

# You've been disconnected— Leaders weaving coherence

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Leaders weaving coherence**

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## Challenges for IB World Schools

- How do the findings fit the experience of your schools?
- What does 'coherence' mean to you? How do schools create coherence and a sense among teachers of being part of the 'whole school' rather than a part of a program?
- Some teachers liked DP "just the way it is." Should DP be changed? If so, how?
- **What characteristics and connectors do leaders use that enable schools to proactively address these types of problems?**






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## Overview

To unpack some of the disconnections which may impede successful transitions in IB World Schools as a way to stimulate a movement toward greater coherence.


- **The scene**
- **The research context/findings**
- **The frame**
- **Disconnection points**
- **Key connection challenges**

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## The Scene




- Many programs/interventions individually beneficial.
- Many exciting 'stories of success' (although scattered)
- When parceled together & thrust at speed - unwieldy
- Inability of innovations to penetrate deeply into learning
- Lack of sufficient connection to each other and to:
  - ◇ the reality of school life;
  - ◇ the emotions people carry;
  - ◇ educative and community perceptions;
  - ◇ the political/cultural contexts within schools work.




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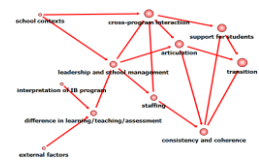
## The research context (a reminder)

- 5 IB schools offering the full continuum in the Asia Pacific region
- Interviews: 68 teachers and administrators, 25 students
- Observations: 13 classroom observations at 3 of the 5 IB schools
- Archival data: Key documents from all schools

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

## The Research Findings



### Connections

- Different flows
- Different strengths
- Different routes
- Different types of:
  - **connectors**
  - **disconnectors**

1. What are they?
2. How can we weave them together?

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## Transitions in disconnection?

A lack of linkage or understanding:

- between different program components, purposes or intentions?
- of what programs propose & the processes that make them 'work' at a school level

There are two different programs and the approach is different in both of them. This is what the IB is lacking - articulation. And that's the real problem (DP teacher, School 3).



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## Disconnection points

- Instrumental
- Intellectual
- Cultural
- Political
- Communicative
- Professional

Do these combine to lessen relevance & hinder meaningful transitions in schools?



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## Instrumental disconnection – 3 faces

Disconnection between

- program demands and the practical realities of learning and teaching in and of leading schools.
- what the different programs demand and how teachers work.
- the different programs and the structural realities of school life


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## Does this hold any credence for us?

*there is almost no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous improvement and sustained learning about their practice in the settings in which they actually work....confronting similar problems of practice. This disconnection between the requirements of learning to teach well and the structure of teachers' work life is fatal to any sustained process of instructional improvement and reform.*

(Elmore, 2006, p. 34)




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## Instrumental disconnection – a few questions???????

- ➔ How can we connect the thrust/demands of the 3 programs with the structural realities of schools? (students/teachers/leaders)
- ➔ Do certain structural conditions (e.g. class size, school size, location of school buildings, timetabling, organizational chart, teacher workload, strong exam emphasis, etc.) need to be addressed before the full continuum program is implemented?
- ➔ Does the presence or absence of certain structural connectors smoothen or interfere with successful transition
- ➔ Should we stop – think and consolidate the programs before introducing any new initiatives?



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## Intellectual disconnection – 2 faced

Disconnection between the purposes, thrust and content both within and between different programs.

**Coherence** asks whether different programs are explicitly linked to one another.

**Consistency** asks about alignment between of the messages within individual programs, and their openness to interpretation by those involved (or not involved).



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## From the mouths of babes?

- **Difference in assessment**
- **Difference in learning**
- **Difference in teaching**

I didn't really experience a lot of exam testing skills in MYP because we like only had one exam per year and not a lot of test throughout the term, so now we have like test, for us it's tough taking a test because we are having like a big exam at the end of the course and I have trouble with that (DP student 3, School 2).




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## Intellectual disconnection – a few questions??????

- ➔ How do we connect the programs so that they link, support and reinforce each other, rather than appearing as separated, if not contradictory and competing entities?
- ➔ How can we connect the demands “within” specific IB programs together so that they are more consistent with each other?
- ➔ How can we design more coherent and consistent IB programs in terms of curriculum continuum, pedagogical approach, assessment, and so on?
- ➔ How can we build a shared, common understanding and interpretation of the different IB programs while protecting contextual and professional discretion?



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## Cultural disconnection – 3 faces

- **Macro-cultural**  
between the cultural values underpinning programs and pedagogies and those of diverse community/student populations.
- **National-cultural**  
between the where and how teachers are socialized and when, where and why children experience ‘formal’ transition
- **Organizational-cultural**  
between the different levels of schooling and the norms, values and beliefs which typify these.





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## Cultural disconnection – a few questions??????

- ➔ How to connect the programs with the dominant/diverse cultural values, beliefs & norms which underpin life in societies & schools?
- ➔ Do IBO & school leaders considered carefully enough how their suggested initiatives fit the local culture and context?
- ➔ Do innovations and initiatives related to IB programs developed in different schools need to be further piloted and adjusted to have a chance of working in different cultures and contexts?
- ➔ How do we connect with local communities to provide clearer understanding of and across IB programs and what migration means?



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## Political disconnection – 3 faces

**Big P**

- Disconnection between programs and schools and broader IBO governance and political structures.
- Disconnection between shifting political rationales and ideologies (perhaps related to geographic locations)

**Small p**

- Disconnection within schools between levels, content areas and cross-functional groups (‘turf-wars’)



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## Political disconnection – just one questions????

- ➔ How do we connect (or maybe disconnect) different programs with/from political realities and competing interests?





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## Communicative disconnection

➤ How the concept of a World School is explained, communicated and sold within & outside the school.



**Communicative disconnection – a few questions?????**



- How to connect the meaning, purpose and detail of the programs among key stakeholders (IBO, teachers, parents etc.)?
- Do we ALL have enough information about the success/failure/pitfalls of and across IB programs?
- Do we spend enough time talking about it IN SCHOOL ? (do we have the time?)

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## Professional disconnection

The lack of connection between the skills, knowledge and capacities required to make the programs work and the shape structure and effectiveness of present professional learning opportunities.

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## Professional disconnection – a few questions?????

- Are IB teachers/teachers receiving sufficient relevant opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and capacities needed to make IB programs work (together) better?
- What kind of professional learning opportunities are provided and how connected are they to working specifically in a World School?




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## Addressing transition disconnections

NO



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## Connection devices available to leaders

1. Work on the emotional, spiritual and relational
2. Modeling, monitoring & promote dialogue
3. Have an intentional design
4. Provide relevant professional learning support
5. Embed a common schema
6. Develop and apply simple rules
7. Seek similarity of scale
8. Value emergent feedback
9. Disperse control

(Bain, 2007; Bredeson, 2006; Southworth, 2009; Walker, 2010)




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## 'You've been disconnected— Leaders weaving coherence

- What's the leaders' work here?
- What's the IBO's work here?
- What's the work to be done together?
- What's the work to be done in individual schools?



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## What we did?

Discussed some of the disconnections which may impede successful transitions in IB World Schools

- **The scene**
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Begun to think about ways forward



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