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An Investigation into the Impact of Mission Statements  
on School Development Planning.

By Margaret Miller

First Supervisor: Dr Beth Howell

Second Supervisor: Professor Richard Gott

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctorate of Education

School of Education

University of Durham

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**Abstract**

This thesis uses quantitative as well as qualitative methods to examine the impact of school philosophical statements on school development planning.

Three case study schools from an Asian city were selected. A questionnaire and face to face interviews were used as data gathering tools. The data from the questionnaires informed the questions created for the interviews and the outcomes of these two data sources were analysed qualitatively. As a result of the findings from qualitative analysis a further quantitative analysis was made of the questionnaire data. A total of 188 responses to questionnaires were examined and 22 interviews took place.

The main aim of this research is to empirically examine the assumptions that underpin the Council of International Schools and New England Association of Schools and College's accreditation standards for school philosophical statements and development planning. At the heart of these assumptions is the belief that school development planning is most effective when it is closely linked to a clearly written, collaboratively created set of philosophical statements which articulate the school's values and beliefs. To date this assumption has not been substantiated by research. A secondary aim is to examine the systems and structures in schools that assist in linking the school's philosophy to its planning processes.

The data resulted in a set of interesting findings. Firstly, insights were gained into techniques used to reaffirm and embed school philosophy into the school's culture. Secondly, the data suggested that the assumptions made by the accrediting agencies hold true under certain circumstances but that a school's underlying ideology may be more powerful in driving institutional planning. As a result of the findings, suggestions to further develop accreditation standards are made and ideas for further research are proposed.

**Declaration**

I confirm that this is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted in candidature to this or another university.

**Statement of Copyright**

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**Acknowledgements**

My grateful thanks go to the man in my life; my husband Dr Antonio Alvarez. Many thanks for all the encouragement given, for instilling in me the belief that I could finish this project and reminding me of the importance of life- long learning.

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Finally, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Beth Howell, for her tireless support, wise counsel and all the time she dedicated to supporting me and to Professor Richard Gott for extending my thinking and assisting me with valuable analysis tools.

**Dedication**

In memory of my father, the late Hugh Miller, whose great pride in his daughter's achievements was a constant inspiration.

## Contents

<b>List of Illustrations.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I Introduction to the Study.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.0 Introduction.....	13
1.1 Research Purpose.....	13
1.2 The Problem.....	15
1.3 Theoretical Framework.....	16
1.4 Hypothesis and Research Questions.....	18
1.5 Context.....	18
1.6 Research Method.....	22
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	23
<b>2. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.0 Introduction.....	24
2.1 The Theoretical Framework.....	24
2.2 School Improvement Processes.....	28
2.2.1 School Development Planning.....	29
2.2.2 Towards a Working Definition of Planning.....	31
2.2.3 Effective School Development Plans.....	31
2.2.4 The Planning Process.....	32
2.2.4.1 Evolutionary or Linear?.....	32
2.2.4.2 A Data Informed Evolutionary Process.....	34
2.2.5 Components of a Plan.....	35

2.2.5.1 Details of Action.....	35
2.2.5.2 Learner Focused Plans.....	36
2.2.5.3 Evolutionary Content.....	36
2.2.5.4 Maintenance and Development.....	37
2.2.5.5 Target Dates.....	38
2.2.5.6 Resources.....	38
2.2.5.7 Success Criteria.....	39
2.2.5.8 Progress Monitoring.....	40
2.2.5.9 Details of Who is Responsible for Implementation.....	40
2.2.5.10 Other Criteria.....	41
2.2.6 The Importance of a Shared View.....	41
2.2.7 Conclusion.....	42
2.3 The Importance of the School’s Philosophical Statements.....	44
2.3.1 Characteristics of Philosophical Statements Effective in Influencing Organisational Development.....	45
2.3.1.1 Clarity in the Definition of Vision and Mission.....	46
2.3.1.2 Definition for the Purpose of This Thesis.....	49
2.3.2 Values Alignment.....	49
2.3.3 Broad- based Creation and Review Process.....	52
2.3.4 Clarity of Terminology and Concepts.....	54
2.3.5 Institutionalising the Philosophy in Systems and Planning.....	56
2.3.6 Ideology.....	57
2.3.7 Conclusion.....	58
2.4 The Hypothesis Driving the Study.....	58
2.4.1 Research Questions.....	59
<b>3. Research Methods.....</b>	<b>60</b>
3.0 Introduction.....	60

3.1 Research Design.....	60
3.2 Selection of Case Study Schools.....	63
3.3 Data Collection.....	65
3.3.1 Questionnaire.....	65
3.3.2 The Questions.....	66
3.3.3 Rating Grid.....	66
3.3.4 Administration of the Questionnaire.....	67
3.3.5 The Sample.....	67
3.3.6 The Pilot.....	68
3.4 The Interview.....	69
3.4.1 The Format.....	69
3.4.2 The Questions.....	70
3.4.3 Sample.....	71
3.4.4 Conduct of the Interviews.....	72
3.4.5 Pilot Interviews.....	73
3.5 Data Analysis.....	74
3.5.1 Initial Questionnaire Analysis.....	74
3.5.1.1 Coding.....	74
3.5.2 Interview Analysis.....	76
3.5.3 Comparative Dimensions.....	78
3.5.3.1 Individual School Analysis.....	78
3.5.3.2 Cross Case Comparisons.....	79
3.5.3.3 Second Analysis of Questionnaire Data.....	80
3.6 Limitations of Research Methods.....	83
3.6.1 Bias.....	84
3.6.1.1 Addressing Bias within Data Collection.....	84
3.6.2 Interpretation.....	85

3.6.3 Sampling.....	87
3.6.4 Variables.....	87
3.7 Ethical Considerations.....	87
3.8.1 Informed Consent.....	88
3.7.2 Anonymity.....	88
3.7.3 Design Ethics.....	89
<b>4. Initial Findings, Description and Analysis.....</b>	<b>90</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	90
4.1 International School A (ISA).....	91
4.1.1 Data Collection- The Questionnaire.....	92
4.1.2 Data Collection- Interview Participants.....	93
4.1.3 Findings.....	94
4.1.3.1 Clarity of the School’s Philosophical Statements.....	94
4.1.3.2 Staff Alignment with the School’s Values.....	96
4.1.3.3 Communication and Ownership of Philosophical Statements.....	98
4.1.3.4 Embedding the School’s Philosophy.....	101
4.1.3.5 Strategic Planning Process.....	106
4.1.3.6 Identification of School Development Needs.....	112
4.1.3.7 Discussion and Interpretation.....	114
4.2 International School B (ISB).....	118
4.2.1 Data Collection – The Questionnaire.....	120
4.2.2 Data Collection-Interview Participants.....	120
4.2.3 Findings.....	121
4.2.3.1 Clarity of the School’s Philosophical Statements.....	121
4.2.3.2 Staff Alignment with the School’s Values.....	123
4.2.3.3 Communication and Ownership of Philosophical Statements.....	125
4.2.3.4 Embedding the School’s Philosophy.....	127

4.2.3.5 Strategic Planning Process.....	130
4.2.3.6 Identification of School Development Needs.....	133
4.2.4 Discussion.....	135
4.3 International School C (ISC).....	140
4.3.1 Data Collection – The Questionnaire.....	141
4.3.2 Data Collection-Interview Participants.....	141
4.3.3 Findings.....	142
4.3.3.1 Clarity of the School’s Philosophical Statements.....	142
4.3.3.2 Staff Alignment with the School’s Values.....	144
4.3.3.3 Communication and Ownership of Philosophical Statements.....	145
4.3.3.4 Embedding the School’s Philosophy.....	148
4.3.3.5 Strategic Planning Process.....	152
4.3.3.6 Identification of School Development Needs.....	155
4.3.4 Discussion.....	157
4.4 The Three Case Study Schools- a discussion.....	161
<b>5. The Statistical Analysis.....</b>	<b>169</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	169
5.1 The Three Case Studies- a Recap of Initial Findings and Reflections.....	170
5.2 Links .....	172
5.2.1 The Clarity of the School’s Philosophical Statements.....	172
5.2.2 The Link between Communication Systems, Input into the creation of Philosophical Statements and Opportunities for Discussion.....	174
5.2.3 The Link between a Shared Value System and the Impact on Teaching and Learning, Decision Making and the School’s Operation .....	179
5.2.4 Relationship between a Shared Culture and the Impact on School Development Planning.....	186
5.3 Discussion.....	191

5.4 The Question of Ideology.....	192
5.5 Discussion.....	195
<b>6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>197</b>
6.0 Introduction.....	197
6.1 Discussion of Research Findings with Respect to Hypothesis and Research Questions.....	197
6.1.1 Research Question One.....	197
6.1.2 Research Question Two.....	200
6.1.3 Research Question Three.....	202
6.1.4 Hypothesis.....	205
6.2 Implications.....	207
6.2.1 Implications for the Accrediting Agencies.....	209
6.3 Limitations.....	212
6.4 Contextual Limitations.....	212
6.5 Interpretative Limitations.....	213
6.6 Future Research.....	214
6.7 Concluding Statements.....	216
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>231</b>

## List of Illustrations

<b>Figure 1:</b> Information from a sample of 30 international school mission statements...	48
<b>Figure 2:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Questions 1 and 5.....	95
<b>Figure 3:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Questions 2 and 6.....	96
<b>Figure 4:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Questions 3, 4 and 7.....	100
<b>Figure 5:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Open Question 1.....	100
<b>Figure 6:</b> Results from ISA questionnaire Questions 8, 9, and 10.....	102
<b>Figure 7:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Open Question 2.....	103
<b>Figure 8:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Open Question 3.....	104
<b>Figure 9:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Open Question 4.....	104
<b>Figure 10:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Questions 11 and 13.....	107
<b>Figure 11:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Open Question 6.....	108
<b>Figure 12:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Open Question 5.....	109
<b>Figure 13:</b> Results from ISA Questionnaire Questions 12 and 14.....	112
<b>Figure 14:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Questions 1 and 5.....	122
<b>Figure 15:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Questions 2 and 6.....	124
<b>Figure 16:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Questions 3, 4 and 7.....	126
<b>Figure 17:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Open Question 1.....	126
<b>Figure 18:</b> Results from ISB questionnaire Questions 8, 9, and 10.....	128
<b>Figure 19:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Open Question 2.....	129
<b>Figure 20:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Open Question 3.....	129
<b>Figure 21:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Open Question 4.....	130
<b>Figure 22:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Questions 11 and 13.....	131
<b>Figure 23:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Open Question 5.....	132
<b>Figure 24:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Open Question 6.....	133
<b>Figure 25:</b> Results from ISB Questionnaire Questions 12 and 14.....	134

<b>Figure 26:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Questions 1 and 5.....	142
<b>Figure 27:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Questions 2 and 6.....	144
<b>Figure 28:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Questions 3, 4 and 7.....	145
<b>Figure 29:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Open Question 1.....	147
<b>Figure 30:</b> Results from ISC questionnaire Questions 8, 9, and 10.....	148
<b>Figure 31:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Open Question 2.....	150
<b>Figure 32:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Open Question 3.....	151
<b>Figure 33:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Open Question 4.....	151
<b>Figure 34:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Questions 11 and 13.....	153
<b>Figure 35:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Open Question 6.....	153
<b>Figure 36:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Questions 12 and 14.....	155
<b>Figure 37:</b> Results from ISC Questionnaire Open Question 5.....	157
<b>Figure 38:</b> Ideological Responses from ISA, ISB, ISC.....	194
<b>Figure 39:</b> Ideology types and responses for ISA, ISB and ISC.....	194
<b>Table 1:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 1 and 6.....	173
<b>Table 2:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 4 and 6.....	175
<b>Table 3:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 7 and 6.....	177
<b>Table 4:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 6 and 9.....	180
<b>Table 5:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 6 and 10.....	182
<b>Table 6:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 6 and 8.....	183
<b>Table 7:</b> R Cran tables for ISA, ISB, ISC Questionnaire Questions 6 and 14.....	188

#### List of Abbreviations

CIS	Council of International Schools
ISA	International School A. The school was not named to protect its identity.
ISB	International School B. The school was not named to protect its identity.

ISC International School C. The school was not named to protect its identity.

NEASC New England Association of Schools and Colleges

WASC Western Association of Schools and Colleges

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction to the Study**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis and lays out the context in which the research was undertaken. Chapter Two considers existing literature, Chapter Three explains the research design and the research tools used, Chapter Four presents the research findings from the initial qualitative study, Chapter Five presents the findings from the statistical analysis made of the questionnaire responses and the final chapter, Chapter Six, discusses the implications of the research and suggests further areas of study.

#### **1.1. Research Purpose**

Over the last three years the Accreditation Service of the Council of International Schools (CIS) and its partner the US based New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) have been developing a new international school accreditation protocol. One of the principal goals of the new protocol, used by approximately 700 schools around the globe, is that it will assist schools strengthen the link between school improvement planning and the school's philosophical statements (vision, mission, educational aims or the terminology used by the school) and by so doing improve teaching and learning and the school's operations. CIS and NEASC direct school leaders to build ownership for the school's philosophical statements through collaborative reviews of the school's philosophy and by creating meaningful discussions of how the philosophy impacts teaching and learning. This, the agencies believe, sets the scene for the philosophical statements to serve as a cornerstone for school development as a collective understanding of the school's direction and values can then help guide school improvement efforts. The agencies further believe that the philosophical statements help inject an element of stability into an environment which can be constantly changing.

The accreditation protocol leads the school through a process of self- evaluation against a set of standards and indicators, called a self- study. This is followed by an on- site school visit which reviews the school's level of alignment with the standards. The findings from both these activities are designed to inform the school's development planning process. Central to the standards and indicators used is the importance of the school's philosophical statements. Although the standards measure various aspects of the school's programmes and operations, they also aim to assist a school in measuring the extent to which its philosophical statements serve as the backdrop to school decision making, and the extent to which they drive improvement planning.

Using initially a qualitative approach, three schools were selected for close examination. The ensuing case study research is an attempt to investigate how the theory on which the accreditation process is built might work in practice. The study attempts to ascertain how far from the 'ideal', as stated in the agencies' standards, each of these schools might be and to discover where and why the fissures between theory and practice are occurring. The ideal in this instance would expect that a school has a clearly defined set of philosophical statements, created in collaboration with the school community and understood and accepted by members. The philosophical statements should also drive teaching and learning and school improvement processes. Appendix H lists the standards and indicators for philosophical statements and school development planning.

Some suggestions are offered which may help to strengthen the correlation between theory and practice. The researcher is an officer of the Council of International Schools Accreditation Service and was a member of the design team that developed the new accreditation protocol.

## 1.2 The Problem

The core aim and the supporting standards and indicators underpinning the accreditation process have been developed from research informed ideas emanating from different parts of the world and broadly acknowledged 'best practice' by practitioners in the international school field. This 'best practice' is, however, not supported by substantial research based on the international school learning environment. Furthermore, there is no defined theory underpinning the accreditation standards or the evaluation process used and neither organization has engaged in research to strengthen its understanding of how the standards and process work in practice.

The opening section of the accreditation protocol includes standards and indicators which focus on the design and content of the school's philosophical statements; the 'ideal' as mentioned in Section 1.1. These standards examine the processes of: mission and vision creation, the level of shared understanding and implementation, communication of the values implicit or explicit in the statements, and the measurement of the philosophy's effectiveness in driving the school's programmes, operations and planning. The accreditation standards and indicators do not include an indication of effective systems and strategies that support the school in developing in alignment with its mission and vision. Furthermore and importantly, they offer no indication of what might be the factors that need to be in place to support effective system or strategy implementation.

The lack of specificity mentioned above is deliberate to allow the protocol to be used by the wide variety of international schools mentioned in Section 1.4 below and to acknowledge different school contexts and differing community beliefs. However, in a separate piece of research undertaken by the Council of International Schools in the 2009-2011 period in which the outcomes of 261 school visitation reports were analysed, 116 schools were unable to demonstrate that there was a clear link between the schools'

philosophical statements, school practice, decision making and planning (CIS 2011). These schools, on receiving notification that they did not meet the standard, naturally asked for some guidance on how the situation might be resolved. To date CIS has not been able to offer anything more than informal advice. CIS, in its last strategic planning session, resolved that, in addition to addressing the absence of a theoretical base and context based research, it needed to develop an understanding of some of the processes used to develop this link in order to support those schools struggling to meet this standard.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

As a framework for approaching an exploration of how a school community creates a common understanding of its philosophical statements, Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984) and Wittgenstein's Language Games theory as expressed in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) were studied.

In the *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas (1984) suggests that the development of meaning, shared understandings and consensus rely on the relationship between interlocutors. Speech is used as the tool to create understandings. Key to the development of understandings are three components, firstly, that interlocutors understand the ideas that each person is expressing, secondly that those engaged in the discussion give accurate information and thirdly that interlocutors are truthful in the way information is presented (Finlayson 2005 :38). In addition, Habermas suggests that a clearly defined set of rules needs to be followed when engaging in debate if common understandings are to emerge (Habermas 1990). These include allowing everyone, that is able, to participate in the discussion, permitting assertions to be questioned and attitudes, desires and needs to be expressed, and disallowing any form of internal or external coercion to influence the discussion. If these parameters are respected and are not subject to negative influences by factors such as power and money, Habermas believes that such 'communicative actions'

transform thinking, create new understandings and change a community's repository of shared meanings and understandings (Bolton 2005:1).

Wittgenstein (1953), in contrast to Habermas' belief that meaning is created through debate, suggests that meaning stems from how language is used in the different contents and contexts in which it is utilised. Using the term 'Language Games' Wittgenstein suggests that language is utilized for various different activities such as to greet people, to describe, report, inform, and to express concern. In order to create meaning one has to understand how language is used in each of these contexts, how language is influenced by societal norms, traditions and customs, shared beliefs and training (Grayling 1996: 83). These 'language rules', he believes, change as society and its customs change. As result, the meanings which emanate from language use are also subject to change (Wittgenstein 1953).

These two theories were selected as they offer possible insights into two key factors underpinning the accreditation process. Firstly Habermas' theory, and in particular his rules for debate, closely resemble the ideas and process the accreditation agencies promote for developing community understanding of the school's philosophical statements (CIS 2010b). Secondly, Wittgenstein's Language Games theory challenges the idea that debate is a conduit to developing common understandings by suggesting that meaning results from using language to access a community's beliefs, practices and traditions. This, although on the surface contradicting the assumptions on which the accreditation process is based, underscores the importance of community context and the community's belief system. These too are factors which the accreditation process seeks to acknowledge, as mentioned in Section 1.2. However, the agencies do not make clear how they view the correlation between school context and belief systems and transformational debate.

#### 1.4 Hypothesis and Research Questions

Given the purpose of the research, the research problem and the theoretical framework outlined above, the following hypothesis was formed and tested within the study.

*'Schools that have clearly defined and collaboratively agreed philosophical statements and teachers whose values are aligned with the school's philosophy demonstrate greater insights into school improvement needs as reflected in school development plans. This is because affiliation with the school's direction, goals and purpose, creates a sense of ownership, allows teachers to identify areas where the school's direction and current practices are less in alignment with the school's stated philosophy and creates a sense of responsibility which strengthens school improvement planning processes.'*

The following research questions were also developed and explored in the study:

- How do senior leaders in international schools create and sustain a set of common values aligned to the school's philosophical statements?
- How is this set of common values translated into practice?
- What strategies allow for close correlation between the school's philosophical statements and school improvement initiatives?

#### 1.5 Context

##### Definition and nature of an international school

Punch (2009: 170) reminds us of the importance of being cognizant of the 'natural setting' or context of a qualitative study. As this study is set in three international schools, it is important to review the context of an international school. Defining the context and nature of an international school has been the subject of widespread debate. As mentioned by Hayden (2006: 5), Hayden and Thomson (1996: 50), and Langton et al (2002: 12-16) defining the nature of an international school is fraught with difficulty, or, as Blanford and Shaw (2001:1-2) state, *"international schools defy definition"*.

When the concept of an international school first appeared in 1893 the nature of such schools seemed clear. These schools were founded on the principles of developing deeper

understandings between nations (Sylvester 2002:97) and their systems and approaches were similar in nature. Nowadays the definition is much less clear given the multiplicity of variables found amongst schools known as or claiming to be 'international'. Hayden lists these variables as: different student and teacher demographics, different curricula offered, different linguistic orientations and different ideologies upon which the mission and vision of the school is based (Hayden 2006:10-16). Langton adds a further set of variables which include: a different and wide range of teaching methodologies, different expectations for students, different beliefs about schooling, different student conduct codes and different beliefs about the role of parents and the role of teachers in school-wide decision making processes (Langton et al 2002:17). These differences appear to result from the various educational experiences which teachers, students and parents bring with them to the school environment (Hayden 2006: 85). For example, students and teachers from South East Asian national school systems, where the researcher is based, tend to come from systems where the educational experience is highly structured and there are limited opportunities for input into the design of the learning environment, whereas students and teachers from, for example, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the United States tend to have greater expectations about the level of involvement in developing the school (Miller 2010). Furthermore, in addition to pedagogical variables, a variety of ownership or governance models can now be found (Powell et al 2001:11; Robertson 2003:286). This diversity carries with it its own particular set of opportunities and challenges for an international school, in particular when a school attempts to establish philosophical principles (Miller 2010). The tension between challenge and opportunity is exemplified in situations such as when founders/owners have invested significant resources into a school and developed critical local political relationships but steadfastly stick to the school's original philosophy which no longer is appropriate for the community the school serves and the direction the school is taking (Miller 2011).

In addition to the factors mentioned above, the student demography of a school with a large number of mobile families may shift significantly in the space of a short period when the temporarily resident population is relocated (Miller 2003:4). Long term globally mobile students still exist and they tend to undergo subsequent international school experiences throughout their school career. These so called 'Third Culture Kids' have often been born and raised outside the country whose passport they hold, have assimilated values and aspects of the cultures of the countries in which they have lived, and have no real bond with a given culture (Pollock and Van Reken 1999:19; Fail et al 2004:325; Zilber 2005:7). Other students in international schools may be experiencing international education for the first time and still maintain a significant connection with the home culture and its values. Yet other students may come from the school's host country culture and consequently maintain daily and strong connections with their culture (Hayden 2006:40). A growing number of such students can be found in international schools in the Middle East and Latin America (CIS 2007; Powell et al 2001:11). This mosaic of cultural backgrounds and beliefs, while stimulating, can pose a challenge in establishing a common set of philosophical beliefs (Miller 2010). As can be read in Chapter 4, many of the variables mentioned in this section were present in each of the case study schools.

Given the above shifts, recent attempts to define the context of international education have moved from defining it by operational factors such as language, curriculum offered, student population served (Ezra 2003:125; Hill 2006:28- 29), to defining it using philosophical constructs which at times reflect the basis on which the earliest international schools were founded. Heyward (2002:26), James (2005:324), Allan (2002:63) and Simandiraki (2006: 46), for example, explore the importance of culture or intercultural literacy, Guensch (2004:255), promotes the concept of cosmopolitanism, (Tamatea 2008:58), Baker et al (2005) and Kanan et al (2006) view international mindedness as a tenet of international schooling. This is expressed by Hayden et al (2000:110), as a

philosophy which is built around *“universal mindedness, awareness and empathy, cultural tolerance the respect of other’s behavior and views, open mindedness, flexibility of thinking, neutrality and universal affiliation”*. We will see that, ‘international mindedness’ featured within the philosophical statements of each of the case study schools in Chapter 4.

For the purpose of this research the definition of an international school adopted by the Council of International Schools in 2007 will be the one used in this paper. This definition stemmed from the findings of a two year long consultation and debate on the definition of international education amongst member and interested schools. The definition was chosen because, as members of CIS, each case study school had to subscribe to promoting the concepts in the definition and it was hoped that this common denominator would add to the internal validity of the study. The definition is illustrated below.

“An international school reflects the following attributes:

**ethical practices:** the review of practices from multiple perspectives,

**global citizenship:** an enduring understanding of issues of social justice and equity, diversity, globalization and interdependence, sustainable development and peace and conflict,

**communication:** the promotion of the language of instruction, as well as another language and support of a student’s mother tongue,

**access:** ensuring that systems, pedagogy, support etc. allow students admitted to the school access to the curriculum,

**service:** the development of dispositions to engage in meaningful and reflective engagement in service,

**leadership:** acquisition and refinement of the skills of critical-thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, conflict-resolution and decision-making and to experience leadership in authentic contexts.” (CIS 2011)

### **1.6 Research Method**

Given the nature of the research questions, which aim not only to identify influencing systems but to explore underlying thought processes and values, it was decided to use a primarily qualitative approach which allowed the researcher to move along the continuum of developing initial understandings to forming deeper insights. Such an approach, it was felt, had been successfully used in qualitative studies in other fields such as in organizational development (Rees and Johari 2010). It was also felt that it supported a two stage data gathering process which allowed the understandings emerging from the first data gathering stage to shape the second stage. As a result, in the first stage a questionnaire is given to each of the three schools under study which aims to develop an initial understanding of processes, influencing factors, levels of collaboration and understanding. The data from the first stage is analysed and initial trends are identified. These findings are then explored further in the second stage of the study which is a series of face to face interviews with a sample of teachers in each school aimed at exploring the thought processes and beliefs which influence the understanding of a school's philosophy and its impact on school improvement. After an examination of the findings from each individual school a comparison is made with the other schools in the study in a bid to expand understandings. Finally, a quantitative element is added in the form of a statistical study of the data from the questionnaire. This aims to further explore the analysis made in the earlier stages of the study and to gain further insights into some of the emerging trends.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited by its scope and sample. The researcher did take careful steps to try to minimize the possible impact of possible researcher and respondent bias, researcher positionality and issues of researcher and interviewee interpretation which could affect the validity of the study's findings (Cohen and Manion 1999: 281-282). A detailed explanation of their possible influence on the study can be found in Chapter 3.6 along with a description of safeguards implemented.

It should be noted that the aim of the study is not to generalize its findings as they are very much related to the context of the schools. It is hoped, however, that this study will serve as an initial exploration of the topic that can later serve as a springboard or signpost for future researchers to build upon its findings.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This section begins by reviewing the theories which underpin the study's theoretical framework. It then examines a range of literature that examines what constitutes effective school improvement processes. From this debate the importance of a robust school improvement plan is highlighted. The factors supporting the creation of a strong development plan are then further examined using examples from the business world, education and the researcher's professional experience. The chapter's focus then turns to an examination of the influence of statements of organizational values/school philosophy on school planning and their importance as drivers of development processes. In the area of organizational values/philosophy, literature from the business world as well as the academic world is considered given the paucity of material which referred to international school contexts. In the concluding section of this chapter, the concept of ideology is examined and finally school development theory and the theory regarding organizational values are combined to create the hypothesis upon which this study is based. As the researcher works with schools based in various parts of the world and these schools stem from a variety of educational backgrounds, the researcher chose to study a diverse range of literature. This, it was hoped, would result in a consideration of a variety of educational and business perspectives. The researcher also keeps a log book which records observations, ideas and reflections about school visits, and the nature of international education. Wide use has been made of this log book, called CIS Fieldnotes, in the course of this study. Use was also made of externally published CIS documents and internal studies used to inform CIS practice

#### **2.1 The Theoretical Framework**

Mention is made of the two theories that frame the study in Section 1.3. They are, however, discussed in more detail in the section that follows.

Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984) suggests that speech is the medium through which society creates shared understandings and meaning. Society, he believes, maintains a repository of shared meanings, assumptions, background knowledge and understandings which have been built up over time. This repository can be changed either by negative forces such as power or money or in a more organic manner that is based upon a consensus building process which results in shifts of meaning. Speech serves as the tool and the organizer for this process. (Habermas 1984)

Key to the consensus building process are a set of conditions for the speech to take place and a set of rules that speakers and hearers need to follow in order to reach consensus and move from communication into action. The conditions include:

- The hearer understanding the meaning of what is said
- Assessment of the speakers' intentions
- Knowledge of the reasons that lie behind what is said and its content
- Acceptance of these reasons and the appropriateness of what is said.

The rules that underpin communication include:

- Correct grammatical and semantic rules need to be followed
- Speakers need to be sincere in what they say and they need to be prepared to justify what has been said
- No coercion, repression or inequality is allowed so that the better argument wins
- Everyone that is able needs to be allowed to participate in the dialogue
- Everyone is allowed to question what is said
- Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires and needs (Finlayson 2005:43).

As mentioned in Section 1.3, the process accreditation agencies promote for developing, reaffirming and reviewing a school's philosophy resembles, in particular, the rules of communication suggested by Habermas. School communities are asked to engage in structured conversations with representatives of all school stakeholders in order to create common understandings about the school's value system, its purpose and direction (CIS 2010). In practice parts of Habermas' theory may appear impractical. For example, the theory's application appears to require a certain level of language acquisition in order to fulfill the requirements that correct grammatical and semantic rules are followed and that the hearer understands what the speaker says. In the international school context the student, parent and teacher communities can be very diverse and varying levels of English acquisition can be found (Sears 1998: 1). This diversity challenges a school's ability to fulfill these two essential requirements of the theory. In addition, the cultural complexities of the international school often stretch a community's ability to ensure that members feel comfortable expressing their attitudes, desires and needs. For example, within the Confucian influenced Korean culture maintaining harmony and not making others feel bad are more important than the right to state one's opinion (Borden 2000 :31) and this cultural norm naturally influences communication styles. Schools with students from a Confucian background will therefore struggle to reach consensus through a pure Habermasian approach. Furthermore, Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* overlooks the impact of authority or status. How possible is it to engage in the type of coercion and repression free dialogue Habermas describes when one's Head of Department or even Principal is contributing to the discussion or when one of the parent contributors happens to be the CEO of a well -known and influential multi- national company that sponsors the school? How possible is it in some countries to craft a school philosophy which is fully reflective of the communities' beliefs when certain values are prohibited by law in the country. For example, the researcher has observed tensions in

Middle Eastern international schools between the community's belief in holistic educational approaches and local legislation when physical education classes are forbidden for girls (Miller 2011).

Wittgenstein's Language Games theory offers another lens through which to approach the study (Wittgenstein 1953). Contrary to Habermas, who suggests that a society's norms can be changed through new meanings resulting from structured conversation, Wittgenstein, suggests that it is society's norms that can change how language is used and the meaning attributed to language. At the core of Wittgenstein's theory is the idea that the meaning of language comes from its use. Language, Wittgenstein believes, is used for numerous activities such as to greet people, report, inform, describe, and curse. In order to create understandings, these 'language games' need to be mastered by following the rules that society has created (Wittgenstein 1953: 43). These language use rules emanate from customs and agreements set by society and they are subject to change as society itself changes. The frame of reference that guides people's use of language is learnt through being part of society. This theory adds a further possible dimension to how organisations create common belief or philosophical systems by suggesting that it is the norms, traditions and initiation processes of a society or organization that craft the meaning of the language that is used to describe its value system and that it is through using language created by this means that society members come to develop frames of reference. In the context of an organization, in essence, this theory suggests that the words used in philosophical statements such as a mission or vision statement are meaningless, without an understanding of the organisation's context, its traditions and mores. Furthermore, it suggests that the words in such statements are not necessarily key to developing community understanding of the school's value system and that understanding of this system is acquired through a process of socialization (Wittgenstein 1953:217).

In addition to international schools as described in Section 1.4, CIS works with forty five government schools in Australia. These schools operate much like government schools in other countries. They do not experience the high turnover of students and teachers that international schools experience, they are subject to the regulations of individual Australian States and offer the state mandated curriculum. These schools, prior to entering the accreditation process, did not necessarily have a set of philosophical statements but tended to have a school motto, often in Latin. These schools did, however, demonstrate a strong sense of tradition and had developed artifacts and events to articulate those traditions. As a requirement of accreditation these schools collaboratively developed a set of philosophical statements which aimed to capture the school's ethos. Internal CIS data from accreditation reports to these schools suggest that in the early days of accreditation evaluators left recommendations that the school needed to strengthen the community's understanding of the school's written philosophy yet at the same time commended the school community for its sense of culture, history and values. Clearly the words in the philosophical statements were in these instances not fully articulating the school's belief system.

As mentioned above, the accreditation process seems to promote a Habermasian approach to developing common understandings of an organisation's philosophy. Given the reservations about the practicality of this theory within the context of international schools, and the examples of observations from government schools in Australia, Wittgenstein's theory offers an alternative approach to understanding the dynamics that may be at play.

## **2.2 School Improvement Processes**

A study of school improvement literature suggests that various factors can influence the effectiveness of school improvement processes. These include: the effect of external and

internal change agents (Wikeley et al 2005: 387; Hill et al 2006 :88-90), the nature of leadership (Stoll et al 2002:467; Sammons 1999: 187; Wikeley et al 2005:536; Weiner 2002:799; Devos and Verhoeven 2003 : 408-418; Bennett and Harris 1999:534), the structure of the organization (Bennett and Harris 1999:536; Stoll 1999:506), the context of the school (Scheerens and Demeuse 2005:383; Stoll et al 2002: 466; Wikeley et al 2005:387; Bennett and Harris 1999 : 536), the school's climate or readiness to embrace improvement initiatives (Kiriakides and Campbell 2004:31; Plowright 2007:389; Reezigt and Creemers 2005:414; Stoll et al 2002: 467-8; Wikeley et al 2005:403).

Much mention is also made of the quality of school planning processes as an enabler of effective school improvement. Plowright (2008: 112) suggests that the planning process needs to be prefaced by a number of activities geared at gathering a broad perspective of the school's needs to avoid creating a plan based on narrow perspectives which is not based on evidence of the school's development needs. In a similar vein, Bennett and Harris (1999: 537) emphasise the need to ensure that planning structures capture the school community's needs so that a "*culturally coherent*" response to change is possible. Welton (2001: 94-99), writing from an international school perspective, highlights the critical function of a shared school view to overcome the challenges of staff and student turnover and assist the international school in embedding planned change. The notion of a shared school view as a critical factor for successful school planning will be explored further within this study given the nature of international schooling described in Section 1:4 and highlighted here by Welton.

### **2.2.1 School Development Planning**

Welton, writing from the perspective of an international school teacher , underscores the importance of effective school planning in ensuring "*connectivity*" between all the moving

parts found in an international school context (Welton 2001:99-101). He argues that the primary purpose of development planning within this context is to encourage:

- “realism and communication among stakeholders
- A coherent and shared view of the whole school
- Managers to face up to unpleasant risks or threats
- Investigation into the market and the school’s position
- A sound business plan
- People to make mistakes on paper rather than in reality” (Welton 2001:95)

Planning, he argues, is *“more an art than a science”* and as such needs to be flexible to meet the changing needs and context of the school, and needs to be approached in a holistic manner to *“increase the probability of successful implementation”*. Planners need to view the planning process as something which is continual, which supports the review of existing practice and each of the parts of a plan needs to be kept under constant review (Werner 2001:95-102). Werner’s approach, while aiming to address the issue of constant change common to international schools, seems, however, to overlook the challenge of *“maintaining a coherent and shared view”* within such a climate of change. As such, he offers no indication of strategies that might contribute to common philosophical approaches and appears to view the planning process as the key instrument for creating constancy and ensuring implementation.

While supportive of the view that effective school development planning needs to be fluid especially given the relatively high turnover of teachers and administrators in many international schools and the often times unpredictable context in which international schools operate (Hayden 2006:102; Miller 2011), this study proposes that the elements, process and stages of an effective plan need clear definition and structure to be fully understood by what can be a highly linguistically, ethnically and culturally diverse school

community and that the community needs to establish core philosophical beliefs on which the planning process can build.

### **2.2.2 Towards a Working Definition of Planning**

Literature on school planning and field experience suggests that various terms are used within schools to describe the planning process. These include 'strategic plan', 'school development plan', 'educational plan, and 'long range plan' (Hayden 2006:101). Some authors attempt to differentiate between a strategic plan and a school development plan by suggesting that a school development plan is more operational in nature and takes a shorter term view on development than a strategic plan which is more focused on the future and places more importance on long term development (Miller and Dess 1996: 347). Field experience suggests and Hayden (2006:101) corroborates that these terms are often used interchangeably. Often, what appears to be a more tactical school plan is called 'The School Strategic Plan' and a plan that aims to change the school's direction over a number of years is called a 'Development Plan'. As a result, for the purpose of this research the researcher will accept the term the school uses to describe its planning process.

### **2.2.3 Effective School Development Plans**

The researcher's view that clear definitions and structure are needed for effective planning appears to be borne out in the literature.

Effective school plans are viewed by Stoll and Fink (1996: 52- 74) as having two essential elements- an effective planning process and effective plan components. In other words, effective plans are based on well structured steps which are taken to create the plan and what is actually recorded within the plan provides sufficient and quality information to guide school development. In keeping with Welton's view (Welton 2001:96), Stoll and Fink (1996: 70) further suggest that the planning process is perhaps more important than what goes into the plan.

### **2.2.4 The Planning Process**

School planning literature provides a number of views on the most effective process to use given the rapidly changing context in which many schools need to operate.

#### **2.2.4.1 Evolutionary or Linear?**

Several authors (Stoll and Fink 1996: 52; Wallace 1992 :154; Cowham : 1995:89; Cowham 1994:283), promote the importance of clarity in planning processes but critique the type of linear planning process often used by schools which involves systematically moving through clearly defined stages such as: reconfirmation of the organisation's values, mission and goals, gathering data, assessment of data, identification of development needs, creation of strategies, creation of action plans spanning a 3-5 year period to support the strategies, annual reviews of progress and plan refinement (Cook 1999: 91). These authors propose that such a linear approach does not assist the school in responding to changing priorities (Wallace 1992:154), lessens the school's ability to identify interconnections (Stoll and Fink 1996:74) and runs the risk of the plan becoming a controlling mechanism in place of a guide to development (Welton 2001:97). These authors propose that a more evolutionary approach to planning which recognizes that planning is not an 'event' but an ongoing process is more supportive of the needs of today's schools and in particular the needs of the constantly changing international school environment (Welton 2001: 94-95).

The 'evolutionary approach' as described by these authors contains some process differences from the traditional linear planning model. Firstly, this approach consists of a less structured method of creating action plans. The action plans, written to support identified strategies, are well developed for the current year of the plan's implementation but are then only sketched out for the second year of implementation and contain the briefest of details for subsequent years (Stoll and Fink 1996: 52). Current plans remain flexible and are constantly under debate and revision to enhance the school's ability to

respond to changing circumstances and sequencing needs and to strengthen the school's ability to ensure that appropriate connections are made with other plans (Wallace 1992:162; Stoll and Fink 1996:68).

Experience as a former international school principal suggests that much of the argument for a more evolutionary approach to the planning process has merit as the pace of change in schools such as information technology developments, the need to comply with changing government legislation and the changing needs of the school population, often render a well constructed and well thought out plan from three years ago redundant. However, the researcher's experience as a school evaluator suggests that the characteristics of some schools such as high staff turnover, resulting in as much as a 33% change of staff each year, frequent school administration turnover (Hayden 2006:102) and frequent change in the school population, pose challenges to creating the level, frequency and intensity of review that an evolutionary approach might require. These changes in the school community, described in greater detail in Section 1.4, can stem from the transient nature of some international schools. For example in Singapore and China, countries in which international schools can only enroll students that are not from the host nation, students tend to remain at the school only for the duration of their parents' work assignment which averages 3-4 years. Non host nation teachers serve two year contracts and, although these contracts are renewable, teachers may decide to move to seek other experiences. Countries, such as Malaysia, impose a limit on the number of years a foreigner can live in the country (Miller 2010). In many instances having a 'fixed' plan can be viewed as a stabilising influence in the midst of constant change.

Support broadly exists for the notion that effective planning is a collaborative process involving input from all school stakeholders (Sammons 1999:297; Cowham 1995:85; Everard and Morris 1990: 195). Building on this belief, Stoll and Fink also highlight that this

collaboration helps to create the culture and sense of ownership needed for effective planning, especially if the school leadership maintains a low profile and encourages broad based input (Stoll and Fink 1996: 64-67).

#### **2.2.4.2 A Data Informed Evolutionary Process**

The Accountability and Improvement Framework for Victorian Government Schools (State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010) considers the planning process as a comprehensive three step evolutionary, data informed process. Firstly, schools are required to undertake a school review. The findings from this review are then used to create the school's strategic plan and from this plan the school is required to create annual implementation plans (State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010:3; AUSPOLL 2006:5). The creation of annual implementation plans reflects the idea of evolutionary planning mentioned earlier in that schools are asked to identify from their strategic plan the key improvement strategies which support school improvement for the current development period. Within the annual implementation plan these key improvement strategies are translated into action by the creation of one year targets. This would appear to support the school's ability to respond in a flexible manner to changing circumstances as the action to be taken to achieve the key improvement area is mapped out in stages.

Importantly, Victorian school plans need to be developed from the findings from data. The importance of creating plans from quality data stemming from a comprehensive evaluation of student achievement results, student engagement, well being and pathways, along with stakeholder views, observation and key ideas from research is well supported in the literature (Stoll et al 2003 :146; HMIe Scotland 2007:9; Stoll and Fink 1996:64). A CIS study of 261 schools undertaken in the 2009- 2011 period, suggests that such an informed planning process is rare within international schools (CIS 2011). The study suggests that

prior to creating a development plan schools undertake an analysis of the school's operations and performance results, although the depth of analysis may vary depending on the school's experience in data analysis. Schools tend not to use research outcomes and they tend to base projected change on what is commonly understood by international school practitioners to be current best practice in the international school context. Furthermore, schools tend to have one planning document which incorporates all action plans for the duration of the span of the school development plan and timelines for development can be less defined (Miller 2011).

### **2.2.5 Components of a Plan**

Although authors appear reluctant to provide 'the ideal formula' for what should be included in a school plan, certain core components emerge from the literature. These support the researcher's belief that clearly defined planning components are necessary for successful planning. These components include;

- details of action to be taken and the steps which will be followed
- target dates, sometimes referred to as timelines
- resources
- details of who is responsible for implementation
- success criteria/evaluation
- progress monitoring

(Everard and Morris 1990: 270; Chaplin 1995: 150; Fidler 1996: 111-112,132; Stoll and Fink 1996: 64-72).

The following sections consider the above mentioned core elements and then continue to consider other elements that have not received the same amount of focus in the literature but which the researcher has observed in her role as accreditation officer.

### **2.2.5.1 Details of Action**

Most of the authors read, although at times using different terminology, highlight the need to identify a small number of areas or strategies for improvement (Stoll and Fink 1996:69; HMIE Scotland 2007: 9) and then to develop clearly stated action points followed by the steps which will be taken to fulfill the action (Everard and Morris 1990:270; Chaplin 1995 :150; Department of Education of Northern Ireland 2005:23; Fidler 1996 111-112; Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008:10; Department of Education of Hong Kong 2010: 5).

### **2.2.5.2 Learner Focused Plans**

HMIE Scotland requires strategies for improvement or action statements to be expressed in terms of outcomes for learners; not in terms of changes to be made to, for example, schemes of work or the development of documentation. The latter areas are to be embedded in the action steps taken to fulfill the action point but are not to be an 'end' in themselves (HMIE 2007). In the international school arena this approach, in the researcher's experience, is rarely completely used. Very often plans which are primarily focused on enhancing teaching and learning follow this pattern but plans which relate to facilities development or financial management, for example, normally do not reflect what will be the outcome for learners. This approach is now being encouraged by the Council of International Schools in its newly released accreditation protocol but it is the feeling of many of the Council's officers that schools will need considerable support in the form of coaching and training to make this conceptual shift (Miller 2011).

### **2.2.5.3 Evolutionary Content**

In keeping with the ideas of authors promoting the 'evolutionary approach' to planning, mention is made of the usefulness of indicating within areas for improvement and action plans how plans are interconnected and how they might be sequenced to maximize their

ability to achieve school-wide strategic goals (Everard and Morris 1990:271). Everard and Morris (1990:271) also promote the idea that, in order for the school to maintain its ability to respond to changing circumstances, a school's development plan needs to also include contingency plans.

