

The World View Project



The World View Project

International Education: Stakeholder Values and Perceptions

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August 2015

A report submitted to the International Baccalaureate Jeff Thompson Research Award Committee (research@ibo.org).

The World View Project

Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
References	24
Supporting Document	27
Contact Information	28

The World View Project

Introduction

This report, titled *International Education: Stakeholder Perceptions and Values*, is a part of The World View Project. The World View Project aims to develop understanding of international education within the context of international schools. The World View Project is part of a doctoral research study receiving academic supervision at [Bilkent University](#) and visiting scholar advising at [University of Cambridge](#). The World View Project is conducted in cooperation with the [International Schools Association](#) and is partially funded by the [International Baccalaureate Research Award](#).

Executive Summary

The significance of the study is directly related to the history of international schools. Chapter two described how the earliest 'international schools' were organized for primarily idealistic or pragmatic reasons. While the idealistic international schools organized themselves around the development of international-mindedness in youth, the pragmatic schools were more focused on serving the children of expatriate employees of specific organizations (Sylvester, 2003). In this thesis, these different approaches are termed the internationalist and globalist perspectives, respectively. Those beginnings of international education constituted mostly small, non-profit, international schools located in Europe (Sylvester, 2002). Since those early days of international education, the rapid progress of globalization has fueled exponential growth of international schools throughout the world (Bunnell, 2005). Today, the vast majority of international schools are large Asian organizations, and increasingly, these schools are members of for-profit networks serving host-country students (Brummit, 2011; Hayden & Thompson, 2008). This growth of international schools has been in a mostly ad-hoc fashion; even the terms *international school* and *international education* continue to defy commonly accepted definitions (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Hayden & Thompson, 2008). The international education community, however, is in a new phase which focuses on organizing the community and evaluating international schools (Bunnell, 2008). In order to provide quality control of international education, organizations such as the Council of International Schools, the International Baccalaureate and the International Schools Association have each developed instruments for evaluating international schools. While there are differences among these evaluation schemes, they share many common elements, including a focus on values related to ideals such as internationalism, intercultural understanding, and global citizenship. However strongly international schools may pursue an idealistic agenda, parents may be pursuing a more pragmatic agenda for their children that are related to language acquisition, global cultural capital, and university admissions (Mackenzie, Hayden, & Thompson, 2003).

International schools are challenged to balance tensions between a pragmatic globalist agenda and the idealistic internationalist agenda (Cambridge J., 2003). Building upon Wylie's (2008) *International Education Matrix*, this study proposes an *International School Dualities Theoretical Framework* ("*Dualities Framework*") which utilizes the competing theories of *Post-Colonialism* (Spring, 2008) and *Global Civil Society* (Keane, 2003). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the *Dualities Framework*. Under the headings of *Internationalist* and *Globalist* agenda, the *Dualities Framework* identifies four topics of 'practice': *philosophy*, *curriculum*, *leadership*, and *community and culture*.

Understanding and managing the tensions inherent in the pragmatic/idealistic duality is a priority for leaders of international schools (Keller, 2014). Managing these tensions means that leaders need to carefully understand the perspectives of their various stakeholders (Connor, 2004). The *Dualities Framework* may serve as a valuable model for helping leaders understand stakeholder perspectives.

The World View Project

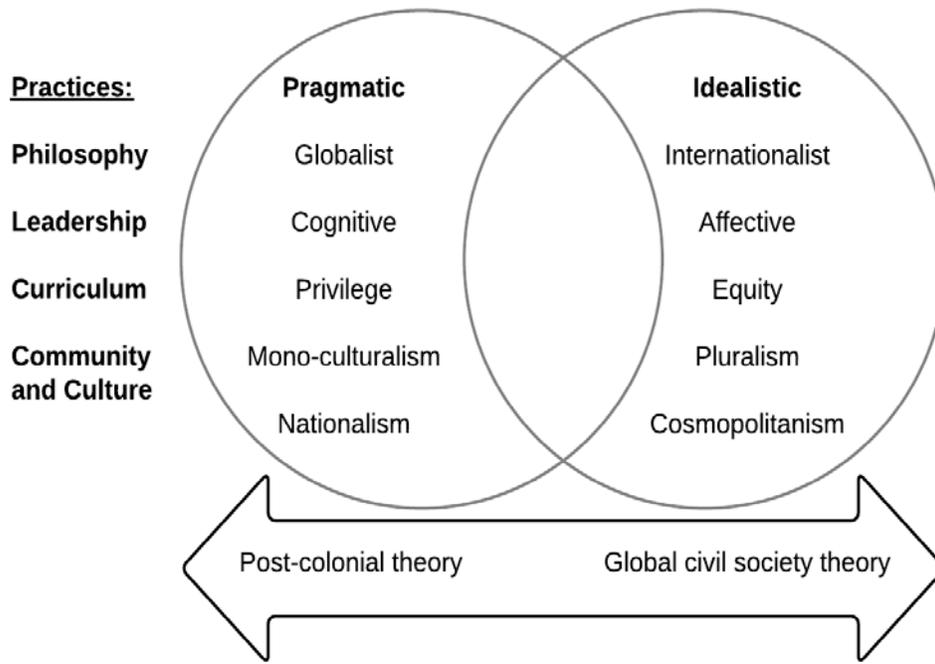


Figure 1. Visual representation of the "International School Dualities Theoretical Framework"

This study researched the question: "How is international education valued and perceived by stakeholders in different international schools?" The study mixed explorative quantitative research methods with explanatory qualitative research. The first phase of the study used a questionnaire instrument to gather data about stakeholders' views of international education. Inferential statistical analysis identified factors related to stakeholder values and perceptions. The second phase gathered qualitative information from questionnaire comments, focus group interviews, and school administrator interviews. Qualitative content analysis identified common themes that help explain the statistical relationships found in the quantitative data.

In this study, the concept of International Education has been defined as "an approach to education that pursues the dual priorities of meeting the educational needs of internationally-mobile families and developing a global perspective in students" (Cambridge & Thompson, 2001); and the term Global Perspective was defined as "a perspective that pursues international-mindedness, intercultural sensitivity, and globally-oriented citizenship in order to promote world peace and justice." The construct of international education was described as consisting of four topics of practices: philosophy, curriculum, leadership, and community and culture. These practices, depending on how they are implemented, may serve two competing agendas, the Internationalist or the Globalist perspectives.

