Stakeholder experiences of a dual-language school:
A case study of a private international school in
Hong Kong

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Education
at the University of Leicester

by

Timothy John Fryer

February 2008

© Timothy John Fryer 2008.
This thesis is copyright material and no quotation from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Clive Dimmock for his guidance, support and encouragement throughout the doctoral programme. I am indebted to the case school for allowing me to undertake this study and to the students, parents, senior leaders and teachers who kindly participated in the research. I also extend my grateful thanks to Marian Rossiter for her kind assistance with proof reading.
Abstract

Stakeholder experiences of a dual-language school: A case study of a private international school in Hong Kong by Timothy John Fryer.

Many international schools around the world aim to produce ‘internationally minded’ students by providing English language international education. However, a problem often arises as they also aim to incorporate the language and culture of the host country in the life of the school. Such dual aims are complex to achieve and this study explores the effectiveness of their implementation at a dual-language, private international school in Hong Kong. The case Secondary school aims to provide a dual-language education in English and Mandarin and develop global citizens who appreciate both Chinese and Anglo-Western cultural traditions. However, it is questionable whether the dual-language, dual-culture goals are achievable, and the research focuses on the perceptions of students, parents, senior leaders and teachers of the relative success of the school in achieving its goals. The Main Research Question asks, “What do the three main stakeholder groups (students, parents, senior leaders/teachers) expect and experience from the dual-language approach and the international education ethos at the Mandarin International School in Hong Kong?” The study employs a qualitative research approach within the interpretive paradigm, using inductive methods to analyse data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with eight members of each stakeholder group, selected through maximum variation sampling.

All groups agreed that the case Secondary school was not dual-language, but an English medium school with compulsory Mandarin and only the teachers/leaders perceived that the dominance of English served the long-term goals of the students. The dual-language commitment enriches the school, according to the parents and teachers/leaders, but the students converse mainly in English and Cantonese, the vernacular of Hong Kong. The parents were unhappy that Mandarin was not a *lingua franca* of the students and it is clear that Cantonese and the associated local culture further complicate the dual-language, dual-culture dynamic.
Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM ............................................................. 1
  1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH ..................................................... 1
  1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE SCHOOL AND SOME INDICATIVE LITERATURE .......... 2
  1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .......................................................................................... 10
  1.5 SIGNIFICANCE AND OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY ............................................. 11
  1.6 STANDPOINT OF THE RESEARCHER ..................................................................... 12
  1.7 CHAPTER OUTLINES FOR THE REST OF THE THESIS .................................... 12

2 LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................. 14
  2.1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 14
  2.2 SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE ................................................................. 14
  2.3 THE DUAL-LANGUAGE APPROACH ....................................................................... 18
  2.4 THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ETHOS .......................................................... 24
  2.5 CONCLUSIONS ....................................................................................................... 31

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD ............................................................................. 32
  3.1 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY ...................................................................................... 32
  3.2 RESEARCH METHOD .............................................................................................. 33
    3.2.1 Epistemological and ontological position ....................................................... 34
    3.2.2 Choice of Analytic induction ......................................................................... 36
  3.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT AND SAMPLING METHOD ......................... 37
    3.3.1 Sampling method ......................................................................................... 37
    3.3.2 Participant descriptions ............................................................................... 37
    3.3.3 Administration of the data collection instrument ......................................... 40
  3.4 THE INTERVIEW AND ITS CONDUCT .................................................................... 42
  3.5 DATA ANALYSIS .................................................................................................... 45
    3.5.1 Categorical indexing .................................................................................... 45
    3.5.2 Memos .......................................................................................................... 46
    3.5.3 Organisation of the categories ..................................................................... 47
    3.5.4 Constructing an interpretation through induction and deduction ............... 49
  3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ................................................................................. 50
  3.7 PROS AND CONS OF INSIDER RESEARCH ....................................................... 52
6.4 EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH ........................................................... 135
6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK ............................................... 136
6.6 ENDNOTE: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT THE MANDARIN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN HONG KONG ............................................................... 136

REFERENCES .................................................................................. 138
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARENT DATA LABELS .................................. 143
APPENDIX 2: TABULATED PARENT DATA FOR SRQ1AI: MANDARIN MOTIVATION AND PROFICIENCY ..................................................... 144
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig.1</td>
<td>A school in its environment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.2</td>
<td>Elements of organisations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.3</td>
<td>Features of positivist and interpretive paradigms</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.4</td>
<td>Extract from the interview with Student 4</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.5</td>
<td>Extract from the interview with Parent 4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.6</td>
<td>Extract from the interview with Teacher/Leader 4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.7</td>
<td>Portion of Student 4’s labelled transcript</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.8</td>
<td>Selection of memos written during the data collection phase</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.9a</td>
<td>Student data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.9b</td>
<td>Teacher/Leader data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.9c</td>
<td>Parent data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.10</td>
<td>Summary description of participants</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

1.1 Outline of the research problem

The case school is a private international school in Hong Kong, called the ‘Mandarin International School’, or MIS, in this thesis, although this is not the real name of the school. The school has a Primary section and a Secondary section, and the latter is the focus of this study. The school aims to provide a dual-language education in English and Mandarin and to develop global citizens who appreciate Chinese and other cultural traditions. However, given these complex aims, it is not clear whether the expectations of the parents, the experiences of the students and the education provided by the school are synchronised and harmonious. It is also unclear whether the school achieves these aims to the satisfaction of all parties. Hence, there is a potential problem centred on the multiple purposes of the school and the possible conflicting expectations of the stakeholders. Accordingly, the Main Research Question is as follows:

What do the three main stakeholder groups (students, parents, and senior leaders/teachers) expect and experience from the dual-language approach and the international education ethos at the Mandarin International School in Hong Kong?

1.2 Aims and objectives of the research

The researcher aims to address the Specific Research Questions through the perspectives of a sample of participants from each of the stakeholder groups. These questions aim to investigate the expectations and experiences of the participants of the dual-language approach and the international education ethos at the Mandarin International School. To discover the extent to which the expectations and experiences of the three stakeholder
groups coincide is a further aim. The quality of the dual-language, Mandarin-English programme is the defining feature of the curriculum that rates MIS above other international schools in Hong Kong, according to the school. However, is this a view shared by the students and parents and what do they perceive the defining features of the school to be? The inextricable nature of language and culture implies that the school actually aims at providing a dual-language, dual-culture programme. The two languages are English and Mandarin and the cultures are Anglo-Western and Chinese. However, there is the problem; the school promotes Mainland Mandarin Chinese culture not the local Cantonese Hong Kong Chinese culture. This culture is distant and ‘foreign’ to the local Hong Kong Chinese students because the unique local Hong Kong Cantonese culture is different to the Mainland Mandarin Chinese culture. The culture of Cantonese speaking Southern China, just across the border, is also different to Hong Kong, because their histories are quite different.

For these reasons, it is questionable whether the current dual-language, dual-culture goals of the school are achievable at all. The school leaders and teachers, the internationally minded parents and the societal culture of Hong Kong all support and promote the English language and Anglo-Western culture. However, Hong Kong society in general does not promote the Mandarin language, nor does a critical mass of MIS parents, and it is clearly not on an equal footing with English in the Secondary school. It is not a casual language of the students in school, who usually converse in English and Cantonese, nor are teachers required to speak or learn Mandarin by the school. Chinese mainland culture is not strongly promoted, but then, neither is local Hong Kong culture, because Cantonese is not officially allowed at school, although the students’ speak it freely outside of the classroom. While it is clear that the multicultural leadership and teaching staff gives a definite English language and international profile to the Secondary school, it is highly questionable whether the same teachers equally promote the Mandarin language and Chinese culture goals. Another important aim of this study is to achieve an understanding of the effects of the organisational culture of the Secondary school on the dual-language, dual-culture goals.

1.3 Background to the school and some indicative literature

Since political reunification in 1997, China has governed the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) under the ‘one country, two systems’ framework. The Hong Kong SAR government allows its citizens to choose any type of education from the
local, foreign or international systems available. The Government’s Education Department defines international schools as:

Schools which follow a non-local curriculum and whose students do not sit for the local examinations (e.g. Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examinations). They are operated with curricula designed for the needs of a particular cultural, racial or linguistic group or for students who wish to pursue their studies overseas. 

(Yamato, 2003, p.11)

The sector covered by this definition is rich and complex, including national schools and international schools. National schools such as the Hong Kong Japanese School and the Korean International School cater almost exclusively for nationals of the respective country. International schools may have a diverse student and/or teacher population and/or an international curriculum, or in the case of non-English medium schools, such as the French International School, have an international or English section. While virtually autonomous, the Education Bureau monitors and supervises all of the schools in Hong Kong in this category. Yamato points out that in Hong Kong:

The number of international-type schools is still small compared to that of local schools. However, these schools are gaining popularity among local Hong Kong people, even though such people could send their children to local curriculum schools free of charge…

(2003, p.2)

However, as Yamato also indicates, ‘local’ in the Hong Kong context is not easy to define, as although ninety-five percent of the Hong Kong population, of around seven million, is ethnically Chinese, many hold foreign passports. Thus, many, as is the case at MIS, may be Australian, American, British or Canadian nationals by passport but they are also permanent residents of Hong Kong. Under British rule, government schools were English-medium and “Students’ of low language (i.e. Chinese) were discouraged from using their home language in learning and the high language (i.e. English) was increasingly used in the classroom” (Lai and Byram, 2003, p.316). This changed with the creation of the Hong Kong SAR in 1997 and according to Lai and Byram, the new government:

…pushed to make Chinese the principal medium of instruction (MOI) in part because of the ineffectiveness of English in students’ learning and in part with the aim of restoring the status of Chinese by eliminating the place of English as an
influential language both in school and in society at large. Language in education is not only a school issue but also a social issue. (2003, p.315)

Lai and Byram point out that in this context, Chinese means Cantonese, the dialect spoken in southern China, or Putonghua (Mandarin) which is the national language of China and the spoken form of Standard Modern Chinese. Cantonese and Putonghua share similar Chinese characters but “…are varied in syntax, lexis and phonology…” (Pierson in Lai and Byram, 2003, p. 317). A further political dynamic is that traditional Chinese characters are used in Hong Kong (and Taiwan) whilst simplified Chinese characters are used on the Mainland (and Singapore). Lai and Byram suggest that the HKSAR government is aiming for “…bi-literacy (i.e. mastering written Chinese and English) and trilingualism (i.e. speaking fluent Cantonese - the home language of the majority of people of Hong Kong, Putonghua - the national language and standard spoken language, and English)” (2003, p.317). Thus, the Hong Kong SAR government would like bi-literate, trilingual students to emerge from its schools, but as Lai and Byram suggest, this may already be a cause of some political tension. Put simplistically, this tension is between the pro-Putonghua, national (China) interest groups and the pro-Cantonese, local Hong Kong interest groups. Lai and Byram contend that, even now in Hong Kong, “In many respects, Putonghua and Cantonese are in conflicting role when diglossic situations of official, ceremonial, and symbolic functions are involved” (2003, p.317). Further discussion and analysis of these issues continues in the review of literature relating to the dual-language approach in chapter two.

The case school, founded in the early 1980’s as a school that was both Chinese and international, initially began as a bilingual Cantonese-English school, with an intake that was about half Chinese and half non-Chinese children. Some of the parents attached importance to mother tongue instruction, hence the choice of Cantonese. However, the programme soon switched to Putonghua, referred to as Mandarin in this study, and English. The school is thriving, with a current enrolment of around 1400 students from Reception to Year 13. This study focuses on the Secondary section of the school, which caters for ages 11-18 and has a total population of around 800 students. Students follow the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) in Years 7-11 and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in Years 12-13. The MIS mission statement contains both local and global aspects. The local aspects include language use and development at the school and the global aspects imply a commitment to international
education. The Mission Statement, where the name of the school is changed, reads as follows:

The Mandarin International School is committed to the achievement of academic excellence and is characterized and enriched by its dual-language program in Chinese and English. The mission of the Mandarin International School is to inspire students to a life-long love of learning. The school encourages intellectual curiosity and independent, critical and creative thinking which will maximize students’ potential and promote the growth of the whole person. The school prepares its students to be compassionate, ethical and responsible individuals, contributing to local and global communities, respectful of other views, beliefs and cultures, and concerned to make a difference in the world.

Although prominently displayed throughout the school, the teachers rarely discuss the Mission Statement and the extent to which new teachers learn about the history and background of the school during their induction is unclear. The MIS Secondary students are predominantly ethnic Hong Kong Chinese, some with a non-Chinese parent. However, the number of students from other cultural/ethnic backgrounds is increasing. The students might use Mandarin at home, if their parents speak it with them. Those students who are not of Chinese extraction may or may not speak Mandarin outside of school. The situation may be further complicated if the students speak other languages at home.

From the 2006-7 school year, after the completion of the data collection for this research, Chinese Studies (previously an elective in Years 7-11) merged into the existing Chinese language programme with the combined programme simply called Chinese. Introduced in 2002, Chinese Studies, focussing on cultural topics, had not proved a generally popular choice, particularly among the older students. The aim of this move by the Secondary school was to ensure that MIS maintained its leading position as the very best dual-language, Mandarin-English IB School in Hong Kong through the quality of the Chinese and English programmes. The school is keenly aware that many other schools in Hong Kong will compete with it in offering the IBMYP and DP and so the dual-language programme is a major selling point. The change, approved by the Board of Governors and announced to the MIS parents, resulted in a significant increase in curriculum time, to twenty-five per cent, for Chinese language and culture in Years 7 and 8. The extent to which the school sought the stakeholders’ opinions about this major change is unclear, but
it was certainly not extensive in terms of a community-wide consultation exercise on mapping the way forward for the school.

In the case Secondary school, Chinese is a single compulsory subject, while English is the main language of teaching, learning, communication and self-expression. Cantonese use is strongly discouraged at the school but students often revert to communicating in Cantonese when they are discussing issues among themselves or socialising. The street-level opportunities for students to practice Mandarin and English in Hong Kong are both limited, particularly in the case of Mandarin. The MIS parental community has opted for dual-language education in English and Mandarin for their children, and the school says it will deliver. Those students who are inclined towards Mandarin and whose parents commit to its use at home can become effectively bilingual. In Hong Kong, Mandarin is growing in importance as economic links with the mainland strengthen. The recent entry of China into the WTO means that now more than ever, the ability to do business in English and Mandarin is vital for the entrepreneurs of the future, a fact recognised by the MIS societal culture. However, proficiency in English is more easily attainable for MIS students than Mandarin. They have access to a range of English language television and cinema and many take frequent holidays to English-speaking western countries.

The school leaders and teachers are mainly from western cultural backgrounds and are from Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the USA; some have Chinese cultural backgrounds (from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan etc.). This rich cultural mix promotes intercultural understanding among both the staff and students, as Cambridge (1998, p.208) contends, “Teachers and students bring their own attitudes about the teaching-learning process into school; these vary between national or societal cultures”. It is obvious in the MIS Secondary school that teachers from different national cultures bring with them a whole range of cultural norms that the students have to accommodate and learn to accept. There might well be clashes of cultural expectations for both the students and teachers that cause difficulties in their relationships. In addition to these internal, interacting processes, Cambridge (1998) suggests that the school also influences the societal culture and the societal culture influences the school, to the extent that:

An international school can be seen as a centre of excellence within a country, encouraging other institutions to change and develop by fostering good relations with the host community, or it can be the focus of local resentment if it is seen as
an élitist institution identified exclusively with serving expatriates and rich host country nationals.  

Probably, both cases apply to most international schools. To the local community in Hong Kong, MIS is a school for wealthy families - evidenced by the number of chauffeur driven, luxury cars picking up students at the end of the day. However, the societal culture also recognises that these parents have worked hard for their success and are wise to invest in education as this indicates long-term planning and the degree of resentment, if any, is difficult to gauge. As stated earlier, it is clear that the multi-cultural leadership and teaching staff heavily promotes the English language and Anglo-Western culture. However, it is questionable whether this same multi-cultural leadership and teaching staff promotes the Mandarin language and Chinese culture equally. The Secondary school organisational culture is typical of a role culture where:

Individuals are selected for satisfactory performance of a role, and the role is usually so described that a range of individuals could fill it. Performance over and above the role prescription is not required, and can be disruptive at times. Position power is the major power source in this culture, personal power is frowned upon and expert power tolerated only in its proper place. Rules and procedures are the major methods of influence.  

(Handy, 1993, p.185)

Department Heads are the conduits through which policies decided upon by the school leadership are communicated and explained to the teachers, and through which the teachers feed ideas and comments back ‘up’ the chain to the leadership. They are also responsible for the appraisal of their departmental staff. The Department Heads cannot encourage individual teachers to take too much personal power over curriculum matters or decision making, because their own freedom within the rigid organisational structure is too limited to allow such individual empowerment. The result is perhaps a passive acceptance of the status quo among the teachers and an attitude of reluctance to raise questions about the fundamental reasons for decisions or policies that they have to implement or follow. The teachers and leaders often discuss the issues raised in the research questions framing this study informally, and sometimes formally, but without a sense of urgency to address them since the school is highly successful. This organisational attitude of ‘just keep doing what we are doing, because it works’, is fine as long as the environmental factors influencing the school are stable. Indeed, for many years, the school has enjoyed a monopoly of sorts in
the Hong Kong international school sector, defined by the English-Mandarin languages, high academic results and the high social status of many families. The commitment to Mandarin as well as English as the medium of instruction and the entry of many graduates to top Universities around the world has reinforced the reputation of MIS as an elite school for elite students.

The school recruits teachers from around the world but, apart from teachers of Mandarin, they are not required to have any Mandarin language skills or expected to help deliver the Mandarin ‘half’ of the dual-language, dual-culture goals. Hence, the mission statement and the requirements of non-Chinese staff are incongruent, in that these staff cannot fully understand or buy into the dual-language, dual-culture goals. In addition, teachers arriving in Hong Kong from other parts of the world might decide to learn the basics of Cantonese, which is different to the Chinese language taught at the school. For teachers new to Hong Kong, the mission and goals of the school are lofty and hard to grasp and hearing students regularly speaking Cantonese, not Mandarin, compounds this. The students are, ideally, ‘internationally minded’, able to operate in Mandarin as well as English and are thus ‘dual-language, dual-culture products’. The viability of the dual-language, dual-culture goals are at the heart of this research project. In terms of outputs, the school and the students also provide considerable service to the local and international communities and, of course, a livelihood for all the employees.

The model in Fig.1 shows that environmental factors, which are complex in an intercultural setting like MIS, are at times likely to impede the mission of the school, as suggested by Walker and Shuangye:

…cultural values form a key element of the hybrid environment for leaders in intercultural schools. Leaders of these schools face confusion, as well as opportunity, due to the ceaseless interplay of the sometimes ill-fitting cultural values carried by their students, teachers and broader community… (2007, p.189)

This means that the leadership of a school like MIS must understand and be responsive to the needs of the broader community - the parents - and actively seek to engage with them on significant curriculum and other changes. The leadership culture set by the board and the school leaders must understand the cultures of both the students and parents for the school to evolve and progress.
This is authentic leadership, according to Walker and Shuangye (2007) who say “Authentic leaders view the school and broader society through the lenses of teachers, students and the communities they serve, while at the same time realising that interpretations will also vary within cultural groups” (p. 197). The double-headed arrow in Fig. 1 shows that, to be effective, a school must be sensitive to the needs of the stakeholders and be aware of how successful it is in pursuing its aims. By triangulating the research with the ‘internal’ students and teachers/leaders and the ‘external’ parents, this study aims to gauge how well the case Secondary school understands and responds to its environment.

Times are changing in the international school sector in Hong Kong; MIS is no longer the only school that offers an English-Mandarin programme, and more schools now offer the International Baccalaureate Middle Years and Diploma Programmes. The school cannot afford to assume that its current position, as an elite school catering for elite families will sustain it indefinitely. The school needs to understand and redefine itself for the future and ensure that all stakeholders share the mission and goals of the organisation. Indeed, Handy warns organisations with cultures like that at MIS against complacency:

Role cultures are slow to perceive the need for change and slow to change even if the need is seen. If the market, the product needs or the competitive environment changes, the role culture is likely to continue to forge straight ahead confident in its
ability to shape the future in its own image. Then collapse, or replacement of the pediment by new management, or take over, is usually necessary. (1993, p.186)

The issues described and the illustrative literature explored above reveal the complex nature of the case school and these components are subject to further examination in Chapter 2. It appears that the awareness and understanding of stakeholder perceptions of the defining features of the school - namely the dual-language approach and the international ethos - are crucial to the future survival of the Mandarin International School.

1.4 Research questions

In order to ‘deliver’ the mission statement, the school established a number of objectives and these provided a reference framework for the construction of four Specific Research Questions (SRQs) for this study. These are supplemented by two SRQs (in italics) not derived from the objectives, but that the researcher considered vital to the context of the study. The questions cluster into two groups, one concerned with the dual-language approach and the other with the international ethos respectively:

**Dual-language approach**

1. How does the school help develop dual-language proficiency in English and Mandarin and to what extent does the school ensure that competency in these languages includes fluency in use and their employment as the working languages within the school? Does it manage to achieve a successful balance between the two?

2. How does Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong, affect the acquisition of English and Mandarin dual-language proficiency? What effect does Cantonese have on the other two languages and cultures?

**International education ethos**

3. How successfully does the school develop in students an awareness and appreciation of Chinese artistic, literary, and cultural traditions along with those of the rest of the world, in particular, the Anglo-Western?

4. With what success does the school prepare students to deal proactively with the challenges that face them both at MIS and in later life, perhaps in international settings?

5. Does the school successfully develop in students a strong sense of multi-cultural values, especially emphasising the need for altruism in a global community where people of different cultures, traditions and backgrounds regularly interact?
6. What does the concept of ‘international school/education mean to you? Does the school provide this? How important is the International Baccalaureate curriculum ‘through-train’ in years 7-13 in enhancing ‘internationalism’ in the Secondary school?

While these questions concentrate on the core dual-language, dual-culture aspects of the school, the data analysis seeks to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the organisational culture from the perspectives of the three stakeholder groups.

1.5 Significance and outcomes of the study

This study is important for helping the school’s leaders to understand what the school stands for and what it needs to do in order to maintain its leading edge in the Hong Kong international school market. The implications arising from the study should help to reveal how effectively the organisational culture of the school supports the dual-language, dual-culture goals. The study will reveal areas of convergence and divergence between the perceptions about the school of three of the stakeholder groups, namely the students, parents and teachers/leaders. The Specific Research Questions focus sharply on the core aspects of the school that are seen as crucial to its future success and the relative perceptions of the stakeholders inform the implications and recommendations arising from the study. In a wider context, the study offers a possible method to researchers in similar situations who need to understand the microcosms of other independent, dual-language international schools.

The study should also aid understanding of the dynamics of the relationships between an independent, dual-language international school and its stakeholders with respect to the aims of the school and the experiences of the stakeholders. Furthermore, the study may serve to reveal how closely aligned the organisational and societal cultures are in terms of expectations (Dimmock, 2000) and whether there are tensions between the stakeholder groups. In addition, the specific Hong Kong linguistic context is both complex and dynamic and this study should help towards gaining a better understanding of the dual-language approach at MIS. It will therefore add to the bank of research aimed at understanding the notion of dual-language international schools and international education. The literature review clearly indicates that interest in international education, intercultural awareness and dual-language education is increasing and that the research base is growing. A further indication from the literature is that parental perceptions in
research concerning international schools and international education are largely missing. Given the importance of education to the parents of MIS students, the researcher considers it vital to hear their voices in this research project. The literature also reveals that there has been very little qualitative research conducted into the international schools sector in Hong Kong.

1.6 Standpoint of the researcher

Having worked at the case school for almost a decade, the researcher has a genuine academic and intellectual desire to understand the complex situation involving the languages and cultures of the school and the local society. There appears to be a dissonance between the rhetoric of the school about its dual-language, dual-culture goals and the perceptions of students, teachers and parents - which is both puzzling and intriguing and served to stimulate this research study. The decision to increase the curriculum time for Chinese in Years 7 and 8 significantly without, it seems, adequate community consultation or explanation to the teaching staff is indicative of a perceived need to re-define the school by the leadership. However, it would appear that before the school instituted these important changes, the priorities of the parents were not established. The researcher is keenly aware that the time lag in collecting and presenting the data arising from this study meant that it could not help inform these important leadership decisions. However, a similarly inclusive, qualitative, data gathering process could inform and influence future decisions about the direction of the school. The researcher has worked as a teacher for over twenty years in international settings including Botswana, Germany, England and Hong Kong and has experienced many different educational contexts. He is philosophically aware of the boundaries that apply to case schools and is very familiar with, and sensitive to, non-native English speaking settings. Given that the researcher is a teacher at the Mandarin International School and was the 2005-6 Head of Year 11, he addresses the pros and cons of insider research in detail in Chapter 3.

1.7 Chapter outlines for the rest of the thesis

The literature review in Chapter 2 examines how the findings of researchers in the fields of dual-language and international education relate to the research problem, in the context of the organisational culture at MIS. The Hong Kong context forms the focus wherever possible, but the broader concepts of bilingualism and intercultural understanding fostered
by international schools also receive considerable attention. Chapter 3 begins with a
discussion of the reasons for the choice of the interpretive paradigm and qualitative
methodology, using in-depth interviews, for the research project. The chapter continues
with a description of the sampling approach and the characteristics of the participants from
the three stakeholder groups. There is an explanation of the choice of methods for data
collection and analysis, including inductive methods to fracture the interview data and then
to construct meaning from it. An examination of the issues of validity, reliability and
triangulation and the pros and cons of insider research follow this. Chapter 3 concludes
with a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations of the research method.

Chapters 4 and 5 report data presentation, synthesis and analysis concerned with the dual-
language approach and the international education ethos respectively. Within each chapter,
the interview data are organised into sections reflecting the emergent themes and focus
upon the areas of convergence and divergence within and between the three stakeholder
groups. Each section describes the data emerging from each stakeholder group in turn and
concludes with a summary of the significant findings. At the end of Chapters 4 and 5, a
comprehensive statement of conclusions directly addresses the relevant Specific Research
Questions. The discussion section in the final Chapter 6 is an interpretation of the
significant research findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Following
this is a statement of the implications for MIS arising from the research findings, followed
by strategic and immediate recommendations for the school leadership. An evaluation of
the research and suggestions for further work in this field conclude the chapter, with an
endnote describing current developments at the School.
2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

2.2 School organisational culture

2.3 The dual-language approach

2.4 The international education ethos

2.5 Conclusions

2.1 Introduction

In this qualitative case study, which aims to extrapolate meaning with no preconceived hypotheses, the role of the literature is to help stimulate and refine the interview questions and to inform the researcher throughout the thesis process. Whilst not striving to produce a theory about the case school from the data, this study seeks to analyse and understand the perceptions of the stakeholders in order to inform the emerging implications and recommendations. The aim of this literature review is not to provide an exhaustive account of all the perceived issues surrounding the phenomena at the outset, but to develop an understanding of the concepts as they relate to the case school. The concluding chapter of the thesis includes references to the literature where they add validity to the research findings or contrast with them. Following the indicative literature in Chapter 1, this review is in three sections. The first section examines how the case Secondary school organisational culture supports the dual-language, dual-culture mission of the school. The second section focuses on Specific Research Questions 1 and 2 and examines the link between language and culture, both in a wider context and in terms of the case Secondary school. The third section, concerning Specific Research Questions 3 to 6, explores the meanings of internationalism and intercultural understanding in the context of the case Secondary school and examines the international school sector in Hong Kong.

2.2 School organisational culture

Securing and maintaining a leading edge in Hong Kong’s international school market is crucial to the future of the Mandarin International School. There are many up and coming competitor schools, so MIS cannot be complacent but must respond to changes in the environment and ensure that all stakeholders share the mission and goals of the organisation (Handy, 1993). The implications arising from this study will help to reveal
how effectively the organisational culture of the school supports and promotes the dual-language, dual-culture goals. Everard and Morris suggest in Fig. 2 that an organisation consists of four interacting but independent elements, all of which need managing and cultivating by the leaders of MIS, in this case, to ensure that they are harmonious and balanced.

Fig. 2. Elements of organisations (Everard and Morris, 1996, p.151)

These authors consider that the culture or character “…covers such intangibles as its tone, its value system, the standards by which merit is judged, personal relationships, habits, unwritten rules of conduct and the practice of educational judgement” (p.151). The organisation’s structure “…embraces the organization chart, the committees, the departments, the roles, the hierarchical levels and authority, the procedures in the staff manual, the timetable etc.” (p.150). In Hong Kong, the societal culture accepts inequalities of power distribution at school (Dimmock, 2000) such as in the hierarchical MIS Secondary school, where the decisions are expected to be made by the leaders. This is because, according to Walker and Shuangye (2007, p.200):

In societies with large power disparity, it is difficult for principals to encourage others to become openly and honestly involved in decision making, even if they want to. In many cases, they are seen as neglecting their leadership role if they do not take a strong personal stand.

There is an implication of an area of conflict here for the leaders of the school in terms of the decision making process, such as the increase in curriculum time for Chinese described
in Chapter 1. The school leaders have to be bold and decisive to meet the expectations of the mainly Chinese parents and opinion seeking to satisfy the expectations of the staff and parents from Western cultures, who are used to shared decision making. The leadership therefore has to try to satisfy the cultural needs and expectations of two markedly different stakeholder groups. The technology in Fig. 2 refers to the hardware of the school and the process of education, while the people are of course the leaders, teachers and support staff who all bring their expertise, skills and attitudes to the school. The facilities at MIS are state of the art, class sizes are small, and the teachers well paid and supported and so the necessary ingredients for a happy and successful school are present. However, it is the researcher’s perception that the newly recruited teachers (and existing teachers) do not receive enough information during induction about the history, mission and dual-language, dual-culture goals. The teachers’ of subjects other than Mandarin do not have to speak Mandarin and are not required to learn it while employed by the school and together, these factors do not promote a school-wide commitment to the dual-language, dual-culture goals.

Teachers joining the school are too busy teaching their subject, participating in the life of the school and adapting to living in Hong Kong to ponder the complexities of the MIS culture. However, ‘sharing of the vision’ by existing and new staff is crucial for any school, as Deveney (2007, p.326) recommends, “…the whole school culture should be one of cultural responsiveness and this should be reflected explicitly in the school’s ethos. This would ensure that new members of staff can access information from the moment they start work at the school…” . Deveney suggests that for new teachers, induction, mentoring and professional development all play a role in helping to ensure sharing of the vision and ethos of the school. She recommends that informal and formal induction sessions take place both at the start and during the school year, that collaborative mentoring is formalised and that the awareness of cultural and linguistic issues is central to professional development. MIS needs culturally responsive teachers who “…draw on current thinking about teaching classes of children with differing cultures, languages and educational histories and who are knowledgeable about the languages and cultures of their students” (Deveney, 2007, p.309).

