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Adapting IB-Informed Lesson Planning Practices in Secondary EFL Education: A Qualitative Case Study of Institutional Transition

Adaptación de prácticas de planificación de clases orientadas al Bachillerato Internacional en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera en secundaria: estudio de caso cualitativo de una transición institucional

Kaori Fukasawa Oyervide
kfukasawa@ueldv.edu.ec
Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí
Manta – Ecuador

Eder Agustín Intriago Palacios
intriago@ksu.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9433-7186
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas – United States

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of IB-informed lesson planning practices in secondary EFL education within a school transitioning toward a fully IB-oriented academic model. The institution is currently applying inquiry-based learning, ATL skills, MYP planning elements, and backwards design in 8th, 9th, and 10th grade classrooms. The study examines how these pedagogical adaptations influence lesson planning practices among secondary EFL teachers, analyzing changes in instructional alignment, inquiry integration, conceptual learning, assessment planning, and student-centered instructional design. The study is grounded in the theoretical perspectives of backwards design, constructive alignment, inquiry-based learning, and teacher agency theory. A qualitative case study design was employed to investigate the phenomenon within its authentic institutional context. Data collection included semi-structured teacher interviews, lesson plan analysis, and institutional planning documents. Current IB-informed lesson plans were compared with previous structures to identify observable changes associated with the transition. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to instructional coherence, teacher adaptation, institutional expectations, and pedagogical transformation. The findings suggest that the adaptation of IB-informed planning practices has influenced lesson planning by promoting greater alignment between objectives, assessment, and instruction, while also encouraging inquiry-based and student-centered approaches. However, teachers also reported challenges related to planning workload, time management, curriculum pacing, and adaptation to new pedagogical expectations. The study concludes that IB-informed

planning practices can positively influence lesson planning coherence when implemented flexibly and contextually during institutional transition.

Keywords: lesson planning, International Baccalaureate, backward design, inquiry-based learning, teacher agency

RESUMEN

Este estudio explora la implementación de prácticas de planificación de clases orientadas al Bachillerato Internacional (BI) en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera en secundaria, dentro de una institución en transición hacia un modelo académico plenamente orientado al BI. La institución aplica actualmente el aprendizaje basado en la indagación, las habilidades de los enfoques del aprendizaje, elementos de planificación del Programa de Años Intermedios y el diseño inverso en octavo, noveno y décimo grado. El estudio examina cómo estas adaptaciones pedagógicas influyen en las prácticas de planificación docente y analiza los cambios en la alineación instruccional, la integración de la indagación, el aprendizaje conceptual, la planificación de la evaluación y el diseño centrado en el estudiante. El marco teórico se sustenta en el diseño inverso, la alineación constructiva, el aprendizaje basado en la indagación y la teoría de la agencia docente. Se empleó un diseño de estudio de caso cualitativo y la recolección de datos incluyó entrevistas semiestructuradas, análisis de planificaciones y documentos institucionales, comparando las planificaciones actuales con las estructuras previas. Los datos se analizaron mediante análisis temático. Los hallazgos sugieren que la adaptación de estas prácticas promueve una mayor alineación entre objetivos, evaluación e instrucción, además de fomentar enfoques indagatorios y centrados en el estudiante; no obstante, los docentes reportaron desafíos vinculados a la carga de planificación, la gestión del tiempo y el ritmo curricular. Se concluye que estas prácticas influyen positivamente en la coherencia de la planificación cuando se implementan de manera flexible y contextualizada.

Palabras clave: planificación de clases, Bachillerato Internacional, diseño inverso, aprendizaje basado en la indagación, agencia docente

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INTRODUCTION

Lesson planning is a central component of effective English as a Foreign Language teaching, because it structures learning experiences, sustains instructional coherence, and guides the relationship between objectives, classroom activities, and assessment. A well-constructed lesson plan does more than sequence tasks. It operationalizes a teacher's pedagogical intent, translating curricular aspirations into concrete classroom practice while creating a coherent thread that students can follow from one learning experience to the next. When planning is fragmented or activity-driven without a clear outcome in view, instruction risks becoming a series of disconnected exercises rather than a purposeful progression toward meaningful language development. This concern has taken on particular significance as secondary schools around the world reconsider how their curricular frameworks prepare students for increasingly demanding academic pathways.

