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# HOW CAN THE IB LEARNER PROFILE BE UTILISED AS A CATALYST FOR FOSTERING TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL COHESION WITH ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IN A SCHOOL SETTING?

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## Abstract

This research explores how the IB Learner Profile can be utilised as a catalyst for fostering transformational culture and organisational cohesion specifically within administrative staff in a school setting. At Deira International School coaching is already well established among teaching staff and has played a significant role in shifting the culture towards one that is more reflective, values-driven, and development-focused. This project builds on that foundation, extending the same principles to our administrative team—an often overlooked group in school improvement work.

The initiative uses the IB Learner Profile not only as a framework for student development but as a shared professional language that can unite all staff in their personal and professional growth. Through the introduction of structured coaching conversations, grounded in the ten attributes of the Learner Profile, administrative staff are encouraged to reflect on their roles, values, and impact within the school community.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining baseline surveys, qualitative interviews, and ongoing reflective coaching sessions. Early responses indicate that administrative staff have welcomed the opportunity for personal development and meaningful dialogue, recognising the relevance of the Learner Profile to their own context. The process has begun to break down silos between teaching and non-teaching roles, helping to build a more cohesive and transformational school culture.

This research offers a practical model for how schools can engage all staff—not just educators—in a values-led approach to organisational development, using the IB Learner Profile as a foundation for reflection, connection, and cultural change.

## Introduction

This research explores how the IB Learner Profile can be used to foster transformational culture and organisational cohesion among administrative staff in a school setting. Coaching is already well embedded with our teaching staff and has played a key role in shifting the culture from transactional to reflective and values-driven. The aim of this study is to build on that success by extending coaching to administrative staff, using the IB Learner Profile as a shared framework for development.

While traditionally seen as a student-focused tool, the Learner Profile offers a common language that can unify all members of the school community. By embedding it within structured coaching conversations, the project seeks to support reflective practice, increase job satisfaction, and strengthen a sense of shared purpose across staff roles. This research examines the impact of this approach and its potential to drive whole-school cultural transformation through inclusive, values-based professional development.

## Literature Review

The IB Learner Profile is widely recognised as a framework that supports student development and helps build reflective, values-led school cultures. While much of the existing research focuses on its application within teaching and learning, this review explores how the Learner Profile can also inform leadership practices and support the development of all staff—particularly administrative teams.

Poole (2017) highlights how teachers adapt the Learner Profile to fit their own philosophies, emphasising the importance of personal interpretation. This flexibility is key when working with non-teaching staff, who may initially see the framework as more student-focused. Similarly, Keser et al. (2022) identify the attribute of being an "inquirer" as central to effective IB practice and propose a conceptual model that supports both student and teacher development—offering useful guidance for broader professional growth.

Gardner-McTaggart (2018) notes that IB school leaders often engage inconsistently with the Learner Profile, tending instead to promote global citizenship based on personal values. His findings suggest a need for more deliberate and embedded use of the Profile in leadership culture. Walker et al. (2014) reinforce this by showing that successful implementation relies on strategic planning and within-programme coherence.

Calnin et al. (2018) propose seven leadership intelligences that align closely with the Learner Profile and can support wider school development. These ideas provide a foundation for designing a coaching framework for administrative staff—one that is personalised, values-driven, and contextually responsive. Collectively, these studies highlight the potential of the Learner Profile to unify and strengthen whole-school culture.

**Key Elements for Coaching Administrative Staff**

1. Personalisation and Flexibility: Adapt the Learner Profile to fit unique contexts.
2. Systematic Implementation: Ensure consistent use in leadership practices.
3. Valuable Attributes: Focus on inquiry and other key attributes.
4. Cultural Awareness: Enhance understanding of diverse environments.
5. Professional Development: Develop targeted programs to build leadership capabilities.

By integrating these elements, schools can leverage the IB Learner Profile to enhance the effectiveness of administrative staff, fostering a cohesive and transformational culture.

## Methodology

A pilot group of ten administrative team members was selected to participate in the study. These individuals were chosen based on their interest in professional growth and their willingness to engage in a reflective process.

Participants received bespoke coaching training designed to introduce key concepts of coaching and align them with the values embedded within the IB Learner Profile. Crucially, the pilot group also played an active role in shaping the process by co-creating the coaching questions used during the sessions. This collaborative approach helped ensure the relevance and contextual appropriateness of the coaching content.