The use of contingency planning within the regions covered by the researcher, does not appear widespread in the international school circuit except for the area of financial management. For example, when a school is located in a politically volatile area and as a result it is difficult to predict income from school enrolment given that families may or may not be allowed by their sponsoring company or government to be based in that area. This has been an ongoing challenge for international schools in Sri Lanka where Tamil Tiger uprisings can result in the evacuation of foreign families at very short notice. Currently, international schools in Egypt report difficulty in predicting school enrolment due to the ongoing impact of the Egyptian revolution. In these circumstances it is often the case that the school's development plan has a number of scenarios developed in areas related to finance; however the direction of the general overall plan remains intact. The Overseas School of Colombo, for example, each year creates three different budgets- the likely budget, a worst case scenario budget and the best case scenario budget- in order to attempt to navigate the volatile context in which it is situated.

#### **2.2.5.4 Maintenance and Development**

Stoll and Fink (1996:69) place considerable focus on the need for development plans to have a balance between those plans which are focused on creating change and those which maintain the implementation of earlier initiatives. This, they believe, will avoid the tension which arises from the continuing need for resources to fully implement earlier development priorities and the need to funnel resources into new developments. The researcher has observed limited consideration of this concept within international schools

as very often the level of competition between schools, especially in large cities such as Bangkok, Tokyo and Singapore, with a high number of similar schools, results in plans being purely development focused in order to capture a larger part of the market share (Miller 2011).

#### **2.2.5.5 Target Dates**

Several of the authors read referred to the importance of target dates in supporting the implementation of plans (Everard and Morris 1990:270; Chaplin 1995: 150). Others referred to a timeline for achieving the desired action (Department of Education, Northern Ireland 2005:24; Department of Education Hong Kong 2010: 5). From experience of examining the school development plans of an average of twenty five schools over a nine year period, the researcher believes that identifying specific dates for achievement of the plan and holding teams accountable for timely completion strengthens the likelihood, in an oftentimes transient context, that targets will be achieved. This also avoids the risk of plans not being completed; an issue the researcher has observed in schools that merely write 'ongoing' as a target (Miller 2011). Perhaps in instances where schools believe that projects are indeed ongoing, it is important to indicate key milestones for achievement to ensure that progress is made.

#### **2.2.5.6 Resources**

Within the literature various areas are included within this term. The importance of this section of the plan in guiding school budgeting is highlighted by Chaplin (1995: 150) who also mentions that all areas of resourcing such as training, equipment, staffing and facilities with estimated costs need to be included. Miller and Dess (1996:347), writing from a business perspective, stress the importance of aligning the organisation's resources and the planning process. This perhaps reduces the plan's ability to be strategic in the long

term directional sense as the organisation's resources may serve as limiters to the strategic thinking which helps set the school's projected direction.

This notion raises an important challenge in the international school environment. Field work suggests that the resource sections of international school development plans are very often skeletal in nature with little or no indication of the potential costs of the plan in the short or long term. As a result, very often these plans are not fully implemented as funding has not been budgeted for the year in which the plan is to be implemented. In the case of costly, longer term plans, the omission of comprehensive, long term financial forecasting and planning results in underestimation of the future cost of the plan's implementation. CIS accreditation officers, therefore, frequently leave recommendations which suggest the school link its development plan to the school's budget and long term financial forecasting processes (Miller 2011).

#### **2.2.5.7 Success Criteria**

The need for criteria which will indicate that the aim of the plan has been successfully achieved is clearly stated by Chaplin (1995: 150), Stoll and Fink (1996:64) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008:10:11). HMIe Scotland (2007:13) uses the term 'measures of success' to express this idea and suggests that each of the 'measures' should be measurable, observable or able to be evaluated using performance data, stakeholder views and quality indicators. This idea is also reflected in the Victorian Framework for Improvement (State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010) in which schools are required to create achievement milestones which outline the tools schools will use to determine that the plan or milestone has been achieved (AUSPOLL 2006:13; State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010:5). The notion of indicating and using measurement tools is developing within international schools but is not yet widely

implemented. The researcher has observed that schools do indicate what they believe to be 'success criteria' but sometimes these 'success criteria' cannot be measured. When asked how the school will determine that the success criteria have been met, cogent replies are not forthcoming (Miller 2011).

#### **2.2.5.8 Progress Monitoring**

Distinct from 'success criteria' mentioned above which measure completion of the plan, successful monitoring of the plan's progress as described by Everard and Morris (1990:270), Fidler (1996:132), Stoll and Fink (1996:72) appears fairly well addressed within international schools. Both the monitoring of the complete development plan and the monitoring of individual action plans, observations suggest, are undertaken on a regular basis. Perhaps a major reason for this, and an area for further exploration, is that, as a result of school's need to align with CIS Governance standards (CIS 2010), responsibility for monitoring the progress of the school's development plan becomes the remit of Governing Bodies. As a result, the school's Senior Leadership is required to give regular updates on progress made to Governors. Observations suggest that these reports can be broad comments about progress made rather than a detailed analysis of the extent to which the success criteria mentioned above have been achieved (Miller 2011).

#### **2.2.5.9 Details of Who is Responsible for Implementation**

The information published by Departments of Education listed below highlighted the importance of indicating who is responsible for implementing the school's development plan (Department of Education of Northern Ireland 2005:23; Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008: 10; State Government Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Education 2010: 12). What was not highlighted in the literature read is the idea that the person responsible for implementing the plan needs to be different from the person monitoring progress made. Although this might seem self explanatory, the

researcher has found that some of the less developed international schools do not always make this distinction. In countries such as India and those in the Middle East where the accepted culture is for the Principal to manage the school in a rather top down fashion, the Principal is listed as being responsible for implementing each plan and is also listed as responsible for monitoring them (Miller 2011).

#### **2.2.5.10 Other Criteria**

The core components mentioned above seem to dominate the discussion of what are essential elements of a school development plan. However, Stoll and Fink (1996: 66) mention the importance of indicating how progress will be reported to the wider community. This, the author believes, is a critical factor for international schools as in the midst of the various changes mentioned earlier it is of vital importance to keep the momentum for planned change intact and frequent reminders and celebration of what has been achieved can be a tool to underscore the positive results of school development planning. Likewise, reminders of what still needs to be achieved and how this will impact the learning environment can serve as useful stimuli for action. Little appears to have been written about the extent to which this occurs in international schools. Furthermore, the accreditation process, while requiring that a school has a development plan, does not measure the effectiveness of any of the processes that lead to the plan's implementation.

#### **2.2.6 The Importance of a Shared View**

Welton's (2001 :101) views on school development planning highlight his belief that a critical factor in effective school development planning are clear, understood and generally accepted values or belief statements which guide planning processes and serve as a filter when determining which prospective projects most effectively support the school's direction.

*“considerable effort will need to be made to develop and sustain a distinctive philosophy which is shared by all its stakeholders. This philosophy must permeate all aspects of school planning and delivery” (Welton 2001:99)*

The literature read appears to fully support the idea that plans need to be built around a set of shared values often expressed in a mission, or belief statement. Stoll and Fink (1996: 17) highlight the importance of shared values in the success of school development planning and also in sustaining ongoing development.

*“Attention to the development of shared values, ensuring a climate for change and maintaining a collaborative culture throughout the growth planning process, not only fostered the success of the planning process but also determined the longevity of changes within the plan” (Stoll and Fink 1996:17)*

Beare et al (1993:140-147) argue that transformational leadership can only be effective if attention is paid to institutionalizing vision through school planning.

Everard and Morris emphasise the need to reconcile staff

*“value systems so as to achieve a clear statement of aims and beliefs to which a large majority of the stakeholders can subscribe and to which they can feel commitment because they are satisfied that the process through which the aims have been defined has taken account of the main streams of fact and opinion.” Everard and Morris (1990:197)*

The HM Inspectorate of Education, Scotland (2007:25) and Cook (1999: 84) all stress the importance of preceding a planning process by the collaborative creation or reaffirmation of the organization’s philosophical statements.

Interestingly, although support was expressed for plans to be developed according to the Habermasian model of consensus which aims to create a shared understanding of the school’s values and mission (Habermas 1984), no mention was made within the literature read of the need to include a specific link to the school’s beliefs within its action plan; a mechanism which the researcher has seen put to good use in consolidating the link between the school’s value system and its planning processes (Miller 2010).

## **2.2.7 Conclusion**

In this section the importance of a robust school development planning process was considered. Factors the literature highlighted as important in this process include:

- The clarity of the process
- The ability of the process to respond to changing school needs and context
- The need for broad based stakeholder participation in the process
- The importance of data in informing the process

The components of a development plan highlighted as important comprise:

- Action plans – which are learner focused, offer a balance between the maintenance of plans in progress and new developments and which have the capacity to evolve as circumstances change.
- Clearly defined timelines or targets
- An indication of resources needed to achieve the action plans
- An indication of persons responsible for implementing the plan
- Success criteria against which successful completion of the plan will be measured
- An indication of how progress will be monitored

Mention was made of the importance, within the international school context of reporting progress on the school development plan to the wider school community.

Within the international school context the researcher highlighted the impact of staff turnover on planning processes, international schools' tendency to focus change initiatives on perceived best practice rather than on an analysis of school data, contextual factors' influence on the way a school plan is developed, the impact of competitor schools on development planning, the underdevelopment of resource planning that hinders implementation of plans, and the leadership orientation in schools which inhibits collaborative planning. Each of these factors can result in a school planning process veering off in a different direction from the school's original 'raison d'être'. The critical need for a

school development plan to be based on a set of shared beliefs, values or philosophy to avoid these possible deviations was highlighted in the literature. The topic of school philosophical statements will be further considered in the next section of this review.

### **2.3 The Importance of the School's Philosophical Statements**

In a study of school climate and improvement initiatives Stoll (1999:504) examined why,

*“some schools seem to embrace opportunities offered by change, whether it is externally mandated or internally inspired”*. In this study she argues that *“internal capacity is vital in developing and sustaining the teacher and organizational learning necessary to promote and enhance student learning”* (Stoll 1999: 503).

Her examination of internal capacity led her to suggest that it is subject to the influence of three primary influences: the individual teachers within the school, the school's structural and learning context and the external context. These influences are viewed as interrelated; influencing each other in complex ways (Stoll 1999:506-7). In order to negotiate the effect of the above mentioned influences and maximize the internal capacity mentioned above, Stoll highlights the importance of developing internal capacity for improvement through:

- Ensuring that the school's vision is focused on learning; student, teacher and organizational learning, and that members of the community share this vision
- Ensuring that community members are fully involved in the development of the vision and that their emotional response to change stemming from the implementation of the vision are recognized
- creating through the shared vision, as positive a school climate as possible that is conducive to improvement efforts (Stoll 1999: 515-516).

As inferred above, Stoll views a school's vision as a constant, stabilizing force which brings order and meaning to school improvement processes.

The importance of the school's mission or vision in providing a foundation for school improvement processes is echoed in Chubb and Moe where mention is made of the

importance of staff members having *“clearer, more consistent conceptions of what their organizations are supposed to be achieving”*, (Chubb and Moe 1997:376-377) and in Koh (2003:11-73), in which the author describes how a school’s collective vision was the key factor in driving organizational change. Sammons (199:198-200) mentions the importance of a shared mission or vision when conflicting priorities are present and Limb refers to the school’s philosophical statements within the context of school development planning as,

*“a reference point by which we make decisions, determine implementation strategies and policy, judge behavior and evaluate our performance. It informs and guides our strategic direction”*. (Limb 1992:168)

The synopsis of the literature above supports ideas promoted by school improvement theorists in that it highlights the importance of a shared understanding and mentions the importance the role the school’s philosophical statements plays in defining and supporting a school’s direction. The synopsis does, however, focus primarily on the impact of these statements in influencing shared understandings and support of the school’s direction. It does not examine the conditions and influences which result in the creation of a shared understanding of the school’s values or the ways in which a shared understanding can positively impact school development.

As school improvement literature suggests that the school’s philosophical statements are considered a key factor in improvement processes, an extensive review of the literature about mission/ vision statements was undertaken. The review also aimed to discover what the literature suggested might be the factors that influence a shared understanding and effective implementation of a school’s stated direction. This review included literature from both the education and business worlds as several searches suggested that limited study has been undertaken in this area within the education field.

### **2.3.1 Characteristics of Philosophical Statements Effective in Influencing Organisational Development**

### 2.3.1.1 Clarity in the Definition of Vision and Mission

The literature read suggests that at times the concepts of vision and mission lack clarity and are used by different authors to represent slightly different constructs (Stott and Walker 1992:49; Davis et al 2007:101; Bell and Harrison 1995:5; Limb 1992:169; Hargreaves 1994:163). Sidhu (2003:440), for example, views a vision to be almost a subset of a mission statement and Stoll and Fink (1996:16) suggest that a mission is a vision. Of significance is Raynor's claim that a philosophical statement's ability to influence is decreased if there is no clarity between the two concepts.

*"'Vision' and 'Mission' are words whose power is overshadowed only by the confusion which surrounds them. And so, while many executives are convinced of the importance of vision and mission statements, they remain frustrated in their attempts to realize the full value of these concepts"* (Raynor 1998:368)

By way of definition he suggests that a mission statement is,

*"a concise statement of the customers and core competencies of the organization; in other words, the arena of competition for the organization and those characteristic of the profession that will allow it to perform successfully in that arena"* (Raynor 1998: 371).

The definition suggested for a vision statement is,

*"a statement of the desired future state of the organization within the arena of competition defined in the mission"* (Raynor 1998: 371).

Rampersad (2001:212) defines a mission statement as the "Why"; why the organization exists, what is its identity, for which purpose it is on earth, what its reason is for existing, and argues that the mission is not tied to a time frame. A vision, he describes as "The Where to?" what is the organisation's dream, where does it want to end in the long run. The vision, he suggests, is tied to a time frame. These definitions are also echoed by Blandford and Shaw (2001:16) and Beare et al (1993:148).

Observations as a school evaluator suggest that the challenges highlighted above are very much reflected in what occurs in practice in international schools (Miller 2010). In fact, the accreditation agencies that support international school improvement, perhaps even

contribute to this confusion. Numerous terminologies are used by these agencies. For example the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) refers to the school's philosophical statements as 'School Purpose' (WASC 2006:2) and appears to use 'mission' and 'vision' synonymously .

*"An essential element of systemic school improvement is the collective vision or statement of purpose on the part of the members of the school community"* (WASC 2006:2)

CIS seems to also consider these two concepts in a similar light

*"The School Philosophy is a statement of beliefs held by the school community (staff, management, governing body, parents and students) about the education of young people and the purposes and goals of the school. Everyone at an effective school should know what the institution stands for, knows what it seeks to accomplish, and should understand why it teaches in the way it does."* (CIS 2003:23)

This lack of clarity in the definition of 'mission' and 'vision' within accreditation processes has likely contributed to much of the confusion found in international schools with respect to these two concepts. An example from one of the researcher's evaluation reports highlights that School X, a school in Europe, states that its philosophy consists of a mission statement and a vision statement.

***"Our school mission***

*"Our mission is to Instruct, to Educate, and to Impart the school's Values."*

***Our vision statement***

*"International School X is committed to educating students to be lifelong learners of good character who demonstrate academic, physical, artistic, and moral excellence, respect for religious and cultural beliefs, and responsibility as international citizens."* (International School X, Miller 2010). (Edits have been made by the researcher to protect the identity of the school.)

In this instance the information conveyed by both these statements relates to what the school does; in other words, its mission; *"The where to?"* (Rampersad 2001:212) remains unstated.

As another example of the difficulty in distinguishing between 'The What' and the 'Where to' International School Y, a school in Africa, has a mission statement which is prefixed by a statement which clearly indicates that the mission statement serves the dual purpose of defining the school purpose as well as its future direction.

*'At International School Y, the mission statement is the cornerstone by which we interact as a community and design strategic plans for the future. Along with our Philosophy and Core Values, International School Y's mission statement provides the context for our daily activities as well as the framework for our strategic direction.'* (International School Y, Miller 2010)

Of note is that an examination of a sample of 30 international school mission statements, (five school's statements from, Europe, Asia Pacific, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East) gave the following results (Miller 2010):

Number of Schools with a Mission Statement	30
Number of Schools with a Vision Statement	5
Number of Schools Articulating a Set of Core Values/Beliefs	18
Number of Schools with a Statement of Philosophy in additional to a Mission Statement	5

N=30

Figure 1.

Of interest is that the schools with a statement of philosophy, in addition to a mission statement, tend to express within this statement concepts which other schools include in their vision statements. One school even had mission, vision, philosophy and core values statements. Once more this points to the need for additional clarity in the definition and use of terminology.

### **2.3.1.2 Definitions for the Purpose of This Thesis**

Given the variety of meanings associated with mission and vision and the manner in which these terms are used in an interchangeable or even unclear manner, within this research reference to an organisation's 'philosophy' or philosophical statements' will be used when referring to those statements used by a school to set its philosophical direction. This term will therefore necessarily encompass the definitions of a mission suggested by Rampersad above (2001:212), the "*Why*"; why the organization exists, what is its identity, what is its reason for existing, and "*The Where to?*"; in other words, what is the organisation's dream, where does it want to end in the long run. When it is possible to clearly separate the 'why' and the 'where to' this paper will refer to a school's mission and vision respectively. Otherwise the statements that a school uses to guide its direction and purpose will be referred to as philosophical statements.

In addition to a clear understanding of the difference between a mission and vision statement, a review of the literature highlighted that the following are also important if a school's philosophical statements are to have a positive influence on improvement processes.

### **2.3.2 Values Alignment**

Bell and Harrison suggest that critical to effective implementation of a school's philosophical statements is the alignment of teachers' values with the values expressed in

the school philosophy (Bell and Harrison 1995:3). A philosophy which is not shared but is viewed as based on one person or entity's view is considered unsustainable (Senge 2000: 72). Everard and Morris (1990:196), echoing Wittgenstein (1953), suggest that, a person's values are conditioned by upbringing and the groups with whom the individual is affiliated. Non alignment of these values with an organisation's value system can lead to what Bottery (1992:63) describes as "*dissent*" and the development of what Hargreaves (1994: 164) calls generic heresy which can "*challenge the central purpose of the mission itself and the principles on which it is founded*". The consequence of such non alignment, Hargreaves claims, is a lost opportunity to collectively strengthen school efficacy, motivation, enhance meaning and forge common beliefs and purpose (Hargreaves 1994: 163).

Stoll and Fink (1996: 52) suggest that key to reconciling personal values with an institution's values is to create opportunities for teachers to articulate their own values, then to critically examine and question them and reflect how they might relate to the values of others. Illustrating this theory in practice, Rampersad (2001: 211-223) describes how, as the first step in implementing a visionary management process, he uses a framework in which participants articulate their own personal values and dreams and then compare them with the organization's philosophical statements. Where there is non-alignment of values participants are asked to reflect on whether areas of non alignment are acceptable, whether personal visions can be adjusted or expanded, how non aligned areas may be developed within the organization and whether or not the degree of non alignment between personal and organizational philosophies is so great that it would be best to seek opportunities elsewhere. This exercise, Rampersad claims, can assist participants to deepen their understanding of an organisation's direction, can identify commonalities between personal and organizational goals and as a result the process "*inspires creativity, motivates and mobilizes people, gives them energy and leads to better performance*" (Rampersad 2001:215).

While the theory that a school's philosophical statements need to be shared in order to be sustained may at first glance appear reasonable, these theories seem to overlook the realities that face many schools and what therefore happens in practice. For example, as mentioned in Section 1.4, international schools not only have a wide range of student and teacher backgrounds, cultures and associated values within the school community (Hayden 2006:16), but these demographics can change rapidly in some schools; in particular in countries where families are placed in the location on defined, shorter term contracts, (Hayden 2006:23), or in schools where staff hired on short term contracts turn over every few years (Hardman 2001:125). The same applies for school leaders. Current research suggests that the average tenure of an international school head is 2.8 years (CIS 2007b). The changeover within many international school communities renders the school's ability to constantly engage in time consuming values alignment activities, such as those described by Stoll and Fink and Rampersad, highly questionable.

In an ideal world a reduction in the possibility of non-alignment between staff and the school's philosophical beliefs would be greatly reduced by a comprehensive recruitment exercise in which opportunities are available for the level of dialogue needed to attempt to determine a prospective staff member's beliefs and for the staff member to fully understand the school's value systems. In reality such time is not available. Teacher recruitment in the international school circuit often happens by means of teacher recruitment fairs during which, for cost and pragmatic reasons, the prospective candidate is only interviewed by one person, often the Head (Hayden 2006:79,) and recruitment discussions take place in a short period of time. Experience as a former Head of School suggests that sometimes vacancies arise at the last moment because a staff member cannot obtain necessary visas to work in the country or teachers need to return home for urgent health or family reasons. In those instances the school simply has to hire whoever is

available and the niceties of searching for the most appropriate 'fit' become secondary to the urgent need to fill the position.

### 2.3.3 Broad- based Creation and Review Process

Key in creating alignment between teachers' value systems and the school's philosophy appears to be the process undertaken to create and subsequently review the institution's philosophical statements (Senge 2000:290-291; Fullan 1992: 120-121; Beare et al 1993: 132). Limb (1992:168) highlights the importance of involving a substantial section of the teaching faculty in the determination of the organisation's philosophy. Stott and Walker (1992:51), in their study of mission statements in Singaporean schools, underscore the advantage of the involvement of all major stakeholders in the creation and subsequent reviews of a school's philosophical statements as this *"brings clarity, ownership and support for the attempts to get there"*. Davis et al (2007: 99) in a study of mission statements in colleges and universities in America reached a similar conclusion, *"much of the good results do not come from mission statements themselves but from the strategic re-education that happens in producing one."* Stott and Walker (1992:51) also mention the need to regularly review philosophical statements in order to ensure that,

*"they are still appropriate for the population served by the school, changes in curriculum mandates, new community expectations and emerging knowledge about academic subjects"*

as well as to enhance their credibility and thus their ability to delineate or guide an institution.

The theories outlined above reflect many elements of Habermasian theory mentioned in Section 2.1. For example, Limb's (1992:168) suggestion that collaborative creation of the school's philosophical statements involving input from all stakeholders leads to greater ownership of the school's expressed values, reflects elements of Habermas' ideal speech situation (Habermas 1984) described in Section 2:1. If equal opportunities to express ideas

in an open and candid manner are given and open and honest debate ensues, then the discourse that follows, according to the theory, leads to consensus (Gilder 1987: 18). Stott and Walker's (1992:52) belief that collaborative review leads to common understandings about the organisation echoes the intent of Habermas' *Theory of Communication*, i.e. that the transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge through a process of achieving mutual understandings leads to social integration, solidarity and a strengthening of identity (Habermas 1984). Stoll and Fink's (1996:52) belief in the importance of creating opportunities for teachers to articulate their beliefs and in the process of doing so reconciling their beliefs with that of the school, is another example of educational theory that echoes Habermas.

In addition to the comments above, other contextual or historical aspects of an international school can render the implementation of these theories problematic. The philosophical statements of a number of international schools were created by their founder and, as such, are not open to negotiation. An example is the mission of Nishimachi International School, Japan. The school was founded by the late Tane Matsukata who returned from the United States to her native Japan after the Second World War and established the school with the vision of building linguistic and cultural bridges between the people of Japan and the United States. Her beliefs were incorporated into the school's original mission statement and they remain intact until today (CIS 2010b). Amongst several Indian international schools their school culture and mission statement is very much defined, driven and coloured by the Founder or Principal. These 'personalities' are very often the reason why parents choose to send their children to the school and as long as the 'personality' is at the helm of the school its philosophical statements are unlikely to change. An example of this is the Good Shepherd International School in Ooty, India where the Founder and Principal firmly believes in structure and discipline and has developed a core of ardent parent advocates that years later send their own children to the school for

the same educational experiences as they had. Indus International School in Bangalore, India, founded and led by a former Colonel in the Indian army has underpinned the school's philosophy with strong beliefs about leadership and the value of outdoor pursuits.

Another challenge lies in the nature and dynamics of an international school, and issues of changing demographics. Many schools align the review of the school's philosophical statements with key stages in international school evaluation processes- that is, five yearly accreditation self studies. Given the rate of leadership turnover mentioned above and the turnover of teachers, particularly in so called hardship posts, the likelihood of having the opportunity to actively engage in the creation or review of the school's philosophical statements can be greatly reduced (Miller 2010).

A more recent phenomenon, which has been exacerbated as a result of the global economic situation, is the need for schools to recreate themselves in order to survive in a competitive environment. CIS field work suggests that this need manifests itself in several ways. Sometimes the need is so urgent that there is no time to engage in collaborative redefining processes and the governing body or the school leadership makes a change which creates a conflict with the school's philosophical statements. An example of this is Hiroshima International School, Japan, which underwent a rapid decline in enrolment when the major expatriate employer left the city. This was exacerbated by the challenges caused by the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear reactor issues. The school's philosophical statements state that it exists to serve students temporarily resident in the city yet in a bid to fill places in the school and maintain the school's financial viability the school population now consists of over 50% host country nationals. The latest evaluation report mentions that there is a level of confusion amongst the community about the nature and direction of the school (CIS 2012).

#### **2.3.4 Clarity of Terminology and Concepts**

Peek and Peek (1997:404) and Sidhu (2003: 442) illustrate the importance of ensuring, during the creation or review of an institution's philosophy, that statements are clear, measurable, operational and carefully articulate the organisation's values. Peek and Peek (1997: 404- 405), in their study of an internal systems auditing process, found that personnel struggled to describe how they implemented the company's mission and goals because the language used was too '*lofty*'. Some members were unclear of the exact meaning of the concepts in the statements, and various interpretations of what the statements actually meant inhibited a unified approach to creating implementation strategies. This reflects Wittgenstein's theory that meaning derives from language use (Wittgenstein 1953). In this case, as the language used in the company's goals was not customary, personnel were unfamiliar with its use therefore its meaning lacked clarity. Sidhu, in his study of the impact of companies' mission statements, examined the extent to which the actual values, direction, competencies and business domain were conceptually expressed within company philosophical statements and to what extent this might impact company performance (Sidhu 2003: 445). In the education world these findings were corroborated by Beare et al (1993:149) and Stott and Walker (1992: 54). In Stott and Walker's study of philosophical statements used in Singaporean schools they found that vague terminology or over-generalisations such as "*to inculcate moral values*" and "*the development of the mind*" appeared devoid of meaning and the respondents who were asked about the concepts included in their school's philosophy gave answers which diverged significantly from the actual content of the statements. Stott and Walker also warn against over specificity suggesting that this may cause tension between "*stated intent and actual practice and have a severe impact on institutional credibility*" (Stott and Walker 1992:51-54).

This thinking manifests itself in the difficulty some schools experience in measuring the organisation's success in implementing its philosophical statements. In order to illustrate

success a school needs to be clear about what it intends to achieve by creating, for example, success criteria for each of the concepts expressed in the philosophical statements and measuring implementation of its philosophy against these criteria. A concept mentioned in international school statements, is the concept of international mindedness. As mentioned in Section 1.4 various interpretations of this term can be found and as a result very often teachers within a school demonstrate differing values or beliefs or understandings of what this means in practice. Field work also suggests that other concepts often found in international school philosophical statements such as 'life- long learning' and 'risk takers' are equally problematic (Miller 2010).

### **2.3.5 Institutionalising the Philosophy in Systems and Planning**

The literature points to embedding philosophical statements in institutional systems as a key factor in supporting school improvement processes and informing development planning. Bell and Harrison (1995:2) describe the need for school philosophical statements to be "*talked down to earth*" and embedded in "*workable structures*". This embedding ranges from alignment of the school's philosophical statements with its appraisal system (Codrington 2004: 181-182) to alignment with policies, the curriculum, the approaches to teaching and learning and articulation of the philosophical statements in school rituals, ceremonies and artistic expression (Beare et al 1993: 154-7). The school's leadership is viewed as critical to the above mentioned institutionalisation of the values and beliefs expressed in the school's philosophy (Beare et al 1993:153).

As mentioned in 2.2.6, critical to the school improvement process is ensuring a close correlation between a school's development planning process and its philosophical statements. This is clearly illustrated in the literature. Sidhu's (2003: 444) study of the impact of mission statements on multi media organizations in the Netherlands concludes

that clear philosophical statements can “*facilitate strategy formulation and implementation*”. Cook (1999:50) describes the role of a school’s philosophy within development planning processes as the “*keystone upon which the entire plan depends,*” in other words, the source of everything within the plan and the yardstick against which everything in the plan should be judged. Measuring implementation of a school’s philosophy is a key ingredient of the accreditation process, yet little is currently known of what makes this happen. One of the aims of the study is to explore this area in more detail.

### **2.3.6 Ideology**

Ideology as an essential ingredient for promoting understanding of a school’s mission statement is hinted by Hayden,

*“from an ideological viewpoint students in many international schools are encouraged to develop at an affective level those attributes found in many mission statements.....Too little research has been undertaken as yet with respect to the ideological dimensions of international education to know to what extent such claims are actually realized in practice”* Hayden (2002: 116)

and by Pearce (2001: 45) in his reference to “*ideology driven schools*”. Rakoff (1977: 87) and (Handy and Aitken (1990:77- 79) describe ideology as tool to promote socialization and a sense of belonging to a community. Most importantly Handy and Aitken describe ideology as a tool to create “*a belief in a common cause*” and create a community driven by inspiring ideals. They remind schools that an ideology cannot just be expressed in a school’s philosophy but that it needs to be articulated in community members’ behavior if it is to serve as a “*uniting system of influence*” (Handy and Aitken 1990: 78).

Purvis and Hunt (1993:474), in their consideration of the differing roles of ideology and discourse, give useful pointers which may help understand the role ideology plays in this study. Ideology they suggest frames peoples “*forms of consciousness*” through reproducing existing social relations to the extent that other systems of ideas are excluded and the ideology is perceived as “*common sense*” the unquestionable way of doing things (Purvis

and Hunt 1993 478-9). This idea is further examined in light of the study's findings in Chapter Five.

Within this study five ideologies are referenced,

- liberalism as promoted by philosopher John Stuart Mill as a belief that if individuals are left to pursue what makes them happy then the individual talents that this nurtures benefits society (Buckingham et al 2011 :193)
- social humanism based on the central idea that all humans should be treated with equal concern for their good and a desire to promote well- being and the dignity of mankind (Polya 2012:2)
- religious defined as relating to "*matters of faith*" (Buckingham et al 2011:15)
- curricular relating to the philosophy of the curriculum provider, in the case of the schools in the study the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IB 2010:5)
- internationalism defined by Tamatea (2008:58) as a belief in the importance of developing world mindedness, and global citizenship.

### **2.3.7 Conclusion**

If a school's philosophical statement is clearly understood, created collaboratively, internalized by staff and constantly reviewed and renewed in a collaborative manner then the literature reviewed above suggests that there is a greater chance that it will be reflected in school operational systems and will drive improvement planning. However, what the literature did not identify are the practices that lead to philosophical statements being understood by a school community, being owned by staff and as a consequence driving school planning processes. The study will attempt to fill this gap and provide some pointers for further examination.

### **2.4 The Hypothesis Driving the Study**

On the basis of the theories about school development planning and shared values and as mentioned in Chapter 1.4, I hypothesize that

‘schools that have clearly defined and collaboratively agreed philosophical statements and teachers whose values are aligned with the school’s philosophy demonstrate greater insights into school improvement needs as reflected in school development plans. This is because affiliation with the school’s direction, goals and purpose, creates a sense of ownership, allows teachers to identify areas where the school’s direction and current practices are less in alignment with the school’s stated philosophy and creates a sense of responsibility which strengthens school improvement planning processes.’

#### **2.4.1 Research Questions**

Stemming from the hypothesis are the following research questions:

- How do senior leaders in international schools create and sustain a set of common values aligned to the school’s philosophical statements?
- How is this set of common values translated into practice?
- What strategies allow for close correlation between the school’s philosophical statements and school improvement initiatives?

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methods**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter is broadly divided into four parts. The first part begins by outlining the research project's design and highlighting the reasons for choosing a case study approach. The second section explains the rationale for the choice of research methods used within the case study and considers the theory that underpins each of the methods used. The penultimate section explains how data was collected and analysed and the final section considers ethical implications.

Researcher and respondent bias are two limitations that could have affected the findings. The researcher was known to the schools in her role as Associate Director of Accreditation and this position of authority may have influenced some of the responses. The researcher, as a result of her role in developing the accreditation protocol and her employment with the Council of International Schools, evidently had a strong affiliation with the 'ideal' approach outlined in Chapter 1.1. Care was taken to reduce these dangers by persistently presenting the researcher as a research student when interacting with the schools and by fully transcribing interviews so that salient information would not be inadvertently filtered out. Care was also taken during analysis of the data to use exactly the same approach with each school and data analysis logs were meticulously maintained. More details of the study's limitations and the efforts made to overcome them are found in Section 3.6.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study aims to explore the correlation between school philosophical statements and school development planning in the international school context. As such it explores the perceptions of educators working in international schools. As mentioned in Chapter 1.5, the study aims to not only identify influencing systems but also to explore underlying thought processes and values. As a result, it was initially felt that a two stage qualitative

research design would help the researcher build upon initial understandings from the first stage of the research and support a deeper exploration of these findings in stage two of the study. This approach was later adapted to add a third analysis stage using statistical tools which allowed for further exploration of pertinent findings from stages one and two of the research.

The researcher decided that as little appears to be currently known about the topic, a flexible data collection process with an initial exploratory feature- i.e. a questionnaire- was needed which allowed the researcher the freedom to respond to emerging themes (Ball 1993: 41). This would allow for rich data collection because the findings from the initial exploratory questionnaire could then help shape the questions asked in the face to face interviews in the second data collection stage. As mentioned earlier, as a result of findings from the two stage qualitative approach a further quantitative analysis of the statistics from the questionnaire was added in a bid to further understand underlying thought processes and values.

In order to undertake the in depth study of educators' perceptions mentioned above, a comparative case study approach involving three international schools was chosen. Initially four schools that were part of the CIS accreditation process were chosen for the study. They were selected from other schools in the city as schools within the accreditation process, as result of working with the evaluation protocol, tend to have developed a common language when referring to school philosophy and school improvement practices. This, it was hoped, would reduce the likelihood of questions being misinterpreted. In the end three schools were able to participate as one of the schools underwent extensive leadership and ownership changes that made participation difficult.

Guidance on how to conduct such a study was found in Wyness' (2010: 159-169) comparative study 'Children and Young People's Participation within Educational and Civic

Settings'. Wyness reminds us that the key theory and epistemological assumption of a case study is *"the research subject as a reflexive social agent situated within a multi layered social setting"* that the emphasis of a case study is *"depth of focus"* and one of its key purposes is to *"locate the attitudes and practices within a more grounded context as a way of providing a deeper understanding of origins, causes and motives"* (Wyness 2010: 160).

The comparative case study approach was chosen as a result of the research focus. Two factors influenced this approach. Firstly, after extensive research which included direct contact with organisations that were known to undertake research in the international school setting, and researchers that were known to be working in the field of school philosophy, it seemed that no previous research appeared to exist in the area of this study. Secondly, as the focus of the research was on developing understandings about the systems, climate and factors that lead to a strong correlation between school philosophical statements and school planning, it was felt that perhaps a single case study approach, while allowing for data to be generated from a wider number of school community members, (Wyness 2010:161) would not necessarily result in the opportunity to compare systems, structures and climate across sites.

The issue of generalizability or external validity within case studies is well documented (Bell 1993:9; Wellington 1996: 46; Yin 1994:144; Cohen and Manion 1997:111). Although each case study followed the same pattern and the researcher chose schools that had differing characteristics such as ownership, demographics, size and underpinning value system, which, Schofield argues, adds to the study's generalizability (Schofield 1993:101), the multiplicity of variables at play and the limited scope of the study render such a claim open to criticisms of internal validity (Yin 1994: 144). The reverse is also true in that multiple variables impacted the researchers' ability to use inferential statistical tools in the final section of the data analysis (Hartas 2010:323). Details of the nature and context of each of

these schools can be found in Chapter 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Indeed, the aim of the research was not to claim generalizability as the findings are very much related to the context of each school. The prime purpose was to engage in an initial exploration of the topic in the hope that educators in the field may recognize some of the findings and that these findings may point to future areas for research.

The issue of internal validity stemming from a researcher's influence on the case study, potential bias and interpretations made, is also well documented (Wellington 1996: 46). These issues are discussed in Section 3.6 but the researcher believes that every effort was made to reduce the possible impact of these elements by approaching the schools as a researcher. For example, in order to reduce the impact of the researcher's position as an accreditation officer, the researcher constantly reminded teachers that she was in the school as a research student. She deliberately dressed in an informal manner and used her maiden name, the name she is registered with at the university, at all times. During analysis and interpretation of the data tools such as data coding logs were utilised to create as uniform and objective an approach as possible. These are discussed in Section 3.6.

### **3.2 Selection of Case Study Schools**

Three case study schools were used in the study. Each of the schools was located in the same Asian city as it was important that the researcher could easily access the schools when breaks between professional travel commitments provided opportunities for gathering data. Each school was part of the Council of International Schools' accreditation process in which the importance of a school's philosophical statements is emphasized and each school had at least one part of the school's curriculum authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organisation. Authorisation by the International Baccalaureate Organisation entails subscribing to the philosophy of the organization (IB 2010:5) and referring to that philosophy using common terminology which is similar to that used by CIS. These common

denominators would, it was believed, reduce instrumentation issues (Cohen and Manion 1997:171) as research participants ought to be familiar with the language used by these organisations when referring to school philosophical statements. It was hoped that if the study's data gathering tools used the same language this would reduce possible misinterpretations. This filter in effect narrowed the choice of case study schools as, at the time of the study, there were only four schools in that Asian city that fitted these criteria. One of the four schools underwent significant ownership and leadership change immediately prior to the study commencing. As a result, the researcher believed, given knowledge gained in her professional role, that these changes may influence data gathered and therefore eliminated the school as a potential case study school. The school was used as a pilot school for the questionnaire. Information about the pilot can be found in Section 3.3.6. The remaining three schools were then used within the study. The impact of the elimination of this school is that the three remaining schools in the study do not permit the use of inferential statistics. This is because the sample does not comply with the need for homogeneity (Hartas 2010:323). The reasons for this include the following: each school had a different governance structure and was under different forms of ownership, one school (International School A) was a proprietary, medium sized school serving students ages 3-18, another (International School B) was a Church owned Secondary School serving students aged 12-18 and International School C was a large trust school serving students aged 4- 18. Each school had different student demographics. Details of the individual schools are outlined in Chapter 4. As mentioned above, although this diversity precluded the use of inferential statistics, it was believed that this heterogeneity would add to the study as findings stemming from a study of very different schools would, given the newness of this topic, likely be richer than one from schools that were very similar (Schofield 1993: 101).

### 3.3 Data Collection

Given the opportunities afforded by case studies to explore a multi layered social setting mentioned above, the research study used a two stage data collection approach. In the first stage a questionnaire was used and in stage two face to face interviews. This approach, it was hoped, would aid in the triangulation of data collected and aid in its interpretation (Cohen and Manion 1997: 241). The findings from the questionnaire which needed further interpretation or explanation could be followed up in the face to face interview and the face to face interview could serve as a means of testing that responses to the questionnaire were consistent with responses to interview questions. As mentioned in Section 3.1, as a result of the findings from the analysis of this data a further statistical analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaires was undertaken.

#### 3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was chosen as a tool in order to answer the 'what, where and how' questions that underpin the study and to help give shape to the 'why' questions that would be asked in the interviews (Wellington 1996:52).

As little appears to have been written about the research topic, the data gathering exercise began by asking teachers and school administrators in each case study school to complete a questionnaire aimed at gathering initial information about staff perceptions with respect to:

- the perceived clarity of the school's philosophical statements
- the level of staff's personal alignment with the values in the school's philosophy
- processes for communicating the school's philosophy and creating general school-wide ownership of its values,
- systems for embedding the philosophy in the school's programmes and operations,

- how the school's development plan is created, how staff give input to its creation and how it was guided by the school's philosophy
- the system's perceived effectiveness in identifying school development needs.

The full list of questions and the areas they aim to gather information about can be found in Appendix D.

### **3.3.2 The Questions**

The development of the questionnaire was informed by Youngman's (1994: 259-262) and Cohen and Manion's (1997:95) lists of suggestions for successful questionnaire creation. During the drafting of the questions the researcher checked that there were direct links between each question and either the research hypothesis or areas raised in the literature review (Youngman 1994:249). Time was taken to consider clarity of questions and the use of language that might be misleading or suggest bias (Cohen and Manion 1997:95). After the pilot, described in Section 3.3.6, several changes were made to the language used. Care was taken with the order of the questions so that the respondent began with a straightforward opening question about the school's philosophical statements and moved through to more complex and open questions which elaborated on areas asked in the more closed questions (Youngman 1994: 261). Open ended questions also afforded an opportunity for other new ideas to emerge from the responses (Hartas 2010:262). Care was also taken to avoid the answer to a given question being influenced by the content of a preceding question (Cohen and Manion 1997: 95).

### **3.3.3 Rating Grid**

The rating grid, a four point Likert-type scale, was initially used for the more closed questions (Boone and Boone 2012:2). This approach, it was believed, would be familiar to the schools and therefore reduce potential instrumentation issues (Cohen and Manion 1997:171) as this is the approach used to rate the school against standards in the CIS

accreditation process (CIS 2010: 15). It also reflected Youngman's advice to avoid an intermediate response which could result in indecision (Youngman 1994: 255). After the pilot an additional category, not applicable was added. The reasons are given in Section 3.3.6 below.

### **3.3.4 Administration of the Questionnaire**

The layout, cover letter and instructions all followed Youngman's advice (Youngman 1994: 259- 264) in the hope that busy teachers would not find the questionnaire's completion too onerous a task. At the end of the questionnaire respondents were asked whether or not they would be willing to participate in a follow- up interview with the researcher and if so to give the researcher contact details. If the participant chose not to participate in a follow up interview then respondents were able to remain anonymous.

### **3.3.5 The Sample**

In order to aim for as much representation as possible regarding the data gathered, it was decided to administer the questionnaire to all the teachers and administrators in each school (Wellington 1996: 53; Cohen and Manion 1997: 53). The researcher asked each of the schools if it would be possible to attend a staff meeting, to explain the purpose of the research and to administer and collect the questionnaire. This, it was believed, would enhance the number of questionnaire returns. In the end after much discussion with School Heads and juggling of travel schedules, it was only possible to administer the questionnaire in this way with International School A (ISA). The theory did, however, seem to work as the number of questionnaire returns from this school was 91.5% of the total teaching and administrative staff. The school leadership team in International School B (ISB) informed the researcher that whole school meeting time had been carefully mapped out to address specific school goals and was therefore so crowded that an additional project such as the questionnaire could not be added. As a result, the school head

distributed the questionnaire through the school's internal mail system and sent reminders to staff to return the questionnaires to his Personal Assistant. This system resulted in a 44% return. International School C (ISC), a very large school, did not have a regular system of staff meetings. During the one whole staff meeting held that semester the researcher was on a scheduled school visit in another country. As for ISB, the School Head distributed the questionnaire and the Head's Personal Assistant sent reminders and collected the returns. This resulted in a 40.5% return. Although the system used with ISA would likely have resulted in a greater number of returns for both ISA and ISB, it was felt that a reasonable number of questionnaires had been returned to satisfy the goal of gaining some insight into perceptions about each school's philosophical statements and its planning process which would inform the deeper exploration of issues within the follow up interviews.

### **3.3.6 The Pilot**

As mentioned in Section 3.2, the questionnaire was piloted by a school which was in the CIS accreditation process and offered the International Baccalaureate programme. In this way this school was familiar with the language used in the questionnaire and the grid for recording ratings. It was also used to examining the correlation between its school's philosophical statements and its practices just like the schools that became case study schools. The questionnaire was sent to all teachers through the Head of School and the Head of School's assistant collected the returns and forwarded them to the researcher. At the end of the questionnaire respondents were asked to comment on any difficulties they had with the questionnaire (Hartas 2010:267). A 55% return was achieved and this influenced the initial decision to try to administer the case study schools' questionnaire in a staff meeting.