In recent years, educational institutions seeking to transition toward International Baccalaureate models have increasingly incorporated IB-oriented pedagogical principles into lower secondary education, as preparation for the full implementation of the Diploma Programme (Kerimoğlu & Altun, 2024). This responds to a widely recognized concern among IB World Schools, since students who encounter inquiry-based, concept-driven learning for the first time only upon entering the Diploma Programme often struggle to adjust to its demands within a compressed two-year timeframe. Introducing IB-aligned habits of mind earlier in a student's academic trajectory is therefore seen as a way of easing that transition and building the dispositions the programme presupposes. These adaptations often include inquiry-based learning, approaches to learning skills, conceptual understanding, reflection, and backward design, each of which reorients the planning process away from content coverage and toward the cultivation of transferable skills and durable understanding.

The institution examined in this study is currently undergoing a curricular transition toward an academic model exclusively oriented toward the IB at the high school level. This transition goes beyond administrative reorganization, since it entails a substantive redefinition of what counts as good teaching within the school, extending well beyond the grades formally authorized to deliver IB programmes and reaching into the lower secondary years. As part of this transition, the school has implemented IB-oriented planning practices in eighth, ninth, and tenth grade classrooms. Teachers are expected to incorporate inquiry-based methodologies, approaches to learning skills, planning structures inspired by the Middle Years Programme, and backward design into their planning processes, despite working at levels that are not formally part of the IB programmes. This arrangement places teachers in an ambiguous position, since they must anticipate and model IB expectations without external moderation that typically accompanies

official programme implementation, relying instead on institutional interpretation of what IB-aligned planning should look like in practice.

Backward design was developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe and holds that instructional planning should begin with the desired learning outcomes and align assessment and classroom instruction accordingly (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This reversal of the conventional planning sequence, moving from ends to means, is intended to prevent the common pitfall of designing engaging activities that ultimately fail to produce the intended learning. Similarly, IB planning principles promote inquiry, conceptual learning, student agency, and reflective practices (Saxton & Hill, 2014). Both approaches seek to create more coherent and meaningful learning experiences, and their conceptual affinity is one reason schools transitioning toward the IB often look to backward design as a bridge between conventional planning habits and the pedagogical expectations of the programme, even when that bridge is constructed informally rather than through official training.

However, adapting these principles in secondary contexts not formally affiliated with the IB can present significant challenges for teachers. Institutional expectations, administrative workload, curricular pacing, limited training, and contextual realities can influence how teachers interpret and implement these practices (Dickson et al., 2018). Teachers navigating this kind of transition often lack a single authoritative reference for what counts as correct implementation, since the frameworks in question were designed for fully authorized programme contexts rather than for preparatory adaptation at unauthorized grade levels. As a result, teachers may adapt them flexibly rather than applying them systematically (Zeng, 2024), producing a form of implementation that is inevitably uneven even when every teacher is working in good faith toward the same institutional goal.

Although existing literature addresses backward design and IB pedagogy, little research has explored how schools undergoing institutional transitions implement IB-oriented planning practices in lower secondary EFL education. The literature tends to treat backward design and IB pedagogy either as fully implemented programme features or as abstract theoretical models, leaving underexamined the messier, in-between reality of schools that are actively building toward authorization while still operating substantially under prior curricular arrangements. Moreover, most studies conducted in Ecuador have examined the impacts of IB implementation on learning (Bittencourt, 2020, 2023; Ponce & Intriago, 2022; Resnik, 2016), rather than investigating how these adaptations affect teachers' planning practices within authentic classroom contexts. This emphasis on learning outcomes over planning processes leaves open the question of how teachers themselves experience and negotiate the day-to-day work of adapting their instructional habits, a gap this study addresses directly.

