

***Dilemmas and Challenges in
IB Middle Years Programme (MYP)
Implementation***

***A case study research of Swedish IB MYP schools
and the impact of Swedish school laws.***

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstract:

This study provides an exploration into the dilemmas and challenges experienced when implementing and developing the IB Middle Years Programme within schools. It examines two schools within the Swedish school system: one an international school in name, classified as a public school, and the other a 'friskola' or an independent school. This paper discusses commonalities between new cases and the cases being studied, with further discussion regarding Swedish educational laws and the impact on the implementation of the MYP.

The study raised a number of key considerations including an urgent need for a review of the categorization of Swedish schools. Inconsistent categorization has led to the questioning of Swedish schools' public data and its reliability.

Introduction

The Swedish Context

Sweden is being confronted with the winds of globalisation and the ever growing demands for increased education given the changing nature of Swedish society and its economy. The *Swedish National Agency for Education* is the central administrative authority that presides over the municipalities and the independent schools in ensuring the attainment of the goals. The goals and guidelines are set by the Swedish Riksdag¹ and Government, outlined in the Education Act and the Curricula. In essence, this provides the framework in which school leaders work from, as they organise their schools whether they are private or public. The agency collects data and oversees the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, a body that checks that *'the municipalities or the independent schools comply with the legislation and other provisions applicable to their activities'* (Skolverket, 2011).

The neo-liberal discourse that now dominates educational public policy in having independent schools and public schools co-exist within the framework of the Education Act and the Curricula is problematic. The fear of elite schools and the unfair positional advantage such schools provide their students, and difficulties in program implementation have surfaced. But nevertheless, the diversity and competition in education is part of the new context Swedish schools have to operate in, as reinforced by the current Minister of Education, Jan Björklund (2007) *'Diversity and competition in education is a good thing, but there must be strict guidelines in place to ensure the quality of education for all children'* (McGettigan, 2007).

It is within the Swedish and Educational contexts that we should consider the following research on the implementation of the IB MYP. The challenges are real, as the schools aim to fulfill mission statements (IB and their own) in tension with the ideological and the pragmatic perspectives. Schools in general, especially international schools operate in an attempt to reconcile such tensions (Cambridge 2001, p.131).

The Research

Overview

The implementation of any educational program is a complex endeavor and one could argue even more challenging when placed in an international context. This project examines two Swedish schools by employing the case study approach as the research methodology. Specifically, it is an exploration into the dilemmas and challenges experienced when implementing and developing the IB MYP (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program) within Swedish schools. Information from one current MYP coordinator, a nominated group of parents, teachers, IB Evaluation reports, mission statements and school development plans from each school was collected to provide a unique, sensitive and informative view of the implementation process. The qualitative component of the MYP coordinator questionnaires and official IB evaluation and authorisation documentation provided the main base for the findings, which were intended

¹ Parliament

to primarily act as a valuable source for other IB MYP schools and the IB for improving the implementation process of the MYP.

The aims of the study were the following:

- To complete a case study of two independent schools in Sweden where the IB MYP has been recently introduced and implemented
- To uncover the dilemmas and challenges that each school has experienced in implementing the IB MYP
- To present findings in a manner that enables the reader to make comparisons and be able to apply such discovered experiences to their own educational context
- To share with the broader community an insight into potential IB MYP implementation challenges with recommendations
- To investigate if Swedish educational laws impact on the implementation of the IB MYP

Methodology

The case study approach was used as the research methodology of studying two schools in relation to the exploration into the challenges and dilemmas experienced when implementing and developing the IB MYP within Swedish schools. The two MYP IB World Schools were chosen from nine possible IB MYP schools for purposes of access and familiarity. The key factor in choosing the two schools for case study was the different categorisations each school represents within the Swedish Education system. This is worthy of its own research, as originally it was intended to select two 'friskolas' (free schools), but problems with definitions within and outside the MYP schools, resulted in the need to broaden the selection group to all MYP schools no matter the categorisation. Succinctly, the case study approach gave us the best chance of capturing the most accurate representation and interpretation of the event being studied.

Design

1. Study questions

The significant research question that drove the research was: What are the challenges and dilemmas when implementing and developing the IB MYP within Swedish schools?

The significant research question was then divided into sub questions, inspired by a previous investigation into my own school the International School of the Gothenburg Region (ISGR) and also IB standards used for school evaluation purposes. The rationale behind this was to collect vital data in respect to a number of main categories.

2. Propositions, if any.

My working proposition was that schools in Sweden face some expected and unexpected challenges and dilemmas in implementing the IB MYP successfully. The challenges examined include the role of the MYP coordinator, the expectations of the parent community, the degree of curriculum documentation and rigorous assessment, school leadership and management, pedagogy, local concerns, the Swedish national school system and school laws. This writer believed the balance of implementing an international

program within a National education system and its respective laws was an ongoing challenge and one that warranted rigorous research and critical educational discussion.