Questionnaire returns suggested that some of the words used were misunderstood by respondents resulting in either an inappropriate response to the question or in comments at the end of the questionnaire indicating confusion. This school, like the case study schools, had a sizeable number of English second language speakers on staff therefore the researcher simplified the wording of several questions which had seemed problematic. Furthermore, in the open-ended question section some of the questions had elicited responses which suggested that perhaps the question had been read quickly and its full meaning not digested or some of the nuances between similar questions in the closed question section had been lost. As a result, the main concepts were put in bold to draw attention to the question's intent.

Several respondents to the pilot questionnaire also did not answer all of the questions. It was unclear whether or not this was due to the respondent not having the necessary information to respond to the question or whether this was due to some other reason. As the responses to the questionnaire were intended to be for the most part anonymous it was therefore difficult to follow up. As a result, a 5<sup>th</sup> category, '5', meaning no response was added to the tabulation charts used to capture the data from the questionnaires. This allowed the original intent behind using a 4 Point Likert -type scale mentioned in Section 3.3.3 to remain, but captured, within data coding, the number of respondents that did not reply to a given question.

As very few respondents agreed to participate in the pilot interview, the information about anonymity at the beginning of the questionnaire was strengthened in the hope that within the case study schools more people would agree to participate.

### **3.4 The Interview**

#### **3.4.1 The Format**

To explore the 'why' and gain further information about the 'how' (Wellington 1996: 52), the findings from the questionnaire were used to inform development of the questions within the semi structured interview. A part- structured format (Hobson and Townsend 2010:226) was chosen to allow respondents the freedom to share what they perceived to be important as a result of a looser questioning structure but, at the same time, to provide the researcher with a structure to quantify results (Bell 1993: 92) and to ensure that the researcher's agenda was covered (Hobson and Townsend 2010:229). The format consisted of a set of 10 preplanned open questions which were asked of all interviewees in the same order and a set of 6 questions based on interviewee responses to the questionnaire. This is elaborated in Section 3.4.2 below.

### **3.4.2 The Questions**

In order to use the data from the questionnaires to inform interview questions, the findings from the questionnaires from each school were tabulated before the interview questions were created. The manner in which this was done is described in Section 3.5.1.2 below. The interview questions comprised of two sections. The first section, consisting of ten questions common to each interview, can be found in Appendix E. These questions aimed to find out more about the systems or policy within a school that had underpinned responses in the questionnaire. For example:

**Questionnaire Question 8:** The values expressed in the school's philosophical statements influence decision making in the school.

**Questionnaire Question 10:** The values expressed in the school's philosophical statements influence the school's operations (e.g. policy creation, human resource decisions etc.).

are explored further in common interview question 2.

**Interview Question 2:** How do staff learn about the ways in which the school's philosophy and objectives give direction to what happens in the school?

The way in which the questions in the questionnaire and the interview complement each other is illustrated in Chapter Four, the Initial Findings Chapter, where questions from the interview and questionnaire exploring a given area are discussed together.

The second part of the interview consisted of questions that were personal to the interviewee. As interview participants had indicated their willingness to participate in a follow up interview on their questionnaire, the researcher had access to responses given. The personal questions either explored unique ideas that arose from the questionnaire, ideas that appeared to differ from trends in the school, or questions that had been given either exceptionally high or exceptionally low ratings in the questionnaire. As for the questionnaire, the formation of questions was guided by Cohen and Manion (1997: 95) and supplemented by ideas from Hartas (2010:267).

### **3.4.3 Sample**

Opportunity sampling, as described by Wragg (1994: 268,) formed the basis of the sample used. To a large extent the interviewees were self –selected. If the number of willing participants exceeded the number of interviews needed for a given school, the researcher tried to ensure that different sections of the school were represented. This was done by liaising with school support staff. Although this sampling technique does not claim to be totally representative of the school population and does not consider probability theory (Cohen and Manion 1997: 87), it was believed fit for the purpose of the study as the research does not aim to generalize its findings. As mentioned above, interviewees volunteered to be interviewed by indicating their willingness at the end of the questionnaire. The researcher took advice from the university as to the number of interviews needed from each school. In the end nine interviews were conducted in

International School A, six in International School B and eight in International School C. The reason for the extended number of interviewees in International School A is explained in Section 3.4.5.

#### **3.4.4 Conduct of the Interviews**

The conduct of the interviews was influenced by Punch's (2009: 149-152) suggestions for conducting and recording data from interviews.

The interviews were held in the interviewee's school at a time and in a location that was convenient to the participant and which coincided with breaks in the researcher's travel schedule. Prior to the interview participants were sent a list of areas that would form part of the interview so that interviewees felt at ease, knew what to expect and had an opportunity to collect their thoughts. At the beginning of the interview the interviewee was given information about the research and the researcher answered any questions that arose. The interviewee then completed the ethics form and signed their agreement to participate. Each of the interviews was recorded and later transcribed. The decision to transcribe every interview word for word aimed at assisting the researcher embed herself in the data (Punch 2009:297) and to reduce the likelihood of researcher bias as mentioned in Section 3.0. In order to probe for meaning and follow interesting ideas, the interviewer asked each of the pre-prepared questions but followed the flow of the conversation with the interviewee; at times asking clarifying questions or using summarizing statements to check for understanding. During the interview the researcher noted the salient themes that were discussed on a pre- prepared sheet on which each of the questions were printed. The purpose of this was to safe guard against technological problems, and to serve as a record of salient points which could be shared with the interviewee to check for accuracy (Wragg 1994: 277). Each interview lasted at least 20 minutes but some lasted as long as forty minutes. Although this extended time runs contrary to advice for interviewing (Hobson

and Townsend 2010:236), in the instances where the time limit was exceeded the interviewee was so engaged in the discussion that they indicated they were keen to continue. Each interviewee was given a small Durham University Charity (DUCKS) gift as a small thank you for giving the researcher their time.

### **3.4.5 Pilot Interviews**

As it was no longer possible to use the school in which the questionnaires were piloted as a pilot school for the interviews, it was decided to pilot the follow up interview in International School A as this school had the largest amount of teachers and administrators willing to be interviewed. The prime focus of the pilot interviews was to test that, in particular, the common ten questions were clear, that the data could be analysed according to the plan the researcher had developed (Wragg 1994: 276) and that the tone and approach adopted by the researcher created an atmosphere in which interviewees felt at ease and willing to share their perceptions. As described in Section 3.6.1.2, this was a particular concern for the researcher as, although she is trained and experienced in conducting interviews as part of her role as an Accreditation Officer, she was unsure how her position might affect the quality of the interviews.

The pilot interviews resulted in some minor refinements to the manner in which the researcher recorded information during the interview so that it could be more easily checked with participants. The shorthand which the researcher has adopted over her years as an Accreditation Officer had to be modified to render it more comprehensible to others. Some adjustments were made to the volume of the microphone and its position on the table so as to make it less intrusive. The coding system which would be used for analysis appeared to work and the pilot interviewees offered thoughtful, well developed and informative responses to the questions; so much so that the researcher, under advisement, included them in the final interview data.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Several authors mention challenges associated with data analysis within qualitative studies (Punch 2009: 50; Lindsay 2010:122); both from an operational perspective and an ethical one. Care was taken throughout the planning for analysis and its execution to avoid obvious traps such as mistakes in recording, and researcher bias in interpretation. The analysis of the data was based on Miles and Huberman's interactive model for analyzing data (Miles and Huberman 1994: 12). In this model the tasks of clustering, coding, memoing, assembling and drawing propositions are viewed as concurrent. In other words, as the researcher moves through the stages of working with data- from coding to portraying to reaching conclusions – the researcher constantly returns to the tasks listed earlier to develop deeper understandings from the data.

#### **3.5.1 Initial Questionnaire Analysis**

##### **3.5.1.2 Coding**

The data from the closed questions for each school was sorted manually and tabulated according to the number of responses given for each of the possible responses 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- agree, 4-strongly agree. This coding method was developed at the same time as the questionnaire was developed so that data could be easily transferred to the coding grid when questionnaires were received (Cohen and Manion 1997:102). Guided by Youngman (1994: 248), it was decided to record instances of no response in a separate category, category 5, so that data would not be unduly affected in cases when there was a larger amount of non-responses. Reflecting Miles and Huberman's approach (1994:12), the distribution of responses (i.e. 1-5) was then illustrated initially in a table to aid the identification of trends. This table was later developed into a series of charts.

The open questions were coded following Cohen and Manion's suggestions (Cohen and Manion 1997:102). Ten percent of each school's questionnaire returns were selected randomly and from this cross section was generated a list of all the responses, sorted by

question, to each of the open questions. These responses were then examined to find themes and responses were then sorted into those themes. After the initial list of themes was created, the responses from the other questionnaires were then analysed and if they fitted the themes they were added to the theme and if not they were listed separately. As this method involves a high degree of interpretation, the researcher was keen to ensure consistency and reduce sorting errors. A log book was used to record decisions made and the researcher used, as far as possible, the same terms to label the themes so that eventual comparisons between schools could be facilitated. This worked well for schools A and B, as respondents used similar terminology, therefore identification of the themes was straightforward and did not involve much interpretation. After conducting the interviews for International School C and having an opportunity to explore themes from the questionnaire in more depth, the researcher felt that perhaps some errors in interpretation of themes had been made. This stemmed from the varied language and terminology used to describe school activities, by respondents in International School C. As a result, the researcher completely redid the coding of the open questions for International School C using her new knowledge as a guide.

Once the data had been collected and coded, charts were made of the findings as illustrated in Chapter 4. In keeping with Miles and Huberman's theory (1994:12), these illustrations aimed to serve as a tool for analysis. The closed question charts show the number of responses given for each category 1-4 and 5 illustrated the number of no responses. The data from the open ended questions was displayed in pie charts. The researcher picked out the top themes for each category and classified all the other themes as 'others'. The percentage of times the particular theme featured in response to the question was also indicated as was the total number of responses on which the pie chart is based.

### 3.5.2 Interview Analysis

The data from the interviews was sorted based on a phenomenological approach but also broadly reflected Miles and Huberman's approach to working with data as described above (Miles and Huberman 1994: 12). The phenomenological approach, advocated by Hycner (1985), is a system of breaking down data from the transcription of an interview, understanding the essence of the interview as a whole, breaking down interview data into chunks of meaning, identifying units of meaning relevant to the research, clustering units of meaning, determining themes from the units of meaning, and checking meaning with participants (Cohen and Manion 1997:292-296).

The researcher simplified the phenomenological approach to fit the resources available to her and the nature of the study. The following process was followed for each school's interview data.

1. Firstly, the essence of each interview was recorded on a data sheet during the interview and its content checked with the interviewee at the conclusion of the interview. The researcher is experienced in recording in this manner as this is the way data from interviews are captured when she is in the field working with schools.
2. The whole interview was then transcribed.
3. The researcher read through the transcription several times to form an understanding of the 'whole'.
4. The researcher extracted units of meaning from the interview which related to the areas under study and recorded them on a separate sheet referring to the interviewee by a pre-designated code name such as Teacher A.
5. These units of meaning were then clustered according to emerging themes.

6. Once each interview for a given school was completed and the information sorted as described above, the individual sets of emerging themes gathered for each interview were read through several times looking for common themes and themes unique to a given interviewee.
7. From this reading themes were modified and added to and the units of meaning from each interviewee were recorded under these modified themes.
8. A final reading of all the transcriptions was undertaken to check for accuracy and omissions.

Throughout this exercise the researcher kept a running log of the thinking that resulted in the clusters of ideas mentioned above so that this could be consulted to assist the consistency and quality of the analysis. This became important as the analysis took several working sessions to complete. Furthermore, as the researcher believed that this approach, given its multiple layers of interpretation, runs the risk of over simplification and misconstruction or fragmentation of emerging ideas it also served as a checking mechanism to ensure that important relations between themes were not overlooked. This log book was also used to record initial ideas that were emerging as the researcher interacted with the data (Miles and Huberman 1994: 72-5) so that they could become a kind of building block between coding and analysis (Punch 2009: 180). A separate log book (Gibson 2010:303) was kept for each school. These running logs were also referred to during the analysis of the other schools when reminders were needed as to how data had been managed with other case study schools. However, although the researcher was keen to maintain consistency and, if possible, compare findings across schools, she was also keen to preserve the unique nature of each school. No attempt, therefore, was made to force a “cookie cutter” approach and every attempt was made to bring each school’s unique story to the fore.

### 3.5.3 Comparative Dimensions

In order to carefully and thoroughly elicit emerging patterns from each of the case study schools, each school was initially analysed as a separate unit. Once individual analyses were complete, the researcher then endeavoured to make links between the findings from each school and to highlight areas of similarity and contrast.

#### 3.5.3.1 Individual School Analysis

As suggested by Punch, the analysis of each individual case study took the form of a comparison of the findings from the questionnaire and the interview.

*“It is by comparing different indicators in the data that we arrive at the more abstract concepts behind the empirical data”* (Punch 2009:182)

The analysis method reflected techniques used within CIS accreditation processes to respond to standards as this method is designed to make use of multiple sources of data (CIS 2010:14). The researcher had, however, to create the categories against which the findings would be written. In order to do this six categories were created:

- Clarity of the school’s philosophical statements
- Staff alignment with the school’s values
- Communication and ownership of philosophical statements
- Embedding the school’s philosophy
- Strategic planning processes
- Identification of school development needs

These categories were based on the concepts embedded in the research hypothesis so that the findings might better illustrate to what extent they supported or refuted the hypothesis. As the questionnaire and interviews had been designed to gather information about these categories, the researcher listed the closed questions from the questionnaire and the themes from the open ended questions under the category which they addressed.

Utilising the data from the interviews in this manner was not simple as many themes appeared to be interrelated and the researcher feared that such distinctive categorization might blinker and stymie the analysis, resulting in lost interpretative opportunities. As a compromise where themes from the interview data clearly belonged under one of the categories above it was listed as such, otherwise those themes which did not initially appear to belong in one place were either listed under several categories or listed separately and constantly kept in view as the analysis progressed. Reflecting Miles and Huberman's theory (1994:12), as the researcher worked through various interpretative drafts those themes initially listed separately which seemed to contribute to understandings within the six categories were incorporated as appropriate. Again, to reduce consistency challenges, the researcher recorded in her log book, the reasons for the decisions taken. Throughout the analysis the researcher attempted to use the data to develop propositions or understandings to explain the outcome of the findings (Punch 2009:122).

### **3.5.3.2 Cross Case Comparisons**

As mentioned in Section 3.1, the aim of the study was not to claim generalisability. However, a comparison of the findings from each case study school was undertaken to explore similarities and differences to see if this would contribute to additional understandings. The findings were compared by listing the outcomes from each of the case studies along with the factors which seemed to influence the outcome. Where there were similarities and contrasts between schools this was noted. Following Wyness' approach (Wyness 2010:165) the researcher returned to data gathered on the political and social context of each school to explore possible reasons for the contrasts.

This cross case investigation seemed all the more potentially interesting as the findings were varied. ISA's findings appeared to support the thesis' hypothesis because the factors

outlined in the hypothesis were not in place and there appeared to be limited links between the school's philosophy and its planning processes. ISB's findings also appeared to support the hypothesis because the factors were in place. The findings from ISC added another dimension by suggesting that the factors listed in the hypothesis were unimportant and that other factors were at play. As a result, it was decided to add an additional stage to the study.

### **3.5.3.3 Second Analysis of Questionnaire Data**

After completing the analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews as described in this section (Section 3.5) and reflecting on the political and social landscape of the three schools, the findings seemed to suggest that unwritten values and beliefs that were accepted as the social 'norm' seemed to play a role in creating shared understandings which influenced school planning. It was also unclear from the initial analysis how the various factors in the study's hypothesis interfaced and to what extent they contributed to a shared understanding of the school's values. At this point, after discussion with the university, a further quantitative data analysis stage was added to further understand what might be happening within the case study schools. The tool that assisted this analysis was R Cran, an open source statistical analysis tool developed by Ross Ihaka and Robert Gentleman at the University of Auckland in 1993 which, it was felt, was suitable for a small scale quantitative study. Additional information can be found in Appendix G.

To complete this second analysis of the questionnaire the data was tabulated for a second time in accordance with the R Cran programme's requirements. Each respondent from each of the schools was given an identification number and had their responses recorded to both the open and more closed questions. Respondents' responses to the initial twelve questions (more closed questions) were recorded exactly as they appeared on the questionnaire. Non replies were recorded as '0'.

The first stage of the quantitative analysis aimed to develop deeper understandings about the dynamics at play in the case study schools, to examine possible relationships between factors in the study's hypothesis and to triangulate the findings from the statistical analysis with the findings from the initial qualitative analysis. To do this a set of research questions was developed. This can be found in Appendix F. From these questions a set of statistical tests and accompanying R Cran commands were identified to produce the statistical analysis. To examine possible relationships, the table function in R Cran was used to help visualize where likely links may exist (Venables and Smith 2012: 26-27). For example, responses to Question 1 in the questionnaire about the clarity of mission statements were examined alongside the question about the creation of shared values. The factors were then further examined using the Mann Whitney- Wilcoxon test (R Tutorial 2012: 1) to see if there appeared to be a link. This non inferential test was chosen given that the study sample was not homogenous as School B was a faith school. Finally, the data was examined for Effect Size to study the difference between the spread of the sample and to give further information about the possible strength of the findings (Coe 2002:2). The findings from this quantitative analysis were then compared with earlier findings and a further set of possible interpretations was drawn.

As one of the primary aims of this analysis was to further understand the values and beliefs at play in each of the schools, the open questions were examined to identify the kind and level of ideology that was expressed. The idea for this approach was influenced by Wittgenstein's theory that meaning is created through socialization (Wittgenstein 1953: 217) and Purvis and Hunt's suggestion that ideology frames people's '*forms of consciousness*' through reproducing existing social relations so that other systems of ideas are excluded and the ideology is perceived as '*common sense*' the unquestionable way of doing things (Purvis and Hunt 1993 478-9). After re-reading all the open question responses to each of the study's schools five ideologies emerged from the responses:

- Curricular- responses which were influenced by the curriculum provider, in this case the International Baccalaureate organization, which, as mentioned in Section 3.2 has its own set of beliefs and values. Such a response included comments such as *“as required by the IB Learner Profile”*
- Religious- responses which stem from religious principles. An example of such a response is *“school philosophy based on Christian values”*
- Internationalism- responses which stem from a belief in the development of international mindedness or global citizenship. *“A diverse student and staff body that share their cultural roots”* is an example of a response in this category.
- Social humanism – responses which illustrate a belief in promoting respect and a common good for all people. An example of a response placed in this category is *“our privileged community and its lifestyle is at odds with the humanitarian philosophy of our school”*
- Liberalism- responses which reflect a belief in the importance of individual choice as a tool to contribute to the good of all. *“Giving students the opportunity to come up with new ideas and to implement them to serve others; Global Concerns, Initiative for Peace”* is a comment from this category.

The definitions which guide the classification of responses can be found in Chapter 2.3.6.

A final category – U- was created to capture those responses that did not appear to be based on an ideology but to be focused more on practical aspects of school life. An example of a response in this category would be *“staff meetings”, “collaboration time”*.

After identifying ideology types, each question was also given a 1-3 rating for the level of ideology expressed; one being a low level and three the highest. Some responses reflected more than one ideology and were given separate ratings for each type and level of ideology expressed. Throughout this exercise the researcher kept a running log of the questionnaire

responses assigned to each of the ideology types mentioned above and the levels given so that this could be consulted to assist the consistency of analysis. This exercise was useful and important as responses were often quite similar and at times difficult to categorise and rate. It would have been easy without the log book to lose track of how responses had been placed in categories and how they had been rated which would have resulted in a loss of data integrity (Gibson 2010:303). Once the responses had been tabulated they were entered into the R Cran programme.

In addition to the highly interpretive nature of this analysis, another of the challenges in working with this set of data (open questions) in this manner is that the study was not designed initially with a study of the ideology behind the responses in mind. This part of the study resulted from the questions that the initial analysis of the questionnaire and interview data raised. If this had been the case then questions could have been written which probed deeper into the respondents' belief systems. The data analysis that was undertaken resulted in a number of responses being categorised as not demonstrating an ideological base. Nevertheless, as can be read in Chapter 5.4, the data did result in some interesting findings. R Cran was used to calculate the number of occurrences of ideologically driven responses per school and to calculate the mean of each ideology per school. The findings are reported in Chapter 5.

### **3.6 Limitations of Research Methods**

As mentioned by Fleming et al, highlighting a study's limitations "*can come as something of an anticlimax*". The following sections mention the limitations of this research; many of which are common to studies that use similar research methods. However, like Fleming et al, the researcher believes that this study resulted in interesting findings which raise pertinent questions that can help develop the body of knowledge in this field (Fleming et al

2004: 177-178). Care was also taken to minimize the possible impact of identified limitations.

### **3.6.1 Bias**

#### **3.6.1.2 Addressing Bias within Data Collection**

As mentioned earlier, one of the researcher's key concerns on embarking on this study was the potential impact of bias, both researcher and respondent bias.

In terms of respondent bias, the researcher was concerned that her position as Associate Director of Accreditation might in some way influence participants' responses to the questionnaire and during the interview. As a result of this role she was well known to each of the case study schools. Furthermore, the researcher had a personal connection to International School A, as a former employee and as a parent. The concern was that the researcher's professional position or personal connections might lead to participants trying to "*show themselves in a good light*" (Cohen and Manion 1997: 283), or that they may give socially desirable responses (Hobson and Townsend 2010: 228), both of which would compromise the validity of the data. In order to minimize respondent bias, the researcher at all times stressed her role as a research student. The researcher's university email was used whenever possible, care was taken, within the introduction to the questionnaire and while setting up interviews, to refer to the purpose of the study and when in schools the researcher took care to dress in a smart casual manner and not in her usual formal attire. Secondly, responses to the questionnaire, with the exception of the volunteers for the interview, were made anonymously. This, it was hoped, would encourage respondents to answer what they really believed (Cohen and Manion 1997:283). Furthermore, as the data from the questionnaires was to be compared with the data from the interviews, it was hoped this might balance any bias that affected the interviews. During the interview stage the researcher asked for examples and clarifications if statements made by the interviewee

appeared to have a limited base or to have been affected by the ability to recall events. These examples also tried to determine to what extent there might be a dissonance between participants' beliefs and what happened in practice (Hartas 2010: 258; Punch 2009:152).

Awareness of possible issues arising from interviewer positionality (Punch 2009: 45) led to the decision to record and transcribe word for word each of the interviews and to record during the interview the salient points made by the interviewee. These points were shared with the interviewee at the end of the interview and opportunity was given for comment (Wellington 1996: 35). Given that in her professional life the researcher has to subscribe to the educational theory and values promoted by the Council of International Schools, there was a danger that in the interview she would be influenced by this and some information would be filtered out or given less importance if only notes were taken during the interview. Transcription, it was hoped, would result in a careful record of what was said which would aid in removing bias from interpretations. Care was also taken to avoid excessive social interaction but enough to allow ambiguities to be addressed and clarifications to be made (Wellington 1996: 31).

As one of the functions of the statistical analysis was to further examine the findings from the qualitative analysis, the possibility of seeking answers that support the previous findings was a concern (Cohen and Manion 1997: 282). In the end some of the findings from the analysis supported the initial findings and others did not. In Chapter 5, where these findings are discussed, the researcher tries to approach the interpretation from various angles so as to not exclude possible interpretations.

### **3.6.2 Interpretation**

Limitations of the questionnaire and interview data include the possibility that respondents misinterpreted the questions asked and that the researcher misinterpreted responses to

the open questions in the questionnaires and to responses given within the interview (Hartas 2010:259). Cognizant of this, the researcher used the language of accreditation in the questionnaire which would have been familiar to the schools as each school had been engaged in the accreditation process during the academic year in which the questionnaire was administered. Exceptions to this would be any staff new to the school. Care was taken in the interview to clarify, if it was felt the respondent had misunderstood the question.

Interpretation of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire was challenging as often respondents referred to activities or systems that were difficult to classify without prior knowledge of the school. Although the researcher knew each of the schools well, some adjustments were made to initial classifications for International School C after the interviews shed further light on the nature of some of these systems or activities. In order to keep researcher interpretations as consistent as possible within and between the schools, the researcher kept a notebook of definitions and notes as suggested by Gibson (2010:303) which was read through before the researcher began the analysis of a new school and which was referred to when doubts arose. It was hoped that this would strengthen the validity and transparency of the analysis. The analysis of the open ended questions in the second stage of the questionnaire analysis (in the quantitative study) was highly subjective and interpretative as the researcher had to classify responses in the light of the ideology they appeared to reflect and give a rating to the level of ideology they appeared to project. Naturally, the researcher could have been influenced by her own value system and her interpretation of each ideology when assigning a rating. Also, given that answers were often one word or short phrases, there was a real danger that the classification exercise could become additionally subjective as there was limited information to work with. To alleviate this challenge an initial set of classifications and examples of ratings was created prior to undertaking the exercise and a log book similar to

the one described above proved invaluable as a tool to maintain consistency as the exercise progressed and additional comments needed to be classified.

Guided by warnings of researcher bias in interpretation and cognizant of the value system within which the researcher had to operate professionally (please refer to Section 3.6.1.2), the researcher constantly reminded herself to let the data do the speaking. This involved suspending preconceived notions, not seeking to justify the 'ideal' model which the researcher had been forming in her mind, taking care not be unduly influenced by any one comment and to report in a fair manner (Lindsay 2010:122).

### **3.6.3 Sampling**

In Sections 3.3 and 3.4.3 comments were made about limitations as a result of sampling; in particular with respect to the interview. Much is written in research literature about the limitations of opportunity or convenience sampling; including the possibility of bias (Bell 1993:83; Punch 2009:44; Cohen and Manion 1997:86-90). In this instance, it was felt that as the aim of the study was not to generalize findings but to explore trends that the sampling methods and size did not unduly compromise the data. By the same token, cognizant that the samples in the study were not homogenous, care was also taken to choose non inferential statistical tools.

### **3.6.4 Variables**

Another limitation of the research is that it does not consider gender or age variables. As this study is an initial examination of the topic of school philosophical statements and their impact on school development planning, this was considered beyond the scope of an exploratory study.

## **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The School of Education's *Department Code of Practice on Research Ethics* was used as the framework for addressing issues of ethics.

### **3.7.1 Informed Consent**

Prior to beginning the data collection the researcher sent the research summary to the Council of International Schools and each of the School Heads involved in the study to give details of the study and to request access to documentation. In the case of the schools, access to teachers and school administrators was also requested. At that point the researcher responded to any questions. Written agreements were received from all participating organisations and the Heads of School signaled their agreement to staff by announcing that the research had been endorsed by the school.

Questionnaire respondents and interview participants were at all times, through the introductory note to the questionnaire and the research summary, made fully aware of the purpose of the study and the manner in which the research would be conducted. They were also informed that participation was voluntary. Each interviewee signed the Consent Form provided by the university and through this form indicated their agreement to participate in a recorded interview. No attempt was made to subtly or otherwise make participants feel obliged to be part of the study (Wellington 1996:8).

### **3.7.2 Anonymity**

In order to shield the case study schools from possible identification, no mention was made of their names or their location. Schools were referred to as ISA, ISB and ISC (Smith 1975:14).

In the cover letter to the questionnaire, participants were informed of the degree of anonymity (Bell 1993: 58) that the researcher could guarantee. Questionnaire data was held securely and will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Interview participants' contributions also remained confidential (Berger and Patchner 1994:95) as outlined in the research summary. In the course of the study participants are referred to as Teacher A1, B1, C1 etc. The interviewees were given an opportunity to review the interview summary sheet so that any information which could have been ultimately problematic for the participant should it appear in any research findings could be pointed out to the researcher. The interview recordings will be erased at the end of the study and the transcriptions will be destroyed. During the study the data was safeguarded in the researcher's safe (Lindsay 2010:122).

### **3.7.3 Design Ethics**

Issues of design ethics were informed by Lindsay's (2010: 117-122) advice on possible pitfalls to avoid in educational research. This included carefully examining the design of the study, and the manner in which data would be collected, stored, sorted, analysed and reported so that interpretations would not be compromised. Information on how this was undertaken can be found in 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 above. Information about the study as well as proposed data collection, analysis and reporting methods also had to undergo scrutiny by the university's ethics committee prior to the study commencing.

## Chapter Four

### Initial Findings

#### Description and Analysis

##### 4.0 Introduction

The research used a case study approach involving three schools. Each of the schools, International School A (ISA), International School B (ISB), and International School C (ISC) is located in Asia in the same city. At the time of the study, each of the schools was either in the process of obtaining accreditation through the Council of International Schools or had just very recently completed the process. Given that the study aims to examine some of the accreditation agencies' assumptions, as mentioned in 1.1, it was considered important that the case study schools were part of the accreditation process. Furthermore, as the accreditation process requires schools to undertake an analysis of their school philosophy and objectives and renew their school development plan based on this analysis and the findings of the accreditation process, it was also felt that it was important that this factor be constant amongst the three schools as theoretically each school would have in place a set of philosophical statements and a plan that supported these statements. Other school features are quite varied as described below. Heterogeneity of sites was a priority in the choice of schools, see below in 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, to allow some generalisability and to secure internal validity (Schofield 1993: 101).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in each instance the case study began with a questionnaire which was sent to all members of staff in each school. The principal aim of the questionnaire was to gather broad information about staff perceptions with respect to the schools' philosophical statements and planning processes. This includes:

- the perceived clarity of each school's philosophical statements
- the level of staff personal alignment with the values in the school's philosophy

- processes for communicating the school's philosophy and creating general school-wide ownership of its values
- systems for embedding the philosophy in the school's programmes and operations
- how the school's development plan is created, how staff give input to its creation
- the perceived effectiveness of each system in identifying the school's development needs.

The findings from the questionnaire were analysed and emerging themes were further explored in follow up interviews. Each interviewee was asked the same 10 questions, which aimed at furthering the interviewer's understanding of the interviewee's perceptions, followed by 6 questions which explored in greater depth certain of the interviewee's responses to the questions in the questionnaire; in particular those that appeared to shed information on the areas under research. The selection process and rationale for the construction of the questions has been explained in the previous chapter.

#### **4.1 International School A (ISA)**

ISA was founded in 1981. It is a proprietary school offering the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IBPYP) to students ages 3 to 10, the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) to students ages 11 to 16 and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) to students ages 17 to 18.

The school is located on two sites, Preschool- Grade 8 (students aged 3-14) are located on one site and the rest of the students are located on a site approximately 6 kilometers away. International School A serves approximately 750 students from approximately 35 different nationalities. The largest national groupings are British, Japanese and Korean. Host country national students have to apply to the local Ministry of Education for permission to attend the school and will only be allowed to join the school under exceptional circumstances. It is host country regulations that nationals attend local system schools. The school has a non

selective enrolment policy, consequently students have a range of abilities and a range of fluency levels in English.

The school employs 83 teachers from 14 different nationalities. The major nationalities represented in the staff body are British, Australian and American. Some of these teachers have served the school for over 10 years but many teachers remain at the school for 2- 4 years before seeking a further international school experience. The school experiences a 33% annual staff turnover. Support staff tend to come from the host nation.

The school's philosophical statements consist of a mission statement, a set of beliefs and a set of objectives which are broadly based on the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile. These statements are listed in full in Appendix A. In brief, these statements commit the school to providing a multicultural educational environment for students, supporting academic success, personal growth, social responsibility, global citizenship and life –long learning. The philosophical statements also promote a supportive and caring community in which education is provided in partnership with stakeholders. The International Baccalaureate Learner Profile aims to create learners that are: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.

At the time of the study the school was in the final stages of completing the accreditation process and its philosophical statements had been reviewed by the school community, as part of this process, approximately 12 months prior to the study.

#### **4.1.1 Data Collection –The Questionnaire**

In total 76 questionnaires were returned. This resulted in a 91.5 % return rate. Most questions were completed in full. As participants were asked to give their name only if they were willing to participate in a face to face interview it was not possible to follow up on incomplete questionnaires unless the respondent agreed to being interviewed. As a result,

a fifth category was created to record the number of non responses to each category. Participants recorded a 1 if they strongly disagreed with the question, a 2 if they disagreed, a three if they agreed and a 4 if they strongly agreed. A 5 signified no response. This tabulation method was used for each of the schools.

#### **4.1.2 Data Collection- Interview Participants**

Prior to beginning the interview process two pilot interviews were conducted with ISA staff to test the effectiveness of the pilot questions, and to gauge the interviewee's comfort level in interacting with the interviewer (please refer to Chapter 3.4.5 for full details of the pilots). These pilots took place with ISA staff as it was no longer possible, given circumstances at the original pilot school, to access the school. In the end, and after discussion with the university, it was agreed to include the data from the two pilot interviews in the findings as much valuable information emerged and no particular issues emerged from the pilots that resulted in a change of approach.

In total nine teachers were interviewed. Background details of the participants follows.

Teacher A1: taught in the High School, had been a student at the school and had been employed for three years at the time of the interview. This teacher was a member of the Accreditation Philosophy Review Committee that had met one year prior to the interview. Teacher A1 is from Australia.

Teacher A2: a High School teacher from Europe who had been employed at the school for twelve years.

Teacher A3: a High School Teacher from the United States who had been employed at the school for two years. Prior to joining this school Teacher A Three had served in a number of international schools. This teacher was also a member of the Philosophy Review Committee.

Teacher A4: a member of the Senior Leadership Team who had been employed at the school for 12 years. Teacher A4 is from Canada.

Teacher A5: a member of the Senior Leadership Team who had been working at the school for three years and who had served in three other international schools. Teacher A5 is from Australia.

Teacher A6: an Elementary School teacher from the United States that had been working at the school for four and a half years. This teacher was also a member of the Philosophy Review Committee.

Teacher A7: a Middle School teacher from Canada that had been working at the school for one year.

Teacher A8: a member of the school leadership team and a seasoned international school educator that had been working at the school for one year. Teacher A8 is from the United States.

Teacher A9: an Elementary teacher from Europe that had been working at the school for nine years. This teacher also served on the Philosophy Review Committee.

#### **4.1.3 Findings**

To begin to explore the extent to which the study's hypothesis bears true in each of the case study schools, the findings from the questionnaire were combined and triangulated with the interview data and a set of emerging understandings were developed.

##### **4.1.3.1 Clarity of the School's Philosophical Statements**

Responses to Question 1 of the questionnaire- *"My school's philosophical statements express a clear set of values"* – suggested that the majority of respondents believed that the school's statements clearly articulated what the school stood for.

Responses to Question 5 of the questionnaire- *"I understand the values expressed in the school's philosophical statement"*- also suggest that, in general, teachers believe that they are familiar with the school's values. These questions did not however reveal whether or not teachers had developed the same understandings about the school's philosophy.

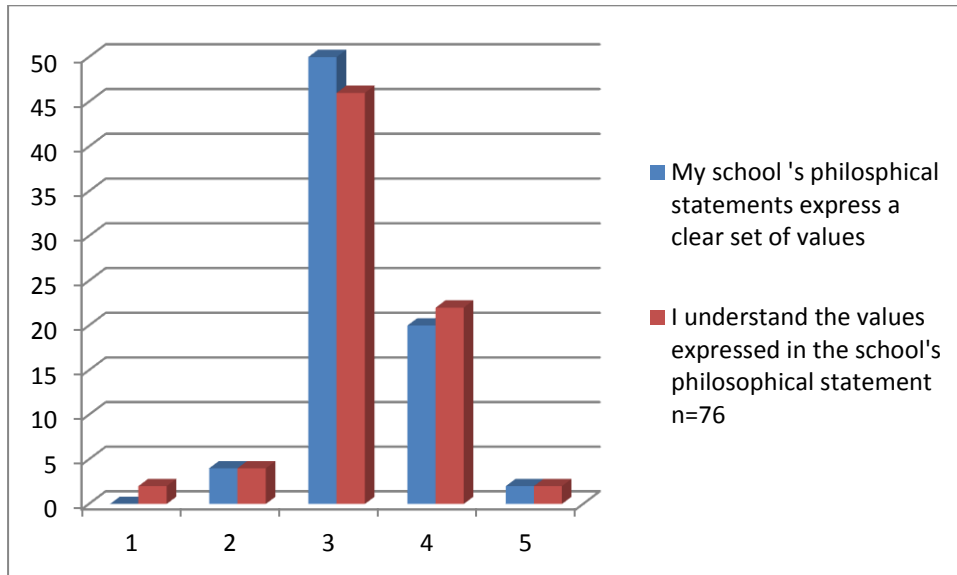


Figure 2

When interviewees were asked, *"What do you think are the major values expressed in your school's philosophy and objectives?"* (Interview Question 1), an array of responses ensued including *"promotion of individuality"*, *"inclusion"*, *"international mindedness"*, *"supporting the IB values"*, and *"commitment to diversity"*. Only three of the nine interviewees used terminology or concepts that were actually expressed in the school's philosophical statements, five believed that the IB philosophy was the school's philosophy, despite four of the nine interviewees mentioning that they had been part of the group that had reviewed the school's philosophy in preparation for the accreditation process approximately 12 months prior to the research interview. An interesting perspective on this finding was offered, unsolicited, in the interview with one of the teachers, also a school administrator.

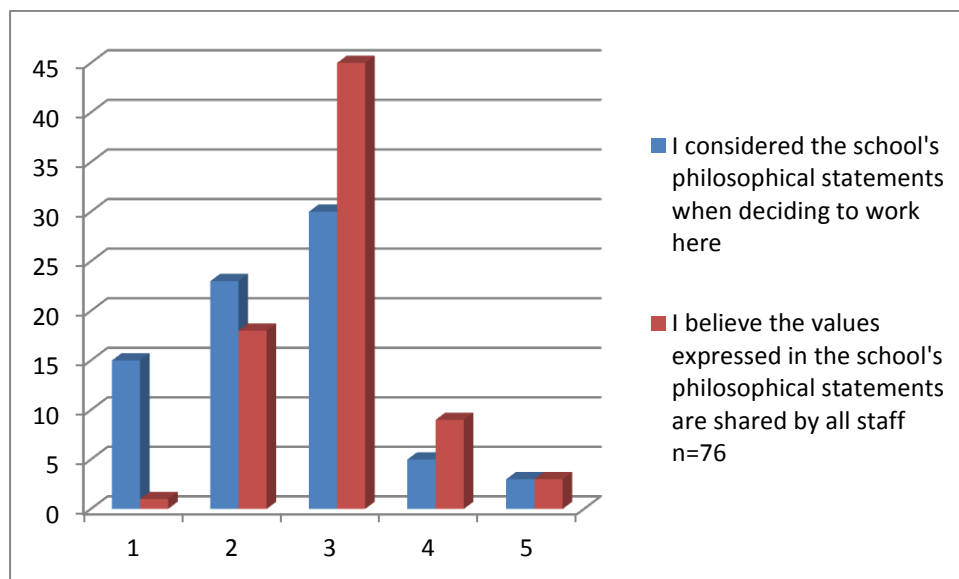
Teacher A4 *“There are other parts of the culture of the school that are not in the philosophy- its inclusiveness and the activeness of the IB Diploma. It was not something that was part of the original mission statement but it is something that is characteristic of our school’s ethos and who we are and what is driving us even more so than some of the other factors”*

As an explanation for this perception Teacher A4, suggests that this drift from what is actually written in the school’s statements to what is understood by staff may be caused by what Teacher A4 considers to be the *“generic content”* of the school’s statements.

*“Because it (mission statement) is so generic it is not something that we have to reflect on... if it was specific and contemporary to who we are then I think we would”*

#### 4.1.3.2 Staff Alignment with the School’s Values

Question 2 in the questionnaire *“I considered the school’s philosophical statements when deciding to work here”* and Question 6 *“I believe the values expressed in the school’s philosophical statements are shared by all staff”* aimed to examine the perceived level of staff’s agreement with the school’s values. Responses suggested that in this school the philosophical statements were not a major pre-employment consideration for more than half of the teachers (38 teachers). Despite the high number of respondents who suggest they did not consider the philosophy prior to joining the school, a significant number of questionnaire respondents (54) believed that the school enjoyed shared values.



## Figure 3

An exploration of these areas in the face to face interviews echoed the essence of comments made by Teacher A4, quoted in 4.1.3.1, and provided some additional possible explanations for these responses. Reflecting Teacher A4's comments about the IB Diploma, Teacher A7, who like Teachers A2 and A9 suggested that the International Baccalaureate philosophy is the school's philosophy, mentioned that *"to be interviewed for a position it is the first thing that is brought up. If you are aware of the IB you know right away what they stand for."* Teacher A2 suggested that if teachers believe in the IB Diploma and have chosen to work in such a school then automatically a shared set of values emerges regardless of the school's written philosophical statements. Teacher A9 suggested that the excellent IB training that teachers received contributed to a shared understanding.

The impact of this confusion with the IB philosophy was illustrated by Teachers A3 and A7 who, as a result of their belief that the school's values were synonymous with the IB philosophy, came to the conclusion that not all teachers fully subscribe to the school's values. This was based on their observation that not all teachers working in the Middle Years section of the school supported the philosophy and teaching approaches of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, and this had resulted in a lack of engagement, collaboration and development (Teacher A3) and difficulties in adapting and being flexible (Teacher A7).

Teacher A8, who was relatively new to the school, suggested that the school's culture of shared values was in part the result of a *"core group of people that has been here for a long time"* and that that group creates a *"sense of the historical cultural knowledge"*. Teacher A8, who throughout the interview expressed difficulty in fully understanding the school's philosophy, mentioned that the specific relationship between the IB philosophy and the school's mission statement was unclear. *"What we do have is our mission statement on a*

*WIKI .... and I think we also have a set of beliefs that go along with the mission and we have the IB characteristics throughout the school but it is not quite clear to me”* Teacher A1, described how an understanding of the philosophy was developed during student days at the school but described the process of understanding the school’s values as “*organic*”. This was echoed by Teacher A5 who suggested that mention of the school’s philosophy “*doesn’t come up a lot*”, by Teacher A6 who believed it is the general ethos of the school that created cohesion, and by Teacher A9 who felt that staff were not very aware of the philosophy. Finally, Teacher A5 believed that the school’s philosophy was applied differently on each of the campuses and that limited systems were in place to ensure cross-over of ideas and application.

These findings suggest that although questionnaire data shows that teachers believed that the school enjoys support for the values in its philosophical statements that in fact certain tensions were at play in ISA. These include firstly, a tension between the school’s stated philosophy and the IB philosophy, secondly, the beliefs built up over time amongst long serving staff and the school’s stated philosophy and thirdly, the additional understandings about the school that had developed and which seemed to be influencing the school and the school’s stated philosophy. The study will return to these important findings in Section 4.4 and in the following chapter.

#### **4.1.3.3 Communication and Ownership of Philosophical Statements**

Both the questionnaire and, in particular, the face to face interviews highlighted important systemic challenges in the areas of communication within ISA.

One of the key tools the accreditation process promotes to help garner support for a school’s philosophy is stakeholder participation in the creation and subsequent review of a school’s philosophy. Question three in the questionnaire sought information in this area and responses initially gathered from this exercise suggested that a reasonable number of

staff claimed that teachers gave input into this process. However, follow up questions during interviews revealed a number of differing perceptions and understandings. Longer serving staff (Teacher A4, Teacher A2) were able to describe how staff gave input to the creation of the school's philosophy but teachers with less years of service tended to respond with views such as *"there wasn't any"* (Teacher A1),

*"I don't think that there has been a real call for staff to give input or for staff to engage with shaping the statements or shaping the documents at all"* (Teacher A3).

