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Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

Simposio con la participación de Dr. Richard Barnes, Leslie Currie, Dr. James Brown, Boyd Roberts e Ian Andain

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Este número de los *Apuntes de investigación del BI* presenta un simposio en el que intervinieron miembros de universidades y colegios autorizados del Programa del Diploma del Reino Unido. El simposio se celebró como respuesta a un informe de Colin Jenkins titulado *Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme*. El informe, realizado a petición de IBO, se presentó en York, Bath y Londres en octubre de 2003. Queremos dar las gracias a todos los participantes del simposio por los esfuerzos realizados para poder cumplir con los plazos de publicación. El informe pretende reflejar cómo perciben el Programa del Diploma las instituciones de enseñanza superior en el Reino Unido, pero estamos convencidos de que nuestros compañeros de los colegios del Programa del Diploma del BI en todo el mundo encontrarán el informe y el debate oportunos y de interés.

En este número presentamos también novedades con respecto al estudio sobre la transición del colegio a la universidad, un estudio que tiene por objeto mostrar a partir de investigaciones si IBO realiza sus objetivos de promover el rigor académico y la conciencia internacional.

James Cambridge
Investigador universitario

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Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

En octubre de 2003 se publicó el informe *Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme*, realizado a petición de IBO. El autor, Colin Jenkins, se puso en contacto con 120 instituciones de enseñanza superior del Reino Unido y observó que el 57% de éstas consideraba que el Programa del Diploma de la Organización del Bachillerato Internacional confería ventaja a los estudiantes que solicitaban un curso universitario, por comparación a los A-levels¹. Según el informe, muchos de los consultados consideran que no se ha producido una “inflación” de las notas en el Programa del Diploma y en sus exámenes. Los tres requisitos del Programa del Diploma de IBO (la Monografía, Teoría del Conocimiento, y Creatividad, Acción y Servicio (CAS)) están bien considerados por las instituciones de enseñanza superior británicas. También se reconoce la amplitud del Programa del Diploma. El Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)² tiene un listado de 47.000 cursos universitarios (sobre 50.000) en los que las condiciones de admisión contemplan el Programa del Diploma. Este porcentaje tan elevado refleja el amplio reconocimiento del Programa del Diploma de IBO.

El informe se publicó en Bath, York y Londres. Se invitó a representantes de los servicios de admisión de diversas universidades y de colegios del Programa del Diploma del Reino Unido para que expresaran sus opiniones. En este número de los *Apuntes de investigación del BI* presentamos los puntos de vista de tres consejeros de admisión a universidades (Dr. Richard Barnes, del Emmanuel College, Cambridge; Leslie Currie, de la Universidad de Bath y Dr. James Brown, de la Universidad de Glasgow) y de dos directores de colegios que ofrecen el Programa del Diploma (Boyd Roberts, del colegio St Clare’s, Oxford, e Ian Andain, del Broadgreen High School, Liverpool).

Dr Richard Barnes **Emmanuel College, Cambridge, UK**

It is important to point out that my remarks are those of an individual and not an official statement on the part of Cambridge University. My personal perspective is informed by having had a daughter, and a niece, study the DP at United World College of the Atlantic (UK), by my role as an admissions tutor for fifteen years, by teaching in universities for almost thirty years and by having three children receive their undergraduate education at American universities.

I would like to put my response to the report on perceptions of the IB Diploma Programme into perspective by indicating to you some of the current concerns of Cambridge University, and then using our perception of the DP to indicate how we believe that form of education meets our needs or, more importantly, meets the needs of its students.

The two major issues relating to secondary education currently under consideration at Cambridge are the fair and unbiased selection of the best students for admission, and influencing the provision of 14–19 education so that it provides students with the right combination of skills and knowledge to benefit

¹ (En el Reino Unido) Exámenes que se realizan al término de la enseñanza secundaria de nivel preuniversitario, así como los títulos o certificados que acreditan su realización positiva.

² (En el Reino Unido) Servicio de admisión a universidades y otras instituciones de educación superior.

from higher education. In order to do the latter we need to influence politicians and educators to accept that the higher ability range has needs that are just as vital to the country as those of lower ability. We recognize that if the efforts expended on influencing 14-19 provision fail then we will need to consider further adjustments to our courses to ensure a smoother transition between secondary and higher education. We are already examining the skill and knowledge deficits in our intake and adjusting courses where we must.

In selecting the best students fairly we have a number of problems. The first of these problems is getting students to apply, particularly if they come from backgrounds not traditionally associated with Oxbridge. In this we have not been helped by adverse publicity generated by media and politicians, many of whom appear never to have been near Cambridge and to have no idea of the efforts and initiatives that we have put in place to widen access. Oxbridge can be a soft target for those politicians with psyches, and voter support, vested in the class struggle.