Each participant engaged in two structured coaching sessions over a six-month period. These sessions aimed to promote self-reflection, increase awareness of individual contributions to the school community, and build a greater sense of professional identity.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to evaluate the impact of the initiative. Quantitative data was collected via pre- and post-intervention surveys measuring participants' perceptions of coaching, self-efficacy, and perceived impact on their roles. In parallel, qualitative data was gathered through focus group interviews, offering deeper insight into individual experiences and the emerging cultural shifts.

## Survey Results

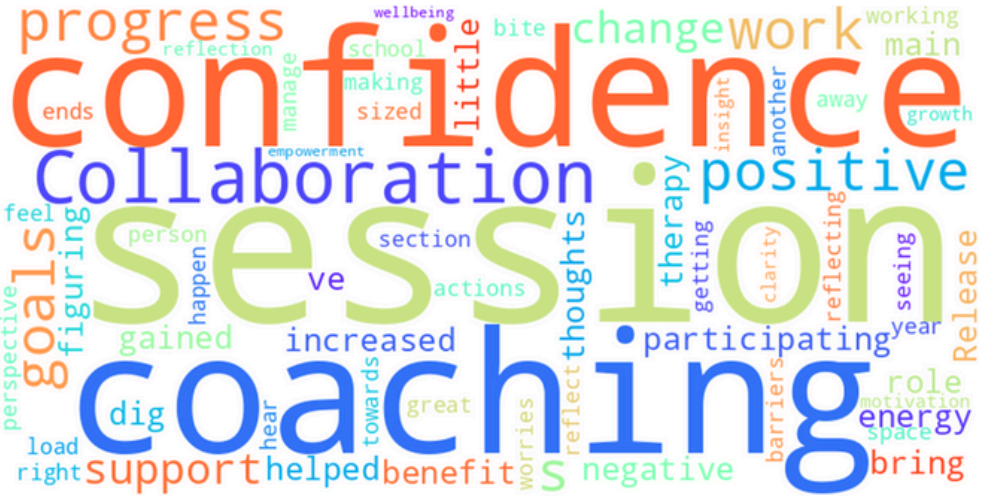
The introduction of a structured coaching cycle for administrative staff marked a meaningful shift from task-focused conversations to reflective, developmental dialogue. Historically, admin staff had limited opportunities to explore their personal and professional growth. This initiative aimed to address that gap—and did so with considerable success.

Survey data showed that before coaching began, only 38% of staff felt they had space for meaningful reflection. After the cycle, this rose to 89%, indicating a significant cultural shift. Staff valued the dedicated time to pause and think. As one participant put it:

*"Just having someone ask the right question helped me realise things I hadn't considered before—it made me stop and think in a way I usually don't get time for."*

The coaching wheel offered helpful structure and clarity, enabling participants to prepare thoughtfully for each session and reflect on areas for growth. Many reported increased confidence, improved communication, and a renewed sense of purpose (see **Figure 1**). One staff member reflected, "*I stopped thinking of myself as just an admin. I'm part of the bigger picture now.*"

**Figure 1**
**Benefits of the Coaching Process**




While the overall response was highly positive, a few challenges were noted. Some participants felt their coach lacked insight into their daily responsibilities, and others suggested that feedback from line managers could complement the coaching process.

Looking ahead, improvements such as clearer introductions, flexible scheduling, and peer coaching could help embed this reflective culture even further.

Ultimately, the project empowered admin staff and helped create a more inclusive, growth-oriented community (see **Figure 2**).

**Figure 2**
**Skills Developed as a Result of Coaching**


## Conclusion

This project set out to explore whether the IB Learner Profile could serve as a meaningful framework for professional development among administrative staff—and in doing so, contribute to a more cohesive, reflective, and transformational school culture. The results suggest that it can. By embedding coaching conversations within the language and values of the Learner Profile, we were able to provide administrative colleagues with time, space, and structure to reflect on their roles and professional identity.

The initiative has shown that the Learner Profile is not just relevant to students and teachers but can serve as a unifying language for the entire school community. As administrative staff began to see themselves as active contributors to the school's mission, rather than simply as operational support, a stronger sense of connection and shared purpose started to emerge.

Future work will focus on refining the model, expanding access, and building the capacity of staff to coach one another. In doing so, we hope to continue strengthening the sense of community, agency, and alignment that characterises transformational schools.

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