Other regional research on the IB has instead focused on macro-level policy outcomes. Resnik (2014), for example, examined how the national expansion of the Diploma Programme

into public schools reconfigured the teacher labor market and revealed tensions between bureaucratic regulation, teacher training, and the public-private divide in Ecuadorian education. While that work illuminates the systemic and labor consequences of IB policy, it does not address how IB pedagogical principles translate into everyday classroom planning by teachers working outside formally authorized levels. The policy-level focus of much of this regional scholarship, valuable as it is for understanding structural change, offers little guidance to a teacher standing in front of a classroom and deciding how to sequence a unit or frame a formative assessment task under IB-informed expectations. This study therefore seeks to investigate how the implementation of IB-oriented pedagogical principles influences lesson planning practices in secondary EFL education during an institutional transition toward an IB-oriented model, situating itself deliberately at the classroom level rather than the policy level.

Literature on lesson planning in EFL teaching highlights the importance of instructional coherence, alignment, scaffolding, and meaningful student participation (Rahayu et al., 2021). These elements are frequently treated as interdependent rather than separate concerns, since scaffolding without alignment to a clear outcome risks becoming busywork, while alignment without adequate scaffolding can leave students unable to reach the outcomes a lesson sets for them. Effective planning enables teachers to organize learning experiences that support language acquisition while facilitating communicative competence and student engagement (Richards, 2013). In contemporary educational approaches, planning also plays a critical role in promoting inquiry, formative assessment, and student-centered learning; general treatises on language teaching methodology likewise insist on aligning objectives, activities, and assessment when designing lessons and courses (Harmer, 2001; Macalister & Nation, 2019). This body of work, though not specific to the IB, establishes the baseline expectations of sound EFL planning against which IB-oriented adaptations can be understood as an intensification rather than a wholesale departure.

Backward design has become one of the most influential instructional planning models in contemporary curriculum design. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), planning should begin by identifying the desired learning outcomes before determining assessment evidence and instructional activities. This outcomes-oriented approach contrasts with traditional activity-first models and favors greater alignment among goals, instruction, and assessment. The model organizes planning into three stages, beginning with identifying desired results, then determining acceptable evidence of learning, and only then designing the learning experiences and instruction that will lead students there, a sequence intended to keep engaging activities honest to their instructional purpose. Biggs's (1996) constructive alignment theory reinforces this importance of coherence, holding that objectives, classroom activities, and assessment practices must operate together to sustain meaningful learning (Wang et al., 2013). In EFL contexts, such alignment can contribute to clearer instructional organization and more intentional learning opportunities, a

principle that has extended to classroom teaching in general as a central element of learning quality (Biggs et al., 2022). These frameworks together suggest that the value of backward design lies less in any single technique than in the discipline it imposes on the planning process itself, requiring teachers to justify each activity by reference to the outcome it is meant to serve.

IB-oriented pedagogical practices further emphasize inquiry-based learning, conceptual understanding, reflection, international mindedness, and student agency (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014). These commitments go beyond stylistic preference; they reflect a particular view of the learner as someone who constructs understanding through guided investigation rather than absorbing content transmitted by the teacher, a view that has direct consequences for how a lesson plan is structured from its opening inquiry question to its closing reflection. In the Middle Years Programme, planning often integrates inquiry questions, approaches to learning skills, interdisciplinary learning, and conceptual exploration, with the purpose of positioning students as active participants in the process rather than passive recipients of content (Mutammimah et al., 2019). For EFL teachers accustomed to more linear, grammar- or skills-sequenced planning, adopting this orientation can require rethinking not only individual activities but the underlying logic by which a unit is organized from start to finish.