In the interviews most staff were able to describe the recent review process that had taken place as part of the accreditation process but were unanimous in stating that this review was driven by the upcoming accreditation process and limited input had been given prior to this. Teachers with less than one year's service were less clear of the system for review and made statements such as *"I think it needs to be more evident, obvious and directly applied"* (Teacher A8). In addition, teachers interviewed tended to speak with a school divisional perspective rather than a whole school perspective as evidenced by statements like *"I am speaking from the Elementary School perspective"* (Teacher A6).

Systems for communicating the school's values were explored in the Questionnaire through Question 3: *"The school's orientation process includes an orientation to the school's philosophical statements"* and Question 7 *"My school makes time for staff to discuss and debate the school's values and beliefs"*. This data is also explored in the open ended question number 1 *"Please specify 2 or 3 ways that your school helps staff understand the school's philosophical statements"*. The results for questions 3, 4 and 7 are tabulated below along with the data from open question 1.

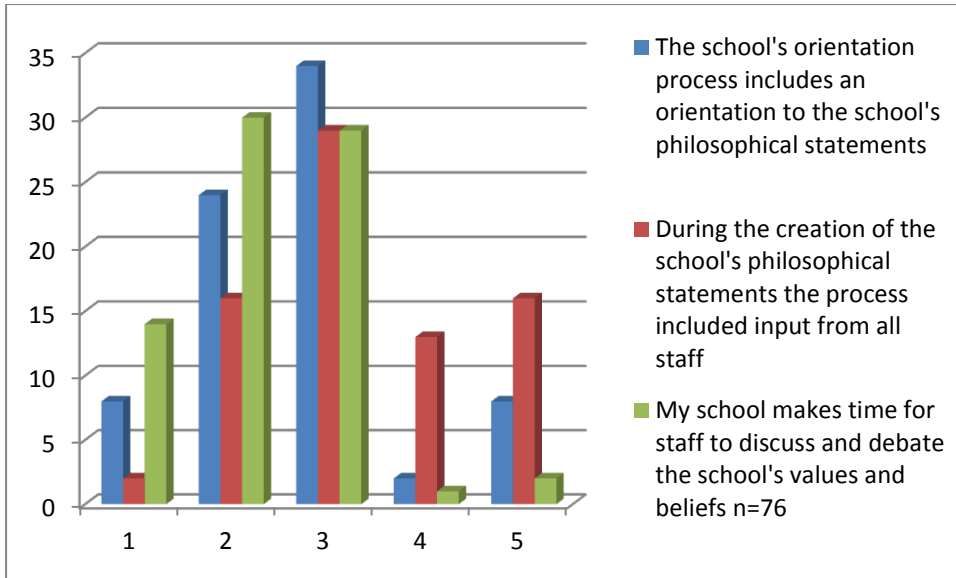


Figure 4

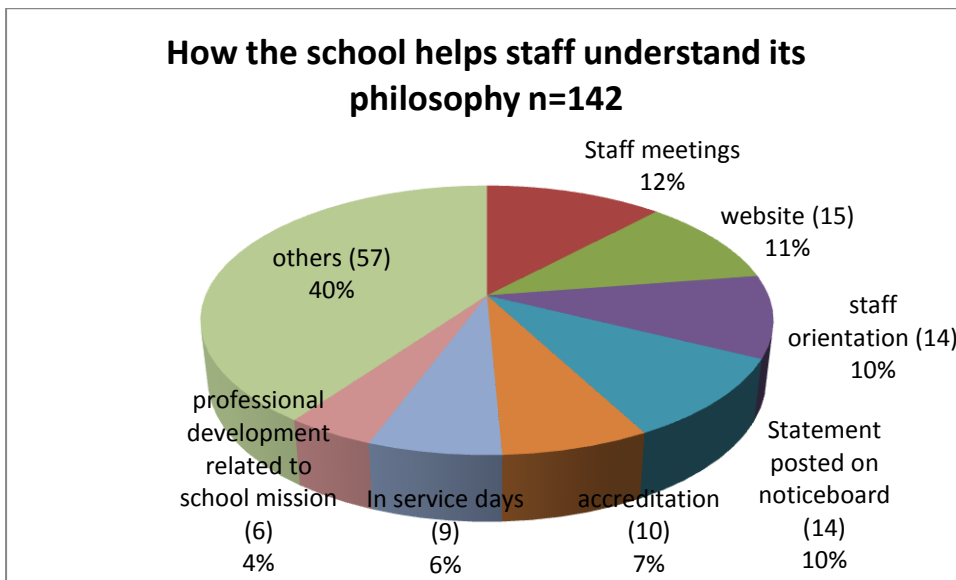


Figure 5

Results from the questionnaire suggest that a majority of teachers felt that an orientation to the school’s philosophy was either not part of the school’s induction process or they were unsure that it was part of the process (38 respondents) and a significant number of teachers did not believe that the school makes time for debate and discussion of the school’s values (45 respondents). Responses to Open Question 1 also suggest that there is a variety of understandings of how the school articulates philosophy as a whole range of

methods were listed; the method receiving the highest percentage- staff meetings- only received 12% of the overall score.

This finding was supported by data from the interviews. When asked how teachers developed an understanding of the school's philosophy responses such as "*organically*" (Teacher A1), "*I have been here a very long time*" (Teacher A2), and "*osmosis*" (Teacher A5) were received. Teacher A3 mentioned that it was rarely referenced, that there was an assumption that people "*know it*" then expanded this idea by suggesting that the school community had not yet developed a common language which would enable effective discussion and debate to take place.

*"I don't know if we have ever actually been communicated enough about the ins and out of the philosophy so that we can be thinking OK when we are doing things we are saying, OK, I am representing the school philosophy. I don't think that the elements of the philosophy have been present enough in the school documents so that when people talk people have the vocabulary"*

Teacher A5 suggested that the school's philosophy was mentioned in meetings but qualified this by saying,

*"It is not like some schools I have been to where it is at the front, particularly in meetings and induction and things like that..... it is not formalized like other schools are."*

#### **4.1.3.4 Embedding the School's Philosophy**

Given the challenges illustrated in the findings thus far, the researcher believed that it was likely that data in the following section would suggest that the school's philosophy was not highly embedded in the school's programmes and operations.

The extent to which the school's philosophy is embedded in its programmes and operations was explored through Questions 8-10 and Open Questions 2 and 3 in the questionnaire, Questions 2 and 4 in the interviews as well as through several of the questions personal to the interviewees. The findings are illustrated below.

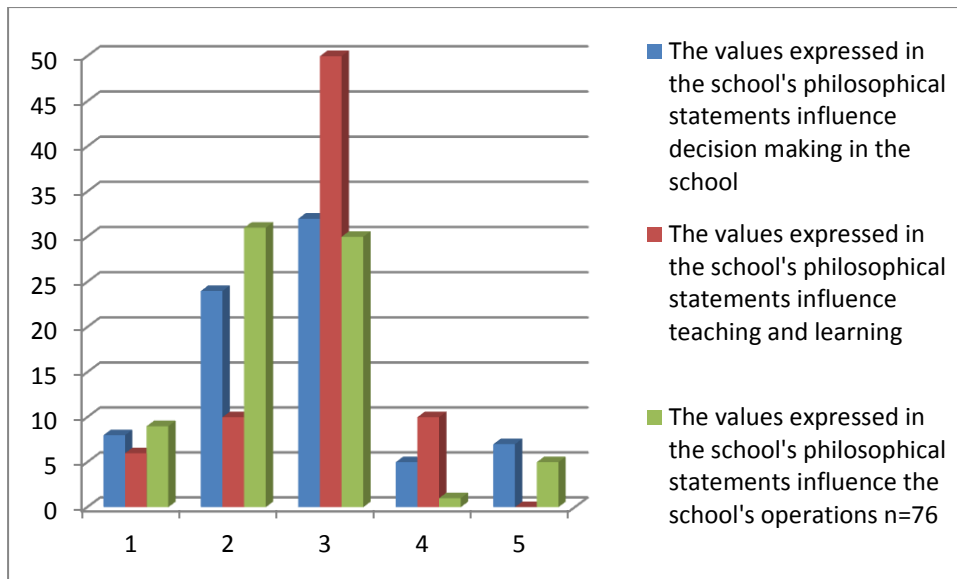


Figure 6

Contrary to the researcher's assumptions, responses to the questionnaire suggest that a significant number of teachers (60) believed that teaching and learning was influenced by the school's philosophy (Question 9). This may in part be explained by the limited distinction made by several teachers between the school philosophy and the IB philosophy which was mentioned earlier in Section 4.1.3.2.

This perception was supported by the responses received to Open Question 2 asking for details on how the school puts its philosophy and objectives into action. In this instance 29% of the responses related to aspects of the school's curriculum (curriculum choice, IB Learner profile, and teaching) and no significant mention was made of other areas of the school's operations.

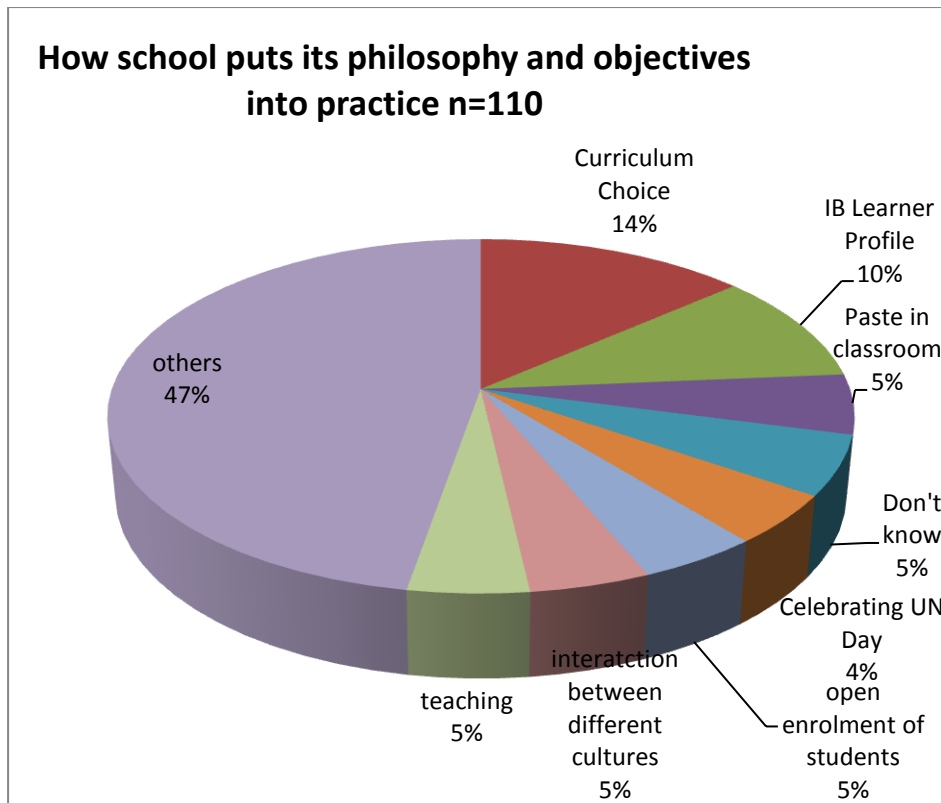


Figure 7

As can be seen in Figure 5, school operations and decision making in general were perceived to be less driven by school values (Question 10). Forty teachers did not believe that the school's operations were driven by the school's philosophy and thirty one believed that this happened. Thirty two teachers felt decision making did not consider the school's philosophy and six did not respond to the question (Question 8).

Factors which were viewed as helping the school implement its philosophy were varied, (Open Question 3), but those that attracted higher ratings tended not to relate to school infrastructure or systems but to elements of the school demographics such as the school's multicultural body, the international makeup of the teaching staff, school activities or the school's chosen curriculum.

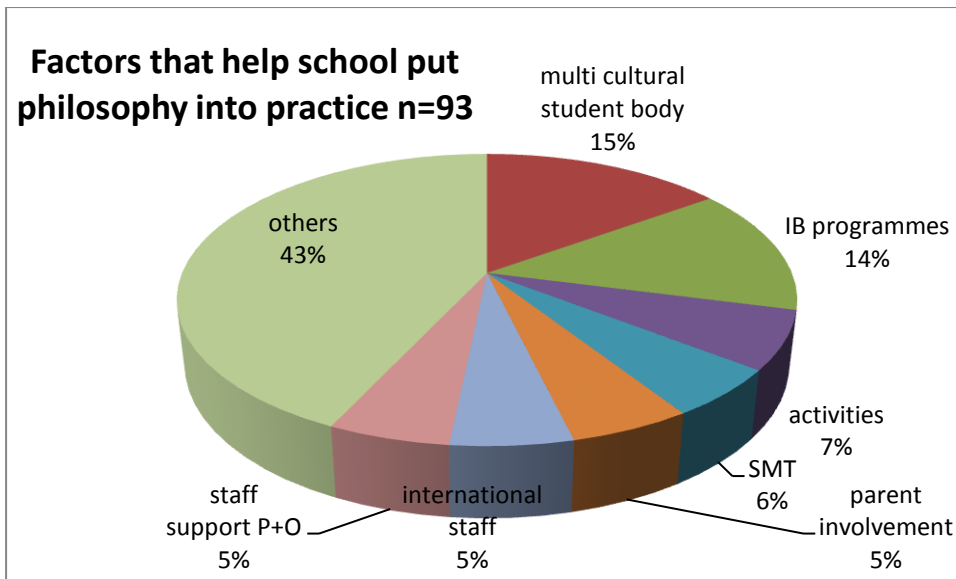


Figure 8

Operational issues such as funding, resources, facilities, and communication did, however, feature more strongly in the converse question which aimed to solicit the challenges to implementing the school’s philosophy (Open Question 4).

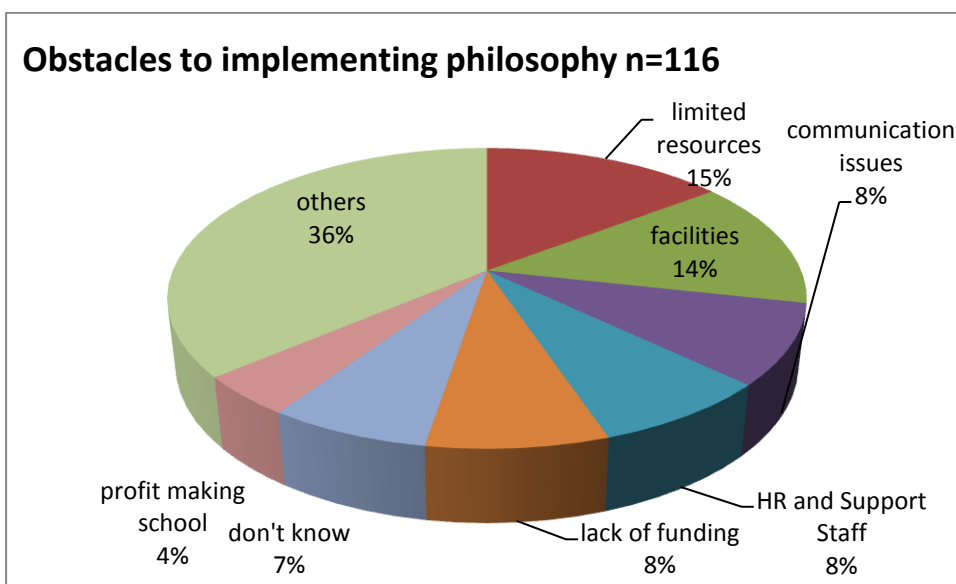


Figure 9

Interviewees gave detailed responses on how teaching and learning is influenced by the school’s philosophy and objectives. However, reflecting the possible explanation for the higher positive responses for this area, it was, at times, unclear whether or not it was the curricular philosophy, which is the International Baccalaureate philosophy, or whether it

was the 'understood' philosophy of the school mentioned in 4.1.3.1 that was driving teaching and learning. This is borne out in interview comments such as:

Teacher A1: *"It's not the Philosophy and Objectives that is guiding our thinking I think it is the idea that we are part of an international community that actually guides our thinking and that we are like minded people , we are well travelled, well educated and naturally pass on these life experiences to our students."*

Teacher A2 *"and so the activities we do in advisory and outside of class are led by the Philosophy and Objectives which I think is based around the diploma."*

Teacher A3 *"I think it is something that one does; it is intrinsic because we are educators. You know I think that is a really good question, does our philosophy come from what we are told or does how we act inform the philosophy that we are creating?"*

Teacher A6 *"I think both in the sense that because we are an IBPYP school and it is embedded in what we do."*

Teacher A7 *"well the curriculum is your guide and you as an experienced professional will take that and apply it to your teaching."*

Teacher A9 *"because we are very much following the IBPYP I think they are linked to that so it naturally happens."*

In terms of decision making and school operations, interviewees were very able to articulate what they believed to be the school's operational challenges. These included primarily the areas illustrated in Figure 14. Teachers A2, A3, A5, and A9 clearly linked the challenges in the school's facilities to the impact on creating a sense of community which they felt was part of the school's philosophy but which was not in fact part of the written school philosophy. Teachers A6 and A8 mentioned recent decisions to increase Special Educational Needs staff as a tardy yet welcome decision to support the school's philosophy of inclusion; again an understood but not formally articulated school belief. Teacher A1, when asked to describe the thinking that lay behind the comment that facilities and resources detracted from the school's implementation of its philosophy and objectives, paused pensively for a while then said:

*"I might actually retract that as when you actually look at the Philosophy and Objectives, the Philosophy and Objectives is really about actually inspiring a feeling amongst the community of inclusiveness and compassion and international mindedness and actually all of that comes from social interactions between students and between staff and students so the only way I could see it influencing that is perhaps by people's negativity towards the*

*school.... there are days when you hear comments that really criticize the school for having a lack of facilities and morale is low and there are other days when we think we work in an amazing place despite this lack of facilities. We have amazing kids, we have amazing staff, we achieve amazing things despite the lack of facilities and resources.”*

The interviewees, primarily in the personal question section of the interview, were able to describe decisions that had been made which they did not agree with. This included raising school fees (Teachers A3, A9), decisions made by non academic administrators or the Governing Body (Teachers A4, A5, A7, A8) but none of the responses reflected upon the relationship with the school’s philosophy. Even when ‘pushed’ on how their ideas might support the school’s philosophy, links to the school’s philosophy were not forthcoming. For example, Teacher A9 in response to a direct question about the school’s philosophy “*How do you think addressing those will support the school’s philosophy and objectives*” responded:

*“I think it is crucial. If they don’t do something about a new building and developing new facilities the school will really struggle and I think the only reason we are still getting so many children is that the schools in (name of country) are full.”*

The only school philosophy related response came from Teacher A5 who mentioned that the main instances when the philosophy drives decision making are when the school needs to make a decision about whether a student should remain at school or be excluded.

*“On these occasions we tend to discuss what we are about and how does this relate to our mission in that decision we are making about that student.”*

#### **4.1.3.5 Strategic Planning Processes**

In order to learn about school development processes and to understand how links were made with the school’s philosophy the questionnaire asked two questions about planning processes- Question 11: “*I am involved in my school’s development planning processes.*” and Question 13 : “*My school refers to the school’s philosophical statements during school development planning*”. This area was further explored in Open Question 5 in which respondents were asked to specify ways that the school identifies its development needs

and in Open Question 6 where teachers were asked to specify ways that staff give input into the school's development process.

The initial questions from the questionnaire suggested that a sizable number of respondents (42) felt they were not involved with school development planning. However, Open Question Six did elicit a number of possible avenues for staff to give input; primarily through faculty meetings, committees and through school leaders. In addition, Open Question 5 resulted in a list of several data gathering processes staff were involved in that were used for planning purposes. This apparent contradiction was considered during the interviews.

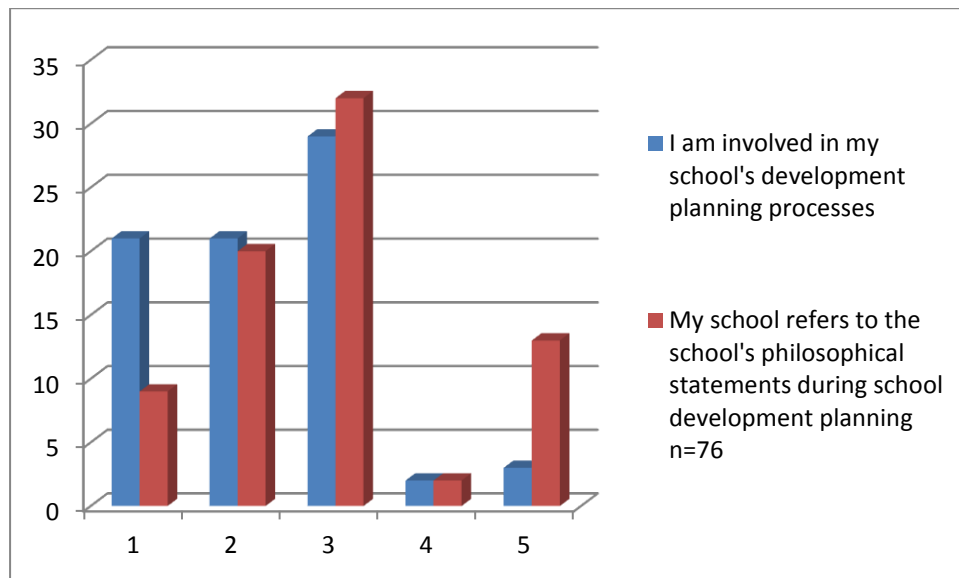


Figure 10

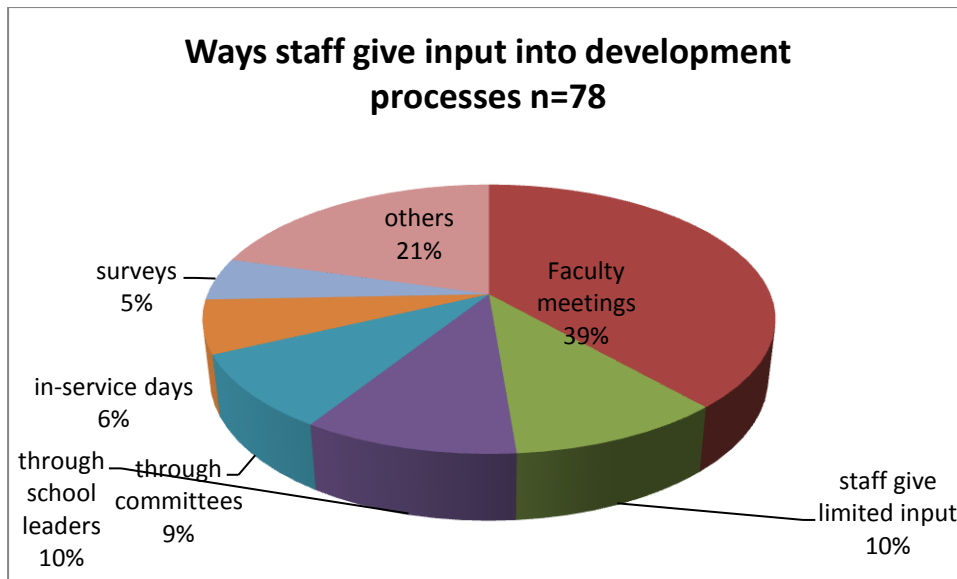


Figure 11

A number of questions were asked during interviews to try to understand the ratings in the questionnaire. The standard questions which each interviewee was asked solicited details about how planning is undertaken in the school, how staff participate, what data is used, how the plan is reviewed and how the school measures if the plan supports the school's goals (Questions 5, 6, 7, 8, 10). A range of responses were received. Staff with less than three years of service, (Teachers A1, A3, A5, A6, A7 and A8), were not able to describe how the school creates its overall development plan. Some were aware of a document on the intranet (Teacher A5 and Teacher A8) but did not know much about the document and had formed personal opinions about it such as *"it tends to be top down"* (Teacher A5) *"it doesn't seem quite updated"* (Teacher A8). Teacher A4, who had 12 years of service in the school, was able to give the history of how the school's strategic planning process began and the process used for review. Teachers A2 and A9, the other longer serving teachers, were unsure,

*"I am a bit unclear now of how it does that because I think there has been such a shift of concerns"* (Teacher A2), *"I think it is an ongoing procedure they keep going back to the self-study"* (Teacher A9).

What did emerge from the interviews was that two layers of planning seemed to be in operation, the strategic planning process and a process the interviewees often referred to as “*academic planning*”. This academic planning process, as described by Teacher A5, included four specific plans, an IBPYP, IBMYP, IB Diploma and Information Technology Plan. The plans consisted of a set of outcomes to be achieved for the year and the PYP, MYP and Diploma plans were subject to review through the International Baccalaureate’s authorization process and were driven by the IB philosophy. Evidence of planning emerged from the questionnaire and the interviews. For example, the use of data from accreditation work, IB evaluations and standardized tests is corroborated in responses to Open Question 5 in the questionnaire. In addition, each of the teachers interviewed gave numerous examples of how standardized tests were analysed in order to develop improvement strategies (Teacher A1, Teacher A3, Teacher A4, Teacher A5, Teacher A6, Teacher A8), how the findings from the accreditation process were used to examine development needs (Teacher A1, Teacher A2, Teacher A4, Teacher A9) and how teachers engaged in conversation about curriculum development work in departments or committees (Teacher A2, Teacher A5, Teacher A8).

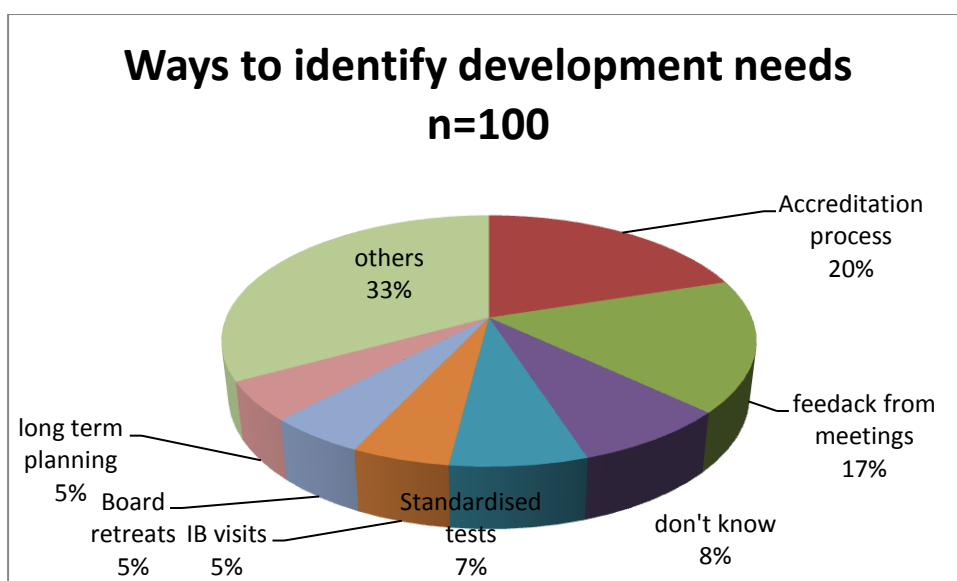


Figure 12

All of this data seemed to point to active engagement in areas such as programme development and planning yet none of these areas seemed to feature in the school's strategic plan. One interviewee, Teacher A2, struggled to understand how the school's current focus on technology supported the school's beliefs and believed it was part of a marketing ploy *"but when it comes to decisions, decisions are made more outside the curriculum to see how we can market the school"*.

When asked about other areas of school-wide development planning a wide array of understandings appeared. Responses were received such as,

*"There are messages that get passed through Subject Group Leaders, we get bits and pieces in our meetings but my understanding is that planning is dictated by management"* (Teacher A1).

*"Well I do think we have clearly participated this year in the CIS committees...so I think we have been involved at that level but the next level of actual implementing decisions that we have made doesn't happen"* (Teacher A3).

Teacher A6 was unsure how the academic planning that was being undertaken related to the school's strategic plan and what the long term vision of the school actually was.

Teacher A5 felt that limited information was shared with staff about other forms of development and consequently limited input was given by staff. Teachers A6 and A8 believed that non curriculum related decisions that were made seemed to be made in isolation of the reality of the learning environment.

*"So in the creation of a strategic or development plan the top might have one idea but it is not connected to what the reality is and the people down at the bottom don't have any idea what dictates the decisions at the top and there is probably some very logical reason for that but neither one is aware of the other."* (Teacher A6)

*"I would say that sometimes the reality of the Elementary School is often not taken into consideration by the school structure and it is more based on financial limitations than promoting our mission and vision in terms of what we have here"* (Teacher A8).

In the end, Teacher A4, part of the senior leadership team, confirmed that there were in fact two separate sets of planning undertaken. It was not apparently intended that way, however, it seems the school struggled to create a process which allowed it to use the

feedback from the accreditation process, the evaluation visits undertaken by the International Baccalaureate and other identified strategic goals, to inform the school development planning process. It was explained that as these evaluations all took place at different times it was difficult to embed their findings in a plan. As a result, the school found itself in the situation of reacting to external organizations and did not have time to fold development areas into an overall plan. This overt influence by external organisations such as the IB may have contributed to teachers confusing the school's philosophy with that of the IB. Teacher A4 mentioned that this situation would be rectified after the upcoming evaluation visit which would involve all agencies at the same time. The current, in principle, inactive school development plan would be retired and a new all encompassing plan would be created. This was not mentioned by any of the other interviewees, including those that were members of the leadership team.

Teacher A4's comments about the current state of planning in the school and the reasons for the difficulty in creating an overarching plan strongly suggest that International School A's planning processes both current and past were not guided to any great extent by the school's philosophy and that it had not developed a robust planning process. The extent to which ISA's challenges stemmed more from the former than the latter was not examined to any great extent in this study. Nevertheless, if planning processes were driven by the school's philosophy, then the guidance offered by the philosophy ought to have given the school a framework in which to include the recommendations from the various organisations regardless of when these recommendations appeared (Stoll 1999:515-6). A robust planning process which offered opportunities for review would have also solved the challenges highlighted in the timing of the feedback received. Furthermore, Teacher A4's comments suggest that ISA's planning processes solely consisted of responding to external agencies' standards and not to other needs identified by the school after analysis of its philosophy and intended direction. In fairness to ISA, recommendations in IB and

accreditation evaluation reports do take into consideration what the school believes are its development needs. However, these needs are only those that arise from an analysis of the agencies' standards. They do not consider other tactical or strategic needs that the school may have.

In support of this interpretation, all respondents stated that the school does not have a mechanism in place to determine the extent to which the school's development plan supports the school's philosophy although Teacher A6 mentioned that the Accreditation Review Committee had suggested that a rubric could be created for this purpose. The mixed ratings given to Question 13 in the questionnaire reflect staff's uncertainty of the extent to which planning is driven by the school's philosophy.

#### 4.1.3.6 Identification of School Development Needs

Two questionnaire questions, Question 12: *"It is easy to identify where my school's development needs lie"*, and Question 14: *"I believe my school's development plan effectively captures the school's development needs"*, aimed to garner information about teacher perceptions in this area. The results are illustrated below.

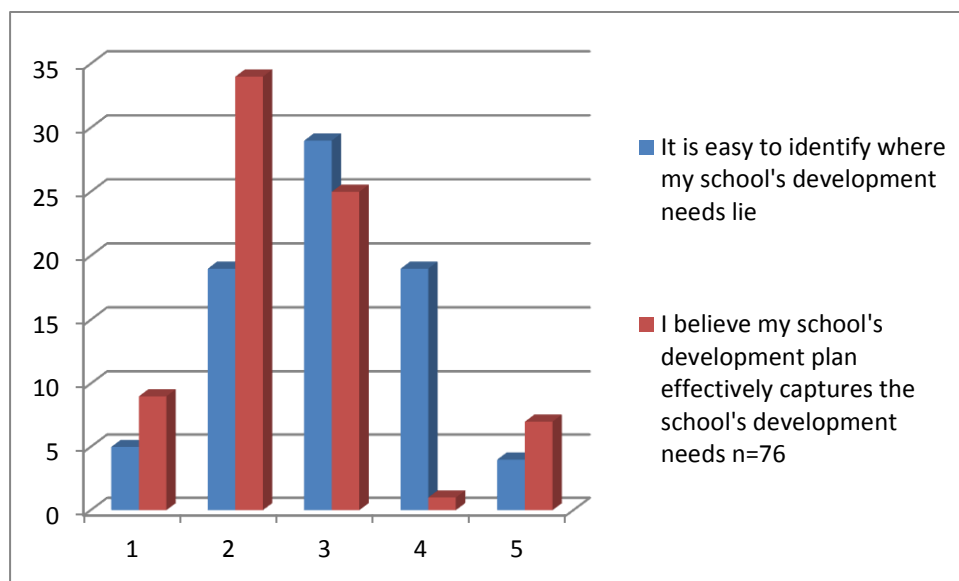


Figure 13

The majority of questionnaire respondents believed it was easy to identify the school's development needs (48 respondents) but that they were not reflected in the school development plan. This supports many of the findings related in Section 4.1.3.5 in which teachers in the interviews described varied understandings about the nature and process of planning in the school, uncertainties about developing planning in general, limited links with the school's philosophical direction and what they believed to be a disconnect between planning perceived to be driven by senior management and the needs of the school. When this topic was directly explored with each interviewee, apart from the confusion described above as to what constituted the school's development plan, staff tended to repeat their belief that planning processes to develop the curriculum captured development needs as the school's constant referral to the International Baccalaureate expectations made it clear where there were shortcomings. Comments about other development needs tended to repeat comments about what needed to be addressed such as facilities and resources.

When interviewees were asked why the plan does not appear to effectively capture the school's needs, a broad selection of comments were offered such as,

*"perhaps more formal consultation, with staff... more effective data collection, more communication between staff, management and the Board, lack of processes"* (Teacher A1),

*"I think the key reason is that is a private limited company and that the focus is on profit and about keeping costs low"* (Teacher A2),

*"I would like the school to seriously look at its mission and values....to zero in on what makes ISA special"* (Teacher A4),

*"I think that for the academics the philosophy and objectives needs to be adhered to fairly strongly but doesn't appear to be adhered to very strongly on the administrative side. They are governed by governmental controls rather than by educational philosophy and values"* (Teacher A5).

*"Fear of giving too much away"* (Teacher A7),

*“I think our mission is to provide a multicultural environment but don’t think we actually plan it, it happens in a sense organically” (Teacher A8).*

In essence, it would seem that the school’s low responses to Question 14 stem from both communication issues, various understandings about what the school believes in and its non- philosophy driven processes.

#### **4.1.3.7 Discussion and Interpretation**

To a large extent the findings from the study of the ISA outlined above support the literature read and the research hypothesis.

ISA teachers do not appear to have a unified understanding of the school’s values, although they purport to having a strong shared culture. Individual teachers seem to have developed their interpretation of the school’s philosophy based on their interpretation of the school culture and appear to have fused the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate Organisation with the school’s philosophy. To a large extent the IB philosophy, in the eyes of staff interviewed, seemed to have become the de facto school philosophy. As mentioned above, this is perhaps due to a lack of clarity in the relationship between the two belief systems. In some instances interviewees believed that this philosophy was the school philosophy and other teachers were struggling to fully understand the connection and how the sections of the school’s philosophy were interrelated.

This confusion appears to stem from three factors. Firstly there does not appear to be a clear understanding of how the various parts of the school’s philosophy – the mission, beliefs and objectives (The IB Learner Profile) are interrelated. Raynor (1998:368) highlights the confusion that can arise when there is conceptual misunderstanding about the role of the parts of an organisation’s philosophy. Although his work refers to conceptual misunderstanding between the role of a mission and vision, this study suggests that perhaps the same can apply to the other parts of a philosophy. In this case teachers in

ISA had adopted the IB Learner Profile from the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) as the school's objectives. The Learner Profile lays out the attitudes the International Baccalaureate would like learners to demonstrate as a result of following the International Baccalaureate curricular framework. It is an integral part of the International Baccalaureate's curricular philosophy. Inclusion of the school's curriculum provider's philosophy within the school's philosophical statements, coupled with staff familiarity with the learner profile and limited familiarity with the school's mission and beliefs seemed to have resulted in a philosophical drift in which the school's philosophy was overshadowed by the IB philosophy.

The second factor which seems to have diluted a common understanding of the philosophy is the 'generic' terminology used which appears to have stripped the school's philosophy of some of its meaning. This finding strongly supports Stott and Walkers findings in their study of Singaporean schools (Stott and Walker 1992: 54 and Beare et al's work (1993: 149). A third factor, also mentioned in the literature, appears to be the school's limited or unclear communication structures which impeded the development of ownership of the philosophy through Habermasian style debate and discussion (Habermas 1984) and alignment of teachers' value systems with the school's philosophy. ISA teachers that had served the school for more than one year appeared to have had the opportunity to review and debate the school's philosophy as a result of the school's accreditation process but those newer to the school all stated that they had not had a chance to do so. ISA teachers were not able to clearly describe the systems used to communicate the school's value system to stakeholders, and the systems used to link school decision making with the school's philosophy. Furthermore, the majority of respondents to the questionnaire did not believe that induction processes effectively addressed this topic. These were all elements mentioned by authors such as Senge (2000:290-291), Fullan (1992:120-121), and Limb

(1992:168) as critical to ensuring the institutionalization of the school's philosophy in its systems and planning (Bell and Harrison 1995:2).

In keeping with the research hypothesis, as ISA did not have a clearly defined and collaboratively agreed philosophy, ISA's development plans did not demonstrate a tight correlation with the school's philosophy. Although the original plan contained components such as action steps, target dates, resources, the implementer, success criteria and process for monitoring described by authors such as Everard and Morris (1990:270), Stoll and Fink (1996:69) the school's planning processes had to some extent become defunct as the result of the school's inability to include recommendations from its accrediting and authorization agencies into its planning review process. The strategic plan was in effect no longer operational and had been replaced by four separate plans, which appeared to operate out with the school's philosophical framework, and three of them were designed to react to recommendations made by external forces, namely the International Baccalaureate. The fourth plan, the IT plan, was viewed by at least one of the interviewees to be a marketing ploy. Whether the defunct plan resulted from ineffective planning processes, a lack of philosophical direction, the philosophical tensions described in 4.1.3.5, some other cause or a combination of some of the factors above, did not fully emerge from this study. The researcher only realized that there was no school-wide plan during the latter stages of the interview process and after the questionnaire stage had been completed. Interviewees, apart from Teacher A4, appeared to have no knowledge of why this situation had occurred.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned comments, in a sense, ISA's challenges in updating its plan give weight to Welton's (2001:94-95) evolutionary approach to planning. ISA seemed to realize that its original more static strategic plan did not support its changing environment but somehow it struggled, either for philosophy related or process reasons, to make the interconnections described by Stoll and Fink (1996:74).

Support for the notion that ISA was not driven by its philosophy can be found in the absence of references made to it in both questionnaire and interview responses. For example, when describing the three IB programme plans, interviewees neither connected them with the school's philosophy nor did they suggest how they might support what the school stood for. Interviewees did however believe that the three IB related plans supported the school's curriculum development needs as the plans were data driven and teachers had a clear understanding of the expectations of the IB organization.

When discussing the school's overall development plan, interviewees did not feel that it supported school development needs. When asked what the school's development needs were, although resources and facilities were high on interviewees agenda, a variety of additional and differing opinions were offered and limited connections were made with how addressing those needs might further the school's philosophy. Most notably, four interviewees who believed that the school had an inclusive philosophy felt that the need for additional Special Needs support was not adequately addressed in development planning yet there is no mention of a belief about inclusion in the school philosophy which would have suggested that it would be a funding priority. Had the school in fact now become an inclusive school, enrolling students with different learning needs, but had not expressed this in the school philosophy or had this belief about inclusion arisen amongst teachers because contrary to policy as expressed in the school's mission, the school had been enrolling SEN students? If the school now believed in inclusionary practices what are the resourcing implications if this practice is not mentioned in policy? These were all questions that at the time of the study seemed to be unanswered.

It would appear that in this instance the varied interpretations of the school's philosophy had resulted in a variety of opinions about development needs. This factor coupled with the lack of a clear planning process like those described by Stoll and Fink (1996: 52),

Wallace (1992:154) and Cowham (1995:89), had contributed to a more 'siloed' and disjointed planning approach in which the school missed an opportunity to carve out its future based on its own beliefs and to a large extent had become driven by the dictates of external organizations.

It would appear that ISA did not have the kind of school philosophical statements that Stoll (1999 :515-516), Chubb and Moe (1997:376-377) believe are needed to serve as a stabilizing force and ensure that community members are united in their vision of what the school aims to achieve. The varied understandings of what the school stands for are evidence of this and the strong perception that, apart from the area of curriculum development, which staff believed to be guided by the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate, the school's value system seemed to have limited impact on the school's operations.

Further interpretations arising from the data are made in Section 4.4 and in the following chapter.

#### **4.2 International School B (ISB)**

ISB, one of the newer schools in the city, was founded in 2004. It is part of a group of schools located in the same city that are affiliated with the Methodist Church. This school is the only school in the group to offer an international education. The other schools in the group cater mostly for host country nationals and teach primarily the country's national curriculum. International School B was granted a special licence, as part of a pilot scheme, from the local Ministry of Education to establish an international programme and to create a student body that consisted of 50% foreign nationals and 50% host country nationals. The school serves 700 students from Secondary Year One to Secondary Year 6 (ages 12-18) from 23 different nations. The major national groupings are Singaporean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian and Malaysian. In Years One and Two students follow a general

programme, in Years Three and Four they study for the Cambridge International Certificate of Secondary Education qualification and in Years Five and Six students study for the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The school does apply entrance criteria, consequently the range of student abilities is less diverse than in ISA, however recent recruitment drives in neighbouring countries have resulted in a number of students entering the school that have limited English.

The school body is served by a cohort of 70 teachers. The school has made conscious efforts in the recent past to diversify the educational background of its teaching body. When the school opened the teachers were primarily from the host culture. At the time of the study approximately 50% of the teachers were from the host country and the remaining 50% were from overseas. In total the teaching body comprised 23 nationalities; the largest groupings being Singaporean and British. Support staff were mainly from the host country. Teachers tend to remain for long periods of service either because they belong locally or because the school is reported to offer competitive remuneration and benefits. At the time of the study the school had increased its staff strength due to increased student enrolment. Although it had experienced a staff turnover of only 8% in the previous academic year, there were a number of new teachers in the school due to additional staff recruitment.

The school's philosophical statements comprise of a vision, goals and philosophy statement. The philosophy statement is shared with the other schools in the group and was created in the nineteenth century when the first school in the group was established. This philosophical statement tends to focus on the spiritual values promoted by the school. Discussion with the Senior Leadership Team suggest that it is accepted that the philosophy statement is not negotiable but that the school is free to develop a vision and goals which support the school's context and future plans. The vision and goal statements were

reaffirmed and further developed when the Principal joined the school approximately 18 months prior to the study and these statements are revisited on a termly basis. These philosophical statements outline the school's commitment to Christian belief and values, leadership in a global world, embedding an international perspective within the community and the development of healthy lifestyles and a strong moral character. These statements can be found in full in Appendix B. At the time of the study the school had recently gained accreditation from the Council of International Schools. It was also experiencing growth in student numbers and a consequent growth in staff numbers. As part of the school's strategic vision the staff demographics were under significant change. The school opened with predominantly host culture teachers with limited experience outside of the host country national educational system. At the time of the study the school was actively recruiting teachers from outside the host culture and with experience of other educational systems.

#### **4.2.1 Data Collection- The Questionnaire**

A total of 31 questionnaires were received resulting in a 44% return. Most of the questionnaires were completed in full. As for ISA, participants were asked to give their name only if they were willing to participate in a face to face interview therefore it was not possible to follow up on incomplete questionnaires unless respondents happened to agree to being interviewed. As for ISA, a fifth category '5' was created to capture non responses.

#### **4.2.2 Data Collection- Interview Participants**

Six interviews were held in total.

Teacher B1: a host country national, taught across the year levels in the school and had been working at the school for one year. This teacher's previous experience was in the host country system.