The World View Project

International education may not be particularly well defined by the organizations who purport to be its representatives in the world. The evaluation standards of CIS, IB, and ISA were analyzed as potential sources for the creation of the quantitative instrument of this study. These standards were determined to have low content validity vis-à-vis this study's definition of international education; 59% of the items were identified as not essential to the construct of international education. The remaining 41% of items that were determined to be essential to the construct of international education may reflect a greater concern for the internationalist perspective; 66 of the dependent variables appear to be more concerned with the internationalist perspective, while only 7 appear to reflect the globalist perspective. These results suggest that international education organizations, such as CIS, IB, and ISA, may reflect a general bias toward the internationalist agenda.

OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

Stakeholders value international education highly irrespective of their factor groups, as defined by the construct. However, statistically significant differences in value exist in some categories, even though all stakeholders surveyed value international education. These significant differences exist between certain factor categories when valuing the construct of international education. These significant differences are concerned with: a) stakeholders at different schools, b) stakeholders whose first language is Arabic, c) stakeholders' educational attainment level, and d) stakeholder group in the school (staff versus parent). These significant differences are not across all topics which make up the international education construct, except in the case of schools. The qualitative data help describe why: a) stakeholders all value international education, b) why there might be some differences across certain factor categories, and c) why such differences only focus on part of the construct of international education, except in the case of schools. A statistical difference is evident between value and perception of implementation. All stakeholder groups perceive international education is implemented 'less than well.' Some significant factor category differences exist which, in most cases, do not cover all topics, except for schools. Qualitative data help describe why: a) perceptions of implementation are considered 'less well' by all stakeholders, b) why there might be some differences across certain factor categories, c) why such differences only focus on part of the construct of international education, except in the case of schools.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This study has resulted in seven findings, each numbered and written in a clear statement. Each finding is discussed from seven different perspectives: a) how each research question generated a specific finding, b) how the finding is substantiated by specific results, c) how the literature relates to the finding, d) how the finding relates to problems of practice, and e) how the finding relates to implications for further research.

Finding 1: Stakeholders value international education standards as highly important.

Descriptive statistical analysis indicated that international school stakeholders tend to value international education, as defined by the construct, between *important* and *very important* ($4.18 < \mu < 4.30$) for all four topics of *Philosophy, Curriculum, Leadership and Community, and Culture*.

The World View Project

The finding that stakeholders value international education highly is consistent with some findings in the literature. Hayden & Thompson (1998) found faculty members valued a mixture of pragmatic and idealistic aspects of international education. Hayden et al. (2000) found students and teachers considered ideas related to attitude of mind predominated their conception of what it meant to 'be international.' However, other findings in the literature present a different view. While some findings suggest parents choose international schools for pragmatic reasons (Fox, 1985; Ingersoll, 2010), other findings suggest they specifically value an international education for their children (Mackenzie, Hayden, & Thompson, 2003; MacKenzie, 2009). The literature regarding stakeholder values predominantly utilized open-ended questioning approaches which may yield results that tend to reveal more pragmatic priorities. The design of this study, by proposing different aspects of international education and asking stakeholders to indicate the degree to which they value those standards, may tend to elicit more positive responses to idealistic standards.

The Dualities Framework distinguishes the distinct realms of the pragmatic and idealistic agendas. The composite list of aspects of international education utilized in this study favors the idealistic agenda. The results of the study suggest that stakeholders highly value the generally idealistic aspects of international education.

These results have significant implications for practitioners in the field of international school leadership. Leaders, operating in the context of this study, can know that stakeholders tend to highly value the idealistic agenda of international education. Leaders may find that appealing to the ideals of international education may be influential with stakeholders. However, leaders should be careful to avoid the conclusion that stakeholders do not value pragmatic aspects of international education. With little data on the degree to which stakeholders value the pragmatic agenda, leaders should be prepared for stakeholders who might refute idealist appeals with pragmatic priorities.

These findings have implications for further research. This study was not designed to 'tease out' whether stakeholders leaned more toward pragmatic or idealistic agendas. Put into terms of the Dualities Framework diagram, it is difficult to know stakeholder inclinations toward global civil society perspectives or the post-colonial perspectives.

Finding 2: Stakeholder values of international education are related to the factors of *international school, educational attainment, stakeholder group, and primary language.*

Inferential statistical analysis indicated that international school, educational attainment, stakeholder group, and primary language are statistically significant factors related to differences in stakeholder values of international education. A MANOVA testing detected significant differences between international schools in stakeholder values and perceptions of international education. ANOVA testing indicated significant differences in values of Community and Culture between stakeholders with different levels of Educational Attainment. ANOVA testing also indicated significant differences in stakeholder values of philosophy between stakeholders from the two different Stakeholder Groups: staff and parents. While ANOVA testing did not detect a statistically significant relationship within Primary Language groups, post-hoc test results revealed that the valuing of Community and Culture statements was statistically significantly

The World View Project

lower by stakeholders whose Primary Language was Arabic compared to other languages. All ANOVA effect sizes are considered to be small.

The finding that stakeholder values of international education are related to international school, stakeholder group, primary language, and educational attainment is reflected in the literature. Literature supporting International school as a factor related to stakeholder values includes Sylvester's (2003) findings that there are different types of international schools and Cambridge and Thompson's (2001) findings that different international schools have different ethos. Literature supports stakeholder group as a factor related to stakeholder values. Ingersol's (2010) found parents have aspirational priorities when selecting schools. MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson (2003) found that international school parents selected schools based on specific factors, many from the pragmatic agenda. Fox (1985) found most parents are more immediately interested in a school's academic achievement than in its philosophy. Hayden & Thompson (1998) found international school teacher values were a balance of the globalist and internationalist agendas. Returning to MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson's (2003) study, they also found that primary language may be a factor related to stakeholder values: non-native English speakers tended to have different values related to language curriculum issues than native English speakers. No literature was found that directly relates educational attainment to stakeholder values of international education.