Making fair judgments between students who have applied is a difficult problem, not only for Oxbridge but for all universities. The problems are compounded by students applying from different cultural and social backgrounds, and from different secondary education systems. It is important to recognize that interviewer and admission tutor training can deal with many, perhaps all, of the cultural and social issues. Strangely enough it is the diverse educational experience that presents some of the biggest problems. It is difficult to make a fair comparison between students who have taken A-levels, Scottish Advanced Highers, the *Abituur* and various forms of Baccalaureate. There is a tendency for the selection procedure to be dominated by the perception of the most common qualification, in our case A-levels. However, the current quest is for a stand-alone test, independent of cultural bias, social bias and past examination experience that, ideally, is also predictive of future performance in a university environment and beyond.

Current efforts to create a fair test involve two main areas. The first is the creation of a quite specific test for medical and veterinary admissions, originally called the MVAT (Medical and Veterinary Admissions Test) and pioneered by Cambridge but now called the BMAT (BioMedical Admissions Test) and used by Oxford, Cambridge and UCL. This test has three sections that might be described as: "Can you think?", "Do you have any basic knowledge?", and "Can you string more than two words together in a coherent written argument?" The second direction in which testing is evolving is the assessment of thinking skills. It may be possible to develop this testing to explore specific thinking skills relevant to different university subjects.

The development of these tests ought to be quite beneficial to DP students but there is a problem. As I have already mentioned, the perception by admissions tutors of the meaning of examination grades for all students is dominated by what has happened with A-levels, and what is perceived about, A-levels. There has been clear grade inflation and A grades have become the norm for all our applicants at Cambridge. Some years ago we decided on a Cambridge-wide offer for the DP that we deemed to be equivalent to three grade A A-levels with a grade 1 in a Sixth Term Examination Paper (STEP). We settled for 39 points overall, with 19 on HL subjects. The argument was that, although it was clear that the A grade at A-level was a broader band than the 7 of the DP, we were looking for the top part of the A band so a 7 in a relevant subject was a reasonable request. Nineteen points awarded to three subjects at higher level can be made up as 7,7,5 or 7,6,6 and the equivalence seemed to us reasonable. Unfortunately for DP students the perception of grade inflation in examinations has been extrapolated without evidence to the IB and many of our admissions tutors have increased the point requirement; 7,7,7 with 42 overall is one offer that I have heard about in the

recent past. Colin Jenkins' report shows quite clearly that there has been no significant grade inflation in the DP over ten years. We should, therefore, still be asking for 39 with 19 on HL subjects, and even then that is a steeper offer than our traditional A-level one. If this fact were recognized by admissions tutors then the thinking-skills-based sifting should favour DP students. Thinking skills are built into the DP in a way that they no longer are in the "tick box" A-level system.

The three extra points (I think of them that way and apologize if it offends IB organizers) seem to me to be a key part of this. The theory of knowledge course challenges the students to think "outside the box" and the extended essay gives them the opportunity to demonstrate that they can, indeed, do so. DP students preparing for any new admissions test that universities may introduce will need little extra help.

In seeking to work with the Tomlinson review of 14-19 curriculum in England and others on the development of a 14-19 curriculum we believe we have very simple requirements. We need an appropriate knowledge base, a general cultural and social history base, reading skills, numeracy related to the relevant subjects, IT skills and the ability to communicate ideas, both orally and on paper. Reading the *Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme* report it is clear that universities generally agree that the DP encourages and develops most or all of these skills. It is also clear, from a recent survey that I undertook in the university, that there is a perception among academics that the present A-level system is not providing these skills to an appropriate degree. The problem is sufficiently acute that some of the arts faculties need to provide remedial help with the writing of essays, over and above the normal development of writing skills associated with the supervision system. I am not aware of any DP students needing to attend these sessions.

To some extent we have to say that a comparison between the DP and A-levels generally is unfair. The DP does cater for the more-able end of the cohort and is demanding of teacher resources. It is also a very full timetable, but perhaps that also encourages time management skills. I personally would love to see the DP more readily available for able students and would wish to see any plans formulated by Tomlinson, and subsequently the government, adopt an IB-style approach for the more-able end of the range, but I recognize that it would have certain knock-on effects. Requiring breadth, and attempting to teach a wide curriculum beyond sixteen would certainly need the government to invest more in training teachers, and a more-demanding curriculum would mean that the status of teachers, and their pay, would need to be increased to encourage more of the right calibre of person to enter the profession. Nevertheless, I do hope that the thinking skills element, the extended essay and the cross-curricular integration of the DP will inform the development of the new national 14-19 programme.

