

Intra-Coordination in IB schools: A phenomenological study¹

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Abstract: This study explores how coordination in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools is perceived and experienced by members of the school community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 participants selected through maximum variation sampling. We analyzed the data by following Moustakas' Transcendental Phenomenological approach and realized that the subthemes emerged under two main themes: factors supporting coordination and factors hindering it. The subthemes include gatherings, school culture, management attitudes, individual attitudes, and crisis situations. The findings of our study indicate that these factors can either strengthen or weaken coordination, highlighting the complexity of coordination in educational settings. Structured meetings, supportive school culture, proactive management attitudes, and positive individual behaviors enhance coordination, while language barriers, unstructured meetings, hierarchical school systems, inaccessible management, and negative individual attitudes impede it. The study suggests that effective coordination in IB schools requires addressing these multifaceted and context-dependent factors to foster a more collaborative and efficient educational environment.

Anahtar Kelimeler: IB schools, coordination, educational management, school community.

Araştırma Makalesi
Research Article

IB okullarında eşgüdüm: Fenomenolojik bir çalışma

Öz: Bu çalışma, Uluslararası Bakalorya (IB) okullarındaki eşgüdümün okul topluluğu üyelerince nasıl algılandığı ve deneyimlendiğini incelemektedir. Çalışmada, maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesiyle seçilmiş 16 katılımcıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Moustakas'ın Transandantal Fenomenolojik yaklaşımını kullanarak yaptığımız veri analizi sonucunda eşgüdümü destekleyen durumlar ve eşgüdümü engelleyen durumlar şeklindeki iki ana temanın altında yer alan aynı alt temaların ortaya çıktığını gördük. Alt temalar, bir araya gelişler, okul kültürü, yönetim tutumları, bireysel tutumlar ve kriz durumlarıdır. Çalışmamızın sonuçları, bu alt temaların içerdiği faktörlerin eşgüdümü güçlendirebileceğini veya zayıflatılabileceğini ortaya koymuştur, ki bu da eğitim ortamlarındaki eşgüdümün karmaşıklığını göstermektedir. Yapılandırılmış toplantılar, destekleyici okul kültürü, proaktif yönetim tutumları ve olumlu bireysel davranışların eşgüdümü artırdığı görülürken, dil engeli, yapılandırılmamış toplantılar, hiyerarşik okul sistemleri, erişilmez yönetim ve olumsuz bireysel tutumların eşgüdümü engellediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışma, IB okullarında etkili eşgüdümün, daha işbirlikçi ve verimli bir eğitim ortamı sağlamak için bu çok yönlü ve bağlama bağlı faktörlerin ele alınması gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: IB okulları, eşgüdüm, eğitim yönetimi, okul topluluğu.



Okul Yöneticileri Derneği

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Introduction

Coordination which is a crucial organizational management function, involves organizing interdependent tasks and interactions of individuals and groups (Malone & Crowston, 1994). It can be classified into two types: intra-coordination (internal coordination) and inter-coordination (external coordination) (Carr et al., 2008). Intra-coordination pertains to the alignment among units within an organization that share similar goals, processes, materials, or regions (Hoy & Miskel, 2015), while inter-coordination addresses efforts to achieve harmony between different organizations.

Evaluating intra-coordination within an organization requires assessing its goals, activities, responsible individuals, and interdependencies and without these elements, effective intra-coordination cannot be claimed (Malone & Crowston, 1991). Organizations need intra-coordination mechanisms to integrate tasks across different units and establish necessary connections (Popadiuk & de Souza Bido, 2016), as it has a significant impact on teamwork (Williams, 2005; as cited in Aghajani et al., 2014). Both insufficient and excessive intra-coordination can lead to significant issues within organizations (Casoria et al., 2020), which makes it essential to tailor intra-coordination efforts to the organization's structure, culture, philosophy, and employee characteristics to provide sustainability (Smith & Jones, 2019).

The importance of intra-coordination is especially notable in educational institutions, including International Baccalaureate (IB) schools in Türkiye, where the increasing popularity of international education programs has required effective intra-coordination despite institutional complexity (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2024). IB schools, emphasizing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration, exhibit unique structural complexities because of the diverse positions and specialists (such as DP coordinators, CAS coordinators, MYP coordinators, EE advisors, CAS advisors, laboratory teachers, and library teachers). Numerous specialized roles often complicate vertical intra-coordination due to a preference for self-regulation over administrative directives (Pierce, 2014). As institutional complexity increases, more challenging and costly intra-coordination strategies may be required (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Moreover, there are different contrasting views in the literature about intra-coordination within schools. Some researchers argue that schools exhibit weak intra-coordination structures leading to inefficiencies in collaboration and decision-making (Smith & Jones, 2019). On the other hand, others claim that an excessively high level of intra-coordination may result in time-energy losses while also restricting teacher autonomy (Brown, 2020).

Recent studies provide more clarity on this issue. Lin (2022) found that when leadership duties are shared among different people, school coordination improves. This approach allows teachers to take more control and work together more effectively. Many schools struggle with organizing their internal processes, but shared leadership can help ease these difficulties (Lin, 2022). On the other hand, Nguyen et al. (2021) warn that if school coordination is too strict, it can create unnecessary rules and limit teachers' freedom in the classroom. Their research that includes 48 countries, shows that too much control can make it harder to balance teamwork and independence. Similarly, Hallinger and Lee (2012) studied leadership in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools and found that well-planned coordination helps to provide smooth transitions between different grade levels and subjects. Their findings suggest that schools should aim for a balanced leadership model that gives teachers autonomy while maintaining order.

IB schools face the challenge of keeping teachers' autonomy while making sure school activities run smoothly and coordinated. This can be difficult because many teachers prefer to make their own choices about how they teach (Bergeron & Dean, 2013). Schools that find the right mix of structure and flexibility create an environment where new ideas can thrive without disrupting the overall system.