Within the hierarchical role culture (Handy, 1993) of the case school, described in Chapter 1, there is an issue with integration between the subject disciplines and departments, since they are separated with their own offices and teaching areas. The regular Heads of Department meetings are the main vehicle for integration between disciplines and are
where the vision transfers vertically downwards through the organisation. According to Everard and Morris, “Effective integration calls for careful attention to relationships, a high degree of mutual trust, candour and respect, and an insight into organizational behaviour and complexities” (1996, p.149). Hence, the leadership must be sensitive to the people and the culture of the school and ensure transparency in all areas concerning curriculum planning and initiatives affecting individual departments, or risk disquiet among teachers about the rationale for the changes. The increase in the curriculum time for Chinese, described earlier, is a case in point for MIS because the leadership did not adequately share the vision for the change, nor the implications of a reduction in curriculum time in other areas to allow the increase in time for Chinese, and this has been a problem for the school. Change in schools is always difficult, as Everard and Morris point out:

Heads and senior staff who want to implement change therefore have a sizeable educational task on their hands: they have to help everyone concerned to discover and conceptualize the true nature of change and how it impinges upon us all … This attempt to help people to conceptualise change is like tilling the ground before planting the seed… (1996, p. 219)

Hence, the MIS leadership should have instilled greater confidence in the teachers and parents by clearly explaining their perceived rationale for the change, which was (probably) to re-position the school in the light of the growing competition, as described earlier. In striving for authentic leadership, the MIS senior leaders must always realise that, as Walker and Shuangye (2007) suggest, “…diverse groups - be they students, teachers or others - can hold very different values and expectations…” (p.201) they also note that, “For leaders seeking authenticity it is important to understand and learn from the values of parents and other community members” (p.199). In order to be responsive to the expectations needs of all members of the stakeholders in the school community, the School Leadership has to understand the cultural expectations of these groups and adopt appropriate strategies to work effectively with them. This research aims to reveal whether the Secondary school organisational structure effectively supports the dual-language, dual-culture goals and, if not, to suggest possible changes.
The dual-language approach

Language is at the heart of the mission of MIS and therefore a critical discussion of the positions of English, Mandarin and Cantonese is central to this review. According to Wright, “There are seven main varieties of Chinese: Mandarin, Wu, Xiang, Hakka, Gan, Min and Cantonese, all of which are mutually incomprehensible” (1996, p.110). Cantonese is a dialect that originated in Guangdong Province and is the lingua franca of the ethnic Chinese who account for around ninety-five percent of the population of Hong Kong. Putonghua, spoken in the Northern provinces, is the national language and the spoken form of Standard Modern Chinese (Lai and Byram, 2003). As Wright (1996, p.112) explains, “Modern Standard Written Chinese follows the grammatical rules, syntax and structure of Northern Mandarin (Putonghua)” and that, although logographic rather than phonological, some characters provide some indication of pronunciation (p.111):

…the characters of Standard Written Chinese (SWC) fit Mandarin much better than they do the Southern dialects and that there are many words in Cantonese for which there is no appropriate character in the system. Moreover, those who do not speak Mandarin cannot make use of the phonetic component of some of the characters.

Harrison and So, describing the situation concerning written Chinese in Hong Kong state, “Standard Written Chinese … lacks characters for many Cantonese words and idioms. In informal writing, like newspaper gossip columns or novels and advertisements, written Cantonese, with its own characters, is often used and can be impenetrable to non-Cantonese Chinese” (1996, p.119). Cantonese is therefore likely to remain a dynamic and vibrant language in Hong Kong, being the language of private life, small businesses, “...the cinema, a thriving popular music industry, of a respected operatic tradition, of the media...” (Wright, 1996, p.112). Taking a pragmatic line, according to Davison and Lai, the Hong Kong government is “…trying to balance the need to raise Putonghua proficiency levels as part of the reintegration with the motherland, at the same time maintaining a key place for teaching the local ‘language’ and culture, Cantonese” (1997, p.120). These authors contend that schools such as MIS are popular because “Putonghua-medium programs are increasingly being chosen by socio-economically advantaged Hong Kong parents to develop their children as elite bilinguals who can transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries…” (p.120).
However, English retains its high status in the “post-colonial reality of Hong Kong” according to Davison and Lai (2007, p.131) and is “…the most widely used lingua franca among the international business community in Hong Kong and in commercial communication with the Pacific Rim and the West” (Wright, 1996, p.109). Li and Lee (2004, p.754) report that, in Hong Kong, “…English remains a co-official language alongside Chinese (spoken Cantonese, standard written Chinese). Putonghua (or Mandarin) is becoming more and more important…”. This is because, as the socio-economic links between Hong Kong and China develop, it will become increasingly advantageous for schoolchildren to be able to speak Mandarin. Li and Lee (2004) note that in the history of Hong Kong, native English-speaking residents have never made up more than five percent of the population and that:

Since colonial times, except for work-related purposes there has been relatively little social interaction between westerners in Hong Kong and the local Chinese communities. This is partly so because both sides have access to various institutions in their preferred language, Cantonese or English (e.g. school, church, radio, television and print media). In short, it is as if the two communities lived in separate “enclosures.” In this regard, little has changed since Luke and Richards (1982) made this observation two decades ago. (p. 754)

So where does MIS fit in to this linguistic picture of Hong Kong? How will the perceptions of the students and parents, who are mainly Hong Kong Chinese and mirror the composition of the local society, compare to those of the mainly Western teachers/leaders concerning Specific Research Questions 1 and 2? It could be argued that some MIS students are perhaps early pioneers of the “…Hong Kong government’s goals in its language-in-education policy: biliteracy (written Chinese and English) and trilingualism (Cantonese, English and Putonghua)” (Li and Lee, 2004, p.756). Pierson, in Lai and Byram (2003, p.317), proposes a scenario with “Putonghua the language of politics and administration, English the language of technology, commerce and finance and Cantonese the language of the family and intimacy”. Davison and Lai (1997, p.131) suggest that the Hong Kong government is aiming for “a kind of Cantonese-speaking English and Putonghua-using Hong Konger, identified with, but separate from, the ‘awakening giant’.

Indeed, the whole notion of dual-language learning in the MIS Secondary school needs explaining here because the students have very mixed linguistic backgrounds. The majority
of the MIS Year 6 Primary students progress to the Secondary school, having had exposure to a dual-language curriculum. A further thirty-percent of new students from outside MIS join them, as Year 7 expands to 120 students. All new students applying to attend the case Secondary school must pass an English test and demonstrate the required speaking, listening and writing skills needed to access the English-medium curriculum. Tests also assess Mandarin language skills but students may enter the Secondary school without any Mandarin at all and take a beginner’s class, available at each Year level. Hence, there is a continuum in each Year ranging from a minority who are bilingual in English and Mandarin to those learning Mandarin as a new second language. The linguistic situation in the Secondary school is therefore complex and it is important to have a theoretical understanding of the issues before examining the reality from the points of view of the stakeholders. Genesee et al (2004, p.7) suggest that children in dual-language settings fall into four subgroups thus:

1. Children from a majority ethnolinguistic group who have learned or are learning two languages simultaneously from the outset
2. Children from a majority ethnolinguistic group who have learned or are learning a second language after their first language is established
3. Children from a minority ethnolinguistic group who have learned or are learning two languages simultaneously from the outset
4. Children from a minority ethnolinguistic group who have learned or are learning a second language after their first language is established

The ‘ethnolinguistic group’ indicates whether the language is widely spoken in the community. In Hong Kong, the language of the majority ethnolinguistic group is Cantonese - hence both English and Mandarin speakers are minority ethnolinguistic groups. Many MIS students are mother tongue Cantonese speakers who may or may not have learned English and Mandarin from the outset and thus fall into subgroups 1 and 2. MIS students who are not mother tongue Cantonese speakers, with perhaps as their first language English, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese or French for example, fall into subgroups 3 and 4. Hence on a language continuum, MIS students may range from being bilingual in English and Mandarin in subgroup 3, through to being learners of both English and Mandarin (in subgroup 1) as second languages, which they use mainly at MIS. The question is what does it mean to be bilingual, and is this a goal that is applicable to all MIS students? The international teachers/leaders in this study might have a more ‘academic’
understanding of the meanings and terminology of dual-language education than the parents and students perhaps, since they are required to promote the mission statement of the school. The perceptions expressed by the three stakeholder groups concerning Specific Research Question 1 should reveal if there is a divergence of views on this particular issue in the context of the case Secondary school.

Haywood (2007) and Shin (2005) both help put the concepts of bilingual education, and bilingualism into context in terms of the international school. Haywood (2007, p.123) points out that:

Bilingualism is the normal way of life for millions of people across the globe, and it is increasingly one of the defining characteristics of the international school, where a substantial portion of students are coming to terms with cognitive and intellectual development (and inter-personal relations) in a language that is not their mother tongue.

Shin (2005) contends that the monolingual view of bilinguals, that they are equally fluent in both languages, is very misguided. She suggests, “Rarely will any bilingual be equally proficient in speaking, listening, reading or writing both languages across all different situations and domains” (p.16). To overcome this difficulty, Shin explains that, “In educational circles, the term ‘semilingual’ has been used to describe bilingual students who appear to lack proficiency in both languages” (p.17). Discussing the work of Cummins, Shin argues that the means and the goals of bilingual education are definable characteristics. When defined in terms of the means, bilingual education “…refers to the use of two (or more) languages of instruction to varying degrees in various instructional contexts and proficiency in two languages is not necessarily a desired outcome” (p.31). The latter part of this sentence is crucial, because it emphasises that the native-speaker level competence in writing, speaking and reading is not the expectation for all students in a dual-language programme, such as at MIS. Indeed, when defined in terms of goals, Shin suggests simply that, “…bilingual education can support the development of bilingual skills in children” (p. 31).

Genesee et al (2004) suggest that for a child to develop bilingually in English and Mandarin, for example, that is to fall into subgroups 1 or 3, he/she can only do so when exposed to both languages from birth. After the age of three, the child will not be bilingual,
but will acquire a second language and fall into subgroup 4. Bringing up a child to be bilingual therefore requires exposure to both languages from birth and a real commitment on behalf of the parents. As Genesee et al (2004) suggest, “…the decision to raise a child bilingually should be made only if the sustained, enriched, and consistent bilingual experiences that are necessary to achieve bilingual proficiency can be provided” (p.58). Coulmas (2005) indicates that consequently, complete bilingualism is hard to achieve, stating “…researchers now agree that fully balanced bilingualism at a level of native control of two languages is exceedingly rare for individuals…” (p.141). Even in the MIS context of aiming for dual-language development (not necessarily bilingualism) in English and Mandarin, Genesee et al (2004) suggest that “Continuous, consistent, and rich exposure to both languages is important for full dual language development” (p.59). Adding to this exploration of the MIS situation, Shin (2005, p.22) describes two types of bilingual acquisition: simultaneous and successive. She suggests that:

…a child who acquires two languages more or less from infancy is regarded as acquiring them simultaneously, whereas a child who is exposed to one language in infancy and the second language later in childhood (after the age of about three) is considered as acquiring the two languages successively.

Children entering MIS fall into both categories, and for those learning English and Mandarin successively, the ultimate aim is additive bilingualism. According to Carder (2006, p.106) this “…implies that the second language is learnt in addition to, and does not replace, the first language, and there are also cognitive and metalinguistic advantages”. Hence, for those students with Cantonese as their mother tongue, they are adding both English and Mandarin. Conversely, subtractive bilingualism is “…when the second language and culture are acquired with pressure to replace or demote the first language, possibly relating to a less positive self-concept, loss of cultural identity, and maybe alienation…” (Carder, 2006, p.107). This definition raises some questions about the real situation of the MIS students in subgroups 1 and 2 described earlier. Since Cantonese is not officially ‘recognised’ at the case school, there is the potential danger that Cantonese, and the Hong Kong culture that inextricably goes with it, may be demoted or even devalued in the minds of the students. Specific Research Question 2 seeks to find out whether the status of Cantonese is actually an issue for the students, parents or teachers/leaders and whether it is a source of tension between the stakeholder groups.
To ensure that additive and not subtractive bilingualism prevails, Carder (2006, p.121) suggests, “There is a need for mother tongue instruction in the curriculum from the age of five, the amount of time given to it varying with age”. There is little specific research available concerning the effect of Cantonese on English or Mandarin development in the Hong Kong context. However, an interesting study by Lin (2006) illustrates how mother tongue Cantonese permeated an English medium lesson in a local school. Describing a science class, she made the following observations:

Basically the bilingual teacher seemed to be using Cantonese to bridge the gap between the students’ everyday life world (largely mediated in Cantonese) and the school world … with this bridging work … students are helped to understand core scientific concepts and terms, which are, however, always mediated in English, not in Cantonese or Chinese. (p.302)

It appears that the teacher in this situation has drawn upon Cantonese (the students’ mother tongue) to aid concept development in English and in doing so has raised the power of Cantonese to that of English. Dabène (1994, p.51) also stresses the importance of developing a positive image of the students’ own mother tongue language. She contends, “…the school must help children develop a positive social representation of their own language, so that they will not be separated from their linguistic heritage”. The data pertaining to Specific Research Question 2 will reveal whether the participants in the three stakeholder groups recognise this factor as significant.

Educationalists and the public at large recognise that a highly competent bilingual ability is a very desirable quality. Educational research appears to support the view that bilingual adolescents have an advantage over their monolingual peers. Lindholm-Leary (2001, p.52) describes the results of a study of bilinguals by Peal and Lambert that found, “Intellectually, their experiences with two languages resulted in mental flexibility, superiority in concept formation, and a more diversified set of mental abilities”. Indeed, Lindholm-Leary (2001, p.52), in discussing a number of studies in this field, concludes, “The important thing is that there is evidence to suggest that bilingual development may facilitate cognitive functioning”. Kusuma-Powell (2004, p.157) also reports “…recent studies suggest that becoming fluent in another language, as in bilingualism, is advantageous to intellectual and linguistic development”. Shin (2005, p.35) concurs, adding that a large number of studies “…have reported that bilingual children exhibit a
greater sensitivity to linguistic meanings and may be more flexible in their thinking than monolinguals are”. In the business world, it is clear that the ability to operate in more than one language (and culture) is becoming an increasingly valuable skill. As Edwards (2004) points out, “Bilinguals bring considerable linguistic and cultural ‘capital’ with them to the job market (p.86) and that, “…an understanding of other languages and cultures is an invaluable lubricant in transactions and negotiations” (p.217). Shin (2005, p.28) warns that there is, however, always a balance of power between the languages and contends:

In any bilingual situation, there is typically an unequal distribution of power that is represented by the languages in question. By interacting with members of their family, school and community, children learn that one language may be valued more than another and decide to become more proficient in that language.

Here, Shin is exploring the fundamental link between the place of a language and the associated culture in the worldview and it is useful to explore the positions taken by other commentators in this field. Aronin and Ó Laoire (2004, p.11) suggest “…language constitutes one of the most defining attributes of the individual. Language thus represents and mediates the crucial element of identity”. Similarly Li (1996, p.111) states, “The intimate relationship between language and culture has long been recognized in anthropology and linguistics”. While Fantini (1991) contends that the “…use of two languages provides access to differing visions of that same world…” (p.111). However, effective and competent language use also requires cultural sensitivity, “…knowing what to say is never enough; it is also necessary to know how to say it” (Davies, 2003, p.23). The above discussion indicates that dual-language ability is a highly desirable yet complex phenomenon, because language and culture are inextricable. Thus, Specific Research Questions 1 and 2 aim to address the reality of the English and Mandarin dual-language programme and the importance of Cantonese, as perceived by the participants in the three stakeholder groups.

2.4 The international education ethos

According to Hill, “Types of schools range along a continuum from national to international with many variations in between” (2006, p.8). Describing the characteristics of schools at the ends of this continuum, Hill suggests that pure international schools, such as United World Colleges, “…have a very culturally diverse student body, ideally with no
one nationality significantly dominating the others” (2006, p.8). He contends that such schools also teach an international education programme and are usually private independent schools. At the other end, Hill asserts that, “A national school will have culturally homogeneous students and staff from the same country; it may be public or private and offers an education programme prescribed by the nation state” (2006, p.8). Hill also suggests that some schools, whilst having culturally homogeneous student populations, include the term ‘international’ to reflect the international mindedness of the programme on offer. There is an active debate about the nature of the term ‘international’ in the context of international education (Heyward 2002, Carroll 2003, Roberts 2003, Sylvester 2003, Drake 2004) to which this study can hopefully add some insights. The teachers/leaders, coming mainly from international backgrounds, might be more aware of these issues than both the parents and students; however, the participants from these two groups will have their own perceptions - shaped by their own worldviews.

There is high national cultural homogeneity (Hong Kong Chinese) within the case Secondary school student population; Hill would describe them as national students, who attend an international school for a number of reasons. One of the aims of this research is to elicit and understand those reasons, which may concur with assertions made by Hill that:

National students in international schools of diverse cultures may represent potentially mobile families (or those who would like to be internationally mobile) or parents who are preparing their children for university overseas after completing pre-university education in the home country. The contacts with staff, students and parents will provide a global perspective and … an international education in a culturally diverse context. These students bring the local culture directly into the heart of the school. (2006, p. 26)

The final sentence is highly significant in the MIS context, for as discussed in Section 3, the students do not bring the home language, Cantonese, and the associated culture into the heart of the school. The student population is also not as diverse as in other international schools and hence, the position of MIS on the continuum is very difficult to ascertain given these characteristics. More broadly, Bray in Yamato (2003) asserts, “International schools have received little attention from the research community in Hong Kong” (p. xiii). While Yamato (2003) contends that “The nature, position and role of international schools in Hong Kong are unique in a world context. No other government has taken as active a role
The international schools sector in a sense represents an intersection between cross-national and internal comparative education. Analysis of Hong Kong’s international schools can thus make methodological contribution to the wider field of comparative education. It can also help to stimulate similar studies of international schools in other cities and regions. (2003, p. 87)

The school’s mission promotes intercultural understanding and international mindedness and Specific Research Question 6 explores perceptions of these concepts. Interculturalism promotes comparisons between cultures and the “process of putting one culture, curricular system, educational policy alongside another - without any relative judgement or assumptions of superiority – serves to give insights into the illuminations and limitations of each” (Coulby, 2006, p.255). Hill, the Deputy Director General of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) describes the features of an effective school programme, proposed by Thompson, for promoting intercultural understanding. These are:

1. Exposure to cultural diversity within the school.
2. Teachers as role models of international mindedness.
3. A balanced, formal curriculum with an international perspective and open, critical approach.
4. Management practice that is value consistent with an institutional international philosophy.
5. Exposure to cultural diversity outside the school. (Hill, 2006, p.14)

Inviting debate among international educators, the Council of International Schools (CIS) is in the process of defining core standards for internationalism in education. Bartlett and Tangye (2007) report that so far, The CIS has proposed the following ‘facets of internationalism’:

…if a student has a personal ethical code, appreciates diversity, understands and acts upon global issues, communicates well in several languages, has a sense of personal responsibility to a wider community and has the capacity to lead, then we
have developed an ‘internationally-minded’ individual, equipped and disposed to
make a constructive contribution to society. (Bartlett and Tangye, 2007, p.5)

However, what are the underpinning characteristics of the Hong Kong culture that the
stakeholders themselves bring to the case school? Dimmock (2000), who incorporated
some of Hofstede’s and others’ ideas in his approach, suggested it is possible to recognise
dimensions or continua between two extremes, for analysing societal cultures. Dimmock’s
group-oriented/self-oriented dimension reflects Hofstede’s dimension of individualism
versus collectivism on which Hong Kong ranked 37th out of 50 countries, indicating that
Hong Kong is a group-oriented, collectivist society. This collectivist nature of Hong Kong
Chinese society, which has roots in Confucian philosophy, suggests that the societal values
include deeply held Chinese virtues. Described by Berthrong and Berthrong (2000, p.57),
these virtues include filial piety (which embodies deference, respect and honesty),
humanness, righteousness, civility and wisdom. Honesty and integrity are core values that
are emphasised throughout the case Secondary school community. Likewise, modesty,
conservatism and respect are norms of expected behaviour in the harmonious Hong Kong
society. Directly related to intercultural understanding, Berthrong and Berthrong describe
the central Song dynasty and Confucian principle of self-cultivation, which is relevant to
the discussion of the possible effects of the Hong Kong societal culture upon the
organisational culture of MIS. These authors say of self-cultivation that:

Merely enlarging the moral sensitivity of the person was (and is) not enough. It
must be matched by a broadened concern for the family, society, the state, the
international community, nature and the cosmos itself. The ultimate task was and is
to expand and develop the person’s mind-heart into a life of humane concern and
consciousness of the welfare of all humanity.

(Berthrong and Berthrong, 2000, p.18)

Simandiraki (2006) begins to explore in “International education and cultural heritage -
alliance or antagonism?” the dynamics of the relationship between the concepts of culture
and internationalism. In drawing upon the work of Cambridge, Hayden, Thompson and
others, Simandiraki contends that international education is concerned with
internationalism and globalisation. She questions whether international mindedness is a
“…affluence-bound construction of today’s world, imposed locally; or …really an ideal
way of thinking…” (p.37). If it is affluence bound then, she suggests, the link with
globalisation is obvious and “In this case, international education serves to instil global competency in its participants...” (p.37). In Simandiraki’s description, globalisation is “...affiliated with the pragmatic realities of surviving in the global market” (p.37) - characteristics exemplified by Hong Kong! Indeed, according to Dimmock (2000, p.48), Hong Kong ranked 50th out of 53 countries and regions on Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension. Hence, as a low uncertainty avoidance culture, Hong Kong society is opportunistic, tolerant, accepting and not bound by red tape. Thus, there is a suggestion that in the Hong Kong context at least, international education or mindedness sits well with globalisation.

That Hong Kong is embracing internationalism through globalisation is widely recognised. For example, Westrick and Yuen (2007, p.129) contend, “...through the phenomenon of globalization, the ‘international’ is being experienced locally even in relatively monocultural settings like Hong Kong...”. However, what of the Hong Kong cultural heritage part of the equation? Simandiraki (2006) defines cultural heritage as “…a continued way of life, behaviors, attitudes, material remains (archaeology), history and a consciousness shared by a particular community of people” (p.38). However, Abdallah-Pretceille (2006, p.481) cautions against cultural generalisations and reminds us that the citizens of a culture have their own agenda. This author asserts, “The challenge of the intercultural approach is to learn to distinguish, in a given situation, the elements that fall within what some call a cultural characteristic from those that are the expression of a person’s own individuality”.

Specific Research Question 5 focuses on how the students, parents and teachers/leaders view the promotion of ‘community’ by the case Secondary school. One way that an individual or group can ‘make a difference’ in a wider cultural community, is through community service. Indeed, Simandiraki (2006) suggests that an international school can effectively engage in a dialogue with the local culture through such involvement. According to Arenas et al (2006, p.24) community service is “…service that students provide to the school or community in which there is no prescribed learning agenda related to the academic curriculum”. An important feature of the case Secondary school is that it aims to produce compassionate individuals through international and local service work. Describing the recognised importance of community service, Arenas et al say, “…research findings have consistently demonstrated that well-designed civic service programmes are successful in developing students’ personal and social growth...” (2006,
These authors also suggest that “…service may be one of the mechanisms by which a healthy sense of ‘meaning’ can be developed as an adult, along with a sense of compassion” (p.38). This research will help to reveal whether the three stakeholder groups are in agreement with these suggestions.

A topic impossible to ignore in any discussion of the societal culture of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is politics. Coulby (2006, p.251), linking politics and culture, observes, “Culture is politically defined and politics are culturally defined … The interplay between culture and politics and the vulnerability of both to the forces of globalization form the basis of exacerbating conflicts of the twenty-first century”. The ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle by which China governs Hong Kong, is an obvious source of political tension in the local free-wheeling culture of Hong Kong that wants greater democracy in a pragmatic desire for increased political accountability. As Yuen and Byram (2007, p.34) describe, “…Hong Kong is marked by a cosmopolitan and global outlook and increasingly by active participation in society. On the other hand the mainland is characterised by a paternalistic, passive and centrally directed citizenship”. Paris (2003) also describes tensions between the local and the global (including China, in the Hong Kong case) faced by local cultures. He quotes Delors et al, who suggest, “People need gradually to become world citizens without losing their roots and while continuing to play an active part in the life of their nation and their local community” (Paris, 2003, p.232).

The foregoing discussion suggests that at an international school such as MIS, in a complex context such as Hong Kong, there may be tensions between the international education, which implies globalisation, and the celebration of the local cultural heritage.

Little international school research, similar to this project, is available in the literature. Hinrichs (2002) utilised an opinion questionnaire to assess the international understanding of students in a North American high school but concluded that the strategy was of limited value. Although lacking in detail, Zsebik (2004) describes a survey of some students, parents, educators and administrators concerning curriculum imperatives in a number of international schools. In interpreting his findings, some discrepancies between the actual experiences and aspirations for the curriculum were apparent, among these, were wishes for greater inclusion of both intercultural awareness and the cultures of the students. In a more robust research project, Hayden, Rancic and Thompson (2000) explored the perceptions of students and teachers in international schools about what it means to be ‘international’. They concluded that:
...for the most part teachers and students appear to consider similar factors important as contributors to being ‘international’...many of the factors considered most important relate to attitudes of mind: being interested in and informed about other people and parts of the world, for instance, and factors relating to open-mindedness and flexibility, are all rated highly, as are attitudes which place the cultures and views of others on a par with one’s own...showing respect for others and respecting the rights of others to hold views contrary to one’s own...being able to speak more than one language fluently was considered by both groups to be a necessity.

(p.120)

There appears to be convergence with these findings of Hayden, Rancic and Thompson and the MIS mission and objectives. Thus, this study may be helpful in exploring what the somewhat nebulous notion of ‘international education’ actually means to students, parents, teachers and school leaders of the Mandarin International School. The survey instrument constructed by Hayden, Rancic and Thompson was adopted and developed by Lam and Selmer (2004) in a study of British adolescents in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom on their perceptions of being international. Lam and Selmer (2004) concluded that teachers in international schools might not be fully aware of their responsibilities towards fostering internationalism among students. However, in an article concerning best practice in international schools, Codrington (2004, p.181) asserts:

An international school’s teaching staff is usually regarded as its most important asset ... Teachers define the identity and character of an international school, probably even more than buildings or facilities. For most parents and students, the staff are the ‘face’ of the school, and a quality education will result only from the fruits of their labours. It is the staff who must implement the long-term vision.

With over twenty years of international experience in three continents, the researcher fully concurs with these sentiments. Turning now to parental input, Mackenzie, Hayden and Thompson (2003) suggest that it is rare for researchers to ask parents about issues relating to international schools and to the international education that happens within them. Discussing parental perceptions of the education at international schools in Switzerland, these authors ask (p.312), “Would they describe it as ‘international’ and, if so, do they value it?” and report, “Few of the 238 parents sampled appear to have chosen an international school, far less an ‘international education’, for their children.” (p.312).
While Hong Kong Chinese predominate at the Mandarin International School, the ‘history’ of the parents (where they have lived) may influence their perceptions of the Chinese and international dimensions of the School. The perception of the researcher is that many MIS parents want their children to be globally mobile cosmopolitans who retain a rich and deep Chinese identity and are able to form a vital network of local and global connections. As Gunesch suggests, for such global citizens, “Feeling at home in the world can be defined as straddling certain cultural aspects of “the global” and “the local” within the individual in terms of thinking and identity perception” (2003, p. 220).

2.5 Conclusions

The review of literature continued throughout the thesis process and served to illuminate the research questions and inform the researcher before, during and after the data collection phase. There is a rapidly growing body of research literature relating to international education, as illustrated by the cited publications of the International Baccalaureate Organisation and the Council of International Schools. As Hayden (2007, p.7) suggests, referring to the ever-evolving landscape of international education, “Discussion and debate contributing to a better understanding of the many issues relating to international education will continue to play a crucial role”. Dual-language education is a concept practised by many international schools but it is clear that the Mandarin International School is a community within Hong Kong society that has some unique characteristics. Hence, the time is ripe to explore what the dual-language approach and the international education focus mean to the students, parents, teachers and school leaders.
3 Research Design and Method

3.1 The aims of the study
3.2 Research method
3.3 Data collection instrument and sampling method
3.4 The interview and its conduct
3.5 Data Analysis
3.6 Validity and reliability
3.7 Pros and cons of insider research
3.8 Ethical considerations
3.9 Limitations of the method

3.1 The aims of the study

This ethnographic case study examined the perceptions of three stakeholder groups within the unique context of the Secondary section of the Mandarin International School in Hong Kong. The study aimed to capture how each of the three main stakeholder groups (parents, students and senior leaders/teachers) perceived the school in terms of its dual-language and international education mission. The Main Research Question asks:

What do the three main stakeholder groups (parents, senior leaders/teachers and students) expect and experience from the dual-language approach and the international education ethos at the Mandarin International School, Hong Kong?

The Main Research Question fractured into a number of Specific Research Questions, described in Chapter 1 and restated below.

Specific Research Questions

The questions cluster into two groups, one concerned with the dual-language approach and the other with the international education ethos.

Dual-language approach

1. How does the school help develop dual-language proficiency in English and Mandarin and to what extent does the school ensure that competency in these languages includes fluency in use and their employment as the working languages within the school? Does it manage to achieve a successful balance between the two?
2. How does Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong, affect the acquisition of English and Mandarin dual-language proficiency? What effect does Cantonese have on the other two languages and cultures?

International education ethos

3. How successfully does the school develop in students an awareness and appreciation of Chinese artistic, literary, and cultural traditions along with those of the rest of the world, in particular, the Anglo-Western?

4. With what success does the school prepare students to deal proactively with the challenges that face them both at MIS and in later life, perhaps in International settings?

5. Does the school successfully develop in students a strong sense of multi-cultural values, especially emphasising the need for altruism in a global community where people of different cultures, traditions and backgrounds regularly interact?

6. What does the concept of ‘international school/education mean to you? Does the school provide this? How important is the International Baccalaureate curriculum ‘through-train’ in years 7-13 in enhancing ‘internationalism’ in the case Secondary school?

3.2 Research method

The appropriate choice of research paradigm for a project depends on the research aims and research questions. That is, the notion of ‘fitness for purpose’ guides the choice of research design. Indeed as Bryman, in Henwood and Pidgeon (1994, p.17) suggests, “…the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is really a technical matter whereby the choice between them is to do with their suitability in answering particular research questions”. The main aim of this research was to explore the purposes and actual achievements of the school as perceived by the three main stakeholder groups. A second aim was to judge the extent to which their views coincided. Hence, the researcher chose to carry out an ethnographic study directly involving the participants, with the intent of achieving an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, that is, perceptions of the dual-language and international education offered by the school, within the Hong Kong context. McMillan (2002, p.6) summarises the research approach this way, “Ethnographies collect observational and/or interview data and then summarize and analyze the data. Conclusions are based on a synthesis of the data that were collected”. Merriam (1988) contends that what sets an ethnographic case study apart from other qualitative research is “concern with the cultural context” (p.23) and that, “Whatever the unit of study - students,
schools, learning, curriculum, informal education - an ethnographic case study is characterized by its sociocultural interpretation” (p.24). Thus, the intention is that reader of this study should gain an understanding of the beliefs and behaviour of the participants in the cultural contexts of the school and Hong Kong.