3. Unit(s) of analysis

The unit of analysis was two Swedish schools (organisation), with the subject of the case being IB MYP implementation (phenomenon) within the context of the Swedish Educational school system.

4. Logic linking the data to the propositions

The findings of the study were based on qualitative data collected from a structured coordinator questionnaire, with follow up clarifying questions analysed across official IB evaluation and authorisation documents

5. Criteria for interpreting the findings

The criteria employed to interpret the findings was as follows:

- all respective issues across the schools will be stated in the general findings
- the general findings will be presented in a table summary of each sub question
- a significant issue for each sub question, where possible, will be identified after being jointly experienced and raised by both schools
- each significant issue will be triangulated through an analysis across IB evaluation and authorisation documents, parent and teacher questionnaires, school mission statements and development plans

Significant issues would then be further discussed, in light of critical literature, concluding with suggested recommendations of action.

The key players

For the purposes of privacy and confidentiality, the names of the participant schools, the school locations, the MYP coordinators, teachers and parents, and the authorized and evaluation visit dates have been omitted or modified in this report.

School A is a 'Friskola' or an independent school situated in one of the major cities - Gothenburg. It has no religious or political affiliation and is run by an educational foundation. The school aspires to be an internationally minded school with academic rigour. The school was granted MYP authorisation and has had one evaluation visit. It has a relatively small teaching group of fewer than 20 teachers with a generally stable turnover rate. The program is taught in Swedish and it offers MYP in all years of the program. The school is open to male and female students, with a student population of around 180 students with diverse ethnic backgrounds. The MYP coordinator has been in his/her position for 6 years.

School B is public owned international school situated in the capital of Sweden -Stockholm. The school was founded to meet the needs for international education in the area. The school has been authorised and has had a number of evaluation visits. The program is taught in English and it offers MYP in all years of the program. It has a teaching group of

over 30 teachers. The school is open to male and female students, with a population around 450 students. The coordinator has been in his/her position for 3 years.

The Findings

In reporting some of the dilemmas and challenges the schools faced in implementing and developing the IB MYP, it could be summed up in the following tables based on the questionnaire questions completed by the respective school coordinators.

Each area presented below displays the issues cited across both schools. A and B is listed in the issue column to indicate the respective key player. The responsible authority is listed to help identify where a potential solution could be found and notes are provided to give greater insight into the studied schools' issues. The 'school leadership group' refers to the Principal, Deputy Principal and MYP coordinator. The Areas of Interaction are Human Ingenuity, Environments, Health and Social education, Approaches to learning and Community and Service.

The findings were also analysed across official IB evaluation and authorisation documents and a small sample of teacher and parent questionnaires, where possible in identifying the key significant issue.

1. School leadership and management

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of school leadership and management?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Changes in leadership (A) | School leadership group /Principal | During the authorisation process, there was a change in coordinator, where momentum was lost and confusion regarding IB Evaluation information and documentation existed |
| Professional Development (A) | Principal | The coordinator was given IB training one year <i>after</i> being appointed |
| Changing of campus (B) | Board/ School leadership group | Split into PYP/MYP on one campus and Diploma on another |
| Parental expectations (B) | School leadership group | School was seen as very Swedish minded |
| Organisational leadership structure (A,B) | Board/School leadership group | Difficulty in finding the right balance and structure in best supporting the IB MYP implementation process as a friskola and a public school according to Swedish school regulation |

2. Teaching

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of teaching (pedagogy)?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IB Philosophy (A) | School leadership group, IBO | Teacher buy in, teachers changing educational systems (national to international). |
| Unit planning (A,B) | MYP coordinator, teachers. | Incorporating key MYP program components such as the Areas of Interaction (Aoi), the learner profile, and real life connections into units. Interdisciplinary planning and collaborative planning. |
| Teaching instruction/approach (B) | MYP coordinator, teachers. | Differentiation Conceptual/inquiry based instruction vs. traditional knowledge focused instruction |
| Professional development (B) | School leadership group/MYP coordinator | Cost and the need to train teachers to assist the fluidity of the implementation process |

3. Student learning (curriculum)

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of student learning (curriculum)?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Communication (A,B) | MYP coordinator, teachers. | Difficulties with MYP jargon, IB philosophy and two assessment systems (national and MYP) between the school, students and parents. |
| Responsibility for learning (B) | MYP coordinator, School leadership group, teachers and students | A desired state of learning involving self-evaluation. |
| Meaningful and authentic units (A,B) | MYP coordinator, teachers and students | Real life connections, Conceptual learning. |

4. Assessment

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of assessment?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Two systems of assessment (A,B) | Swedish Education authority, IBO, MYP coordinator, teachers. | Both schools reported having to satisfy two assessment systems- National and the IB. High workload consequence for teachers. |
| Assessment criteria (A,B) | MYP coordinator, teachers. | Time needed to educate teachers of how to write, use and communicate assessment rubrics |
| Communication (A,B) | MYP coordinator | Feedback to parents and students |