It was a pleasure to read this report and to note that so many others shared my perception of the benefits conferred by taking the DP. I do have one serious criticism however. My experience is that it takes students (particularly those from the United World Colleges, but not only those students) a good year to come back to the reality of the mundane. I believe that the principles of world citizenship that it fosters may actually produce a lifelong and incurable desire to save the world, but I guess someone has to try.

Leslie Currie

Recruitment and Admissions Office, University of Bath, UK

In these comments, I am not primarily looking at the IB Diploma Programme (DP) as an educationalist, concerned with its values and the qualities it brings out in a student, but from the self-interested viewpoint of a UK university admissions officer, faced daily with a dazzling range of qualifications. Cambridge (2003) identifies two aspects of the DP as being internationalist (“a transformative discourse which locates all fields of inquiry in a supranational frame of reference and upholds the cause of peace”) and globalist (offering “educational certification that is portable between schools and transferable between different educational systems”). As an admissions practitioner, as distinct from a university academic or member of faculty, I need the latter: provision of qualifications of a consistent standard, with a mark scheme that is easily comprehended, and good information on the underlying syllabus.

What does the DP offer Higher Education?

The DP offers higher education admissions staff a range of benefits, including:

- ◆ **Quality and no grade inflation.** There is a feeling among many admissions tutors that the standard of A-levels has fallen over the years, and that an “A” grade today does not mean what it meant 20 years ago. I am not able to comment on the accuracy of this but it must be noted that by contrast academic staff *do* have faith in the DP, which they feel has kept its standards over the years.
- ◆ **Simple structure.** The DP is easy to understand. All students who have the IB diploma have taken the same structure of courses; three subjects at HL, three at SL and the core (extended essay, theory of knowledge and CAS). This is in contrast with some systems, including the post-*Curriculum 2000* English system, where such a large number of options make it difficult to be sure if a student has taken the necessary subjects at the appropriate level.
- ◆ **Easy-to-understand mark scheme.** The marks for the academic subjects are clearly and unambiguously set out for the DP, and the structure makes it possible to both ask for an overall grade and to specify grades for individual subjects. Consequently it is simple to formulate an offer, in very precise terms if need be, and to interpret what a student has achieved when the marks are awarded.
- ◆ **Good international marketing, back-up and support.** From its earliest days the IBO seems to have been very aware of the importance of consulting with the institutions that will receive its students. This current consultation with UK universities is an example of that continuing concern and “after-sales service”. It is only recently that some other national and international curriculum and assessment authorities have begun to approach this level of awareness of their higher education customers.

In most UK universities, the final decisions on whether or not to admit a student and what requirements to set are made by a member of the academic staff or faculty (the admissions tutor) in cooperation with the university’s Admissions Office. Consequently we still need to be aware of the wider educational concerns and interests of our academic colleagues, and their interest in the qualities of the students who will be in their classes. These colleagues feel that the DP gives a breadth of personal, professional and academic preparation, encourages an international outlook and instils the value of independent learning. Students with an IBDP background also identify these qualities.

While they are very happy with the DP, it must be mentioned that, although faculties like the breadth of the DP in principle, there doesn't seem to be a *measurable* difference compared with other students. A good A-level student, for example, may display similar qualities. Academic staff comment favourably on the "international outlook" of students who have taken the DP, but are unsure whether it is the result of the DP itself or of the kind of students who usually take it and of the schools that offer it.

What could the IBO do better?

Overall, the DP meets the needs of higher education but some things could be improved, including some that I know are being worked on at present. Examples include the following.

- ◆ **The web site.** It is very useful, but could continue to improve. For example, the search facility is a little unhelpful (my recent search for "marks" and "grades" brought only job advertisements for examiners). I don't think that the site has been "sold" and explained in the way the IBO is so good at doing in other areas.
- ◆ **The subject content.** Why is the content of DP subjects hidden on the online curriculum centre and not made available on the public web site? The subject content should be brought to the attention of as many people and organizations as possible.
- ◆ **Marks—core/academic subjects.** An area that is unclear is the relationship of the core to the six academic subjects. I understand that letter grades are converted to marks, but how and why is unclear to my academic colleagues and me.
- ◆ **Language options.** These are not always clear. The wide range of language options may reflect the effort a student has had to expend to achieve a particular grade but does not necessarily help academic staff and admissions offices to know a student's level of skill or knowledge. The language options can be complicated for students and staff to understand. For example, a prospective student recently asked what we thought about "language 2B2". It was a problem to work out what this meant.

Some future issues

The following are some issues that I think may arise in the coming years, and no doubt there are others as well.