Teacher B2: from Eastern Europe, taught across year levels and had been working at the school for 4 months. Teacher B2 had worked in other international schools in Europe and the Middle East.

Teacher B3: from the United Kingdom, was part of the school leadership team and had been working at the school for 18 months. Prior to working at this school, Teacher B3 had been in administration in the country of origin.

Teacher B4: from India had been working with the school for four years and was in a Middle Management position. This teacher had experience from the home system and had been working in faith based schools prior to joining this school.

Teacher B5: from Kenya had been working at the school for 7 months. Teacher B5 had worked in two other international schools in Africa prior to joining this school.

Teacher B6: from the United Kingdom was a member of the senior leadership team and had been working at the school for 4 years. Prior to joining the school Teacher B6 had worked in another international school in Asia and had previously worked within the home country system.

#### **4.2.3 Findings**

As for ISA, the findings from the questionnaire were examined along with the interview data and a set of emerging understandings were developed.

##### **4.2.3.1 Clarity of the School's Philosophical Statements**

A significant majority of the questionnaire respondents (28) believed that the school's philosophical statements expressed a clear set of values and all of the respondents claimed they understood the values expressed in those statements.

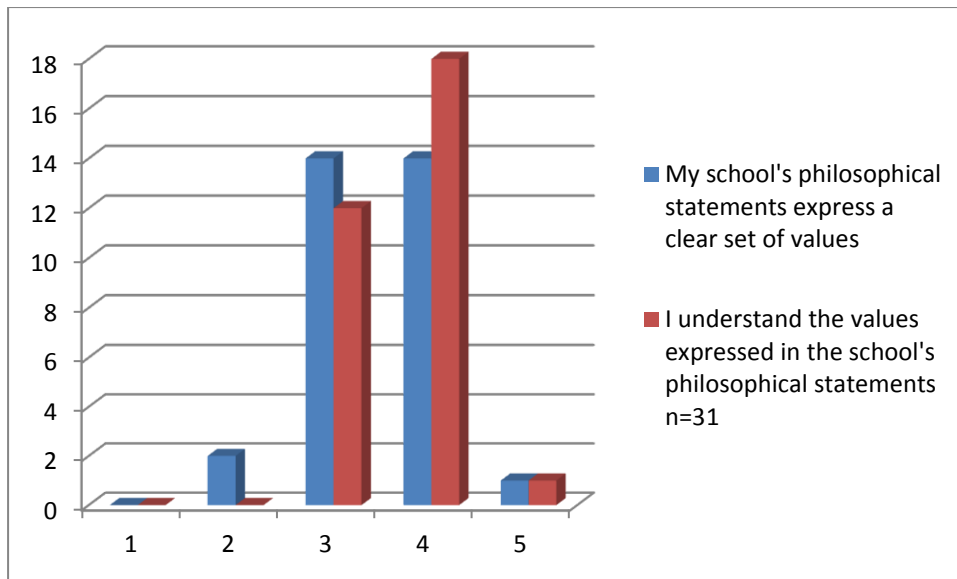


Figure 14

This finding was supported by findings from the interviews. Each of the six interviewees mentioned the Christian values that the school subscribed to and Teachers B2, B3, B4, B5, and B6 all mentioned the importance of developing a global perspective. The school's focus on the development of moral character was mentioned by Teachers B2, B4, B5 although the terminology used such as *"character building"* and *"moral values of the community"* differed from that in the school's actual statements; suggesting a slightly different interpretation of the original school statements.

Interestingly, in the course of the interviews it emerged that the school had been focusing on student leadership, community service and broadening the educational programme (what was referred to as *"creating a holistic education"*) as strategic goals. These areas, although not expressed within the school's philosophical statements, were stated as school values by Teacher B1, B4, and B6. As in the case of ISA, the relationship between the school's philosophy and the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate seemed to lack clarity. For example, statements were made such as,

*"The values are enshrined in the Christian faith as professed by the Methodist church as well as those espoused by the IB in its overall philosophy"* (Teacher B3),

*“we have the learner profile which is the IB Learner Profile which we somehow emphasize for intercultural integration” (Teacher B5).*

In this case, however, although the relationship between the two set of values had perhaps not been clearly defined, statements such as, *“the IB learner Profile fits in very well with our philosophy and objectives” (Teacher B6)* suggest that the school viewed it as complimentary and supportive of the school’s values. Furthermore, there appeared to be a clear understanding of what the school stood for, mentioned above, which eliminates the tension that seems to exist in ISA.

Teachers B2, B3, B5 and B6 all seemed to have a clear understanding of the difference between the mission, which was shared by all schools in the group and the vision statement which had been developed by the school and outlined the direction the school aimed to take. This understanding seemed to stem from knowledge of the history of the school and the systems that are described in the following sections.

#### **4.2.3.2 Staff Alignment with the School’s Values**

The two questionnaire questions examining the level of staff alignment with the school’s philosophical statements (Questions 2 and 6), suggested that, although staff believed that the school had a clear set of values, that not all respondents (7 out of 31) believed these values were shared by all staff and not all staff felt that they had considered ISB’s values prior to working at the school.

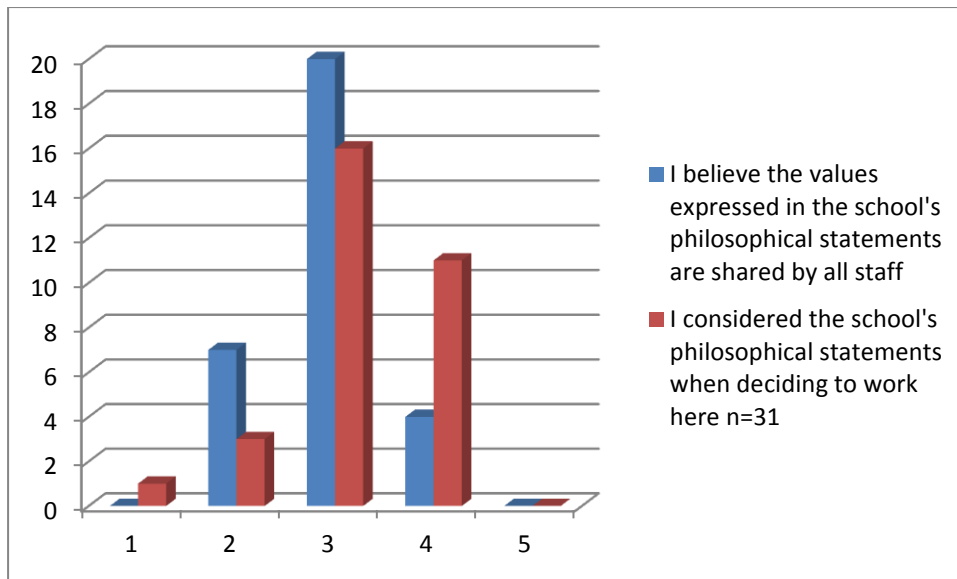


Figure 15

When the issue of not all staff accepting the school's philosophy and objectives was explored in the interviews, Teachers B1, B4 and B6's responses suggested that not all teachers subscribed to the school's Christian values and perhaps did not believe in some of the school's activities such as chapel attendance. Teacher B6 suggested that even amongst teachers that subscribed to Christian values there were differences of opinion as to whether or not the school viewed itself as a mission school or a school that embraced Christian values.

Teachers B2, B3 and B4 pointed to differences in opinion over pedagogical approaches used to implement the school's philosophical statements; tensions such as the school's belief in holistic education and the teachers' examination results focus were cited. Although the issue described here was not necessarily with the school's values, differing beliefs about implementation were viewed as problematic and in the minds of the interviewees these issues appeared to have become fused with the school's values.

Teachers B3, B4 and B6, who all held leadership positions, appeared acutely aware of the small minority of teachers that perhaps did not fully subscribe to the school's values and had implemented strategies to address this. Teacher B4 mentioned the manner in which

leadership team was “*unpacking*” the concepts that appeared to be problematic and Teachers B3 and B6 described how the school’s leadership consciously reiterated in meetings, forums, through documentation and other means what the school was about and helped staff internalize these values by trying to make them personally meaningful. Teacher B3 also mentioned the use of persuasive techniques through individual discussion, training and personal development.

When asked if they believed teachers considered the school’s philosophy and objectives prior to joining the school, Teacher B4 mentioned that the school’s name was the major attraction along with the charisma of the Principal and Teacher B6 believed that the school’s attractive remuneration package and working environment were considerations. Teacher B6 did however mention that the teacher recruitment process now explored to a greater extent potential teachers’ alignment with the school values and that this shift had reduced some of the tensions seen in the earlier years of the school.

The findings from 4.2.3.1 and 4.2.3.2 suggest that although the majority of teachers believe that the school has a shared philosophy, some nuances remain that need further interpretation or development. These include, the issue of whether the school is a school that is based on Christian values or a mission school, what the school believes about learning and pedagogical approaches, further clarity about the role of the IB within the school’s curriculum, and the need for additional research about the level of prospective teachers’ alignment with the school’s values during the recruitment process.

#### **4.2.3.3 Communication and Ownership of Philosophical Statements**

Questions (3, 6 and 7) in the questionnaire, aimed at exploring the systems used to develop ownership and understanding of the school’s philosophical statements, suggested that the majority of respondents believed that the school utilized new staff orientation, discussion and debate and review processes for this purpose.

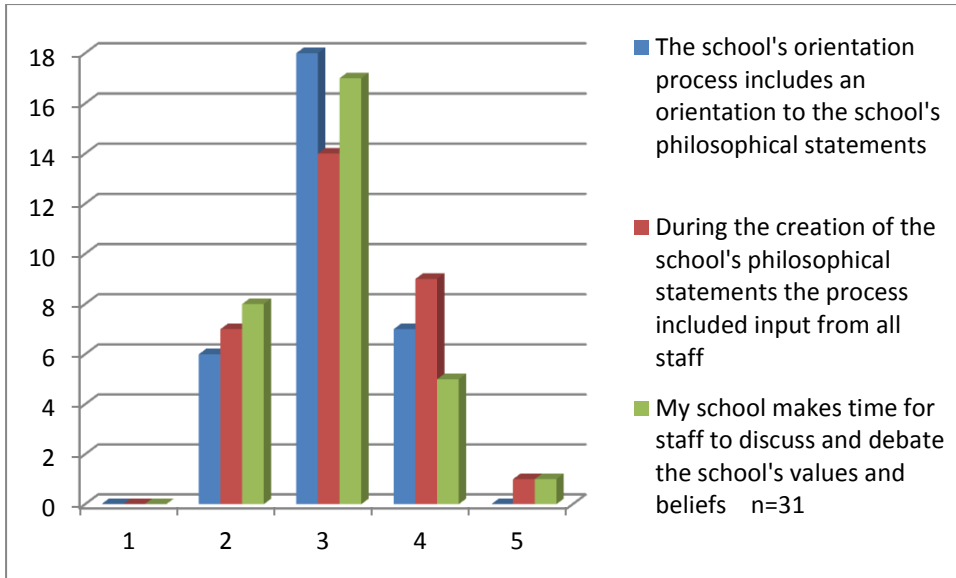


Figure 16

This perception was further supported by the results of Open Question 1 which asked how the school helps staff understand the school’s philosophical statements. In this case staff meetings, staff orientation and department collaborative time all received mention.

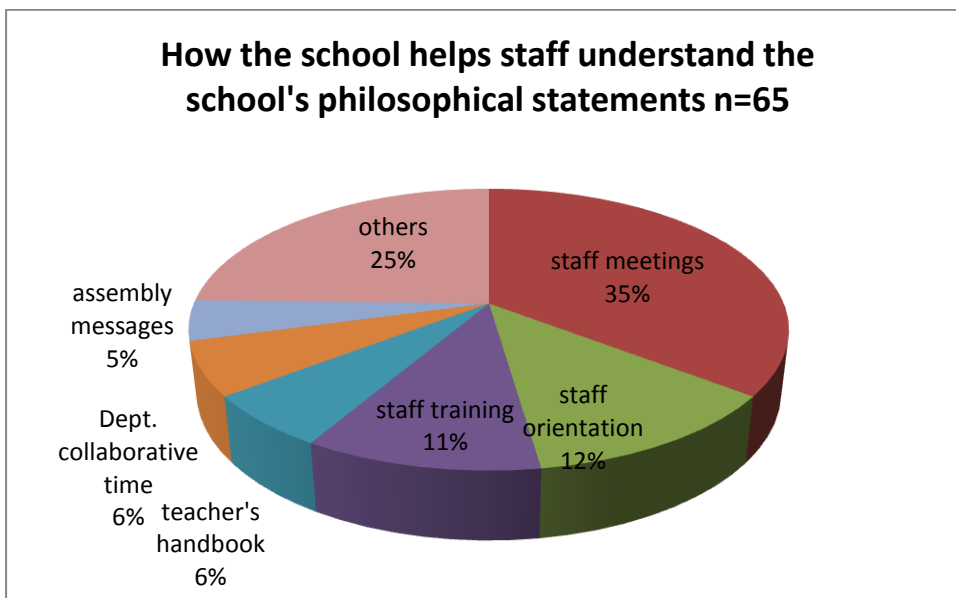


Figure 17

Data from the interviews suggested that clear and deliberate systems of input and review had been established as each participant was able to describe in detail, in the same manner and without contradiction, the various input opportunities and systems. These included the

beginning of the year Staff Conference, which is designed to affirm and, if necessary, amend the vision and goals, provide opportunities for discussion, examine progress made on the school's goals and in doing so create common understandings about the school's philosophy and the direction it is taking. This data also highlighted the work of the Mandate Group as the group tasked with translating the vision and goals into action through tactical planning and its role as the collector and reviewer of staff input. The data gathered also included information about systems such as the tutor group and faculty system that all afforded opportunities for discussion. Furthermore, the information given by teacher interviewees aligned exactly with that given by school leadership interviewees. The key to this uniformity of staff perception can perhaps be found in comments made by Teacher B6 who described referencing the school's philosophical statements as "*consistent and even persistent*" and Teacher B3, part of the school leadership team who stated,

*"I would stress that I intend probably twice a year to see all staff, and I have done this with teaching as well as non teaching staff to reiterate time and again what we are about.. because it seems you can't get enough of that"* (Teacher B3).

#### **4.2.3.4 Embedding the School's Philosophy**

Responses to questionnaire questions (8, 9 and 10) examining the degree to which decision making, teaching and learning and school operations were driven by the values expressed in the school's philosophy showed that a significant majority of respondents believed that each of these three areas was influenced by the school's philosophical statements as illustrated below.

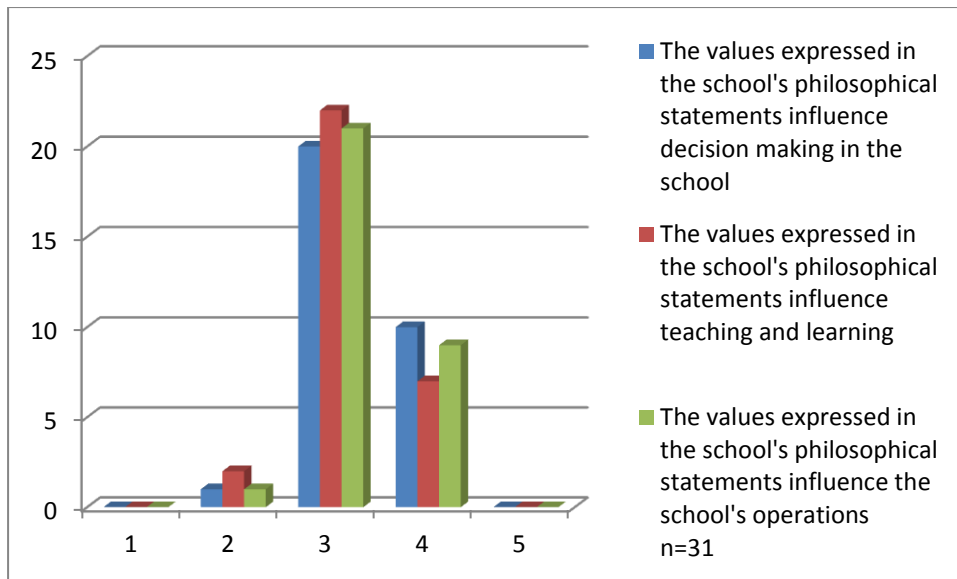


Figure 18

This positive response was reflected in the interviews. All teachers interviewed described how the school identifies themes such as leadership and international understanding that are specifically linked to the school's philosophical statements and in a systematic manner embeds these themes into classroom activities, chapel services, the pastoral system, and assemblies. These themes, the researcher was informed, are discussed at different levels of the school's organizational structure, at departmental, faculty, senior management level, within school-wide decision making bodies such as the Mandate Group, the teaching and learning committee, the assessment for learning committee and the internationalism committee and during whole school planning and review meetings (Teachers B3, B4, B5 and B6). Again this information was reflected in the questionnaire responses to Open Question 2 where participants were asked to describe how the school puts its philosophy into practice. Although the chart shows that there were a significant number of 'other' responses, a closer look at the data shows that many of the responses falling into the 'other' category refer to descriptions of the processes that were described during the interviews or descriptions of the categories incorporated into lessons, the house system, daily devotions or school activities.

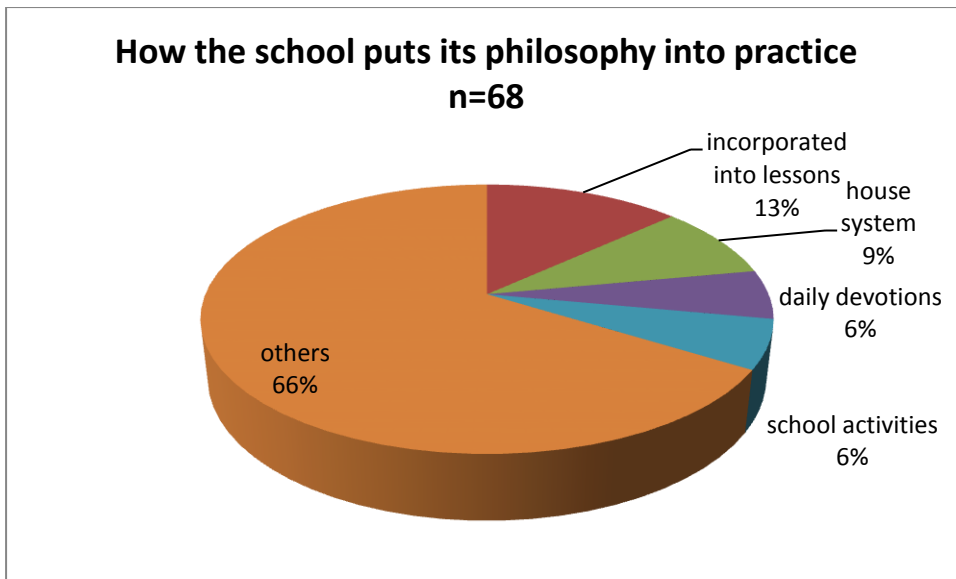


Figure 19

Interestingly, the responses to the factors that help the school implement its philosophy and objectives and the obstacles to implementing the philosophy and objectives (Open Questions 3 and 4) did not solely name school programmes, activities or resources but demonstrated that staff had considered the importance of teacher alignment with the values and philosophy of the school. Nine percent of respondents to Open Question 3 mentioned philosophy related attributes as factors that supported implementation of the school philosophy and 24% of respondents to Open Question 4 mentioned areas of non alignment with the school’s philosophy as impediments to its implementation.

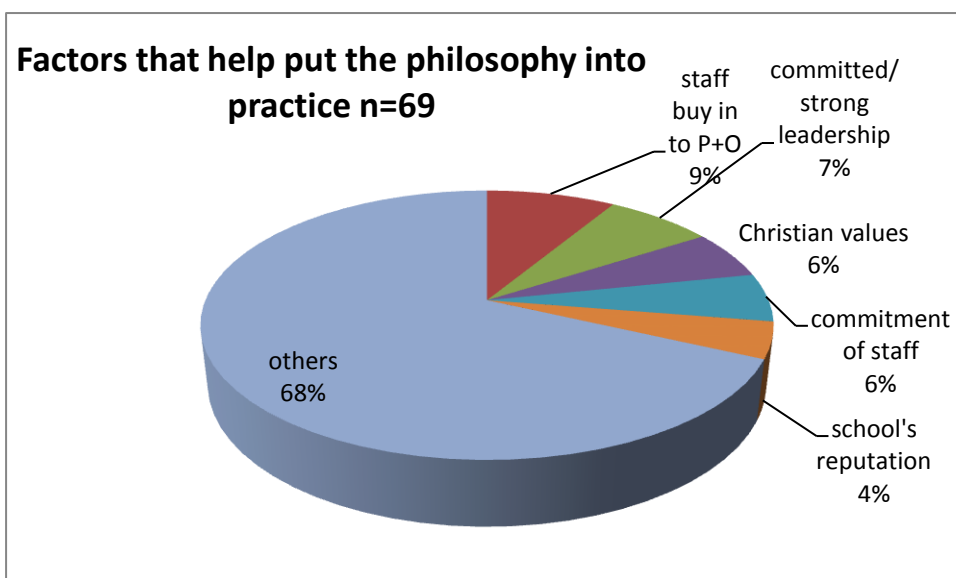


Figure 20

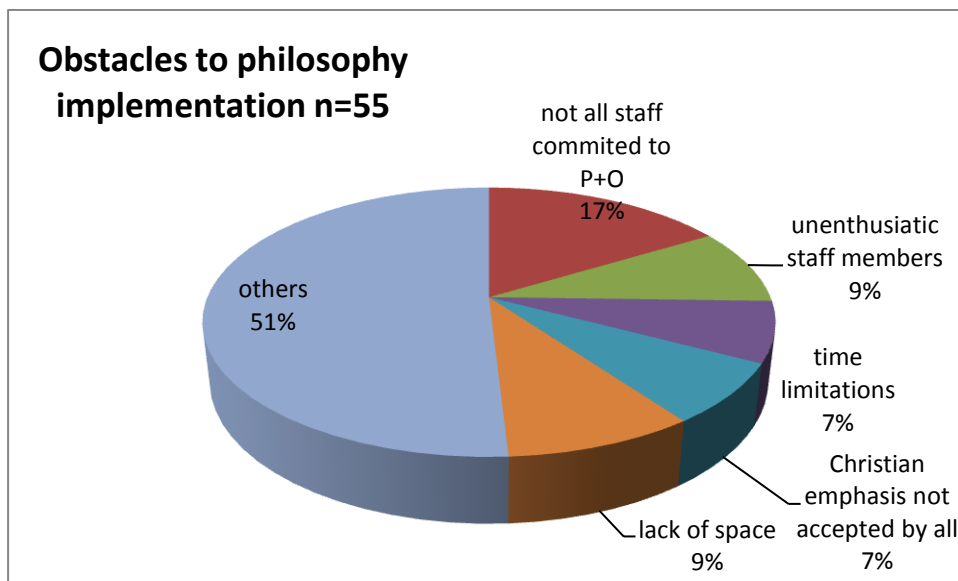


Figure 21

Data from the interviews supported the perception mentioned in 4.2.3.2 that non alignment with the school's Christian values was an obstacle to implementing the school's philosophy. Other aspects alluded to in the 'others' responses in Figure 21 such as *“strong resistance from staff that doesn't like change”*, *“inertia based on previous experience”* also surfaced in the interviews. Teachers B2, B3, B4 and B6 once again mentioned different pedagogical beliefs as an obstacle to fulfilling the school's philosophy. As mentioned in 4.2.3.2, there appears to be different beliefs with respect to best teaching practices and the role of examinations which stem from teachers' educational background. Teacher B3, B4 and B6 mentioned that this seems to be slowing down the pace of change. As suggested earlier, these beliefs about learning are not explicitly expressed in the school's philosophical statements.

#### 4.2.3.5 Strategic Planning Processes

Responses to the questionnaire questions 11 and 13 examining strategic planning processes, suggests that over two thirds of the teachers believe that they are involved in the school's strategic planning process.

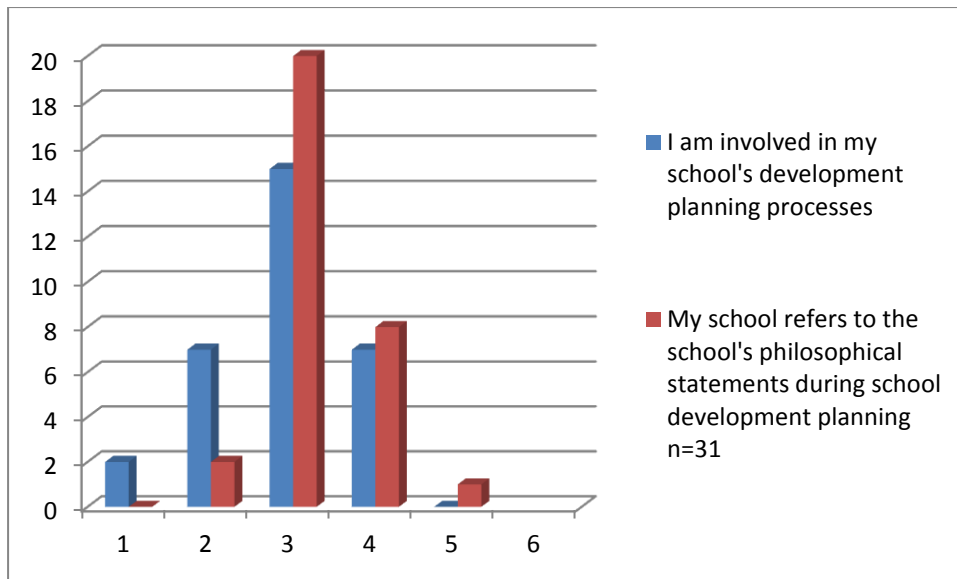


Figure 22

In the course of the interviews two of the teachers that had responded 'disagree' to this question (Teacher B2 and Teacher B5) informed the researcher that they had changed their mind on this rating. The reason they gave for this was that they were fairly new to the school when they responded to the questionnaire and in the period between completion of the questionnaire and the interview (approximately 6 weeks) they realized that in fact staff were engaged in planning activities.

The interviews fully supported the findings from the questionnaire's examination of the extent to which the school refers to its philosophical statements during its planning process (Question 13) and provided rich descriptions of how the school's philosophical statements were closely linked to school development planning.

ISB teachers viewed the reaffirmation of the school's philosophical statements and the school's planning process as a seamless process. Teachers B2, B3, B4, B5, and B6 gave consistent details of how the open meeting of the school year- the staff conference- consists of exercises to consider and reaffirm the school's philosophy and discuss the extent to which the school is meeting the goals outlined in its philosophical statements based on feedback collected from various school committees, surveys and other data such

as examination results, face to face interviews with teachers, budget data, marketing data, classroom observations and departmental audits. Teacher B1 described how one of the action items in the school development plan 'internationalism' was debated and implementation strategies were drafted so that the concept was infused into multiple layers within the school. Teacher B1 also mentioned that this meeting consists of the Principal presenting a draft development plan based on teacher feedback. The staff is then invited to give further input into the draft, both in the course of the meeting and through the various school committees. According to all interviewees, this plan is then reviewed in a similar manner four times a year and its alignment with the school's philosophy is reviewed twice a year. Interviewees felt that teachers were "*encouraged to speak, to speak their mind*" (Teacher B4), and that the encouragement of "*freedom of speech*" (Teacher B5) results in stakeholder contribution to the school's development.

This data reflects the findings from the two open questionnaire questions (5 and 6) which asked how staff give input into the school's development and how the school identifies its development needs. Responses make mention of the various committees and the meeting infrastructure that interviewees gave reference to.

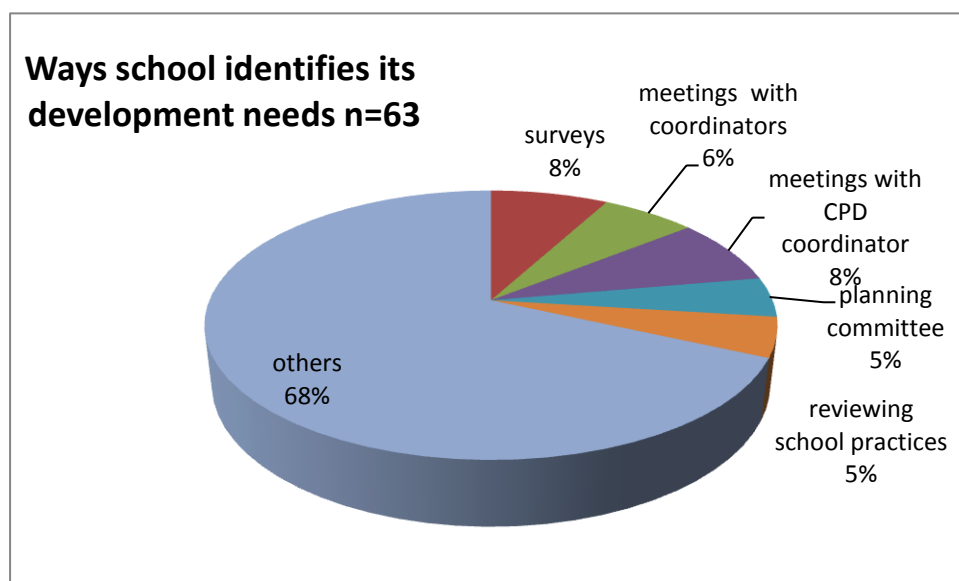


Figure 23

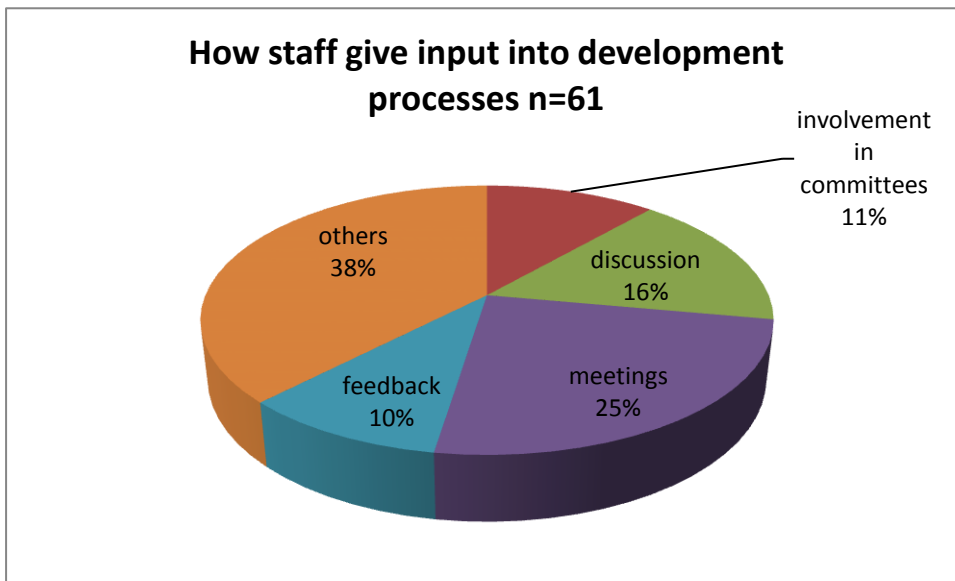


Figure 24

#### 4.2.3.6 Identification of School Development Needs

Given what appears to be the extent of the correlation between the school's philosophy and the school's development planning, coupled with what appears to be a well understood and widely implemented system of staff input into planning processes, it follows that that data from the study suggests that teachers believe that it is easy to identify the school's development needs and that the plan is seen to capture those needs. This is illustrated below.

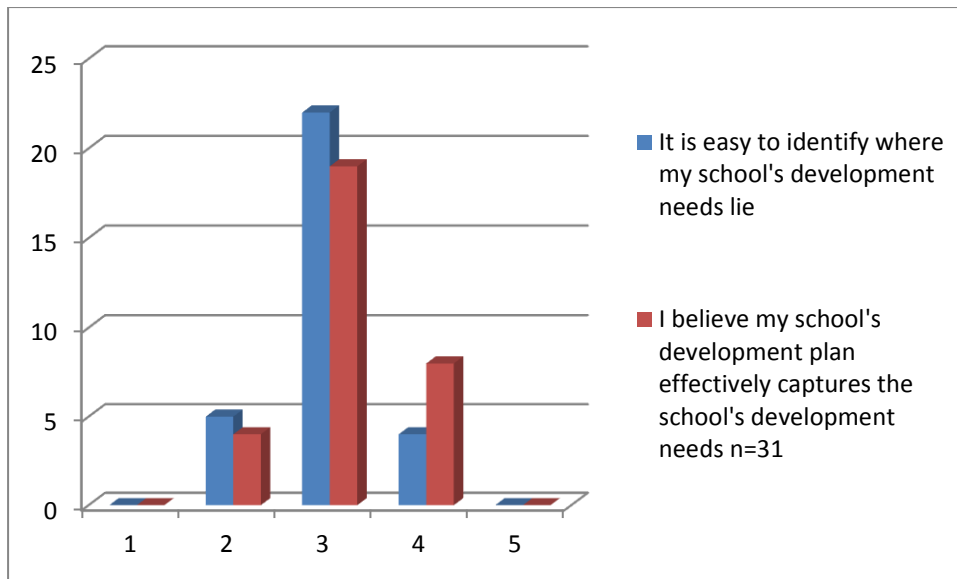


Figure 25

An indication of ISB's apparent success in creating a philosophy driven plan which addressed school needs arose during the interview with Teachers B3 and B6. Teacher B3 believed that key to ensuring that the school's development plan addresses the needs of the school is the *"need to establish proper systems and structures" which underpin the whole process from establishment/reaffirmation of the school's philosophy through to the development of the plan*". Teacher B3 and Teacher B6 also mentioned the importance of robust professional development systems which include generic as well as tailored training to develop a common understanding of where the school may need to develop in order to better meet its mission. Teacher B6 mentioned the importance of a cohesive leadership structure that consists of people that share common values, have a sense of *"ownership and purpose"* are in full support of the school's philosophy and can consistently articulate the school's objectives. Systems, clear communication channels, professional development and a cohesive leadership team with shared values, seem therefore to play a part in creating the link ISB teachers perceive between the school's philosophy and its development plan.

When interviewees were asked what they believed the school's development needs to be, the development of a boarding programme (Teachers B4 and B5), further development of international mindedness (Teacher B4), teaching and learning (Teacher B3, B4 and B6), information technology (Teacher B6), facilities (Teacher B5) were cited. All of these areas reflected issues highlighted in the school development plan.

Although all interviewees believed that the school's plan supported the school's philosophy, there did not appear to be a formalized mechanism in place to measure this. When asked if the school used identified measures to ensure its development plan supported its philosophy, a variety of responses were offered such as surveys (Teachers B1, B3 and B6), parental feedback (Teacher B4), individual teacher meetings (Teacher B2) and reports on progress (Teacher B3). These were the same processes identified by interviewees as the ones used to gather feedback on what the school needed to address, suggesting that interviewees interpret these separate processes as the same process. Teacher B6 suggested that a clear measurement system had not yet been created and that the school relied on qualitative data such as feedback and information from surveys.

#### **4.2.4 Discussion**

ISB, a faith school, was chosen to add heterogeneity to the study as the school had a different 'raison d'être' than the other two schools. The study aimed to explore whether or not this made a difference to teachers' level of alignment with the school's philosophical systems and how school systems and planning operated. At the outset the researcher expected a higher degree of alignment with the school's philosophy as it was expected that the majority of the teachers would be Christian and that religious beliefs would have played a part in their choice to work in the school. To a large extent these assumptions proved to be accurate. However, once the research was underway it became apparent that the school was going through a transition phase. It was expanding rapidly and developing a

significant shift in its recruitment practices. Although ISB was a faith based school, many teachers hired at the school's inception, 6 years prior to the study, were not Christian and had been attracted to the school for other reasons such as remuneration and the founders' reputation. Some of these teachers remained at the school, however in the recent past and in particular during the school's recent expansion the school now only hired Christian teachers. Some unresolved tensions seemed to remain between the non-Christian and the Christian teachers' beliefs. At a practical level, these included beliefs about attendance at school events that were essentially Christian celebrations such as house devotions and chapel services. Importantly, as mentioned by Teacher B4, different views existed among teachers of other faiths on the nature of some of the school's programmes such as the school's character building and service learning programmes that according to Teacher B4 are founded on Christian beliefs. Teacher B1 also described some of the tense debate that was ensuing at the time of the research about positioning the school's values as universal values and not Christian values. It appeared that non-Christian teachers were questioning whether or not these values were truly universal.

Reflecting Bell and Harrison's belief (1995:3) that critical to the implementation of a school's philosophy and objectives is alignment of staff values with the values of the school, both data from the questionnaire and the interviews suggest that ISB has a clear set of philosophical statements which are clearly understood and, apart from the tension mentioned above, mostly accepted by the teachers in the school; (please refer to Figure 14). Even teachers with less than one year's service were able to speak with confidence and in a supportive manner about the school's values, its direction and its plans. Key to this clarity and common understanding appears to be the communication strategies used such as persistent reiteration, persuasion and personalization of the philosophical concepts and the multiple communication systems which the school leadership has established to ensure discussion, debate and engagement with the school's values. Additional evidence of the

clarity of the school's philosophy is that ISB, like ISA, offered the International Baccalaureate Diploma and was therefore also obliged to subscribe to the International Baccalaureate philosophy, yet ISB teachers seemed to view the tenets of the International Baccalaureate philosophy as complimentary to the ISB values and seemed able to articulate very clearly what ISB stood for. These same communication strategies and systems also appeared to support teacher input into school development planning and created a sense of ownership and understanding of the school's development plan. In particular, the Habermasian approach (Habermas, 1984) of affording multiple opportunities for discussion and debate appear to have supported the school's efforts to create common understandings about the school, its values and its needs. To a large extent this common understanding has resulted in a development plan created using a consensus approach although, as Teachers B2, B3, B4 and B6 suggest, the guiding hand of the school leadership is evident in the planning process. Furthermore, the school's attempts to personalize the concepts in the school's philosophy seem to have increased teacher understanding of what these concepts might look like in practice thus avoiding the traps described by Peek and Peek (1997:404) and Sidhu (2003:442) that some institutions seem to have endured. This attempt to give meaning to the concepts expressed in the school's philosophy by guiding teachers to an understanding of what they mean at a personal level also reflects Wittgenstein's 'Language Game Theory' which suggests that language is given significance and meaning through its use and through developing an understanding of how it is used (Wittgenstein 1953: 43). Critically ISB's efforts to embed its philosophy in the programmes and operations of the school by using the multi layered implementation planning approach described by Teacher B1, and highlighted in literature by Codrington (2004: 181-182), Beare et al 1993:154) and Bell and Harrison (1995:2) appear to have resulted in what Teacher B5 describes as the integration of the philosophy into the "*internationalism, intellectualism and spiritualism*" of the school.

In addition, teachers seemed to be able to clearly distinguish between the mission of the school and the vision of the school in the manner Rampersad (2011: 212) described as necessary to support organization growth and discussions about future direction related to the vision i.e. where the school wants to go.

The link between the school's philosophy and its development plan appeared seamless in a manner that underscored Koh's theory (Koh 2003 11-73) that a school's collective vision is key to driving organizational change. Indeed, when interviewees responded to questions about the school's philosophy they infused this discussion with how the school planned the philosophy's implementation suggesting that the philosophy really did drive planning processes and the plan's prime purpose was to further the school's vision and goals.

The importance of a clearly developed plan, with core components as described by authors such as Everard and Morris (1990: 270), Chaplin (1995:150), Fidler (1996: 132) did not emerge as key to identifying school development needs. When interviewees were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the plan, only one interviewee, one of the school administrators, Teacher B3, mentioned that links to budgeting processes and a clearer definition of responsibility for action and timeframes could be improved. The other interviewees either felt the plan reflected the school's development needs (Teachers B1, B2, B4 and B6) and focused their responses on the manner in which the plan reflected ways to strengthen the tenets of the school's philosophy such as Christian values and internationalism or described how the planning methodology had created uniformity of thought and/or teacher ownership (Teachers B3, B4, B5 and B6). Some support may have been alluded to for Stoll and Fink's theory that plans ought to maintain a balance between plans which maintain current developments and those that introduce new areas (Stoll and Fink 1996:69) as one criticism of the plan was that there is too much development

happening (Teachers B2 and B6). This was not however followed up in any great depth in the course of this study.

ISB's planning process demonstrates support for the theories proposed by authors such as Wallace (1992:154) and Cowham (1994:283) that promote a more evolutionary approach to planning and critique heavily structured and phased approaches that involve wading through several layers of formalized processes before creating or updating a plan. ISB's quarterly review of its plan, which is undertaken in a clearly structured and understood yet simple manner affords the school the opportunity to adapt to changing circumstances and be more supportive of changing school needs; a factor important in the international school context.

The findings as described above from the ISB case study seem to support the overall study's hypothesis, but for different reasons than the findings resulting from the ISA case study. In this instance the school did have a clear statement of philosophy which was understood by teachers as a result of the extensive communication systems in place. As reported by each of the interviewees, the teaching staff work with the school's leadership in full staff meetings and through the department structure to create definitions for the school's values and descriptions of what the values look like in practice. They then use this definition and description to identify areas of the school that needed development. Those needs, according to the interviewees, were then addressed through collaborative planning processes which were embedded in the structure of the school. What is not clear, however, is the extent to which teachers' perceptions that the school's plan supported its development needs stemmed from deep understanding about ISB's needs, whether it simply stemmed from familiarity with the content and discussions about the plan or whether it stemmed from an implicit trust in the process that had been created. A hint that it might stem from familiarity or trust emerges from the interviews. When teachers were

asked about the school's development needs the responses received were almost verbatim what had been written in the development plan and they did not offer the level of reflection which might indicate that deeper reasoning had taken place. This idea is further developed in Section 4.4 and the following chapter.

### **4.3 International School C (ISC)**

ISC was founded in 1971, is part of a world-wide movement of schools, and is recognized in the host country as a registered charity. It enrolls approximately 2600 students from around 68 different nations in Kindergarten to Grade 12 under selective enrolment criteria. The most significant nationalities represented in the student body are: Indian, British, American, Australian, Singaporean and Korean. Like ISA it can only enroll host country nationals under very specific conditions. ISC offers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme in the Primary School, a school written curriculum in Grades 6-8, the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) programme or the International Baccalaureate Foundation Programme in Grades 9 and 10 and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in Grades 11 and 12. The school employs approximately 200 teachers, from 24 different nations. The largest staff nationality groupings are British, Australian, Canadian, New Zealander and American. Teachers serve the school for extended periods of time (CIS 2010b).

The school is located in the western part of the city in an area where other private and international schools can be found. During the period of study the school opened a second campus in the eastern part of the city and transferred some of its staff to this campus to aid transfer of the ethos and values of the school. At the time of the study the school was working towards accreditation with the Council of International Schools and was due to host a Team Visit within the next two months. The school's philosophical statements consist of three parts: a statement of mission broadly governed by the world-wide

movement to which the school belongs, a statement of vision and a statement of values created by the school. Copies of these statements can be found in the appendices. The school's philosophy broadly commits the school to promoting a holistic education with an emphasis on academic achievement, service, environmental stewardship, teamwork and leadership.

#### **4.3.1 Data Collection- The Questionnaires**

A total of 81 questionnaires were received from the school; a return of 40.5%. Several questionnaires had questions which were unanswered. As it was impossible to follow up most of these unanswered responses the researcher decided to record non responses in a fifth category; category '5' on the charts below. Seven teachers that had indicated their willingness to participate in a follow up face to face interview were interviewed.

#### **4.3.2 Data Collection- Interview Participants**

Details of the participants are as follows:

Teacher C1, a Canadian, had taught at the school for 6 years and was teaching in the Elementary School in Grade 5 at the time of the study. Teacher C1 had worked in four other international schools prior to joining ISC.

Teacher C2, from Canada, had served the school for 2 years and was a Year Head in the Middle School. Teacher C2's previous experience was in Canada.

