

## **Future Directions for the IBO**

Time is rather short and I shall welcome your feedback when I have finished, so let me explain how I intend to approach the topic of **future directions for the IBO**.

- I shall start with some figures that illustrate our rate of growth
- I shall then sum up the main outcomes from 18 months of strategic planning
- And then I shall describe how we are moving forward with our strategic plan
- I shall then identify six future directions that seem especially important to me
- Finally I shall describe three areas of concern that we must be aware of.

I am going to take what is called a helicopter approach: I want to get above the day-to-day issues and look down at the big picture.

### **Why does the IBO exist?**

So, before we get to those figures, let me take two minutes to explain why the IBO exists. Like any not-for-profit organization, we exist to make the world a better place, in our case through the development of international education. Our Act of Foundation, which is supervised by the Swiss authorities in Berne, states the first objective of the IBO as

*To develop programmes of international education for students at the primary, middle and upper secondary school level for adoption by authorized school in all countries...*

and then our mission statement explains how the

*...the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.*

The definition of international education is the subject of lively debate, but just so we have something in our minds during the next few minutes, let me offer you this one which I read recently in an article to be published in our Journal of Research in International Education:

*International education can be fruitfully defined as education about the nature of the planet earth, education about the nature of the human species and education about the social structure of the world as a whole. (LF Anderson 1981)*

That sets the scene and at the same time it indicates both the importance and the challenge of the work the IBO is engaged in.

## **The Growth of the IBO**

The following figures illustrate the growth of the IBO during the brief five years that I have been director general.

### *Budget expenditure:*

<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>
24.5 m \$US	45.5 m (est)

### *Authorized schools by programme:*

<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>
DP 883 MYP 146 PYP 43	DP 1215 MYP 296 PYP 181

### *Diploma subjects examined:*

<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>
136,000	210,000

It would be quite wrong, and insulting to my colleagues, to say that this remarkable expansion has happened by chance. It has happened because our schools, none of which is obliged to offer an IB programme, are satisfied they are engaging in something worthwhile, something that gives value for money, something that is better than any alternative.

At the same time, no one could claim that the expansion has been planned, that it has followed a careful pattern or that it has reflected any particular set of IBO priorities. In that sense it *has* just happened and that forms the background to our strategic planning because we recognize that one sign of a mature organization is its ability to plan its growth rather than just let it happen.

One additional measure of the IBO's maturity may surprise you. Today, the majority of students engaged in an IB course (about 55%) are to be found in national state schools. Only a minority (about 18%) are in international schools and the remaining 27% are in national private schools. This illustrates a trend in the IBO's development, as its programmes in any particular country are first introduced into international schools, are then adopted by private schools and then slowly begin to influence the state education system. The exception to this process has, of course, been in the United States.

## **The Outcomes of Strategic Planning**

Our work with McKinsey and Co has been one of the most stimulating episodes of my career and their pro-bono support continues even today. Five main conclusions came from that period of strategic planning:

1. the IBO is in sound health both financially and organizationally; it can therefore make choices about the future
2. our current rate of expansion would probably continue if we did nothing but answer the telephone but it would take place in developed countries, thus reinforcing the IB's élitist image

3. the IBO should therefore plan its growth so as to achieve the maximum impact of our mission and we measured that impact in terms of a rather controversial formula:  $I = f(D, N, E)$  where D is the difference an IB programme makes, N is the number of students it will impact and E is the ease of its implementation
4. the ability to achieve planned growth will depend upon three key factors: *maintaining quality, building an appropriate infrastructure and widening access*
5. many of the IBO's ambitions will not be achieved unless it can access alternative sources of funding.

If you want to read the strategic plan and its 28 strategic actions you will find it on our public website: [www.ibo.org/strategy](http://www.ibo.org/strategy).

### **Following up the Strategic Plan**

The strategic plan was adopted last April by the Council of Foundation. We have taken four important actions to ensure that it does not go where most strategic plans go: onto a shelf to collect dust. We have

- created a new strategic planning department, under Andrew Bollington's direction, that is responsible for business planning, project management and communication
- organized a series of two-day workshops for each of the IBO's functions to decide who is responsible for what and how it is going to be progressed, an essential step towards ownership of the plan
- established a strategic planning committee, chaired by the President of the Council of Foundation
- set up an IB Fund with tax-exempt status and a group of influential trustees to spearhead the IBO's fund-raising programme.