- ◆ **The core, certificates and the full IB diploma**
How is the core (TOK, CAS, extended essay) supposed to fit in? What skills are being assessed, and can they not be found in the six academic subjects? Some institutions are prepared to accept IB certificates, equating the HL subjects in the DP to A-levels or APs. The IBO presumably wishes such institutions to demand the full IB diploma, but what are the qualities that a holder of the full IB diploma brings that a certificate holder will not?
- ◆ **The UCAS tariff**
Will the IBO decide to participate in the tariff? The DP already has the advantage of a mark structure that permits both individual subject and overall grades to be specified in detail, so from that point of view it is unnecessary. Fitting it into the tariff structure may be a complex procedure, with controversial decisions to be made on equivalence. However, being part of the tariff might give the DP extra acceptability in the few higher education institutions that are unfamiliar with it at present.

To sum up, the IB diploma is a well-respected qualification that sets a standard that other curriculum and assessment organizations should seek to follow. It has performed an excellent job so far and it does not surprise me that it should enjoy the level of support which Colin Jenkins has found in conducting his research.

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Dr James Brown

Director of Admissions, University Of Glasgow, UK

The University of Glasgow is entirely persuaded of the value and ability of students presenting for admission with the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP). It has also found that the performance of those DP students admitted to degree programmes at the university over the past 10 years has been excellent.

One of the key strengths of the DP is the breadth of subjects studied at a high level. This feature is particularly beneficial for students seeking entry to Scottish universities given the importance of breadth of study and flexibility of subject choice available to entrants. Indeed, DP students are ideal entrants to those older Scottish institutions, which, in the main, admit to a faculty rather than to an individual course or programme of study. The University of Glasgow's general faculties (arts, sciences or social sciences) admit students to the whole range of courses within the faculty and do not expect students to determine on their final honours selection until the end of second year. Therefore, although a student may have indicated on their UCAS form that they wish to study English literature, the faculty does not commit them to that course when they enrol, should they change their interests. Students typically study three courses in first year, take two of these on to second level and while in second year select another course from the first year provision. At the end of the second year a typical student will have six different courses, four different subjects and will be able to select their options from this portfolio for the final two years of study.

Because a student is not committed to any particular field of study at the outset, the university's general faculties look for evidence of breadth of study as well as overall academic ability. An applicant does not necessarily have to present with specific named subjects to be considered for admission, as we would not automatically expect subject-specific knowledge to be considered for first level work. It is therefore possible under this system for students with all science school qualifications to be considered for admission to a humanities-type programme of study. DP students are excellently placed to show ability in a range of subjects, which suits them ideally for faculty admissions. The range of courses undertaken within the DP, together with the extended essay, matches the broader range of subjects that the older Scottish institutions would expect to see from their entrants.

Even those areas that admit to a professional qualification with a prescribed curriculum (medicine, veterinary medicine, engineering or dentistry for example) welcome DP applicants. Indeed, the DP is one of the very few school leaving certificates offered by international (non-EU) students that the Medical Faculty and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine will accept, a clear acknowledgment of the academic quality of the programme and the success of its students in the past.

Typical offer levels for DP applicants range from 30–32 points for the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, to 28–30 points for the Faculties of Sciences and Engineering, to 36 points including chemistry at higher level 6 plus two from mathematics, physics and biology for medicine or veterinary medicine. Applicants to the sciences with 36 points may gain second year entry in some areas.

The university's experience of the progress of DP entrants throughout their degree programme has been almost entirely positive and the degree results of those accepted supports this suggestion. The percentage of DP entrants graduating with an upper second class degree or better (the benchmark of satisfactory performance at undergraduate level) since 1995 entry has been as follows.

Year of Entry	% achieving 2i or better
1995	60
1996	100
1997	70
1998	80

It should be noted that this excludes those admitted to medicine or veterinary medicine whose degrees are not classified. No DP entrant withdrew due to academic factors.

The standard of DP applicants' degree results compares more than favourably with the university's graduating class as a whole. The overall degree performance of those admitted to the University of Glasgow on the basis of any qualification from 1995 entry is as follows.

Year of Entry	% achieving 2i or better
1995	47
1996	53
1997	48
1998	50

These figures exclude unclassified degrees.

In general terms the university welcomes the increasing uptake of the International Baccalaureate internationally and within the UK. The DP qualification provides applicants with a breadth of academic study ideally suited to the flexible study patterns of the University of Glasgow. The university seeks students with well-developed study skills based on independent, analytical and critical thinking, which the DP provides. The ethos of the schools that offer the DP is normally one that seeks to develop the individual both academically and socially; to produce students who are fully aware of their place within a world culture. Thus, the qualification develops students with all the academic elements vital to successful performance in higher education but also produces a well-rounded, thoughtful applicant—one aware not only of the demands that academic study will bring but also aware of their place within society and the challenges that will face them in their future.