5 Local concerns

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of local concerns (companies, councils, governments)?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding of school needs (A) | Local education municipalities | Lack of understanding perceived by authorities regarding schools with an international program |

6. National School system (Swedish)

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of the National school system (Swedish)?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding of the MYP (A,B) | Swedish National Agency, Parliament, Schools Inspectorate and municipalities. | While the MYP is accepted within the structure of the Swedish school system, no flexibility is given e.g. National tests, assessment and subjects in technology. |
| Confusion of school categories and laws (A,B) | Swedish National Agency, Parliament, Schools inspectorate, municipalities and the school leadership group | The Education act is to be followed but due to various categories of schools confusion exists. Language issues exist- through the translation from Swedish and the sharing of act information within schools i.e. for non-Swedish speakers |

7. Swedish school laws (Education act)

What impact do the 'Swedish school laws' have on the implementation of the MYP in your school?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What applies to what? (A,B) | Swedish National agency, Schools Inspectorate, municipalities and school leadership group | Questions to the Agency were asked with some answers given in an uncertain manner |
| Education Act and the new curriculum LGR 11 (A,B) | Swedish Education agency, Schools Inspectorate | Act not adapted to implement the MYP |
| MYP implementation- IB regulations (A,B) | Schools, IBO. | Perceived lack of understanding of Swedish context and flexibility for national variations |

8. Parental expectations

What dilemmas and challenges has your school experienced in implementing the MYP in the area of parental expectations?

| Issue | Responsible authority | Notes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education and communication of the MYP (A, B) | School leadership group, MYP coordinator, and teachers. | Could be perceived as a need or not from the view of the parents. |
| Varying parental viewpoints in respect to international education and why they chose the school (B) | School leadership group | International schools in a local context find themselves in a tension between international and national school parental expectations |

Discussion of significant issues and recommendations

The following is a summary of the significant identified issues:

1. Categorisation of Swedish schools
2. Understanding of the MYP by the Swedish National Agency for Education and law enforcing bodies
3. Organisation: School leadership and management structure
4. Teaching and student learning: MYP unit planning
5. Assessment: Two systems of assessment
6. Communication

The intention of this paper now is to discuss further in depth the significant identified issues in relation to MYP implementation, by examining key literature, reviewing IB

Evaluation documents, parent and teacher questionnaires, school mission statements and development plans and suggest potential ways forward.

Categorisation of Swedish schools

The Swedish School Category Dilemma

The first significant issue uncovers and highlights inconsistencies in regard to the categorisation of Swedish schools and how it brings into question the validity of Skolverket's statistics and the use of them in the wider community.

The Swedish school category dilemma was unearthed after the research for suitable schools took an unexpected turn of events. Originally, the study intended to research what is known as 'friskola', or independent schools. The total pool of schools based on the 2011/12 figures (refer to table 2) was 4616 schools, however there was only 761 friskolas or independent schools representing only 16% of the total number of schools. Out of 4616 schools only 9 schools actually implemented the MYP at 0.002%. The percentage for the friskolas implementing the IB MYP was even less and hard to clearly identify due to categorisation issues. Thus, due to the selection pool being too small, the selection criteria was changed and expanded to include all MYP schools, after the realisation that the school law to be followed was predominantly the same for friskolas and public schools. During the selection process, there was some confusion within the Swedish MYP schools of what classification or category they were in. There seemed to be many exceptions to the rule. One school that was earmarked for the study declined to participate as they stated they were not a friskola, even though as we uncover next they were by Swedish student performance data.

The school categories based on the Swedish National Agency for Education's (also known as Skolverket) 2011/12 figures (see table 2) were as follows: public (kommun), sameskola and friskola (fristående). The category of *friskola* was then for the first time divided up into general (allmän), confessional, waldorf, international, and boarding schools (riksinternat). The schools were run by predominantly limited companies, followed by non profit organisations, economic associations, foundations and others. What can be noted here is that there was an attempt at classification.

Table 2 (Skolverket, 2012)