Research on teacher agency suggests, in turn, that educational frameworks are rarely implemented uniformly across contexts. Hizli Alkan and Priestley (2019) argue that teachers act as active curriculum makers who interpret and adapt pedagogical frameworks according to contextual realities, institutional expectations, and classroom needs. This view stands in contrast to more mechanistic accounts of implementation, in which teachers are treated as conduits who simply transmit a curriculum designed elsewhere; instead, it positions the teacher as an interpretive agent whose professional judgment materially shapes what a framework becomes in practice. This perspective is especially relevant in institutional transitions, in which teachers are expected to integrate new approaches into previously established planning systems. Beyond individual capacity, teacher agency is shaped by beliefs, professional relationships, and working environment conditions (Priestley et al., 2015), and it becomes particularly visible during periods of educational change, when the gap between what a framework prescribes and what a classroom can realistically accommodate forces teachers to make continual, often improvised, adaptive decisions.

Prior empirical studies indicate that the implementation of inquiry-based and outcomes-oriented practices varies according to teacher training, institutional support, and contextual demands (Chaudhary & Singh, 2022; Dieudé & Prøitz, 2024; Kanya et al., 2021). Dieudé and Prøitz (2024) found that, although all the schools studied had accommodated outcomes-based governance regimes, teacher autonomy continued to differ by context and was more closely tied to pedagogical practices than to formally required outcomes, suggesting that policy adoption at the institutional level does not automatically translate into uniform classroom-level change.

Meanwhile, in a meta-analysis of 132 studies guided by the dynamic model of educational effectiveness, Chaudhary and Singh (2022) found that teaching factors were only moderately associated with learning outcomes and cautioned against imposing rigid dichotomies between teaching approaches, a caution relevant when traditional and IB-oriented planning coexist during a transition rather than one replacing the other overnight. Institutional conditions also matter, as shown in a survey of 385 secondary teachers where Kanya et al. (2021) reported that administrative leadership, organizational culture, and teacher competence jointly explained 68.12% of the variation in teacher performance, which suggests that successful pedagogical change depends as much on the surrounding institutional ecosystem as on any single teacher's individual skill or willingness to adapt.

In summary, while some studies report greater instructional coherence and more student-centered learning resulting from backward design and IB-oriented practices (Heineke, 2018; Kodzi, 2019), others highlight challenges related to workload, planning complexity, and adaptation processes (Mousa, 2025). The literature, in other words, is not divided over whether these practices carry pedagogical benefits, but over how sustainable those benefits are once the practical costs of implementation are taken into account. Little research has specifically examined how these practices influence secondary EFL lesson planning during institutional transition processes, and fewer studies still have examined this question through the direct accounts of the teachers doing the adapting, rather than through policy documents or student outcome measures.

This study is guided by the following research questions. The first asks how the implementation of an IB-oriented model influences the pedagogical decisions of secondary EFL teachers during an institutional transition toward that model. The second examines the perceived benefits and challenges that teachers report during this pedagogical transformation. Together, these questions position the study to contribute both a descriptive account of how planning practices change and an evaluative account of how teachers themselves experience that change, addressing the gap identified above between policy-level and classroom-level understandings of IB implementation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine the impact of implementing International Baccalaureate-oriented planning practices in secondary EFL teaching during the institutional transition toward a fully IB-oriented educational model. The case study approach was considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth, contextually grounded examination of a bounded phenomenon, in this instance a single institution undergoing a specific and time-limited curricular transition, without requiring the artificial isolation of variables that a quantitative design would demand. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study sought to understand teachers' experiences, planning processes, perceptions, and pedagogical adaptation

within a real educational context, rather than measuring quantitative outcomes (Sampieri, 2018). This choice reflects the exploratory nature of the research questions, which ask how and why planning practices changed rather than how much they changed, a distinction that favors a design capable of capturing nuance, contradiction, and individual variation among participants. The research was conducted at a private Ecuadorian secondary institution currently transitioning toward the exclusive implementation of the International Baccalaureate at the high school level. As part of this transition, eighth, ninth, and tenth grade English teachers were expected to incorporate inquiry-based learning, approaches to learning skills, structures inspired by the Middle Years Programme, and backward design principles into their planning, even though, as noted above, these grade levels fall outside the boundaries of any IB programme the institution is formally authorized to deliver.