Teacher C3, from the United Kingdom, was an Elementary Head of Department and had been with the school for 10 years

Teacher C4, from the United Kingdom, was a mathematics teacher and had been with the school for 20 years.

Teacher C5, from Belgium, had been with the school for 3 years and was a High School Head of Department. Teacher C5 had experience in one other international school and had experience with development organizations.

Teacher C6, an Australian, was a Head of Grade and Head of one of the school's outreach programmes and had been with the school 15 years.

Teacher C7, from the United Kingdom and a school administrator, first joined in the school in the 1980's, left for three years to take up a position in another international school then returned to the school in 2008. In total, Teacher C7 had 24 years of service in the school.

### 4.3.3 Findings

#### 4.3.3.1 Clarity of the School's Philosophical Statements

Responses to Question 1 of the questionnaire suggested that the school's mission, vision and values statement was clearly expressed and responses to Question 5 suggest that these statements are well understood by staff.

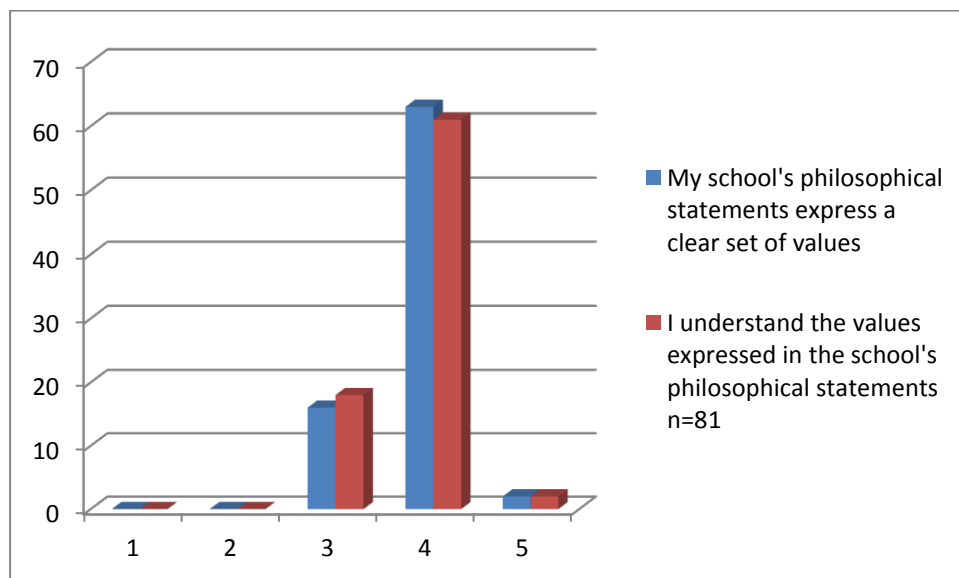


Figure 26

In the course of the interviews, however, it became apparent that teachers had differing understandings of the values and purpose of the school. To Interview Question 1 "What do

*you think are the major values expressed in your school's philosophy and objectives?"* the following responses were received

Teacher C1 believed that the school aimed to deliver a strong academic background, instil a sense of adventure in students through its expedition programme and a sense of service through the service programme.

Teacher C2 felt that the school aimed to produce international leaders that understand and foster cultural differences, are successful global citizens and have been exposed to a broad range of learning experiences.

Teacher C3 suggested that the school's mission was to produce compassionate, non prejudiced, socially aware and environmentally responsible citizens that were capable of pushing themselves beyond personal limits and enjoyed friendships with people around the world.

Teacher C4 believed the school promoted internationalism and aimed to assist students make valuable contributions to the world.

Teacher C5 said that the aim of the school was to produce students with integrity that are creative and without prejudice.

Teacher C6 felt that the school's philosophy promoted peace, justice and understanding.

Teacher C7 believed the school promoted holistic education; its philosophy was based on the principles of faith in youth and education as well as the promotion of honesty and compassion.

A comparison with the school's philosophical statements suggests that for the most part the responses given by the interviewees, although not always using the language of the school's philosophical statements, echo the various concepts in the school's mission, vision

and value statement. Not all of the concepts in the school's philosophy were included in the responses suggesting perhaps that respondents had focused on the elements that were most meaningful to them. Some responses not included in the school's statements such as *"peace, justice, faith in youth and education, sense of adventure"* suggest that, as in the case of ISA, some teachers may have developed slightly different interpretations of the values and purpose of the school. An examination of this trend is considered in the next section.

#### 4.3.3.2 Staff Alignment with the School's Values

Responses to questionnaire Questions 2 and 6 which aimed at examining staff alignment with the school's values suggest that the majority of respondents believed that teachers had examined the school's values prior to joining the school and that the school teaching community supported these values.

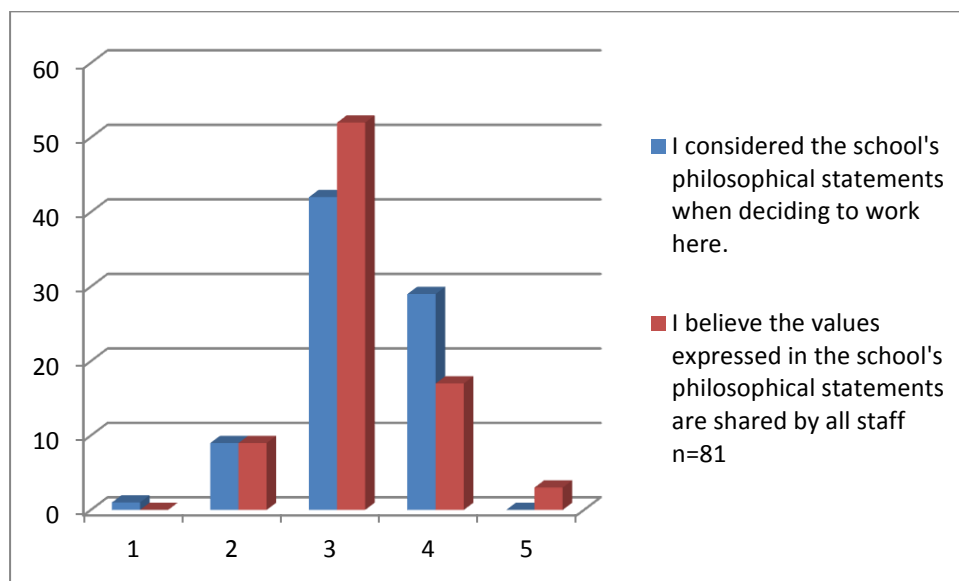


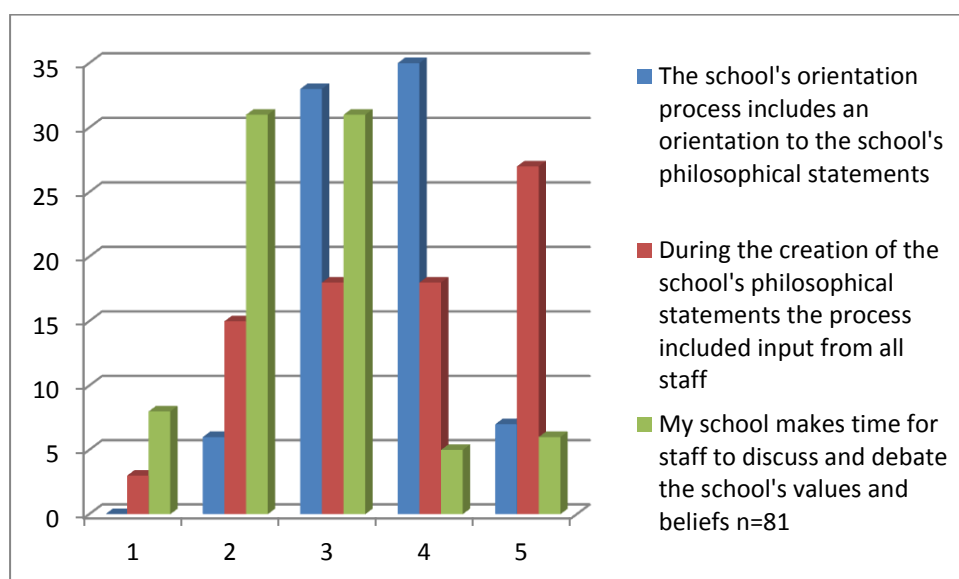
Figure 27

The development of a set of shared values was explored in the interviews. Although interviewees mentioned that these statements were published in school documents, each interviewee was keen to make sure the researcher understood that the primary manner of developing an understanding of the school's values was by living it. Expressions such as,

*“it’s a microchip that gets embedded under your skin”* (Teacher C6), *“through embedded immersion....., peer infection.... and cultural momentum”* (Teacher C7), *“It’s a part of everything that the school does”* (Teacher C2) were used to describe this process. This rather osmotic approach appeared to have been successful in instilling deep commitment to a set of common values but perhaps, given the range of responses the researcher received, learning through osmosis may to some extent have resulted in some level of drift from the original concepts expressed in the school’s statements.

#### 4.3.3.3 Communication and Ownership of the Philosophical Statements.

Responses to questions 3, 4 and 7 from the questionnaire, which seek to gather information about systems for transmitting the school’s philosophical values and building ownership for them, suggest that the school’s orientation process does consider these statements but that staff had differing ideas about opportunities for subsequent discussion and debate about the school’s values and beliefs. Thirty nine respondents rated Question 7 either ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ and thirty six rated it ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’. Question 4 about opportunities for staff to give input into what is included in the statements also attracted a range of responses- eighteen people either disagreed or strongly agreed and twenty seven respondents did not answer the question.



## Figure 28

Possible reasons for these responses were sought in the interviews. Teachers C1, C2 and C3, in response to interview question 2, all made mention of the school's orientation programme for new staff and the annual Head of School address at the beginning of the year in which the mission, vision and values are reiterated and a review of the school's strategic plan takes place. Interview discussions, however, tended to gravitate back to the ideas expressed in Section 4.3.3.2 that, although some formal communication systems exist to articulate the school's philosophical statements, these statements are learned through the culture of the school and are implicit rather than made explicit. Again, when referring to the school's philosophy, statements such as *"the whole atmosphere is soaked through"* (Teacher C5), *"it is the closest thing I will have to some sort of a religious experience"* (Teacher C6) were offered as explanations.

A close examination of the responses to interview Questions 2 and 3 did reveal that interviewees talked more about school programmes and events, such as the Global Concerns, Service and Expedition programmes, through which the school implemented its mission, vision and values rather than eluding to systems the school's used to communicate and build ownership for its philosophy. Indeed when asked directly about systems of communication and review Teachers C3, C4 and C5, mentioned that there were none and Teachers C1, and C2 mentioned that prior to the school embarking on accreditation there had been limited opportunities for discussion of the school's philosophy and channels for offering input.

Teacher C7 suggested that staff learn about the school's philosophy from the momentum created by the students and the various activities they promote which results in immersion in the school's philosophy from the outset. Teacher C7 believed that the transformational

nature of some of the activities the teachers and students collaborated in resulted in understanding and acceptance of the school's philosophy.

Teachers C1, C4 and C6 suggested that teachers contributed to the development of the school's philosophy and furthered their understanding of the philosophy through "*doing*". Only Teacher C7, a school administrator, was able to give information about review systems and opportunities for debate. In this case Teacher C7 explained that the school's philosophy was reviewed in conjunction with the school's strategic planning process and that staff gave input through the various feedback channels and working groups that had been established. This will be discussed further in the section about the school's planning process. To a large extent these findings were supported by Open Question 1 in which respondents were asked to specify how the school helps staff understand the school's philosophical statements. The orientation programme was mentioned frequently as were the activities mentioned by the interviewees. Responses to this question did suggest that meetings were a forum used to help teachers understand the school's philosophy however this did not feature strongly in the interviewees' replies.

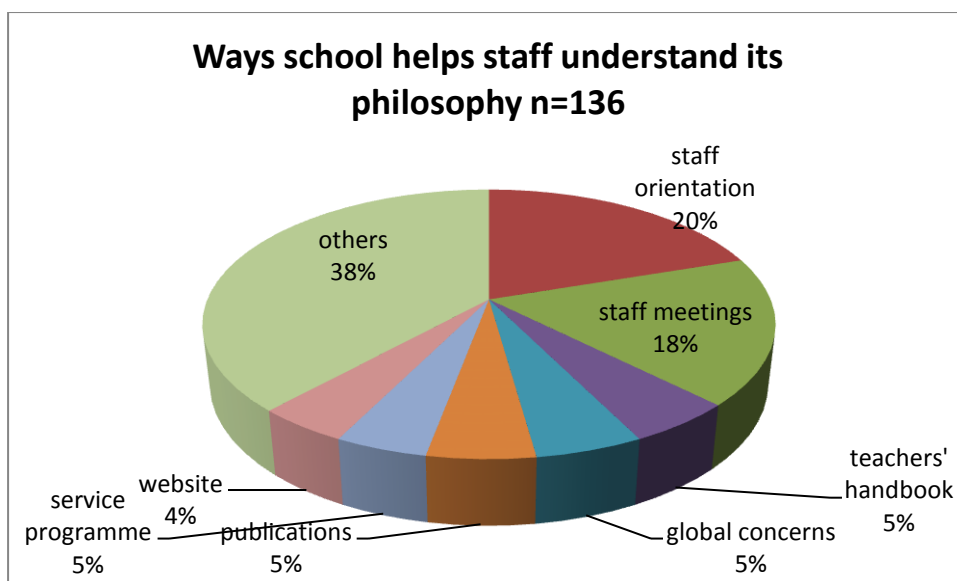


Figure 29

What seems to be happening here is quite different from what appeared to be occurring in ISB. Unlike in ISB, communication systems in ISC seem to have a minor impact on the school's understood philosophy. Other factors, such as involvement in activities, appear to be key in developing a shared understanding of the school's philosophy. As in ISA, additional perceptions about the school's values seem to have emerged which are not fully reflected in the school's philosophical statements.

#### 4.3.3.4 Embedding the School's Philosophy

The three questionnaire questions aimed at exploring the extent to which the school's philosophy drives decision-making, its programmes and operations (Questions 8, 9 and 10) suggest that questionnaire respondents believe that these areas of the school are driven by the school's value system. The only question which received slightly lower ratings was question 10 to which 16 respondents replied that they did not believe that the philosophy drove operational decisions.

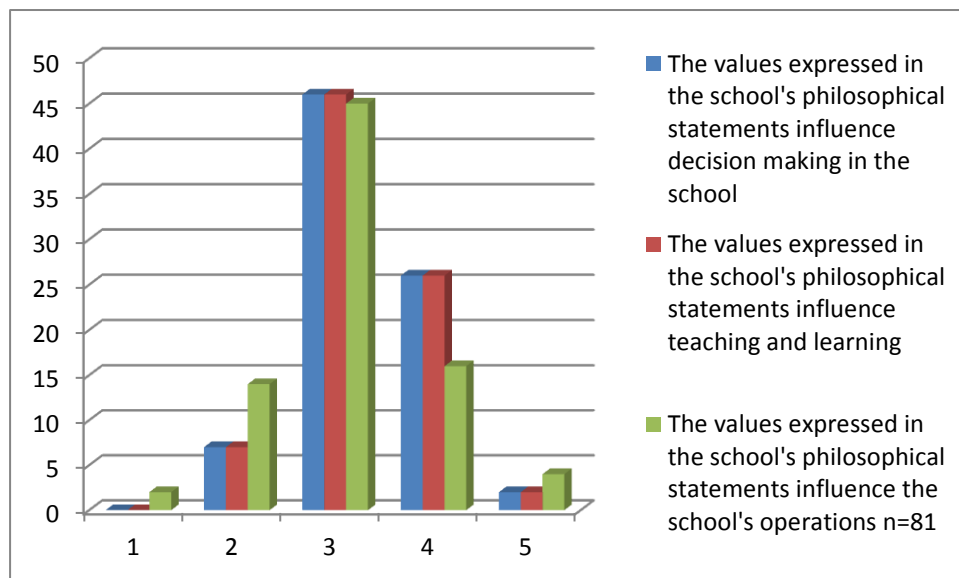


Figure 30

Interview Question 4 elicited several ways in which the philosophy drives decision making; in particular in the area of teaching and learning. Teacher C5 described how teachers deliberately chose novels that supported the school's beliefs and values, Teacher C2

mentioned how teachers were encouraged to incorporate the school's values into PYP planners and learning intentions, Teacher C3 outlined how classroom essential agreements mirrored the school's philosophy, and Teacher C7 outlined courses that the school offered such as GCSE Global Perspectives and a Grade 6 'Ideologies and Value Systems' course in which students are asked to reflect upon how the school puts its mission and vision into practice. Examples of general decision making guided by the school's philosophy included Teacher C6's description of how decisions about possible new activities were deliberately measured against the school's statement of values and mission, Teacher C5 suggested that the school's pastoral care system included, through assemblies and the Tutor programme, explicit references to the school's philosophy and Teacher C2 described how the school's discipline policy was built upon the cornerstones of the school's statement of values. Limited information was received about the manner in which the school's operations were influenced by the school's philosophy; perhaps because the interviewees were teachers and in the context of this school not involved in daily operations. Teacher C4 did allude to this area and suggested that this could be an area for further school development however Teacher C1 suggested that the school's admissions process was very much based on the aims outlined in the statement of values and mission. Other questions aimed at garnering details attracted responses such as *"it is always the foundation of how decisions are made"* (Teacher C6) or resulted in additional descriptions of the various programmes through which the school's philosophy is implemented.

The uniformity of the teachers' thinking in terms of how the school's philosophy is implemented is illustrated in the chart below in which the global concerns, service and expedition programmes that were mentioned by the interviews are featured as well as the importance of the curriculum as a vehicle for transmitting the school's values.

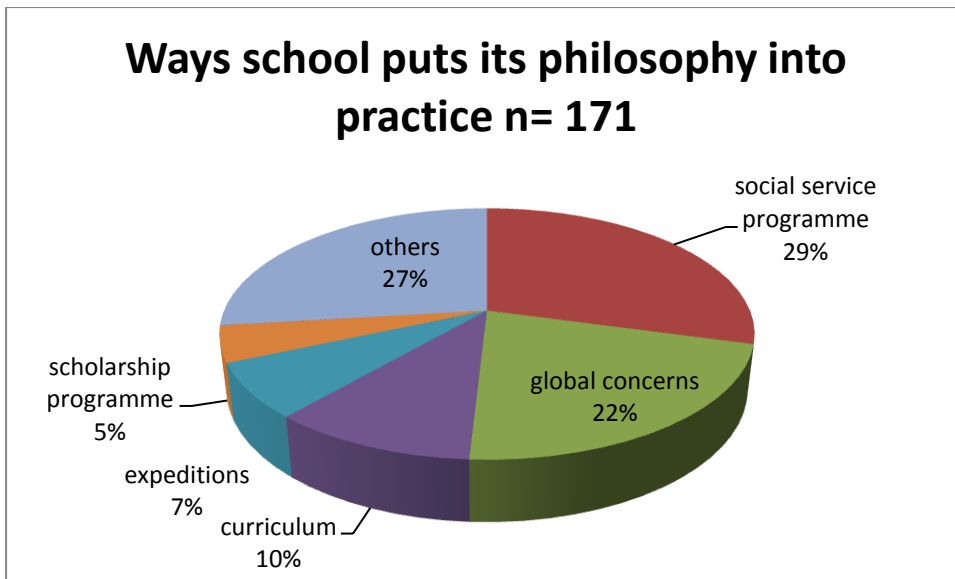


Figure 31

Responses to Open Question 3, which seeks to gain understanding about the factors which assist the school put its philosophy and objectives into practice, highlight several aspects of the school which further the school's mission, vision and values. These include the staff's commitment to the school's values and the various programmes which have these values as a foundational element. The responses also introduce other elements which were not mentioned in the interviews such as parental support and the location of the school. Within the 'others' section, a wide range of factors were offered such as a well-financed school, long serving staff, school events, and the support of alumni.

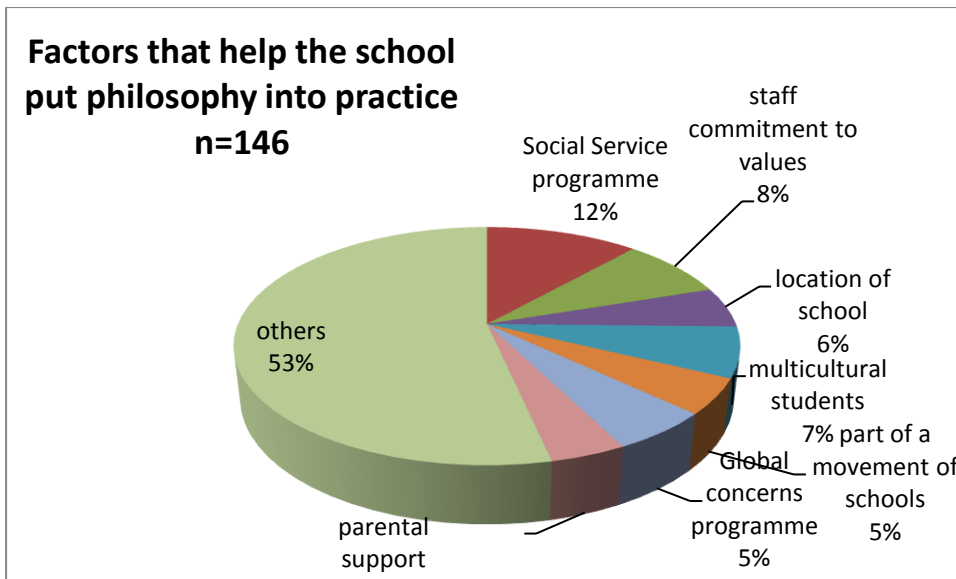


Figure 32

The converse question, Open Question 4, mentioned factors such as: parents’ interest in academic results and the local government as an impediment to implementing the mission, vision and values. Parents’ focus on academic results were also mentioned in the interviews by Teachers C2, C4 and C5, who all believed that parents overlooked the school’s belief in action and service.

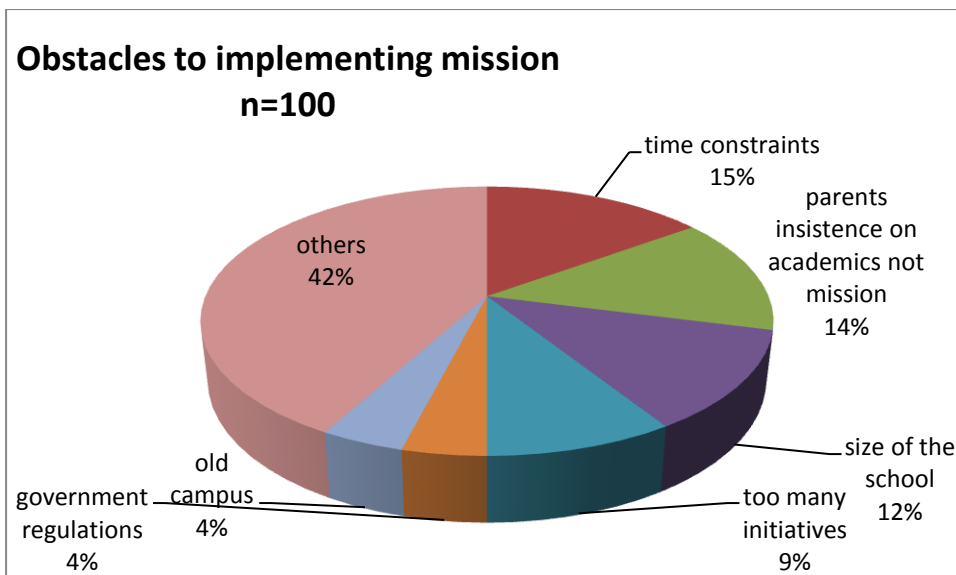


Figure 33

In contrast to responses received from ISA and ISB to this question, teachers could articulate how the school’s challenges affected implementation of its philosophy. Time

constraints and the number of initiatives undertaken were mentioned as challenges to embedding the school's philosophy at various points in the interviews. Teacher C6 suggested that teachers were too busy to engage in service activities which are fundamental to promoting the school's philosophy. Teacher C1 emphasised the need for additional time to fully implement quality programmes that supported the school's mission, and Teacher C3 mentioned the challenge of implementing several far reaching new initiatives at one time. Teachers C5 and C6 mentioned that teachers in the school seemed to be fired with a great passion for the school's values and that there needed to be a balance between this passion and the number of initiatives aimed at supporting these values that the school could realistically accomplish. Echoing concerns in Figure 33 about school size, Teacher C4 believed that the school had become too large to offer the personalised approach that was central to the values of the school and Teacher C6 mentioned that a specific challenge currently facing the school was how to embed the school's values in the new campus that had just opened with a team of teachers new to the school and its philosophical approach.

#### **4.3.3.5 Strategic Planning Process**

Data from the questionnaire (Questions 11 and 13) suggested that over almost one third of the respondents did not believe that they were involved in the school's planning process as 26 out of the seventy six people that replied to the question gave this question a disagree or strongly disagree rating.

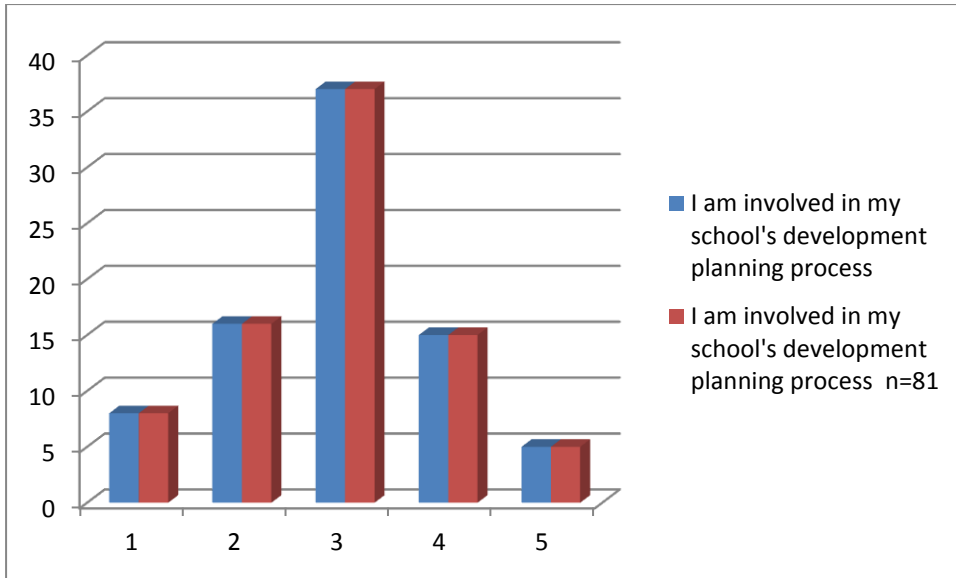


Figure 34

Nevertheless, only four respondents to the question about the school philosophy's influence felt that the school's philosophy did not drive school development planning.

In contrast, responses to Open Question 6 in the questionnaire which asked how staff become involved in planning processes, did suggest a variety of ways in which staff become involved, primarily through meetings and the accreditation process.

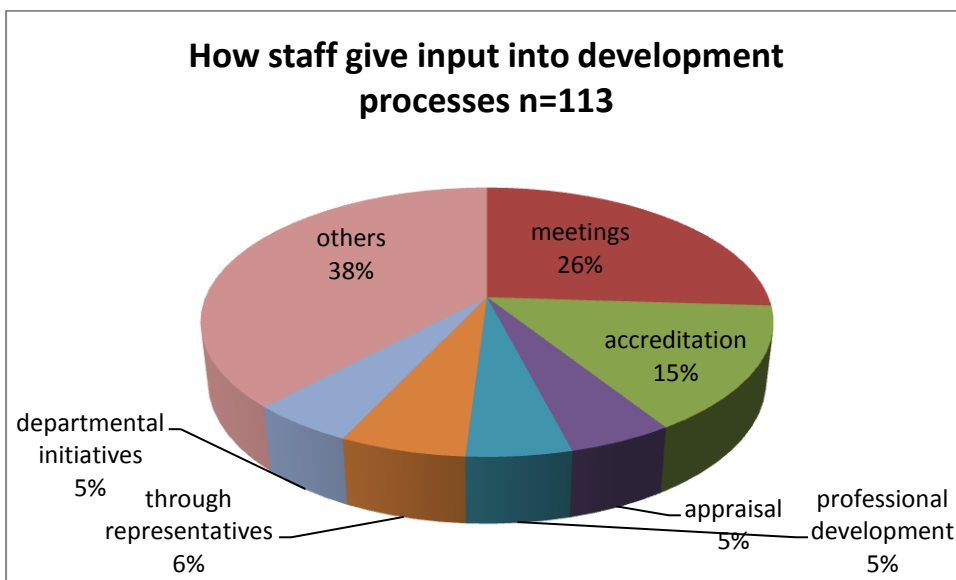


Figure 35

During the interview process the researcher tried to further understand the school's development planning process and channels for input and the reasons why some staff believed they did not give input into the process. To the question *"Can you describe for me how the school develops its strategic plan?"* Teachers C1, C2, C3, C4 and C5 responded that they were all unsure of the process. Various understandings seemed to exist such as the plan is created by the Board (Teacher C1) and it is management driven (Teachers C2, C3, C4 and C5). Teacher C4 did mention that in the past strategic planning had been a collaborative effort with formal meetings created to discuss the school's development needs and direction. Only Teachers C6 and C7, both of whom have positions of responsibility, were able to describe the planning process. In their opinion, the School Head creates the vision then staff with positions of responsibility are asked to contribute guiding targets for their area which support the school's mission, vision and values. The plan is then disseminated by request of access and individual working parties are established to address the guiding targets. According to Teachers C6 and C7, teachers can give input to the plan through the department structure. Although unsure of the planning system, Teachers C1, C2, C5, C6 and C7 were all able to give examples of how teachers could give input to planning. Teacher C1 mentioned that if a teacher has a particular interest in an area it is possible to join a working party, Teachers C2 and C7 mentioned the opportunities the accreditation process had given for staff input, Teachers C3 and C5 mentioned that staff are not directly asked for input but that the appraisal process provided data that they believed was used by management in the planning process. Teacher C7 mentioned that the school garnered important development ideas from professional development consultants. What the researcher pieced together from the interviews is that ISC engages in two tiers of planning. A strategic plan is created by the Senior Leadership Team and the School Board and teachers develop subject or departmental plans. All teachers mentioned that there was an expectation that department plans and personal learning plans were to be aligned

with the school-wide strategic plan and that staff were very much involved in these areas of planning. All teachers interviewed also believed that school-wide (strategic) planning and department planning were aligned to the mission, vision and values of the school although all interviewees believed that no formal mechanism was in place to ensure that link or to measure the effectiveness of the link. Teacher C6 mentioned that teachers were “trusted” with their opinion, Teacher C7 mentioned that the community “can see and recount” the link to the school’s philosophy but that it has not been articulated and Teacher C2 believed that the type of people that the school employed and the activities they planned and engaged in automatically created the link to the school’s philosophy.

#### 4.3.3.6 Identification of School Development Needs

Responses to Question 12 in the questionnaire suggested that approximately one third of respondents did not find it easy to identify the school’s development needs, however sixty five out of sixty eight respondents to the question about the efficacy of the school’s plan in capturing the school’s development needs believed that the strategic plan was effective in capturing needs; although 13 participants left the question blank.

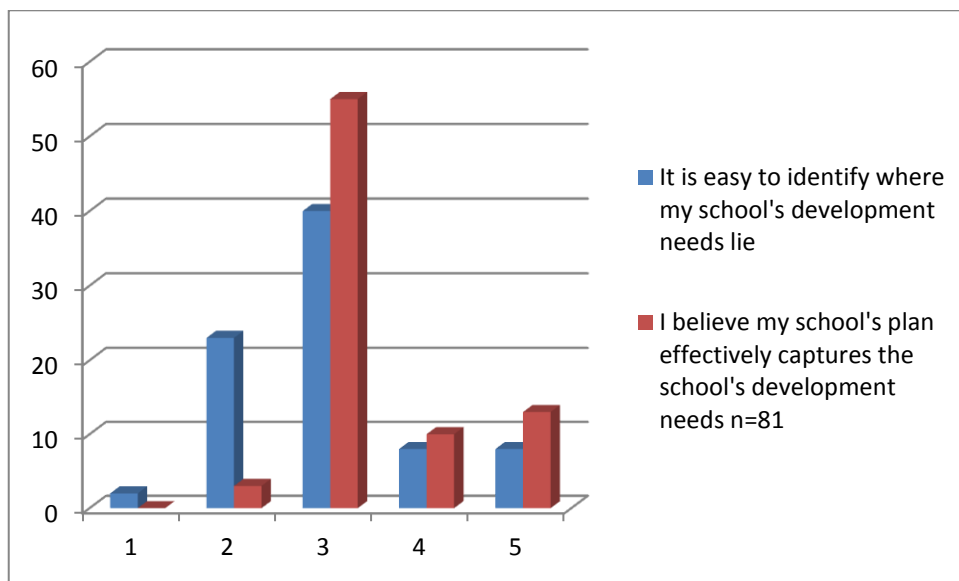


Figure 36

This anomaly was explored in the interviews through additional questions to the 10 'set' questions such as *"What do you think are the school's development needs?"*, *"How widely known is the strategic plan?"* *"You mention in the questionnaire that it is not easy to identify where the school's development needs lie, why do you think this is the case?"* These questions produced the following responses. Teacher C5 felt it was easier to identify department needs rather than school-wide needs given the information available to staff and the role of staff in department planning but not school-wide planning. This belief was echoed by Teacher C3. Teacher C2 suggested that identifying which data is to be used and analysed as a basis for determining needs was a challenge and this was corroborated by Teacher C7 who believed that the school did not have a structured framework for gathering evidence. Teacher C7 also believed that the school's current planning process was *"granulated"*, and could be strengthened through additional formalisation and communication. In this instance, Teacher C7 suggested that the current planning process tends to be exclusive, resulting in members of the community that are involved in a given area having in depth knowledge of their area of focus but limited knowledge of other areas. According to Teacher C7, opportunities are then missed for creating connections with other related aspects of the school and involving a wider range of people.

These perceptions and the perceptions mentioned in the section above were supported by the data gathered from Open Question 5 in the questionnaire which sought information about the ways in which the school identified its development needs. The various inputs mentioned in section 4.3.3.5 are reflected in this data and the lack of reference to systemic processes for data gathering and planning may suggest why multiple understandings of how the school develops its plan appear to exist amongst the teachers.

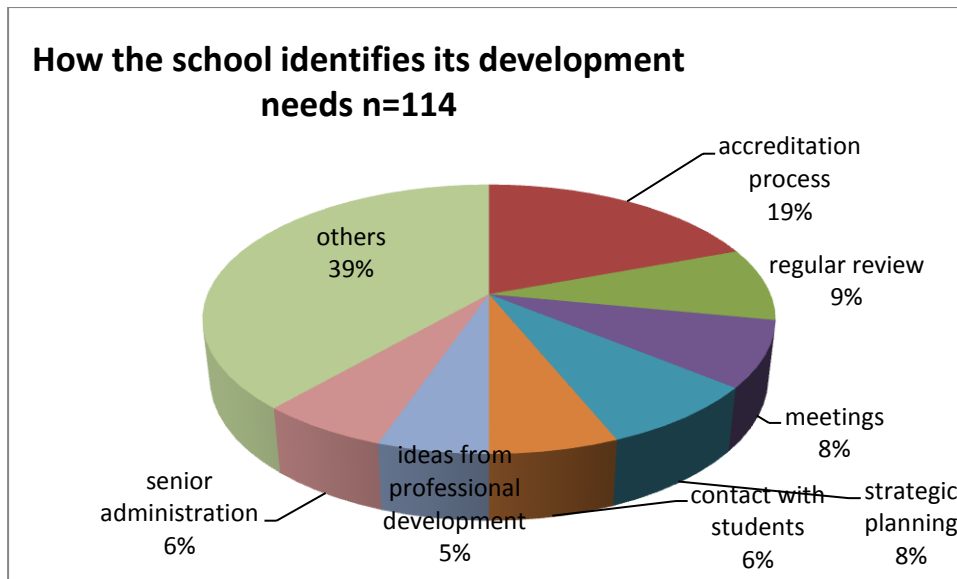


Figure 37

In terms of actual school development needs, technology development was cited by Teachers C3 and C5, curriculum articulation was mentioned by Teacher C2 and the service programme was mentioned by Teacher C6. The Executive Summary of the school's strategic plan included each of these areas; other areas in the Executive Summary pertained to the development of the new campus that had just opened.

The data from 4.3.3.5 and 4.3.3.6 at first appears contradictory. There does not seem to be widespread input into school-wide development planning. There also seems to be limited understanding of how this plan is created, and only an executive summary of the plan is available upon request. Nevertheless, a high level of trust seems to exist that this plan addresses school needs. Further analysis and interpretations are offered in Section 4.4 and the following chapter.

#### 4.3.4 Discussion

The culture of ISC provides strong support for Bell and Harrison's theory that the alignment of teachers' values systems with the school's value system is critical for the effective implementation of a school's philosophy (Bell and Harrison 1995:3). Data from the questionnaire provides substantial evidence that teachers subscribe to the school's

philosophy and this is clearly supported by interviewees' comments. What is less easy to identify in the case of ISC is why this alignment exists. Unlike ISB, and in contrast to theories promoting high levels of teacher input into the creation and review of a school's philosophy (Habermas 1984; Senge 2000:290-1; Fullan 1992: 120-1; Beare et al 1993: 132; Limb 1992:168), limited systems seem to be in place to communicate and review the school's values. Nevertheless, each interviewee suggested that the school's philosophy is not assimilated in this manner but that it is learned through "*doing*"; through involvement in the various school activities intended to put the philosophy into practice. Indeed, whenever questions aimed at learning more about how the school transmits its value system to teachers were asked, reference was made in both the questionnaire and the interviews to these outputs; to how implementation of the philosophy was demonstrated. What does seem to be at play in ISC is what Everard and Morris (1990:196) described as conditioning through group affiliation. In other words, teachers in the school, by dint of association with the apparently strong belief system in operation at the school, are encouraged to align their philosophical beliefs with the school's beliefs; the kind of "*peer infection*" that Teacher C7 alluded to in the interview. This process of "*peer infection*" is perhaps aided in ISC by the stability of its staffing which aids transmission of the school's values from longer serving staff to newer staff. Teacher C7 mentioned that the school experienced between 10- 15% staff turnover each year which, as mentioned by Hayden (2006: 16) and Hardman (2001: 125), is low in comparison to some international schools. What might also be reflected in this finding is the influence of Wittgenstein's 'forms of life' (Wittgenstein 1953). In other words, the assumptions, practices, traditions and shared beliefs which give meaning to language, serve as a community's frame of reference and help form a shared outlook (Grayling 1996: 97). In this case the teachers, through engaging in the activities which further the school's philosophical beliefs and interacting with

colleagues that are supportive of these beliefs, develop a common frame of reference from which they operate and a common lens through which they view their school.

As the teachers interviewed seemed to either give more emphasis to certain elements of the school's philosophy when asked what they believed the school stood for, or even added elements that were not included in the philosophical statements (Teachers C1, C6 and C7), the school's philosophy may be in danger of the kind of philosophical drift demonstrated by ISA. This is perhaps due to some extent to some of the concepts in the school's statements which are undefined; an area mentioned by Stott and Walker (1992:54) as potentially problematic. This was corroborated by Teacher C5 who stated that several concepts in the school's philosophy are difficult to measure because it is not clear what they look like in practice and the school, after initially attempting to measure them, had abandoned its attempts to do so in a formal manner.

In support of Cook's (1999:50) theory, teachers firmly believed that the school's planning processes were informed by the school's philosophy and that the philosophy was the yardstick against which any potential innovation was measured. Interestingly, although interviewees did not believe they were heavily involved in school planning other than at the classroom or departmental level, they demonstrated faith in the extent to which the school's development plan captured the school's needs. Contrary to some of the dangers associated with less holistic planning approaches alluded to by Welton (2001: 102), Stoll and Fink (1996: 60-70), Sammons (1999: 297) and Cowham (1995:85), none of the teachers interviewed appeared particularly concerned that they were not directly involved in planning and none of the teachers expressed a feeling of disenfranchisement. When questioned, teachers interviewed appeared to direct more energy to implementing the school's philosophy through the various activities they were involved in than concerning themselves with the school's future direction. There appeared to be implicit trust in and

support for the direction the senior administration had set for the school and although input channels to the planning process did not appear to be well understood or defined, teachers interviewed could cite examples of how those not in positions of responsibility could to some extent influence the direction the school was taking. Teachers C1, C3, C4, C2, C5 and C7 also believed that other mechanisms such as parental and student feedback, analysis of student achievement results and benchmarking with other schools and outside consultants helped to ensure that the school was effectively responding to needs. Possible reasons for this implicit trust may be found in several of the teachers' comments about the school such as *"This is a special school"* (Teacher C3), *"I think the school is a very successful school, popular school, immediately within the host country and also on a more global scale"* (Teacher C4), *"We believe we are a very good school, sometimes we are told we are one of the best schools"* (Teacher C7) and the positive comments made about alumni successes and contributions made to the school by Teacher C6. This suggests that the school's good reputation combined with positive school outputs offer staff assurance that the school is headed in the appropriate direction. Teacher C7, however, suggests that the school is aware that it still needs to continue to develop appropriately and that the *"formula has been a good one so far but the world is changing"*. Additional staff reflection, *"broader understanding of the strategic plan"* and more interconnections within the planning process were all areas flagged by Teacher C7 as ways to strengthen future implementation of the school's philosophy. Further possible interpretations are discussed in the next section and Chapter 5.

The researcher is unable to comment upon the impact of the plan's format as she was only given access to the executive summary of the plan which outlines the key school goals in the immediate future.

Again the data from this case study school seems to support the research hypothesis (please refer to Chapter 1.4) as the common set of values shared amongst the teachers seemed to lead to an understanding of school development needs and/or trust that elements of school development outside a teacher's sphere of influence were being adequately addressed by the school's administration. However, questions have been raised about how exactly this common set of values has been created and why implicit trust in the school's strategic plan exists. These questions will be examined further in the next chapter.

#### **4.4 The Three Case Study Schools- a discussion**

The data gathered about each of the case studies appear to support, but perhaps in different ways, the hypothesis that,

'schools that have clearly defined and collaboratively agreed philosophical statements and teachers whose values are aligned with the school's philosophy demonstrate greater insights into school improvement needs as reflected in school development plans. This is because affiliation with the school's direction, goals and purpose allows teachers to identify areas where the school's direction and current practices are less in alignment with the school's stated philosophy.'

Nevertheless, as described below, although the findings uncover some interesting information about the level of teacher alignment to the schools' philosophy, how each school's philosophy is implemented and how systems are used to focus planning on the school's values, they raise some questions which the researcher believes are worthy of further examination in order to more fully examine the study's hypothesis.

The findings suggest that teachers of ISB and ISC both demonstrate alignment with their school's values; with some slight deviations in interpretation as noted above. How that alignment materialized did differ quite significantly between the two schools. Reflecting the factors outlined in the study's hypothesis, ISB had developed clear, deliberate and well understood systems for discussion and debate of the school's philosophy which seemed to have created widespread understanding of and staff alignment to the values of the school. In such instances there would be an expectation that teachers had a good understanding of

the school's value system. ISC, on the other hand, appeared to have less frequent, less deliberate and less defined systems for discussion. Nevertheless, teachers seemed to have a good understanding of the school's philosophy which had been developed by engaging in school activities designed to put the school's philosophy into practice. Conditioning through being part of the ISC community also appeared to play a role in this process. Furthermore, as noted in Section 4.3.3.5, one of the success factors in this approach was possibility the longevity of service amongst this school's staff.

