this is dealt with by several of our contributors, such as Barnard, Lyons and Tarc, Palmer, and Gardner-McTaggart.

Although some contributions call for communicative action, we find this concept to be of limited use in a context of greater power. Habermas may well act as a positive way of producing knowledge and consensus in the day-to-day teaching, learning and leading of the schools which output the IB, yet it may not go quite far enough. Communicative Action (*CA*) can afford for some measure of equal, (if not just) participation and involvement of contributors towards knowledge and leadership. CA may often represent an improvement on more hierarchical schools' systems increasingly common in the Neoliberal educational world (Apple 2013; Tarc 2023), however, a betterment of poor practice is not always great practice; equality is not justice.

Particularly in a broader policy context, communicative action can easily serve the power of those already entitled, privileged and capable, because everyone comes to 'communication' with their own biography. In this way and others, communicative action can be critiqued for being able to mask power in the form of social capital (Miller 1987); as Foucault makes clear, knowledge is imbricated with power, and those who can best mobilise it, and know the hallways and intimacies of power, are always likely to 'win' communicatively. Many of our contributions demonstrate how this process has occurred to minimise the democratic nature of an IB education and its ability to 'make the world a better place'.

As editors, we are not here to propose solutions, and have merely been able to highlight the tensions we see. Still, what is needed is *action*. As our contributions make plain, actions could be along the lines of the IB expanding to state schools to reach a critical mass of students to which could be thought of as a social movement comprised of globally responsive (future) citizens. A 'tipping point' of empowered citizenry. The IB's potential educational gift lies in facilitating a critical view of our planet and the human constructed world. More imaginatively, we have also seen the creation of IB alumni movements such as 'The Organisation to Decolonise IB schools' (ODIS). It is likely that this kind of mobilisation of critical thinking is better positioned to support educational/curricular responsiveness to inequality and other global crises.

Finally, our Special Issue demonstrates the value of both criticality and hope in education and educational scholarship. Hope of a better world where individuals will attempt to challenge the increasing neoliberal and irrational mentalities that are admittedly at least a part of the context within which the IB operates. As our papers make clear there is great potential in the IB, not in the carbonised memories of yesteryears in replicating social privilege, or as the *Passepartout* through Ivy League gate keepers; the real IB diamond in the rough lies in the educational potentialities it evokes in its users/stakeholders to challenge the status quo and imagine more just and sustainable potentialities.

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