Given the complex structure and the necessity for high intra-coordination in IB schools, this study aims to explore intra-coordination within Turkish IB schools using a phenomenological approach, and examining how intra-coordination is achieved within the complexity from the perspectives of different IB school community members. As a former IB student and current educator with years of experience in different roles in IB schools (Researcher 1) and an academic who has been working on both practical and theoretical studies on IB programs since 2013 (Researcher 2), we have observed and been curious about intra-coordination within these schools. Therefore, this research investigates intra-coordination in Turkish IB schools, how it is maintained, the influencing factors, and the experiences and views of individuals within the school community.

Literature review on coordination in IB school

The Multifaceted Nature of Coordination: From History and Theories to Effective Practices

The concept of coordination has origins going back to the advent of railways in the 18th century. The increasing use of railways necessitated the coordination of train schedules to provide passenger safety

and efficient cargo transport, thereby preventing collisions (Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009). The formal request of coordination in management began in the late 19th century, pointing out different perspectives, including rational, natural, and open systems within organizations (Hoy & Miskel, 2015).

The evolution of management theories introduced various approaches to improve efficiency and productivity through coordination. Frederick Taylor's scientific management emphasized the value of teamwork and the division of labor, emphasizing the necessity of harmonious operation (Taylor, 1911). According to Hoy and Miskel (2015) and Weber (1947), Max Weber's bureaucratic approach also emphasized specialization and the need for coordination among specialized roles in order to achieve organizational efficiency. Henri Fayol incorporated coordination into management by identifying it as a fundamental managerial function, highlighting the need of collaborative efforts towards shared objectives (Fayol, 1949; as cited in Asopa & Beye, 1997). Gulick and Urwick (1937) underscored the significance of cooperation within their classical management paradigm (Özdemir & Cemaloğlu, 2017). Mintzberg (1993) characterized coordination as the aggregate of labor division into specific tasks, illustrating different coordination models including vertical (hierarchical), horizontal (voluntary/mutual adjustment), and planned (managed).

Organizational coordination can be classified as vertical and horizontal coordination. Vertical coordination involves top-down control, in which higher-level authorities plan, coordinate, and control the work of subordinates using predetermined rules and policies. While structured, this form of coordination can be less flexible and efficient than horizontal coordination, which relies on informal discussions and mutual adjustments among employees (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Pierce, 1969). Horizontal coordination emphasizes collaborative efforts in which employees supplement each other's work to achieve shared objectives. Although it promotes teamwork and innovation, it can be time-consuming and energy-intensive due to the dependency on personal interactions (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Hoy & Miskel, 2015). The choice between vertical and horizontal coordination depends on the organizational structure and the nature of tasks being performed (Jeong, 2002).

Effective coordination requires awareness of each other's goals and activities, resource dependency, problem similarity, and mutual agreement on boundaries (Esterline, 1976). Gittell and Weiss listed boundary spanning, routines, meetings, and information systems as critical elements that enhance intra coordination (Gittell & Weiss, 2004). Boundary spanners enhance communication among various positions within the organization, hence greatly aiding coordination (Mintzberg, 1993). Routines standardize duties and enhance communication among staff, enabling a mutual understanding of workflow (Gittell & Weiss, 2004). Meetings facilitate staff in sharing progress and collaborating on interrelated projects (Mintzberg, 1993). Information systems are essential for maintaining ordered records and enabling concurrent access to papers, hence averting delays and miscommunications (Gittell & Weiss, 2004). Mintzberg highlighted direct supervision and mutual adjustment as efficient coordination strategies across various organizational contexts (Mintzberg, 1993).

Coordination in IB Schools

In the context of International Baccalaureate (IB) schools, coordination is crucial for integrating diverse educational programs and ensuring consistency across different subjects and activities. The matrix organizational structure commonly used in IB schools requires the coordination of various experts, such as project managers, to coordinate with other departments, ensuring that staff with the necessary skills are allocated to appropriate tasks (Mee, 1964; Gos, 2015). A well-defined organizational structure, clear mission, skill distribution, decision-making processes, and institutional policies are required for effective coordination in IB schools (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Mintzberg's framework suggests that a well-organized school structure includes strategic top management, middle management linking top management with service units, and efficient production of educational services (Mintzberg, 1979).

Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research method using a phenomenological design. According to Husserl (1982), phenomenology is "a descriptive discipline that explores the realm of pure intuition and transcendental pure consciousness" (p. 136). Patton (2015) notes that phenomenological studies aim to understand and explain the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of individuals or groups. In this study, we conducted semi-structured interviews with staff members in various positions at different IB schools in Türkiye, and with alumni and parents of these schools. We believe that semi-structured interviews support questioning flexibility combining structured and unstructured elements (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During these interviews, we first asked participants to briefly introduce themselves to break the ice, then posed the probing questions: "How do you perceive coordination in IB schools?" The interviews continued with probing questions shaped by participants' responses. This study was designed as Researcher 1's dissertation project. Although the research was conducted collaboratively from start to finish, all interviews were carried out solely by Researcher 1.

Table 1.*Participants Demographic Information*

Code	Gender	Age	Education Level	Years in IB	Seniority	School Type	Position held so far	Programs conducted at the school
P1	Female	35-44	Master's degree	4	16	Private	Teacher	MYP-DP(Teacher) PYP-MYP(Parent)
P2	Female	25-34	Master's degree	2(student)+6	6	Private Public	Teacher	MYP-DP(Teacher) DP(Graduate)
P3	Female	35	Bachelor's degree	7	9	Private	Head of Department, DP Coordinator, Teacher, Head of Department, IB Coordinator, School Principal, General Manager, IB Team Leader, Workshop Leader, Teacher, DP Coordinator,	MYP-DP(Teacher) DP(Parent)
P4	Female	60-70		20	35	Private Public	Head of Department, Assistant Principal, Lab Teacher, Graduate Teacher, Head of Department	PYP-MYP-DP
P5	Female	25-34	PhD	10	10	Private	Teacher, DP Coordinator,	MYP-DP
P6	Female	25-34	Master's degree	4	4	Private	Teacher	DP
P7	Female	15-24	High school	12		Private	Graduate Teacher, Head of Department	PYP-MYP-DP
P8	Female	45-54	Master's degree	22	22	Private	Teacher	MYP-DP
P9	Female	35-44	Master's degree	2	12	Private	Teacher	MYP MYP(Teacher)
P10	Female	35-44	Bachelor's degree	19	20	Private	Teacher	PYP-MYP(Parent)
P11	Female	45-54	Bachelor's degree	7	24	Public	Teacher, DP Coordinator,	DP
P12	Female	35-44	Bachelor's degree	5	10	Private	Teacher	PYP(Teacher) PYP-MYP-DP(Parent)
P13	Female	35-44	Bachelor's degree	6	21	Private	Teacher	PYP
P14	Female	55-64	Master's degree	12	25	Private	Parent	PYP-MYP
P15	Male	45-54	Bachelor's degree	6	25	Private	Teacher, Head of Department	PYP-DP
P16	Male	35-44	Master's degree	5	13	Private	Teacher	PYP-MYP-DP

