

Does the school have a realistic estimation of the cost involved of introducing the IBDP in terms of effort, time and money?

We begin by repeating that in terms of time, a school needs typically around 5 years to become fully familiar with the IBDP. As we mentioned before, this need not be a problem at all, as long as everyone is aware of the time requirements and no one has unrealistic expectations.

In terms of costs and effort, the IBO requires, at a minimum, that each of the teachers teaching an IBDP subject has attends one of the many workshops offered at destinations around the world (which typically last 3 days and come with a bill of around US\$ 2500 per teacher [**note**: from here onwards, \$ will always denote US \$]). In terms of overall costs, if one includes travel, accommodation and incidental expenses for training teachers plus library enhancement costs, expanded IT provision, additional administrative staff and equipment, and increased departmental resourcing costs, a relatively well-equipped small school is looking at a minimum initial cost of US \$ 50,000 (and at least about US \$ 25,000 in additional running costs per year).

It is our firm conviction, however, that this cost estimation is far too optimistic, and that schools do themselves a great disservice by spending an amount too close to the required minimum.

An IBDP workshop tends to be a good experience for the more experienced IBDP teachers, but a less fruitful one for teachers new to the IB: new teachers are not going to learn the intricacies of the IB approach to their subject in just a few days. The IBO has responded to this concern by offering separate workshops for beginners, but this initiative has met with mixed reviews: some schools are happy but some lament the lack of contact with more experienced colleagues. Indeed, a frequently heard comment from IB teachers, both new and experienced, is that (apart from the international networking advantages the workshops afford) they often benefit in particular from the informal mingling sessions that take place outside the more formal workshop sessions. So teachers should come fully prepared to make the most of this 'informal time'. This observation also emphasizes that it is important that schools engage the mentoring assistance of experienced IB educators who understand the school's background and characteristics. In personal consultation sessions, teachers and administrators can then ask those questions that are most relevant to them. The IBO, on its part, actively encourages this kind of sharing of expertise. Such personalized consultation, however, will obviously add to the staff-training bill.

We also believe a significant addition to the initial cost may come from the efforts and costs associated with obtaining good university admission advice (see questions below). Then there are the costs attached to the fact that the entire school (not just the high school) will have to undergo changes (for details, see the questions below). Language support programs may prove necessary and thus add further to the costs. In terms of wages, private international schools in particular must seriously consider the scenario that they may have to increase teacher salaries (details below), thus adding to the yearly operating costs. Diploma package constraints may well mean that certain classes must be run with only a handful of students in them. Also, a number of subjects may expertise not available in the existing teaching body for which new teaches must be contracted. There are a number of other issues that may add to the bill such as potentially smaller class sizes, administrative (wage) bills, departmental resources, and marketing bills. A comprehensive list of cost details can be found in our Cambridge Press publication.

Not spending sufficient money initially often means paying the penalty later in terms of far higher costs in later years. Especially if parents start withdrawing students from the programme or from the school altogether, the overall cost due to loss of clients could well be 10 times higher or more, in particular for private schools (see the case studies featuring in our Cambridge Press book). It simply does not make sense for a school to be stingy, either

from an educational or from a business point of view. A more realistic cost estimate would be to spend at least double the minimum cost stipulated by the IBO requirements. In other words, US \$ 100,000 is a more realistic initial cost estimation for a small school, and much more for a bigger school.

Parents need not worry about the details of the costs to the school – but the school should. What parents may wish to verify is that the school has established a *DP feasibility study committee* that looks into the cost analysis, amongst other things (see question below). This may seem like a trivial remark, but it is not unusual for schools to start the IBDP without an adequate cost analysis, so it may not hurt to bring up some of the cost issues listed above to check that the school has done its financial homework.

In conclusion, parents should ask schools to provide a generous budget to ensure a successful and ultimately cost-effective start, and then decide (along with all the other stakeholders), whether these costs are worth it, and if so, how to fund these. As the regional study of Canada in our Cambridge publication recounts, parents of children who are enrolled in other programmes of the school may not be happy to share the extra cost associated with the IBDP, so schools may have to increase the fee for IBDP students (the annual basic fee and examination fees alone account for well over US \$ 500 per student). It may well be the case that parents are prepared to pay a premium to have their children study the IBDP (particularly if its merits have been well-explained), but clearly, such issues are better resolved before the programme starts. Arguments over funding in a programme that is already in operation is the last thing anyone needs.

Has the school established an IBDP feasibility study committee?

We referred to this committee in the question above. This committee should conduct a *position audit*, a *gap analysis* and a *cost analysis*, and formulate an *action plan* with a timeframe for DP implementation. The position audit deals with issues such as ‘where is the school now and where does it want to go?’ and, ‘is there a market for offering the IBDP – do we have a market niche?’ At first sight, such questions may seem only important to the school itself and not to the parents, but a badly conducted position audit may lead to a collapse of the programme, which affects everyone including the parents. The gap analysis must establish how the IBDP is different from the existing programs in school, or more generally, what development must take place across the school to enable it to offer the IBDP effectively. The cost analysis was discussed in the previous question, and the meaning of an action plan speaks for itself.

What must be clear from this is that this feasibility committee cannot just be one person. In order to do an accurate gap and cost analysis, the committee will obviously need to comprise the detailed help of the management, and of the department heads, who will need to study the IB programme very seriously and carefully to find out where changes or new resources are needed.

Are teachers paid well enough?

Now here’s a question that is going to win you friends amongst the teaching staff! But for private and international schools in particular, it is a very important issue for everyone. As detailed in the case studies in our Cambridge publication, paying lower salaries in comparison to the international market leaves the school open to a serious risk: after a typical 2 year contract, teachers can boast not only their (IBO mandated) IBDP training, but also their years of IB teaching experience. With the number of IB schools growing roughly at 10% a year worldwide, it is easy to find a better-paid job elsewhere, and many teachers do so. This can leave the school with a very high turnover rate and a continually under-experienced staff and continual training costs. In response, some schools try to protect their training investment by making contractual amendments, but of course they are once again constrained here by international standards. In a fluid labor market such as the international teaching world, we feel that the only sustainable policy is to provide an attractive working