Boyd Roberts **Principal, St. Clare's, Oxford, UK**

My reactions to this valuable and timely report stem from personal experience of the IB Diploma Programme (DP) over 26 years. I have overseen the introduction of the DP alongside A-levels in two contexts and, in both cases the phasing out of A-levels in favour of the DP—at St. Clare's, Oxford (where we introduced the DP in 1977 and phased out A-levels in its favour over 20 years ago); and in the Amman Baccalaureate School, a bilingual national school in Jordan. St. Clare's now sends 60 to 70 students each year to UK universities and institutions of higher education, mostly with DP qualifications.

The conclusions of the report are reassuring, but generally unsurprising for those of us in DP schools with experience of placing students at UK universities. They accord well with personal impressions and experience. Acceptance of DP students into British universities has been relatively straightforward for many years now. (Local difficulties or issues may arise, particularly in universities where admissions are decentralized and rotating. But these are usually caused by individuals' unfamiliarity with details of the DP, and can be overcome by providing information or encouraging consultation with better-informed colleagues.)

From early days, the IB Diploma Programme was enthusiastically received in some UK universities, with, it must be said, some reservations elsewhere. The advocacy work of key individuals from the IBO and DP schools was essential in establishing acceptance of a qualification in principle before there was very much actual experience within universities of working with DP students. But after over 30 years, cohorts of DP students have gone to UK universities—around 1000 from my college alone. Now, as this report shows, increasing numbers of universities are endorsing the breadth of the DP. This in part reflects UK universities' increasing interest in more broadly based pre-university programmes. But, as evidenced in the report, experience in higher education of dealing with DP students has convinced people that the DP is able to combine that breadth without any, or any significant, reduction in depth in comparison with A-levels or the more recent A2s. Indeed, in some cases, higher level may be more demanding than A-levels. The DP also addresses most of the academic key skills identified as important in recent work within Britain, through the six subjects, the extended essay and the theory of knowledge course. The report shows that the DP is viewed very favourably in its development of critical thinking and communication skills.

This report is welcome as a means of making more widely known the warm reaction of UK higher education towards IB students. Having said that, the report does raise some intriguing and tantalizing questions.

- ◆ We see that 96% of respondents were satisfied that the DP curriculum prepares students adequately for undertaking undergraduate degree courses. While this is a very high percentage, 4% did not think the IB gave adequate preparation. Why?
- ◆ How does this 4% relate to the 3% who consider DP students relatively disadvantaged in preparation for higher education compared to students who have taken A-levels, and to the 4% not in favour of broadening the post-16 curriculum?
- ◆ Do these proportions relate to the 10% of respondents who have no direct experience of DP students?

We cannot answer these questions here, and they should not detract from the overwhelmingly strong and positive responses. The *Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme* report provides compelling evidence that a broader programme can prepare students for the demands of an undergraduate course in the UK without undue loss of depth. It comes at a significant time, as the pre-university programme for England is being reviewed. I hope these findings may embolden and strengthen the resolve of those charged with reviewing the 16-19 programmes to move us away from the excessive specialization that has for too long characterized—and limited—England's upper secondary programme. (It is ironic that on the day the report was launched at the University of Bath, newspapers carried reports that the association of heads of leading public schools in Britain had voted against any element of required breadth of students on the academic programme for the last two years of secondary school. They took the view that students would be discouraged from staying on to complete secondary school study if they were required to take particular subjects.)

Taking up the comments of some university respondents, the report raises the question of the extent to which the DP itself has produced these students, which quite a number of universities are so enthusiastic to accept. Could it be that students with the desirable qualities have selected the IB programme? Or are IB schools better than average schools, and does this account for the superior qualities of the DP students?

My own, albeit anecdotal, experience suggests that the quality of the schools is certainly not the whole story. In the two schools that I have been involved with (which introduced the DP alongside A-levels, and then phased out A-levels) it was the development of students on the two parallel programmes within the same school that seemed to differ. Students rise to expectations and in England, in certain respects, our expectations of students are quite low. We think—or certainly have thought—that at upper secondary level, students can only reach reasonable depth by concentrating on a small number of subjects. We think that mathematics is beyond (or unnecessary for) the majority of students over 16, and there is still a strong tendency to regard those who speak a second language as “linguists” despite the fact that the majority of people in the world (including many who have had little formal education) speak at least two languages. Experience in Jordan in particular convinced me that setting high expectations is beneficial to students’ achievements, and that, at its extremes, differentiation can lead to inappropriate lowering of expectations and demands. I am not saying that the DP suits all students, but I do believe that many students embarking on the DP, without any possibility of narrower or easier alternatives, simply get on and succeed. The DP calls for good time management and commitment, but it does not require outstanding academic or intellectual ability.