These results have implications for practitioners in the field of international school leadership. There are some significant differences between certain demographic groups, knowledge of which may have potential use for schools leaders. Leaders should first be aware that staff tend to value international education philosophy more highly than parents. Leaders should be prepared that parents may be less influenced by idealistic appeals than teachers. Leaders may be able to rely on teachers to help communicate to parents from an idealistic perspective. Second, international school leaders should also be aware that Arabic speakers may have less value for the international education topic of community and culture. Since the Arabic speaking population is the local population, leaders may need to be sensitive to the possibility that there may be distinct differences between the needs of expatriate and local stakeholders. Local stakeholders may have a lesser need for the school to serve as their community center. When organizing community events, therefore, leaders may be wise to use 'differentiation' strategies for meeting the different communal needs of different groups. A first step may be for leaders to seek input from representatives of local stakeholders when planning school community events. The results related to educational attainment show that the least educated stakeholders tend to value community and culture aspects of international education less than stakeholders with higher levels of education. International school leaders may consider providing community events that have components accessible to stakeholders with less than a bachelor degree.

These findings have implications for further research. It would serve leaders well if further research explored methods for influencing parent values of the philosophy of international education. Another area for investigation would be related to differentiation of community events to account for Arabic speakers and stakeholders of the lowest education levels, and into whether these are two separate groups or two characteristics describing one group of stakeholders.

The World View Project

Finding 3: The relationship between stakeholder values and demographic factors is explained by the themes of *philosophy, internationalism, cultural tensions, corporate/for profit education and academic priority.*

Qualitative data analysis developed a set of five themes, viz. philosophy, internationalism, cultural tensions, corporate for-profit education and academic priority, which provide possible explanations for some of the significant differences in factors discussed in 'Finding 2' above: international school, stakeholder group, educational attainment, and primary language.

Stakeholder comments indicate that a school's philosophy is important to stakeholders. While some feel generally positive about their school's philosophy, others appreciate that their school is still in a process of developing its philosophy. Comments suggest different stakeholder understandings of what an 'international school' is supposed to be.

Stakeholder comments about internationalism reflected opinions ranging from critical to positive views of the concept. Stakeholders offered input about their personal ideas about internationalism and often emphasized the importance of establishing internationalism as a priority. Leaders were identified as influential in stakeholder values of internationalism, as well as outside organizations such as the IB.

Stakeholders expressed cultural tensions ranging from inequality of compensation for employees of different nationalities to concerns about the degree to which a school is focusing on specific national curricula. In addition, a number of cultural tensions were expressed about issues related to the host country, including government regulations, Arabic teachers, Islamic studies, Arabic studies, Emirati attitudes and behaviors, Arab/non-Arabs tensions, and Emirati tensions between traditional culture and international education.

Stakeholders expressed concerns about the corporate for-profit arrangement of the international schools. The comments in this theme were all negative and focused on condemning the for-profit motives of schools, suggesting that an inherent conflict may exist between the aims of education and the aims for for-profit schooling.

Academic priority was a value held by some stakeholders, expressing their prioritization of the pragmatic purposes of school over the idealistic purposes. This was sometimes expressed in terms of financial advantage to the school, academic advantage to students aiming to graduate, and academic advantage to students aiming to enter selective universities.

Together, the themes of philosophy, internationalism, cultural tensions, corporate for-profit education and academic priority are important to understanding stakeholder values of international education. These values significantly change in relation to four stakeholder factors: international school, stakeholder group, educational attainment, and primary language.

International school was a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder values of international education. This relationship may be explained by two processes: match-making and influencing. The match-making process occurs when stakeholders and international schools select each other. These processes include parents searching for appropriate schools, teachers searching for appropriate schools, schools searching for appropriate teachers, and to a lesser extent, schools searching for appropriate

The World View Project

families. The degree to which a match is deemed appropriate may be significantly related to alignment of values between stakeholders and schools. As an acceptable alignment of values leads to a match, new stakeholders become incorporated into the school community and the process of influencing begins. This process may occur in three ways: a) a school may influence stakeholders, b) stakeholders may influence schools, and c) stakeholders may influence other stakeholders within the school community. If the process of match-making creates a school community with similar values, the process of influencing may further refine the common values within the community. These processes provide an explanation for why international school is a significant factor for differences in stakeholder values.

Stakeholder group was a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder values of philosophy of international education. International education, as the construct was defined in this study, was valued significantly higher by staff members than parents. The differences in how these groups value philosophy of international education may be explained by how these two groups differently experience four topics: a) origin, b) match-making, c) influencing, and d) understanding. The origin for selecting an international school is often different between parents and faculty members. While international faculty members may be in the country because they were hired by the school, most international families are in the school because they were brought to the country. As one administrator described: "It is a 'pull' factor for teachers, whereas it is often a 'push' factor for many parents." Staff members may be pulled to move to other parts of the world to work in international schools; this may explain why they value international education at higher levels. The process of match-making may also be different between the two stakeholder groups. While schools, during the hiring process, are able to truly select teachers based on a perceived match in philosophy, the process for match-making with families, who are paying customers in for-profit schools, may be less selective. International schools, desiring to have teachers who value the philosophy of international education, may be likely to select staff members with higher appreciation for the philosophy of international education than the parent customers who send their children. The degree of influence in values may also be different between the two groups. The relationship between school and staff members is based on employment; it may involve professional development, supervision, evaluation, discipline, meetings, discussions, and termination. The relationship between school and parents is based on customer service. With regard to valuing the philosophy of international education, international schools may have a greater degree of influence on staff members than parents. The level of understanding of international education may be different between the two stakeholder groups. International school educators, with on-going professional development in topics related to international education, may be more knowledgeable about the subject than parents. This increased knowledge level may increase staff value for the philosophy of international education. Differences in how parents and staff members value the philosophy of international education may be explained by four differences related to the international school: purpose, match-making, influencing, and understanding. These differences provide an explanation for why the philosophy of international education is valued significantly higher by staff members than parents.