3.2.1 Epistemological and ontological position
Since the aim was to capture the in-depth perceptions of individuals, and those perceptions are subjective, the researcher worked within the interpretive paradigm, as opposed to the positivist paradigm. Coleman and Lumby (1999, p.11) give a description of the essential features of the two paradigms, as shown in Fig. 3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positivist</th>
<th>Interpretive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The world is external and objective</td>
<td>The world is socially constructed and subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The observer is independent</td>
<td>The observer is part of what is observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science is value free</td>
<td>Science is driven by human interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The focus is on facts</td>
<td>The focus is on meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for causality</td>
<td>Try to understand what is happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce to simplest elements</td>
<td>Look at the totality of the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating concepts for measurement</td>
<td>Using multiple methods to establish different views of the phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large samples</td>
<td>Small samples looked at in depth or over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3. Features of positivist and interpretive paradigms

Epistemologically, researchers working in the positivist tradition regard the social world “...like the world of natural phenomena, as being hard, real and external to the individual...” (Cohen and Manion, 1989, p.8). From an ontological perspective, the social phenomena investigated in the positivist tradition are external to the individual and the research approach is scientific, relying predominantly on quantitative methods, such as surveys and experiments. The interpretive approach epistemologically views the social world as “…softer, more subjective ... based on experience and insight...” (Cohen and Manion, 1989, p.7). Ontologically, the social reality is not external to the individual conscious, but is a product of the subjective experience of the individual. The techniques used to understand this personal reality, such as in-depth interviews and participant
observation, fall within the qualitative research domain. As Bell (1993, p.5) contends, "Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis”.

Research in the interpretive paradigm therefore leads to the generation of new meaning or emergent theory from the raw data. Hence, this approach fits the purpose of this study, which is to understand the meanings that the three stakeholder groups give to dual-language and international education in the school. Research, undertaken in the positivist tradition, quantifiably measures attitudes to phenomena that are generalised across a wider population having the same characteristics as the sample. Such traditional generalisability is not the aim of interpretive work; however, there are different ways of constructing the concept of generalisability. ‘Fittingness’, described by Guba and Lincoln in Schofield seems particularly appropriate in this case. They suggest “…the concept of ‘fittingness’, with its emphasis on analyzing the degree to which the situation studied matches other situations in which one is interested, provides a more realistic and workable way of thinking about the generalizability of research results…” (Schofield, 1994, p.206).

A quantitative approach, such as the use of questionnaires, would not have yielded the type of data required, even if the researcher had surveyed the entire population of each stakeholder group. Ontologically, the researcher was interested in the perceptions of the participants and qualitative, semi-structured interviews provided the right epistemological platform for this type of data gathering. Without the capacity to probe responses, as in the interview setting, the data would have been ‘thin’ and under-developed. Cohen and Manion (1989, p.308), discussing the relative merits of interviews and questionnaires, contend that:

…the direct interaction of the interview is the source of both its advantages and disadvantages as a research technique. One advantage, for example, is that it allows for greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection. A disadvantage, on the other hand, is that it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer.

Cohen and Manion also point out that the ‘rate of return’ of interviews is usually much better than for questionnaires and agree that the opportunities for asking probing questions are far greater in interviews compared to questionnaires. Oppenheim (1992, p.81) suggests
that the asking of open-ended questions is a major advantage because “Such open-ended questions are important in allowing the respondents to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity”. In support of this, Robson (1993, p.229) contends, “Face to face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one’s line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot”. These authors all caution, however, that interviewing is a time consuming method of data collection that requires careful and thorough preparation. The researcher wholeheartedly concurs with these comments, given that it took him approximately three hours to transcribe a one-hour interview and a further hour to label the concepts.

Group interviewing in this context was out of the question, as it could obviously not provide anonymity and the opportunity to speak freely, openly and critically of an institution close to the hearts and lives of the participants. Only individual interviews, with the guarantee of anonymity, allowed the generation of the personalised responses that the researcher was seeking.

3.2.2 Choice of Analytic induction

In this study, qualitative interviews and the technique of analytic induction (Punch, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1999) provided for the extrapolation of meaning from the complex web of concepts and categories that emerged. The researcher aimed to construct an interpretation (Mason, 2002) of the data with no pre-conceived hypotheses before data collection. Analytic induction is a process where, “Concepts are developed inductively from the data and raised to a higher level of abstraction, and their interrelationships are then traced out” (Punch, 1998, p.201). It is also an approach where “…theory comes last and is developed from or through data generation and analysis” (Mason, 2002, p.180). Because the explanation or theoretical propositions emerge from the data, this approach is similar to grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, the difference is that, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.12), grounded theory is a method where “…data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another”. Here, the theorising, or abstraction of the raw data, begins with the first data set, which directly affects the second stage of data gathering. Ultimately, a substantive theory emerges about the phenomenon. The researcher considered the grounded theory method, but given the large amount of time required for the detailed analysis of the data between successive interviews, he decided that it was ‘not the best fit’ for this project.
3.3 Data collection instrument and sampling method

3.3.1 Sampling method
The researcher collected data through individual interviews with eight members of each of the three stakeholder groups. Purposeful, maximum variation sampling (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Punch 1998) gauged a wide range of perceptions across each stakeholder group. The aim of the sampling, guided by the emerging concepts, was to maximise the range and richness of the data for each stakeholder group. Snowball sampling, where initial participants suggest further interviewees aided the process and, in several cases, participants suggested one or more further potential interviewees, who often held quite different views to themselves. The number of participants selected from each group was a balance between practicality, feasibility and the requirement for sampling a diverse range of views. The data generated by the first participant helped identify the profile of the second participant and so on. The 2005-6 Year 11 group, of approximately one hundred students in total, comprised the student population for this study. The parents of this cohort formed the parent population and the senior leaders and teachers comprised the teacher/leader population.

For each of the three stakeholder groups, the maximum variation sampling reflected the diversity of the core-characteristics of the population. For the students, this meant the length of time they had been at the school and their ethnicity. In this cohort, the vast majority were ethnic Chinese, with one or usually both, parents being Chinese. Only a very small number had two non-Chinese parents. For the parent group, the sampling criteria were their length of involvement in the school through their child in the student cohort, and their ethnicity. Several were parents of children who also took part in the research. Senior leaders and teachers, representing a range of departments and lengths of service at the school, formed the teacher/leader group.

3.3.2 Participant descriptions
As promised by the researcher, no names or identifying bio-data appear in the thesis in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.

The Students
The approximately one-hundred students in the cohort were almost entirely ethnic Chinese. Some had dual ethnicities and only two were non-Chinese. Sample selection provided for
maximum variation in their experiences due to their length of time spent at the school.

S1 A very confident and thoughtful boy, acknowledged as an excellent English, Mandarin and Cantonese speaker. He spoke mainly Mandarin at home with both parents, who are Chinese. He joined the school in Year 7 at the start of Secondary. He had clear opinions and articulated them well.

S2 He had been at MIS since reception i.e. for eleven years, his mother is Chinese, his father European. He acknowledged that he was only semi-fluent in Mandarin and spoke very little Cantonese. English was his main language of communication at home. He engaged thoughtfully and easily in conversation. His mother, Parent 5, also participated in the research.

S3 She had been at MIS for eight years and was a bilingual Mandarin and English speaker, with little or no Cantonese. She spoke mainly English at home, although both parents are Chinese, but spoke Mandarin with other relatives. She was eloquent and thoughtful and was able to talk concisely at length.

S4 She joined the school in Year 9 from a local Cantonese medium school. She is fluent in Cantonese and can communicate in Mandarin. She spoke only Cantonese at home and did not use English or Mandarin. She struggled to find the words to express herself and the researcher asked frequent probes. She had a very clear self-concept of why she had joined the school. Her mother, Parent 3, also participated in the research project.

S5 Her parents are Chinese and her mother, Parent 1, participated in the project. She joined the school in Year 7 at the start of secondary. She usually spoke English and Cantonese at home, but also spoke Mandarin well.

S6 He joined the school in Year 7 at the start of Secondary. He spoke English and Cantonese at home and spoke Mandarin well. He was quite critical of aspects of the school and seemed to enjoy having the opportunity to express his opinions.

S7 She joined MIS in Year 9 from a local Cantonese medium school. She spoke Cantonese at home and rarely spoke either English or Mandarin. Rather shy, the researcher used many probes to expand the narrative. Both parents are Chinese and her mother, Parent 2 participated in the research.

S8 She had been at MIS since Year 1, both parents are Chinese, and her father, Parent 7, took part in the research. The main language of communication at home was Fujianese, a dialect of Chinese, but they also spoke English and Mandarin. She was most comfortable speaking English. She was a willing participant but was not sure whether she could contribute much to the research.
The Teachers/Leaders

The teaching staff of about sixty full-time and about ten part-time was multicultural. All teachers in the Secondary school work in departments with a Department Head who is accountable to the Leadership Team. The Secondary Leadership Team consists of the Principal and three Deputies. The Principal reports to the school Headmaster, who presides over the Primary and Secondary schools.

**T/L1** She had been at the school for five years and taught science. She is Asian and had worked in several international settings. She did not speak Mandarin or Cantonese. She spoke openly from her experiences and needed very little prompting.

**T/L2** He is European and mainly taught English and Drama. He had been at the school for eleven years and had other international teaching experience. He spoke some Cantonese and Mandarin. The conversation was more intellectual and hypothetical than others and required some direction from the researcher to keep it focussed.

**T/L3** She is Asian and had been at the school for seven years. She taught Mandarin and held a middle management position. She had taught at another international school in Hong Kong.

**T/L4** He is Asian and had been at the school for four years. He had a senior leadership role in the school and was involved in the development of the Mandarin programme.

**T/L5** He is from North America and taught English and Drama. He had been at the school for five years and spoke Mandarin. He made several observations about the difficulty of teaching children in their second language. He had taught at other schools in Hong Kong.

**T/L6** He is from North America and had a senior leadership role in the school. He had been at the school for three years and this was his first international school experience. He spoke some Mandarin.

**T/L7** He is European and had a senior leadership role in the school. He had been at the school for eight years and had worked at a variety of schools including international schools, around the world.

**T/L8** She is European and had been at the school for ten years. She had worked at other schools in Hong Kong and had other international experience. She had a senior leadership position.

The Parents

**P1** She had been a parent at MIS for six years and is the mother of Student 5. She is Chinese and spoke Mandarin, English and Cantonese but could not read or write Mandarin. At home, she used mainly English and Cantonese and occasionally Mandarin.
She said “Nobody has a first language in our house except for my husband, whose first language is Cantonese. He speaks, writes and thinks in it”.

**P2** She is the mother of Student 7 and had been a parent at the school for two years. She thought she was “kind of trilingual” in Cantonese, English and Mandarin.

**P3** She is the mother of Student 4 and had been a MIS parent for six years. The language at home was predominantly Cantonese mixed with some English. She commented: “My daughter practices Mandarin and English mainly in school plus some at home, but she doesn’t really practice, she just watches television”.

**P4** Her home languages were English and Cantonese but she was fluent in Mandarin. She said, “If it’s a very serious topic it is all in English, but everyday life in Cantonese. We rarely use Mandarin because is it not our mother tongue”. She had been a MIS parent for fourteen years.

**P5** She is the mother of Student 2 and had been a MIS parent for seventeen years. She is Chinese and spoke Cantonese, English and Mandarin. She explained that: “Our home language has been English because the attempts to use Mandarin or Cantonese were resented - I didn’t get answers and was often ignored. I tried to use Mandarin but it was rather pointless. I used to read stories but with growing homework pressures they said no, you don’t have to try”.

**P6** He is Chinese and had been a MIS parent for twelve years. The main language spoken at home was Cantonese. He commented that: “At home, we don’t speak Mandarin, but the children speak simple Mandarin with me when we are in China”.

**P7** He is the father of Student 8 and had been a MIS parent for eleven years. He is Chinese and spoke Mandarin with his daughter, while his wife spoke English with her.

**P8** He is European and the home language was English; however, he spoke some Cantonese and Mandarin. He had been a MIS parent for 12 years.

### 3.3.3 Administration of the data collection instrument

The interviews were in English, the native language of the researcher, who does not speak either Mandarin or Cantonese. The researcher was confident that all of the participants were able to express their views in English and considered that the involvement of a translator would have had a detrimental effect on the dynamics of the interview process.

The interviews with all the participants followed the same semi-structured format, with the six Specific Research Questions literally guiding the conversation with probes and prompts used as necessary. The researcher decided to use the Specific Research Questions as the interview guide since all the participants had the necessary language skills to comprehend
their meaning. This also meant that the researcher ensured that he focussed on all aspects equally with all participants. Through this consistent approach, the researcher aimed to make the comparisons of the interview data more valid. The researcher read a Specific Research Question to the interviewee at an appropriate place in the conversation and gave the participant time to consider his/her answer. Probes and prompts helped focus the interview on the questions. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996, p.310) consider that the general interview guide approach “…involves outlining a set of topics to be explored with each respondent. The order in which the topics are explored and the wording of the questions are not predetermined”. Although all interviews covered the same set of questions, the order of questions was flexible and varied with the interviewee, depending upon the direction of the conversation at the start of the interview. For example, the question order with Student 4 was 1, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5 and Teacher/Leader 4: 6, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

All the interviews were voice recorded, with the permission of the participants. The researcher verbally asked the first student selected to take part, and upon his agreement, he received a letter addressed to his parents, seeking their permission for his participation. Subsequent student participants were then selected (all agreed willingly) and the student interviews all took place at school outside normal hours and lasted between forty-five minutes and seventy-five minutes. The teacher/leader interviews followed, taking place either during the school day or after normal hours on the school premises. The researcher approached all the participants in person and then sent them an email with a formal invitation and an outline of the research project. The outline described the nature of the research and contained the Main Research Question and the Specific Research Questions. The interviews lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes. Some parent interviews took place at the school, some at workplaces and others at private homes, to suit the schedules of the participants, and lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes. The researcher invited parents to participate in person or via email, and some of those approached declined to take part, for various reasons. Several parent interviews required rescheduling more than once due to work commitments and so the researcher had to be flexible in this respect. The parent participants received a formal invitation and the same research outline as the teacher/leaders.

Following complete transcription, the researcher emailed the transcript of the interview to the participant to give him/her the opportunity to review it and clarify any points arising. In several cases, the participants replied with some clarifications and modifications to explain
the meaning of what they were trying to convey. Extracts taken from the transcripts illustrate points made in the thesis and make up the bulk of the data analysis chapters. Whilst word for word transcription was hugely time consuming, the researcher felt that listening carefully to the interview as close to its occurrence as possible was valuable for a number of reasons. Firstly, the researcher was able to provide all the participants with a complete record of what they had said and could ask them to check and explain any aspect they felt needed clarification. This ‘member checking’ was a vital component of the protocol for providing trustworthiness of the research, as described in Section 6. Secondly, the process of complete transcription of the recording provided discipline, since the researcher had to concentrate carefully to accurately capture what was being said, particularly with non-native English speakers, when passages required listening to several times. Additionally, ‘researcher fatigue’ was countered by complete transcription, meaning that after the novelty of interviewing and transcribing the first few times had worn off, the process was established and no shortcuts were taken on the later interviews. This provided rigour to the data collection process. Ideally, the labelling process would have followed on quickly from the transcription and member checking, and before the next interview, in order to inform the researcher of the issues generating particular interest. In practise, however, this was not always possible, given the time constraints.

3.4 The interview and its conduct

Prompts and probes are necessary in any interview situation and, in these interviews, the need ranged from frequent and regular to only occasional. The interviewer tried to avoid talking too much during the interview process, however, when the conversation flagged or strayed out of focus, a number of probing techniques helped to guide the conversation. The types of probes available to an interviewer have been categorised to different levels of complexity by various authors. Gillham (2000) identifies eight types, while Robson (1995, p.234) proposes that:

A probe is a device to get the interviewee to expand on a response when you intuit that she or he has more to give ... there are obvious tactics such as asking ‘Anything more?’... Sometimes when an answer has been given in general terms, a useful probe is to seek a personal response, e.g. ‘What is your own personal view on this?’ There are also very general tactics, such as the use of: a period of silence; an
enquiring glance; ‘mmhmm...’ and repeating back all or part of what the interviewee has just said.

The interviewer certainly learned the importance of silences in such conversations, especially with those participants who required more thinking time and those not so comfortable speaking English. Together with the types of probes described above, the interviewer frequently used non-verbal kinesic prompts (described by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996)) such as nods, smiles and eye contact to provide positive reinforcement and encouragement. The extracts of the transcripts of the interviews with Student 4, Parent 4 and Teacher/Leader 4, in Figs. 4, 5 and 6 respectively, illustrate the richness and range of the conversations and show the types of probes used by the researcher. Abbreviations: E= English, M= Mandarin, C= Cantonese, I.S. = International Schools. Italics indicate the interviewer speaking, using probes to expand the conversation.

**Student 4**

**Addressing Specific Research Question 1.** I think MIS is a totally E environment, so for us C speakers, you are forced to speak E to communicate with friends, which helps us improve E. For M, because there are students from the mainland, we try to communicate in their mother tongue, which is M. It is not something deliberate that the school does; it’s just natural, you want to talk with them. *How much does the school promote fluency?* I think the school can do more to promote M. Now we only use M in Chinese class so we study M as a subject but not for communication. *What could the school do to encourage M use?* I think the first step is to improve the students M, because students from local schools don’t take M. We have Chinese week and we should communicate in M only and no E! *Is MIS what you thought it was going to be?* No, the M level was much higher than I thought in speaking, writing and reading. The M level was actually higher than in my old school. *Does being mainly a C user hold you back in any way from learning M?* Yeah, because most M speakers can understand C. So C speakers tend to use C to speak with them and they don’t have to force themselves to use M. C speakers can understand M. If you come from a local school and speak C to an M speaking student and that student speaks M to you, we understand each other. *So you’re not forced to speak M?* Yes. I came into the top M class when I started at MIS and I have stayed there.

---

Fig.4. Extract from the interview with Student 4
**Parent 4**

The researcher asked Specific Research Question 6, and following some conversation, posed the following probe: *How do you see the ethnic make-up of our student body?* Ethnically, the majority are either Asian or one of the parents is Asian. I think the reason is probably that if you were Caucasian family, you may not have such a high confidence that the students would be able to be competent in Chinese. Or, it may be that these people are ‘transition families’ - expatriates - where this is one of many stops for the family so they probably want their kids to have some sort of traditional education. *Are there any other factors that contribute to the international ethos?* The faculty all has different accents. I tell my kids that if they want to be international people they have to train their ears! Sometimes they come home with stories that the teachers have told them about their childhood and these are very eye-opening experiences for them. I think it is very important to have teachers from various countries, or the teachers themselves should have an international mindset.

Fig.5. Extract from the interview with Parent 4

**Teacher/Leader 4**

**Addressing Specific Research Question 1.** *What do you think our parents want from the students, what do you think they want their children to become?* Our parents want their children to get a very good ‘western’ education and on top of it, they want them to keep their Chinese language to a high level together with the culture. That’s what I call to ‘buy one and get one free’, which won’t happen. If you really want to promote Chinese, you have to put in an effort and the resources. At the moment in Secondary we’re only addressing the issue in a very small way. Unless M becomes a working language, that is, you teach subjects in M, it will forever remain a subject as it is now. Dual-language is only a relative concept. We are much more dual-language in E and M than other schools in HK. **Addressing Specific Research Question 2.** *Is there a rule in Secondary that kids are not supposed to speak C?* Well, there’s no written rule, but they are encouraged not to speak C but M but they don’t do it. *Is this an overt policy?* The Chinese teachers talk about it and a small number of non-Chinese teachers. I rarely hear M around the school - once in a blue moon! I mainly hear C and E in Secondary, C not as much. E is predominant. In Primary, you hear mostly E. When children grow up their identity becomes clearer and they realise that they are above all, ‘Honkies’, so they speak C.

Fig.6. Extract from the interview with Teacher/Leader 4
The large quantity of rich and relevant interview data that resulted was organised through a process of categorisation applied consistently across the whole data set. The rationale for this categorical indexing follows in the section on data analysis.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

#### 3.5.1 Categorical indexing

The categorical indexing of the data involved the systematic application of a set of labels to portions (sentences or whole paragraphs) of the interview text. The data labels emerged during the analytic process and the researcher had no preconceived ideas about the number, scope or description of the labels, in short, they were ‘grounded’ in the data. The purpose of producing these “bags of indexed data” (Mason, 2002, p.157) was to organise the data for ease of later retrieval for the purpose of analytic induction. A portion of the labelled interview with Student 4 in Fig. 7 shows the types of labels added to segments of the transcript. CU means ‘Cantonese Use’, SAM stands for ‘Student Ability in Mandarin’, SUME for ‘Student Use of Mandarin and English’, MUAS for ‘Mandarin Use at School’, CNEM for ‘Cantonese Negative Effect on Mandarin’ and EUAS means ‘English Use at School’. In some instances, when the same piece of data fell into two categories, it had two labels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am fluent in Cantonese and I can communicate in Mandarin. At home, the language of communication is Cantonese with my parents and older sister. I do not use Mandarin or English at home. I practise Mandarin and English just at school. In school, I use English most of the time with my friends. Sometimes we speak a mix of Cantonese and English. Sometimes Mandarin if there is a mainland student. I speak Cantonese mainly with new students who have come from local schools. I don’t mind actually speaking English or Cantonese. I have definitely become more comfortable speaking E since I have been at MIS.</td>
<td>CU/SAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MUAH/SUME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MUAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNEM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EUAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.7. Portion of Student 4’s labelled transcript

All of the labelled segments of data belonging to a particular category e.g. SUME, from all of the student interviews were extracted from the labelled transcripts and placed into an
In the Excel spreadsheet for category SUME, the above data was entered in the table as S4.1 *I practice M and E just at school. In school, I use E most of the time with my friends.* The labels emerged from the data and the process of interviewing, transcribing, labelling and collecting ‘like data’ took place simultaneously for all three of the stakeholder groups until all the data had been categorised and tabulated. Appendix 1 contains a complete list of Parent transcript data labels, as an example.

### 3.5.2 Memos

During the data collection process and the data analysis phase, the researcher wrote notes or *memos* of relevant thoughts, ideas and concepts about the data and the research questions and examples of memos, as shown in Fig. 8. The memos helped to steer the maximum variation sampling, refine the interview strategies and to clarify thoughts, enabling the researcher to focus more succinctly on addressing the research questions during the interview process.

**Memo after interview with Student 4.** *I did not give her enough thinking time before jumping in with a prompt - a valuable lesson to give more time to non-native English speakers. I apologised in my email to her when I sent the transcript for checking. There seems to be some clear messages coming through about not being enough attention paid to Mandarin and Chinese culture. A lot of language learning is going on informally. Added LAMOT and EUAS labels. The student suggested another participant who is also relatively new to the school. This student helped explore the language issues in some depth and was the first to mention ‘elitism’ as an issue for MIS students. Interestingly, the prejudice works both ways (see text). Her mother is also very willing to take part in the project. Internationalism is taking a ‘back seat’ in the interviewing and the student’s responses are a little shallow in variety.*

**Memo after reviewing Student 6 transcript.** *Should there be a minimum exit Mandarin expectation? Higher expectations for student development and encouragement in the use of Mandarin? English-free days? Greater emphasis on Modern fashionable China in Mandarin classes? Quote, “MIS means the international school that emphasises China”. Where is the evidence that China is emphasised as much even as Hong Kong? Is there a parental expectation that the school is actively encouraging, indeed insisting upon Mandarin use at school to encourage fluency? It seems that very little Mandarin is used outside class, it is E or C. Mismatch here of expectations and reality?*
Memo after reviewing Student 8 transcript. I sense a perception that Mandarin is more important at MIS than other schools that may have a Mandarin course (i.e. devote the same amount of time as MIS). This is perhaps a bit of mythology about MIS intertwined with the name, the clientele and the mission perhaps. The students think they are quite a diverse group (although they agree that they are almost all ethnically Chinese) because of where they have lived and passports held etc. More credence needs giving to this than just the range of nationalities in a school.

After interviewing Teachers/Leaders 1 and 2. Very interesting contrast between MIE (Meanings of International Education) thoughts. T/L1 is confident that diverse teachers make it an international school whereas T/L2 finds this idea bizarre and that diversity within the student body is the key point. T/L1 was clearly giving me the ‘party line’ from the point of view of the school. T/L2 was far more critical (in a positive sense) about the questions.

Fig.8. Selection of memos written during the data collection phase

3.5.3 Organisation of the categories

To keep the focus of the data analysis on the research questions, the researcher next organised the tabulated, labelled data under each Specific Research Question. However, at this stage the Specific Research Questions were broken down into components or ‘sub-Specific Research Questions’ (referred to as ‘sub-SRQ’s) to aid the organisation and analysis, as follows:

Dual-Language approach data categories
SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency
SRQ1aii: English motivation and proficiency
SRQ1b: School dual-language promotion
SRQ1c: Home/societal dual-language support
SRQ2a: Cantonese effect on dual-language proficiency
SRQ2b: Cantonese use

International Education Ethos data categories
SRQ3a: Chinese culture
SRQ3b: Western/other cultures
SRQ4a: Life skills at school
SRQ4b: Life skills after school
SRQ5a: Intercultural awareness
SRQ5b: Community service
SRQ6a: IB programme and international ethos
SRQ6b: International education factors

The researcher then assembled together all of the data tables pertaining to a particular sub-SRQ for the Students, Teachers/Leaders and Parents. For example, Figs. 9a, 9b and 9c show the data tables collected for category sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency for the students, teachers/leaders and parents. ‘Locking’ the data to the sub-SRQs in this way kept the data sharply focussed on the aims of the research and facilitated systematic analysis. Appendix 2 contains a complete set of tabulated Parent data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>Dual Language Proficiency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRLWS</td>
<td>Mandarin Reading Listening Writing Skills</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>Student Ability in Mandarin</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSMOTM</td>
<td>Student Self Motivation in Mandarin</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUME</td>
<td>Student Use of Mandarin and English</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.9a. Student data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BILS</td>
<td>Bilingual Students</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>Dual Language Proficiency</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBDPLC</td>
<td>IBDP Language Choices</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>Student Ability in Mandarin</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSMOTM</td>
<td>Student Self Motivation in Mandarin</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUME</td>
<td>Student Use of Mandarin and English</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.9b. Teachers/Leader data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>Dual Language Programme</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTO</td>
<td>Mother Tongue Issues</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>Student Ability in Mandarin</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAME</td>
<td>Student Ability in Mandarin and English</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.9c. Parent data for sub-SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency
3.5.4 Constructing an interpretation through induction and deduction

The data analysis required a systematic examination of the labelled data in the sub-SRQ categories for each stakeholder group in order to find answers to the Specific Research Questions. This involved searching the assembled data tables for significant patterns and areas of convergence or divergence within and between the stakeholder groups. When four or more participants, out of a total of eight, of any stakeholder group expressed broadly similar perceptions on an issue, this was strongly significant in the eyes of the researcher. Thus, the process of labelling and tabulation of ‘data-bits’ from the transcripts, and the subsequent organisation ensured the ‘grounding’ of the eventual findings in the original data. The analysis of the raw data from all three of the stakeholder groups resulted in the emergence of a number of themes. Concerning the dual-language approach in Chapter 4, four themes emerged, namely, dual-language perspectives, languages at school, languages at home and the effects of Cantonese on Mandarin and English. The international ethos questions resulted in the emergence of the six themes presented in Chapter 5. These are international education in the Secondary school, International Baccalaureate programmes, awareness and appreciation of Chinese culture, awareness and appreciation of other cultures, particularly Anglo-Western, developing intercultural understanding through Community Service and the preparation for future life challenges.

The significant findings arising from each of these themes, where convergent or divergent views within or between stakeholder groups emerged, are summarised at the end of each of the sections in Chapters 4 and 5. In the conclusions to both of these chapters, the within group and between-group comparisons lead to the emergence of a picture of the expectations and experiences of the three stakeholder groups correlated directly to the Specific Research Questions. In the final Chapter 6, the discussion section brings together the significant findings and areas of convergence and divergence in order to address the Main Research Question. This process followed the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework for analytic induction, which consists of data reduction, data display and the drawing of conclusions. Punch (1998, p.203) describes data reduction as occurring continually throughout the analysis and involves coding, memoing, explaining and conceptualising processes, “…since developing abstract concepts is also a way of reducing the data”. Data displays such as graphs, charts and tables help to move the analysis forwards and as such, provide the basis for further analysis. In this research, fracturing of the interview data followed by labelling, tabulation and then thematic organisation,
allowed the researcher to address the Specific Research Questions. Within group and between-group comparisons of the data sets was at the heart of the analytic process.

During the analysis, the researcher employed the various techniques for generating meaning, and drawing and verifying conclusions described by Miles and Huberman (1994). Memo writing continued in conjunction with the processes of data collection and analysis to assist in the elucidation of emergent themes and in the build up of a deeper interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Mason suggests that in an analytic process such as this, “Comparative arguments aim to draw some explanatory significance from a specified set of comparisons and therefore the logic of explanation is tied up with the mechanism of comparison” (2002, p.175). The analytic process neatly linked the conclusions back to the epistemological and ontological considerations and provided some measure of ‘soundness’, which is explored in the next section.

3.6 Validity and reliability

According to Mason, “Validity encapsulates the idea that you need to be able to demonstrate that your concepts can be identified, observed or ‘measured’ in the way that you say they can” (2002, p.39). This notion of qualitative validity is applicable to this research project since the significant findings and areas of convergence and divergence emerged directly from the raw data. Hence, the study has “…pragmatic validity…” (Kvale in Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.280), that is, it is relevant and meaningful to the case school. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), describing criteria for making judgements about the credibility of an interpretive research project, say that if “…it enlightens the individuals who read the report of its findings” (p.572), it is useful within the context of the case study. Thus, the diversity of opinions of the participants in each stakeholder group and the analytic process both enhanced the usefulness of this study. The researcher raised the credibility and authenticity of the data by emailing the full transcript to each of the participants and asking them to read the conversation to confirm, explain, retract or modify their comments. In this way, the researcher gained “…respondent validation…” of his interpretations (Pidgeon, 1996 p.84). Several interviewees replied to clarify what they had meant by a particular comment and to ensure that there was no misunderstanding on behalf of the researcher. For example, Student 1 added the underlined sentence in the section below to explain his assertion in the previous sentence:
The student community itself is doing a lot. We listen to American music, rap and rock and that is an influence. I am not too sure but it seems that we live in an American influenced community. I am not too sure how it originated, though. When ‘cool’ kids enter the school, they generally tend to be popular and that can be a significant influence in the student community, especially since most are American.

Therefore, member checking enhanced the validity of the researcher’s reconstruction of the participants’ emic perspectives and maximum variation sampling assisted by snowball sampling, together with the comparison of data, provided credibility to the findings within each stakeholder group. Reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the research technique; in this case, the semi-structured interview, in generating the required data. The instrument was reliable, given that the researcher used the same set of questions throughout the process, and was conscientious about addressing all of the questions with all of the participants. The researcher aimed to triangulate the data by interviewing participants from the three main stakeholder groups most closely involved in experiencing the issues addressed in the Main Research Question and the Specific Research Questions. According to Gall, Borg and Gall, “Triangulation helps to eliminate biases that might result from relying exclusively on any one data-collection method, source, analyst, or theory” (1996, p.574). The members of the School Board, the other main stakeholder group, were not included in the research because after consideration, the researcher thought that their views of the school would not necessarily reflect the ‘daily realities’ in the same way. Simply put, the researcher wanted the focus of the study to be on what he considered were the ‘core participants’. By asking the same set of questions in each interview to the members of all three groups, the researcher ensured that he focussed on all aspects equally with all participants and this strengthened the triangulation of the data.