Participants were three EFL teachers working at the institution during its transition toward the IB-oriented model, selected through purposive sampling for their direct involvement in adapting planning practices. Purposive sampling was chosen over random or convenience sampling because the study required participants who had firsthand, sustained experience with the specific phenomenon under investigation; a randomly selected group of teachers might have included individuals with little direct involvement in the transition, diluting the depth of insight the study aimed to capture. The sample consisted of three female teachers (N = 3), aged between 18 and 44 years. Their teaching experience varied considerably, from three to twelve years, and all worked at private bilingual institutions. This range in years of experience was considered valuable rather than a limitation to be controlled for, since it allowed the study to observe whether seniority or relative novelty shaped how teachers approached the same institutional demands. Together, they taught at lower secondary and high school levels and reported varying degrees of familiarity with the Middle Years Programme framework and backward design principles, ranging from slight to high familiarity. Teachers who taught English at the institution, particularly in lower secondary courses (eighth through tenth grade), and who were actively involved in adapting their planning structures to IB-oriented practices during the institutional transition, were included. Those not involved in the transition or not teaching EFL were excluded, ensuring that every participant could speak directly and concretely to the planning changes at the center of the research questions rather than offering secondhand or speculative impressions.

Data collection included semi-structured interviews, analysis of lesson plans, and review of institutional planning documents. This combination of methods was intended to allow triangulation across what teachers said about their planning, what their planning documents actually showed, and what the institution formally expected, so that the analysis would not rest on self-report alone. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' experiences adapting IB-oriented pedagogical practices, their perceptions of changes in planning, and the challenges associated with the transition process. The semi-structured format was selected

specifically because it offered enough consistency across interviews to support thematic comparison while still leaving room for participants to raise considerations the interview protocol had not anticipated. Questions focused on planning procedures, instructional alignment, integration of inquiry, assessment practices, approaches to learning skills, and institutional expectations, with follow-up prompts used to probe more deeply into responses that touched on the study's central concerns of coherence, adaptation, and teacher agency.

Lesson plan analysis constituted a central data source. Current IB-oriented lesson plans were analyzed alongside planning formats used prior to the institutional transition, in order to identify observable changes in instructional organization and planning structure. Comparing before-and-after formats directly, rather than relying solely on teachers' descriptions of change, provided a documentary anchor against which interview accounts could be checked and enriched. The analysis focused on elements such as alignment between objectives and assessment, inquiry-based learning, conceptual understanding, formative assessment, student-centered instruction, reflection activities, and the integration of approaches to learning skills. These categories were drawn directly from the theoretical constructs central to backward design and IB pedagogy discussed above, ensuring that the document analysis remained conceptually anchored to the study's guiding framework rather than proceeding as an open-ended inventory of plan features. Additionally, planning templates and institutional curricular documents were analyzed to contextualize the pedagogical expectations established during the transition process, which made it possible to understand the school's implementation goals and planning requirements, and to distinguish expectations that were formally documented from those that circulated more informally among staff.

Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymization of participant data throughout the study. These considerations carried particular weight given the small size of the teaching staff involved in the transition, which made careful anonymization essential to prevent participants from being identifiable to colleagues or administrators through contextual detail alone. Ethical approval procedures were followed in accordance with institutional research guidelines. Participants were fully informed of the voluntary nature of the study and of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences, as well as of the option to decline to answer any question that caused discomfort. Given that participants were reflecting on an ongoing institutional process in which they remained active employees, particular care was taken to ensure that participation would not be perceived as compulsory or as linked in any way to performance evaluation. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying data, so that no participant could be individually identified in the reporting of results. All digital files, including transcripts, were stored on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher.