Educational attainment was a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder values of the community and culture topic of international education. The least educated stakeholders tend to value community and culture aspects of international education significantly less than stakeholders with higher levels of education. Qualitative data analysis did not yield explanations for this statistical finding. It is possible that

The World View Project

the community and culture aspects of international education are more abstractly related to the purposes of international schooling and that lesser educated stakeholders don't see the value of this topic. This may provide a preliminary explanation for why the community and culture topic of international education is valued less by the least educated stakeholders.

Primary language was also a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder values of the community and culture topic of international education. Arabic speakers tend to value community and culture aspects of international education significantly less than speakers of other languages. Strong qualitative results described a variety of cultural tensions, particularly related to Emirati citizens. A tension was clearly described between the general 'culture' valued in international schools with highly diverse populations and the value of Arabic culture, with a focus on connection and cohesion. These tensions provide an explanation for why the community and culture aspects of international education are valued significantly less by Arabic speakers than by speakers of other languages.

The finding of the explanatory themes of philosophy, internationalism, cultural tensions, corporate for-profit education and academic priority are reflected in the research literature. There are a number of studies supporting philosophy and internationalism as explanatory themes for stakeholder values. Cambridge and Thompson's (2001) found that different international schools have different ethos, thus supporting the finding that stakeholder values are related to international schools. Sylvester (2005) described that international schools may be analyzed through their political and idealistic considerations; the idealistic considerations ranging from education for international understanding to education for world citizenship, thus further supporting the notion that different school communities may have different common values. Cultural tensions as an explanatory theme is supported by competing literature on the topic, thus supporting various findings in this study. Some evidence suggests that diversity within schools strengthens an international education (Hayden & Thompson, 1997), supporting the many stakeholder comments valuing diversity in their school. Other studies suggest that simply increasing diversity can perpetuate normative national, cultural and ethnic identities (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005), thus supporting the comments about cultural tensions and negative impressions of Emirati citizens. While there is little research related to stakeholder perceptions of corporate for-profit international education, Odland and Ruzicka (2009) found that proprietary international schools suffer from the perception that operational decisions are driven by a profit incentive. This is consistent with the stakeholder comments expressing condemn of for-profit education. Academic priority as an explanatory theme has strong support in the literature. MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson (2003) found parents selected international schools based heavily on a pragmatic agenda. Fox (1985) found most parents are more immediately interested in a school's academic achievement than in its philosophy. Cambridge (2003) argues wealthy global elite parents seek economic advantages for their children by paying for them to attend exclusive schools, learn English as the international language of business, attend a program that allows for easy mobility between schools, and earn a diploma that permits access to top universities. These studies support the stakeholder comments related to academic priority.

The Dualities Framework illustrates the tensions between the explanatory themes of stakeholder values. Some explanatory themes, such as philosophy and internationalism, are well-described on the right side of

The World View Project

the diagram illustrating the idealism of a global civil society. On the other side of the diagram, explanatory themes such as academic priority, are depicted in the pragmatic post-colonial approach to globalization. The middle of the diagram depicts the tensions between the pragmatic and idealistic agendas. This is where explanatory themes like cultural tensions and corporate for-profit education may be found. While many stakeholders may like the ideal of cultural diversity in their school community, the pragmatic realities of needing intercultural understanding may create cultural tensions. Furthermore, an international school may appear to be culturally diverse as measured by nationality, but yet could be found to be quite mono-cultural as measured by family income. While many stakeholders may be predisposed to criticize corporate for-profit schools for driving all educational decisions for a profit incentive, the stakeholders may be joining that school for similar reasons: to seek economic advantage, but for their children. Cambridge (2003) portrays this tension found in the Dualities Framework with following metaphor: some surf the globalization wave of pragmatic opportunity while others work toward creating a wave of idealist commitment.

These results have implications for practitioners in the field of international school leadership. Leaders are better able to understand the explanations behind stakeholder values. They should keep in mind that school communities are values-laden enterprises and all stakeholders hold general philosophies about ideals like internationalism. International schools, however, are also pragmatic organizations tasked with providing an academic priority for all students. The space between the pragmatic and idealistic agenda is filled with tensions. While cultural diversity may be considered a strength to international schools, cultural tensions are a natural byproduct. While stakeholders are happy to pursue economic advantage for themselves and their children, they may criticize the school for pursuing similar goals. It is the management of this complex list of tensions that may be the priority for international school leaders (Keller D. J., 2014).

These findings have implications for further research. While much has been written about the importance of visionary international school leadership anchored in core values, more research is needed to explore the inherent tensions between competing values. While leaders of for-profit schools may be all-too-familiar with stakeholder predisposition to complain about the school's profit motive, more research about successful strategies for handling those concerns may prove helpful.

Finding 4: Stakeholders perceive international education standards are implemented less than well.

Descriptive statistical analysis indicated that international school stakeholders tend to perceive international education is implemented between fair and well ($3.60 < \mu < 3.81$) for all four topics of Philosophy, Curriculum, Leadership and Community and Culture.

Limited publicly available literature exists, based on search evidence, directly addressing stakeholder perceptions of implementation of international education standards within international schools. The literature that was found discussed the instruments that were available to international schools, rather than studies sharing the results from administering those instruments. The Council of International School's Standards for Accreditation, 8th Edition (2010) has a self-evaluation component to their evaluation process that involves a stakeholder questionnaire aligned to the CIS standards. The International Baccalaureate's Programme Standards and Practices (2010) has a self-evaluation phase to their evaluation process

The World View Project

encouraging schools to gather information from stakeholders, but it is not a pre-designed questionnaire like CIS. The International School Association's Internationalism in schools - A self-study guide (2006) is a very detailed self-study guide; schools may choose how many stakeholders are involved in the self-study process. For reasons of confidentiality, none of the results of these stakeholder perception instruments are made available outside of these organizations.

The Dualities Framework describes the pragmatic and idealistic agendas across four practices. The results of the study indicate that stakeholders value international education standards more highly than they perceive the implementation of these standards. If these results were somehow marked on the Dualities Framework diagram, stakeholder values of international education would be marked in a different place than stakeholder implementation. The instrument in this study predominantly measures aspects of international education consistent with the idealistic agenda. Therefore, if both values and implementation would be marked on the diagram, implementation would be somewhere within the right-side 'idealistic' circle and values would be marked further to the right.