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|----------|----------------|--------------|------------|
| 2010/11 | 290 | 3 696 | 626 | 4 | 886 487 | 3 057 | 192 |
| <i>Därav</i> | | | | | | | |
| | | | 3 | | | | |
| Kommun | 290 | 2 957 | 880 | | 781 210 | 2 694 | 201 |
| Sameskolan | 4 | 5 | 5 | | 141 | 35 | 28 |
| Fristående ²⁾ | 190 | 736 | 741 | | 105 136 | 553 | 142 |
| 2011/12 | 290 | 3 683 | 616 | 4 | 888 658 | 3 064 | 193 |
| <i>Därav</i> | | | | | | | |
| | | | 3 | | | | |
| Kommun | 290 | 2 924 | 850 | | 776 356 | 2 677 | 202 |
| Sameskolan | 4 | 5 | 5 | | 158 | 40 | 32 |
| Fristående ²⁾ | 189 | 756 | 761 | | 112 144 | 593 | 147 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|--------|-----|-----|
| <i>Därav</i> | | | | | | |
| Allmän | 179 | 639 | 643 | 97 588 | 545 | 152 |
| Konfessionell | 41 | 68 | 69 | 8 166 | 199 | 118 |
| Waldorf | 29 | 39 | 39 | 4 072 | 140 | 104 |
| Internationella | 4 | 7 | 7 | 2 092 | 523 | 299 |
| Riksinternat | 3 | 3 | 3 | 226 | 75 | 75 |

Educators well versed in International educational literature well know that attempting to classify schools as international schools is a dangerous occupation. For instance in relation to table 2, one of the IB MYP schools was an international school in name but actually was classified under public, as it was run by the municipality. The research then expanded a little more which led to the dilemma unfolding. By searching for more information about the schools, which could be found on a Skolverket data base called Siris, where the public can view data on a range of school related topics from students to budget more attempts at categorisation was discovered. In taking the topic of students for example, the reader is able to find out *how many students were in each school from every municipality for each grade level*, but the interesting fact in light of this research was that schools were categorised into only *two* sets - public (kommunal) and independent schools (friskola/fristående). The debate and confusion of the categorisation of Swedish schools grew a little more. Double checking, another example was chosen that being a *list of schools from each municipality*, with all schools once *again* separated into the *two* distinct categories: kommune and fristående (friskola). What this all illustrated was the grey area of categorisation of Swedish schools and the inconsistency of school data. There is little wonder the MYP schools themselves were at times uncertain of how they were *actually* classified. The grey area created by allowing independent schools to exist outside the public school system is in need of reconstruction with clear categories otherwise the informative statistics collated by the Swedish National Agency are inaccurate, misleading and flawed.

The *Swedish school category dilemma* requires consideration and further investigation. It raises questions concerning the validity and reliability of Skolverket's statistics. It is important to schools for categorisations to be clear and consistent, not only to fully understand what rules apply to them but also in regards to marketing. This is a flaw that needs to be addressed and considered by statistical organisations, governments and education departments who claim to report accurately on schools, within Sweden and possibly internationally. Succinctly, we need to get the definitions and the nature of schools right otherwise it is hard to analyse, resulting in ideological propositions or arguments lacking creditability.

Understanding of the MYP by the Swedish Education Agency and law enforcing bodies

The second significant issue of understanding the MYP by the Swedish Education Agency and law enforcing bodies suggests the importance of educational reform being based on proper research and not just ideology. It is important for all contributing bodies to understand the implications of such change and how they can effectively support the implementation process.

While it can be seen some confusion reigns over the categorisation of schools within the Swedish Educational system, the significant issue addressed next is based on understanding. It would seem paramount for any education system to ensure it has completed its due diligence before entertaining and agreeing to make an amendment to the previous education laws in 1992, which resulted in allowing a variety of independent schools to operate mostly under a voucher system. In regard to diligence I mean in the form of knowing the results and implications of such change, which ensures reform is based on proper diligent research and not just ideology. This point is important to consider when discussing the aspect of understanding between schools and the National education authorities. The voucher system refers to how *'the Independent School Reform of 1992 made it possible for families to send their children to any school – public or private – without having to pay fees. The law states that children have equal right to education regardless of gender, ethnic or political background, and economic status of their families'* (McGettingan, 2007).

The Swedish School Agency of Education states its mission is 'to actively work for the attainment of goals', with it further elaborating how it does this as follows:

- Drawing up clear goals and knowledge
- Providing support for the development of preschools and schools
- Developing and disseminating new knowledge of benefit to our target groups
- Communicate to improve.

(Skolverket, 2012)

Its general description of its role goes further in explaining how it provides frameworks and guidelines, how it collects data to ensure pupils receive 'equivalent assessment' and how the Swedish Schools Inspectorate is given the responsibility to check that *'municipalities or the independent schools comply with the legislation and other provisions applicable to their activities'* (Skolverket, 2012).

In reflecting on the Swedish School Agency's mission, let's discuss the reality of our studied schools. School B's coordinator makes the point that *'As a public school (but at the same time international) we have found that all rules apply as they would to any public school, but that does not always fit'* (MYP coordinator, Questionnaire, 2012). This was also seconded by School A in highlighting that the schools were expected to complete the National tests, which are based on the Swedish National Curriculum, despite operating the MYP. Another example was made in regards to programing, where *Technology* contained set course requirements not necessarily required for the MYP such as home economics, cooking and woodcraft. The timetabling of Swedish subjects is mandated, further affecting the implementation of the MYP program and the use of financial support in areas otherwise needed. As discussed previously, the requirement to run two assessment systems is an unmitigated conundrum. While this may indicate a difference in requirements from one program to another, and adaptability the key, it is nevertheless problematic. These examples indicate that Swedish laws impact on the implementation of the MYP in the areas of timetabling, curriculum subjects, National tests and the significant issue of assessment.