Participants

The participants in this study included teachers and administrators currently or previously working at IB schools in Türkiye, alumni, and parents of students from these schools. We used maximum variation sampling, a type of purposive sampling, to select the participants. Purposive sampling focuses on selecting information rich cases to illuminate the questions under study (Patton, 2015). Maximum variation sampling involves deliberately choosing different cases to capture diversity across various dimensions of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure diversity, interviews were conducted with participants who had served in different roles at IB schools over the years, including parents, alumni, teachers, coordinators (CAS, IB PYP, IB MYP, IB DP), department heads, assistant principals, principals, IB team leaders, and IB workshop leaders (IBO, 2021). Some participants had held multiple roles or were still active in these positions. Initially, Researcher 1 conducted interviews with 14 participants. Noticing recurring themes in their responses, we concluded the interviews at this number, as data saturation had been reached. Saunders et al. (2018) propose that saturation is generally attained when analogous data start to repeat, and no additional codes or themes arise, signifying that the study has achieved adequate depth and comprehensiveness. Our sampling technique employed purposive sampling, specifically maximum variation sampling, to guarantee varied perspectives. We changed our sample composition in response to research that found gender differences in coordination perceptions (Kaynak & Bülbül, 2008). According to Yıldırım and Çelik (2021), female educators are more likely to collaborate with peers and build empathy with students, while male teachers tend to favor solitary work and may be less enthusiastic about group involvement. In light of these findings, we sought the advice of a qualitative research expert and decided to broaden our sample by incorporating male participants.

As a result, we conducted two extra interviews with male participants (a teacher and an IB coordinator), bringing our total number of interviews to 16.

Data Collection

Although we initially planned to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews to explore the phenomenon of coordination in IB schools, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated using the ZOOM platform for all but one interview. Both researchers designed the study method collaboratively, but Researcher 1 took the initiative to gather the data. She prepared for the interviews by watching online qualitative research methods courses by Researcher 2 during the Spring Semester of the 2019-2020 Academic Year and took notes on key points to consider. Furthermore, she read various books and articles on qualitative research, particularly phenomenological studies. Before the first interview, she consulted with Researcher 2 for further guidance. The first interview was conducted on October 15, 2020. While some researchers prefer using a predefined interview form, we opted for a primary question, "How is coordination in IB schools?" supplemented by probing questions. Throughout the interviews, Researcher 1 asked additional follow-up questions to explore the points raised by participants. These questions investigated how coordination is perceived from different perspectives (such as those of administrators, teachers, parents, and alumni), factors influencing coordination, key considerations in achieving it, responsibilities for coordination within the school, and variations in coordination across different types of schools (public vs. private) and IB programs (such as the IB PYP). All interviews were completed by December 15, 2020, with durations ranging from 20 minutes to 46 minutes.

Before the interviews, Researcher 1 informed participants that their personal information would remain confidential, their responses would only be used for research purposes, they were not obligated to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with, and they could end the interview anytime. Written and verbal consent to record the interviews was obtained. After explaining the process, the interviewer and the interviewees signed an agreement. Due to remote interviews, participants sent signed agreements electronically. Except for one participant who did not consent to audio recording but allowed note-taking, all participants provided written and verbal consent. Researcher 1 transcribed and sent the notes to this participant for approval before including them in the study. Moreover, a demographic information form was created to collect relevant background information from participants, which they also filled out.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, various experts use terms such as trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, we explained in this section how we strengthened the findings of our study by choosing one of these terms, trustworthiness). To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, we employed various strategies. Using different data sources and purposive sampling ensured data triangulation (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) suggests that while large random samples are standard in quantitative research, smaller purposive samples are appropriate for qualitative studies. The diverse sample of IB alumni, parents, and staff members provided rich data.

Furthermore, Creswell and Miller (2000) highlight that prolonged engagement in the field enhances credibility. As Researcher 1, having been a student in IB programs for 12 years and a teacher for five years, her extensive experience positively impacted the study's trustworthiness. Researcher 2's involvement in the authorization process for IB PYP teacher certification training in her previous position at a private university was also a significant contribution. Peer debriefing was employed as a methodological strategy to enhance the findings' trustworthiness further. Peer debriefing involves an external auditor who is knowledgeable about the research process, examining and analyzing the data to provide an alternative perspective and identify potential biases (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The peer debriefer in this study was a researcher with expertise in the field who reviewed the data collection and analysis processes and provided feedback on the interpretations of the findings. In addition, ethical approval from the university's ethics committee was obtained at the beginning of the study. Interviews began after receiving approval.

Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews began on October 15, 2020, and concluded on February 15, 2021, after including two additional male participants. Researcher 1 transcribed the audio recordings from the ZOOM platform while continuing other interviews. The transcriptions resulted in a total of 23,442 words. She analyzed the data using Moustakas' Transcendental Phenomenological approach, which emphasizes setting aside biases and focusing on participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Given her background as a former IB student and current IB teacher, she consciously adopted an etic perspective to remain objective (Pike, 1954). Moustakas' (1994) data analysis steps include epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis.