Finally, generalisation to the entire stakeholder populations or to a broader context of similar international schools was not the intention of the study. However, the methodology developed is applicable to other similar research contexts and given the description of the school and the stakeholders, readers can make inferences about the applicability of the findings to their own contexts. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) cite the difficulty of generalising the findings of case study research such as this as a major disadvantage of the method. They also suggest that problems arise if it is difficult to disguise the identities of
participants, or indeed the organisation, and there is further discussion of this in Section 8 on ethical considerations.

3.7 Pros and cons of insider research

As in this situation, access to the sample population and to willing interviewees is a potentially major advantage for educators conducting research within their own institution. Given that the researcher was the Head of Year for the 2005-6 Year 11 cohort, he knew the students and their parents to some extent. He recognised that the relationship of the interviewer to the interviewees was a possible major disadvantage, particularly regarding the authority relationship with the students (Cooper, 1993 and Oppenheim, 1992). In this context, it was critical for the researcher to focus on the task of achieving maximum variation in the data and to maintain as neutral and objective a stance as possible, particularly in the selection of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher recognised that as an ‘insider researcher’ he was actually part of the case, which presented disadvantages as well as benefits. However, the researcher considered that in this research context, his position as a teacher enabled access to the participants and was a major advantage. This is because he knew the characteristics of the student, parent and teacher/leader populations and this facilitated the selection of participants to strive for maximum variation in the data. After almost a decade at the school, he had insight into the unique organisational culture and history of the school and this helped him understand the thoughts and actions of the participants.

On the negative side, since the researcher was the only instrument for data collection and analysis, and the analytic approach depended upon the interpretation of perceptions, there was clearly room for researcher bias at all stages. The researcher had his own views about the case school, and there was a danger that he might have brought his perceptions not only to the interview process, but also to the analysis. By grounding the interpretation at each stage of the analysis in the raw data, he hoped to avoid the pitfall of undue subjectivity. Mason (2002) argues, however, that the labelling of data from the transcripts requires selection on behalf of the researcher and therefore subjectivity is in-built into the data collection and analysis. The researcher’s relationship to the stakeholder groups as a teacher, colleague and employee (of the parents) all placed potential constraints on the willingness of the participants to reveal their true opinions and feelings. The absolute guarantee of anonymity, in the researcher’s opinion, served to limit these constraints quite effectively.
3.8 Ethical considerations

The researcher recognised the importance of gaining ‘informed consent’ (Punch, 1998) from all those involved in the research project. First, he gained permission from the school leaders to undertake this project and to approach the students, parents and staff. He also requested the consent of the students’ parents in writing, not because the students were too young to make the decision, but because the interviews took place after normal school hours on the school premises. For all participants, the researcher provided an outline of the aims of the study with an explanation of the open-ended nature of the interview and a request to voice-record the conversation. In the interviews, the parents and teachers/leaders received the written Specific Research Questions and the students a paraphrased, verbal form. The participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and to confirm, explain, retract or modify their comments. Concerning confidentiality, the subjects remained anonymous, as promised, in order to ensure open and honest interviews. The detailed bio-data of the participants is only available to the interviewer and the participants are referred to as Student, Teacher/Leader and Parent 1, 2, 3 etc. Thus, the researcher perceived no obvious consequences for the participants that could arise from publication of the thesis. The study aimed to help the school understand its constituents in terms of its mission and aims and it will be available to the leadership and to the wider school community. In this context, the researcher is aware of the sensitivities involved, as described by Mason (2002), who discusses the need to consider the politics and ethics of presenting the arguments, analyses and explanations of research to a wider audience.

3.9 Limitations of the method

The method adopted was limited in a number of ways, including the subjective perception of data saturation through the sampling method, emic versus etic considerations, and the capacity of the participants to verbalise and conceptualise. The researcher had to balance feasibility and practical considerations with the aim of achieving maximum variation in the data. However, the researcher was quite confident that the data obtained broadly represented the range of perceptions within the populations. The researcher sought to develop an emic account of the research findings, in that the analytical process grounded itself in the raw interview data and in the reality of the participants. He aimed to remain as objective as possible during the whole process. However, the methodological tools employed such as labelling, categorising and interpreting the data were subjective, relying
on the understanding of the data by the researcher and producing, to some extent, an etic account. The researcher’s own personal viewpoint intertwined with the research findings, hence possibly weakening the validity of the claim that the research is a study of the participants’ views on the research questions. To overcome this, and to present his etic interpretation, the researcher made every effort to distinguish between his and the participants’ voices in the analysis.

A further limitation of the method was that not all of the tables of raw data were, on closer examination, pertinent to the research questions. Since these data represented recurrent themes in the interviews, either the researcher was pursuing unnecessary lines of enquiry or these themes were generally important to the participants. For example, the researcher unnecessarily sought the views of the participants on whether Hong Kong will eventually adopt simplified written Chinese characters, as in China, instead of traditional characters.
4 Data analysis - the dual-language approach

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Dual-language perspectives

4.3 Languages at school

4.4 Languages at home

4.5 Effects of Cantonese on Mandarin and English

4.6 Conclusions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interview data from the members of the three stakeholder groups relating to the two Specific Research Questions (both comprising two subsidiary questions) concerned with the dual-language approach. The chapter sections provide triangulation of the data pertaining to language use at home and school and the commentary, interwoven throughout the perceptions of the respondents, seeks to link, clarify and interpret the data from each stakeholder group. Section 2 contains an overview of the issues found by the researcher in the data, followed by three sections describing the main emergent themes, namely, languages at school, languages at home, and the effects of Cantonese. The themes are consistent with the Specific Research Questions and thus the Main Research Question. A summary of the findings highlighting similarities and differences in the data, from the three groups, ends each section and the concluding section draws these findings together. The dual-language Specific Research Questions, which both have two parts, addressed in this chapter are:

1. *How does the school help develop dual-language proficiency in English and Mandarin and to what extent does the school ensure that competency in these languages includes fluency in use and their employment as the working languages within the school? Does it manage to achieve a successful balance between the two?*

2. *How does Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong, affect the acquisition of English and Mandarin dual-language proficiency? What effect does Cantonese have on the other two languages and cultures?*

Underlined in the text, the interviewer’s words are included where they help to explain the context of an interviewee’s comments.
Fig. 10 contains a summary of the descriptions of the participants provided earlier, in detail, in Chapter 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years at MIS</th>
<th>Parent interviewed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes, P5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes, P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes, P2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, P7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/Leader</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years at MIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years at MIS</th>
<th>Child interviewed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, S5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes, S7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, S4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Yes, S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes, S8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 10. Summary description of participants
4.2 Dual-language perspectives

The data in this section portrays the realities of daily language use by the students through the eyes of the participating students, teachers/leaders and parents. The situation is complex given the school, home and societal contexts experienced by the students. The data also highlights the range of terms used by the interviewees to describe linguistic ability, for example ‘bilingual’, ‘dual-language’ and ‘fluency’. This indicates some confusion about, and misuse of, the various descriptors of language mastery, already discussed in the literature review, as the quote by S2 illustrates, “I consider myself to be maybe a semi-bilingual person”. This statement implies that there is a scale of bilingual ability, rather than referring to equal command of two first-languages. T/L1 suggested, “…dual-language is only a relative concept. We are much more dual-language in English and Mandarin than all the other schools in Hong Kong”. This statement literally means what it says, yet it is difficult to know what exactly dual-language refers to here. P5 combined the bilingual and dual-language concepts more successfully this way, “I would not expect a student from a dual-language school to be bilingual. I would say you couldn’t have a person with 60:40; there are always the mother tongue thoughts”. She recognised that bilingual is a specific term reserved for those with equal command of two first-languages.

4.2.1 Students’ responses

Two students, S4 and S7, specifically stated that the dual-language programme was an important factor that had influenced their parent’s decisions to choose MIS. S4 indicated, “Language was one of the main reasons for coming to MIS, for both English and Mandarin” and S7 explained, “…the main motivation for coming to MIS was English and Mandarin; that’s what my mum wanted”. Discussing language proficiency, three students, S1, S6 and S7, suggested that only a small number of students in their Year group were fully proficient (bilingual) English and Mandarin speakers, writers and readers. S1 asserted, “…currently in this Year group, the number of students who are fluent in both Mandarin and English is very small. Many of the students stick to Cantonese” and S6 stated that in the year group, “…only one or two people I would call fully fluent…if you dropped them in the Mainland most could not function”. S7 similarly indicated that the number of students fluent in Mandarin was small. He suggested, “…just some students want to become really good in Mandarin”. Two students, S3 and S7, reported that they were very able in Mandarin, S3 more so, “I am almost bilingual, almost completely fluent in Mandarin”,
whereas S7 was more modest, “I am in one of the top sets for Mandarin. I am not really
good orally, but my writing is good”.

Two students, S4 and S7, suggested that Cantonese was an important language for many of
their peers. Reporting on their own situations S4 explained, “I practice Mandarin and
English just at school. I use English most of the time with my friends. At home the
language of communication is Cantonese, in which I am fluent” while S7 described her
home situation this way, “We speak Cantonese at home. Mostly I speak Cantonese at
school with new students whose first language is Cantonese too”. However, three students,
S3, S5 and S6, indicated that they did not normally speak Cantonese at home. S3
commented, “At home I occasionally speak Mandarin but mostly English. I don’t speak
Cantonese and it’s not spoken at home”. While S5 described his home situation this way,
“I speak entirely English with my parents, but my dad suddenly speaks Cantonese and
expects us to reply!” S6 reported a similar scenario at home, “Both mum and dad speak
English and that is the language of communication at home. Mum and dad also speak
Cantonese to me but I speak English with my brothers”.

Three students, S1, S6 and S8, commented on the motivation, or lack of, to improve their
Mandarin ability. S1 was categorical about what Cantonese speakers had to do to learn
Mandarin: “You have to be determined to change yourself. If you just stick to Cantonese,
this ultimately will hinder your Mandarin level”. S6 remarked that he was not motivated to
improve his Mandarin ability, “Do you have an ambition to get into language A? No, I am
comfortable where I am. Is it a motivator? Not really, and I don’t practice Mandarin
outside of class” and S8 added, “I am not in the top group because I don’t write well
enough. I don’t practice apart from what I have to do for school”. On the other hand, four
students (S3, S4, S5 and S6) suggested that English was the common language of the year
group. Commented S4, “I think MIS is a totally English environment, while S3 said, “Most
of the students in my class have English as their first language”. S5 also observed, “I think
that most people in the Year are comfortable in English”. Furthermore, in contrast to the
situation with Mandarin, students were motivated to improve their English proficiency at
MIS because it was the lingua franca of the school. S5 explained it this way, “Our English
has to be at a level to do all the other subjects, like for Mathematics, you have to be able to
comprehend what the teachers are trying to say”. S6 claimed that the students themselves
expected a high level of English of each other and were actually intolerant of ‘poor’
English language skills. He commented that:
There’s this one person, when he came his English standard wasn’t so high and people made fun of him for it, but now he’s equally proficient in English. Would the same happen in Mandarin, would people make fun? No, it is not something about which people would worry. (S6)

4.2.2 Teachers/leaders’ responses

Five teachers/leaders, T/L1, T/L8, T/L3, T/L4 and T/L7, expressed broad support for the dual-language programme in the Secondary school. T/L1 asserted, “I think we are characterised and enriched by our dual-language programme in English and Mandarin”. T/L8 thought that students generally left the Mandarin International School in Year 13 quite fluent in English and Mandarin. She said:

I think we are successful in that obviously the majority of our students leave at the end of Year 13 being reasonably fluent in Mandarin and completely fluent in English. (They had) the opportunity to develop their Mandarin to the best of their abilities, I would say. (T/L8)

T/L3 suggested that to be bilingual, students should have to achieve minimum IB Diploma Programme grades in Mandarin. Like T/L8, T/L3 also pointed to the steadily increasing numbers taking an IBDP bilingual diploma as a good indication of dual-language ability. T/L8 commented that “If you take a bilingual diploma as the benchmark, in which case it is increasing each year”, while T/L3’s contention was as follows:

My perception is that if by the completion of the IB diploma programme they can get a good mark, say six in their Language B higher level Mandarin course, we can call them bilingual. Because at that standard you can use Mandarin as a working language, that would be 30-40% (of the students). (T/L3)

T/L4 compared MIS to other schools in asserting, “Dual-language is only a relative concept. We are much more dual-language in English and Mandarin than other schools in Hong Kong”. T/L7 was also upbeat about the promotion of Mandarin at MIS stating, “I would say we are really quite effective in promoting proficiency, depending on when a child enters the programme. For somebody coming up from Primary or joining Secondary with some Chinese, I think they do end up pretty proficient”. Five teachers/leaders, T/L4, T/L5, T/L6, T/L7 and T/L8, discussed drawbacks to the dual-language concept and
approach in English and Mandarin. T/L4 perceived that English was a struggle for some students, but that this had changed in recent years. He pointed out “Now we are getting so many applicants that they have to be pretty good in English. So we are not seeing the same sort of second-language problems that we used to have”. T/L4 also commented on the relative importance of the two languages, and emphasised the place of English at the school:

We are not teaching any core subject in Mandarin, so it is just a subject. If we taught some core subjects in Mandarin, and we insisted upon students speaking Mandarin in free time, then it would be a dual-language school. The pressures of globalisation and because English is the world’s lingua franca, mean that Mandarin suffers. (T/L4)

T/L5 implied that the compulsory Mandarin requirement limited the diversity of students in the Secondary school. He commented, “When they get to the IBDP and choices have to be made, the dual-language problem becomes an obstacle, I think. Also, how many students take a degree taught in Chinese?” T/L6 made a similar point, suggesting “We remain constrained by the IBDP examinations that are in English and that 99% of our students go to (an English medium) University”. When asked, “Is it stated somewhere that students have to take Mandarin as part of the IBDP?” T/L8 responded, “Yes, in the course booklet. They can take their mother tongue subject, but outside curriculum time. We have had some parents in the past who have asked if their children do not have to take Mandarin and they have been told firmly, no”.

Two teachers/leaders, T/L7 and T/L6, commented on the dual-language approach in the Primary and Secondary sections of the case school, with T/L7, referring to the Primary section, observing, “The whole effort we have now, to work collaboratively and to integrate some of the curriculum between the two languages is a much purer dual-language concept”. T/L6 also indicated that curriculum delivery changes in the Primary school already allowed it to meet the dual-language goals more effectively. He described the situation this way, “In lower primary it was always 50:50 but got less, further up the school. Now, under the new programme, the two languages have equal importance. That, in many ways, signals a policy change and an attempt to fulfil the mission more stringently”. T/L7 raised an important question in suggesting there were tensions concerning the level of Mandarin mastery expected by the parents and that ‘delivered’ by
the school. He asserted, “There is a certain tension making sure the kids end up fluent in Mandarin. I think most of the parents are content with their accomplishments, although we may think we could do a little better in terms of final standards”. Finally, T/L4 referred to an article he had read in a student publication about the lack of recognition of Cantonese at the school and its effect on the dual-language concept. He commented, “Once a student wrote in the student magazine, ‘Wink’ that the Secondary school is, at best, a dual-language school of Cantonese and English”.

### 4.2.3 Parents’ responses

Six parents, P1, P2, P3, P4, P6 and P8, gave the dual-language programme as a major factor in choosing the school for their children. Mandarin was crucial for P1 who said, “We are here for the sense of commitment to Mandarin. It was the number one criterion”. P3 was pragmatic about the dual-language programme stating, “We chose MIS firstly because of the Mandarin programme because, apart from English, Mandarin is the most important language you have to master right now in the world. Thinking of China as a market, it has 25% of the world’s population, it’s a country you cannot ignore if you want to survive”. P2 echoed these sentiments and explained that she valued the dual-language programme above all other factors: “My number one priority for choosing MIS was the dual-language, but the international part of it was also important. If it had been the most important, I would have moved her to a boarding school”.

P4 had looked for both ‘international’ (English curriculum) and Mandarin in her choice of school: “I did not find any other schools with an international community that taught Mandarin in a serious way. It was the only school, unfortunately there was no choice”. P8 also chose MIS for the English and Mandarin, and was pleased with his decision: “Mandarin was the main thrust, International School, yes. We took the decision that Mandarin would be better for them later. Learning Cantonese would have meant a local school. We did not realise how quickly Mandarin would become important”. However, three of the parents, P6, P1, and P4, contended that English, Mandarin dual-language education was a difficult proposition, and that MIS had not been very successful in achieving a balance. P1 asserted that it was difficult because of the linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages:

A dual-language education is actually a tremendously ambitious project and if the languages are English and Mandarin, I think the odds are against success. This is
because if you think of a school that is dual-language in English and French or German, there is so much more relation between the languages, culturally, philosophically, in every way. English is a phonetic language whereas Chinese is a pictorial language, so there is a lot of rote learning involved, there is no getting away from it. It is altogether different from stringing together letters phonetically to make sounds.  

(P1)

P6 was sceptical about the dual-language programme, given the dominance of English and Western culture:

I do not think the school has been too successful. In fact, I think that it is challenging to maintain a balance English and Mandarin and inevitably, if you are good in English you are more geared up to a Western culture. The thing is, technically, how to help the students manage two languages even better. We have to be more objective.  

(P6)

P4, questioning the measure of success in achieving the dual-language goals, commented:

MIS is the only school that has some success in English and Chinese in Hong Kong, but it depends on what you mean by successful. If it means if I put my child in China, would he survive? Then, yes. Now do you think the kids really love Mandarin and use it voluntarily? I do not think we have got to that point yet.  

(P4)

Three parents, P1, P7 and P5, tried to quantify the relationship between English and Mandarin. P1 asserted:

I tell parents, you have made a choice by virtue of sending your child to a school like this. When you put together two such different cultures and languages you cannot expect them to develop on a 50:50 basis, it’s just not real. The reality is that it will be more like 80:20 but whatever that 20 may be it’s already better than nothing.  

(P1)

However, P1 was more positive when asked, what percentage of the Year group would be completely comfortable in a Mandarin environment? She estimated that:
Sixty percent would be able to rapidly become comfortable and function. Then you realise that maybe the kids have much more fluency and competence in Mandarin than we think and when they are forced to use it, it will all come out.  

(P1)

Although P7 was more generous in his assessment of the dual-language relationship than P1, the imbalance disappointed him and he commented:

I thought MIS was 50:50 but found out after my daughter got a place that it is 70:30 English to Mandarin. My friends admire my daughter because she can speak Mandarin fluently, but they do not know that she cannot write well.  

(P7)

P5 agreed with P1 that 50:50 was an unlikely target for students in a dual-language setting, adding, “For dual-language you are very successful if you are 60:40. I would not expect a student from a dual-language school to be totally bilingual”. Two parents, P8 and P6, explained that the students and their parents recognised the importance of a successful dual-language programme at MIS, in terms of practical outcomes. P6 suggested, “You don’t have to aim to be a world class author in Chinese, but at a seminar, if you deliver your speech in English, you should be able to handle questions in Mandarin”. When asked, are they happy to have this dual-language ability? P8 responded:

I think so, they certainly don’t complain and are starting to realise from ESF (English Schools Foundation) students who left, went to college and have come back and cannot get jobs. They have then gone to language schools in Beijing and have worked very hard for twelve months. The penny is starting to drop.  

(P8)

Describing the characteristics of the product of a perfect dual-language education, P6 suggested, “The ideal case is the student who is fluent, competent, and impeccable in both languages, switching their brain from one to the other very easily. There are not that many bilinguals at MIS”. Three parents, P1, P4 and P5, cited limited practice opportunities and the family commitment as factors affecting the development of Mandarin proficiency. Since Cantonese is the lingua franca of Hong Kong, students are not easily able to practice Mandarin in the community, and they must be highly motivated to seek practice opportunities outside the classroom. Said P4:

It is almost impossible for them to be in the top class in Mandarin because they
cannot practice. In Hong Kong, you can get by in English and the locals speak Cantonese not Mandarin, so there is less of a chance for them to practice in a natural environment. (P4)

Cantonese was the main language spoken at home by some students according to P5 who said, “…they go home and speak Cantonese, and speak Cantonese with their friends”; while P1 implied that parents found it hard to keep their children motivated towards learning and bettering themselves in Mandarin. She asserted, “By the time you get into the Secondary school, the families that are left are those that for cultural or whatever reasons have a commitment to beating their kids over the head with Mandarin!”

4.2.4 Summary
There is agreement between the three groups that dual-language learning in English and Mandarin is an ambitious project, given the added complication that Cantonese is the local language of Hong Kong. Six parents reported that the dual-language approach was a major factor in their choice of MIS and five teachers/leaders believed that the dual-language programme enriched the school. However, the data suggests a significant discrepancy between the teachers and parents realities. The teachers were under the impression that the students generally achieved the Mandarin levels that they and their parents were satisfied with, whereas the parents were generally unhappy and reluctantly accepted the need for compromise. The compromise was between the time required for achieving high Mandarin proficiency levels and for delivering the English language curriculum in order to maximise academic achievement. The latter aspect was most important for parents, as it allowed the students access to top English medium universities. The range of combinations of languages used at home and school by the students adds to the challenge for the school in promoting the dual-language goals. For example, students may speak only English or Cantonese at home and few appear to use Mandarin regularly as a means of communication. For some, English and Mandarin are therefore two ‘foreign languages’ learned and spoken only at school. To the students, Mandarin ability is not as important as being fluent and able to operate in an English language environment - which is the case in the Secondary school.

The students embrace Anglo-Western culture and most go on to study in Western countries where they want to feel linguistically and culturally competent. The parents take a pragmatic approach; they understand the obvious difficulties in terms of the limited
opportunities for the students to practice Mandarin, but are more concerned with the students improving their English language skills. They know that their children are heading to English-speaking countries for their university education, and while English is most important, they hope that their children leave school having done their best to learn Mandarin. The teachers/leaders are hazy about the expectations that the school has for the students in terms of the dual-language goals, in particular, Mandarin acquisition. They also recognise that Mandarin is probably not the number one priority for the students and parents. Indeed, the tacit and unspoken acceptance of the subsidiary role of Mandarin in the dual-language equation by all stakeholder groups is probably why it is not an obvious and visible source of tension in the school community. Nevertheless, the questions that abound in the data concerning the dual-language approach need addressing if the school aims for congruence in its goals and objectives.

4.3 Languages at school

English and Mandarin are the two official languages of the whole school, while French and Spanish are electives in the Secondary school. However, Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong, plays a major role in the lives of many students. This section examines how the three stakeholder groups viewed the use of both English and Mandarin in the school context.

4.3.1 Students’ responses

All eight students perceived that English was the lingua franca of the school and that they spoke Mandarin only when necessary. In terms of the dual-language approach, six students specifically referred to the dominance of English in the Secondary school. They all made very similar comments, “I believe that MIS does not place enough emphasis on Mandarin because there is no other subject that uses Chinese in the Secondary school” (S1). “I guess the Secondary school does address the dual-language to a certain degree, but there’s a lot more emphasis on English” (S2). “We don’t practice Mandarin much outside class. When you leave Chinese class, you all speak English on the corridors then, Yes” (S6). “Outside class we don’t use Mandarin to converse with each other” (S8). “We use Mandarin just in Chinese class. I don’t think it is balanced, as most of the students normally speak English” (S7). S5, commenting on the imbalance, explained that it was obvious since the school offered an English medium curriculum:
The school is not achieving a successful balance between English and Mandarin because all our classes are in English, apart from Chinese. We only use Mandarin in the classroom, or when we are trying to do homework or helping each other. Our English has to be at a level to do all the other subjects. Like in Mathematics, you have to be able to comprehend what they are trying to say. (S5)

In concurring with this, S4 made suggestions for Chinese Week:

I think MIS is a totally English environment, so for us Cantonese speakers, we are forced to speak English, so it helps us improve. I think the school can do more to promote Mandarin. Now we only use Mandarin in Chinese class, so we study Mandarin as a subject not for communication. One example - in Chinese Week we should communicate just in Mandarin! (S4)

Four students commented on the school’s delivery of the dual-language concept. S6 and S3 observed a fundamental difference between the English and Mandarin programmes. S6 said, of the English programme, “Everyone is taught to the same standard in English. It is rather expected that you are already fluent in English – I am not sure if it is an admission requirement for the school”. S3 added that a range of entry-level Mandarin classes was available, but that there was only one English level (except for additional support classes) and confirmed, when asked, are there Mandarin classes at different levels but just one English level, “Yes”. Also referring to the range of levels available in Mandarin, S1 commented, “Some of us have been learning Mandarin since we were small. The school manages that by splitting us into different sets in Chinese class. Since we only practice Mandarin in lessons, chances to raise our levels are limited”. Two students pointed out that in the Primary school, they had a significant amount of time, up to 50%, in Mandarin and this dropped significantly in the Secondary school, since they only used Mandarin in their Chinese classes. They understood, however, that the school could not realistically deliver other areas of the curriculum in Mandarin. S3 explained, “When you move into Secondary there is much less opportunity for speaking Mandarin”. S1 described the effect of the reduction in time allotted for Mandarin in the Secondary school this way:

The big drop in the use of Mandarin from Primary to Secondary (as a subject) definitely does hinder the ability to learn Mandarin and acquire the skills. That is the problem; you can’t teach all the subjects in two languages, it’s just not practical.
The school is trying but it is still too English based. (S1)

Two students, S2 and S4, both spoke of the formality of Mandarin as a language and the culture that it represents compared to Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong. They obviously had to go out of their way to hear, or use, Mandarin outside school. S2 commented, “I don’t really hear people communicating with each other in the hallway in Mandarin. When we use Mandarin, it seems to me usually in a formal situation. Cantonese is for communicating with friends. It’s quite informal”. While S4 suggested that:

There is not much of a difference if you travel to Guandong province; the culture is similar to Hong Kong. We have different kinds of music. When I think of Mandarin, their arts are more formal (the music as well) and academic, whereas Cantonese is more like a fashion. (S4)

S4 who joined the school in Year 9, from a local school, and had spoken primarily Cantonese at home said, “I have definitely become more comfortable speaking English since I have been at MIS”. This comment showed that new students have to acclimatise rapidly to the common language of the school (English) out of necessity, both socially and academically.

4.3.2 Teachers/Leaders’ responses

Five teachers/leaders, T/L4, T/L5, T/L3, T/L1 and T/L2, commented on the dominance of English as the lingua franca of the Secondary school, and focussed on the relative use of Cantonese compared to Mandarin. T/L4 summed up the situation thus:

I rarely hear Mandarin around the school; I mainly hear Cantonese and English in Secondary. Cantonese not as much, English is predominant. Mandarin is spoken very, very little on the playground or on the corridors. The parents and The Board are not happy with this. The parents want the kids to speak Mandarin. (T/L4)

T/L5 commented similarly, “In Secondary you predominantly hear English and Cantonese” and T/L3 observed, “Most of the kids are from Chinese families but if you listen to them chatting during lunch breaks it’s all English. I do not hear Mandarin spoken on the corridors”. T/L1 made a similar point to T/L3, suggesting that English was the
second language for most of the students, “I do hear them speaking in English and you often forget that it is their second language”. T/L2 viewed the situation like this:

You get small groups of students that speak almost exclusively in Cantonese and a larger group that converse and socialise in English. That has a knock on effect in that English is perceived as an informal medium all the way through school and you can more or less say and write what you want and it is okay. Mandarin is not a working language in the school. (T/L2)

Five teachers/leaders, T/L7, T/L5, T/L3, T/L8 and T/L4, raised issues concerning the dual-language concept in practice in the Secondary school. T/L7 asserted, “Mandarin is certainly not an equal working language. We basically force the Chinese department to communicate with the rest of us in English” and it was T/L5’s contention that “Mandarin is not treated as a working language despite what we would like. I think the rhetoric and the reality just don’t match”. They also pointed out that all school publications were in English and Mandarin, and that, although the secretaries were Chinese, they did not often speak Mandarin in the office. They usually spoke English with the students and often Cantonese with the parents and this did not help to reinforce ‘normal school communication’ in Mandarin. T/L3 suggested that Mandarin-speaking secretaries would help to promote Mandarin as a language of communication, “When we hire them, if we want to reinforce normal communication in Mandarin, we have to consider this factor”.

Discussing the impact of the dual-language approach on the Secondary curriculum, T/L8 expressed these concerns, “Being a dual-language school, we give a huge amount of curriculum time to languages, and this puts a squeeze on other subjects”. T/L7 was of the opinion that “In Secondary we are pretty much forced into an English medium curriculum with Chinese as a very important component but really off by itself”. T/L4 was not optimistic about Mandarin becoming more important unless there were changes in the curriculum. He asserted, “I think that if you do not teach any core subjects in Mandarin it will forever remain as a subject so its status will always be as an affiliated language rather than the main language”.

In terms of the balance of the two languages in the curriculum, three teachers/leaders, T/L7, T/L6 and T/L8, made some important points. T/L7 explained that the allocation of curriculum time to Mandarin was likely to rise through the plan to incorporate the Chinese culture elective (Chinese Studies) into regular Mandarin classes so that it was compulsory
for students in Years 7-9. He said, “We are looking to put Chinese studies into the Chinese
time rather than treating it as another subject”. Also discussing the increased use of
Mandarin, T/L6 stated, “There is ongoing discussion about how we can expand the use of
Mandarin in Secondary, perhaps the amount of time. Perhaps we can deliver other
subjects in Mandarin in the lower Secondary school”. However, there were concerns about
the effects on other areas of the academic curriculum by such an increase in time for
Mandarin. Indeed, T/L8 said that there would be a price to pay, “Without being willing to
lower the academic standards in other subjects, I think you have to adopt a balance and I
think we have probably done that”. Five teachers/leaders, T/L5, T/L8, T/L2, T/L3 and
T/L4, commented that the two languages, English and Mandarin, by their very nature,
required quite different teaching and learning methods. T/L5’s opinion was that:

You cannot teach Mandarin in the same style as English. Mandarin involves a lot of
repetition and memorisation and that is the only way to get through it. We do not
think the same way in a western based holistic style of education and this creates a
conflict. (T/L5)

T/L8 concurred with these perceptions. She stated:

The experts in languages tell me that Mandarin has to be drilled. It can’t be happy-
clappy fun and I think for our students who are used to being taught in a more
student centred way, that’s where the difficulty comes. I don’t think our students
fulfil their potential in Mandarin because of the perceived chore of it. (T/L8)

T/L2 expressed similar sentiments, asserting, “The means by which you achieve
proficiency in English and Mandarin are very different. I suspect students are encouraged
to express themselves and be creative in English. Perhaps the ‘getting it right’ idea is less
rigorous than in Chinese”. T/L4 pointed out that students could now enter the Secondary
school without having any Mandarin, as there was a beginner’s class available for each
year level. He commented, “Now we have a beginner’s class which is designed for those
children without any Mandarin, they can progress at their own pace”. T/L3 discussed a
widely held view that language learning becomes more difficult with age, due to the
decreased willingness to make mistakes. He observed:

When students come to Secondary from Primary their use of Mandarin decreases
since they speak less and the subjects are taught in English. As they get older, they are shy to speak Mandarin because they are afraid of making mistakes and find it easier to use English. (T/L3)

T/L4 perceived that the Chinese department’s policy of setting the students according to ability had both good points and bad points. He commented, “As a teacher (of Mandarin), I would like the students to be grouped as precisely as possible but as an educator, I don’t think it’s a good idea because you are branding the students”.