These findings have significant implications for practitioners in the field of international school leadership. Leaders, operating in the context of this study, can know that stakeholders tend to perceive international education standards are being implemented fair to well. This is not a resounding vote of confidence and raises significant questions as to why the ratings are significantly lower than ratings for values. It would be helpful for leaders to understand why the perceptions of implementation are lower and what actions leaders may take to improve these perceptions. It raises the question as to the whether it is the implementation in the school that is the problem, whether communication with parents is the problem, or whether some other dynamic is effecting these perceptions.

This study found a distinct difference between the stakeholder ratings for values of international education versus perceptions of implementation of those standards. While the scale for values and perceptions were each five points, the descriptors for those points were different: a five in values represented 'very important' while a five in perceptions represented 'very well.' It would be interesting to see if using the same descriptors for the five point scale yielded the same results. If so, it would be fruitful for a specific study to further explore the question of why the differences between values and perceptions exist.

Finding 5: Stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation are related to the factors of international school, number of international schools, and stakeholder group.

Inferential statistical analysis indicated that international school, number of international schools, and stakeholder group are statistically significant factors related to differences in stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation. MANOVA testing detected statistically significant differences between international schools in stakeholder values and perceptions of international education. ANOVA testing indicated significant differences in perceptions of implementation of Philosophy and Curriculum of international education between stakeholders from different International Schools. ANOVA testing also indicated significant differences in perceptions of implementation of Leadership and Community and Culture between stakeholders experienced with different Numbers of International Schools. Post-hoc testing detected that stakeholders experiencing four or more international schools responded statistically

The World View Project

significantly lower than those attending either one or two international schools. Furthermore, ANOVA testing indicated Stakeholder Group is a significant factor: for all four topics of international education, Philosophy, Curriculum, Leadership, and Community & Culture, perceptions of implementation are rated significantly higher by staff members than by parents. All ANOVA effect sizes are considered to be small.

As discussed above, there appears a dearth of limited literature directly addressing stakeholder perceptions of implementation of international education standards within international schools. With regard to international school being a significant factor, the evaluation systems of CIS (Council of International Schools, 2010), IB (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010), and ISA (International Schools Association, 2006) do not publicly report the results of stakeholder perceptions of implementation. Some research does discuss how a stakeholder's experience with a number of international schools may be connected to their perceptions of implementation of international education. In *Global Product Branding and International Education* (2002), Cambridge argues that 'products' like the IB are marketed toward global elite who travel between multiple international schools in a child's educational career. He makes an analogy between the global product of an education from the IB and the global product of a burger from a fast-food chains like McDonald's. The analogy explores issues like easy identification and quality control for global nomads in need of reliable education delivered with convenience. Cambridge's analogy suggests that more experience across multiple international schools may create experienced 'consumers' of international education. Therefore, his research supports that findings that stakeholder perceptions of implementation of leadership and community and culture topics of international education may be significantly different for stakeholders experienced with different numbers of international schools.

It has previously been discussed how stakeholders factors like international school and stakeholder group relate to the Dualities Framework. However, the relationship between number of international schools and the Dualities Framework warrants discussion. This study found that stakeholders experienced in a higher number of international schools had significantly lower perceptions of Leadership and Community and Culture implementation. The Dualities Framework illustrates that an idealistic stakeholder would have perspectives aligned with concepts of internationalism, affective curriculum, equity in leadership, pluralism in community, and cosmopolitanism in culture. Such an idealistic stakeholder, subscribing to the global civil society theory, would certainly have high expectations of leadership and community and culture. Alternately, the framework illustrates how a pragmatic stakeholder would have perspectives aligned with concepts of globalist agenda, cognitive curriculum, privilege creating inequity, mono-culturalism in school community, and nationalism in the culture. More experienced stakeholders may have higher expectations of the implementation of the idealistic aspects of international education. In addition, they may also be better able to distinguish between school rhetoric and actual implementation. If increased expectations and decreased gullibility are byproducts of stakeholder experience in multiple international schools, than these byproducts may explain why more experienced stakeholders rate implementation of leadership and community and culture at significantly lower levels.

These results have implications for practitioners in the field of international school leadership. Leaders should remember that their most experienced stakeholders may have other experiences with which to compare the schools they are in; this may lead to lower perceptions of implementation of their current

The World View Project

school's international education. In addition, parents may have lower perceptions than staff members of the school's implementation of international education. Leaders may want to leverage the positive perceptions of faculty by having them connect more closely with parents. In addition, leaders may consider identifying the most experienced stakeholders in the community and involved them in constructive feedback about the school. As stated previously, knowledge of the relationship between stakeholder demographics and perceptions of implementation may be helpful to leaders as they manage the group dynamics within their schools.

These findings have implications for further research. Of the three factors identified in this finding, number of international schools may prove to be the most interesting for further research. It would serve leaders well to know why more experienced stakeholders perceive implementation of leadership and community and culture at lower levels. In addition, this finding may be very context bound, suggesting that additional data from other contexts may be helpful. It may also be helpful to know what those more experienced stakeholders might provide in the way of advice or suggestions to international school leaders. There may be valuable insights to be gained from exploring this unique group of experienced stakeholders.

Finding 6: The relationship between stakeholder perceptions and demographic factors is explained by the themes of general context, philosophy, management, communication, teaching, stakeholder role, and curriculum.

Qualitative data analysis developed a set of five explanatory themes, viz. *context, philosophy, management, communication, teaching, stakeholder role, and curriculum*, which provide possible explanations for some of the significant differences in factors discussed in finding 5 above: *international school, number of international schools, and stakeholder group*.

Stakeholder comments described how implementation of international education was affected by the *general context* within which the school operates. Key features of the context included governmental regulations, diversity, and change. The UAE was described as a highly regulatory environment which limits the ability of international schools to implement international education. The highly diverse population within the UAE was perceived as a positive multi-cultural environment at one level but at another level, an environment filled with segregation and disparity. While the diversity provides great opportunities to implement some ideals of international education, other ideals, such as equity, seem to be violated, thus undermining some of the positive implementation. The UAE was described as a fast-changing economy, and the education sector reflects this with new schools being built, growing quickly in student population, and moving to new larger school locations. Stakeholders commented that this frenetic environment challenges a school's ability to successfully implement many aspects of international education.