During epoche, Researcher 1 made a conscious effort to recognize and set aside her preconceptions, focusing solely on the participants' accounts. Before beginning the analysis, she identified moments where her own experiences might influence interpretation, following Moustakas' concept of bracketing.

This helped her stay neutral and minimize bias throughout the process. In the phenomenological reduction phase, she carefully read and reread the transcripts, listing significant statements from participants while avoiding from making immediate judgments. Instead, she focused on fully understanding participants' lived experiences. To ensure confirmability, she engaged in peer debriefing, discussing her reflections with colleagues to gain different perspectives. As the analysis progressed, she assigned descriptive labels to the participants' statements. We then edited and reorganized these categories as needed. Through repeated readings, we identified recurring expressions and began developing themes and subthemes, paying close attention to vocal emphasis and tonal shifts. At this stage, Researcher 1 also explored different ways of interpreting participants' experiences, integrating multiple perspectives to build a deeper understanding. She re-examined the data, analyzing not just what was said but also how it was expressed including indirect cues such as tone, emphasis, and language patterns. In the final phase, we synthesized the textural and structural descriptions, improving the themes and subthemes based on feedback from peer debriefing. To confirm the credibility and coherence of our findings, she collaborated with a colleague, adjusting theme definitions and organization as necessary.

Findings

The main question of the research was addressed through participant responses, which highlighted both obstacles to and facilitators of coordination. A notable observation was the emergence of the same sub-themes under challenging and supportive coordination conditions, including gatherings, school culture, management attitudes, individual attitudes, and crisis situations, as shown in Figure 1. These factors could weaken or strengthen coordination that suggests a complex interplay of elements influencing coordination outcomes.

Situations Supporting Coordination

Gatherings

The results showed that specific characteristics of gatherings can significantly improve coordination. Creating a suitable and supportive environment, as well as conducting structured meetings, were found to have a positive impact on coordination. It was discovered that appropriate environments encourage social interaction, which leads to increased communication and, as a result, better coordination. For instance, one participant pointed out the informal but enriching characteristic of the teacher's lounge:

"There's always a conversation going on in the teachers' room. Someone brings sweets, and our music teacher pulls out a guitar and starts singing" (P12).

Structured meetings have been seen as critical for good coordination, with participants underlining the significance of understanding the agenda, time, and duration in advance. One coordinator explained,

"I always share the topics and tasks to be discussed two days before, and at the end of each meeting, I outline what will be done next. Everyone comes prepared, and we wrap things up quickly, usually within an hour" (P8).

Another participant stressed the importance of efficiency: *"We try to save time and focus on identifying and addressing the key points"* (P10). Moreover, the value of frequent, short meetings was recognized: *"We realized that shorter, more frequent meetings tend to be more effective"* (P11).

School Culture

The findings showed that school culture could both positively and negatively influence coordination. Factors supporting coordination included the type of school (public or private), cultural diversity, and the presence of experts in non-traditional roles. One participant noted: *"The advantage of being in a foundation school is that things move faster... There's less hierarchy, and I can access what I need more quickly"* (P8).

Cultural diversity was also found to enrich coordination, as one participant explained: *"There are schools that have embedded the concept of coordination, and these are usually schools with a lot of cultural diversity"* (P4).

Moreover, having experts from various fields was seen as beneficial, particularly in schools with International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. As one participant stated,

"Having dedicated professionals in-house, rather than seeking external professionals, is crucial. It prevents the feeling of imposing on others and ensures reliable information is obtained" (P10).

Main and sub-themes emerged from the research results

Situations Supporting Coordination	Situations Hindering Coordination
Gatherings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gatherings being structured - The physical layout of the school (e.g., office locations) - Encouragement of gatherings 	Gatherings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language barriers - An excessive number of communication tools - Unstructured gatherings
School Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The cultural diversity within the school - Experts from different fields not found in traditional schools 	School Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ambiguity regarding job descriptions - Hierarchical systems
Management Attitude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciation of employees by management - Providing professional development opportunities - Inviting employees to participate in decision-making - Teacher autonomy 	Management Attitude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inaccessible management - Assignment of uneven workloads - Excluding employees from decision-making processes - Limited professional development opportunities - Competency gaps among leaders in conflict management and decision-making
Individual Attitudes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal motivation levels - Having a sense of responsibility - Being transparent - Being willing to collaborate 	Individual Attitudes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misuse of communication channels - Lack of motivation - Educational backgrounds influencing perspectives on coordination - Biases - Lack of transparency - Taking inappropriate initiatives - Educational backgrounds that emphasize disciplinary knowledge without interdisciplinary connections
Crisis Situations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turning crisis into opportunity 	Crisis Situations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High turnover rates - Part-time employment

Management Attitudes

Management's attitude emerged as a key theme, with several points highlighted by participants. The importance of making employees feel valued, being understanding, providing opportunities for professional development, involving staff in decision-making, and supporting teacher autonomy were mentioned. One participant shared,

"Sometimes, even if you can't solve a problem as a teacher or manager, just listening to the teacher can be relieving" (P12).

Another emphasized the importance of professional development, stating, "The quality of education cannot exceed the quality of the teacher. Therefore, they invest in teachers to improve them" (P3).

Involving staff in decision-making was also seen as beneficial: "Instead of giving directives, we present the issue, gather their views, and then come to a decision" (P15).

Regarding teacher autonomy, a participant expressed, "If we can incorporate enough differentiation within the standard, then there's no problem with everyone doing the same thing; but if we can't, then some customization is needed" (P10).

Individual Attitudes

Individual attitudes also played a role in supporting coordination. Participants highlighted the importance of responsibility, transparency, and willingness. One participant noted: "Everyone approaches work professionally and doesn't mix personal issues with work" (P8).

Another added, "Knowing that a mistake can affect the whole community, and that doing something which benefits everyone, is crucial" (P9).

Transparency among colleagues was also emphasized: "That transparency is very important. I am very clear and open. I share everything that needs to be shared" (P8).

One participants mentioned that the willingness to communicate was another critical factor:, "To communicate, we just need to be willing and have a goal in mind" (P6).