Some work I did about six years ago is relevant here. I contacted, where possible, all the students who had taken the DP at St. Clare’s since 1977, and about 170 out of 1700 replied. I did not analyse the responses using formal research methodology, but some strong messages came through. Many spoke very positively about the strong preparation the DP had given them in university work. They spoke of the study skills they had developed, in part because of the breadth of the programme. They commented on learning to manage many simultaneous demands on their time. The theory of knowledge course came in for particular mention. This is not always the most popular course with students, but quite a number commented on how they had come to value what it had taught them, either at university or later in life.

This report provides conclusive evidence of the acceptability of the DP in the UK higher education context. However, I hope that the increasing profile in England of the 1968-devised IB Diploma Programme will not give the IBO any encouragement to rest on its laurels. In developing its own upper secondary programme, England may have something to learn from a programme devised elsewhere for the latter part of the 20th century. The IBO owes it to the world to lead in the 21st century. The following areas are those that, to my mind, call for attention.

- ◆ **Greater academic coherence**
The breadth of the DP is welcomed, presumably in part, because the study of subjects from different areas of knowledge can be mutually beneficial to the study of each. The IBO could encourage this more through the curriculum and assessment. I would hope for greater mutual reinforcement between the subjects of the curriculum—better utilization of the compulsory mathematics element in other subjects, and greater attention to developing language competence across the curriculum.
- ◆ **Reconsideration of the languages courses within the DP**
There is a plethora of DP language courses—seven in all. What are universities to make of “a 5” in French, when it could relate to anything from a course at higher level for native speakers to an *ab initio* programme? (This confusion was touched on in discussions at the Bath launch). As universities become

more familiar with the different language courses, I think we could find they will start to increase demands on students. This is already happening in Germany, where A1 or A2 programmes are required, and not B, in certain languages. I advocate a distinction between the study of languages, the study of literature, linguistic progression, and certifying linguistic competence.

- ◆ **Closer integration of theory of knowledge and CAS**

How can creativity (and perhaps service) be promoted and developed within academic subjects? It seems odd that “creativity” is specifically recognized in the CAS element of the programme, implying that it is not called for in the rest of the programme. The relative unimportance of CAS in university selection, indicated in the report, is understandable but regrettable. In many ways, the attributes required and promoted in CAS are of greater importance in life in general than formal academic achievements. Perhaps universities should come to recognize these more.

- ◆ **Clear identification of key skills and their assessment**

How should these be addressed across the curriculum, particularly ICT-related and research skills?

- ◆ **Areas of knowledge and attitudes**

We need to recognize that certain areas of knowledge and attitudes are more important now than when the DP was developed. For instance, awareness of man’s ecological impact, or a basic understanding of Islam or of principles of democracy, would all seem essential aspects of a good international education nowadays.

- ◆ **A greater focus on non-academic development**

In particular, the very difficult area of shaping attitudes and values to promote the development of better global citizens needs to be tackled. There should be a great focus on a commitment to action for fairness.

- ◆ **Internationalism**

There should be a true embracing of internationalism—perhaps “interculturalism”—as the *sine qua non* of the DP. National systems should develop their own baccalaureates, while the IBO must ensure that its programmes are not only international but internationalist.

- ◆ **Student results**

This final point relates to DP scores required by UK universities for admission. The proportion of students getting A grades in A-levels or A2 has increased considerably in recent years to an average of 20% in each subject. Universities are less able to discriminate between better students by A-level grades alone. This makes selection more difficult. There is no evidence of grade inflation within the DP. The proportions of students getting high overall grades in the DP, and the higher grades in separate subjects, have been consistent for years. Indeed a grade 7 in HL mathematics remains an elusive prize which only goes to the most able, who are also the luckiest on the day. While DP grades do not show signs of inflation, I begin to detect inflation in the grades required by universities of able DP students. Discussion from university representatives at the Bath launch seemed to confirm this. Universities that are offering places conditional on 3 A grades at A-level, may be requiring 37 or more points from DP students—and there is some evidence of these grade requirements rising. It is ironic that the students of a system that continues to discriminate between the very good (35 points—which can be taken to be equivalent to three A grades at A-level) and the truly outstanding (with 45 points—about 0.2% of the total IB Diploma Programme population) should be penalized in the face of competition for places from students with qualifications no longer able to make this discrimination.