The collected data were analyzed following the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019). This framework was chosen because its reflexive approach to coding treats the researcher's interpretive judgment as an explicit and necessary part of theme development, rather than something to be minimized in pursuit of a single, mechanically verifiable coding scheme, which suited a study whose data was rich in nuance and individual variation. The analysis proceeded iteratively, as initial codes were generated from close, repeated readings of the interview transcripts and lesson plan documents, then grouped into candidate themes, and finally reviewed and refined against the full dataset to ensure that each theme captured a coherent and distinct pattern of meaning. Coding focused on identifying recurring themes related to instructional coherence, teacher adaptation, institutional expectations, implementation of inquiry, planning challenges, and pedagogical transformation. Data from the interviews, the lesson plan comparisons, and the institutional documents were considered jointly during this process, so that a theme was retained only when it was supported by more than one source of evidence. The AI tool Claude (Anthropic) was used to support the grammar and style correction of the manuscript. The research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were all performed by the human authors; no content was automatically generated or interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the implementation of International Baccalaureate-oriented planning practices significantly influenced lesson planning processes in secondary EFL teaching. Across the three participants, this influence was consistent in direction even where it varied in degree, since all three teachers described planning differently than they had before the transition began, though the extent and manner of that change differed according to their individual circumstances. Teachers noted that the institutional transition promoted greater intentionality in planning, particularly regarding the alignment between objectives, instructional activities, and assessment practices. This shift toward intentionality emerged as a thread running through nearly every aspect of the data, from the interviews to the lesson plan documents themselves, suggesting that it functioned as something close to a unifying effect of the transition rather than an isolated change confined to one area of practice. Table 1 summarizes the themes identified in the analysis and their correspondence with the research questions.

Table 1

Themes identified in the analysis and their relationship to the research questions

Theme	Key finding	Question
Intentionality and alignment in planning	Teachers planned with greater intentionality, aligning learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment.	RQ1
Inquiry and conceptual learning	Current lesson plans showed greater integration of inquiry-based learning, conceptual understanding, approaches to learning skills, and formative assessment.	RQ1

Outcomes-oriented backward design	Teachers defined learning outcomes and assessment before designing activities, shifting from activity-centered planning to outcomes-oriented planning.	RQ1
Perceived benefits	Greater instructional coherence and more reflective, student-centered planning.	RQ2
Perceived challenges	Increased planning workload, limited preparation time, curricular pacing pressures, and uncertainty about IB concepts.	RQ2
Variability and teacher agency	The depth of adaptation varied according to teaching style, confidence, and classroom context, reflecting teacher agency.	RQ1 and RQ2

Note. RQ1 and RQ2 correspond, respectively, to the study's first and second research questions.

Lesson plan analysis showed an increasing incorporation of inquiry-based learning, conceptual understanding, approaches to learning skills, formative assessment, and student-centered instructional strategies, compared with previous planning formats. This shift was visible not only in the presence of new planning categories but in the language teachers used to frame lesson objectives, moving away from purely content-based statements toward objectives framed around what students would be able to investigate, understand, or transfer to new situations, a change consistent with previous research suggesting that IB-oriented approaches promote deeper student engagement (Mutammimah et al., 2019). Teachers frequently integrated inquiry questions, reflective activities, collaborative learning tasks, and opportunities for student agency into the structure of their lessons. These additions suggest that the transition was reshaping the underlying assumptions teachers held about what a lesson plan is meant to accomplish, not just the surface features of lesson plans, despite the institution's grade levels falling outside formal IB authorization.

Participants also reported that backward design fostered more intentional planning processes by requiring the identification of learning outcomes and assessment criteria before designing classroom activities. Several participants described this as a genuinely different way of starting the planning process, since rather than beginning with an activity or a textbook unit and working backward to justify it, they described starting from a question about what students needed to be able to do, then working forward to select or design activities capable of getting them there. All three teachers described a shift from activity-centered planning toward outcomes-oriented instructional organization, and several noted that this shift, once internalized, was difficult to reverse even in planning contexts unrelated to the IB transition.

Despite these positive changes, participants identified several challenges associated with the adaptation process. They frequently mentioned the increased planning workload (around five additional hours per week), limited preparation time, curricular pacing pressures, and uncertainty regarding the implementation of IB pedagogical concepts. This additional workload was described not as a one-time transitional cost but as an ongoing feature of planning under the new model, since aligning objectives, inquiry questions, and assessment criteria for every unit demanded more sustained cognitive effort than assembling a sequence of activities had previously

required. Some expressed difficulty balancing institutional expectations with classroom realities, especially in large classes or with tightly structured curricular schedules, and more than one participant noted that the conceptual vocabulary associated with IB planning, terms such as statements of inquiry or key concepts, took considerable time to internalize in the absence of formal training.

