

GUEST COLUMN – September/October 2022

Aim High, Work Smart, Care Deeply Simon Watson

International schools are free to choose from the best educational initiatives around the world, unshackled from the administrative handcuffs of national and state regulations.

Yet many international school leaders and governors find themselves blinkered by historical traditions and patriotic ruts of the marketing gurus. The hindrance to development and innovation, the lack of cross-pollination of ideas that follows from ploughing the single furrow is self-evident.

The connected thinking in international schools is no doubt as varied as it is in national schools. Blind adherence to national standards and curricula trap some international schools in their offerings, being more “British” or “American” than schools back home.

The best schools are open and outward thinking, ready to critically accept ideas from around the world, even if these ideas emanate from people or organisations in countries other than their own. International schools have a responsibility to look beyond their own borders and aspire to provide an [Education for a Shared Humanity](#).

Our purposeful and accidental interconnectedness with all forms of life on the earth has been growing exponentially but is now so prevalent that we cannot ignore our collision with the world. We must explicitly educate young people and our communities about our detrimental impact. And all that we do must be for the good of all humankind, emanating compassion and demonstrating forethought that we readily talk about yet find difficult to achieve.

The autonomy that international schools possess can be debilitating but armed with good research and perceptive questions, schools can decide on key elements that help structure the curriculum.

At St Christopher’s School, Bahrain, we have sought to define the essence of our existence as an international school through our distilled mission, vision and strategic journey. These are complemented through our holistic curriculum framework, the [Future Ready Curriculum \(FRC\)](#), which equips students with

forward thinking knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to serve as *Role Models for the World*.

Through subject-based and experiential learning opportunities students receive clear, specific and authentic opportunities to develop competencies in the domains of Academic, Metacognition, Service, Enterprise, Digital and Wellbeing.

This learning journey includes activities to engage student-centred learning within the context of the school and global community such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), internationalism and interculturalism, and positive psychology (PERMA) among many others.

The title of this short piece is a modification of one of Hilary Clinton's quotes on her campaign trail in her bid in the 2016 US Presidential Election. It encapsulates much of what we endeavour to do in schools and, like Clinton, we probably fall short, just a little, not quite perfecting the ideal lesson or creating the dynamic curriculum that engages all learners.

Yet, also like Clinton, we keep going, we demonstrate to the community that we care. Because no matter how imperfect our schools are we will always: Aim High, Work Smart, Care Deeply.

Simon Watson is Principal, St Christopher's School, Bahrain