Crisis Situations

The COVID-19 pandemic, considered a crisis during the study, sometimes hindered coordination. However, some participants saw the shift to online education as an opportunity. One participant described: "Our work is a bit more challenging as we try to coordinate between schools, but it's actually easier online" (P10).

This finding illustrates that crisis can simultaneously pose challenges and opportunities for improving coordination practices.

Situations Hindering Coordination

Gatherings

As revealed in the findings, one of the situations hindering coordination is the sub-theme of gatherings. Gatherings encompass meetings to discuss work-related topics and strengthen employee social bond. The findings indicate that the inability to create environments that support communication directly influences these gatherings. The physical conditions of the school (such as the locations of offices and buildings) and the lack of motivation for gatherings are influential factors in this regard. As P3 expressed:

"This place is huge. For instance, sometimes you can't find the person you're looking for at their desk. In our previous school, even though we had different branches, we were in the same building. Sometimes we were meeting and talking even in the corridor."

Another point that negatively influences coordination in gatherings is the language barrier (not understanding the spoken language or the employee's native language being different from the language spoken in the country they work in). P2 highlighted the impacts of the language barrier:

"I encountered the language barrier a lot in Turkey because I can say my native language is English... but the first point I struggled with in meetings was that all the meetings were conducted in Turkish."

Gatherings include communication through different channels (online platforms, shared working files on drives, ManageBac, etc.). However, the abundance of communication channels can negatively influence coordination, as mentioned by another participant:

"For instance, at my previous institution, there were many things like work files, ManageBac, Workcube, Teams, Zoom, WhatsApp, and another system used by the school. As the number increases, people can get lost, and communication can break down." (P2)

The absence of organization in these meetings is another factor impacting cooperation in events. Participants said that coordination struggled from unclear agendas, poor timely information sharing, and unplanned meetings. P2 described this situation:

"There were many days when we entered meetings without having the agenda shared... We could have been prepared, but since it rarely happened, we usually went without knowing what the meeting would entail."

School Culture

School culture is another sub-theme emerging under the central theme of situations complicating coordination. The impact of school culture on coordination can arise from differences between public and private schools, the lack of established role definitions, and the hierarchical system in the school. K15 noted the potential negative impact of school culture on coordination:

"When you look at the fact that the institution has its traditions, they want everything in communication channels to be recorded, but sometimes those kinds of things take a long time."

The findings suggest that the singular authority of the school principal in public schools and the school founder in private schools directly and negatively influences coordination. A participant explained the situation:

"I felt that the value was placed on satisfying the patron, restricting financial resources as little as possible, or attracting students by impressing parents." (P5)

Another public school employee described a similar situation:

"Of course, since this is a management style that closely follows instructors, the role of the school principal is quite crucial here. We are not so different from private schools, in truth." (P11)

In foundation-owned private schools, another issue was the management being seemingly directed by the desires of students and parents. While having a voice for students is necessary and valuable, making most decisions (even renewing teacher contracts) based on student and parent opinions can sometimes negatively impact coordination. P5 expressed this concern:

"In the foundation school, students had a lot of say in the management. A student representative always participated in meetings with the management... They had adopted a student-centered management approach."

P10 highlighted the influence of parents on the school's operation: "There are things done just so parents don't say, 'You didn't do it,' which I don't find meaningful."

Another point identified in the findings is that the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the school culture can negatively impact coordination. P5 illustrated the adverse effect of not having established roles within the school community:

"I know of many schools where the job description of the EE coordinator, the diploma (referring to the IB DP program) coordinator, and the CAS coordinator is not written or given, and therefore, many things fall on the teachers."

Another significant point revealed in the study is the negative impact of the hierarchical system embedded in the school culture on coordination. A participant summarized this situation:

"It's like preparing a report for a government institution. Like it has to go through these processes and meet these criteria. Maybe if there weren't so many procedures, it could be more functional." (P9)

Attitude of Management

Another sub-theme in the findings related to situations complicating coordination is the attitude of management. Specific factors contributing to this sub-theme include the inaccessibility of management, imbalanced workload planning, lack of employee involvement in decision-making, lack of development opportunities for staff, and insufficient competence of managers.

The difficulties in reaching management in certain schools were noted as directly influencing coordination, as described by P5:

"I could only reach the head of the department. I see the vice principals as scary figures because there's always a warning system. I can't go to the principal's office, and when I even see the principal in the corridor, my anxiety levels rise; the general manager is not around anyway."

Another significant issue is the imbalanced workload assigned to individuals, regardless of their position. P7 explained the negative impact of this on coordination:

"I know from my teachers that they were advisors for CAS and EE, and had to give feedback on their courses. This put a lot of pressure on them and made communication difficult."

Another critical point affecting coordination is the exclusion of staff from decision-making processes. P5 highlighted the seriousness of this issue:

"Our general manager told us, 'You will observe but do not try to bring about change.'"

The lack of development opportunities for staff was also seen as negatively impacting coordination. P7 expressed this concern:

"When I was writing the LA, my advisor read it first and gave me feedback. I revised it and brought it back. I also asked our department head to read and provide feedback. I thought it was great because I got feedback from three people. The department head told me to change it a bit. To change teachers' knowledge or perspective on this, taking the same training together... could be good."

The findings also clearly indicate that the lack of competence among managers critically influence coordination. Another participant expressed this concern:

"People responsible for ensuring coordination need to be competent. Leaders in leadership positions should fulfill the responsibilities of their roles.... Conflict management, meaning managing conflicts when they arise, is essential." (P16)

Attitude of Individuals

Another sub-theme under the central theme of situations complicating coordination is the attitude of individuals. This includes extreme and inappropriate use of communication channels, lack of motivation, habitual educational culture, prejudices, lack of transparency, and wrong initiatives.

The first significant issue revealed in the data is the negative impact of the excessive and inappropriate use of communication channels on coordination. P2 explained the problems caused by this:

"If a group is using a platform, it shouldn't be used for unnecessary chatter because, when misused, we get unnecessary notifications, which can distract teachers during lessons."