The findings also indicated variability in implementation across teachers. While some participants demonstrated extensive integration of inquiry and conceptual learning, others adapted IB principles more selectively according to their teaching style, confidence level, and classroom context. This variability did not appear to correlate in any simple way with years of teaching experience; rather, it seemed to reflect each teacher's individual comfort with reworking established routines and their personal assessment of how much risk a given class could absorb without compromising coverage of required content. This suggests that pedagogical adaptation during an institutional transition is shaped not only by institutional expectations but also by teacher agency and contextual realities. Overall, the study found that the implementation of these practices promoted greater instructional coherence and fostered more reflective and inquiry-based planning approaches, even as the pace and depth of that transformation remained uneven across the teaching staff.

These results suggest that the institutional implementation of IB-oriented pedagogical practices can significantly influence planning processes within secondary English teaching. The greater emphasis on alignment, inquiry, reflection, and conceptual understanding observed in the lesson plans reflects the influence of backward design and IB planning principles on instructional organization. Importantly, this influence was observable even though the teachers involved were working at grade levels outside the institution's formal IB authorization, which suggests that the pedagogical logic of backward design can take hold in a school community well before the administrative and curricular apparatus of the programme is formally in place. The findings support the theoretical perspectives of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), demonstrating that outcomes-oriented planning can foster greater coherence among learning objectives, assessment, and instruction, and they also align with Biggs's constructive alignment theory, given that teachers placed increasing emphasis on the importance of intentional alignment throughout the process. The two frameworks converge on the same practical lesson that emerged from the data, namely that coherence among objectives, activities, and assessment is not an incidental byproduct of good teaching but something that must be deliberately engineered at the planning stage.

The study also reinforces the concept of teacher agency proposed by Hizli Alkan and Priestley, since teachers did not mechanically replicate IB pedagogical frameworks but instead interpreted and adapted them according to contextual realities, institutional expectations, and classroom needs. This demonstrates that the implementation of pedagogical frameworks during an institutional transition constitutes a negotiated and dynamic process rather than a standardized

one. This variability need not be read as a deficiency in implementation fidelity; the findings instead suggest that teacher agency is a resource institutions undergoing pedagogical change should support explicitly, rather than a compliance risk to be minimized. The variability observed among participants further highlights that successful pedagogical adaptation depends on factors such as institutional support, teacher preparation, workload, and contextual flexibility. While these practices can promote instructional coherence and inquiry-based learning, their effective implementation requires realistic expectations and sustained professional support, particularly in institutional contexts where teachers are asked to anticipate programme requirements without the benefit of the formal training that typically accompanies full IB authorization.

The study presents several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the sample was small and consisted of three teachers from private bilingual institutions, which limits the transferability of the results to other contexts, particularly public or non-bilingual schools, or institutions with different resource levels and staffing structures. Second, the data relied mostly on self-reported perceptions gathered through interviews and on the analysis of a limited set of lesson plans, which may not fully capture actual classroom practice; observed instruction was not included as a data source, so the study cannot confirm the extent to which documented planning changes were consistently enacted in the classroom. Third, the research was conducted during a specific phase of the institutional transition, so the findings reflect a particular moment rather than the long-term evolution of these practices, and it remains possible that some of the challenges reported here, such as workload and unfamiliarity with IB terminology, will diminish as the transition matures and institutional support structures develop further. Finally, as a qualitative case study, the research prioritizes depth of understanding over statistical generalization, and its findings should be read as an in-depth account of one institution's experience rather than as a representative measure of IB-oriented transitions in general.