Next week the Council of Foundation will be meeting in Buenos Aires and it will be reviewing progress over the past six months.

### **Future directions for the IBO**

I have described our growth. I have explained the main thrust of the strategic plan. I have told you how we are inserting the plan into the fabric of the IBO. In the previous strategic plan we spoke, perhaps a little pompously, of 'grandes lignes'. Let me suggest five grandes lignes that will help carry the IBO forward in the next few years.

*First*, I see us becoming more involved in on-line teaching and learning. The IB, which is so forward-looking in many of its ambitions, is stuck in the last century in the way it is very institutionally bound. Unless you happen to attend an IB World School that happens to offer the courses you wish to take, your access to international education is barred. That is unacceptable and we are already involved in a number of on-line initiatives.

*Second*, we shall want to widen the language access to our programmes. Already we are offering some diploma subjects in German and we have been seeking ways of supporting schools that want their students to study the MYP and PYP in languages other than French, Spanish and English.

*Third*, we are beginning to understand that our professional development opportunities for teachers are just as effective in promoting international education as our actual programmes. We shall continue to develop the on line curriculum centre. We shall study the impact of a project that is developing the trainers-of-teachers in a PYP project that we are running in Cambodia and we shall soon publish proposals for teacher professional accreditation.

*Fourth*, we shall want to become increasingly involved in research that measures the impact of our programmes (remember - *the difference that they make?*). Another sign of a mature organization is that it can produce evidence to back up the claims that it is making on behalf of its products; quite simply that they really do work.

*Fifth*, we shall be seeking to form even more partnerships in order to obtain greater leverage for an organization that will always be of rather modest size. On the one hand the IBO is taking a very tough line with those who abuse our intellectual property rights. On the other hand we are working out legal contracts for those who have the experience to help us in a consultancy role and, as many of you will know, we are continuing to out-source our workshops to those organizations able to operate them successfully on our behalf.

*Sixth*, we shall be adopting an even more proactive approach to fund-raising. Our development office has already had some significant successes – to our pleasant surprise and against all predictions, our grant from The Goldman Sachs Foundation to develop the on-line curriculum centre was extended for a fourth year - but much of what we want to achieve will depend upon external funding. We shall not divert core funding away from our core business.

If we review that list of six grandes lignes – on-line learning, language access, professional development, research into IB impact, leverage through partnership and fund-raising – I think you will realize that each addresses one or more of those three strategic themes: **quality, access and infrastructure**.

## **Future Worries**

So: what clouds do I see on the horizon?

The first cloud comes in the shape of the US dollar sign. The continuing weakness of the US dollar, which is our main income currency, has hit us very hard. Let me give you a simple illustration: if we took the 2002 budget, which produced a surplus of US\$ 945k and repeated exactly the same activity at today's exchange rates, we would record a net loss of 2.1m. In practice, a combination of currency protection, increased volume of activity and improvements in efficiency will (I hope) just about enable us to break even this year. But we are swimming against a very negative currency tide.

The second cloud is the heavy weight of increasing regulation that affects any serious organization today and which threatens to turn economy of scale into inertia of scale as the organization becomes weighed down by the inescapable responsibilities of governance, financial regulation and risk control. The larger we get the more we are exposed to an increasingly litigious world. Add to that our own priorities of consultation and participation and you will understand why the IBO is sometimes accused of being bureaucratic! I am trying to lead an organization where action is based on knowledge, trust and nimbleness but I know that decisions that I would have taken without a moment's hesitation five years ago are no longer mine to take alone.

Which leads me to a final cloud which we must never allow to gather because the cloud of doubt obscures the bright sunlight of vision and idealism. There is so much that is so evidently wrong with the world at the moment that it is easy to lose heart and to give up. Every time I listen to the BBC World News, I know that the negative reports will outnumber the positive by a factor of about five to one. An organization the size of the IBO cannot (to use a McKinsey expression) try to 'boil the ocean' but it *can* make a difference if we use our limited resources wisely. Never let us divert our eyes from the vision, optimism and courage of those early IB heroes who set the direction for this remarkable organization so clearly more than thirty years ago.

The IBO has always been a special mixture of vision and pragmatism but the most precious, and the most easily-surrendered, is the vision. Fortunately, the IBO community, which contains the most talented and committed group of people I have ever worked with, will ensure that never happens. As I said a moment ago, there is really only one reason why not-for-profit organizations exist: to make the world a better place.

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