Stakeholders suggested that *philosophy* plays an important role in the implementation of international education. Comments ranged from generally positive impressions of implementation to criticisms of how some schools did not appear to be implementing the school's stated philosophy successfully. The importance of aligning stated philosophy with implemented philosophy was reflected in many comments, suggesting that some stakeholders are able to discern between rhetoric and implementation. Some

The World View Project

comments directly connected the challenges posed by the *general context* of a school with the school's ability to successfully implement its intended philosophy.

Management of schools was another theme of comments related to implementation of international education. While general comments ranged from positive to negative, there were more specific comments addressing topics such as concerns about resources, ideas about leadership and schools, and ways to improve participatory decision making. Comments generally suggested that successful implementation of international education rested with the leaders of international schools.

Comments from stakeholders suggested that *communication* affects perceptions of international education implementation. Stakeholders identified that frequency of communication and quality of communication are both important areas that affect stakeholder perceptions. Some comments suggested that a focus should be not only on school-to-stakeholder communication, but also inviting stakeholder-to-school communication. Some leaders explicitly described how communication strategies were successfully used to influence stakeholder perceptions of the school's implementation of international education.

Stakeholder comments about *teaching* addressed teacher orientation programs, quality of general teaching staff, specific concerns about Arabic teachers, how teachers should prioritize their efforts, and how teachers should improve assessment practices. A number of comments suggested that the teachers are the main agents of implementation of the international education in the school and should be the focus of attention. Some comments suggested a distinct disconnect between the school's stated philosophy and the perceived teacher philosophy based on their work in the school.

The theme of stakeholder role included comments addressing the origin of how stakeholders come to join the school and the differences in experiences between groups. As previously described in the discussion of Finding 3, international school teachers may be 'pulled' to the country because of their employment in the school, while parents may be 'pushed' to the school because of their expatriate employment in the country. Comments about the different experiences between staff and parents describe how staff 'live' at the school while parents 'drive by' to drop off and pick up their child. Comments also suggested that while parents pay tuition costs, teachers draw salary payments, putting the two groups on opposite sides of the financial exchange. These differences, comments suggest, affect stakeholder perceptions of how international education is implemented within the school.

Stakeholder comments about curriculum ranged from negative to positive summary comments. More specific comments addressed the on-going development of the curriculum and cross-curricular tensions. Some stakeholders described how, due to a context filled with change, they perceive their school is still developing their curriculum and therefore face challenges with successfully implementing the international education. Other stakeholder comments described how they are torn between different national curricular systems, the current curriculum in the school, and what they hope the curriculum would be for their children. The curriculum of the school is not only a major aspect of how international education is implemented in the school, but it also has the potential to impact stakeholder perceptions of other aspects of international education not directly related to the written curriculum.

The World View Project

Together, the themes of general context, philosophy, management, communication, teaching, stakeholder role, and curriculum are important to understanding stakeholder perceptions of how international education is implemented within international schools. These perceptions of implementation significantly change in relation to four stakeholder factors: international school, number of international schools, and stakeholder group.

International school was a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder perceptions of how the international education topics of philosophy and curriculum are implemented. This relationship may be explained by two processes: implementation and influencing perceptions. As discussed in section 4.4.3, stakeholder comments related to implementation of international education may be organized into seven themes: general context, philosophy, management, communication, teaching, stakeholder role, and curriculum. As described above, many comments ranged from positive to negative for many of these themes, and stakeholders often provided specific suggestions for improvements. Stakeholder perceptions of implementation may change according to international school for the simple reason that some international schools are more successfully implementing their international education curriculum. The seven themes may provide a structure for understanding why some schools are more successfully implementing curriculum than others. Comments related to general context describe that change is a major factor impacting many international schools in the UAE. For some schools that are more established, they may no longer be dealing with challenges related to increasing enrollment and moving to new facilities. Similarly, established schools have had more time to clarify and implement their philosophy, more continuity with management, more established communication systems, more developed systems for improving teaching, and more developed supports for the curriculum. As one parent commented:

I think maybe if you consider how long our school has been opened for and the vision and mission we have and how long it takes for you to consistently build that into practice, I think we're definitely on the way there, far from where we were in the beginning. As the years progress, more people are accepting the vision and philosophy.

While there are surely other causes for successful implementation, the impact of rapid change should not be underestimated. As one administrator stated:

As you grow from zero to two thousand in six years, the ability to communicate and communicate well to all the stakeholders when it grows so quickly is probably one of the most challenging areas.

This comment leads to the second explanation for why international school is a significant factor for stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation: influencing perceptions. One administrator commented on how communication can influence stakeholder perceptions of implementation of international education:

The World View Project

We do a lot of information sessions, a lot of newsletters, and constantly espousing what we believe in our curriculum, in our assemblies, we constantly drive home the IB Learner Profile and we over-emphasize it.

This suggests that schools may be able to influence stakeholder perceptions of how the philosophy of international education is implemented within the school. It is possible that some schools, more than others, prioritize informing stakeholders about philosophy in order to influence their perceptions. Implementation and influencing perceptions provide two explanations for why international school is a significant factor for differences in stakeholder perceptions of international education philosophy implementation.