Understanding and dialogue is needed to find a way forward. In elaborating on the issue of understanding rather than expectations of law, both schools indicated they experienced varying degrees of support and advice from Swedish Education authorities. It was suggested that Skolverket was at times uncertain and not clear regarding information for

the schools in regards to MYP and the Swedish laws. A lack of understanding of the MYP was cited. This concern was validated further with members of the School Inspectorate visiting and evaluating schools also displaying confusing states of mind regarding the MYP. This researcher has experienced a lack of MYP understanding in the constant request for school National test data. This illustrates the point that there is a need for the authorising education bodies such as the IBO and the Swedish Education Agency to show a greater understanding of the MYP and the implementation process. It has been reported from the studied schools that little interference actually occurs from Skolverket and the Swedish inspectorate. While this may be perceived as a positive it may alternatively equate to a lack of understanding about what an IB MYP school is, (national or international) and the needs it may have.

Organisation- School leadership and management

The third significant issue of organisation: school leadership and management is developed and clarified by discussing the importance in the stability of leadership, the need of supporting structures, the influence of the dynamic area of micro politics, and the complex and demanding role of the MYP coordinator.

In any program implementation it would be advisable for key players to have an understanding of the process. It would be preferable to also have some degree of experience. Whatever the case, it seems plausible to suggest that the stability of a school leadership and management team is a key factor in successful and effective implementation. A significant issue for the schools being studied was that they both experienced degrees of change and instability in school leadership and management which affected the implementation process. Bunnell (2009, p.63) referring to a study done by Littleford(1999) on the survival of American school heads in international schools, argued that they averaged only 2.8 years, with 80% being sacked, compared to their English counterparts of approximately 9-10 years. This was considered an indication of micro-political tension. Micro-political tension refers to the manifestations of power and the interacting and contribution of five factors: 1) school isolation 2) school location 3) school history 4) the way it fragments and 5) who has control (Caffyn 2008). Bunnell emphasised through exploring the *systems approach* how school structure and development were linked, operating in micro- political tension and that there was a lack of developmental planning in international schools which was not surprising '*given the adhoc growth of this type of school*'(p.63). A note of caution was issued that could be applied to our studied schools.

The role of the coordinator and how it is approached and viewed is vital. A corner stone position working in a shared collaboration with the teaching group, the coordinator role provides the link to other key school community players, such as the parents and the school board in the IB MYP implementation. Philosophically, the coordinator is on the *coal face* and works within the '*contested field of educational practice involving the reconciliation of economic, political and cultural-ideological dilemmas, which may be identified as competing globalist and internationalist perspectives*' (Cambridge 2011, p. 131). It has been suggested that the coordinator position is better perceived within a genuine collaboration process (Robertson 2011, p.150), and if '*provided with only limited release time and presented with many organizational barriers, the position of MYP coordinator became (becomes)... narrowly defined, even controlled, by these administrative requirements*' (p.151). The point being made here is that MYP coordinators are received better by the teaching group and achieve better

results when working closely with the teachers. Importantly, this could be jeopardized with progress hindered if administrative tasks usurp the time and the original intention of the MYP coordinator role. The issue of adequate time allocation for the coordinator role is supported by School A's authorisation report which stated in its recommendations within **Standard B -organisation**, that '*the administration ensures the MYP coordinator is allocated sufficient time to develop the programme*', which school A addressed to a point of commendation for the following evaluation visit. School B's first evaluation report also recommended that the school '*review the workload and time allocation of the MYP coordinator to ensure there is adequate time for effective leadership of the programme*'.

The difficulty of finding the right balance of organisational roles within the context a school operates in is an enormous challenge. The organisational structure in terms of the MYP coordinator's role could be shared with but not limited to a) teaching, b) deputy principal c) principal or d) a combination. During the implementation process School A changed combination from (a) to (b) with School B changing from (a) to (c). In elaborating further, in regard to School B the organisation issue was highlighted and confirmed in the last two IB evaluation reports. Robertson (2011, p.153) stated '*coordinators must be politically aware, dialogically orientated, and personally persuasive in order to succeed in this function.*'

In Sweden, the growing opportunities for independent schools to develop within an existing National education framework, mostly reliant on public funding, raises once again the area of micropolitics. Micropolitics is a key area of focus due its sensitive and often hidden perspective and effect on program implementation as it involves the '*sociological and emotional side of schools as organisations*' in understanding that '*organisational politics affect all aspects of the schools, including the curriculum, learning and pedagogy. This concept suggests that an organization is a maze of interconnected relationships (Watson 2002) and that each affects the other in some way*' (Caffyn 2011, p 59). What this tells us is that it is difficult to implement programs and/or reforms into schools if there is an imbalance of role recognition, and/or if there are constant changes in the leadership and management structure. This relates directly to the sociological factors of micropolitics of fragmentation, control, and isolation and situational factors of location and history (Caffyn 2008, p.268). Thus the aspect of continuity in the leadership and management structure of schools, it would seem is essential for successful IB MYP program implementation.