Five teachers/leaders, T/L2, T/L6, T/L4, T/L7 and T/L8, reflected on the issues surrounding Cantonese. The effects of Cantonese on the acquisition of both Mandarin and English and the question of whether the school should promote Cantonese as part of its mission were significant discussion topics. T/L2 cautioned that “If Cantonese is the language of the street then trying to establish either English or Mandarin as the working language of the school is going to have to deal with that on some level”. Whereas T/L6 warned, “To complicate the (language) issue by allowing or encouraging Cantonese to be used could be perceived as being unhelpful and limiting the opportunities for developing the two designated languages of the school”. T/L2 thought that Cantonese somehow needed incorporating in the life of the school, in recognition of the students’ ‘unofficial’ use of the language:

I know we tolerate Cantonese on campus; we don’t have a problem with it and I suspect Cantonese probably needs embracing more. We don’t acknowledge Cantonese within the school since it’s not part of the mission statement and we very rarely find it spoken by students when they are addressing each other in assembly. Yet, when you look at the Yearbook, the leavers’ comments are full of Cantonese or ‘Chinglish’ idioms. (T/L2)

T/L4 allowed students to speak Cantonese in class if it was their mother tongue, in order to aid their learning and suggested the following:

Should we not incorporate some recognition of Cantonese? I think we should. I don’t have a strict regulation that students should not speak Cantonese in class. They can use a few words in a discussion to express themselves better. In doing so,
they may learn a new word in Mandarin. You can’t punish students for speaking their mother tongue. (T/L4)

Indicative of the tolerance of Cantonese was the comment made by T/L7, when asked, *is Cantonese banned in Secondary*, he replied, “*No, there is no written policy at all. I think there may be an effort not to encourage it, but that’s sort of passive*”. T/L6 placed this local phenomenon in the wider context of mother tongue use in international schools around the world and its impact on English learning. He suggested:

> The fact that many of the students in Secondary lapse into Cantonese at the first opportunity, probably is an inhibitor to the strengthening of their English, but in many international schools around the world that, of course, is the case. (T/L6)

Finally, T/L7 and T/L8 explained that the International Baccalaureate Organisation’s stance on mother tongue language use could become a serious issue at the Mandarin International School. They commented as follows:

> That is a very curious thing about this school, compared to many International schools in that we’re not really encouraging the host language. One could argue that the written Chinese is more or less the host language. (T/L7)

> There is a huge debate in the IB and the MYP about mother tongue maintenance and mother tongue resources. I think we are in a unique situation in that of the two languages that we teach and give a huge amount of time to, neither are the majority of students’ mother tongues. (T/L8)

### 4.3.3 Parents’ responses

Of the six parents, P7, P6, P8, P2, P1 and P4, who commented on the English/Mandarin dual-language approach at the school, four were disappointed that Mandarin was not a lingua franca of the school. P7 revealed his concerns thus:

> Mandarin is never spoken on the corridor, only English, and I am disappointed with that. The school does not do enough to promote Mandarin. Last year my daughter had to write an 800 word novel summary and she cried, saying she couldn’t do it. (P7)
While P6 sought to rationalise his disappointment this way:

I would expect more spoken Mandarin, but one of the difficulties we face is that English is not just a medium of communication; it is the medium of conveyance of knowledge. In school all subjects are based in the English language so, the students are able to use English and apply it to all facets.  

(P6)

P3 recognised that concerning the dual-language approach, the entire school environment was important, not just the classroom. She commented, “The entire environment is important because they don’t just speak English in the classroom, they use English outside, which I hope my daughter is doing now”. When asked, does it surprise you that Mandarin is not used very much, P8 replied, “Yes, I had the preconceived idea that the Chinese students spoke Mandarin part of the time and that Cantonese was not spoken much”. P2 was of the opinion that the school needed to do more if it was serious about the dual-language concept:

If you really want MIS to be a dual-language school, you really need to promote Mandarin. If you want your students to get good jobs, you had better help them to speak good Mandarin. I don’t think English and Mandarin are equal since the students speak mainly English.  

(P2)

P1 and P4 offered the following insights into why they thought Mandarin was not a lingua franca of the school:

Within the student population, Mandarin is taught at so many different levels that more than half the school actually is learning it at such an elementary level that it is impossible for it to be a working language. It’s just not realistic.  

(P1)

It’s not cool to be able to speak fluently and use Mandarin. You hear Cantonese all the time in school. I think the teachers of Chinese really do not have as high a status in MIS relative to their peers and that shows one way or another and the students get the clues.  

(P4)

Concerning learning and teaching strategies, three parents, P6, P1 and P5, made some insightful comments and suggested some interesting possibilities for the school to consider.
Regarding Mandarin learning, P6 asserted:

The students should feel the need to learn Mandarin. They have to have it - we need to cultivate that sort of determination. We cannot change the situation; we are only a school and parents, but we can ride on the ‘wave’.

(P6)

On the other hand, P6 was quite positive about the English training, adding:

I strongly believe that MIS has done a good job in that the English used is effective and the open-minded approach in school helps students to respect each other. The language plays an important part in knowing the correct vocabulary to use and the jargon that people use.

(P6)

P1 agreed and asserted that learning to read in English was probably easier for students:

Learning to read in English, you can just guess at how a word sounds. When you sound it out it may be a word in your spoken vocabulary and it will click. With Chinese, you either know it or you don’t. There is very little leeway for trying to guess the word. There aren’t many clues, maybe in the radicals. Do you see how difficult that makes trying to read for a child?

(P1)

P5 expressed similar sentiments to those expressed by P6 above regarding the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the Mandarin programme, stating:

They have to use Mandarin on a daily basis. They are not taught to appreciate the language. There are few extra curricular activities in Mandarin. They only read in Chinese when they have to; my older ones regret that now.

(P6)

P4 had some advice for the school about the necessary qualities of the teachers of Mandarin. She proposed that:

It is important to find the right kind of teachers if the school really wants to promote Mandarin. They have to understand international students in order to shape the message. They have to tell them stories.

(P4)
P2 and P6 suggested that practical applications such as writing business letters and debates on particular issues instead of poetry analysis would make Mandarin classes more relevant and interesting. P2 suggested, “Perhaps in school, they could teach Mandarin through something more exciting, like TV cooking or discovery programmes”. P6 also emphasised the importance of bringing the language to life and making links between language and culture:

When you are talking about Chinese culture and history, if you have something to show them, they start to understand. Therefore, I would encourage the school to have more of a ‘show and tell’ approach rather than just telling them this is Chinese culture. (P6)

P1 and P5 raised some interesting points concerning mother tongue issues. P5 disagreed with the school stance regarding Cantonese use and asserted, “The fact that MIS discourages Cantonese doesn’t help to improve the Mandarin because a person who speaks Cantonese and reads Mandarin will not have any difficulty in writing Chinese as there is only one written language”. P1 explained that since her son is Chinese, local people expect that he is a native Cantonese speaker and surprised when they find that he is not. She reported:

My son goes “what is our first language? Do we even have a mother tongue?” I cannot honestly answer that. My son is oriental, he’s grown up in Hong Kong and Chinese people expect him to be able to speak, read and write much better than he can. (P1)

She also suggested that people usually count in their mother tongue, whatever their level of fluency in the language they are talking, stating, “For mathematics, you have to go back to your mother tongue, unless the student has been brought up in a bilingual family... I have to think in Chinese when I’m counting”.

4.3.4 Summary
All eight students, five teachers/leaders and four parents described the case Secondary school as an English medium school with compulsory Mandarin as a taught language. English is very much the lingua franca of the school and the students’ perception is that Mandarin is the formal Chinese language of the school whereas Cantonese is the casual,
conversation. The school tacitly acknowledges this reality but does not seek to raise Mandarin to an equal status with English in accordance with the ‘working languages’ objective. There are no obvious guidelines about whether students may speak Cantonese in class and around the school. Those students whose mother tongue is Cantonese may speak it in class to explain concepts to each other but they do not appear to use Mandarin in this way. Teachers do not support the ‘Mandarin and English only’ dual-language mission, because they are not involved or indeed asked or expected to buy into it. It is not ‘on the table’ for general staff discussion because it appears that it is a difficult issue to resolve. Students can enter the school at any year level in Secondary school without having any Mandarin at all - English is what matters - thus, the status of Mandarin is overtly lower in importance to English in the Secondary school.

Five teachers/leaders and two parents advised that the Cantonese issue should be openly addressed by the school, with suggestions that it should be embraced and celebrated as the ‘home language and culture’ of many students. The International Baccalaureate Organisation is currently examining host-country language and mother tongue maintenance issues and MIS will eventually need to adopt a transparent position on them. Teachers were concerned that if the time for Mandarin instruction increased, the subsequent reduction in time for other academic areas would have serious consequences. In the 2006-7 academic year there was a significant increase in time for Mandarin in Years 7-8 with Chinese culture included in the compulsory Mandarin curriculum for all students, and the unpopular elective, Chinese studies, disappearing. Described earlier in Chapter 1, this change occurred after the data collection for this study was completed.

It is apparent that the approaches to learning English and Mandarin are different and this alone could be a significant factor in perhaps explaining the attitudes of the students’. Whilst adequate Mandarin ability is acceptable for many students, they want and expect to develop high quality English and this is obviously easier for them, since opportunities abound to practice speaking and to broaden their vocabularies. The parents seemed pragmatically resigned to the fact that the children would not develop equally in English and Mandarin and that they were less motivated towards the latter. They recognised the complex realities faced in accomplishing dual-language education, and implied that learning a pictorial language like Mandarin was a ‘hard grind’ with little room for error or creativity, whereas English provides greater freedom for experimentation. In English ‘getting it right’ was less rigorous than in Chinese and the students were encouraged to
express themselves and be creative. In Chinese, the approach was more methodical, involving considerable rote learning.

The parents’ suggestions for improving the attractiveness and effectiveness of Mandarin could be helpful to the teachers of Mandarin, and perhaps establishing a forum for such dialogue would be advisable. Section 4.5 deals with the perceived effect of Cantonese on English and Mandarin, however, the complex language picture at home needs understanding before going any further. Riding on the ‘wave’, described by P6, refers to the accelerating growth in China’s importance, and of the Mandarin language, in the world.

**4.4 Languages at home**

Some students and parents report that Mandarin is not a ‘home’ language at all and Cantonese and English are the languages of communication. Equally, some students do not use English (or Mandarin) at home and live in an almost exclusively Cantonese world. On the other hand, some speak mainly English at home. The spectrum of possibilities explored in the interviews and the following sections illustrate the realities and perceptions of the three groups.

**4.4.1 Students’ responses**

From this sample of eight students, it is probable that the range of different situations described was indicative of a population-wide phenomenon. Two students, S4 and S7, reported that they spoke mainly Cantonese at home. S4 said, “I do not use Mandarin or English at home, only at school” and S7 concurred, adding, “I rarely speak Mandarin or English at home”. However, five students, S2, S8, S3, S5 and S6, indicated that they mainly spoke English at home and only occasionally Cantonese or Mandarin. S2 explained that she sometimes spoke Mandarin at the instigation of her parents to help her practice. She said, “At home I speak mostly English but sometimes I speak Mandarin with my mother to help me improve”. S8 similarly added that, “Sometimes my Dad speaks to us in Mandarin because he wants us to be fluent”. S3 and S5 indicated that they experienced similar English-medium situations at home. Commented S3, “I occasionally speak Mandarin at home but mostly English”, and S5 added, “I speak entirely English with my parents, but my Dad suddenly speaks Cantonese and expects us to reply in Cantonese”. English was also the language of choice for the household of S6 although both of his parents were Mandarin speakers. He commented, “Mandarin is not used at home although
both of my parents can speak it almost fluently. I learned Mandarin from a tutor in Singapore, not at school, where we just used English”. S1 summarised the situation quite effectively perhaps, suggesting, “I think the school is trying, but the main problem is that a lot of students at MIS come from families that don’t speak Chinese at all”.

4.4.2 Teachers/Leaders’ responses

Three teachers/leaders, T/L3, T/L8 and T/L4, described their perceptions of the home-languages used by the students. T/L3 reported that it was obvious which students used mainly English as a means of communication outside school and explained that:

Their parents may have been educated in the west and they speak English at home. They also have a domestic helper who speaks English. We know that at home they get little Mandarin exposure so we really can’t do much about it. (T/L3)

Similarly, those students who predominantly spoke Cantonese at home were obvious to T/L8, a teacher of English, who commented, “I recognise them by their sentence structure, because their syntax and their language are just not fluent”. T/L4 suggested that some parents unwittingly exacerbated the difficulties for their children in acquiring Mandarin by not playing their part at home:

Ironically, parents realise it but they don’t practice what they preach so they probably speak more Cantonese than English with their children at home (they think the school will take care of it?) That’s right, that’s why I say it’s buy one get one free. (T/L4)

T/L4 went on to say that since the students received little exposure to Mandarin at home, their parents employed tutors and ‘talking partners’. Only a small number of parents helped with this - most were too busy and preferentially spoke Cantonese or English with their children. The ‘buy one get one free’ comment referred to the parents paying for English medium education and hoping for a high level of Mandarin proficiency without too much effort or cost in terms of diminished success in the academic curriculum. Perhaps the parents understanding of what was most important for their children at MIS was reflected in an anecdotal report that MIS graduates, living and working in the USA, generally did not need to use Mandarin (or Cantonese) at work. ‘Native quality English’ was the most important attribute for success, however, they thought that the parents perceived that
Mandarin was going to become increasingly important in Hong Kong due to the business opportunities generated by the Chinese market. Two teachers/leaders, T/L4 and T/L5, discussed the changing attitudes towards Mandarin in Hong Kong. T/L4 commented this way, “In ‘Sogo’ (a department store) you hear Mandarin spoken on every floor. Hong Kong people are pragmatic if they see business opportunities”. Whilst T/L5 explained that while Mandarin is becoming more widely used, it will not replace Cantonese:

If you walk in Times Square, you hear Mandarin all the time; it’s business. It’s a necessity. The Hong Kong market is certainly becoming more integrated with the mainland since the hand-over. People are appreciating and valuing Mandarin much more than they ever did and Hong Kong will certainly move more towards using Mandarin as a working language; but Cantonese will always be there. (T/L5)

4.4.3 Parents’ responses
The seven parents who commented on the languages used at home indicated that the range of possibilities that existed in the sample was indicative of the population. Three, P4, P1 and P3, explained that Cantonese was the lingua franca at home. P4 described her situation this way, “At home, we speak English and Cantonese. Daddy speaks almost 100% in English; I speak 75% in Cantonese and 25% in English. If it’s a very serious topic it is all in English, but everyday life is in Cantonese”. P1 described a similar situation saying, “We mainly use English and Cantonese and Mandarin only occasionally. My husband’s family is local and nobody has a first language except for my husband, whose first language is Cantonese”. P3 also reported that the home language for her family was mainly Cantonese, “My husband is a Cantonese speaker so the language at home is predominantly Cantonese mixed with some English. My daughter practices Mandarin only at school and only a little English at home”.

Three parents, P6, P8, and P5, explained that English was the medium of communication at home with P6 asserting, “English is the most important language for both my son and daughter”. With both parents being European, and neither speaking Mandarin, P8 commented that the only way to help his children was to have regular tutoring, “They have had a tutor at home from when they were quite young”. P5 explained that as a Mandarin speaking Hong Kong Chinese, married to a European, she tried to encourage her children to speak Mandarin, but without much success. She commented:
At home, our language has been English because the attempts to use Mandarin or English were resented - I didn’t get answers. I tried to use Mandarin but it was rather pointless. I used to read stories to them, but with growing homework pressures, they said, no, you don’t have to try.  

(P5)

P7 on the other hand, adopted the classic approach to dual-language or bilingual development with his daughter, with his wife speaking English and him speaking Mandarin, and he was obviously pleased with the outcome. He described the situation as follows:

My wife speaks English with my daughter and I speak Mandarin because I want her to speak Mandarin. We have done this since they were very young. Her English is fluent and her spoken Mandarin is fluent, just in her writing she has some problems.  

(P7)

P6 and P3 suggested how attitudes towards Mandarin in Hong Kong had changed with the growth of the Chinese business market, again reflecting the pragmatic nature of Hong Kong people in general. P3 pointed out, “The Government is encouraging schools to teach Mandarin instead of Cantonese. When there are mainland groups in the shops, you hear local people speaking Mandarin”. Whilst P6 explained the situation comprehensively this way:

Ten years ago, our thinking was very much USA centred, but now you’re talking about a global economy and to perform well you should know both languages well. Business is a big motivator; Hong Kong people are very practical. Corporations are employing Mandarin speakers. I think the macro forces are interacting, so I think that could make the school and the parents better. When multinational companies interview university students, no matter what the subject, the first question is, do you know Mandarin? If you say yes, they say, speak with me for 15 minutes.  

(P6)

4.4.4 Summary

A clear conclusion arising from this section is that the school needs to understand the language demographics of the students to better manage and implement the dual-language mission. Five students and three parents reported that English was the common language at home, while for two students, and three parents, Cantonese was the home language. The parents support of their children’s Mandarin and obviously, in many cases English,
language development was hugely variable. Thus, the varying commitment of the parents and students towards developing and practising Mandarin at home probably needs understanding by the school so that it can work more effectively in partnership with the parents. The parents also recognised the need to support the dual-language goals at home by encouraging their children to watch the television news in Mandarin and to read books written in Mandarin. Only one parent from this sample reported a dual-language (perhaps bilingual) English and Mandarin approach at home. Overall, the data from this small sample suggested that the parents’ commitment to helping the cause of Mandarin at home was out of step with the (unspoken) expectations of the school.

Teacher/leader comments such as “they don’t practice what they preach” and “buy one get one free”, suggest a perception that the parents do not really expect their children to become fluent speakers of Mandarin. The parents implied that they were most concerned with English and that they hoped that their children would become reasonably adept in Mandarin. There appears to have been a tendency to assume that the school would ‘take care of it’, that the amount of practice time at school was enough and that they were not responsible for helping to realise the dual-language mission. It is a wonder that so many students cope admirably well with a dual-language English and debatably, Mandarin education, given that many operate in a Cantonese environment outside school. This stark reality about language use is not officially acknowledged by the school in the mission or objectives and this further suggests that a whole range of experiences enjoyed by the students in the host language are unfortunately ignored. The data suggest that this could be an underlying and unspoken source of tension in the school community and the significance of Cantonese on the acquisition of English and Mandarin is the focus of the next section.

Two teachers/leaders and two parents indicated that the merging of Hong Kong with the Chinese cities of the Pearl River delta and beyond into mainland China is making redundant the debate about whether Mandarin is necessary for the future. Thus, market forces increasingly dictate the need for Mandarin proficiency for the students of MIS and the people in Hong Kong. The data also suggest that opportunities to practice speaking English and Mandarin outside school were limited, whereas listening to English (television and cinema) was not a problem. A concern expressed by non-native English speaking parents was therefore that their children would not develop first-language oral fluency in English and that this would hinder them in later life.
4.5 Effects of Cantonese on Mandarin and English

The data in the above sections appear to show that Cantonese was a significant home language for many students. This section now focuses on how the three groups perceived the positive and negative effects of Cantonese on both Mandarin and English language development.

4.5.1 Students’ responses

Six of the eight students were of the opinion that a Cantonese background had a negative effect on developing Mandarin and English language skills. S6 illustrated the effect of Cantonese on Mandarin this way, “I know one person who has trouble learning Mandarin because the pronunciations are completely different in Cantonese and Mandarin. He’s fluent in Cantonese, but he’s really not sure about Mandarin and it’s confusing when you mix the two”. S1 said that the home situation exacerbated this phenomenon: “Many of the students stick to Cantonese when they are trying to communicate. At home they listen to Cantonese music and the news in Cantonese”. For primarily Cantonese speaking students, reluctance to speak Mandarin out of fear for ‘loss of face’ was a factor suggested by S8: “There are some groups for whom English is not their main language and they usually converse in Cantonese. They are usually reluctant to speak English so they form their own groups and isolate themselves out of fear of embarrassment”.

Thus, when Cantonese speakers spoke in Mandarin, it was obvious in their accents and pronunciation and this affected their willingness to speak Mandarin. S3 described the situation this way, “if they have a very strong Cantonese accent, when they speak Mandarin, some of the ‘ing’ sounds are dropped into only ‘in’ and they slur the words or it isn’t as clear”. S3 also generalised that “Cantonese speakers are at a disadvantage because it is very hard to switch from Cantonese to Mandarin”. S5 observed that the effect was very noticeable for those students who spoke mainly Cantonese:

I think if you have been speaking Cantonese a long time, when you speak Mandarin it sounds like Cantonese because you have the two of them mixed up. In your English and Mandarin, people can hear that you speak Cantonese a lot. (S5)

S4 made a telling point when asked, does being a Cantonese speaker hold you back from learning Mandarin, she replied, “yes, because most Mandarin speakers can understand Cantonese”. In other words, and perhaps unfortunately for the school in terms of the dual-
language goals, there was no obvious communication breakdown between Cantonese and Mandarin speakers, so it required real effort for Cantonese speakers to speak Mandarin. Language learning through immersion, especially for children, is apparently the best method, but at the Mandarin International School, this was not the case for these students. It comes as no surprise, however, that the students readily learned swear words and slang, as reported by S6, “in school swearing in Cantonese is slightly less common than in English, but everyone knows Cantonese swear words”. Perhaps somewhat ironically for an educational institution - and the researcher suggests this with tongue firmly in cheek - that if students were to swear freely in Mandarin, it would surely indicate that Mandarin was a lingua franca of the school.

4.5.2 Teachers/Leaders’ responses
Four teachers/leaders, T/L4, T/L6, T/L8 and T/L5, identified negative effects on both oral and written English if the students had a strong Cantonese background. According to T/L4, Cantonese native speakers made common errors in writing English, “some students write English in a Chinese way; Chinese grammar filled up with English words”. T/L6 asserted that “in terms of English, the fact that many of the students lapse into Cantonese at the first opportunity probably inhibits strengthening their English”. T/L8 agreed with this sentiment, adding, “Cantonese must affect the acquisition of English and Mandarin. For many students their whole lives outside school are conducted in Cantonese”. Sharing a perception gained from some parents, T/L5 revealed, “I have heard complaints from some parents, suggesting that our English standards are not up to par internationally because students often converse in Cantonese in the hallways”.

Only one teacher/leader, T/L3, suggested that there was a negative effect of Cantonese on both oral and written Mandarin. She explained, “In oral communication the effect is even greater, because they constantly use the wrong pronunciation and tone. Cantonese idioms and expressions are different from Mandarin, so that’s what I call a dialect influence, that only happens with the Cantonese speaking students”. T/L3 also suggested that in their writing, Cantonese speakers confused words because the wrong character in Cantonese sounded the same as the character they wanted to use in Mandarin. She commented, “…for example, they want to write the word “arrival” but instead write “all of them” because the wrong character in Cantonese sounds the same as the character they should use in Mandarin”.

82
On the positive side, two teachers/leaders reported that the Cantonese environment helped the students’ acquisition of Mandarin because the grammar, vocabulary and even the written language are similar. T/L7 suggested, “The positive effect is that it’s clearly easier for a student who is fluent in Cantonese to acquire Mandarin than someone who knows only English, orally but particularly the writing”. T/L4 agreed that Cantonese was beneficial for the students’ learning of Mandarin and tacitly condoned their use of Cantonese in the classroom, stating, “You often find that children with Cantonese acquire Mandarin much quicker. Therefore, I don’t have a strong objection to children speaking Cantonese”. T/L8 expressed admiration for the students who used English only at school. She commented, “I find it incredible that the students who operate in Cantonese at home have the whole of the curriculum taught in English and survive”. From the researcher’s point of view, the fact that students often explain concepts to each other in Cantonese before grasping them fully in English - the medium of instruction - is not a matter of concern but is perfectly natural.

4.5.3 Parents’ responses
Three parents, P4, P1 and P6, considered that for non-Cantonese speakers, living in a Cantonese environment did not impede their English and Mandarin learning. For such students, P4 suggested:

For those that do not know Cantonese, it is just noise to them and their languages are only English and Mandarin so it has no impact. (P4)

P1 expressed similar sentiments that Cantonese had little effect on English or Mandarin acquisition for non-Cantonese speaking students. She responded to the researcher’s suggestion in the interview that MIS was ‘an island of Mandarin and English in a sea of Cantonese’ by indicating that Cantonese had no positive effects on Mandarin learning thus:

Cantonese has zero effect on the acquisition of Mandarin and English in our experience. My youngest is doing brilliantly in Mandarin, since he doesn’t get any support at home. He cannot speak a word of Cantonese. His father speaks nothing but Cantonese at home with me. My son speaks English and Mandarin. To your suggestion, I can say that the island must be big enough because the inmates are successfully learning Mandarin and they understand no Cantonese! (P1)
However, four parents, P2, P3, P6 and P1, suggested that Cantonese speakers definitely had additional difficulties learning English and Mandarin. P2 asserted that, “You do not write well if you are a Cantonese speaker who is learning Mandarin. Chinese writing is better taught through Mandarin because Cantonese is not a written language” while P3 made a similar point that, “Cantonese does not help the Mandarin as the pronunciation is totally different”. P6 explained that his family’s home language, in common with the majority of Hong Kong families, was Cantonese and he felt that the opportunities for his child to practice both English and Mandarin were too limited. He implied that he was looking to the school to provide more help for Cantonese medium families like his, in the quest for English and Mandarin dual-language skills, commenting:

I think Cantonese has a negative effect on both English and Mandarin, but the fact is that 90% of the people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese. I also speak Cantonese at home with my wife and children and I think some measures should be devised (by the school) to improve the situation. (P6)

P1 further suggested that students with a Cantonese background had more difficulty learning the sounds in Mandarin compared to non-Cantonese speakers. She said, “Many Mandarin teachers have told me that speakers of Cantonese have the worst time trying to acquire Mandarin because the sounds are so different, so it’s better to learn Mandarin without a Cantonese background”. According to P4, her children had greater motivation to learn Cantonese rather than Mandarin because they quite naturally wanted to follow the local popular culture. She explained, “My kids think Jacky Chan is a cool icon, he speaks Cantonese so in order for them to understand all these idols and local movies they have an incentive to learn Cantonese and less incentive to learn Mandarin”.

This raises the question of whether the school can ignore the host (Cantonese) language and culture that the students experience on a daily basis. However, when asked what she thought about the incorporation of Cantonese in the Mission Statement, P1 was frank in expressing her opinion that adding Cantonese to the language mix at school would not work:

We do not mention Cantonese in our mission statement; do you think we should? No, that would be over ambitious, it would be death, forget about it! Even if you successfully manage English and Mandarin, it is already half of a miracle! (P1)
4.5.4 Summary

Six students, four teachers/leaders and four parents perceived a negative impact of a strong Cantonese background on a student’s ability to learn English and Mandarin. On the other hand, three parents suggested that for non-Cantonese speakers, Cantonese had little effect on the learning of Mandarin. Two teachers/leaders actually suggested that a Cantonese background had a positive influence on Mandarin acquisition. The students identified only negative impacts of Cantonese on the dual-language goals of the school. First-language Cantonese speakers were apparently embarrassed to casually converse in English or particularly Mandarin, because their Cantonese accents were highly noticeable. This inhibited their willingness to practice speaking Mandarin socially and was perhaps a reason why Mandarin was not a social language of the school. There was a negative impact on the motivation to immerse themselves in Mandarin at school because of the fact that Cantonese speakers could understand Mandarin speakers, and vice-versa.

The teachers also reported that primarily Cantonese speaking students had significant difficulties with their English pronunciation and made common errors in their writing of English. They also often used the wrong tone and pronunciation when speaking Mandarin. However, Cantonese-speaking students reportedly acquired Mandarin skills, particularly written Mandarin, more rapidly than English speakers did. For this reason, some teachers of Chinese had no objection to students speaking Cantonese in class at times. Indeed, there was admiration for the students who lived in a totally Cantonese environment at home and were so successful in an English and Mandarin environment at school. The parents’ perceptions were loud and clear; they explained that Cantonese as the lingua franca of the society was a barrier to both English and Mandarin acquisition for primarily Cantonese speakers but had no effect on the non-Cantonese speakers. Cantonese to the latter was just background noise - a conclusion to which the researcher can attest. Exacerbated by the lack of Mandarin practice opportunities in Hong Kong, ‘sound confusion’ between Cantonese and Mandarin negatively affected the Mandarin ability and willingness to speak of native Cantonese speakers. Although the parents realised, of course, that the students wanted to understand Cantonese in order to access fully the local culture, there was opposition to the incorporation of Cantonese in the linguistic diet of the school.

4.6 Conclusions

The data presented in this chapter show that all three groups acknowledged that the goal of
promoting dual-language competence in English and Mandarin is hugely complex and ambitious. There was recognition that the relatively small amount of curriculum time for Mandarin was a necessary compromise within the requirements of an English medium curriculum, seen as the overriding priority for the parents and students. Six parents chose the school for the dual-language commitment and five teachers/leaders believed that the dual-language approach enriched the school. However, all eight students, five teacher/leaders and four parents agreed that the school is an English medium school with a compulsory Mandarin component. The case Secondary school does not appear to address the influences, detrimental or otherwise, of the societal host language, Cantonese, on the students English and Mandarin acquisition. The range of combinations of languages used by the students at home and at school adds to the challenge for the school in promoting the dual-language goals. First-language Cantonese speakers use two ‘foreign’ languages at school and do not use Mandarin casually or conversationally because of pronunciation difficulties and lack of motivation. Mandarin is the formal Chinese language of the school whereas Cantonese and English are the social languages. Because the curriculum is in English, apart from Mandarin class, MIS is an English medium Secondary school and virtually all the students’ progress to tertiary education in Western countries. Thus, for the students, a high level of English language and Anglo-Western cultural competence, together with high academic achievement, are the priority factors for which they and their parents strive. They work for the best Mandarin level possible but without making this a top priority, a view shared by the parents.

English fluency, cultural competence and access to top Western Universities are what the parents ultimately expect and demand from the school - their top priorities. They also want their children to attend an elite school that promises Mandarin in its mission and thereby sets their children apart from local Hong Kong children. Mandarin gives them a competitive edge for the future in terms of doing business in Mainland China. Whilst proud of the dual-language ‘tag’ at MIS, the parents are content for the school to ‘deliver’ the Mandarin and, in this respect, many appear to do little to assist or provide practice opportunities for their children outside school. The parents were aware that the students were not excited to learn Mandarin at school and suggested that more stimulating and practical classroom activities could overcome this. Six students, four teachers/leaders and four parents were clearly of the opinion that a Cantonese family background had a negative impact on the acquisition of English and Mandarin. Naturally, many parents expect to, and do, lead Cantonese home lives with their children and they immerse them in the local
Cantonese Hong Kong culture. However, they do not want Cantonese brought into the school any more than it is at present, that is, informally accepted but not officially sanctioned. They recognise that Cantonese is a hindrance to English and Mandarin acquisition but also probably, because they think that their children learn Cantonese anyway, if they want to. However, they did not appear perturbed or concerned by the effects of not embracing the host language, and therefore the host culture, on their children’s lives and personal development.