When asked about school development needs, teachers in both schools were able to identify needs that had been outlined in the school's strategic or development plan. In ISB, teachers interviewed demonstrated similar thinking when discussing school needs. However, although supportive of projects identified in the school's plan they did not clearly articulate why these needs ought to be addressed in order to further the school's philosophy. The structured system created by the school's leadership to seek input, and discuss strategic ideas seemed to have contributed to this knowledge and an acceptance that the school's plan addressed the school's development needs. The ISC teachers interviewed, while able to cite areas in the school's strategic plan, appeared to be more familiar with development needs at the department level and within the interviews returned the conversation to discussion of school activities designed to promote the school's philosophy. These teachers, apart from the two with senior leadership positions, seemed to view this level of planning as the purview of the school's senior leadership. Teachers not in a leadership position did not appear to fully understand systems for reviewing and creating the school's strategic plan and garnering feedback. Their focus was much more on departmental and subject planning. Teachers did however appear to trust that the school's development plan addressed school needs.

The findings from ISA support the hypothesis in that this school appeared not to have a clear and understood statement of philosophy. It also had no overall development plan and the curricular plans and technology plan which did exist were perceived as working in isolation of the school's philosophy.

ISA teachers appeared to have developed a variety of understandings about the school's philosophy based either on their own views about the nature of the school or through incorporation of the curriculum provider's philosophy. Limited systems of communication and limited forums for debate of the school's philosophy seemed to have contributed to this situation. In the course of the study it became apparent that ISA really no longer had an umbrella strategic plan or school development plan and that the original plan had become redundant due to the school's struggle to develop a system to combine development needs dictated by its curriculum providers' evaluation processes and needs identified by the school. In the place of an overarching development plan separate plans, which were a combination of curriculum provider dictated areas to be addressed and perceived school needs, had been created. ISA teachers believed that curricular needs were adequately identified through this planning process but that other school development needs were not. The variety of understandings about the purpose and mission of the school resulted in staff citing a wish list of development areas not all of which were aligned to the values articulated in the written school philosophy.

A number of questions arise from these findings. A first look at the findings from ISB and ISC might suggest that schools with clear philosophical statements do create development plans that support furtherance of the school mission, vision and objectives. However, although this study suggests that a link exists between acceptance of the school's philosophy and effective planning it was unable to fully identify why ISB and ISC teachers seemed to be in greater alignment with the school's philosophy. A possible explanation of

why ISA teachers appeared to have less of a shared value system than teachers in ISB and ISC was suggested; i.e. confusion between the school's philosophy and the curriculum provider's philosophy. It seems likely that ISB's "*consistent and persistent*" communication of the mission contributed to the understandings that were recorded. Nevertheless, the analysis did not fully establish the extent to which clear statements of philosophy, giving input into the creation of a school's philosophy and making time for discussion and debate helps create shared values nor did it fully uncover the impact of shared values on teaching and learning, decision making and the school's operations. Importantly, the data from the face to face interviews point to some other factors that might have an influence on the creation of a shared understanding of a school's philosophy. Teachers C6 and C7 make reference to "*a microchip that gets embedded under your skin*" and "*peer infection*", and teachers A8 and A1 refer to processes based on a sense of "*historical cultural knowledge*". Teacher A4's comments seem to hold the key to what might be contributing to a school's value system- some unwritten yet understood system of beliefs.

*"There are other parts of the culture of the school that are not in the philosophy- its inclusiveness and the activeness of the IB Diploma. It was not something that was part of the original mission statement but it is something that is characteristic of our school's ethos and who we are and what is driving us even more so than some of the other factors"*

These ideas are further explored in the next chapter along with a discussion of possible interpretations for the findings.

This study focused on school planning at the more strategic level. In the course of the study it became apparent that ISC and ISA operated two levels of planning. In ISC's case the school had an overall strategic plan which seemed to have been created mainly by the senior leadership team and it also had a series of department and subject level plans which were created by the teachers in alignment with the school's philosophy. In ISA's case this two level planning process seemed to have been created as a result of the absence of an overall current strategic plan whereas in ISC's case this appeared to be a deliberate

strategy. The link between these plans and the school's philosophy was not researched in any depth within this study as the researcher only discovered the planning structure in the two schools after the study was underway. As a result, the questions created in the questionnaire and in the semi structured interview did not lend themselves to exploring this area. Consequently, respondents may have had other forms of planning in mind when responding to questions in this area. This possible interpretation is further discussed in the next chapter.

ISB had developed an overarching school development plan which seemed to be well understood by the community. What the data from the questionnaire and interviews did not determine was whether the community's belief that their school's development plan was well aligned with the school's philosophy and objectives resulted from the school's "*consistent and persistent*" communication systems which created a high level of knowledge about and acceptance of the areas in the plan, or whether the feedback systems described by teachers were in fact effective in empowering teachers to identify areas where the school's direction and current practices are less in alignment with the school's stated philosophy. In addition, the extent to which the school's shared culture impacted the school development plan did not emerge from the findings. This idea will also be further explored in the next chapter.

It is interesting to note that values related to teaching and learning did not feature as highly in the data gathered as the researcher had anticipated. Limited information was gathered about what the case study schools believed about teaching and learning, how they defined good learning and what the implications might be of the school's values in this area. Responses to the questionnaire in each of the schools suggested that teachers believed that teaching and learning was guided by the values in the school's philosophy; 60 from a total of 76 respondents in School A, 29 out of 31 and 75 out of 78 respondents in ISC

rated this agree or strongly agree. Within the open questions references to teaching and learning were rather generalized, and did not refer to specific ways in which teaching and learning were guided by school philosophy. For example in ISA responses to Open ended Question 2 *“Please specify 2 or 3 ways that your school puts its philosophy and objectives into practice”* produced comments such as *“curriculum, International Baccalaureate Learner Profile, and teaching”*, in ISB *“incorporated into lessons”* was received, and in ISC, apart from *“curriculum”*, responses tended to focus on school activities such as Global Concerns, Social Service programme and expeditions. As a result of the general nature of the responses, the researcher thought that perhaps the questions asked were not designed to really address the topic therefore in the interviews the researcher sought to address this from another angle but without leading the interviewees. Interview Question 4 *“How do you and your colleagues use the school’s philosophy and objectives to guide your thinking in your daily work?”* along with personalized questions directed to those interviewees that had specifically raised teaching and learning issues within the questionnaire, such as *“How do you think the school could strengthen the way in which the school’s philosophical statements influence teaching and learning?”* were designed to explore this area further. These resulted in generic responses such as *“embedded in activities”* (Teacher B5), *“it is intrinsic because we are educators”* (Teacher A3), *“we incorporate them (beliefs about teaching and learning) in planners”* (Teacher C2). In addition, responses from ISA suggested that it is the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate that guided teaching and learning (Teacher A2, Teacher A6, Teacher A9) and Teachers A1, A2, A5 and A9 suggested that teachers were guided by *“best practice”*. Again in spite of being asked to give examples of ‘how’, responses remained non-specific suggesting that although teachers believed that teaching and learning was influenced by the school’s philosophy the ‘why’ had not been thought through. Similar patterns were found in interviews in ISB and ISC. In ISB teachers B1, B3, B4, B5 and B6 gave more specific details on how the themes

emanating from the school's philosophy were embedded into lesson planning, other responses, in particular from Teachers B3 and B6, both school leaders, focused on the need for pedagogical shifts for teaching and learning to align with the school's philosophy. These comments about pedagogy were not reflected in teacher comments suggesting that this aspect had perhaps not yet been internalized at the teacher level. In ISC responses to these questions elicited more information on the activities that had been mentioned in the questionnaire, however Teachers C2 and C3 mentioned that the curricular values (the International Baccalaureate philosophy) guided unit planning and Teacher C7 mentioned that the school had designed some specific courses such as Global Perspectives to incorporate a study of values.

In an attempt to understand why this might be the case the researcher returned to each school's philosophical statement. ISA's statements describe the school's beliefs about the kind of education the school aims to provide "*multicultural educational environment, academic success, academic excellence*" are all terms found in the statements as well as descriptions of the dispositions the school wishes students to acquire. ISB's statements also describe the kind of education the school aims to provide,

*"nurturing the development of Christian belief and values, promote the intellectual development of our students together with the best academic qualifications within each student's capabilities",*

and ISC did likewise,

*"a challenging and holistic values- based education with an emphasis upon academic achievement, service to others, environmental stewardship, teamwork and leadership".*

None of the statements defined what the schools believed about learning nor did they express any aims or objectives in terms of student learning. The data gathered suggested that the schools had perhaps not yet engaged in such discussions as teachers interviewed could only provide general and undeveloped responses. In the case of ISB and ISC what they stated they valued in their philosophical statements i.e. Christian values (ISB), service,

environmental stewardship, teamwork and leadership (ISC) did permeate the data gathered. This suggests that to create common understandings and additional focus, it is important to articulate a school's beliefs about teaching and learning within a school's philosophical statements. This reflects the work of Pamela Mundy, an educational consultant who begins the process of learning development by eliciting what the school's beliefs are about learning and then asking schools to check to what extent these beliefs are reflected in the school's philosophy (Miller 2011).

## Chapter Five

### The Statistical Analysis

#### 5.0 Introduction

Initially each of the case studies appears to support, but perhaps in different ways, the study's hypothesis that,

'schools that have clearly defined and collaboratively agreed philosophical statements and teachers whose values are aligned with the school's philosophy demonstrate greater insights into school improvement needs as reflected in school development plans. This is because affiliation with the school's direction, goals and purpose allows teachers to identify areas where the school's direction and current practices are less in alignment with the school's stated philosophy.'

However, as highlighted in 4.4, the initial analysis of the data did raise several issues which appeared worthy of further analysis and discussion. These included:

1. To what extent does the clarity of the school's philosophical statements impact upon the creation of shared philosophical understandings in the school?
2. To what extent do systems such as gathering staff input into the creation of the school's philosophical statements and opportunities for discussion about the school's philosophy create a shared understanding of the school's values?
3. How strong is the link between staff's shared understanding of the school's values and their impact on teaching and learning, the school's operations and decision making?
4. To what extent does a shared understanding of the school's values lead to the school's development plan capturing its development needs?
5. Are there factors other than the school's philosophy that influenced the development of common understandings?

As a result, it was decided to further examine the data from the three schools' questionnaires to attempt to discern what additional dynamics were at play. A description

of the coding method and the analysis tool can be found in Chapter 3.5.3.3 and the definitions of each ideology identified can be found in Chapter 2.3.6. The re-examination of the questionnaire had two parts and was guided by a series of research questions which can be found in Appendix F. Firstly, responses to the closed questions were compared to try to identify whether or not there may be a link between variables. The researcher is careful to stress that the intent of this exercise was not to identify 'cause' but to see if there might be a link between the variables. The second part was an examination of the responses to the open questions. These were categorised according to the type and level of ideology expressed. Statistics were used to more closely examine the factors that might be at play in the schools.

### **5.1 The Three Case Study Schools- A Recap of Initial Findings and Reflections**

The teachers of ISB and ISC both demonstrated alignment with their school's values, with some slight deviations in interpretation as noted in Chapter 4.2.3.1 and 4.3.3.1. How that alignment materialized did differ between the two schools. ISB had developed clear, deliberate and well understood systems for discussion and debate of the school's philosophy which seemed to have created widespread understanding of and staff alignment to the values of the school. ISC appeared to have less frequent, less deliberate and less defined systems for discussion and relied on teachers developing an understanding of the school's values through engaging in school activities designed to put the school's philosophy into practice and on conditioning through being part of the ISC group. As noted in Chapter 4.3, one of the success factors in this approach was possibility the longevity of service amongst this school's staff. ISA teachers, on the other hand, appeared to have developed a variety of understandings about the school's philosophy based either on their own views about the nature of the school or through incorporation of

the curriculum provider's philosophy. Limited systems of communication and limited forums for debate of the school's philosophy seemed to have contributed to this situation.

When asked about school development needs, teachers in ISB and ISC were able to identify needs that had been outlined in the school's strategic or development plan. In the case of ISB, teachers interviewed demonstrated similar thinking when discussing school needs and were able to describe with confidence what was outlined in the school development plan. The researcher did record some doubts about the level of understanding portrayed. Please see Chapter 4.2.4 for further details. ISC teachers interviewed, while able to cite areas in the school's strategic plan, appeared to be more familiar with development needs at the department level and within the interviews returned the conversation to discussion of school activities designed to promote the school's philosophy. These teachers, apart from the two with senior leadership positions, viewed this level of planning as the purview of the school's senior leadership. ISB gave the impression of having developed deliberate, well defined and understood systems for communicating and discussing the school's development plan and for soliciting feedback. In the case of ISC, teachers not in a leadership position did not appear to fully understand systems for reviewing and creating the school's strategic plan and garnering feedback. Their focus was much more on departmental and subject planning. In the course of the study it became apparent that ISA really no longer had an umbrella strategic plan or school development plan, that the original plan had become redundant due to the school's struggle to develop a system to combine development needs dictated by its curriculum providers' evaluation processes and needs identified by the school. In the place of such an overarching plan separate plans which were a combination of curriculum provider dictated areas to be addressed and perceived school needs had been created. ISA teachers believed that curricular needs were adequately identified through this planning process but that other school development needs were not. The variety of understandings about the purpose and mission of the

school resulted in staff citing a wish list of development areas not all of which were aligned to the values in the written school philosophy. The findings from ISA clearly suggest that a school without a clear and understood statement of philosophy is likely to struggle to identify areas for improvement which will further the school's ability to fulfill its philosophy.

## 5.2 Links

### 5.2.1 The Clarity of the School's Philosophical Statements

The initial qualitative analysis suggested that the majority of teachers in ISA, ISB and ISC felt that their school had a clear statement of philosophy and that there was a shared understanding of that philosophy amongst the teaching body. When the topic of shared understandings was explored in the interviews responses did not elicit references to the clarity of the school's mission and vision but referred to other factors such as longevity of staff service (Teacher A8), or immersion in the school community (Teacher C6). Using statistics the researcher tried to identify whether or not the patterns that emerged from the qualitative analysis were supported. To do this, using R Cran as described in Chapter 3.5.3.3, for each school individually, the response patterns to Question 1, which asks about the clarity of the school's philosophical statements, were compared with those given to Question 6, which asks about the extent to which the school's values are shared by staff. These responses were tabulated as illustrated below. A 1 rating indicates strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree and 0 indicates no response. There were 76 respondents for ISA, 31 for ISB and 81 for ISC.

ISA      Q6

Q1	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	1	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	1	2	0

3	3	1	14	31	2
4	0	0	0	13	7

ISB Q6

Q1	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	1	1	0
3	0	0	5	9	0
4	0	0	2	11	3

ISC Q6

Q1	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0
3	1	0	1	13	1
4	1	0	8	41	15

Table 1

Although the qualitative study suggested that the clarity of the school's philosophical statements did not appear to be foremost in respondents' minds, the results in the table above suggest that a link may exist. The table shows that in ISA 53 respondents gave either an "agree" or "strongly agree" rating to each question, in ISB 23 respondents did likewise and in ISC 70. In ISA the 15 respondents that believed that the school had a clear set of values but not a shared understanding of the values supports the earlier findings that identified multiple understandings about the school's values. This finding also supports Peek and Peek's belief that that an organisation needs not only a clear philosophical statement but also that the values need to be operationalized in order to create shared understandings (Peek and Peek 1997:404).

To further examine the data above and, in particular, the significance of the difference between the two groups the Effect Size of the data was examined as suggested by Coe

(2002:4). This yielded a result of 0.9984989 for ISA, 1.080404 for ISB and 0.7009689 for ISC. Each of these results suggests that the effect size is significant and that there is significant difference between the distribution of the responses for Question 1 and 6. This finding was further supported by running a Mann Whitney Wilcoxon test (R Tutorial 2012:1) on the data. In each of the tests for ISA, ISB and ISC the null hypothesis, that Question 1 and Question 6 responses are dependent groups, set at a confidence level of 0.95 ( $p < 0.05$ ), was rejected given the p value of 0.0002963 for ISA, 0.0002886 value for ISB and 6.792e-15 value for ISC. The effect size score along with the Mann Whitney- Wilcoxon test results suggests that a link between the clarity of a school's philosophical statements and the creation of a shared set of values is tenuous at best and it lends weight to the findings emerging from the initial data study (Chapter 4.4) which infers that factors other than the actual wording of a school's philosophy promote shared values.

### **5.2.2 The Link between Communication Systems, Input into the Creation of Philosophical Statements and Opportunities for Discussion.**

In the initial part of the study findings suggested that each of the schools believed that their teaching community demonstrated shared understandings of the school's values. However, in ISA new teachers reported not having opportunities for input into the school's philosophical statements and staff appeared to have limited opportunities to learn about the statements or discuss and debate the school's philosophy. In ISB the majority of staff seemed to believe these opportunities were available and in ISC staff believed that the school presented its philosophy during orientation but there was a variety of perceptions amongst the staff as to the extent the school created opportunities for further discussion. To attempt to discover if there might be a link between a school having a shared value system (Question 6) and strong systems for communicating the school's philosophy (Questions 4 and 7), the table function in R Cran was used and the responses to Question 4

of the questionnaire were compared with the responses to Question 6. The same was done for the responses to questions 6 and 7.

ISA Q 6

Q4	0	1	2	3	4
0	4	0	3	8	0
1	0	0	1	1	0
2	0	1	5	10	0
3	0	0	6	18	6
4	0	0	1	9	3

ISB Q6

Q4	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	1	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	2	5	0
3	0	0	4	10	0
4	0	0	2	5	3

ISC Q6

Q4	0	1	2	3	4
0	2	0	2	16	4
1	0	0	1	2	0
2	0	0	3	13	2
3	0	0	0	15	4
4	0	0	3	8	6

Table 2

The statistical tests for Questions 4 and 6 gave the following results. Effect sizes for ISA, ISB and ISC were -0.3549082, -0.500767, -0.6301705 respectively; all of which fall in the weak effect size range suggesting that the difference in the distribution of responses for the two questions is small.

The possible relationship was further examined using the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon Test. This gave the following results. ISA and ISB results suggested that responses to the two questions were related (for ISA the p value was 0.1204 and for ISB 0.2371).

The outcome for ISB is strongly supported by the earlier analysis as throughout the data gathering exercise the researcher learned of all the input systems that had been developed to create a school-wide understanding of ISB's ethos. ISB's result combined with the weak effect size score also supports claims by Senge (2000: 290-291), Fullan (1992:120-121) Beare et al (1993: 132) and Limb (1992: 168), that giving input into the creation of a philosophy statement contributes to a shared understanding.

The result for ISA is, however, more difficult to interpret. The responses to Question 4 did suggest that the majority of teachers believed they had given input into the school's philosophical statements yet the interviews revealed that this had occurred as a result of the accreditation process and staff that had joined the school in the last year had not been part of that exercise. In addition, although the school believed it enjoyed a shared set of values, the study suggested that varying perceptions existed see Chapter 4.1.3.2. This result may suggest that although the school had undertaken a study of its philosophy and as a result teachers genuinely believed that input had been given which resulted in common understandings about the school's values, in reality, as discovered in the face to face interviews, the exercise had not been wholly successful in achieving this aim. Perhaps this exercise needed to be followed up with debate and discussion to strengthen teachers' understandings and to assist new teachers internalise the school's values. This could also suggest that the input exercise was viewed as an accreditation compliance issue and only lip service had been paid or as will be discussed later in Section 5.4 there might be reason to believe that other factors were influencing the school's ethos.

ISC's result was  $3.306e-05$  which suggests that there is no relationship between the two groups. This is in keeping with the qualitative study which reflected a range of perceptions about staff input and a perception that, with the exception of the accreditation process,

there had been limited input into the school's philosophy; yet there was a clear understanding of the school's ethos.

The tables created in R Cran for questions 7 and 6 gave the following results.

ISA Q6

Q7	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	1	0
1	4	1	6	3	0
2	0	0	7	22	2
3	0	0	3	20	6
4	0	0	0	0	1

ISB Q6

Q7	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	3	4	1
3	0	0	3	14	1
4	0	0	2	3	1

ISC Q6

Q7	0	1	2	3	4
0	1	0	0	1	0
1	1	0	2	6	0
2	0	0	5	22	7
3	0	0	2	22	7
4	0	0	0	3	2

Table 3

An analysis of the tables suggests that the link is perhaps not so strong between these two factors. For example, 48 ISA respondents replied "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to one of the questions (45 of these to the question about communication) and only 27 responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to both questions. Set against the backdrop of 55 positive responses to the question about a shared culture this weakens the supposition that communication systems contribute to a community establishing a shared set of values. This

pattern was not repeated to the same extent with ISB where 19 respondents gave an “agree” or “strongly agree” response to both questions and 13 gave a negative response to one of the questions, 8 of those to the question about communications. Given that some of the new staff respondents mentioned in the interview that they had changed their mind about the level of communication and input since they completed the questionnaire, the researcher was not sure how reliable this finding might be. However, a similar pattern to that observed in ISA emerged with the data for ISC. Forty five respondents gave a “disagree” or “strongly disagree” response to one of the questions and of that 45, 43 of these responses related to the question about communication. Overall 70 respondents out of 81 believed that the school enjoyed a shared set of values.

Effect Size and Mann Whitney Wilcoxon tests were once again applied to this set of data to determine whether further insights could be gained. The Effect Sizes (ISA -0.3902023, ISB-0.6356581 and ISC-0.7939507) are weak. The Mann Whitney Wilcoxon tests gave the following results- ISA p value= 1.811e-05 suggesting no connection between Questions 7 and 6, ISB p value= 0.5834 suggesting a connection exists and ISC p value= 4.12e-08 suggesting that there is no connection. These results imply that, apart from in ISB, there does not appear to be a connection between the systems for communicating the school’s philosophy and the development of a shared understanding.

The findings from ISB, lend support to the study’s hypothesis that schools that have clearly communicated philosophical statements create communities with shared understandings about the school’s direction and values. They also support earlier findings in which staff members described in detail the systems that had been established to communicate what the school believed in. The researcher does recognise that in the six week period between administering the questionnaire and undertaking the interviews some interviewees has changed their mind about the level of input staff could give to the school’s philosophy. In

all cases interviewees mentioned that they believed they would give a higher rating to question 7 than they did initially. The extent to which this has impacted the data is not determined.

However, as in the initial data analysis, the findings from ISA and ISC raise questions about the impact of communication systems on the development and sustainability of shared understandings. They also question the Habermasian theory (Habermas 1984) that consensus is built through shifting meaning by engaging in structured conversations. This finding is all the more pertinent as ISA and ISC had, prior to the study, undergone the section of the accreditation self-study in which they are required, as mentioned in Chapter 2.1, to engage in structured discussion and debate about the school's philosophy. The most likely reason for the outcome is that these discussions did not have the intended impact on creating a shared set of values. This finding also does not fully support the proponents of comprehensive review processes involving debate and discussion amongst all of the organisation's stakeholders such as Stott and Walker (1992:51), Davis et al (2007:99) and Rampersad (2001:215).

### **5.2.3 The Link between a Shared Value System and the Impact on Teaching and Learning, Decision Making and the School's Operations**

The findings from the R Cran table test used to examine the possible link between teaching and learning (Question 9), and shared values, (Question 6), is illustrated below. Although there were respondents that gave a "disagree" or "agree" response to one of the questions in each of the schools, the number was small. ISA had a larger percentage of responses in this category 26/76.

ISA Q9

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	2	1	1	0
1	0	0	0	1	0
2	0	3	4	9	0
3	0	1	4	36	5
4	0	0	1	3	5

ISB Q9

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	2	5	1
3	0	0	1	16	4
4	0	0	0	1	2

ISC Q9

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	2	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	1	7	1
3	0	0	1	38	15
4	0	0	0	5	11

Table 4

The Effect Size tests (0.03339931, -0.3789526, -0.664165) for ISA, ISB, and ISC respectively are all in the weak range although it is noted that the size is greater for ISA. The Mann Whitney Wilcoxon tests again suggest connections for ISA ( $p=0.4322$ ) and IS B ( $p=0.05207$ ) and no connection for ISC ( $p=0.006591$ ). The findings for ISA and ISB support the information gained during the first analysis of the questionnaire and the data from the interviews which suggested that ISA was driven by the learning philosophy of its curriculum provider and ISB's teachers described how the systems the school had set up included mechanisms to embed the school's philosophy in teaching and learning. The findings for ISC give another perspective to the earlier findings as here the suggestion is that teaching

and learning is less driven by the school's philosophy. A possible explanation for this can be found in the responses to the open questions and the interviews. Here responses tended to focus on activities that promote the school's philosophy rather than on pedagogical approaches or curricular choices.

The findings for tests undertaken to explore a possible link between shared values (Question 6) and the school's operations (Question 10) suggest that there is a possible relationship between these two factors. Again, however, ISA demonstrated a weaker link with 42 respondents giving a negative reply to at least one of the questions compared to 8 in ISB and 21 in ISC. Of these 42 respondents in ISA, 24 of them believed the school enjoyed shared values, supporting the findings in the interviews in which respondents from this school gave examples of why they believed that the school's values did not influence operational decision making.

ISA Q10

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	2	1	0	1	0
1	0	0	1	0	0
2	0	2	11	3	0
3	4	6	15	21	0
4	0	0	3	5	1

ISB Q10

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	2	6	0
3	0	0	0	14	7
4	0	0	0	1	2

ISC Q10

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	2	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	2	2	4	0
3	0	0	11	33	10
4	0	0	1	8	7

Table 5

These assumptions were further tested. Effect sizes were weak for ISB and ISC (-0.5173243 and -0.1064422 respectively) and strong for ISA 0.8383367. The Mann Whitney Wilcoxon test for ISA and ISB suggested that the two groups of responses were not connected and a connection is suggested for ISC (ISA p value=2.448e-05, ISB p value=0.01138, ISC p value=0.5427). The findings for ISC reflect the findings in the qualitative analysis, in particular the interview data, in which teachers spoke of an implicit trust that staff's understanding of what the school believed in led to effective actions. The lack of connection described by the Mann Whitley- Wilcoxon Test and the large effect size for ISA is reflective of the array of understandings about the school and the strong perceptions articulated in the interviews that operations and the school's philosophy were somewhat divorced. ISB's findings are more surprising and are worthy of research, especially given that highly structured systems seem to have been created to place the school's philosophy in the driving seat of school decision making and planning. What might be the reason for this result? Was there a lack of clarity in what was meant by 'school's operations'? Was there a lack of knowledge in this area which may have influenced the result or have there been happenings at the school which did not surface in the data gathering exercise which may have influenced some of the responses?

A similar pattern emerged from the analysis of the possible relationship between school decision making (Question 8) and a shared value system (Question 6). Thirty four respondents in ISA replied negatively to one of the questions compared with 8 in ISB and 11 in ISC. Of the 34 respondents in ISA, 32 had responded negatively to the question about the impact on the school's decision making. Again this was in keeping with the findings in the initial study where ISA interviewees expressed concerns about the apparent lack of a relationship between the school's philosophy and decisions taken about its needs.

ISA Q8

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	2	2	0	0	0
1	0	1	0	0	0
2	0	4	10	2	0
3	5	1	14	23	3
4	0	0	0	7	2

ISB Q8

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	1	5	2
3	0	0	0	15	6
4	0	0	0	1	2

ISC Q8

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	2	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	4	4	1
3	0	0	2	37	15
4	0	0	0	6	10

Table 6

Effect sizes for these two questions followed the same pattern as Questions 6 and 10. ISA showed a strong effect size (0.6521969) and ISB and ISC demonstrated weak effect size (-

0.6203974 and -0.5491279 respectively). Mann Whitney Wilcoxon tests suggested no connection between the two groups (ISA p value=0.002319, ISB p value=0.003121 and ISC p= value 0.04153). It is noted however that ISC's p value is closer than the others to the 95% confidence level ( $p < .05$ ). Again, the findings for ISA reflect what was discovered in the earlier analysis i.e. that the teachers did not believe that the school's philosophy influenced decision making. Similar interpretations to those proposed for Questions 10 and 6 above could be offered for ISB's findings. It is interesting that although ISC's responses to the last question suggested that there was a connection between Questions 6 and 10 that here no connection is suggested. A possible explanation is that ISC did not appear to have clear systems or processes in place which demonstrated how decisions are made and this influenced responses. On the other hand, the apparent implicit trust that by understanding the school's values members of the community took appropriate action resulted in a different score for the question about the school's operations. The focus being, in the former case, on the outcome i.e. how the school runs and, in the latter, on the process of decision making.

Various interpretations can be made from these three findings. As ISA, from the interviews, the initial analysis of the questionnaire data and from the statistical analysis appears to have a weaker shared understanding of the school's philosophy than the other two case study schools it would follow that ISA's results would show a weaker connection between the school's philosophy and the school's decision making processes and its operations. However, it is interesting to note that the results suggest a connection between the philosophy and teaching and learning. It may be possible that the school's philosophy had an impact on teaching and learning. Alternative explanations for this finding might be that the school seemed to be driven by the philosophy of the curriculum provider, as highlighted in the interview data, therefore respondents focused on this philosophy when responding to the question. It is also possible that responses to the question about the

impact on teaching and learning may have been influenced by a *“halo effect”* given that teachers are primarily responsible for teaching and learning. As a result, responses were made that showed teaching and learning in a positive light (Cohen and Manion 1997: 310). For ISB the *“halo effect”* is also a possible explanation as is the possibility that the philosophy did impact teaching and learning. Teachers in ISB, during the interviews, did, however, focus more on the activities and religious events that promoted the school’s philosophy than pedagogical considerations. Please refer to Chapter 4.2.3.4. As mentioned above, the results for ISC are worthy of further investigation. Teachers did, as mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3.3, give examples of how the philosophy was embedded in the school’s curriculum but responses to the open questions and within the interviews tended to focus on activities that were believed to further the school’s philosophy. This focus on school activities rather than pedagogy suggests that ISC may not have fully engaged in conversations about how the school’s philosophy guides teaching and learning. Further research in this area might focus on the extent to which the school had developed curricular philosophies aligned to the school’s overarching mission and vision as it was not clear from its philosophical statements what ISC believed constituted good learning.

As for the questions about the school’s operations and decision making ISA did demonstrate a much weaker relationship than the other two schools. This is in keeping with the data gathered in the interview stage and the earlier analysis of the questionnaire. Again various interpretations can be offered. Perhaps decision making and the school’s operations were impacted to a limited extent by the school’s philosophy. Another possibility is that respondent bias may have influenced responses in the same way as this was a possibility for the question about teaching and learning. The researcher believes that this is a real possibility for this school as interview responses, in particular those that referred to challenges or development needs, focused on operational matters or administrative decision making. These responses ranged from the need to address the

school facilities to decision making processes which did not consider classroom teacher needs. Please refer to Chapter 4.1.3.4. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 4.1.3.4, limited analysis of how these factors related to the school's philosophy were evident. This might also suggest that the school had not *"talked down to earth"* and embedded the philosophy in *"workable structures"* (Bell and Harrison 1995:2) nor had it visibly aligned policy, with the school's philosophy (Bearne et al 1992 141). ISC's data may also have been subject to bias given that teachers in the interviews did not report much knowledge of the school's systems therefore it may be reasonable to question the level of knowledge on which the responses to questions 8 and 10 were based. This may also account for why the school shows a connection between the school's operations and a shared philosophy but not between decision making and a shared philosophy. Reflecting Codrington's emphasis on systemic alignment with the school's philosophy (Codrington 2004:181-182), teachers in ISB did report that the school's leadership had created clear systems to demonstrate how the school's programmes, decision making and its operations were driven by the school's philosophy. Nevertheless with the exception of impact on teaching and learning ISB did not demonstrate that there was a link between the school's philosophy, decision making and the school's operations. Possible interpretations are offered above and an additional factor could be that the systems designed to promote the operationalization of the school's philosophy still needed time to be fully embedded in the school.

#### **5.2.4 Relationship between a Shared Culture and the Impact on School Development Planning**

During the initial study data was gathered about the level of input into school development planning, what the school's development needs are, initial perceptions about the development plan's link to the school philosophy, but limited data about whether or not the school development plan was perceived to effectively capture the school's

development needs. In ISA it was discovered that the school had no development plan but that there were four plans in operation working independently of each other and with no apparent reference to the school's philosophy. In ISB there appeared to be a seamless system in operation which moved through building awareness of the school's philosophy to planning stages and finally to implementation. In ISC, teachers interviewed reported limited involvement in big picture school development planning but high involvement at the department or subject level planning. They did however report a high level of trust that the overall school plan supported the school's development needs. Please refer to Chapter 4.3.3.5.

In an attempt to use this information for contextual purposes and to examine further whether shared philosophical understanding do assist in better identifying a school's needs, the R Cran table function was also applied to Question 6 and Question 14 (the question about the extent to which the school's plan captures its development needs) as illustrated below.

ISA Q14

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	2	1	1	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0
2	1	4	10	1	0
3	5	4	20	16	1
4	0	1	3	5	0

ISB Q14

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	1	1	4	2
3	0	0	2	15	4
4	0	0	0	0	3

ISC Q14

Q6	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	0	0	2	0
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	2	6	0
3	8	0	1	43	2
4	2	0	0	6	8

Table 7

Forty seven respondents in ISA replied negatively to one of the questions and of that 47, 28 believed that the school enjoyed shared values. In ISB only four respondents believed that the school's plan did not reflect school development needs and two of these 4 respondents also did not believe that the school enjoyed a shared culture. In ISC 3 respondents did not believe that the school's plan addressed school needs and two of them also did not believe the school enjoyed a shared culture. Eleven teachers did not respond to the question about the school plan.

The Effect Size test suggests a strong effect size for ISA (1.025079) and weak effect sizes for ISB and ISC (-0.3445083, ISB, 0.1930535, ISC). The Mann Whitney- Wilcoxon test gave the following results: ISA p value= 1.46e-07, ISB p value=0.0508 and ISC p value= 0.149. This suggests that there appears to be a connection between a shared culture and a plan that supports school needs for ISB and ISC and no connection for ISA. This appears to be in keeping with previous findings. ISA, as described in Chapter 4.1.3.5, did not have an overall development plan and the four operational plans seemed to operate outside the influence of the school's philosophy. Further consideration of the school's findings is considered below. ISB had developed visible systems to link its philosophy to school planning and ISC teachers, although primarily involved at subject area or department level planning,

demonstrated strong beliefs that the school's development plan supported the school's development needs.

Various interpretations and/or further areas for thought can be offered. Firstly, further analysis is needed to discover which plan the respondents in ISA are referring to as there was in effect no school development plan at the time of the study. Do respondents' primarily "disagree" or "strongly disagree" responses to Question 14 refer to the non-existent plan or are they referring to the four operational plans which are in use? If the respondents are referring to the non-existent school development plan then the low score attributed to this question is understandable. If the answer refers to the three curricular plans and the technology plan, then this needs further examination. Secondly, as a degree of frustration was detected with the school's decision making processes and operations during the interviews it is inevitable that questions of respondent bias need to be raised.

Only 2 respondents in ISB that believed the school enjoyed shared values did not believe the school development plan supported school needs. A likely link between the two concepts was corroborated by the Effect Test and the Mann Whitney- Wilcoxon test. This finding lends strong support for Sidhu's belief that a strong set of shared values not only aids strategy formulation but also a plan's implementation (Sidhu 2003:444). This is perhaps not surprising given that during the interviews the researcher learned of "*consistent and persistent*" systems that had been established to gather feedback about school needs and that the school, from the data gathered during the initial analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews, appeared to enjoy a set of shared values.

What is perhaps more surprising is the high level of agreement demonstrated in the findings from ISC, corroborated by the two statistical tests mentioned above. Fifty nine respondents reported agreement or strong agreement with both questions and 6 of the 9 respondents that reported that they believed the school did not enjoy a set of shared

values did report that the school's development plan met school needs. This is surprising because results to questions 11 and 12 in the questionnaire suggested that a number of teachers did not feel that they had been involved in development planning (24) and 25 teachers believed it was difficult to identify where the school's development needs lie. This information was also echoed in the interviews in which teachers confirmed that school-wide development planning tended not to take place at teacher level. A possible interpretation of what is happening is that given the level of shared values in the school, referred to above, teachers have developed a level of trust that development decisions align with the school's values. This would imply that Cook's belief that a school's philosophy is the "keystone" to a plan was reflected in the planning culture within this school (Cook 1999:50). Another possible explanation is that when the teachers were responding to this question they were referring to the level of planning that they are involved in; that is either departmental or subject area planning. Yet another possible explanation which Teacher C3 alluded to in the interview is that the school has a good reputation in the community therefore a level of trusting the administration has been developed which is not a result of shared understandings but stems from the school's positive track record. Given the last remark, and in keeping with the comment for ISA, an element of respondent bias may have affected the responses to the question about development. In other words positive perceptions about the school may have created a "halo effect" and influenced responses (Cohen and Manion 1997: 310). Indeed Teacher C7 alludes to the need to be aware of the danger of the school's previous track record colouring perceptions about school needs in his comment that the "formula has been a good one so far but the world is changing". The most likely interpretation is possibly a combination of each of these factors. Teachers seemed to implicitly trust the senior leadership's decisions, they demonstrated a range of understandings about planning in the school and they demonstrated pride in their school's reputation.

### 5.3 Discussion

Given the additional pointers provided by the statistical analysis, it would appear that there may be a link under certain circumstances between teacher input into the creation of philosophical statements, effective systems for communication and the creation of a shared value system. Such circumstances may include instances when highly overt, frequent and deliberate systems of communication, designed to support teacher understanding of the school's philosophy, have been implemented. No evidence was found to support a link between the clarity of a school's philosophy and the development of a shared values system.

The relationship between a shared culture and the impact on teaching and learning, decision making and the school's operations resulted in various findings. Although the data suggested that there might be a relationship between some of these variables, the study raised a number of questions which need further research in order to further understanding in this area.

A link between shared school values and planning which reflects the school's needs is difficult to support from this data. Firstly, it is unclear what the data from ISA is telling us as during the interview stage the researcher learned that there was no operational school development plan. Secondly, the interview stage also revealed that ISC teachers were not really involved in school- wide development planning and focused on department or subject planning. Nevertheless, the data and the statistical analysis suggest that ISC teachers believe that planning captures the school's developmental needs. As mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3.6, the researcher also did not have sufficient information about ISC's

development plan to really identify which needs were being addressed as she was only given access to an executive summary. The statistical analysis of the data from ISB supports the information gathered during earlier stages of the study. In this instance, the interview and early questionnaire analysis gathered information about the process that had been established to create a link between the school's values and its planning processes and this was corroborated in the study. Furthermore, in order to fully understand if the schools' development needs were reflected in planning, an audit would need to take place along with a study of each school's strategic direction, and this was beyond the scope of this study.

#### **5.4 The Question of Ideology**

A first look at the findings from ISB and ISC might suggest that schools with clear philosophical statements do create development plans that support furtherance of the school mission, vision and objectives. However, although this initial analysis seems to have identified a correlation between acceptance of the school's philosophy and effective planning it was unable to identify what might be creating this link. The initial study suggested that this link may stem from well-structured communication and feedback systems which empower teachers to identify areas where the school's direction and current practices are less in alignment with the school's stated philosophy. It also suggested it might result from peer conditioning. In particular, the findings from the initial study, such as ISC teachers' limited knowledge of the school's philosophy yet their overt understanding of the ethos of the school and comments from Teachers C1, C4 and C6 that the philosophy is understood through "*doing*", and that the school's philosophy "*is the closest thing I will have to a religious experience*" (Teacher C5) seemed to point to some other dynamic at play which the initial data analysis did not identify. This idea was further supported by ISA Teacher A4's, comment that,

*“There are other parts of the culture of the school that are not in the philosophy.....It was not something that was part of the original mission statement but it is something that is characteristic of our school’s ethos and who we are and what is driving us even more so than some of the other factors.”*

To develop an understanding of what might be happening, it was felt that reference to Wittgenstein’s Language Games theory (Wittgenstein 1953:43) might be helpful here. Wittgenstein suggests that the meaning of language comes from its use, that language is a kind of gatekeeper to society’s belief system or ideology, and that the frame of reference that guides people’s use of language is learnt through being a part of that society. This idea was reflected in Teacher A5’s comment about why she believed ISA struggled to develop a shared set of values,

*“ I don’t think that the elements of the philosophy have been present enough in the school documents so that when people talk they have the language.”*

In the context of a school, this suggests that the words in a school’s statement of philosophy are likely to be insufficient to establish a school’s ethos and that socialisation processes (Wittgenstein 1953: 217) through which the school’s beliefs, traditions and agreements are learnt and assimilated, are the underlying forces which create a common philosophical approach. Reference to Handy and Aitken’s suggestion that ideology can be a tool to create *“a belief in a common cause”* is also useful (Handy and Aitken 1990:78). As a result of these emerging ideas, a second analysis was made of responses to the questionnaire and statistical tools were applied in an attempt to dig deeper into what was happening. In this case each of the open questions in the questionnaire was examined to identify whether or not they reflected an ideologically driven response and if so how strong that response appeared to be. A description of how the questions were coded, how ideological labels were assigned and how the degree of ideology was determined to each of the responses can be found in Chapter 3.5.3.3.

Two questions formed the basis of this area of research. The first question sought to discover which school had the highest ideologically based responses to the open questions. This was achieved by finding the mean of the total number of ideologically based responses for each school and resulted in the figures below.

School A	School B	School C
2.89	2.4	3.8

Figure 38

The second question sought to identify the frequency of the different ideologies within each school's responses. This was achieved by calculating, on a school basis, the mean of the total number of responses for each ideology and it produced the following results.

ideology	ISA	ISB	ISC
internationalism	0.63	0.3	0.6
religious	0	1.85	0.02
curricular	1.31	0.04	0.15
Social humanism	0.24	0.11	2.91
liberalism	0.93	0	0

Figure 39

These findings suggest that School C has the highest number of ideologically driven responses and that these responses, as a result of the strongly dominant mean score for social humanism, show that teachers in the school tend to share similar beliefs. This perhaps helps explain why the qualitative analysis seemed to suggest that teachers in ISC appeared to have a clear of understanding of what the school is about even if they did not demonstrate a particularly strong knowledge of the school's official philosophy. Please refer to Chapter 4.3.3.1 and 4.3.3.2 for more details.

ISB, which has the lowest mean score for ideological responses, has religious ideology as its dominant belief system and a scattering of other ideologies such as internationalism, curricular and social humanism. Given that the school is a faith school, the dominance of a religious ideology is to be expected, however, its mean score is much lower than the dominant mean score for ISC. This raises additional questions as the qualitative analysis suggests that ISB had developed clear, deliberate and well understood systems for discussion and debate of the school's philosophy which seemed to have created widespread understanding of and staff alignment to the values of the school. A possible interpretation is that perhaps further work or time is needed to fully embed the school's philosophy in the life of the community. At the time of the study the school's leadership was fully engaged in this endeavour through creating opportunities for discussion and systems to link the school's philosophy with planning. Another possible interpretation of this finding is that although the leadership was consciously promoting the school's philosophy this alone was insufficient to embed it in the ideological fabric of the school and that like in ISC, teachers feel they need to live the belief system before they can develop an affinity with it.

The findings for ISA support the findings from the initial qualitative analysis. The ISA teacher community did not appear to have a common understanding of what the school stood for and teaching and learning seemed to be driven by the curriculum provider's philosophy. Teachers believed that what the school was about was not in fact expressed in the school's philosophy and a variety of understandings emerged from the teacher interviews. It is perhaps not surprising that teachers in this school gave responses which reflected an array of ideologies and that 'curricular' appeared as its dominant ideology.