We could conclude relationships form *a team* of principals, coordinators and teachers, through distributed leadership and collaboration that ultimately is essential for successful MYP implementation. As Milken et al (2005, p.23) reinforces '*Relationships are at the pinnacle of the triangle. Curriculum is on one corner, and instruction is on the other. That's what the focus of the work has to be*'. That leads us to the next significant issue indicated by the schools, the other corner -the curriculum, specifically MYP unit planning.

MYP unit planning

The fourth significant issue concentrates on the area of MYP unit planning. This paper goes on to examine the essential aspects of the planning process and the challenging experience MYP teachers and schools face in relation to this area. It then concludes by delving deeper and identifying teacher curriculum writing training, the reconciling contexts of

international education, culture and understanding how the learner of today learns, as potential areas of future research and discussion.

The Foundation

MYP unit planning is a form of communication teachers are mandated to use that serves numerous functions, which provides accountability and exposes the soul of a teaching group. It was a significant issue for both schools, and not surprisingly as it challenges teachers, coordinators and schools on many fronts. This seemingly vital, challenging and time consuming process MYP teachers experience we will further elaborate on based on our studied schools' experiences, as it raises interesting points about culture, time and change.

Ideologically, outside research (Robertson, 2011, p.147) seems to indicate that teachers enjoy the 'freedom' that the MYP program gives albeit that it can be relative to the teachers' own ideological standpoint, IB MYP training, MYP and non MYP teaching experience. These individual experiences, views, beliefs and actions merge into a group or team identity operating in flux. No group can be treated the same as no school context is the same, adding to the complexity of the planning process.

The experience

Experienced teachers coming from the public school category were challenged by the conceptual and interdisciplinary approach of the MYP rather than the traditional knowledge based teaching approach with discrete subjects. It was found by teachers to be difficult in using the Areas of Interaction (Aoi) in their planning, which is presently one of the key foundations (soon to be defunct). IB philosophy expects units to be authentic and make meaningful connections to the real world and School A found this to be a major challenge.

School A's IB evaluation documents provided triangulation of such experience with the *pre- authorisation* report stating concerns regarding the documentation of the Aoi, and the subsequent *authorisation* report recommending in **Section C: Curriculum, standard 1** that curriculum documentation should include resources, assessment tasks, facilitate cross - curricular learning and promote the sharing of good practices. Pointedly, it acknowledged '*the school recognized their failure to use the areas of interaction in a meaningful way as (a) weakness and knew they needed to become more central in curriculum planning (IB Report)*'. A sign of progress appears in the first *evaluation* report, conducted and compiled 4 years later where the school was commended for the documentation of MYP subject aims and objectives and the time provided for collaborative planning. But despite the progress there was also a deeper issue at play here. It was the need to integrate the Swedish National curriculum as well, that was proving problematic. The IB *evaluation* report considered this in the introduction of the report and stated that **standard C2 - written curriculum** required significant attention and recommended the curriculum mapping of how the '*national curriculum objectives are aligned with the MYP curriculum framework*' (IB report). The report also made special note that the new LGR 11 curriculum resulted in the school having to integrate 20 subject areas into the MYP subject groups. In reflecting on the role of the MYP coordinator and the process of change involved in the implementation of the MYP program, it is a never ending fluctuating process. The aspects of time and change are

worthwhile points for coordinators to consider before embarking on implementing the IB MYP as evidenced by further changes initiated by the new MYP- the next chapter.

School B reported that unit planning was an ongoing challenge with a particular need to focus on differentiation and interdisciplinary units. In the *evaluation reports* it highlighted how collective planning time was lost due to teachers being required to work across two IB programs (MYP/Diploma). It became a **matter to be addressed (Standard B Organisation)**, with the last *evaluation* report specifying a need to focus on collaborative planning time, with particular training for the MYP 5 teachers in the area of unit planning.

Beneath the surface

The IB encourages teachers to create authentic units that connect to the real world. It encourages teachers to work collaboratively and develop interdisciplinary units. It mandates teacher training. It expects a large amount of documentation, follow up and evaluation (Albright, 2001, p. 174). Teachers today experience challenges that run deeper than filling out an IB MYP unit planner. Cambridge (2011, p.128) contends the IB programs require shared values and attitudes about curriculum and pedagogy, an integrated code, that make unit planning all the more complex. Speaking about the importance of context, he states '*it is evident that the construction of and development of international curriculum is disrupted by competing positions that attempt to reconcile the instrumental needs for matriculation and university entrance with the expressive order values associated with progressive, person centred education*'(p131). It would be advisable therefore for teachers and school leadership groups to consider such contexts when accepting the responsibility of curriculum writing in regards to the implementation of the MYP.