The findings carry several implications for practice. For teachers, the results highlight the value of intentional, outcomes-oriented planning and suggest that familiarity with backward design and IB principles fosters greater coherence among objectives, activities, and assessment. This suggests that even teachers outside formally authorized IB programmes may benefit from targeted training in backward design, since the underlying planning logic appears transferable independent of formal programme status. For institutions transitioning toward IB education, the study points to the importance of providing sustained professional development, adequate planning time, and collaborative support, given that workload and curricular pacing emerged as significant challenges. Structured opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively, share adapted lesson formats, and discuss points of uncertainty regarding IB terminology could help distribute the cognitive and time burdens of adaptation more evenly across a teaching team, rather than leaving each teacher to resolve these challenges independently. An additional implication concerns the scope of this adaptation, since the lower secondary levels examined are not formally

part of the IB programmes offered by the institution, so IB-oriented planning operates at this stage as a recommended preparatory practice rather than a programmatic requirement. Introducing these principles early can therefore be understood as a way of building the conceptual understanding and self-management skills that students will need upon entering the programme, with a view to strengthening their future academic outcomes. More broadly, the findings suggest that EFL lesson planning can benefit from inquiry-based and conceptually oriented approaches, provided that teachers have sufficient resources and autonomy to adapt them to their contexts.

Future research could address the limitations identified in this study. Larger-scale studies involving multiple institutions, including public and non-bilingual schools, would help determine whether the observed patterns extend to other English teaching contexts, and whether the variability in adaptation observed here holds across institutions with different resource levels and staff compositions. Longitudinal designs would allow examination of how these practices evolve throughout the entire institutional transition process rather than at a single point in time, potentially clarifying whether early challenges such as workload and terminological unfamiliarity are transitional in nature or persist once the new planning model has become fully established. Likewise, future work could incorporate classroom observation and student outcome data to complement self-reported perceptions, and explore how factors such as teaching experience, confidence, and institutional support shape the depth of pedagogical adaptation. Comparative studies examining institutions at different stages of IB authorization, from preparatory adaptation to full candidacy and beyond, could also help clarify how the dynamics identified in this study change as formal programme status is achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how the implementation of International Baccalaureate-oriented planning practices influenced the pedagogical decisions of secondary EFL teachers during the institutional transition toward a fully IB-oriented model. In answering the first research question, the findings indicate that the adaptation of inquiry-based learning, approaches to learning skills, structures inspired by the Middle Years Programme, and backward design reshaped the decisions teachers made when planning, as they defined learning outcomes and assessment earlier, sequenced activities based on those outcomes, and integrated conceptual and student-centered strategies more deliberately. This reshaping occurred at the level of planning logic itself rather than as a superficial addition of new activity types, indicating that the transition prompted a genuine reorientation of how these teachers approached the task of designing instruction. The depth of this shift varied among participants according to their teaching experience, confidence, and familiarity with IB principles, confirming that institutional change of this kind is filtered through individual teacher agency rather than adopted uniformly by decree.

In response to the second research question, the study also revealed that teachers experienced both opportunities and challenges during the transition process. While many valued the greater coherence and intentionality associated with IB-oriented planning, they also identified difficulties related to workload, limited preparation time, curricular pacing, planning complexity, and adaptation to new pedagogical expectations. These two sets of findings, benefits on one hand and costs on the other, were not experienced by participants as contradictory but as two faces of the same demanding process of pedagogical growth.

The findings demonstrate that these practices can positively influence secondary EFL lesson planning when implemented flexibly and in a contextualized manner. However, successful implementation depends not only on institutional expectations but also on teacher agency, professional support, and recognition of classroom realities. Institutions pursuing similar transitions would therefore do well to treat implementation not as a matter of compliance to be monitored but as a professional learning process to be actively resourced and sustained over time.

This work contributes to existing research on curricular adaptation, institutional transition, and pedagogical implementation in English teaching, and highlights the importance of understanding educational transition processes as collaborative, context-dependent phenomena rather than strictly standardized procedures. By focusing on the classroom-level experience of teachers navigating an institutional transition that had not yet reached their own grade levels through formal authorization, the study offers a perspective largely absent from existing regional scholarship on the International Baccalaureate, one grounded in the everyday, often improvised work of translating a pedagogical framework into a functioning lesson plan.

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