## **5.5 Discussion**

Data from this section point to possible interpretations for the unexplained factors raised in Section 5.0 and the earlier qualitative data analysis. ISC, the school that did not have particularly strong systems for communicating its philosophical statements or gathering input into their creation/review but had a staff that seemed to understand what the school believed in and a staff that felt that the school's value system drove the school's operations and planning also had the highest mean number of ideological responses to the open questions and a dominant ideology emerged from those responses. ISA had a lower mean score school for ideologically based responses and, although it had a dominant ideology, other ideologies emerged from the analysis. Is it possible that the common understanding of the school's values that seemed to permeate ISC derived from this ideological base? Does the range of scores ISA received for the different ideologies help explain why ISA teachers did not portray a common understanding of the school's value system? If this is the case then one might assume that a school's philosophical statements are not the core element in creating shared philosophies. What is then their role and was ISB perhaps misguided in devoting energy and time to discussing and debating its mission in place of creating systems to develop a stronger ideological base? This will be considered in the concluding chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

#### 6.0 Introduction

This section of the thesis reviews the findings of the research in the light of the research questions that framed the study. It also considers the scope and limitations of the study, describes how the findings might contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of international education and concludes by suggesting how the research may serve as a springboard for other researchers in the field.

#### 6.1 Discussion of Findings with Respect to Hypothesis and Research Questions

##### 6.1.1 Research Question One

*How do senior leaders in international schools create and sustain a set of common values aligned to the school's philosophical statements?*

The accreditation process appeared to be the key instigator of processes to review or create the school's philosophical statements in two of the case study schools- ISA and ISC. After creation or review of the statements there did not appear to be formalized systems in place to ensure that the values expressed within the statements were understood by staff or used as a tool to drive programmatic or operational decisions. Neither were there systems in place to secure their implementation or to measure how well the school had sustained implementation.

Teachers within ISA appeared to have varying understandings of the school's mission and direction and a kind of 'values drift' seemed to be occurring. On the other hand, teachers in ISC seemed to fully understand the nature and direction of the school. They suggested this happened through a form of osmosis and really believed that decisions were aligned with the school's philosophy.

ISB, in contrast to ISA and ISC, appeared to have deliberate systems in place, designed and led by the Principal, to reaffirm the school's philosophical statements and further staff

understanding of the concepts and values in these within the context of the school. This was supported by an action planning process geared at putting these contextually defined concepts and values into practice within the school. The planning process appeared to have clearly defined feedback loops, which not only encouraged teacher participation, but also reminded teachers of the values the school espoused and helped them understand what the values meant to them personally. An example of this from the interview data are the descriptions given of the work undertaken to imbed international understanding into the curriculum, co- curricular programmes and operations of the school. Please refer to Chapter 4.2.3.5.

A deeper examination of the data gathered suggests that perhaps values aligned to the school's philosophical statements are not completely sustained through the kind of systems found in ISB. This is not to deny that these systems help in creating awareness and serve as useful reminders as teachers in ISB did believe that the school enjoyed shared values. In particular, the statistical analysis provided no evidence that a clear statement of philosophy resulted in a shared set of values and it did not provide strong evidence that teachers believed that shared values are created through discussion and debate; please refer to Chapter 5.2.1. and 5.2.2.

Importantly, teachers in ISC and ISA made reference to intangible factors when describing the school's value system such as, "*osmosis*" (Teacher A5), "*soaked through*" (Teacher C5). An examination of the value system/ideology underpinning the responses to the open questions in the questionnaire suggested that ISC appeared to have the strongest ideological base to its responses and that within the ideological responses there was a dominant belief system. ISB, the school that had deliberate and structured systems overtly led by the school's leadership to embed its value system, had the weakest ideological base, although, not surprising as it was a faith based school, religious ideology came through as

the dominant belief system. ISA did not have a sustainable set of values nor did it appear to have particularly obvious systems in place to ensure that the school's value systems are transmitted to the school community. The responses from this school seemed to be based on a number of ideologies.

These findings suggest that the systems of collaborative input, discussion and debate, orientation presentations, promoted by accreditation agencies and by authors such as Limb (1992:168) and Davis et al (2006:99) to create and sustain a set of school values are more useful perhaps at the philosophy development stage or at a time when reaffirmation of philosophy is needed due to a drift in values such as ISA appeared to be experiencing. However, sustaining a set of common values requires community members to internalize these values and make them their own and needs other strategies to bring this to realisation.

ISB, the newest case study school, was undergoing expansion at the time of the study and a number of new staff had joined. Although the school leadership was actively promoting the school's value system, perhaps these new teachers needed more time to internalize the values and, given the number of new teachers, the process of socialization was slower.

ISC, the most established school, enjoyed a high rate of teacher retention, which likely aids the socialization of new teachers and the internalization of its values. Interestingly and reflecting this theory, teachers in this school did mention their concern that the new school campus that had recently opened and was staffed primarily by teachers new to the school would struggle to develop the strong sense of shared values that the original school campus enjoyed. This phenomenon was mentioned by ISA Teacher A5 who believed that the philosophy of her school was sustained by a *"core group of people that has been here for a long time"*. This idea is supported by ISA findings. This school appeared to have the

highest rate of teacher turnover, diverse beliefs about the school's values system and limited systems in place to create awareness of or sustain school values.

### 6.1.2 Research Question Two

*How is this set of common values translated into practice?*

Although the study highlights strategies and systems schools use to translate their values into practice, it also suggests that operationalizing the school's values was still a work in progress in each of the case study schools.

Clear evidence of how the school's values are translated into practice was difficult to identify in ISA. This is partly because teachers in ISA appeared to have different interpretations of what these values were and partly because there appeared to be confusion between the school's philosophy and the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate. When asked questions soliciting **how** the school translated its values into practice, teachers in ISA responded with **what** influenced implementation; factors such as student demographics, teachers with an international focus and the school curriculum. This and the statistical analysis described in Chapter 5.2.3 suggest that ISA's philosophy was operationalized only to a limited extent.

Teachers in ISB, in keeping with Bell and Harrison's thinking, expressed the importance of the alignment of staff values with the school's values as a key factor in translating values into practice (Bell and Harrison 1995:3). They also described how the school's leadership, reflecting the practices mentioned by Beare et al (1993:153), invested time in activities designed to: create awareness of the school's values, collectively agree on what they might look like in practice by creating success criteria, build action plans to implement them, provide training to aid implementation and develop review processes to review progress and refine implementation. These values included educational values such as beliefs about teaching and learning as well as spiritual values. Despite ISB teachers' obvious awareness

of the school's values and their ability to describe the systems that had been created to develop awareness of and operationalize the values, it was interesting to note that responses to the questionnaire and within the interview responses about the philosophy in action remained at the very concrete level and produced ideas such as "*chapel services*". Furthermore, the statistical analysis did not provide strong evidence that at the time of the survey ISB had been particularly successful in embedding its philosophy. As mentioned in Chapter 5.2.3, there appeared to be a link between the school's philosophy and teaching and learning but no link between the school's philosophy and the school's operations and decision making.

Teachers in ISC also mentioned the importance of teachers' belief in the values of the school but developed the idea further by suggesting that key to translating the values into practice was that the school designed opportunities and activities which allow those values to be practiced and made visible and to ensure that time was made available to take part in them. This reflects Handy and Aitken's suggestion that a philosophy needs to be articulated in community members' behavior (Handy and Aitken 1990:78). When describing how the school's values were put into action, teachers in this school mentioned that their colleagues were driven by a passion (Teachers C5 and C6), suggesting a high degree of alignment with the school's philosophy. In keeping with the idea that opportunities and activities had to be created to allow school values to be articulated, teachers in this school gave numerous examples of the activities they believed promoted the school's philosophy. Please refer to Chapter 4.3.3.4. The school's success in embedding its philosophy into its operations is highlighted by the statistical analysis in Chapter 5.2.3 but the same analysis suggests the school did not appear to have mastered the 'bedding in' of its philosophy within teaching and learning to the same degree.

Mirroring Rampersad's comments, in addition to systems and activities, a common thread running through each set of data seems to be the importance of recruiting teachers that not only share the school's values but that can effectively put them into practice (Rampersad 2011: 211-223). At the time of the study, ISB was actively recruiting teachers that shared the school's Christian values, teachers in ISC mentioned that colleagues were recruited for their interesting backgrounds such as a former head of a Non- Governmental Organisation in Africa (Teacher C1), former Dutch economic development officer in Vietnam (Teacher C5), and IB philosophy focused teachers in ISA stressed the importance of hiring teachers with an understanding of the IB values. This suggests that strengthening a school's ability to put its values into practice might be aided by a carefully designed process that enables recruiters to determine to what extent prospective teachers share the school's values. This process might also explore concrete examples of how prospective teachers envisage furthering the school's values within the purview of a teacher's role. Currently the recruitment agencies serving international schools have not yet developed such a tool.

### **6.1.3 Research Question Three**

*What strategies allow for close correlation between the school's philosophical statements and school improvement initiatives?*

The study's findings, as mentioned in Chapter 5.3, shed limited light on this topic. The study's aim was to examine correlations between school-wide strategic or development planning and the school's philosophy but apart from the data from ISB, this did not emerge from the other two schools. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, the school development plan in one of the case study schools, (ISA), was defunct and in its place were four action plans, three of which were mandated and driven by the International Baccalaureate and the fourth plan seemed not to be linked to the school's philosophy to any great extent. There

were no strategies in place which promoted a close correlation between the school's philosophical statements and school improvement initiatives.

In another of the schools, (ISC), a two tier planning process was in place. The first was a strategic planning process, driven by senior leadership. Teachers mentioned that they had limited knowledge of this process and were not particularly involved in it. Apart from one of the interviewees, teachers interviewed were involved in the school's second planning tier- departmental/subject area planning- and could offer little insight into the link between the school's overall development plan and its philosophy. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis undertaken in the study suggested that there was a link between ISC's school's shared culture and the school's planning systems, however as mentioned in Chapter 5.2.4 it is unclear why this is occurring.

Within ISB a comprehensive and clearly defined system, echoing Welton's comments, had been created to link the school's improvement initiatives to the school's philosophical questions. This link was supported not only by the statistical analysis of questionnaire responses but also by interview comments and other comments received from the questionnaire. Responsibility for leading this process had been clearly designated and delegated to the Mandate group and appeared to be well understood by the teaching community (Welton 2001: 99-101). This strategy comprised of:

- deliberate and comprehensive communication systems to build community understanding of the purpose and direction of the school as expressed in its philosophy
- the creation of success criteria which delineate what the school believes the concepts in the school's philosophical statements should look like in practice
- cascading proposed improvement initiatives to all sectors of the teaching community and seeking feedback and input

- an overt, systematic and public review of school improvement initiatives, their success measured by the extent to which they furthered the concepts in the school's philosophical statements.

As mentioned in Chapter 5.4, questions remain as to whether the understanding resulted from consistent messaging as the study did not ascertain staff members' individual level of commitment to the school's values.

Despite the limited strategies that emerged from the study of ISA and ISC, some important observations can be made. Teachers in ISC expressed conviction that although they were perhaps not involved in strategic level planning that the school's plan was driven by the school's philosophy. A realization that it might be a good idea to measure the effectiveness of this perceived link between the plan and the school's philosophy was beginning to emerge. It is possible, as suggested by Teacher C4, that as this was a big school, with a number of staff in positions of responsibility, that there was less possibility and less expectation that the development of school-wide initiatives would involve a broad spectrum of the school community. Furthermore, as suggested in Chapter 4.3.3.6 and supported by the Mann Whitney- Wilcox test in Chapter 5.2.3, the apparent embedding of the school's value system in its operations may have contributed to a belief in the inevitability of the plan being guided by school philosophy. Other possible interpretations for this belief can be found in Chapter 4.3.3.5 and Chapter 5.2.4.

Teachers in ISA seemed to believe that this link was important but at the time of the study they appeared to be more concerned with burning issues within the community such as discontent about facilities, school fees, resources, ownership and the governing body. Questions that sought answers to how areas they identified for improvement would support the school's philosophy received responses such as that of Teacher A9 quoted in Chapter 4.1.3.4 that did not demonstrate a high level of reflection about the school's

philosophy. This suggests that in addition to an understanding of the school's values, the climate of a school needs to be conducive to the type and level of reflection needed to link school development needs with the school's philosophy. Teachers in ISA, at the time of the study seemed to have strong emotional connections to what they perceived was ISA's development needs and as described by Teacher A1 (Chapter 4.1.3.4) they were distracted by these perceptions and struggled to make connections with the school's philosophy.

#### **6.1.4 Hypothesis**

Given the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 and the discussion about the research questions it would appear that at one level the findings support the study's hypothesis mentioned in Chapter 1.4.

The data from ISA, as mentioned in Chapter 4.1.3.7 and Chapter 5.2.4, supports the hypothesis as the school did not have a clearly defined statement of philosophy, it was not collectively understood and the school development planning process was defunct. As mentioned in Chapter 4, it is not possible to claim that the defunct planning process was solely caused by the differing values and interpretations present within the school without further research. However, Teacher A4, and Teacher A5 suggested that there may be some connection.

As explained in Chapter 5.1, ISB's data lends the greatest support for the hypothesis amongst the three case study schools. There does appear to be a clearly defined and collaboratively agreed philosophy, created using techniques that reflect Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (1984). Teachers are cognizant of the need for teacher and school values to be in alignment if change initiatives are to come to fruition and teachers do appear to understand the school's development needs. A question that needs answering to is to what extent it is the system that the school has created to link its philosophy with its planning process, which involves discussion, debate, strategies to make the concepts in the

philosophy personally meaningful to teachers and persistent and consistent messaging, that has contributed to teachers' understanding of the school's development needs and not their affiliation with the school's values.

ISC's data adds another dimension to the study. At a first glance ISC's data would appear to support the hypothesis. The school has a clear set of philosophical statements and teachers understand and support the philosophy. Although teachers do not appear to be highly involved in school-wide planning, there appear to be opportunities to do so and an implicit trust exists that the administrators that create the plan do so in support of the school's philosophy. However, a deeper analysis of the data, in particular the analysis described in Chapter 5, (Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.3), suggests that the extent to which it is the school's written philosophy that has contributed to this understanding is questionable. Teachers use terms such as "*peer infection*" (Teacher C1), "*it is lived*" (Teacher C2), "*it is a lot through doing*" (Teacher C3), to describe how they come to understand the school's philosophy, suggesting Wittgenstein's belief (Wittgenstein 1953:217) that it is the culture, created through time and community actions, that serves as the transmitter of the school's values and beliefs. In ISC's context, it would therefore appear that it is not the school's philosophical statements that are the prime transmitter of the school's cultural values and that consequently it is this 'culture of practice' that creates shared understandings and influences the school's planning process. The study of the level of ideology present in ISC's questionnaire described in Chapter 5.4 seems to support this and several comments made by ISA teachers as mentioned in Chapter 4.1.3.1, alluded to these factors.

The implications of this analysis are discussed below in Section 6.2.

It should be noted that the researcher does not believe that the study was able to fully identify the extent of linkage there might be between affiliation with the school's direction, goals and purpose and teachers' ability to identify areas where the school's direction and

current practices are less in alignment with the school's stated philosophy. The reasons for this are explained in 6.1.3 and 5.2.

## **6.2 Implications**

The findings of the study suggest that, perhaps Stoll's (1999:515-516) claim that creating a clear set of philosophical statements and systematically embedding them in a school's programmes and operations so that teachers share a common understanding of the school's aspirations and values is an important factor in informing school planning processes but it is not necessarily the only or even most significant factor. This is explained below.

ISA had a set of philosophical statements but no system to embed them in fabric of the school, resulting in a mixture of teacher understandings about the values that underpin the school and disjointed planning processes. There appeared to be a tension between the school's philosophy and the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate and a resultant confusion as to which philosophy was driving decision making. Teachers believed that they knew what the school's development needs were but felt disenfranchised as a result of limited opportunities to have their ideas listened to. The school had no overarching development plan, no robust planning system and plans that were in place did not appear to completely meet the school's development needs. Systems such as those promoted by accreditation agencies would perhaps have gone some way to addressing ISA's challenges at that point; in particular helping teachers create common understandings about what was important for the school community and what needed to be developed to support school priorities. The lack of systems and a strategic plan was, however, not the only challenge facing the school.

The statistical analysis described in Chapter 5.4 highlighted the range of ideological points of view held by teachers in the school. This was probably contributing to the diverse

understandings about the school's values as individuals were likely viewing the school's philosophical statements through slightly different lens. In order to solve its philosophical doldrums, the school probably needed to clarify its philosophical statements, in particular how they related to the IB philosophy, then put in place systems such as opportunities to discuss the concepts in the statements to further staff awareness and create common belief systems. Embedding and sustaining a shared set of values would possibly need time. In addition, longer teacher service at the school might assist and a recruitment process that is able to attract and identify teachers that share the same ideology would aid the process. Overt links between the school's philosophy and its planning process are also needed and key to this is the creation of a vision statement which outlines the direction the school intends to take. This vision statement may facilitate the school's efforts to bring the demands of the International Baccalaureate, accreditation agencies and the school's needs into better alignment as it will help the school set priorities and align competing demands. This appeared critical given the changing environment in which the school operated.

ISB had a deliberate and consistent system in place to drive home the school's value system and to link it to the school improvement plan. A clear and comprehensive system seemed to be in place to include teachers at all levels in the school's planning process. Teachers seemed very clear of the school's direction, spoke with 'one voice' when discussing the school's improvement plan and could articulate why some development projects were necessary to further the school's direction. The statistical analysis did however suggest that, despite these structured systems and the school being a faith school, that its ideological base could be further developed and that the systems created had not resulted in the school's beliefs fully driving the school's operations and decision making. This suggests that systems alone, while helpful as a framework for development, may not be sufficient to sustain a deeply embedded set of values.

ISC had a clear set of philosophical statements, no formal system of communicating its underlying values and no formal system designed to link it to the school's operations and programmes. Nevertheless, teachers spoke articulately and passionately about the school's values and believed that they penetrated the essence of the school including development planning; although for the most part many of the teachers interviewed were not directly involved in whole school planning except for at their department level. As mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3.2 and further developed in Chapter 5.4, the transmission of the school's values seems to emanate more from the school's culture and underlying ideological base, the "*peer infection*" mentioned by Teacher C7, that had been created over time rather than a system like the one in ISB. This lends support to the notion that school philosophy statements alone cannot guarantee shared value systems. What is key is a process of learning about the organization, sharing and living its values and building up common understandings about the organisation's belief system or ideology. Factors supporting the development and sustaining of culture and ideology in this school included longevity of teacher service, the school's ability to hire and retain teachers that demonstrate values aligned with the school's philosophy given its attractive salary and benefits package and the school's reputation.

### **6.2.1 Implications for the Accrediting Agencies**

Although further research is needed to triangulate these findings, the study's outcomes hint perhaps at a need to revisit the CIS standards to downplay prescriptions about how philosophical statements are to be formed and communicated and CIS' insistence that schools must demonstrate clear systemic links between their philosophical statements, the school's programmes and operations and planning. As an addition to the standards CIS may consider revising its standards to include a consideration of values transmission through the school's culture and ideology. In other words, the researcher suggests that the agencies give less emphasis to promoting Habermasian rules of debate (Habermas 1990)

and direct schools' attention to developing a deep understanding of the meaning of their philosophical beliefs through engaging in activities that result, through a process of socialization, in a common language and culture (Wittgenstein 1953). In the case of ISC, for example, the researcher believes it is questionable whether creating a formal, deliberate and systemic approach to articulating and embedding the school's values would contribute to the teachers' understanding of the school's philosophy and whether this would influence planning processes as the school's philosophy was simply 'lived'.

The researcher does not, however advocate, completely discarding the essential elements of the standards. ISB is the school in the study that most closely followed the 'ideal model' the researcher had in mind and which is promoted by the CIS standards for accreditation. This school made consistent efforts to discuss and analyse the values and concepts within the school's philosophical statements and there were clear and consistent systems to link those values to school planning. This 'model' seemed to have created a cohesive school community that had ownership in school improvement efforts and had resulted in improvements that had been noted by teachers. This school was also the 'youngest' school' amongst the three case study schools and was undergoing considerable transformation as a result of its expanded enrolment. The accreditation framework seemed to be useful in supporting the school create a basic understanding of what the school believed in and what the school needed to achieve to realize its philosophy. As the statistical analysis did suggest, it likely now needed time to develop strategies to help teachers fully internalize and live those values and embed them in the fabric of the school.

ISA, on the other hand, at the time of the study, was in a kind of 'values crisis'. Different interpretations with respect to the school's 'raison d'être' were expressed by the teachers interviewed and plans that had been created by different groups of teachers seemed to result in the school drifting somewhat from the values expressed in the school's

philosophical statements and from the direction outlined in the redundant school strategic plan. As mentioned above, perhaps a clearly articulated set of values and a structured system to demonstrate linkages throughout the school would be a good antidote to the malaise that the school seemed to be experiencing.

Given the data from ISA and ISB, it might therefore be argued that the current standards do in fact support schools in need such as ISA or newer schools such as ISB that are working to establish an identity, culture and systems.

In terms of teaching and learning, the stated primary focus of the CIS accreditation protocol, the study suggests that schools *ought to* strengthen the focus on student learning within their philosophical statements in order to ensure that teachers understand what the school values, what the expectations are for teachers and what kind of pedagogy and resources are needed to align practice with policy. In this piece of research none of the case study schools, as described in Chapter 4.4, explicitly referred to their beliefs about learning in their philosophical statements and the data gathered from the study suggested that teachers had not reflected to any great extent on what the schools valued in this area. Indeed in ISB there appeared to be a gap between what the school leadership believed about pedagogical practices and what the staff might believe.

This finding suggests that it may be more effective for the accreditation standards to focus more strongly on the articulation of learning values within a school's philosophical statements. Currently a school is asked to define what it believes is good learning within curricular documentation but perhaps this definition of learning needs to be elevated to the school's philosophical statements and articulated in more operational terms; i.e. what it will look like in practice, within the school's teaching and learning documentation. Placing learning at the forefront of a school's 'raison d' être' and directional statements may strengthen development; especially if schools, like ISB, make direct references to

philosophical statements in planning. This may also assist the assimilation of this value within the culture of the school in the same way as the values of leadership, environmental stewardship, service, and teamwork were evidently in practice within ISC. Stating learning as a value within the school's philosophy might also strengthen awareness when allocating budgetary provisions. As emerged from the findings in ISA, special educational needs support was not referred to in the school's philosophy, therefore was not officially part of the school's purpose and according to teachers interviewed this area was underfunded.

### **6.3 Limitations**

As mentioned in Chapter 3.1, the aim of the researcher was not to generalize the findings of the study as the research is highly dependent on the context of the schools. It was, however, hoped that some of the findings might resonate with researchers in the field, and contribute to further research (Bassey 2001: 20; Howell 2008: 9). The researcher included details in the narrative about the school's student demography, curriculum, value system, staff demography and retention in the hope that readers can decide whether or not these factors resonate with their particular context.

The researcher did not consider the data from a gender or age perspective as this was an initial exploration of this field of research and an attempt to raise questions and identify variables that might be considered in future research.

### **6.4 Contextual Limitations**

It is important to note that each of the three case study schools was based in the same Asian city and subject to the same environmental influencers such as local laws, and economic conditions. In the case of ISA and ISC this resulted in these schools being unable to enroll host country nationals except under very controlled conditions. This phenomenon does, however, exist in some countries such as China. ISB had a special licence to enroll up to fifty percent of its students from the host nation but had to implement certain features

of the host nation's curriculum, such as the moral education programme and mandatory home language teaching. It is important to note that these conditions are not unknown in some countries where host country nationals are enrolled in international schools. An example of this are the regulations applied to international schools in Thailand or so called national plus schools in Indonesia (CIS 2012). As mentioned in Chapter 1.4 the demography, purpose and curricula vary from school to school.

Each school had a slightly different 'raison d'être' as reflected in its philosophical statements. ISB was a Christian school with a strong religious focus and with roots in the host culture. ISA and ISC, by nature of their licence and mandate had limited roots in the host culture. ISA seemed to believe in inclusionary approaches to education and ISC, as mentioned by Teachers C1 and C7, was influenced by Kurt Hahn's philosophy of education and was more selective with its student enrollment.

*"The boy growing up in the brotherhood of foreigners cannot help but care about the rights and happiness of at least one other nation."* (Hahn 1936)

### **6.5 Interpretative Limitations**

Hammersley (1998:78) uses the term "*subtle realism*" when alluding to the idea that "*we can never be absolutely certain about the certainty of any knowledge claim*". The same term "*subtle realism*" can be applied to this study. Although the researcher took care to avoid well published pitfalls with respect to quantitative and qualitative studies - please refer to Chapter 3.6 for details-, it is not possible to say with absolute certainty that answers received in questionnaires and interviews always reflected what participants actually believed. Nor is it possible to claim that the researcher, despite best efforts, was not influenced by the value system from which she operates and as a result her interpretations leaned in a given direction. Certain aspects of the data analysis were highly interpretative, especially the analysis undertaken to determine the nature and level of

ideology in questionnaire responses. As mentioned in Chapter 3.5.3.3, care was taken to log the manner in which classifications were made to maintain a standardized approach. At all times the researcher stressed her role as a researcher, deliberately chose open ended questions in both the questionnaire and the interviews and allowed the interviewees to speak without interruption, except to ask for clarifications. Indeed as described in Chapter 3.6.1.2, the researcher's positionality and the 'ideal model' she had created with respect to the link between mission statements and development planning were highly challenged as a result of this research and it was through the work of making meaning from the data that the researcher arrived at new understandings which reframed her original thinking and led to suggested CIS policy changes outlined in Section 6.2.1 above. These efforts, it is hoped, allow the reader to make reasonable judgments about the validity of claims made (Hammersely 1998:78).

A final limitation of the study is the scope of the sample; in particular the interview sample. The researcher relied on teachers that volunteered to be interviewed. The researcher, did, when possible, try to ensure a spread of teachers across sections and levels of the school. This was possible in ISA and ISC. Furthermore, given the scope of the study, only the perspectives of teachers and school administrators were examined. School governor, support staff, parent and student perspectives were not sought.

## **6.6 Future Research**

In order to further test the findings it will be necessary to replicate the study in more and different international schools. For example, it would be interesting to determine whether similar findings would emerge from schools that served more of a homogenous student and teacher population. Would there be, for instance, a higher level of common ideology? The schools in the case study and in particular ISA and ISC served very diverse student populations and had teachers from many different parts of the world and from different

backgrounds and values. It would also be interesting to examine what emerges from international schools that teach in languages other than English, schools that are part of a corporate or foundation group and schools that are primarily government schools with an international branch. Government schools and schools belonging to a group, for example, may have a different perspective on the link between philosophy and planning given that often aspects of planning are undertaken by their central office.

The study, the researcher believes, could be replicated with perhaps some language adjustments to reflect the terminology used in the school or with carefully checked translation into the teaching language if this is not English. The research process has been carefully documented which would assist replication. The set of questionnaire questions is related to the literature and research questions, and is common to all schools in the study. The initial set of 10 interview questions serves as the backbone to the interview process which is then supplemented by personal questions directly stemming from interviewee responses to the questionnaire.

To strengthen the study I would propose that the researcher undertake an initial scoping meeting with potential case study schools before finalizing the research design and embarking on the study. This may have helped avoid the challenge the researcher faced when, in the middle of the data gathering process, she uncovered that one of the case study schools did not have a strategic plan and another one seemed to have a more closed approach to planning at the strategic level. This resulted in the examination of the link between the school's philosophical statements and planning processes not being fully realized. Such a scoping meeting would help the researcher decide whether or not the school had the necessary criteria in place to effectively contribute to the research.

Building on the findings of this study, I would suggest further research into the impact of ideology on shared understandings and the school's planning process; a finding which

emerged from this study but towards the end of the study and only after the initial data analysis had taken place. Perhaps the statistical analysis could take place at the same time as the more qualitative analysis of the questionnaire and the findings of the two analyses could then inform questions asked at the interview stage.

Furthermore, an interesting extension to this study might be an examination of the leadership attributes that promote assimilation of the school's philosophy into the school's programmes, planning and operations. ISB's processes seemed to be leader driven and dependent on clear leadership communication, ISC's planning processes appeared to be driven by the Senior Leadership Team but this team did not appear to be actively engaged in formally communicating the school's philosophy. The study did not examine this area in any detail.

Lastly, it would be interesting to further develop understandings about the impact of a school's philosophy on teaching and learning. In this study the schools had not clearly identified their beliefs about teaching and learning within their philosophy. This appeared to have weakened its potential impact on the learning environment. To do this it would be necessary to identify schools for study that had statements about learning embedded in their philosophy.

## **6.7 Concluding Statements**

One of the main values of the study is the step it has taken to open the door for the first time, in an empirical manner, to an examination of an assumption that the CIS and NEASC accreditation agencies have simply taken for granted, that is, that school improvement planning is most effective when it is undertaken by staff that understand the school's philosophy as a result of a process of collaborative debate which has resulted in clearly articulated philosophical statements. Prior to undertaking the study the researcher

undertook extensive research through international school networks to try to establish whether empirical research had been undertaken in this field. The search did not uncover any such research and this study, it is hoped, will begin to create a knowledge base in this area.

To some extent the findings of this particular study support the accrediting agencies' assumption- under certain conditions. These are when the school is new and in the process of defining its identity or when the school is in need and the creation or validation of a common philosophy serves as a tool to harness the community along a common development path.

The study also underscores the importance of clearly defining what a school believes about learning within its philosophical statements to further assist the school embed these beliefs into the learning environment. As a result, the researcher suggests that accrediting agencies ought to include the need for this definition within its standards about school philosophy.

Perhaps the principal value of the study lies to some degree in the issues that it raises. The study does suggest that the accreditation agencies' assumption about school philosophical statements is perhaps limiting and overlooks the importance of other factors such as the importance of school leadership or the influence of school culture/ideology. Such suggestions might help accreditation agencies refine their standards for measuring schools. These suggestions might also help school leaders look beyond purely the systemic factors that the assumption promotes and guide leaders to a consideration of school leadership attributes and school climate factors which will support the assimilation of philosophical values and in turn aid school improvement planning.

As a researcher, the findings added a whole new dimension to my understandings about school philosophy. It was a painful, mind opening and strangely exhilarating experience to witness the theory to which I had been wed for many years as a result of my role within the Council of International Schools, be challenged and unraveled as a result of my own research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### The Philosophical Statements of School A

##### Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a multicultural educational environment for our students in which they achieve academic success, personal growth and become socially responsible and active global citizens with an appreciation of learning as a life long process.

We accomplish this through an international and dynamic curriculum delivered by an enthusiastic and experienced faculty and staff in partnership with students, parents and guardians, in a caring and supportive community.

##### Beliefs

ISA is a community in which:

- The IB Learner Profile is the core of our teaching and learning practice
- Mutual respect and communication are essential to the educational process
- Our diverse multi-cultural community is essential to our identity
- All individuals are unique and valued
- All individuals are nurtured to achieve their full potential
- Self-esteem is developed in a safe and caring environment
- All individuals reflect on and inquire into their roles and responsibilities as a global citizen
- We strive for academic excellence for all students

##### Our Objectives

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. IB learners strive to be:

**Inquirers** They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

**Knowledgeable** They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

**Thinkers** They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned , ethical decisions.

**Communicators** They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

**Principled** They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

**Open-minded** They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

**Caring** They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

**Risk-takers** They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

**Balanced** They understand the importance of the intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others

**Reflective** They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

## **Appendix B**

### **The Philosophical Statements of School B**

#### **Vision**

We aim to develop future leaders with an international vision, moral character, intellectual ability and deep compassion for humanity based on Christian belief and values.

#### **Our Goals**

- To be true to our foundation by nurturing the development of Christian belief and values, and encouraging the spiritual growth of all members of the community
- To create a strong, vibrant international community
- To encourage in our students an appreciation of the need to understand, respect, serve and care for others
- To encourage in our students the skills of leadership, teamwork and service
- To encourage our students to adopt a healthy lifestyle to promote their well being and to enhance their cultural awareness
- To promote the intellectual development of our students together with the achievement of the best academic qualifications within each student's capabilities.
- To encourage the development of personal standards such as self discipline, initiative, self reliance and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- To provide a physical environment of the highest quality possible to enhance the education on offer

#### **Philosophy**

ISB brings an international dimension to the ISB tradition of education. In common with other ISB schools, we believe that we are all created by God and that he has a purpose for each of us. We are therefore committed to a holistic education- the education of the whole person, body, mind and spirit, in order that God's will for each of us may be discerned and fulfilled.

We believe that many of the most important truths are learned in the community. We aim that in our community each will feel valued and accepted, and encouraged to fulfil their God given potential.

As an international school, we welcome into our community those of all races, all cultures, all religions, and all social backgrounds. We respect the integrity of all and will not consciously do anything that denigrates another's race, culture, religion or social background or would lead to disharmony. But as a school to put Christian values at the centre of our life together. We shall promote the Christian faith within the school and encourage others to take seriously the claims of Christ: Christian worship will be an integral part of the life of the school, and all students will be required to attend all formal services, but we shall also be sensitive to our students' individual beliefs.

We celebrate the fact that we are an international community in school- currently almost 30 nationalities. We aim to help each student feel proud of their nationality, honour its flag and share its anthem. In these ways we remind ourselves that we are different nationalities learning to work together toward a world where there is justice, freedom and peace for all.

## **Appendix C**

### **The Philosophical Statements of School C**

#### **Mission**

The ISC movement makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. We educate individuals to take responsibility for shaping a better world.

#### **Vision**

ISC will be a leader in international education. We will have a worldwide reputation for providing a challenging holistic values- based education with an emphasis upon academic achievement, service to others, environmental stewardship, teamwork and leadership.

#### **Values**

The International School C community expects members to:

- Be honest and act with integrity in all that they do
- Avoid prejudice by developing views based on evidence and reasoning
- Be compassionate and morally responsible
- Embrace challenge in order to maximize their potential
- Offer help to other people
- Take an interest in and enjoy friendships with people of all cultures and backgrounds
- Minimise their harmful impact on the environment

The International School C prepares its students to be:

- Sensitive and compassionate
- Educated for a changing world
- High achievers
- Free from prejudice
- Constructively energetic
- Creative in action
- Self confident and engaging
- Prepared for responsibility and service

## Appendix D

Questionnaire as Part of Ed D Thesis, University of Durham, UK

The researcher is undertaking a doctoral programme with the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. The area of study is the impact of school philosophical statements on school planning within the international school environment. In order to give the researcher some background information she would very much appreciate if you could complete the questionnaire below.

Thank you very much for your input! All responses will remain confidential to the researcher. If you would be willing to participate in a follow up dialogue please fill out the section at the foot of the questionnaire. This dialogue will also remain confidential and comments will not be subscribed to either the participant or the participant's school.

### Instructions

From your perspective as a teacher or administrator at your school please give a rating to the statements 1-14 on a scale of 1- 4 as described below. For the open questions please give short responses using bullet points.

<b>Questionnaire Rating Scale</b>			
Rating1	Rating 2	Rating 3	Rating 4
Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	Strongly agree

### School A

Number	Question	Rating
1	My school's philosophical statements express a clear set of values.	
2	I considered the school's philosophical statements when deciding to work here.	
3	The school's orientation process includes an orientation to the school's philosophical statements.	
4	During the creation of the school's philosophical statements the process included input from all staff.	
5	I understand the values expressed in the school's	

	philosophical statement.	
6	I believe the values expressed in the school's philosophical statements are shared by all staff.	
7	My school makes time for staff to discuss and debate the school's values and beliefs.	
8	The values expressed in the school's philosophical statements influence decision making in the school.	
9	The values expressed in the school's philosophical statements influence teaching and learning.	
10	The values expressed in the school's philosophical statements influence the school's operations (e.g. policy creation, human resource decisions etc).	
11	I am involved in my school's development planning processes.	
12	It is easy to identify where my school's development needs lie.	
13	My school refers to the school's philosophical statements during school development planning.	
14	I believe my school's development plan effectively captures the school's development needs.	

### Open Questions

Please complete using the short bullet points

1. Please specify 2 or 3 ways that your school **helps staff understand** the school's philosophical statements.
  - 
  - 
  -
2. Please specify 2 or 3 ways that your school **puts its philosophy and objectives into practice.**
  - 
  - 
  -

3. Please specify 2 or 3 **factors ( things about your school) that help the school** put its philosophy and objectives into practice.

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4. Please specify 2 or 3 of the **obstacles** the school faces in implementing its mission (or substitute terminology used by the school)

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5. Please specify 2 or 3 ways the school **identifies its development needs.**

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6. Please identify 2 or 3 ways that **staff give input into school development processes.**

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**If you are prepared to participate in a follow up interview with the researcher please complete the section below.**

**I am prepared to participate in a follow up interview with the researcher**

**Name:**

**Contact email:**

**End of survey- many thanks!**

**Appendix E****Interview Questions used for all Interviewees**

1. What do you think are the major values expressed in your school's philosophy and objectives?  
What helped you arrive at that understanding?
2. How do staff learn about the ways in which the school's philosophy and objectives give direction to what happens in the school?
3. How do staff in the school contribute to the ongoing review of the school's philosophy and objectives?
4. How do you and your colleagues use the school's philosophy and objectives to guide your thinking in your daily work?
5. Can you describe for me how the school develops its strategic plan?
6. How do staff participate in the school's development planning processes?
7. How does the school identify its development needs during the planning process? (What data is used? How successful is this? Why?)
8. How does the school ensure that the plan remains relevant/supportive of school goals in a changing environment?
9. What do you believe are the strengths of the school's current strategic plan
  1. its weaknesses?
  2. Why?
10. How do you measure if the school's plan supports the school's goals?

**Appendix F****The Research Questions that Guided the Statistical Analysis**

1. Which school has the highest number of responses (to the open questions) that have an ideological base?
2. Which types of ideology are found in each school's responses (to the open questions)?
3. What is the range of ideology – based questions within each school? i.e. how many are R, C, U etc
4. Is there a correlation between believing there is a clearly expressed set of shared values (Q1) and (Q6) the values in the mission are shared by all staff?
5. Is there a correlation between levels of input into creating the mission (Q3) and shared understandings (Q6)?
6. Is there a correlation between systems for communicating the mission (Q7&3) and a shared understanding (Q6)?
7. If there is a clearly stated mission (Q1) and a shared understanding(Q6) then does this shared understanding appear to impact a. teaching and learning (Q9) b. the school's operations (Q10), c. decision making (Q8)?
8. Is there a correlation between the level of shared understanding (Q6) and a belief that the school's development plan captures school development needs (Q14)?

## Appendix G

### R Cran

(extracted from R Project Information Website [www.r-project.org](http://www.r-project.org))

#### What is R?

##### Introduction to R

R is a language and environment for statistical computing and graphics. It is a [GNU project](#) which is similar to the S language and environment which was developed at Bell Laboratories (formerly AT&T, now Lucent Technologies) by John Chambers and colleagues. R can be considered as a different implementation of S. There are some important differences, but much code written for S runs unaltered under R.

R provides a wide variety of statistical (linear and nonlinear modelling, classical statistical tests, time-series analysis, classification, clustering, ...) and graphical techniques, and is highly extensible. The S language is often the vehicle of choice for research in statistical methodology, and R provides an Open Source route to participation in that activity.

One of R's strengths is the ease with which well-designed publication-quality plots can be produced, including mathematical symbols and formulae where needed. Great care has been taken over the defaults for the minor design choices in graphics, but the user retains full control.

R is available as Free Software under the terms of the [Free Software Foundation's GNU General Public License](#) in source code form. It compiles and runs on a wide variety of UNIX platforms and similar systems (including FreeBSD and Linux), Windows and MacOS.

##### The R environment

R is an integrated suite of software facilities for data manipulation, calculation and graphical display. It includes

- an effective data handling and storage facility,
- a suite of operators for calculations on arrays, in particular matrices,
- a large, coherent, integrated collection of intermediate tools for data analysis,
- graphical facilities for data analysis and display either on-screen or on hardcopy, and
- a well-developed, simple and effective programming language which includes conditionals, loops, user-defined recursive functions and input and output facilities.

The term "environment" is intended to characterize it as a fully planned and coherent system, rather than an incremental accretion of very specific and inflexible tools, as is frequently the case with other data analysis software.

R, like S, is designed around a true computer language, and it allows users to add additional functionality by defining new functions. Much of the system is itself written in the R dialect of S, which makes it easy for users to follow the algorithmic choices made. For

computationally-intensive tasks, C, C++ and Fortran code can be linked and called at run time. Advanced users can write C code to manipulate R objects directly.

Many users think of R as a statistics system. We prefer to think of it of an environment within which statistical techniques are implemented. R can be extended (easily) via *packages*. There are about eight packages supplied with the R distribution and many more are available through the CRAN family of Internet sites covering a very wide range of modern statistics.

R has its own LaTeX-like documentation format, which is used to supply comprehensive documentation, both on-line in a number of formats and in hardcopy.

**Appendix H****The CIS Standards for School Philosophical Statements and School Development Planning****STANDARDS & INDICATORS RELATING TO PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENTS**

*Note: The term “governing body” includes any school ownership structure.*

**STANDARD A1**

**The school shall be guided by clear and broadly accepted Guiding Statements of vision, mission, and educational objectives (or the equivalent using the school’s chosen nomenclature and format) for students.**

## A1a

The school’s Guiding Statements establish clear expectations for student learning and guidelines for the well-being of the whole school community.

## A1b

Monitoring procedures exist which show that the school’s Guiding Statements enjoy a high degree of support from the governing body, school leadership, staff, parents and students with this support being demonstrated by the actions of all these school sectors.

## A1c

There is evidence which shows that the school’s Guiding Statements drive decision-making, planning, action and review at multiple levels of school life.

## A1d

There are periodic, data-driven reviews of the school’s Guiding Statements which involve the broad school community and which ensure that the statements remain vibrant and relevant.

## A1e

A formal process and defined indicators are used to assess the school’s success in achieving its aims as laid out in its Guiding Statements

**STANDARD A2**

**The school’s Guiding Statements shall clearly demonstrate a commitment to internationalism/interculturalism in education, and this shall be reflected throughout the life of the institution.**

## A2a

The school has created an engaging and contextually appropriate definition of internationalism/interculturalism in education.

A2b

The school puts into action its definition of internationalism/interculturalism in education, both inside and outside the classroom, as evidenced by impact on students.

A2c

The school expresses its commitment to internationalism/interculturalism in education through as many avenues as possible. (See list in appendix)

### **STANDARD A3**

**The school's Vision for Students (or similar) shall demonstrate a clear commitment to fostering desirable traits related to internationalism/interculturalism, and this shall impact upon all students.**

The school is committed to, and is actively promoting in its students, internationalism/interculturalism in education through ....

A3a

.... discussion of substantive matters of principle from multiple perspectives.

A3b

.... the understanding of the histories, cultures, beliefs, values and perspectives of a range of individuals and peoples.

A3c

.... the understanding of current issues of global significance relating to geopolitics, the environment, health, trade, sustainable development and human rights.

A3d

.... development of fluency in the language(s) of instruction, in another language, and - with as much support as the school can offer - in student mother tongues.

A3e

.... the development of their disposition to serve the community - local and global - through engagement in meaningful and reflective service.

A3f

.... the acquisition and refinement of the skills of leading and following, collaborating, adapting to the ideas of others, constructive problem-solving, and conflict-resolution through experiencing leadership in authentic contexts.

### **STANDARD A4**

**The school's admissions policies and practices shall ensure there is alignment between its Guiding Statements, its programmes, and the students admitted to and remaining at the school.**

A4a

The school's promotional materials and activities project a realistic picture of the school and its mission, objectives and programmes, hence enabling parents to appraise the school's suitability for their children.

A4b

The school's admissions policies and practices require that adequate information be obtained, and that appropriate evaluations be carried out, to ensure that there is alignment between a student's needs/abilities and the programmes offered.

## **STANDARDS & INDICATORS RELATING TO SCHOOL PLANNING**

### **STANDARD C5**

**The school shall have educational and financial plans for the near and long term that ensure school viability, are supportive of the mission and are explained to the school community.**

C5a

There is evidence that the short and longer-term finances of the school are sufficient to ensure it can fulfil its educational and other obligations for the foreseeable future.

C5b

The school has educational and financial plans for the short, medium and long term which are tied to the school's mission.

C5c

Financial considerations and required expertise are incorporated into the governing body's vision and plans for the school.

C5d

The school's educational and financial plans are appropriately communicated to the school community.