Number of international schools was a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder perceptions of how the international education topics of leadership and community and culture are implemented. As described above, stakeholder experience across multiple international schools may create experienced 'consumers' who may be more critical of implementation of international education. These critical perceptions of implementation of international education leadership may be related to topics such as complexity of leadership, change in leadership, diversity of population, and regulatory environment. Stakeholder comments highlight the complexity of international school leadership and suggest that stakeholders may develop their personal understanding of leadership as they experience more international schools. As they develop a more complex understanding of leadership, stakeholders may become more critical of current leadership practices in the school. The degree of change occurring in the school network and the UAE, including changes of leadership, may exceed the degree of change that stakeholders have experienced in other international schools. This lack of leadership continuity may be another cause for lower perceptions of leadership from more experienced stakeholders. Stakeholders comment that the degree of multi-national diversity existing in the study schools may exceed the degree of population that stakeholders have experienced in other international schools. Comments suggest that some aspects of diversity poses challenges to ideals of international education such as equity, which may lead experienced stakeholders to perceive leadership as unprincipled. Stakeholder comments described how the extremely regulatory environment of the UAE imposes limits on the quality of leadership that can be implemented in the school. Experienced stakeholders perceiving lower implementation of international education leadership may be explained by findings related to complexity of leadership, change in leadership, diversity of population, and regulatory environment. Experienced stakeholders also perceive lower implementation of international education community and culture. These perceptions may be related to stakeholder comments about the challenges that change poses to developing a strong culture and sense of community within a school. Comments specifically described how changes in staff, parents, and students limit the sense of community and culture in a school. Other comments emphasized that changes in leadership also negatively affects the implementation of a strong international school community and culture. Stakeholders who have experienced a variety of international schools may have experienced a stronger sense of community and culture in general contexts that are not so impacted by change. Experienced stakeholder perceptions of international education leadership implementation may be related to topics such as complexity of leadership, change in leadership, diversity of population, and regulatory environment.

The World View Project

Experienced stakeholder perceptions of international education community and culture implementation may be related to the topic of change. These findings provide explanations for why number of international schools is a significant factor for differences in perceptions of implementing international education leadership and community and culture.

Stakeholder group was a significant factor related to changes in stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation of all four topics: philosophy, curriculum, leadership, and community and culture. International education, as the construct was defined in this study, was valued significantly higher by staff members than parents. As discussed in Finding 3, differences between these two groups include a) the degree of influence the school may exert, and b) the degree of understanding international education. In addition to these differences, comments also include a) differences in stakeholder role and b) different levels of access to information. Together, these four ideas help explain why staff members rate implementation of international education significantly higher than do parents. Schools have a significantly higher degree of influence they may exert over staff members than they may over parents. Stakeholder comments suggest the 'employment relationship' allows schools to exert more influence over employees than the 'customer service relationship' allows school to exert over paying customers. Comments suggest schools may intentionally use this added influence to positively impact staff how staff perceive the implementation of international education. The level of understanding of international education may be different between the two stakeholder groups. International school educators, professional training in international education, may be more knowledgeable about the subject than parents. This increased knowledge level may increase staff perceptions of international education implementation. The difference in stakeholder roles may also explain why staff members perceive implementation of international education at a higher level. Section 4.4.4 discussed how school may be a 'full-time' experience for staff members versus a 'drive-by' experience for parents. As one administrator stated:

Staff get a different insight into things and see things in a different way. Faculty have the inside view of things. Parents are customers and don't see how things are done. How do we work on our curriculum? Parents don't really understand what curriculum is, how teachers reflect on curriculum, what it means to work in a school. Faculty members will always have a better understanding. Parents are coming in the morning and the afternoon for pickup, listening to complaints from one another, rather than by what is actually going on.

One comment summarized this difference by simply stating that teachers work hard to try to implement international education in the school and they are inclined to perceive that their efforts have been successful. Finally, staff members may perceive implementation of international education at levels higher than parents because of differences in *access to information*. Faculty members are working in the school full time and have a more direct experience of how all aspects of international education are being implemented in the school. Parents, with indirect experience in the school, rely upon the quality and frequency of communication to inform their understanding of how international education is implemented in the school. This indirect experience filtered through various communication systems may explain why parents perceive lower implementation of international education in the school. The explanations of *influence*,

The World View Project

understanding, role, and access to information provide reasons for why staff members may perceive international education is implemented at significantly higher levels.

These explanatory themes have strong connections with findings in the literature. The research literature supports *context* as an important explanatory theme for stakeholder perceptions. Simkins (2005) argues that instead of trying to find easy leadership prescriptions, leaders need to make sense of the context within which their school operates. Bunnell (2006) directly applied Simkins' work to the area of international schools and the role of international school organizations help in 'making sense' of the international school context. Caffyn (2010) explored the significance that location plays as a factor in the political environment of international schools. The research literature also supports *philosophy* as an important explanatory theme for stakeholder perceptions by providing specific tools for assessing these perceptions. The ISA's evaluation tool *Internationalism in schools - A self-study guide* (International Schools Association, 2006) is based primarily on the stakeholders perceptions of how international schools implement the philosophy of internationalism. The theme of *management* is well-represented in the literature related to international schools. Poore (2005) described the important role that leadership plays in developing the culture of international schools. Caffyn (2011) explored the relationship of leaders and micropolitics in international schools. Benson (2011) discussed the impact that international school administrative turnover has on stakeholders in the organization. While the literature found on *Communication* in international school contexts is limited, Bunnell (2005) found that schools tend to not have strategic marketing plans, and those that do tend to focus only on attracting students, rather than strategically addressing issues like internal communications. The literature supports *teaching* and *curriculum* as explanatory themes for stakeholder perceptions. Miller (2006) examined stakeholder perceptions of curriculum regarding bilingual education programs. Other studies have utilized stakeholder perceptions to explore teaching (Whelan, Manour, Farmer, & Yung, 2007) and curriculum (Muller, Jain, Loeser, & Irby, 2008). As described previously, a number of research studies have explored various stakeholder perceptions of international school education (Fox, 1985; Mackenzie, Hayden, & Thompson, 2003; MacKenzie, 2009; Ingersoll, 2010; Hayden & Thompson, 1997, 1998, 2008; Hayden, 1998).

The Dualities Framework provides an instrument to analyze some of the tensions within the explanatory themes of stakeholder perceptions. From the qualitative analysis, it was suggested that different stakeholders may have different perceptions of the international school due to their different levels of knowledge. Teachers, with much more knowledge about how things are implemented in the school, perceive implementation at a higher level than parents, who usually receive more diluted information about the school. However, it could also be that teachers are more confident about the service they provide than parents who perceive how the service is received by their children. This leads directly to the importance of communication. The more successfully the school communicates to parent stakeholders, the more successfully it may be able to help them better understand the actual implementation within the school. Implementation in the school directly connects with themes like philosophy and context. Many comments about the context and philosophy could be interpreted as expressing the frustration between the pragmatic and idealistic agendas of the school, or of the local education authority's impact on the school. Stakeholder comments then emphasized the importance of management and how leaders need to help resolve the

The World View Project

various tensions and communicate a clear philosophy for the school. Tensions between pragmatic and idealistic agendas regularly emerged within the stakeholder comments about teaching and curriculum.