The *Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme* is a welcome report, which provides reassuring firm evidence to confirm the high standing of the DP within UK higher education. It also raises issues to be explored and challenges to be addressed.

Ian Andain
Broadgreen High School, Liverpool, UK

The publication of this report is timely. Not only have more and more schools opted for the DP but, in addition, English schools and local education authorities are currently responding to the Tomlinson Committee's proposals on a new diploma qualification to replace GCE A-levels—a development which, in my view, should have occurred a decade ago. Indeed, it is worth reminding ourselves of the leader that appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper in August 1991: “no other developed state in the world has such a narrow end to its school exam (system)”. This blunt judgment of the A-level system has been reflected in many other reports, including the Higginson report of 1988 and now, of course, in Colin's research. Colin cites the law faculties at the Universities of Leicester and Hull expressing “satisfaction with DP students” and Hull, in particular, believing that the “IB is better than A-levels” and that “IB students seemed to possess the advanced skills of analysis and problem solving”. Broadgreen, naturally, had this view in 1991! However in those far off days premature clarity was a dangerous theory and we certainly did not fit the profile of an IB school at that time. Broadgreen is an inner-city coeducation community comprehensive in Liverpool with 5% of pupils statemented and 54% entitled to a free school meal. We also have two specialist units on site, a Deaf Resource Base (for both profoundly deaf and hearing-impaired pupils) and an Access Resource Base (for disabled pupils).

Notwithstanding the view of many people at the time and it must be said, even now, that the breadth of the DP might “prove too difficult for the less-able students” (*Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme*, 2003), we nevertheless persevered. One of the things I think we did well in those initial stages was to market the IB programmes. I do not believe schools can enter into a change of this nature without some serious thought being given to how to “sell” it. Initially we did not think about dropping A-levels; our immediate concern was finance. Before the days of delegated funding and chequebook management, we needed to find some sponsorship to develop the Diploma Programme. We decided to approach businesses on Merseyside and were eventually rewarded with grants from Glaxo (as it was then), BNFL and Pilkington Glass. This support was crucial, not only because it signified that businesses saw value in the IB but also because most IB staff-development courses occurred outside the UK. These grants were supplemented by generous financial support from the Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (now defunct) that allowed the school to run an advertising campaign for the IB Diploma Programme in an area that is very traditional in its attitude to post-16 qualifications. We targeted potential students, parents and employers through a variety of marketing techniques: a video explaining the IB, information sessions at venues likely to attract large numbers (such as Liverpool Football Club) and information packs. It would be a gross exaggeration to say that we were overwhelmed by student applications for the DP in year 1 (we actually had one student!) but slowly the currency of the programme has gained acceptance and much of the reason for this was the quality of the marketing campaign in those first three years.

Looking back now the decision to drop A-levels in 1997 seems much easier than it was at the time. In so many respects, our decision seems to have been vindicated. We know that university admissions tutors do look twice at DP students from an

inner-city comprehensive school. Broadgreen has almost a 100% record of entry to university for those students who wish to apply. It is also true that many of those students did not complete the full Diploma Programme. Not every student had the capacity to fulfill the demands of this programme but every student can benefit from it. We have many students, currently studying at university, who achieved the certificate qualification rather than the full diploma. They still gained a university place based on an offer that did not require the mandatory 24 points but that satisfied admissions criteria in the relevant subject areas and, importantly, recognized the immensely enriching experience of the theory of knowledge and CAS elements of the DP. Many university admissions officers have also commented favourably on the extended essay that gives many students their first taste of original research. The certificate option within the DP does give students who are not of the first rank academically the opportunity to participate in the DP, benefit from the programme and still obtain a place at university. It certainly enabled our school to extend recruitment to a wider range of students than we had initially calculated.

Indeed I would now go further. Broadgreen is classified by the Department for Education and Skills as a school “in challenging circumstances”. For schools such as ours many commentators (especially in the USA) now deem it important that we offer our students a “rich curriculum” where teaching strategies, learning activities and assessment practices are clearly aligned and aimed at accomplishing the full array of knowledge, skills and attitudes and dispositions valued by society. It would be very difficult to contradict Colin Jenkins’ chapter on the “Whole Package” that implies the DP does precisely these things. The strengths and weakness response table on page 23 of the report clearly shows the DP scoring higher than Curriculum 2000 in respect of depth, breadth (much higher), critical thinking, communication skills, self-management and motivation. The comment from the University of Essex is instructive: “IB students are more flexible, more open to new ideas and are more ready to question and challenge”.

As communication technology shrinks the world, we need to ask ourselves what sort of experiences we want to expose our young people to. In addition to the skills and knowledge that we know come with the DP, the DP is also becoming a powerful force for international understanding, and schools and universities should prize it for that, most particularly in the 21st century in which uncertainties and tensions abound in a way they did not in 1990.