Culture has been a growing concept of interest and debate within the field of education. Globalisation has heightened the need to seek an understanding of it as it can be linked to national and international educational programs. One of the IB's fundamental concepts is intercultural awareness, and it is expected coordinators and teachers who are writing the MYP curriculum promote an understanding across cultures. But what cultures are they expected to address as an international school or for that matter a public school implementing the MYP program? How deep does the responsibility lie? The following terms of global culture, multicultural, intercultural, cosmopolitan, essentialist and non-essentialist views of culture are just a few teachers need to be aware of particularly if they are constructing curriculum. How MYP teachers are guided on this point alone in schools that are run by predominantly white English speaking, culturally loaded leaders² (Bunnell 2011, p.171)with culturally biased leadership training (Pool cited in Bates 2011, p.7) is a question that deserves critical discussion.

Possibly, part of the way forward in curriculum planning and instruction lies in understanding motivation and cognitive theory. Students work best when the '*study has direct and immediate relevance to their lives*' (Stout, 2011, p.26). Learning is by making associations and interconnectedness, and it addresses physiological and psychological needs of the student such as '*self-worth, relatedness, affiliation, approval and achievement*' (Stout 2011, p.26).

² In early 2010, just a dozen countries accounted for 75% of the IB World schools (in order- USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Mexico, India, Spain, China, Germany, Sweden and Ecuador). 85 nation states representing 62 % of all countries with an IB school had less than 5.

Two systems of assessment

The complex nature of serving two masters is no more apparent than when discussing the next significant issue: assessment. This section discusses the complexity of dual assessment procedures, the stress it places on teachers and coordinators, and the issue of consistency in program grade conversion.

The need to fulfill IB MYP assessment obligations while also satisfying Swedish National assessment procedure has proven to be problematic as illustrated in the following recounts. School A experienced the need to understand MYP terminology and how criterion referenced assessment worked, before the challenge became problematic in the writing of assessment criteria and rubrics in English and Swedish, and the need to communicate this with parents and students. While School B experienced a similar challenge with the coordinator describing:

The biggest problem here is the combination of the Swedish and IB systems. For students it means that they have to understand that they are evaluated in two systems and for teachers it means that they have to gain skill and understanding in two systems when it comes to creating assessment tasks and marking work. This leads to student confusion and frustration and the same from parents. It is a huge challenge. We do try our best to combine tasks so that we are not doubling up, but the work for the teaching staff is very heavy as a result (MYP coordinator, 2012, questionnaire entry).

Today, November 2012, the studied schools and schools alike are faced with further implementation challenges with LGR 11 introducing a new grading system to schools. The challenge for the MYP coordinators continues as they are required to lead their team through the introduction and communication of a new system, the rewriting of key school documents, the need for teacher re-education and the need to satisfy both national and IB requirements.

A significant and sensitive issue regarding the dilemma presented is the conversion of Swedish grades into IB grades or vice versa. This writer is aware through personal experience, attending Swedish MYP coordinator meetings and privy to reading Swedish IB Diploma coordinator meeting minutes, that this is a major issue for schools in Sweden. It is plausible to suggest that there are inconsistencies in relation to grade conversions (IB to Swedish) resulting in confusion, frustration and some resentment towards official bodies such as the IB and in particular the Swedish National Agency. But it can be stated they while the IB and the Swedish Education Agency are open for the integration of each other systems, further flexibility, support and understanding would be welcomed from respective IB Swedish schools. While there are some Swedish universities recognising the IB Diploma program, there is still some resistance to it and it is important to note, the conversion issue of such grades between systems is not just a local one.

Communication

The final significant issue of communication, a fundamental MYP concept aptly follows the discussed areas of pedagogy, student learning and assessment as it links all key areas of development. It deserves to be highlighted due to the importance of its influence on the IB MYP implementation process. Without it, the culture of learning and the acceptance of change within educational programs such as the MYP would struggle to develop. It has

played its part in the impressive development of the program worldwide since its introduction in 1994.

In relation to our study, the following list illustrates the stated areas where communication challenges have been experienced by the two schools being studied:

1. Framework of the MYP fundamentals i.e. Aol, Learner profile, philosophy
2. MYP unit planning and curriculum development
3. MYP assessment i.e. criteria, rubrics and grades
4. Swedish National curriculum
5. Swedish National Agency for Education and its associated bodies i.e. Skolinspektion
6. Parents - interest or lack of.
7. Resources

Conclusion

Over the past 18 years since the introduction of the MYP there has been very little research in the area of implementation (Robertson, 2011p.145), therefore the valuable contributions from the studied school coordinators add to the much needed critical discussion and support of IB MYP implementation. The context of such implementation has been presented highlighting the complexity in introducing an international educational program within a National educational system. It has also taken into consideration wider contexts and tensions in understanding that *'education has never been a stable and uniform enterprise in any nation or region. It has always been an outcome of a resolution of different economic, social, productive, ideological and other cultural forces, constantly in flux'* (Peters et al. cited in Beach 2007, p.1). This context based discussion is one that this writer suggests is essential to consider when implementing the IB MYP, especially with particular regard to curriculum writing.