In terms of the dual-language mission, the expectations for the students are not clear to the staff of the Secondary school. In order for the leaders and teachers to buy into and support it, the dual-language concept and the terminology of language mastery need better understanding by them. The teachers/leaders are fully aware that MIS is essentially an English medium school with Mandarin included as a taught language. Perhaps because the school is successful in terms of IB Diploma results and most students go to prestigious Universities in English speaking countries, the dual-language mission has not been a problem. There has been unspoken acknowledgement of the reality but no need to attempt to raise Mandarin to a more-equal status to English. The teachers/leaders were sceptical about the commitment of many parents to Mandarin and the apparent lack of parental support outside school called into question the concept of dual-language English and Mandarin education in the Secondary school.

Of considerable concern to five of the teachers/leaders was the deliberate exclusion of the host language and culture from the daily life of the school and the lack of transparency about the status of Cantonese in the school. The suggestion is that the school is a poorer place for not promoting or celebrating the first language of many students and the host language of the city of Hong Kong. It appears that there is a definite need to put these dual-language issues on the table and have a frank and open debate involving all the stakeholders, including the School Board. Such a debate may become inevitable in the near future given the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme proposals for the incorporation of the host language in the students’ daily activities. On the practical side, the teachers/leaders who commented, including teachers of Mandarin, expressed no concerns with students using their mother tongue, Cantonese, in class to aid their learning. There was some indication that first-language Cantonese speakers developed strong writing skills more rapidly than non-Cantonese speakers did because the Chinese
characters are the same. However, their pronunciation of Mandarin was ‘worse’ than that of non-Cantonese speakers and their strong Cantonese accents affected their oral English.

Several clear points of concern and tension can be identified from the above, the first being that the school has to gain a better understanding of the reality of the students’ daily lives in terms of the languages they use. In collaboration with the parents and students, the school needs to clarify the position of the host language, Cantonese, within the school. The students speak Cantonese at school whenever they feel like it; the teachers/leaders are indifferent or actually support it but the parents do not want it spoken or even accepted at school. The parents buy into a dual-language education that concentrates on English and Anglo-Western culture and they do not see why Cantonese should impinge on that, since the students get it at home anyway. The expectations that the school has for the students’ Mandarin development, perhaps in terms of exit criteria, need clearly articulating, again with the input of the students and parents.

It is clear from the findings that the school must be very cautious about increasing the time allocation or curriculum commitment to Mandarin without an inclusive debate. The teachers/leaders have to deliver a top quality English medium curriculum with clear exit criteria, including access to top Western Universities. The parents’ top priority for their children, and therefore the school, is English fluency, Anglo-Western cultural competency and ultimately, access to top English speaking universities. Mandarin is not their top priority. This needs recognising by the school in terms of the dual-language statement in the Mission as the school moves forward and evolves to serve the needs of the students and elite parents of Hong Kong better. A glossary of terms, and their meanings, used to describe language ability would aid such discussion in the community and ensure that everyone understood exactly what was under consideration. As described earlier, terms used throughout this chapter such as ‘bilingual’, ‘dual-language’, ‘fluency’, ‘first language’, ‘mother tongue’ and ‘host language’, are not well understood by non-linguists, and definitions would be helpful. In the context of this small-scale inquiry, the data does provide some answers to the two Specific Research Questions that framed this chapter. Concerning SRQ1:

*How does the school help develop dual-language proficiency in English and Mandarin and to what extent does the school ensure that competency in these languages includes fluency*
in use and their employment as the working languages within the school? Does it manage to achieve a successful balance between the two?

Dual-language is not an accurate description of the case Secondary school. It is an English medium school where Mandarin is a compulsory language. Mandarin is not a working language of the school, nor is it a lingua franca of the students. The ‘language balance’ lies heavily towards English - but this is what the parents expect and need from the school in order for their children to access the tertiary education to which they aspire. Of course, balance does not imply 50:50 and the current 80:20 balance in favour of English represents a successful equilibrium. There are not enough Mandarin practice opportunities at school or in Hong Kong generally and so the school has to do a lot more to raise the status of Mandarin in the school community. To re-quote the candid thoughts of Parent 1:

I tell parents you’ve made a choice by virtue of sending your child to a school like this. When you put together two such different cultures and languages you can’t expect them to develop on a 50:50 basis, it’s just not real. The reality is that it will be more like 80:20 but whatever that 20 may be, it’s already better than nothing.

Finally, and to repeat the point made in the summary of section two, the role of Mandarin is however, not an obvious source of tension because of the unspoken understanding that it is subsidiary in the dual-language equation. Concerning SRQ2:

How does Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong, affect the acquisition of English and Mandarin dual language proficiency? What effect does Cantonese have on the other two languages and cultures?

First-language Cantonese speakers apparently develop stronger Mandarin writing skills than their non-Cantonese speaking peers do, while their Cantonese accents affect their speaking skills. The parents do not want Cantonese used at school, but the students’ lapse into it both out of class and in class and the teachers/leaders condone it to some extent. Given this state of passive acceptance of the daily reality experienced by the students, the English and Mandarin dual-language goals would appear difficult to achieve.
5 Data analysis - International Education Ethos

5.1 Introduction

5.2 International education in the Secondary school

5.3 International Baccalaureate programmes

5.4 Awareness and appreciation of Chinese culture

5.5 Awareness and appreciation of other cultures, particularly Anglo-Western

5.6 Developing intercultural understanding through Community Service

5.7 Preparation for future life challenges

5.8 Summary and conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interview data from the members of the three stakeholder groups, relating to the four Specific Research Questions, concerned with the international education ethos of the school. Six themes emerged from the data. These are; international education in the Secondary school, International Baccalaureate programmes, awareness and appreciation of Chinese culture, awareness and appreciation of other cultures, particularly Anglo-Western, developing intercultural understanding through Community Service and the preparation for future life challenges. Sections 2 and 3 are the most extensive and address the two parts of SRQ6, which explores international education factors. Sections 4 and 5 focus on the two parts of SRQ3 concerning the promotion of cultures at the school. Section 6 examines the perceptions of the success in addressing SRQ5, which focuses mainly on Community Service. Finally, Section 7 addresses SRQ4, which is concerned with the perceptions of the life-skills programme. The researcher’s commentary seeks to link, clarify and interpret the data from each stakeholder group and the summary at the end of each section identifies the significant findings. The interviewer’s comments are included and underlined in the text where they help to explain the context. The Specific Research Questions addressed in this chapter are:

3. How successfully does the school develop in students an awareness and appreciation of Chinese artistic, literary, and cultural traditions along with those of the rest of the world, in particular, the Anglo-Western?
4. With what success does the school prepare students to deal proactively with the challenges that face them both at MIS and in later life, perhaps in International settings?

5. Does the school successfully develop in students a strong sense of multi-cultural values, especially emphasising the need for altruism in a global community where people of different cultures, traditions and backgrounds regularly interact?

6. What does the concept of ‘international school/education mean to you? Does the school provide this? How important is the International Baccalaureate curriculum ‘through-train’ in years 7-13 in enhancing ‘internationalism’ in the Secondary School?

5.2 International education in the Secondary school

This section focuses on the characteristics of international education identified by the participants. These included the ethnic/cultural diversity of the students and teachers, the use of English as the medium of instruction, teaching and learning styles and curriculum matters.

5.2.1 Students’ responses
All eight of the students expressed the opinion that the ethnic/cultural diversity of a student body is an important factor in deciding whether a school is ‘international’. On this theme, S8 suggested, “I think international school means people of many different nationalities and backgrounds coming together and studying”. Similarly, S2 said that ‘international’ concerns “…the exposure to other cultures, the ability to learn about and experience them” and S7 suggested, “International means where people have different backgrounds and cultures”. The students expressed a variety of opinions about how the case Secondary school measured up to this particular ‘international school’ factor. Describing the composition of the population of his Year group, S5 said “…they are mostly Chinese I guess, about 85-90%” while S7 stated that “…the majority of the students in this Year group are Chinese, so it’s not exactly international”. However, S1 explained, “I believe that MIS is an international school, because it absorbs students from all over the world, which makes the community itself international…within the student body that is primarily Chinese”. S5 went further in describing the profile of the student population this way, “…here at the school you have a lot of Hong Kong Chinese, a lot of mixed race people, quite a few South East Asians and the odd Caucasian”. S6 implied that while the school was open to accepting students of different cultures, it did not provide an all-encompassing
education covering global issues. He made another important point, that the language in the name of the school implicitly defines the nature and mission of the case school. He asserted:

If you take international to mean we get students from around the world and we’re not directly connected to the government, then, yes. If you’re trying to say that it teaches students about the entire world then, no, not really. It’s an international school meaning it’s a private school that takes people from around the world. The language in the name means the country that it emphasises. (S6)

This is an interesting proposition that requires researching in an exploration of the suggested link between the profiles of international schools and the names they adopt. S4 and S7 made similar observations concerning a culturally diverse student population and the medium of English as defining traits of international schools. S4 suggested, “I think most of the students are Hong Kong Chinese, but for some reason they speak English at home” while S7 remarked that “An international school is where there are overseas students and local students. Before I came, I expected the students to all be very good at English but didn’t expect them all to be good at Mandarin, so I was not surprised”. She clearly implied that English was the normal language of the student population and that Mandarin proficiency was not a priority.

S4 considered the range of nationalities of the teachers and the English medium of the school as defining international factors, “MIS is an international school because of the language and the teachers”. S5 made similar points, suggesting that:

MIS is an international school because they speak English and Mandarin, and many of the teachers aren’t from Hong Kong, they are from the USA, Canada or the UK. When people think of international schools, they think of people speaking in English all the time. (S5)

S1, S2 and S3 all suggested that the different cultural and educational backgrounds of the teachers at the Mandarin International School provided a diversity of learning experiences for the students. They commented as follows, “You have different teachers from all over the world” (S1) and S2, “Within the staff there is a wide variety of people”, with S3
adding, “The way they teach was influenced by the way they were taught and if they come from different backgrounds then it’s a mix of all sorts of education methods”.

5.2.2 Teachers/Leaders’ responses
Not surprisingly, the views expressed by the teachers/leaders about the significance of diverse student and teacher populations, as defining characteristics of international schools, were more analytical and sophisticated. T/L2 outlined what he considered were the necessary components of an international school and was of the opinion that, in terms of the need for a diverse student body, the Mandarin International School did not fit the bill:

If you define international as a coming together of students of different nationalities, then MIS is probably not an international school. Such a school needs a broad ethnic base, an international curriculum and an outlook through the curriculum, the hidden curriculum and the co-curricular programme that seeks to engage with so-called international issues. (T/L2)

T/L7’s contention was that since English was the language medium of the school, this provided a limit to the range of students that the school could absorb. In contrast, he said that a student’s lack of Mandarin played no part in limiting the diversity:

Two thirds of the students are ethnic Chinese by both parents, ten percent are Caucasian by both parents and about fifteen percent are half-Chinese so there clearly is some diversity. We are not really prepared to take kids who do not have strong English which I think limits our ability to be diverse in that sense. We can handle a kid who has never had Mandarin, but there’s a limit to how international we can get. (T/L7)

T/L5 believed that the relative homogeneity of the student population, that was predominantly Hong Kong Chinese, had a significant impact on the international credentials of the institution:

When one looks at the student body as a whole, one can see ethnically, racially, we are predominantly, I’d estimate, 90% or higher a Chinese school. Students here, I found, very rarely take the initiative to be unique or different because that makes them stand out in many situations. That’s very much unlike other international
schools that I have worked in where you have a much broader base of perspectives
and values and attitudes. I believe a school such as ours can be international in its
curriculum and outlook and in its mission statement but if the student body is not, I
don’t think it’s a truly international setting. (T/L5)

T/L3 also pointed to the lack of diversity in the student population as a factor limiting the
international dimension of the school:

The Mandarin International School students are not as international as I thought,
because they are mainly Hong Kong Chinese, although they hold foreign passports.
If you look at their family backgrounds, they are kind of Hong Kong people but educated in a Western way. (T/L3)

T/L6 doubted that, with a largely homogeneous population, the case Secondary school
could claim the same cultural richness enjoyed by more culturally diverse international
schools:

If you don’t have the diversity of cultures in your school you can, I guess, promote
an understanding of different cultures through your curriculum. You may not be as successful doing that as a school that can take advantage of the cultural understanding that comes from having different cultures actually within the class. Ethnically, we are clearly not very diverse and that’s an issue for discussion. (T/L6)

However, T/L4 explained that the school had deliberately sought to redress the lack of
heterogeneity in the student population by accepting students without Mandarin language
skills, starting in upper Primary and all through the Secondary school:

Somehow, somewhere in the school history, the school decided to take in students
without Chinese (Mandarin) in upper Primary. They believed, unofficially, that the
school was becoming increasingly Chinese and if we didn’t change, we would gradually become a local school without too much international flavour. For some people a diverse student body seems to be a factor in considering whether a school is an international school. At Board level Yes, I think so and by taking in students without any Chinese, we are giving opportunities for students from other backgrounds to come here. (T/L4)
T/L7 suggested that not having a Mandarin entry requirement supported the school's dual-language mission. He said, “I don’t think we can call ourselves truly international unless, to those students coming in with no Mandarin, we can say come and join us, embrace our dual language and this is your way into it”.

Concerning other factors, T/L1, T/L3, T/L5, T/L6 and T/L8, all suggested that a diverse teacher population was important in defining an international school. When asked, “Do you think MIS is an international school?” T/L1 replied, “Yes, mainly because the education that the child is getting comes through a whole set of international teachers. I think the main strength is in the intercultural education we are imparting”. T/L3 also referred to the diverse range of teachers and the International Baccalaureate programmes as essential factors underpinning the international ethos and said, “Our curriculum is the International Baccalaureate, which is widely recognised in the world. Although the majority of students are Chinese, the education they receive at the Mandarin International School is quite international, given that the teachers are from different countries”. T/L3 added that she thought that the students benefited from the international teachers in terms of “cultural influence, their concepts and their way of teaching using different resources”. In terms of holistic education, she commented, “we are all involved in pastoral care and the education of the individual. I think teachers from different cultural backgrounds contribute quite a lot in this respect”.

T/L5 also perceived that the Mandarin International School students benefited from a range of culturally diverse teachers. He suggested that “The students have exposure to a good mix of people in the faculty and that’s wonderful and that will help them in many ways”. While T/L6 commented, “our teachers are certainly international and our board of governors is fairly representative of the international cultural groups that are represented in the school”. T/L8 concurred, “I think the Mandarin International School staff is fairly international and probably becoming more so”. However, T/L2 reacted incredulously to the suggestion that teachers in an international school should be culturally different to the students and expressed the concern that often, international means Anglo-American. He stated, “Some people quite bizarrely see international schools as places where the teachers are of a different ethnic group to the students. There is definitely a tendency to define internationalism as something western and therefore Anglo-Western”. The researcher senses that he was perhaps referring to the outmoded historical notions of colonial involvement in the education of children in different parts of the world and the issues
surrounding the power relationship of the coloniser and the colony. While supporting the idea of ‘international’ requiring a range of cultures in the student and/or teacher populations, T/L6 suggested the notion of a ‘continuum of definition’ of international school and international education. He described where the Mandarin International School fitted on such a continuum this way:

On the one hand I think, yes, MIS is an internationally based curriculum but it’s not an internationally based student body. On a continuum, you’ve got at one end schools in some parts of the world that call themselves ‘international’ simply because they teach in English in a particular environment where English isn’t the language of the country. They have chosen to teach in English because it gives the school, the name an ‘international school’. At the other end of the spectrum are schools that are ideistically ‘international’, having an international body of children coming from different cultures and different parts of the world. They have international staff, offer an international education and the board of governors is internationally diverse as well. It is important in an international school to have at least one or other of those groups of constituents who are diverse. If you have neither, or both of those constituencies are limited, I think that would have an impact on the schools ability to offer an international education. (T/L6)

The above paints a very interesting picture of the range of characteristics that schools can literally choose from, if they describe themselves as ‘international’. Of course, those international schools with only a limited possession of the characteristics described by T/L6 exist in many parts of the world. Most international schools of repute are accredited members of the Council of International Schools, or its affiliates, and have to satisfy a whole raft of standards applying to all operations of the school. These standards however, do not preclude those schools with limited diversity in the student or teacher populations from becoming accredited. Accreditation means that the school has satisfied a set of ‘internationally recognised standards’ in order to receive accredited status. In future, the International Baccalaureate Office plans to accredit schools jointly with the Council of International Schools and the process will measure a school’s commitment to international education.

Both T/L4 and T/L8 expressed uncertainty about what international education/school meant to them and T/L4 implied agreement about the notion of a sliding continuum. Both
referred to the International Baccalaureate Programmes as being a central feature of commitment of the School to international education. They also described the transportability of these programmes as vital for internationally mobile students. Chapter 5, Section 3, deals with the data from all stakeholder groups concerning the International Baccalaureate programmes. T/L4 and T/L8 commented thus:

How international you have to be to be an international school I am not quite sure. I think we are superficially international because we are using the Middle Years Programme concept that claims to be a genuine international education. I think we are at best running a Western curriculum.  

(T/L4)

It depends on your definition of international. We’re certainly not a local Hong Kong school, we offer an international curriculum but whether our students are international, in the sense that they have moved around the world, probably not. The curriculum is definitely international; you could transfer anywhere in the world that is doing IB.  

(T/L8)

Four teachers, T/L8, T/L2, T/L4 and T/5, offered their perceptions of parental expectations of the Mandarin International School in terms of international education. T/L8 suggested that the mind-broadening international focus of the school was potentially a cause of tension between some parents and their children. This was because “…they are going home with values and ideas and things they want to do, and their parents find it quite difficult because it is out of their paradigm”. T/L2 expressed his view of the pragmatic expectations of the parents this way, “The parents want the students to have an academic and intellectual sense but they don’t want them too rough and radical. They want them to be able to shift from one context to another without a major gear change”. This suggests that the parents wanted a Western liberal education that emphasised personal growth and development for their children - as long as they stayed true to their Hong Kong Chinese roots and the cultural norms of the local society.

In a similar vein, T/L4 linked language and culture in saying that the parents wanted an English medium international education and good Mandarin without losing any of their Hong Kong Chinese identity. He described their ideal situation as unattainable:
Our parents want their children to get a very good western education and they want them to keep their Chinese language to a high level together with the culture. That’s what I call to ‘buy one and get one free’, which won’t happen.  (T/L4)

Finally, T/L5 suggested that the parents prime concern was that their children were well prepared and to cope with life in international universities. He commented that: “The higher up the school they get, the less concerned the parents are with their Mandarin and the more they are concerned with making sure their English is up to standard to get them into the best universities”.

5.2.3 Parents’ responses
Of the parents, P3, P4, P5, P7 and P8, all spoke of the range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students as being significant in the description of the Mandarin International School as an international setting. P7 was very positive about this aspect of the school:

For me, the Mandarin International School really is an international school because it is different from the local schools and there are many foreign students. My daughter has many friends from different countries and this will help her to study international relations later. To have friends of different nationalities is an advantage for her. (P7)

P4 recognised that the students were different from local school students due to their international exposure. He commented, “The children are considered half-foreigners and half-Asian and so the family backgrounds, their experience and exposure are all very international and that makes it an international school”. P3 put a figure on the number of ethnic Chinese students and implied that this weakened the international claims of the school: “I think that eighty to ninety percent of the students are ethnic Chinese. I think that’s a weakness of the student body but bear in mind that Hong Kong is predominantly Chinese”. P8 concurred with this assessment and stated, “It probably isn’t a broad range of nationalities. Racially, it is mostly Chinese but from different parts of the world plus a smattering of westerners”. P5 favoured comparing the cultural backgrounds of the students rather than ethnicity as a measure of diversity. She said, “I am very careful about classifying a person by his/her ethnicity - what’s more important is their cultural
background’. P5 emphasised that diversity was the most important factor for her in choosing an international school over a local school:

An international school to me is where you meet people from different countries and cultures so at least you are aware you are in a global setting. This is to me what international education is all about. This is exactly the reason I transferred my children from a local school to the Mandarin International School, because I feel local schools are not providing this. (P5)

Diversity in the teacher population was also a significant factor for four parents, P1, P2, P3 and P4. P1 commented that the teachers had a major impact on the students’ perceptions of the world:

We have teachers from all kinds of different places who have trained in a number of different systems. They inevitably bring their own training and background, culture and lifestyle, and if you put that all together, the teachers have a major influence. They consciously or unconsciously learn that, well, this is how the world is made up, that everybody is different and does things in many different ways. (P1)

P4 felt that the exposure to teachers from different cultural backgrounds was an education in internationalism in itself for the students. She described the situation at the Mandarin International School this way:

The faculty all has different accents. I tell my kids that if they want to be international people they have to train their ears! Sometimes they come home with stories the teachers have told them about their childhood and these are eye-opening experiences for them. I think it is very important to have teachers from various countries or the teachers themselves should have international mindsets. (P4)

On this issue, P2 simply indicated, “…the diversity of staff is important…” and P3 said, of a diversified teaching staff, “…that’s also important to me; it’s an important aspect of an international school. The teachers represent the country where they are from; you see the country behind the staff member”.  

99
Turning to other factors raised by the parents, P2, P3, P4 and P5 all focussed on the curriculum and teaching approaches as important components of an international education. It was difficult to gauge how developed their concepts of international education were from the interviews because it was clear that their main source of comparison was the local school curriculum in Hong Kong. They were well aware of the teaching and learning styles (teacher centred, large classes) and the curriculum in the local school system and this was often a reason for them to enrol their children at the Mandarin International School. P3 spoke of the English medium curriculum and the promotion of independent learning as hallmarks of the Mandarin International School:

I think MIS is an international school because there is a very broad education that trains students to be independent learners. There is more participation in class and group research projects. To me, this is what international education is all about, to research their own learning and explore different subject areas. In addition, of course English, this is a must. (P3)

P5 agreed, saying, “To me it means it is the curriculum that is a departure from the local school curriculum”. P2 also valued the development of skills and the focus on personal growth and asserted, “I think international education really benefits the students in terms of developing presentation skills and self-confidence”. P4 remarked that the home background of the students had an impact on their ‘international education’ implying that the school could not produce internationally minded students on its own. She said, “It’s the family background of the students and the way of teaching the curriculum that make a school international or not, regardless of what the name is”. P1 suggested the compulsory Mandarin requirement automatically reduced the diversity of the student body:

The fact that we’re a dual-language school and Mandarin is mandatory actually makes the student body less international and the reason is that you automatically weed out those families who don’t feel that Mandarin is a priority. The diversity of students is less than in a straight international school, because you are self-selecting families who have a particular commitment to pushing the kids. I mean, to be honest, except for this Chinese business, we would probably be at some other school. (P1)
5.2.4 Summary

Concerning the issue of a diverse student population, all eight of the students agreed that an ethnically/culturally diverse student body is an essential requirement for an international school. Of those who expressed opinions about the school three, S4, S5 and S7, said that the student body was not diverse enough to meet this criterion. Two students, S1 and S6, also indicated that, while the student population was not very diverse, students of all nationalities/cultures were welcome. On the same question, six of the teachers/leaders commented that the school was not international because it did not have a heterogeneous, multi-cultural student population. They all indicated that the student body was largely homogeneous, made up of ethnic Chinese or half-Chinese students and that this led to a narrow range of experiences and perspectives in the classroom. Three parents, P4, P5 and P7, felt that the students represented an international range of experiences and cultures when compared to the typical situation at local Hong Kong schools. Two parents, P3 and P8, were categorical in their assessment that the school did not have a broad enough range of nationalities/cultures for classification as an ‘international’ school.

What emerges from this comparison of the data is that the perceptions of the members of the three stakeholder groups were relative to their life experiences and knowledge. The teachers/leaders general perspective, that the school was not very international in terms of the students, probably came from direct experience or knowledge of other international school contexts. It is fair to say that, relatively speaking, the parents and students had less such experience and knowledge of other international educational contexts than the teachers/leaders. The students and parents who compared the Mandarin International School to local Hong Kong schools were thus comparing what was most familiar for them. Considering this, the general impression from all three groups was that the school did not measure up well on this ‘international’ factor.

On the issue of a diverse teacher population, five students, S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5, indicated that the mix of teachers from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds was a positive contributor to the students’ international education. Five teachers/leaders, T/L1, T/L3, T/L5, T/L6, and T/L8, also suggested that the students benefited greatly from the cultural diversity, represented in the teacher population in terms of their international awareness and understanding. For four of the parents, P1, P2, P3 and P4, the presence of teachers from a range of nationalities and cultures was very important to them as they felt it had a significant impact on the students’ holistic education.
Two students, S4, and S7, perceived that an international school was typically characterised by the use of English, as both the medium of instruction and the informal language of the school. They felt that the Mandarin International School measured up to this. Four of the teachers/leaders, T/L2, T/L4, T/L5 and T/L8, noted that the English medium of instruction aided the transferability of the International Baccalaureate Programmes. T/L5 suggested that the parents’ main concern was that their children acquired a sufficiently high level of English for university. On this theme, several parents talked indirectly of the significance of an international curriculum and probably did not feel the need to emphasise the English medium as being a major factor in their choice of school. Only one, P3, expressed the opinion that the English language was necessary for the delivery of an international school curriculum.

Concerning curriculum factors, two teachers/leaders T/L4 and T/L8 indicated that the curriculum was definitely international because of its transportability, at the very least. However, four parents, P2, P3, P4 and P5 focussed on the learning and teaching methods at the Mandarin International School as being indicative of an international education. The phrase, “...it depends on your definition of international...” cropped up frequently in the data. The description by T/L6 of a continuum of factors that define a school or an education as international helps to put this into perspective. Indeed, the data suggests that the extent of the internationalism of the education, or of the school, appears to depend on the relative position of the observer, meaning the observer’s cultural, educational and own personal international exposure.

5.3 International Baccalaureate Programmes

This section concerns the participants’ views on the attributes of the IB programmes and their role in promoting international understanding at MIS. The issues raised include the strengths of the Middle Years Programme and the values represented by the ‘IB brand’.

5.3.1 Students’ responses

Three students, S1, S4 and S8, commented that the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme curriculum taught ‘out of the box’ applied thinking, as opposed to the rote memorisation and exam preparation prevalent at the time in local Hong Kong Schools. Said S1, of the element of reflection built into the ‘Approaches to Learning’ strategy in the Middle Years Programme:
I am thinking about Mathematics; not only do you have knowledge and understanding, you learn how to apply it to real life situations. You make a mistake, you reflect on it. You learn how to correct it so you don’t make the same mistake next time. (S1)

S4 said that her friends in local schools thought that it was harder at the Mandarin International School because there was less memorisation, but more thinking, required. S8 explained, “We learn how to communicate with each other through group work”. Two students, S1 and S6, expressed their perceptions of the international value of the curriculum. S1 asserted, “I think the International Baccalaureate is a very international system. It is applied all over the world”, while S6 commented, “The ‘International’ means that it is just taught around the world, a standard that is practised world-wide”. These are rather superficial comments perhaps; but this is not surprising given the students’ limited scope for comparison with other school systems.

5.3.2 Teachers’ responses

Four teachers/leaders, T/L2, T/L4, T/L5 and T/L7, were sceptical about the depth of the educational meaning and relevance of the term international in the International Baccalaureate. T/L2 saw it as part of a brand name:

I think if the IB was being candid, of course it sees itself as a kind of brand, and part of the brand is the word ‘international’. The word makes sense as a brand, but in terms of the impact on the students, it’s hard to say. (T/L2)

T/L4, T/L5 and T/L7, all expressed concerns about the bias of the IB curriculum towards a Western-oriented educational model. T/L4 pointed out the lack of inclusion of Eastern educational philosophies from two of the world’s oldest and most populous nations, China and India, in the IB model. He suggested that:

Superficially, we are international as we are using the IB curriculum all the way through Secondary. Is the IB truly international? I doubt it. I do not believe that IB is a genuinely international curriculum because it doesn’t incorporate educational philosophies from China, where there are 1.2 billion people or India with another billion. (T/L4)
T/L5 expressed a similar opinion, “The curriculum is completely based on Western ideology and we rarely look at others so I guess, in a way, there is a sense of cultural arrogance that can or cannot be avoided, I am not sure”. Also implying that the IB represents a brand rather than a distinct educational approach, T/L7 pointed out that international education occurs in schools all over the world, irrespective of designation and location:

I think the name ‘IB’ means essentially that it does not represent any national curriculum. I know the organisation has ideals called ‘internationalism’ and they expect schools to uphold those ideals. On the other hand, I’m not sure whether the courses themselves have a lot of content that would be more international than you might find in a school that didn’t do the IB. I am sure that in public schools in Maryland, the students learn about world cultures and world events and gain an international outlook. (T/L7)

T/L6 described what he saw as the heart of international education, as promoted by the IB, but suggested that terminology was an issue:

I think the IB programmes are very valuable in an international school in that they provide scaffolding for the development and promotion of international education. PYP, MYP and DP continue to use slightly different terminology in reference to international awareness, international understanding and international education that all stem from the same cultural imperative. For me, it is intercultural awareness that is at the heart of international education. (T/L6)

He added that the IBO and the Council of International Schools accreditation body had recognised the need to mesh their international credentials, and commented:

The IB has put together a set of programme standards and practices that will be built into the Council of International Schools accreditation scheme and they will slot it into the process if the school is doing the PYP, MYP or DP. In the future, you are going to have to demonstrate a lot closer fulfilment to the philosophy and practices that would lead you to being designated an international school promoting international education. (T/L6)
Concurring with this, T/L7 argued that these IB standards are applicable to any school fostering international education, suggesting that:

Within the IB movement, the vast majority of schools are national schools, not international schools. These standards are being set up in such a way that any school around the world that wishes to promote international mindedness could do so, even in a mono-cultural situation, in the sense of both the student and teacher populations. (T/L7)

Three teachers/leaders spoke of the impact of the IBDP on the lives of the students. T/L2 commented, “…on the individual level, some students have been very open to thinking about new ideas and cultures and taking on board some of the precepts of internationalism, as the IB would have it”. T/L1 similarly suggested that:

The IB is helping students to get positive attitudes in life. Accepting differences is a way of being positive. A simple example; in the States I have to change how I say things so that they understand. Here you can say things in different ways and the students accept the difference. Therefore, they are more at ease in the world than students coming from a pure culture or background are. (T/L1)

T/L3 also argued that the IB programme was suitable for the Mandarin International School. His contention was that “…it is widely recognised and the content lays a solid foundation in a wide range of subjects and that the tertiary standard is high and quite competitive”. T/L2 suggested that the adoption of the MYP curriculum had provided greater opportunities for teachers to internationalise the content: “I think moving to an MYP curriculum framework from our previous in-house 7-9 curriculum and IGCSE in 10-11, gave greater freedom to be more international in our material and focus”.