Afterword by Colin Jenkins

It is gratifying to see the well-considered and thoughtful responses from the five contributors. There is little that I can add to their careful analysis of my report. However there are two points I would like to highlight. Firstly, everything written in my report arising from the responses of university staff was agreed by them before being included, and secondly, the research was aimed at assessing the perceptions of the quality of the IB Diploma programme and not its position as an admission qualification. Much is known about the latter and much is included in university admission documentation about it. Very little is known about the reasons for the warm reception the qualification now receives. My report was an attempt to see if the IBO’s perceptions of the nature and value of our curriculum and assessment were matched by higher education institutions. On the whole the IB Diploma Programme comes out rather well but one caveat needs to be expressed. University teachers are not always confident that they know enough about the Diploma Programme to be able to give an informed opinion of it.

School/University Transition Study Project

Zhen Yao, Research Assistant

The school/university transition study was proposed by the IBO Council of Foundation in early 2003. The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics gained by students as a consequence of participation in the IB Diploma Programme. It will concentrate on two areas: academic progress and performance, and the development of international values and attitudes. The progress and performance dimension will address the relationship between formal academic achievement measures and subsequent performance in higher education. The international values dimension inquires into the impact of the values underpinning the Diploma Programme and their realization in promoting lifelong learning, intercultural understanding and international-mindedness.

The school/university transition study is intended to cover a wide range of schools and higher education institutions to represent the situation throughout all the regions of the IBO. At present, eight universities, four IB regional offices, consultants from the University of Bath, and IBRU are working closely together as a project team towards the research goals. The universities comprise University of British Columbia (Canada), University of Florida (USA), University of Washington (USA), University of Melbourne (Australia), Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (Lima, Peru), Universidad de San Andrés (Buenos Aires, Argentina), American University of Beirut (Lebanon), and Bocconi University (Milan, Italy). A project team meeting was held in the University of Bath on 14-15 November 2003. Representatives from the universities and regional offices, project consultants, and researchers from IBCA and IBRU attended the meeting to discuss the issues and concerns in project design.

The project team will start to collect data in 2004. The whole study will be completed in 2005. The results from this study are expected to provide research-based evidence of how well the IBO achieves its claims of academic rigor and international-mindedness.

Noticias de investigación

Journal of Research in International Education

Si desea más información sobre esta publicación, visite: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk>.

Trabajos de investigación

Gunn, C. *Teaching, Learning and Researching in an ESL Context*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2003.

Hicks, D. "Thirty Years of Global Education: a reminder of key principles and precedents". *Educational Review*. 2003. Vol. 55, N° 3, pp. 265–275.

Organización del Bachillerato Internacional. *Perceptions of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme: A report of an inquiry carried out at UK universities and institutions of higher education*. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization, 2003.

Mackenzie, P.; Hayden, M.; Thompson, J. "Parental Priorities in the Selection of International Schools". *Oxford Review of Education*. 2003. Vol. 29, N° 3, pp. 299–314.

International education research database (base de datos de investigación sobre la educación internacional)

Esta base de datos ya se encuentra disponible y cuenta con más de 1900 artículos de investigación sobre educación internacional y sobre los programas de la Organización del Bachillerato Internacional. Se puede acceder a ella desde el sitio web de IBO, en www.ibo.org. En la sección **Investigación**, a la que puede acceder desde el menú de atajos, encontrará un enlace a la base de datos de investigación, que le permite realizar búsquedas.

Sitio web público de IBO

El sitio web público de IBO (<http://www.ibo.org>) proporciona información general sobre la organización y sus programas.

Centro pedagógico en línea

El Centro pedagógico en línea (<http://online.ibo.org>) está disponible para todos los profesores de colegios del BI que estén suscritos al sitio web. El Centro pedagógico en línea constituye una valiosa fuente de información para todos aquellos que estén considerando realizar investigaciones relacionadas con los programas del BI.

Conferencia de Alliance for International Education

Esta conferencia tendrá lugar en la ciudad cosmopolita de Düsseldorf, Alemania, del 1 al 3 de octubre de 2004. La conferencia tratará el tema de la educación como forma de promover una mentalidad internacional (*Education for International Mindedness*). Para más información, póngase en contacto con Beatrice Larose, responsable de desarrollo, International School of Düsseldorf, Niederrheinstrasse 336, D-40489 Düsseldorf (Alemania). Tel.: +49 (0) 211 9406 712; fax: +49 (0) 211 9406 804.

Esta conferencia se ha organizado con el auspicio de la Universidad de Bath y de la Organización del Bachillerato Internacional.