Moreover, the lack of motivation among individuals was clearly seen as directly impacted coordination. P16 described this issue:

"We don't hold many meetings; they are on our schedule, but teachers could take more initiative to communicate... I don't put much effort into taking this initiative myself. One reason for my lack of effort could be the motivation of other teachers."

The study also revealed that individuals' habitual educational culture directly influences their perspectives on coordination. Another participant explained this:

"In Turkey, teacher education at universities usually focuses on specific subjects. There's not much interdisciplinary connection; maybe the lack of experience in this reflects here." (P15)

The findings show that another point negatively impacting coordination is the presence of prejudice among individuals. P13 expressed this:

"During our working years, we might have very dominant teachers who insist on things being a certain way. This can lead to conflicts."

Another significant point from the data is the lack of transparency among individuals, hindering coordination. P10 described this issue:

"They always come to me saying we did great on paper, but when I check, I see that nothing was done. Sometimes are times when you can see clearly that nothing was actually done."

Another issue influencing coordination is individuals taking wrong initiatives. A participant described this situation:

"Sometimes, when a teacher or student doesn't meet a deadline or calendar, they give extra time without the coordinator knowing. This is a coordination issue." (P4)

Crisis Situations

Another sub-theme under the central theme of situations complicating coordination is crisis. Specifically, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's economic situation, and school turnover were explored.

Many participants noted that the pandemic weakened coordination, as evidenced by the following statements:

"In the past two years, while dealing with the pandemic, constant updates have been necessary. Meetings with students and parents, and assessments have become weaker in terms of connection." (P15)

"When we were at school, it was more established. In online communication, it's much less." (P12)

"In previous years, I frequently communicated with teachers more than students, but this year, communication with teachers dropped to zero." (P6)

Apart from the pandemic, the country's economic and political situation was noted to have a direct impact on coordination, as expressed by P4:

"The country's environment, the economic situation of the country has an impact."

Besides national and global crises, school staff turnover was also negatively affected coordination. Some participants noted:

"Turnover and part-time work are a problem." (P4)

"There should not be too much teacher turnover. We shouldn't lose the teachers we have hired." (P1)

The study identified several factors complicating coordination in educational settings, highlighting key elements across various themes, including gatherings, school culture, management attitudes, individual attitudes, and crisis situations.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research focused on the situations supporting and hindering coordination in International Baccalaureate (IB) schools. Insights of the interviews with 16 participants highlighted various elements, such as gatherings, school culture, management perspectives, individual behaviors, and crisis situations, all of which support or coordination.

One themes that emerged was the value of gatherings in promoting coordination. Participants emphasized that the planning for conducive environments to support these gatherings should begin with the school's architectural design. The physical architecture, which included the distribution of buildings and office layouts, influenced how easily people could gather. Specific designs that promote common areas can significantly improve teacher collaboration, making their planning a critical step from the start (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; Akran, 2020). All staff must contribute to creation of these spaces and strive to maintain a positive environment conducive to collaboration during these events. Furthermore, regular events designed to improve social interaction should be organized based on suggestions from the entire school community in order to strengthen collaborative bonds.

Structured meetings were also identified as critical to effective coordination. Meetings should be scheduled with clear agendas shared at least a week before, giving participants time to prepare and suggest additional agenda items (Rogelberg et al., 2007). This approach promotes open communication

and shared understanding, which are required for effective collaboration (Schwarz, 2002; Rosenberg, 2007; Fullan, 2007). Furthermore, making certain that everyone understands the language used in these gatherings is also critical. When a common language is unavailable, translation services are necessary to facilitate effective communication (Karaçor & Şahin, 2007). If multiple communication channels are to be used within the school, clear guidelines on their purpose, timing, and use should be established and communicated to the entire school community to avoid confusion and inefficiencies (Quadiet, 2016).

Another important aspect was school culture, which was directly related to the institution's hierarchical structures and clear duties. The hierarchical arrangements in schools differed, with public schools often taking a top-down approach led by principals, but private schools frequently received major influence from school owners or founders. It is critical that school founders entrust pedagogical and managerial decisions to the proper professionals, avoiding excessive engagement in management procedures. When delegation is not an option, such as when the school owner also serves as principal, the founder should look for possibilities for professional development in educational administration. Clear position definitions should be presented to the entire school community, allowing personnel to quickly find the proper person for assistance. Creating accessible online documents that conform with MEB requirements and feature unique job descriptions for IB school positions might help enable this (Ayyıldız & Üzümcü, 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003; Goddard et al., 2006). Furthermore, management should meet with teachers, students, and parents on a frequent basis to analyze processes and obtain feedback, making themselves available and open to suggestions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

The attitudes of school management also played a pivotal role in shaping coordination. Management must support the professional development of staff, particularly in areas that promote collaboration. Applying human performance technology approaches across all roles can further enhance these efforts (Fulton & Britton, 2011). Moreover, balancing workloads is crucial; at the beginning of the school year, management should review workload distribution multiple times. For example—new, qualified personnel should be hired to fill the gaps if workloads are uneven due to insufficient staff. Moreover, management must be skilled in conflict resolution and develop transformational leadership abilities to foster a supportive and collaborative environment (Lencioni, 2002). Furthermore, regular meetings with the school community should be held to gather input on various practices, with final decisions made after considering all viewpoints to ensure the inclusion of the entire school community in the process.

Individual attitudes and behaviors were also critical for effective coordination. Teachers and staff who were open to new ideas and willing to work with colleagues improved coordination (Goddard et al. 2006). Openness, defined as transparent communication and a willingness to share ideas and feedback, is essential for building employee trust and fostering a sense of community and mutual respect, both of which are required for effective collaboration (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hargreaves, 1994). Furthermore, when hiring staff, communication and teamwork skills should be evaluated just as rigorously as academic background to ensure they can effectively contribute to the school's collaborative environment.