5.3.3 Parents’ responses
Three parents, P1, P4 and P6, suggested that the real importance of the IB to the school was the setting of internationally recognised standards. P1 stated, “I think the IB is very important for setting standards and for providing some kind of cohesive network for all of these teachers and their diverse backgrounds and training and expectations to tap into”. P6 similarly referred to the importance of the quality control aspects, “The MYP and DP programmes are effective; therefore there are some good controls”. P1 however, was
sceptical about the importance of ‘international’ in International Baccalaureate. She explained that the characteristics of a particular school are far more significant:

I don’t think the IB programme is important at all for creating internationalism. You could implement the IB programme in a local school and it would be international to the extent that many things are necessarily international. I don’t think internationalism here comes from the IB curriculum; it comes out of the staff, the students, and the geographic location. The geopolitical situation of our country is such that it forces the whole city, not just the school, to be outward looking. (P1)

Six parents, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6, were concerned about the move from the IGCSE exam based system in Years 10 and 11 to the internally assessed, externally moderated, MYP model. P3 expressed the following concern, “The only thing I think is missing in MYP is that you still have to train students to sit for exams. Students should be disciplined to know that they have to finish the whole thing in a certain time”. P4 shared this concern, questioning:

When the kids move from MYP to DP, where the emphasis is almost all on exams, with only a small part assessed, are they able to train themselves to excel within those 1.5 years? Especially those applying to the US? (P4)

P1 also explained that she had been happy with the previous IGCSE/IBDP programme and expressed reservations for the future:

The exams have disappeared so I will be curious to see how the first few years are going to do in the DP programme because they haven’t had the rigour of being forced to do this monster exam. I am not convinced that the subsequent years are going to do better at the DP. In fact, if they even manage to maintain current levels I would be very impressed. (P1)

P6 was concerned about the possible subjectivity of teacher-assessment and suggested:

Assessment in MYP is sometimes based on the teacher’s perceptions so it may not be so scientific and those students who know what they need to do to make a
teacher happy can have an advantage. I think that may be a concern, but not a real issue. (P6)

P5, who was not convinced that a significant change had actually taken place, commented: “From what I understand, they are still following a lot of the old IGCSE curriculum (in years 10 and 11) and using the same books. I don’t really see any difference except that maybe the PP that’s been thrown in and a difference in the marking system”. P3 was anxious about the academic challenge of the MYP curriculum. She said, “I feel that the level of the MYP maybe is not challenging enough in terms of content, if you don’t have tests you leave it up to the students basically to absorb or progress on their own”. P2 and P4 were unsure about the suitability of the MYP for all MIS students. P2 asserted that “Some are better at doing research and some are more creative but some are moulded (because we are ‘Hongkies’) to the traditional academic skills. The MYP research approach is tougher and I couldn’t find any tutorial help anywhere”. P4 concurred, saying, “I do not think right now with the MYP, that the school, or the parents, know how to prepare the students for it; without exams and so much room for subjectivity”.

Three parents, P1, P3 and P8, had positive impressions of the MYP. P1 liked the MYP approach in Mathematics and said “…in Math getting kids to sit down and solve a problem and then to say well, in what other ways can we solve this problem? And then to say, well, if there are these different solutions, why do we choose this way?” and P3, speaking about her two daughters, said that “Yes, the younger one is more analytical and more resourceful. In IGCSE, you just had to memorise everything, but in MYP you have to research”. P8 similarly commented that, “The old system was based on exams. The MYP gives a good balance, it’s quite tough, and there is a lot to do. They also cover the other elements, the social, community etc. which gives them a broader preparation for life”.

5.3.4 Summary
Three students and three parents agreed that the components of communication, analysis and reflection built into the MYP, were beneficial to the students and an improvement over the previous exam based IGCSE curriculum. Concerning the importance of ‘International’ in the name International Baccalaureate, two students, four teachers and three parents suggested that the IB brand represents a standard known around the world. The IB programme did not, in itself, emphasise or develop international understanding. However, three teachers indicated that the IB programmes had a positive impact on the students’
international awareness and allowed the teachers the freedom to be more international in their teaching than the IGCSE allowed. One teacher/leader pointed out that the IBO was aware of the need to be more overt about its promotion of international mindedness and was implementing a set of standards to reflect this commitment.

Six of the parents interviewed expressed concerns about the adoption of the MYP by the school. These included reservations about the level of academic challenge and the emphasis on continual teacher assessment compared to the external exams of the IGCSE. They were anxious that the students would lack adequate preparation for the IBDP examinations at the end of Year 13, given that they would only face their first set of examinations at the end of Year 12. They questioned the wisdom of the change from the IGCSE and were concerned for the future success of students at MIS.

5.4 Awareness and appreciation of Chinese culture

In this section, all stakeholder groups suggest that Chinese cultural traditions were under-represented in the Secondary school.

5.4.1. Students’ responses

Five students, S1, S6, S3, S2 and S4, indicated that the schools promotion of Chinese culture, art, and history was superficial and was insufficient for the students to develop a deep awareness. S1 commented, “I don’t think the school on the whole is very successful in promoting Chinese artistic, literary and cultural traditions, because I think to instil that awareness it’s not just the occasional event”. S6 made the point that public holidays celebrating festivals, other than the two major events in the Chinese calendar, were not recognised or discussed generally in the school. He asserted, “Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese New Year, that’s about it. We don’t do much about the Hungry Ghost Festival, the Grave Sweeping Festival or the one where you climb the highest hill you can find to avoid disease”. S3 made a similar point and said, “In Secondary school there isn’t enough. There should be more. If you visit China, you are surrounded by the culture and if you don’t understand it, you might feel lost”. Referring to visits to China, S8 suggested that the Year 7, 8 and 9 trips were important, “In Activities Week we had trips to the mainland that exposed us to the culture”. Regarding the whole school assemblies celebrating mid-autumn and Chinese New Year, S1 commented, “The school as a whole focuses on these traditions. We have Chinese New Year assembly and Chinese Week”. S2 suggested that “Obviously
things like the Chinese New Year assembly and Mid-Autumn Festival definitely help raise cultural awareness”. S4 indicated that some students did not fully buy into the spirit of the events, “The students are not very aware of the assemblies and they still speak English in the audience”. However, S2 noted positively that:

We do learn quite a lot about Chinese cultural traditions in geography. As regards art and literature, we only learn about that in Chinese class. I have had quite a lot of contact with people from other international schools, such as Hong Kong International School and South Island School and when we talk about what we learn, I keep thinking “Wow!” We have much more to do with Chinese than they do. (S2)

His comparison with the exposure to Chinese culture at other local international schools offered a glimpse into a completely new and richly interesting subject for future research, given the fascinating position of Hong Kong in relation to China. Concerning the delivery of cultural aspects in their Mandarin classes, S1 and S4, made it clear that this needed addressing. Said S1, “In Mandarin class the teachers sometimes try to link a piece of work to Chinese culture, but most of the time the emphasis is on language”. While S4 was far more critical, “Teenagers now don’t care about old-fashioned arts and stuff. They could have a mixture of Chinese and modern arts”.

5.4.2 Teachers/leaders’ responses
Six teachers/leaders, T/L2, T/L4, T/L5, T/L6, T/L7 and T/L8, indicated that Chinese cultural traditions were only superficially recognised and celebrated at the school. T/L2 commented, “We celebrate Chinese festivals so we do at least superficially acknowledge Chinese culture. At Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn festival, we come together as a school and promote Chinese art and music”. T/L5 spoke of tokenism, “We have Chinese Week, which is this cultural song and dance thing and we all have a big feast at the end. Some tokenism; I think it could be better handled”. T/L6 also implied a level of tokenism, “I don’t think we do a particularly effective job in developing cultural awareness of Chinese or other cultures” as did T/L8, who said, “Cultural traditions? I guess we probably do all right. We celebrate certain holidays here and, in doing so, we try perhaps artificially, to bring out the deep cultural roots of the holidays with costumes and the dragon dancers and so on”. This apparent superficiality of the Secondary school’s
commitment to Chinese culture was simply a pragmatic matter of balance according to T/L8. She commented that:

It raises its head at festivals a few times a year and that’s probably ok, but I think if you really wanted it in your face, you would have to stop a lot of the other stuff that goes on.  

(T/L8)

T/L4 and T/L8 suggested that Chinese educational philosophy was generally lacking in the curriculum and that only those Students taking IBDP Higher Level Mandarin gained a richer, contextual appreciation of Chinese culture. T/L4 asserted that the ethnically Chinese students celebrated their Chinese heritage when possible. He said, “In a recent assembly we sang ‘descendants of dragons’ (which Chinese people believe), and they all sang very loudly with emotion. So deep in their hearts, they still believe their identity is Chinese”. He added, “The local culture should be a prominent element in the school’s educational philosophy. It’s natural”. In comparison, T/L8 suggested that the stereotypical Confucian quality of diligence was the students’ most recognised cultural characteristic. She commented, “We pretty much don’t value any of the traditional Chinese notions although we benefit indirectly from the fact that our students are respectful, hard working etc”. Two teachers/leaders, T/L3 and T/L4, commented that the school had taken administrative steps towards strengthening the emphasis on Chinese culture at the school. T/L3 asserted:

It’s not just up to the teachers to promote Chinese culture, art and literature, but also the School Leaders. I think that’s why the school created the post of Director of Chinese, as a member of the Senior Leadership Team.  

(T/L3)

T/L4 echoed this point and said, “I think the school is doing pretty well and recognises the dual-culture in many ways. For example, having a Chinese Head of Year and the position of Director of Chinese”. However, concerning the integration of the Western and Chinese teaching staff in the Secondary School, T/L5 described the presence of cultural divisions:

If you walk into the faculty lounge at lunchtime, the divisions are very clear. It’s not solely the Administration’s fault but they have taken little initiative to break down those barriers. I don’t know how, but it needs addressing.  

(T/L5)
On the other hand, T/L2 indicated that such cultural barriers were not so evident. Indeed, he commented that, “Many teachers have sensitivity towards Chinese culture and non-Chinese staff members speak Chinese. As a school, we probably have more awareness of Chinese culture than we express”. Referring specifically to Visual Arts in the Secondary School, T/L6, and T/L8 both implied that the profile of Chinese Art was not high enough. T/L6 commented, “On the artistic side, I think Chinese is pretty neglected especially in Secondary. The Art department is entirely western in terms of what’s produced and in terms of the staff”. T/L8 expressed her disappointment that “When you look at the art exhibitions that go on, there is very little culturally Chinese, which is a shame”.

5.4.3 Parents’ responses
Five parents, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P7, expressed obvious dissatisfaction that Chinese culture was only superficially recognised and celebrated in the case Secondary school. P2 commented that it was symptomatic of a broader societal issue:

    I have heard about Chinese Week and arts associated with the various festivals, but I think it’s not enough. It’s not just MIS but also the whole school system that is trying to forget our culture. Maybe there is a gap, in that you have to learn the language well before you can appreciate the arts, such as Chinese opera.   (P2)

Both P3 and P5 suggested that the celebration of Chinese New Year amounted to tokenism. P5 said, somewhat ruefully, “Festivals, yes - one week! My kids feel resentful that you spend one week on it then forget about it”. P3 added, “The only thing I am aware of is during Chinese New Year you have lanterns and the lion dance and the teachers all dress up”. P4 and P2 had some proposals for overcoming the superficiality, with P2 suggesting, “The school has to take the students to arts festivals or bring artists into the school” and P4 complaining that:

    There are many Chinese cultural activities in town that the school doesn’t even try to promote. There was a big book exhibition and a series of talks by very famous Chinese authors and I don’t think the students were even aware of them.   (P4)

P4 also strongly suggested that Chinese culture needed celebrating in a greater variety of forms. She asserted, “It has to move down to the masses - to get a feel that instead of going to orchestra on Tuesday lunchtime, another group will do for Chinese poetry because they
are going to represent MIS”. P7 was of the opinion that, in addition to the trips to China in Years 7, 8 and 9, that the school should provide more opportunities for students to visit China. He commented, “My daughter visited Xi’an and Beijing. Maybe the school can arrange more study groups to go to China. The school does not do enough to raise awareness of Chinese culture”.

5.4.4 Summary
Five students, six teachers/leaders and five parents, clearly expressed the opinion that the celebration of Chinese culture was superficial, only really focussing on Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival. All groups expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with the lack of recognition and limited representation of Chinese art, culture, and literature in the school. Some students made the point that although limited, there was greater emphasis on Chinese culture at MIS than at other international schools. The students and parents suggested that the inclusion of contemporary Chinese culture would help to improve the programme. Two teachers/leaders recognised that the organisation had taken steps to raise the profile of Chinese language and culture in the case Secondary school and the Primary school.

5.5 Awareness and appreciation of other cultures, particularly Anglo-Western

In this section, the three stakeholder groups concur that the school actively promotes Anglo-Western culture.

5.5.1 Students’ responses
Six students, S1, S2, S3, S5, S6 and S7, indicated that the school did not need to promote Western culture since most students were ‘Westernised’ by their own background or their exposure to English language and Western culture. S2 suggested, “We have a lot of people who follow American culture or British culture” while S7 asserted, “Most of them are westernised anyway, so don’t really need to promote it”. S5 made a similar point, “Since we speak English quite fluently, we are more aware of things”. S1 commented that the predominance of English in the curriculum provided a rich exposure to Anglo-Western culture by default. He said, “I think the school does not raise a lot of awareness about Anglo-Western culture, mainly because there is no need to, since the curriculum is 85% in English”. S6, speaking of the so-called Anglo-Western culture reflected, “There’s no one great big culture is there?”
Two students, S6, and S3 asserted that the school did not play a major role in broadening the students’ cultural awareness. S6 contended, “People know that there are different people in different situations, but it’s not the school that taught them that, it filters through society, the newspapers, television” while S3 stated that:

The school doesn’t have much influence compared to the family background; if they travel, they’ll feel comfortable in different surroundings. It’s their choice if they want to look at the world as more than the city around them. It’s not something the school can develop. (S3)

5.5.2 Teachers/Leaders’ responses

Three teachers/leaders, T/L2, T/L3 and T/L7, were of the opinion that Anglo-Western culture dominated the school and most teaching and therefore there was no need to celebrate it specifically. T/L2 suggested, “There is definitely a tendency to define internationalism as something Western and therefore Anglo-American. I think the motivation for sending your children to a place like this might be precisely for them to be exposed to Anglo-American cultural products”. T/L3 described the situation this way, “Re. Anglo-Western culture, I don’t see the school promoting any particular kind of activities but it penetrates most daily teaching”, a point also described in some detail by T/L7:

In some respects, Anglo-Western culture pervades the school. It’s not something that we consciously say; now we are going to celebrate this or explain this. It’s probably the dominant culture of the school and most of the kids in a way, their dress, and their music. Most of our teaching is from a Western viewpoint, a Western style. Even the Learning and Teaching Policy entirely imposes Western notions of good teaching on the school and pretty much denigrates any of the traditional notions of teaching in the Chinese culture. (T/L7)

5.5.3 Parents’ responses

Four parents, P1, P3, P7 and P8, discussed the students’ awareness of cultures other than Chinese. P1 was of the opinion that the school did not need to play a role in providing experiences concerned with Western culture. She explained it this way:

I think Chinese kids understand in theory that it (Chinese culture) is part of their heritage but, practically speaking, I think my own children feel more affinity for
Western rather than Chinese culture. The school does not need to do more to emphasise Anglo-Western culture - the kids are doing it on their own, because of television and all of that. (P1)

P3 suggested that the school needed to provide further intercultural experiences for the students. She said, “I think this is very important. Maybe it would be good to have exchange programmes with other countries. With China? I don’t think so. I think you should promote more international/multicultural links”. Whilst he did not elaborate, P7 perceived that the school was promoting intercultural awareness: “There is no doubt the school does a lot to promote understanding of other cultures”. P8 shared a similar impression, “I don’t know how to measure it, but I think they must be doing something right because we are quite aware of it. We always remind our children that they are in a privileged position”.

5.5.4 Summary
The five students, three teachers/leaders and four parents who expressed opinions on this particular issue were in close agreement that the students were sufficiently aware of Anglo-Western culture. Because both the entire non-Chinese curriculum was in English and the teachers brought their own cultural experiences to their teaching, the absorption of Western culture by the students was automatic. Additionally, the students’ exposure to Western media, in all its forms, reinforced their awareness. Ultimately, the students were generally highly motivated to extend their knowledge, understanding and mastery of all things pertaining to the Anglo-Western culture and the school supported these aspirations.

5.6 Developing intercultural understanding of the local and global community through Community Service

In this section, the participants describe the role of Community Service in the promotion of intercultural awareness in the Secondary school, particularly focussing on Project Week activities.

5.6.1 Students’ responses
Six students, S1, S2, S4, S5, S6 and S8, all expressed positive perceptions concerning the role of the school and its programmes in raising intercultural understanding and awareness. Five of them explained that Project Week trips, especially service projects, provided
genuine opportunities to learn more about different cultures. S4 described her experience this way, “I was in Mongolia for Project Week. It was fun, before this, Mongolia was a far away country to which I would never have gone. It was the first time I had personal contact with orphans”. Similarly, S8 explained, “Project Week gives a variety of cultures for students to find out about. I went to Cambodia, and this gave me an insight into the culture and history”.

S2 suggested the integration of Project Week experiences into the curriculum, “I think that Project Week should be a lot closer linked to the curriculum, and I think the service trips are the most worthwhile of them all”. S5 also made this point, emphasising the altruistic participation of the students, “My friends went to Cambodia and found that a really rewarding experience, they enjoyed playing with the kids and looking after them, but they didn’t expect anything back”. S6 suggested, however, that such service projects were often seen ‘a means to an end’ for some students. He argued, “Some people join service projects to pad their transcripts, others are genuinely looking for a new experience, be it going to a new country or doing something new”. S1 described another type of Project Week experience that promoted intercultural understanding. He explained, “I went on the European culture trip and learned about some cultures I didn’t know much about” and S5 emphasised the deeper relevance of such trips, “In international settings, we would be more prepared than local students. These trips, say to New Zealand, I don’t recall any of my friends doing these things”.

5.6.2 Teachers/Leaders’ responses
Four teachers/leaders, T/L5, T/L3, T/L6 and T/L2, described the benefits of Project week to the students in terms of broadening their experiences and appreciating the concept of altruism through contributing to service projects. T/L5 said, optimistically, “I hope we inculcate the need for altruism but whether that’s evident later on is hard to say. We do our best - so there’s a guarded sense of optimism”, whereas T/L3 was more positive about the longer-term impact of such activities, commenting:

In Project Week, the kids travel around and get to appreciate other people’s values and cultures. They are willing to give up their time and money to help people. We hope that these experiences will affect them in their adult lives so that they are more aware.

(T/L3)
T/L6 was the most positive of all about the effects of Community Service activities on the broader education of the students, commenting:

The students are challenged through Project Week and through many of the service opportunities that we’ve got going. They have to think about how to deal with problems and find solutions. For me, this is one of the real strengths of the school right now and has become an increasingly core feature of the education offered at the Mandarin International school.  

(T/L6)

However, T/L2 urged caution, suggesting that a more critical appraisal of the effects of the Community Service opportunities on the students was required:

I think we do give them experiences and we encourage them to help, but I don’t know at what level we encourage them to ask questions about why things are the way they are. I think we have to reduce altruism to pragmatic motivation. Some students given a task will go and help, but do we as a school encourage them to ask why the situation is like that in the first place? That’s the hardest investment because that takes time, experience and maturity.  

(T/L2)

5.6.3 Parents’ responses

Six parents, P1, P2, P4, P5, P7 and P8, commented on the effectiveness of Project Week in raising the students’ intercultural understanding. Two were highly sceptical about the notion of Project Week community service activities, however. Indeed, P1 rejected suggestions that Project Week promoted intercultural understanding and said, “When our kids go away on these Project Week trips, they all hang together and there’s still a little group of MIS people transplanted somewhere geographically different”. P5’s contention was that the personal development outcomes of such trips needed appraising and asked, “How much do the teachers get to know how much the kids benefited or how much they disliked it? I am not saying they are entirely useless but it seems there is a gap between what the teachers are aware of and what the kids feel”. P4 questioned the value of those Project Week trips that did not involve community service and asserted, “There is absolutely no value in sending our kids to Paris, London, Japan or New York to view the architecture. Don’t you think we have been there so many times already?”
However, other comments were very positive about the value to the students of the Project Week concept. P4 asserted, “The Nepal and Mongolia trips for example, these are whole different worlds that they are being exposed to and they are doing something meaningful and it’s well structured. So this is the value added” and P2 suggested, “I think Western qualities are promoted in interactions between students and teachers, like in Project Week”. P7 commented about his daughter, “I encourage her to do social work. She went to Cambodia and Thailand during Project Week. The school is very good at providing such opportunities” while P8 pointed out that:

The Project Week trips are involved in charity work. Helping with the younger kids at camp is also encouraged. They learn how to deal with people and situations and to remember that there are always people worse off. (P8)

5.6.4 Summary
Five students, four teachers/leaders and three parents expressed positive attitudes towards the impact of the Project Week Community Service work on the students’ intercultural awareness. Two parents were sceptical about the value of such experiential learning, the impact of which was not immediately measurable, and it appeared that they had considered the short-term impact on the students’ outlook and world-views of such activities. However, the teachers/leaders took a more philosophical view and highlighted the longer-term effects of such experiences on the students - which would probably stay with them for life and were not quantifiable within days/weeks/months after the experience. One student and two teachers/leaders thought that the school should link Project Week experiences closely to the curriculum and not view them as ‘stand alone’ activities.

5.7 Preparation for future life challenges
This section describes the participants’ perceptions of the formal and informal life-skills education experienced by the students in the Secondary school.

5.7.1 Students’ responses
Perhaps unsurprisingly - as it would take a great deal of maturity to comment meaningfully - few students acknowledged the value of the life-skills education at school. S2 was alone in her assertion that “The CHOICES programme definitely helps you with making decisions. It's quite a good programme to prepare you for later on in life”. There is no
doubt that the topics touched upon in the CHOICES (life-skills) programme, such as drugs, relationships, conflict resolution etc., were not vitally important to many students at the time of delivery, but were intended for ‘future reference’.

5.7.2 Teachers/Leaders responses

Five teachers/leaders, T/L1, T/L3, T/L6, T/L7 and T/L8, all reflected on the value of the life-skills education at MIS, both formally, through the taught programme, and informally, through individual teacher initiatives. T/L1 commented on the formal systems of the school this way:

I think we have a great pastoral system in place that supports what the school is doing simply because at that level we address the needs of the child, not just their academic needs. They might make mistakes and they learn from them but they can’t say ‘I never knew’ because they have been exposed to these decision making situations. They are accountable and right from Year 7 we are continuously informing them. I think that’s very good in the world today. (T/L1)

T/L8 concurred with this statement about the provision of ‘informed choice’. She suggested, “It depends on the personality of the individual student and all we can do is present opportunities, thoughts and ideas in the best possible way and then it’s about informed choices”. T/L3 implied that MIS was more successful in this area of affective education than local schools in Hong Kong, arguing, “We give them the appropriate programmes and counselling. Compared to local schools, we are better at preparing our students. They are more flexible, confident and more holistically developed”. T/L6 thought highly of the Pastoral system at MIS and commented:

I feel that this is one of the great strengths of the school. By comparative standards, we do a very good job in this area. We are never going to meet everybody’s needs and many kids will switch off to pastoral programmes thinking that they know it already. We are attempting to get the kids to be proactive and think about the challenges and issues that they are going to face both in their own lives and outside in other environments outside of Hong Kong. (T/L6)

T/L7 reflected on the success achieved by MIS graduates as evidence of a supportive and nurturing school environment as follows:
The Alumni all seem to be doing very well, those in careers seem happy and doing interesting things and not just business and law that you think Hong Kong would direct them to. So I would say, when you look at our graduates as evidence, I would say we have done a good job. (T/L7)

Similarly, T/L8 suggested that the affective educational experiences gained by MIS students would stay with them in their future careers. She said, “I think some of them will be in these multinational companies being a driving force behind whatever service work they do because they have grown up in a culture where it’s important at school”. T/L8 also commented on the balance that the students have to achieve between the competing expectations at home and school, contending:

I think many of our students know that the values at home and at school are very different. They play the game at school and they play the game at home. Then probably when they go out into the wide world, they have a balance of both. The home culture would be very goal, business, and money oriented. Getting the best grades, into the best college, the best degree, the best firm. (T/L8)

5.7.3 Parents’ responses
Two parents, P6 and P7, commented specifically on this area of the research. P6 was of the opinion that the school achieved a good balance between the different aspects of a holistic education. He explained it this way:

I think MIS cultivates a good balance of academics with societal values. The students don’t just have strong brains, they also have to serve and care about the community. MIS also helps build their self-confidence, as they are able to analyse problems and to develop independent critical thinking skills as the mission statement says. This build-up of confidence and independence is critical and most of the credit goes to the school. This has prepared them well for later life. If the Mandarin language could play a more influential role in school, that could be even better. (P6)

P7 was equally satisfied with the school’s efforts in this direction. He noted, “I think the school does a lot to prepare the students for life after school. The advice about University
choice, I appreciate that”. P7 also went on to comment on his hopes for the assistance of the school’s broader life-skills training in reinforcing his message for his daughter, adding:

I hope my daughter will learn to be internationally minded. I always talk to her about the need to respect all people. I tell her not to gang up with the rich people in school and don’t show them that you have a good life. I tell her that she has to be very humble. I think she does follow this at school. (P7)

5.7.4 Summary
This section indicated considerable imbalance between the perceptions of the students, teachers/leaders and parents on this issue. The five teachers/leaders who commented were quite confident in their philosophical assertions about the positive impact of the holistic education provided at the school. The two parents and one student focussed on specific knowledge/skills/traits that they felt the school had helped to inculcate.

5.8 Conclusions
This section examines how the three stakeholder groups addressed the Specific Research Questions and identifies emerging themes and patterns occurring in the data. The paragraphs below follow the order of the sections above. Firstly, concerning SRQ6, What does the concept of ‘international school/education mean to you? Does the school provide this? How important is the International Baccalaureate curriculum ‘through-train’ in years 7-13 in enhancing ‘internationalism’ in the Secondary School? The contributing factors identified with the concept of an international school/education were; the diversity of the student and teacher populations, the use of English as the medium of instruction, and the international education aspects embedded in the curriculum. Concerning diversity of the student population, all eight students, six teachers/leaders and two parents felt that a heterogeneous multi-cultural student body was a necessary, or at least typical, characteristic of an international school. However, five of the students, six teachers/leaders and two parents indicated that the MIS student body was largely homogeneous (ethnic Chinese) and therefore did not meet this criterion. Three other parents felt that when compared only to local schools, that have Chinese student populations, the MIS student body was more diverse or at least represented a more international range of experiences.

Turning to the diversity of the teacher population, five students, five teachers/leaders and
four parents all indicated that the mix of teachers with different nationalities and cultural backgrounds was an important contributing factor to the international education at MIS. This factor was very important in helping students to gain a ‘world-view’ and to develop their intercultural understanding. The overwhelming conclusion from the data analysis was that the school definitely possessed this ‘international factor’. Two students, four teachers/leaders and one parent specifically referred to the use of English as the language medium of a school as an ‘international’ factor and all were of the opinion that MIS measured up well. Four of the teachers/leaders referred to students being able to transfer anywhere in the world, given the English medium of instruction, as an essential benefit of an ‘international’ programme of study. For the students and parents, as discussed in Chapter 4, an English medium education opened the doors to the further education opportunities that they aspired to, in English speaking countries. However, the numbers reported as commenting specifically on this factor are misleading, since for many students and parents, the reason they chose MIS was the English medium of instruction.

Two teachers/leaders and four parents specifically identified the MIS curriculum as an international factor, the teachers from the pragmatic standpoint of transferability, and the parents in terms of learning and teaching methods. In response to specific questions about the significance of the IB programmes (MYP and DP) two students, four teachers/leaders and three parents considered that the IB was a world-renowned brand that was indicative of a high educational standard. Three teachers/leaders felt that the IB programmes positively influenced the students’ international understanding. Significantly, six of the eight parents were concerned about the change from the IGCSE to the MYP in terms of the loss academic rigour and reduced examination practice for the students before the IBDP.

Concerning SRQ3, How successfully does the school develop in students an awareness and appreciation of Chinese artistic, literary, and cultural traditions along with those of the rest of the world, in particular, the Anglo-Western? There was clear agreement from the majority of all groups that Chinese culture (art, music, and literature) was under-celebrated at the school. In contrast, five students, three teachers/leaders and four parents all acknowledged that Anglo-Western culture dominated the school, reinforced through the media in Hong Kong.

Concerning SRQ5, Does the school successfully develop in students a strong sense of multi-cultural values, especially emphasising the need for altruism in a global community where people of different cultures, traditions and backgrounds regularly interact? Five
students, four teachers/leaders and three parents felt that the experiential learning through Project Week activities definitely helped develop the students’ intercultural understanding, while two parents expressed scepticism about the value of such activities. Finally, turning to the responses to SRQ4, which reads, With what success does the school prepare students to deal proactively with the challenges that face them both at MIS and in later life, perhaps in International settings? Taking a longer term-view, five teachers/leaders were confident that the students’ benefited from the life-skills education provided at the school. However, and taking a shorter-term view, only two parents and one student expressed positive perceptions of the value of such affective learning opportunities provided by the school.
6 Conclusions

6.1 Discussion of the research findings

6.2 Implications of the research findings

6.3 Recommendations

6.4 Evaluation of the research

6.5 Suggestions for further research

6.6 Endnote: Current developments at the Mandarin International School

Introduction

The summaries and conclusions in Chapters 4 and 5 describe, in detail, the significant findings concerning the Specific Research Questions focussing on the dual-language approach and the international education ethos of the Mandarin International School. To clarify, most of these questions address two or more aspects of a phenomenon and in three cases (1, 2 and 6) are composites of two further sub-questions. The discussion in the first section draws together, and puts into context, these findings in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2. In the second section, the implications filter out from the significant areas of convergence and divergence between the three stakeholder groups. The recommendations section identifies ways that MIS can change to address the implications to ameliorate the sources of tension within, or between, the stakeholder groups revealed by this research. The evaluation section that follows includes a discussion of the connectedness of the study, the limitations of the research questions and the method used. Finally, the suggestions for further research examine the suitability of the research method to other international school contexts and individual researchers.

6.1 Discussion of the research findings

The data analysis reveals a number of convergent viewpoints (meaning, in this context, situations where four or more members of each stakeholder group of eight members share a common view) that emerge from the data. Divergent viewpoints held by the three stakeholder groups, which may be sources of tension within the community, also emerge from the data. This chapter presents these findings in relation to the Specific Research Questions to which they pertain and to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. The
abbreviations used for the three stakeholder groups are S for students, P for Parents and T/L for teachers/leaders.

6.1.1 Dual-Language approach
This section addresses Specific Research Questions 1 and 2 that are concerned with the dual-language approach.

