



Lt. General (Retd) Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM

**Dear Friends,**

There is a lot of obtuse thinking on what is international education. The increasing plethora of “international” schools exemplifies this thinking. To make matters even more confusing, IB is the only international curriculum available today. It is, therefore, only natural that teachers and parents feel that IB is international education. The truth is different: international education is not IB; IB is a part of international education. This is why most international schools the world over are not international. They are yesterday’s schools, with yesterday’s teachers, with yesterday’s resources, and yesterday’s technologies.

So what is international education? It has four distinct characteristics and all have to be present for any curriculum or school to qualify as “international.”

First, a school’s international curriculum must clearly sensitize and equip students with a wide array of possible solutions to deal with the Millennium Challenge, our planet’s sustainability. The threats are myriad: sharing of scarce resources, climate change, poverty (403 million of Indians are poor), illiteracy (another 350 million), violation of human rights, growing conflicts, religious fundamentalism, and other social and economic inequalities. The local challenge for teachers is straight forward. For example, what solutions can mathematics, science, literature, business studies, history, and economics provide?

Second, international education espouses adoption of international standards and benchmarks, systems and processes, and best practices. In systems, the most important would be student-centric learning, accountability through quality evaluation, and whole education (but not at the expense of excellence in academics). Academic rigour, assessment for learning, professional development, pastoral care, peer-learning and walk-throughs would be good international processes.

The third feature of international education is preparing students to deal with an unknown future, a tomorrow that is chaotic and unpredictable. In this context, the traditional three Rs – reading, writing, and arithmetic, will not get one too far in life. There is a need to impart a New Literacy, which is a set of key leadership competencies like (to re-connect with one's inner world):

Higher purpose of life and vision

Innovation

Critical thinking

Lifelong learning

Living with diversity

And the fourth attribute of international education, which is foundational, is that this is all possible provided teachers are transformational leaders. They transform themselves first, then the students, the school, and the local community. Those who cannot transform themselves are disempowered. As long teachers remain instructional, international education will remain a still-born idea!

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arjun Ray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Lieutenant General (Retd) Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM  
Chief Executive Officer  
Indus Trust