The significant issues highlighted from the research suggest that there is still some work to be done regarding the challenge of moving forward from the pre-existing ideals and structures of the Swedish Education system of yesteryear. Otherwise the aim for an equivalent education for all could be perceived as idealistic.

The research identified six significant issues that emerged from the study:

Categorisation of schools,

Understanding of the MYP program by the Swedish Education Agency of Education and law enforcing bodies

Organisation: School leadership and management structure

Teaching and student learning: MYP unit planning,

Assessment: Two systems of assessment,

Communication.

This research has discussed each issue with reference to appropriate literature, and in conclusion presents the following suggested recommendations for successful IB MYP implementation:

National school system and laws

1. The Swedish Education Agency needs to clarify the various school categories to ensure the validity of data released to the community.
2. The Swedish Education Agency and associated bodies need a greater understanding of the IB MYP program, in order to fulfill their mission to all schools including those implementing the IB MYP program.
3. The Swedish Education Agency expectation of having IB schools complete assessment based on two assessment models needs immediate attention.
4. A clear understanding of the school's category and of National school laws is necessary to minimize confusion and frustration.

School leadership and management

5. As schools are changing organisations, the documentation of the implementation process is paramount to cater for any changes in leadership, in particular the MYP coordinator.
6. Schools need to carefully consider and if necessary adjust key educational leadership and management structures to ensure the successful implementation of the IB MYP program.

Teaching, student learning and assessment

7. Collaborative planning and professional training are key factors in assisting teachers in their development and understanding of the IB MYP program.
8. Teachers are on their own journey in understanding and experiencing MYP, they are not all in the same place, an important factor in understanding and building a MYP culture.
9. Meaningful curriculum development relies on embracing MYP philosophy, making real life connections, differentiation, collaborative planning and training.
10. Time will be needed for the development of rubrics with criteria, coupled with effective communication of assessment to parents and students.
11. Networking with other IB MYP schools would be beneficial in developing teacher expertise and a culture of learning
12. Whole school 'buy in' of IB philosophy towards learning is essential
13. The development of a distributive form of leadership to support program implementation

Parental expectations

14. The greatest single factor affecting student performance is the school/home relationship; ensure a close working relationship with parents.

Additionally, it would be appropriate if we reflect on the two coordinators' recommendations for schools implementing the MYP:

School A - *Have the all clear that the school does not have to follow LGR 11 100% before the MYP is implemented and if not possible, ensure that the IB understand that some aspects of the MYP is harder to implement in countries like Sweden than others (MYP coordinator, 2012, questionnaire).*

School B- *I would say that having a clear understanding as to how the school is set up from the beginning is essential, knowing what rules apply, how you can incorporate the Swedish content into inquiry based units, allowing teachers time to collaborate is essential and training in the Swedish system alongside the IB assessment model is important (MYP coordinator, 2012, questionnaire).*

Finally the IB continues to grow, at 12% annually between 2005-2010 (IBO, 2013) with a growth strategy of delivering a quality educational product, equal access and an 'infrastructure that allows for the effective implementation of IB's collaborative learning processes' (Hanover Report 2010, p.2). In reflecting that most of the research in 'IB education looks exclusively at the DP' (Hanover Report, 2010, p.6), research papers such as this centering on the implementation of the MYP program is important. In identifying significant issues, this research has provided an opportunity for further critical dialogue on the vital area of program implementation. 'Committing to the IB is a risk laden enterprise for any curriculum manager (Ford, 2007), but hopefully in the sharing of experiences like those presented, the path of implementation success becomes a little easier.

Importantly, the research has provided an insight into the real world of Swedish schools, with particular reference to the IB MYP schools. Interestingly, Beach (2007, p. 165) elaborates:

Current education reform in Sweden is formally characterized in terms of decentralization, deregulation and the creation of quasi- markets to stimulate creativity, individual responsibility and efficiency (Lundahl, 2002a,b). However ...the creation of market solutions in public services is ironic...as it plays on and extends the differences and ineffectiveness it was meant to challenge with this pedagogy again also favouring dominant groups'.

It is as Beach argues, the challenge of successful MYP program implementation and similarly the Swedish National Education system, is that guidelines need to be informed by research, in order to complement reform, if it is not to run the risk of accentuating the worst excesses of neo- liberalism.

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