The impact of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on coordination processes was another important finding. Schools that could quickly adapt to new circumstances, such as switching to remote learning, demonstrated excellent coordination and resilience. Schools' ability to adapt to crises is critical for maintaining effective coordination and collaboration, as these situations necessitate quick adjustments and highlight both strengths and weaknesses in current coordination processes (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001; Christensen et al., 2014; Lunenburg, 2010). To minimize staff turnover, regular discussions should be held with all school community members to assess their satisfaction and needs. If problems cannot be resolved, the reasons should be communicated as clearly as possible (Ingersoll, 2001; Borman & Dowling, 2008). Furthermore, regular subject meetings should be held to ensure coordination among teachers in the same discipline, while still respecting teacher autonomy and openness to innovation.

In summary, this study provides a comprehensive look at the factors influencing coordination in IB schools, showing that successful coordination results from effectively managing a complex set of variables. The findings show that, while structured approaches and supportive management are essential, the ability to adapt to specific contexts and challenges is also critical.

Implications & Recommendations

The design of school environments should encourage collaboration from the start. Architectural planning must prioritize spaces that promote teamwork and coordination, fostering an environment in which employees can collaborate effectively. To accomplish this, all members of the school community should have a voice in shaping these spaces which facilitates both professional interactions and day-to-day collaboration.

Social interactions among employees are critical to fostering a positive work environment. Organizing events at regular intervals can help to strengthen relationships, encourage informal conversations, and

improve overall workplace cohesion. To ensure inclusivity, such events should be planned with the input of the entire school community.

Meetings should be transparent and well-organized. They should be planned at least once a week in advance, with precise information on the agenda, time, and roles of participants, to optimize efficiency. In order to promote a more inclusive decision-making process, attendees ought to be able to submit agenda items. Furthermore, all participants must understand the language of communication. To guarantee full participation, translation or other help should be offered if required.

Clear guidelines for using multiple channels within the school are necessary for effective communication. If various platforms are used, their purpose, timing, and methods of engagement should be clearly defined and explained to all employees to avoid confusion and inefficiencies.

Leadership is essential in developing a collaborative school culture. Founders should cede decision-making authority to chosen educational and administrative leaders rather than trying to handle all procedures themselves. If the founder and principal are the same individual, they should look into professional development options in school leadership to improve their decision-making abilities. Furthermore, administrators should maintain an transparent and accessible approach, holding regular meetings with teachers, students, and parents to examine systems and collect feedback.

Clearly defined duties and responsibilities contribute to a well-organized institution. Job descriptions should be transparent and easily accessible, so that employees know who to contact for specific difficulties.

Leadership teams should actively encourage professional progress. Encouraging staff development through scheduled learning opportunities promotes collaboration at all levels, including teachers, students, and parents. This investment in human performance technologies can improve overall school efficiency and effectiveness.

Decision-making should be inclusive, rather than limited to the administration. Regular staff meetings should inform policy and practice, ensuring that varied perspectives are considered before making major decisions. Furthermore, the workload allocation should be balanced at the start of each academic year. If staffing is insufficient, acquiring more qualified employees should be emphasized in order to maintain a stable work environment.

Conflict resolution skills are essential for school leaders. Effective management methods should emphasize transformational leadership and build a productive and positive work environment. To avoid communication overload, clear expectations for the right use of communication tools should be developed in partnership with personnel and discussed openly.

When employing new employees, schools should consider candidates' communication and teamwork skills in addition to their academic credentials. Collaboration is essential for a flourishing educational environment, and staff personnel exhibiting robust interpersonal skills greatly enhance the overall school atmosphere.

Institutional transparency builds trust in the school community. Transparent communication regarding policies, expectations, and obstacles promotes accountability across all tiers. Likewise, employee retention must be proactively managed. Frequent turnover can hinder school operations, necessitating regular meetings with personnel to evaluate their job satisfaction and address issues. If retention continues to be a concern, the root causes must be thoroughly investigated, and proactive strategies should be implemented to improve employment stability.

Departmental collaboration should be encouraged while maintaining teacher autonomy. Subject-area meetings promote departmental alignment, but they should not impose inflexible structures that constrain educators' professional judgment. Encouraging openness to new ideas promotes a dynamic and growing learning environment. Implementing these guidelines can help schools increase coordination, teamwork, and promote a more unified working atmosphere.

Limitations

As part of our study, in addition to interviews, school observations were also planned as different data collection methods to ensure triangulation. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was limited to interviews only.

Etik Onay (Ethical Approval)

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Istanbul Medeniyet University, Faculty of Educational Sciences (21/09/2020, Decision No: 2020/01-07).

Contribution Rate Statement

The study was collaboratively designed and conducted by both researchers. Researcher 1 was primarily responsible for data collection, while both researchers contributed to data analysis and writing.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this study.

AI Use Disclaimer Statement

Artificial intelligence tools were used only for language editing and stylistic improvements in the preparation of this manuscript. All research design, data analysis, and content development were conducted solely by the authors.

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TÜRKÇE GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye’deki Uluslararası Bakalorya (IB) okullarında eşgüdüm süreçlerinin nasıl algılandığı ve deneyimlendiğini ayrıntılı bir şekilde ele almaktayız. Eşgüdüm, bir organizasyonun farklı parçalarının uyum içinde çalışmasını sağlayan ve etkinliği artıran önemli bir yönetim işlevi olarak kabul edilmektedir. Eğitim kurumlarındaki eşgüdüm süreçlerinin önemi, özellikle uluslararası programlar uygulayan ve karmaşık yapıya sahip olan IB okulları gibi kurumlarda daha da belirgin hale gelmektedir. Bu çalışmada amacımız, Türkiye’deki IB okullarında görev yapan öğretmenler, yöneticiler, mezunlar ve ebeveynlerin eşgüdüm süreçlerine yönelik algılarını ve deneyimlerini derinlemesine incelemektir.