These results have implications for practitioners in the field of international school leadership. The importance of leadership and communication is a clear message for how leaders can help influence stakeholder perceptions- particularly those of parents. Particular topics for communication may need to be: a) clarifying the school's philosophy for the school community, b) address, interpret, and resolve the context within which the school operates, and c) clarify and justify the curriculum for the parent stakeholders. Teaching was also a theme related to stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation. Since teaching is the main method for how schools implement international education, leaders may need to address two areas with teachers: a) use effective strategies to improve quality of teaching in the school, and b) help teachers serve as effective communicators to parents.

These findings have implications for further research. It would be of interest to investigate if parents are lacking understanding of the implementation of the international education provided by the school, or whether they just have higher expectations than staff members. There is little research on the topic of marketing communications within the context of international schools. Research into effective strategic marketing communication may prove to be useful to leaders of international schools.

Finding 7: International school stakeholders value international education at significantly higher levels than they perceive it is being implemented.

One process integrated the results of the study and another described how, for all four topics of international education, stakeholders rated their value of international education at higher levels than they rated implementation of international education. The difference was subjected to inferential statistical analysis and the results indicate that stakeholders value all four topics of international education at a significantly higher level than they perceive its implementation within their schools.

Finding 3 discussed how stakeholder values about international education may be understood through the themes of philosophy, internationalism, cultural tensions, corporate for-profit education and academic priority. Stakeholder values may be considered to be the aspirations stakeholder have for the educational experience of children. Finding 1 established that stakeholders highly value the generally idealistic aspects of international education; this is consistent with findings in the literature (Hayden & Thompson, 1998; Hayden, Rancic, & Thompson, 2000; Mackenzie, Hayden, & Thompson, 2003; MacKenzie, 2009).

Finding 6 discussed how stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation may be understood through the themes of *context, philosophy, management, communication, teaching, stakeholder role, and curriculum*. Stakeholder perceptions of implementation may be considered to be the judgement of the actual education experienced by children. If the premises are accepted that a) stakeholder values may be considered aspirations and b) stakeholder perceptions of implementation may be considered judgements, then it is proposed that c) the discrepancy between aspirations and judgements may be considered disappointment.

The international schools in this study were unable to live up to the aspirations of their stakeholders. While it has been established that stakeholders value a philosophy of international schools that embraces the

The World View Project

ideals of internationalism, it has also been established that a number of pragmatic realities inhibit international schools from fully reaching their aims. Government regulations, for-profit corporate governance, frenetic change, cultural tensions, disparate academic expectations, communication challenges, and teacher limitations are just a few of the pragmatic realities that have been discussed. This tension between idealistic aspirations and pragmatic realities is easily seen in the *Dualities Framework*. The framework suggests that the discrepancy between the idealistic and the pragmatic is a tension inherent in international education. This suggests that pragmatic realities make the ideals of international education unattainable and stakeholder disappointment unavoidable.

These findings have significant implications for international school leadership. Leaders may need to embrace the pessimistic view that stakeholder disappointment is inevitable while simultaneously embrace the optimistic view that the ideals of international education have strong stakeholder support. Leaders may also need to focus on managing stakeholder expectations in order to minimize disappointment.

These findings have implications for further research. One worthy research path would further explore the process of how leaders might manage the opposing views of pessimism and optimism. Another path of interest would be to investigate how leaders may manage stakeholder expectations while simultaneously encourage continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

The history of international education has been shown to be a continuing compromise between the pragmatic needs of the population working in other contexts, and the idealistic need to provide an education promoting a global civil society. The terms international school and international education continue to defy commonly accepted definitions. However, there are common values underlying the ideals of international education, rooted in the concepts of nation, culture, and citizenship, which show that some agreement exists within the international education community. This study used these common understandings as the basis for investigating international education within the context of international schools. The construct of international education was “an approach to education that pursues the dual priorities of meeting the educational needs of internationally-mobile families and developing a global perspective in students.”

International education organizations evaluate international schools according to specific criteria. Limited research has given us few insights into the values and perceptions of international school stakeholders vis-a-vis these criteria. With limited research regarding stakeholder perceptions, international school leaders navigate in uncharted turbulent waters.

The primary research question of this study was “How is international education valued and perceived by stakeholders in international schools?” Results show that all targeted stakeholders value international education at a high level. Some value differences are related to specific demographic factors. Stakeholder perceptions of international education implementation are rated significantly lower than their ratings of values. Some differences been found related to specific demographic factors.

The World View Project

The findings from this study have three major implications for leaders of international schools. Leaders should understand the discrepancy between stakeholder values and how they perceive international education is implemented in the school. They are advised to consider the suggested methods for managing the tensions inherent in international schools. See Keller (2014) for an extended discussion of how leaders of international schools may understand and manage the dualities of international education.

This study has implications for further research into the fields of international education. Multiple directions for further research have been identified, ranging from variations on the design of this study to explorations of the findings.

As globalization advances and the international school market expands exponentially, the issues related to stakeholder values and perceptions become increasingly important. While international education organizations work to provide structure and quality control, international school leaders are challenged to manage competing tensions within their school stakeholder community. These tensions may be summarized as a conflict between pragmatic and idealistic agendas. These two agendas represent a larger struggle at play between a post-colonial capitalistic advantage for the privileged and a global civil society idealistic vision for the world. To some degree, the tensions played out in international schools around the world may be representing the tensions playing out in our larger world today.

Those of us fortunate enough to ponder these issues must face the reality that along the global continuum of wealth, we are each members of the privileged class. Like international schools, we personally benefit from the economic advantages of globalization while also wanting to pursue ideals of equity. The tensions between post-colonial theory and global civil society theory are not purely academic abstractions; they are tensions that exist around us, and within our lives, on a daily basis. As leaders of international schools must manage the competition between pragmatic and idealistic agendas, so too must we manage these tensions in our own lives.

The World View Project

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The World View Project

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