Bu doğrultuda, çalışmamızda katılımcıları maksimum çeşitlilik örneklemesi kullanarak belirledik ve 16 katılımcıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirdik. Bu görüşmeler sonucunda elde ettiğimiz verileri, fenomenolojik bir araştırma yöntemi olan Moustakas’ın Transandantal Fenomenoloji yaklaşımıyla analiz ettik. Bu yöntem, araştırmacının kendi önyargılarını bir kenara bırakarak katılımcıların deneyimlerine yoğunlaşmasına olanak tanıyor. Böylece, katılımcıların eşgüdüm süreçlerine dair öznel ve derinlemesine bakış açılarını ortaya çıkarmayı hedefledik.

Araştırmamızda, eşgüdüm süreçlerine dair elde ettiğimiz bulguları iki ana tema altında topladık: “Eşgüdümü Destekleyen Durumlar” ve “Eşgüdümü Engelleyen Durumlar”. Eşgüdümü destekleyen faktörler arasında yapılandırılmış toplantılar, destekleyici okul kültürü, proaktif yönetim tutumları ve olumlu bireysel davranışlar yer almaktadır. Örneğin, yapılandırılmış toplantılar sayesinde katılımcılar belirli bir gündeme hazırlanarak toplantılara katılım göstermekte ve bu da toplantıların daha verimli geçmesine katkı sağlamaktadır. Destekleyici okul kültürü ise, öğretmenler ve diğer çalışanlar arasında güçlü bir iş birliği ortamı oluşturarak eşgüdümün etkin bir şekilde sağlanmasına yardımcı olmaktadır. Proaktif yönetim tutumları ve bireysel olumlu davranışlar da okul içi iletişim kanallarının açık tutulmasına ve sorunların hızlı bir şekilde çözülmesine imkân tanımaktadır. Bu tür yapıcı yaklaşımlar, okul ortamında güven ve iş birliğinin tesis edilmesine önemli katkılar sunmaktadır.

Bununla birlikte, eşgüdümü zorlaştıran bazı unsurları da çalışmamızda detaylı bir şekilde ele aldık. Bu unsurlar arasında dil engelleri, yapılandırılmamış toplantılar, hiyerarşik okul yapıları, erişilemeyen yönetim ve olumsuz bireysel tutumlar yer almaktadır. Özellikle dil engelleri, farklı dillerin konuşulduğu ortamlarda iletişim zorluklarına yol açıyor ve bu durum toplantıların verimliliğini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Yapılandırılmamış toplantılar ise, katılımcıların yeterince hazırlık yapmadan toplantıya gelmesine ve toplantıların belirli bir hedef doğrultusunda ilerleyememesine neden olmaktadır. Hiyerarşik yapılar ise karar alma süreçlerinde alt kademedeki çalışanların yeterince söz sahibi olamamasına yol açarak, eşgüdümün etkili bir şekilde sağlanmasını engellemektedir. Yönetimin erişilebilir olmaması ve

bireylerin olumsuz tutumları da eşgüdüm süreçlerini olumsuz etkileyerek, organizasyon içinde uyumlu bir çalışma ortamı oluşmasını zorlaştırmaktadır.

Araştırmamızda, COVID-19 pandemisi gibi kriz durumlarının eşgüdüm üzerindeki etkilerini de ele aldık. Pandemi döneminde uzaktan eğitim gibi yeni uygulamalara hızlı bir şekilde adapte olabilen okulların, bu durumu bir fırsat olarak değerlendirdiğini ve eşgüdüm süreçlerini güçlendirdiğini gözlemledik. Ancak, pandemi sürecinde artan belirsizlikler ve iletişimde yaşanan kopukluklar, eşgüdüm süreçlerini zorlaştıran unsurlar arasında yer almıştır. Kriz anlarında okulların esneklik ve adaptasyon yeteneklerinin eşgüdüm süreçleri üzerinde ne kadar belirleyici olduğunu bu süreçlerde gözlemledik. Özellikle kriz zamanlarında hızlı ve etkin bir karar alma yeteneği, karşılaşılan zorlukların üstesinden gelebilmek için kritik bir rol oynamaktadır.

Çalışmamızın bulguları, Türkiye’deki IB okullarında eşgüdüm süreçlerinin ne denli karmaşık olduğunu ve bu süreçleri etkileyen faktörlerin çok yönlü olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Eşgüdüm süreçlerini etkin bir şekilde yönetebilmek için okul yönetimlerinin, öğretmenlerin ve diğer paydaşların iş birliği yapması ve bu süreçleri destekleyen stratejiler geliştirmesi gerektiğini düşünmekteyiz. Bu bağlamda, okul yönetimlerinin yapılandırılmış toplantılar düzenlemesi, dil engellerini aşmak için çözümler geliştirmesi, destekleyici bir okul kültürü oluşturma ve proaktif yönetim tutumları sergilemesi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Ayrıca, öğretmenler ve diğer çalışanlar arasında güçlü bir iş birliği ve iletişim kültürünün oluşturulması, bireysel davranışların da bu süreçte olumlu yönde etkili olmasını sağlayacaktır. Bu tür yapısal ve kültürel düzenlemeler, okulların kriz dönemlerinde dahi eşgüdüm süreçlerini etkin bir şekilde yönetmelerine destek olacaktır.

Sonuç olarak, çalışmamız, IB okullarında eşgüdüm süreçlerinin yönetimi için çok yönlü ve bağlama duyarlı bir yaklaşım benimsenmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir. Okul topluluğunun eşgüdüm süreçlerine dair deneyimlerini derinlemesine inceleyerek, bu süreçleri etkileyen temel faktörleri ortaya çıkardık. Elde ettiğimiz bulgular, etkili bir eşgüdüm sağlanabilmesi için okul yönetimlerinin ve öğretmenlerin iş birliği içinde çalışması gerektiğini ve bu süreçleri destekleyen stratejiler geliştirmesi gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, okulların esneklik ve adaptasyon kabiliyetlerini artırmasının, eşgüdüm süreçlerinin etkinliği üzerinde kritik bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu çalışma, IB okullarındaki eşgüdümün karmaşıklığını anlamaya yönelik önemli bir katkı sunmakta ve bu süreçlerin daha etkili yönetilmesine yönelik önerilerde bulunmaktadır.