Specific Research Question 1:
*
How does the school help develop dual-language proficiency in English and Mandarin and to what extent does the school ensure that competency in these languages includes fluency in use and their employment as the working languages within the school? Does it manage to achieve a successful balance between the two?
*

All groups (5S, 6T/L, 4P) agreed that the case Secondary school was an English medium school with compulsory Mandarin and that the terminology used to describe language learning and learners, such as ‘bilingual’, appears generally poorly understood. However, the parents and teachers/leaders (6P, 5T/L) agreed closely that the dual-language commitment enriched the school and for those six parents, it was an important factor in their choice of school. Half of the parents (4P) expressed disappointment that Mandarin was not a lingua franca of the case Secondary school, suggesting a mismatch of their preconceptions and the reality. Three parents suggested that enthusiasm for the Mandarin language needed cultivating in ways that were interesting, stimulating and relevant. A significant number of teachers/leaders (4T/L) described the English medium of instruction, as an essential benefit of the ‘international’ programme of study at MIS, which opened the doors to further educational opportunities in English-speaking countries. However, only small numbers of students and parents (2S, 1P) commented on this factor, perhaps because it was obvious and did not require stating since the reason they chose MIS was the English medium of instruction. Thus, common appreciation of both the language demographics of the case Secondary school, and the goals of the dual-language programme, appears lacking in the MIS community.

Previously discussed research by Haywood (2007), Shin (2005), Genesee (2004) and Coulmas (2005) helps clarify some of the language issues. As Haywood (2007, p.123) suggests, “Bilingualism is the normal way of life for millions of people across the globe, and it is increasingly one of the defining characteristics of the international school...”.
However, bilingualism is a poorly understood concept, as MIS appears to exemplify. It does not imply equal proficiency, according to Shin (2005), and bilingual education is “…the use of two or more languages of instruction … and proficiency in two languages is not necessarily a desired outcome” (p.31). Most additively (Carder, 2006) bilingual students, in the case Secondary school, fall into the semi lingual description afforded by Shin, due to the ethnolinguistic subgroups to which they belong (Genesee et al, 2004).

The parents and teacher/leaders in this study appear to concur with the business and education worldviews in the literature that, although rare, (according to Coulmas, 2005) fully balanced bilingualism is a highly desirable quality. Educationally, there is research evidence to suggest that there are cognitive and intellectual advantages from bringing up a child bilingually from birth (Genesee, 2004) as discussed by Lindholm-Leary (2001), Kusuma-Powell (2004) and Shin (2005). Edwards (2004), and Li and Lee (2004) emphasise the advantages in the global market place experienced by bilinguals. While some parents want Mandarin to have an equal usage status in the Secondary school to English, the fact that only a minority of the students are at the bilingual end of the language continuum (Genesee, 2004) prevents this. The school should respond to this situation in some way. It could, for instance only allow near-bilinguals into the school or it could by provide alternative pathways to the students.

Specific Research Question 2:
How does Cantonese, the lingua franca of Hong Kong, affect the acquisition of English and Mandarin dual language proficiency? What effect does Cantonese have on the other two languages and cultures?

All three groups (6S, 4P, and 4T/L) agreed strongly that a Cantonese family background had a negative impact on a student’s English and Mandarin language learning. The parents who expressed an opinion did not expect or want Cantonese spoken at school. However, a significant number of teachers/leaders (5T/L) were concerned that, as the host language of Hong Kong, Cantonese played no part in the life of the school. Moreover, these teachers/leaders reported a lack of transparency concerning the status of Cantonese at school, indicating that, as their mother tongue, many students spoke it in the corridors and even in class. There is a case for claiming that the leaders of the school need to urgently address and clarify this issue so that all members of the school community ‘know where they stand’. All of the stakeholders recognise that outside of school, the students live in a
Cantonese-speaking society to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the home situation. By not recognising Cantonese, MIS runs the risk that both the language and the local culture have less power in the eyes of the students (Shin, 2005). For mother tongue Cantonese speakers, there is a risk that the gain of Mandarin (in addition to English) may result in subtractive bilingualism (Carder, 2006). The teachers/leaders’ (5T/L) concerns appear to be that the fundamental link between the Cantonese language and Hong Kong culture is too important in the lives of the students for the school to ignore in its bilingual English-Mandarin policy. This concurs closely with the findings discussed in Chapter 2 of Fantini (1991), Li (1996), Aronin and Ó Laoire (2004) and Shin (2005). However, neither the students nor the parents appeared to share this concern.

The implications of this finding are that the preclusion of Cantonese by Mandarin and English in order to meet the school mission, may not be an educationally sound strategy because the students may sense a loss of cultural identity. If this is the case, the host language and culture should play a role in the life of the school, and the school would need to find ways to include them.

6.1.2 International education ethos
This section first addresses Specific Research Question 6, which subsumes Question 5, followed by Questions 3 and 4.

Specific Research Question 6:
*What does the concept of ‘international school/education mean to you? Does the school provide this? How important is the International Baccalaureate curriculum ‘through-train’ in years 7-13 in enhancing ‘internationalism’ in the Secondary School?*

Specific Research Question 5:
*Does the school successfully develop in students a strong sense of multi-cultural values, especially emphasising the need for altruism in a global community where people of different cultures, traditions and backgrounds regularly interact?*

All three groups (5S, 5T/L, 4P) recognised cultural diversity of the teacher population as an important criterion for defining an international school and agreed that MIS exhibited this characteristic. The stakeholders indicate that this characteristic is necessary to enable the students to gain a broad ‘world view’ and for developing their own intercultural
understanding. This data concurs with features one and two of an effective intercultural understanding programme, identified by Hill (2006), where the teachers provide exposure to cultural diversity and are role models for international mindedness. It also supports the view of Codrington (2004, p.181) that the teachers, “…define the identity of an international school…” and “…implement the long term vision”. However, the notion of student diversity presented significant tensions between the three groups. The students and teachers/leaders (5S and 6T/L) agreed that a heterogeneous, culturally diverse student population was a typical characteristic of an international school. They also agreed that MIS did not meet this criterion, having a largely homogeneous (Hong Kong Chinese) student population. Three parents, while not generally concerned about this factor, suggested that there actually was significant diversity within the student population, when compared to local schools in Hong Kong.

The perceptions of the students and teachers about what makes a school international, again, appear to concur with views in the literature. These views include the need for exposure to cultural diversity within a school (Hill, 2006), the appreciation of diversity (Bartlett and Tangye, 2007) and “…being interested in and informed about other people and parts of the world…” (Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000, p.120). However, the students and teachers/leaders views that the case Secondary school did not meet this ‘international measure’ imply that the potential for the students to develop intercultural understanding is limited. The parental view did not similarly reflect this concern about MIS and this difference of perception suggests that the notion of cultural diversity as a prerequisite for intercultural understanding needs exploring and discussing in the MIS community.

The case Secondary school teachers are mostly English-speaking Westerners and the majority of the students and parents are Hong Kong Chinese. The English-speaking teachers largely provide the international cultural perspectives for the students through day-to-day interactions, but only the relatively few teachers of Mandarin can do the same for Chinese culture. The large imbalance in sheer numbers between the Western staff and Chinese Mandarin teachers makes the predominance of the Anglo-Western culture easy to understand. Another way that the Secondary school actively increases student exposure to cultural diversity is through Project Week, as the responses to Specific Research Question 5 indicated. There was agreement between the students and teachers/leaders (5S, 4T/L, 3P) that Project Week service activities were important in engendering intercultural
understanding. Three parents concurred, but two others expressed scepticism about the real impact of such experiences on the students. The students and teachers/leaders thus appeared to support the “…exposure to cultural diversity outside the school” (Hill, 2006. p.14) in promoting effective intercultural understanding. They also concurred with the Council of International Schools (CIS) facet of internationalism that the internationally minded student has “…a sense of personal responsibility to a wider community…” (Bartlett and Tangye, 2007, p.5) and the research findings described by Arenas et al (2006).

Four parents identified the curriculum as an ‘international factor’ at MIS, in terms of the learning and teaching methods in evidence. However, a significant number of both teachers/leaders and parents (4T/L, 4P) considered that the IB was a world-renowned brand that was indicative of a high educational standard. Of the teachers/leaders, interestingly, only three felt that the IB programmes significantly influenced the students’ international understanding. While the parents and teachers/leaders acknowledged the strength of the IB brand, these findings reflected the lack of focus on the ‘international’ in the International Baccalaureate that the students and teachers/leaders felt. Thus, the current research initiative into the meaning and translation into practice of intercultural awareness going on at the IBO, the CIS and elsewhere appears both necessary and relevant for the practitioners and customers of the IB programmes.

Finally, six parents expressed concerned about the change from the IGCSE to the MYP, in terms of the perceived loss of academic rigour and reduced examination practice for the students before the IBDP. This level of concern was significant and indicated that the change represented a greater challenge to the wider MIS societal culture than to the School itself. International teachers are aware and have first hand knowledge of process-driven education and the value and nature of formative assessments. The parents largely understand summative assessments as a measure of student attainment and, of course, of school quality. Thus, to the financiers of the school (the parents), exam results are an annual check on the performance of the teachers and on the standards of the school. It is important to note here that these concerns appear groundless given the IBDP examination performance of the last two cohorts of students (2006 and 2007). These groups of students, who performed as well, if not better, than previous cohorts, had both progressed from the IBMYP to the IBDP.
Specific Research Question 3:

*How successfully does the school develop in students an awareness and appreciation of Chinese artistic, literary, and cultural traditions along with those of the rest of the world, in particular, the Anglo-Western?*

There was strong agreement between all three groups (5S, 5P, 6T/L) that there was insufficient celebration of Chinese culture and all groups perceived that the school culture was very Western oriented (5S, 4P, 3T/L). As described by Yuen and Byram (2007), Hong Kong and China are culturally quite different and the roots of many MIS students and parents are in the Hong Kong Cantonese culture. Therefore, in addition to the major mainland ‘Chinese’ cultural events such as the Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese New Year, MIS could incorporate and celebrate the local cultural heritage, such as art, music and theatre. The school is missing this rich cultural heritage (Simandiraki, 2006) and risks reducing the power of the local language and culture in the minds of the students’. As discussed earlier, all three groups perceived the Secondary school as an English medium school, where English (with Cantonese) is the casual language and Anglo-Western culture provides the popular images. The implication of the above is that the school leadership must respond to the multiple needs of the students and parents by evaluating whether the current structure of the Secondary school is effective in promoting the dual-culture goals.

Specific Research Question 4:

*With what success does the school prepare students to deal proactively with the challenges that face them both at MIS and in later life, perhaps in International settings?*

A significant number of teachers/leaders (5T/L) were of the opinion that the life-skills education programme at MIS was important in preparing students for the future. However, only small numbers of students (1S) and parents (2P) concurred, indicating either that they held different philosophical views of this area of affective education, or that this is an area of tension.

The overall picture that has arisen from this small-scale study of how the eight members of the three stakeholder groups perceived the case Secondary school is informative, and reveals significant implications for MIS.
6.2 Implications of the research findings

The following six implications derive directly from the above discussion and therefore emanate from the data that emerged concerning each of the Specific Research Questions. These clearly articulated implications, captured from the findings, provide for the subsequent synthesis of the recommendations.

1. The data imply that, while clearly important to the parents and teachers/leaders, the dual-language goals of the school are unclear to many stakeholders, as is the terminology of ‘dual-language ability’ and ‘dual-language education’. The case Secondary school is an English medium school where, on a continuum of Mandarin and English ability, some of the students are bilingual but most are semi-lingual in Mandarin and English. Mandarin does not have the same status as English in the School (most parents would prefer equal status) because there is not a critical mass of casual Mandarin speakers. Thus, English predominates as the lingua franca of the case Secondary school, with considerable casual Cantonese use, but little Mandarin. Further implications are that there is a mismatch between parental expectations regarding Mandarin use and the reality and that the parents want Mandarin delivered in more interesting, stimulating and relevant ways. From the teachers/leaders’ perspectives, however, the academic and casual English medium of the school serves the long-term ‘international’ goals of students concerning their University and career aspirations.

2. Hong Kong is a world city where English is a powerful language for the internationally mobile students and parents at MIS. Cantonese is the host language and is widely used informally in the case Secondary school. However, the host language (and the culture associated with it) is not part of the MIS culture and this may lead to cultural confusion for many students. They reside in Hong Kong and may live an almost totally Cantonese linguistic and cultural life outside school, yet within school, that life is not ‘valued’. All three groups recognise that a Cantonese family background has a mostly unhelpful impact on English and Mandarin learning. All three groups also agreed that there was not enough celebration of Chinese culture in the very Anglo-Western oriented Secondary school. That the school largely ignores the host language and culture is of particular concern to the teachers/leaders. A recommendation is that the school explores the greater recognition and inclusion of Cantonese and the local culture in the life of the school. This, in turn, might assist in gaining a better understanding of the
complexity of the language issues faced by the students, particularly those living a Cantonese home life. Indeed, the school could help the students “...develop a positive social representation of their own language...” (Dabène, 1994, p.51). However, in the present situation, this would compromise the Mandarin (and English) language and culture goals in the Secondary school. After extensive consultation with all stakeholder groups, the school could consider alternative models that might better serve the needs of the students.

3. All groups agreed that the Secondary school has a culturally diverse teacher population and that this is important in enhancing the students’ intercultural awareness. However, the teachers/leaders and students agreed that, while a culturally diverse student population is typical of international schools, the Secondary school did not exhibit this characteristic. This implies a divergence of views about the need for a culturally diverse student population between the parents and the other stakeholder groups. The school could adopt an enrolment policy that welcomes a wider range of cultures, including more Mainland students. The present drive for high Mandarin standards for all students is a limiting factor to the cultural diversity that the dual-language, dual-culture goals can support. Enrolling more Mainland students would quickly raise the Mandarin standards of the school, although this would have an impact on the English standards.

4. While the students and teachers/leaders agreed that Project Week service activities engender intercultural awareness and understanding, there was some divergence of views within the parent group. Given that both the IBO and the CIS, as discussed earlier, support this concept, the implication is that school leaders need to inform the parents of the purpose of such activities more clearly.

5. The parents and teachers/leaders both agreed that the IB is a brand recognised as representing high educational standards, but only the parents considered that the MIS Secondary curriculum actively enhances ‘internationalism’. The implication is that better dissemination of the current research by both the IBO and the CIS to the teachers and parents is advisable in order to refocus on the goals of increasing international awareness and understanding.
6. The implication of the findings with respect to the life skills’ education is that the parents’ and teachers/leaders’ understanding of the goals of the programme relating to preparation for the future, including life in international settings, do not coincide.

6.3 Recommendations

Recommendations, for both strategic long-term planning and for immediate implementation, emerge from these implications. The strategic recommendations present a vision for the increased effectiveness of the case Secondary school in achieving the dual-language, dual-culture goals. The recommendations for immediate implementation concern issues that need addressing in order to improve the understanding among the stakeholders of some of the goals of the case Secondary school.

6.3.1 Strategic recommendations

The implications listed above clearly indicate that the MIS Secondary School is not an English-Mandarin dual-language school in the sense that Mandarin cannot ever reach an equal status with English under present circumstances. There appears to be a stalemate where there is a compromise between the dual-language, dual-culture goals and the curriculum time in order to have all students studying the same curriculum in the same way. The implications of this study lead to some clear recommendations for the school that would help it to provide a better fit with the dual-language, dual-culture goals. The main recommendation is that all students should continue to complete Primary school on the 50:50 English and Mandarin curriculum basis as at present and then choose between two options in Secondary school. They could opt to continue the 50:50 Mandarin and English curriculum stream for Years 7-11, or opt to choose an English medium curriculum with compulsory Mandarin. In the first option, all subjects would be available in both English and Mandarin and in the latter; Mandarin would have the same time allocation as any subject from Year 7 onwards, representing a significant reduction from the present allocation. Students in the ‘dual-language stream’ would choose to study subjects in either English or Mandarin, but all students in both streams would continue to study the IBMYP from Years 7-11. The Diploma Programme (DP), with its emphasis on externally assessed examinations, is currently only available in English, French and/or Spanish; hence, the MIS students from the two MYP streams would study the DP in English as at present. For all students, Chinese would be one of the six diploma subjects, but all of the students from the ‘dual-language stream’ could take the bilingual diploma.
There are two possible options for delivering this new dual-curriculum in the Secondary school. The Secondary school could operate two Years 7-11 streams on the present campus: a ‘dual-language stream’ and an ‘international stream’ or it could open another campus for one of the streams, with the other staying on the present campus. Having both streams on the same campus would have both advantages and disadvantages. For example, teachers could work in both streams and take advantage of the excellent facilities on the current campus. However, the numbers of parents and students opting for the two streams could result in significant imbalance and management problems and most importantly, this model could not support any growth in student numbers, since the school is already at capacity. There is a shortage of international school places available in Hong Kong for expatriates and locals alike, so a second campus would provide additional capacity. Opening a separate campus for the ‘dual-language stream’ would allow for expansion of student numbers on both campuses, under the brand name of the Mandarin International School, and is the preferred option of the researcher.

The change to a two-stream Secondary school would have an impact on all the elements of the school, namely the structure, culture, technology and the people (Everard and Morris, 1996). The two streams could either come back together after Year 11 to form one DP cohort on one campus, since all would study the DP in the medium of English, or each campus could run the DP. The latter alternative would allow for the expansion of student numbers on both campuses. Better meeting the dual-language, dual-culture goals is of course the ‘driving force’ of this recommendation, not expansion, but since the school is over-subscribed, it is a serious and viable option. The current ‘role culture’ (Handy, 1993) would not have to change, but the hierarchical structure might need freeing-up, with Heads of Departments replaced by co-ordinators of subjects in the two streams (or schools) working under heads of faculty, for example. The culture of the two streams/schools would be naturally significantly different, as might the types of teachers. Bilingual English and Mandarin teachers, recruited to work in the ‘dual-language stream’, would teach their subject in either language, whereas teachers recruited for the ‘international stream’ would not be required to speak Mandarin. In terms of sharing the mission and dual-language, dual-culture goals of the school, the two-stream model proposed would be much clearer to new staff.

The ‘dual-language stream’ would emphasise the Chinese part of the name and the ‘international stream’ the ‘international’ in the name of the school. Students in the ‘dual-
language’ stream would practice Mandarin at home, requiring a commitment from parents to work with the school to realise the dual-language goals, whereas students in the ‘international stream’ would probably not speak Mandarin at home. Students in the ‘international stream’ could speak Cantonese casually, but not those in the ‘dual-language stream’, and all would learn about Hong Kong Cantonese culture. This ‘one school, two streams approach’ would seek to encourage greater cultural diversity than at present, in a school freed up from the present compromises. Indeed, there could be greater celebration of cultural diversity, with a ‘Chinese week’ and an ‘International week’. If on separate campuses, the opportunities for cross-cultural curriculum work leading to greater intercultural understanding of the students is an obvious possibility.

The school could market itself as catering to the needs of parents wanting their children to achieve as near to bilingual ability as possible, and to those wanting a high quality English language education with some Mandarin knowledge. This model would provide for an expansion in student numbers in the Secondary school, and growth in the respected ‘brand’ of the Mandarin International School, while better meeting the needs of the parents and students. Such a model is not new in Hong Kong; for example, the French International School operates French and English sections, and the Hong Kong Japanese School and the Japanese International School operate in Japanese and English respectively. Schools such as these do not adopt the ‘one school fits all’ approach that MIS currently does, but cater for students wanting to study in their ‘home’ language and those wanting to study in English. The school should keep the parental community informed about developments in academic research concerning international schools by establishing a forum for disseminating and discussing the current IBO and CIS research findings.

6.3.2 Recommendations for immediate implementation by the Secondary school

An immediate recommendation is that the school leadership clarifies the current dual-language goals to all stakeholders, including the terminology of dual-language ability and education, so that an informed debate can take place about the future direction of the school. In the light of the major recommendation above, the school needs to understand the parents’ aspirations and their expectations of the dual-language programme. Regarding the present situation in the Secondary school, another immediate recommendation is that the Chinese department does all it can to find ways of cultivating enthusiasm and interest in Mandarin in ways that are stimulating, contemporary and relevant. Crucially also, there is a need to incorporate and celebrate local Cantonese Hong Kong culture in the life of the
As a matter of urgency, the Secondary school should seek to improve understanding of the goals of increasing intercultural awareness through Project Week in the parent community. A further recommendation is for an investigation into the divergence of views about the need for a culturally diverse student population in the Secondary school. The aims and goals of the aspects of the life skills programme in the Secondary school, concerned with preparing for life in international settings, also need exploring with input from parents and students. These issues directly relate to the ‘international ethos’ of the school and the recommended move to a ‘one school, two streams’ solution would address them.

6.4 Evaluation of the research

The Main Research Question asked:

*What do the three main stakeholder groups (parents, senior leaders/teachers and students) expect and experience from the dual-language approach and the international education ethos at the Mandarin International School in Hong Kong?*

The Main Research Question and the Specific Research Questions were narrow in focus and, in hindsight, could have explored the school organisational culture, as the recommendations concern school improvement issues. However, the discussion highlights the close connectivity in addressing the Main Research Question and reveals areas of convergence and divergence in the views - both within and between - the three stakeholder groups. In the introduction, the researcher stated that ‘it is questionable whether the current dual-language, dual-culture goals of the school are achievable at all’. The implications and recommendations indicate in the present circumstances, these goals are not achievable and change is required. The implications and recommendations are valid in as far as they represent the views of the eight participating members of the stakeholder groups but they do not extend to all members of the stakeholder groups or the wider school community.

Although maximum variation sampling captured a wide range of views from each stakeholder group, the sample size of eight participants from each group limited the opportunity to saturate the data. The obvious limitations of time and resources available to the sole researcher decided the scope of the research and dictated the sample size. A small-scale project such as this, using inductive methods, is appropriate for a small group of researchers, who share the work of interviewing and data analysis. It is important to
acknowledge that these research findings represent a picture of the school, from the stakeholders’ perspectives at the time of the interviews. This perspective is, of course, fluid and open to change, and ongoing consultation with the stakeholders over a longer period would have informed the research.

6.5 Suggestions for further work

The main recommendation would result in enormous changes in the structure, technology, people and culture of the organisation. It would require significant community-wide consultation in order to gauge the broad spectrum of opinions and to produce a road map for the way forward. Finding out about the histories of other international schools that have faced similar situations, would be important. A feasibility study, undertaken by the Board and School Leadership would need to follow - to evaluate whether expansion and the opening of a new campus are possibilities. The recommendations for immediate implementation require a pragmatic approach from the school to address them in the most practicable way.

For an individual researcher, this research method requires a significant amount of time and resources. Ideally, in a large school, a small team of researchers, sharing the interviewing and data analysis would work on such a project and progress quickly from data collection to data analysis and then to recommendations for the school. The qualitative in-depth interview method captures the true perceptions of the participants far more effectively than any quantitative, statistical method and is useful in finding out about the culture of an international school. It is applicable to any school needing to understand the perspectives of different stakeholder groups within the community, whether in relation to a dual-language programme, intercultural awareness, or any other issue that is a cause of tension.

6.6 Endnote: recent developments at the Mandarin International School in Hong Kong

In August 2007, the school created the position of Deputy Head of School, a senior, whole-school administrative position with overall responsibility for the Mandarin programme. In November 2007, focus groups of staff and parents formed to explore strategic challenges faced by the school in teaching excellence, delivery of Chinese, library and information
literacy, school life and local and global communities. Committees have evolved from these focus groups and are concerned with the both the Primary and Secondary sections whereas this research study focussed only on the Secondary school. However, it is clear that the issues investigated in this study are relevant to the whole community of Mandarin International School stakeholders and the strategic recommendations present a radical vision that could both strengthen the mission and secure the future of the school.
References


Yamato, Y. (2003) *Education in the market place: Hong Kong’s International schools and their mode of operation*, Hong Kong: CERC University of Hong Kong.


# Appendix 1: List of Parent transcript data labels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Sub-SRQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dual Language approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEM</td>
<td>Cantonese Effect on Mandarin</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNEM</td>
<td>Cantonese Negative Effect on Mandarin</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPEM</td>
<td>Cantonese Positive Effect on Mandarin</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Cantonese Use</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>Dual Language Programme</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUCU</td>
<td>Dual Culture</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEC</td>
<td>English effect on Cantonese</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMLEA</td>
<td>English and Mandarin Learning Issues</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUAH</td>
<td>English Use at Home</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUAS</td>
<td>English Use at School</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAMOT</td>
<td>Language as Motivation for Joining MIS</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTO</td>
<td>Mother Tongue Issues</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUAH</td>
<td>Mandarin Use At Home</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUAS</td>
<td>Mandarin Use At School</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUWW</td>
<td>Mandarin Use in the Wider World</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>Student Ability in Mandarin</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAME</td>
<td>Student Ability in Mandarin and English</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOE</td>
<td>School Management of English</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPOM</td>
<td>School Promotion of Mandarin</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TASCCHK</td>
<td>Traditional and Simplified Characters in HK and China</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Education ethos</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAC</td>
<td>Anglo American Culture</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOC</td>
<td>Awareness of Other Cultures</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOCPW</td>
<td>Awareness of other Cultures through Project week</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>3b&amp;5b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTCHI</td>
<td>Attitude to China</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMSERV</td>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>5b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULCONF</td>
<td>Cultural Confusion</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>5a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Diverse Students</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DT</td>
<td>Diverse Teachers</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKB</td>
<td>Hong Kong Broader Perspectives</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBIA</td>
<td>IB International Awareness</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBVA</td>
<td>IB Value</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU</td>
<td>Intercultural Awareness</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IG/MYP</td>
<td>IGCSE &amp; IBDP linked concerns</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGDP</td>
<td>IGCSE &amp; IBDP linked concerns</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE</td>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIE</td>
<td>Meaning of International Education</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOMIS</td>
<td>Meaning of MIS Culture</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1b&amp;6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTFC</td>
<td>Motivation for Choosing MIS 1b &amp; 6b</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1b&amp;6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYP</td>
<td>MYP concerns</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPCC</td>
<td>School Promotion of Chinese Culture</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>3a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOMISIS</td>
<td>View Of MIS in Society</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1b&amp;6b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* not included in the study)
Appendix 2: Tabulated Parent data for SRQ1ai: Mandarin motivation and proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DLP</th>
<th>Table 101: Dual Language Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1.1</td>
<td>Actually, a dual-language education is actually a tremendously ambitious project and if the langs. are M and E, I think that the odds are against success rather than for success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1.2</td>
<td>This is because if you think of a school that was dual lang. in E and French or E and German, there is so much more relation between the languages, culturally, philosophically, in every way, so that you are already multiply your chances of success I think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1.3</td>
<td>What I am trying to say is that even if you have an equally international distribution of students in High School compared with HKIS, for example, not every child is going to take to this dual-language learning equally well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1.4</td>
<td>And I think that automatically those children who don’t adapt well to this dual-language business particularly because it is a combination of E and M and not French and E or Spanish and E, are going to drop out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1.5</td>
<td>By the time you get into the Secondary level the families that are left are families who for cultural or whatever reasons have a commitment to beating their kids over the head with M!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1.6</td>
<td>I tell parents you’ve made a choice by virtue of sending your child to a school like this an when you put two such different cultures and languages you can’t expect them to develop on a 50:50 basis - it’s just not real. The reality is that it will be more like 80:20 but whatever that 20 may be, it’s already better than nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2.1</td>
<td>Do you think our mission statement with the dual language approach, drives MIS towards really catering for Chinese kids rather than other nationalities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3.1</td>
<td>MIS is the only school that has some success in achieving dual-language in E and C, unfortunately in HK. But it depends on what you mean by successful - if it means that if I put my child in China, would he survive? Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4.2</td>
<td>Now do you think the kids really love M and use it voluntarily rather than being asked to? I don’t think we have got to that point yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4.3</td>
<td>It is very difficult because we have to be realistic in several things. The family background, not all are Chinese speaking and for non-Chinese speaking families, if you require the child to be absolutely fluent in Chinese I don’t think it’s totally realistic particularly when they get to Secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4.4</td>
<td>I think it is a very smart idea for the school to stream the students according to their competency and also the family commitment, because you really need the family support particularly in those non-Chinese speaking families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4.5</td>
<td>It’s almost impossible for them to be in the top M set as a first language because they can’t practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5.1</td>
<td>By the time they are in Secondary there is no problem although they go home and speak C and speak C with their friends but they do not have to think twice before they answer anything in E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| P5.2 | This never happened on the M side and a lot of people remain second, and actually I would not classify that as the second language because a second
language is one in which you can read and write, but don’t necessarily think in. You can be slow but you shouldn’t have to think carefully before you utter the next sentence.

**P5.3**
I did try but honestly it didn’t work and I have to say that the school was not encouraging it. It was not until a few years ago that announcements were made in both languages. In fact if I was a parent who was not comfortable speaking E, I would be a bit reluctant to send my children here.

**P5.4**
It’s very important because for logic, you have to go back to your mother tongue. Secondary is a bigger problem, M is only one subject; it is not a dual-language school.

**P5.5**
I would not expect a student from a dual-language school to be totally bilingual. I would say you couldn’t have a person with 60:40; there are always the mother tongue thoughts.

**P5.6**
For dual-language you are very successful if you are 60:40. At French immersion schools in Canada - that means the families are not F background - the kids go home and speak E. At school they have to speak F, but in the playground they speak E, but they are all fluent in F.

**P5.7**
People have high expectations of them, and they feel that actually, yes, I wish I could read Chinese faster. I know so many kids who felt that they actually missed out so badly and they make a lot of effort to make up for it.

**P6.1**
I have my reservations. I do not think the school has been too successful. In fact, I think that it is challenging to maintain a balance between M and E, and inevitably, if you are good in E you are more geared up to Western culture. Your classmates talking about Western culture influence you. Therefore, E is intrinsic.

**P6.2**
Don’t get me wrong, the dual-language programme must be the right direction to go. The thing is how technically to we can help the students manage two languages even better. I think the way to go is that we have to be learning M. We have to be more objective.

**P7.1**
My daughter only watches the news in E, whereas I watch in C and M. CIS is 70:30 E to M, but I cannot ask for more as my daughter is fluent in M.

**P7.2**
I think you have to start in primary school and ask them to read Chinese literature, even comics and learn the slang.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTO</th>
<th>Table 108: Mother tongue Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>P1.1</strong></td>
<td>My son goes “what is our first lang.? Do we even have a mother tongue? I cannot honestly answer that. My son is oriental, he’s grown up in HK, Chinese people expect him to be able to speak, read and write much better than he can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P1.2</strong></td>
<td>In reality, all of my children are second language Chinese speakers. I understand why it’s called a mother tongue, because you know fathers don’t actually provide as much support in terms of lang. learning when the kids are younger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P5.1</strong></td>
<td>For Mathematics, you have to go back to your mother tongue, unless the student has been brought up in a bilingual family. I, along with a lot of other people, realise that counting goes right back - you instantly switch back to your mother tongue. I have to think in Chinese when I’m counting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 112: Student Ability in Mandarin**

P1.1 What percentage of Year 10’s would be completely comfortable in an M environment? 60% would be able to rapidly become comfortable and function.

P1.2 Then you realise well maybe the kids have much more fluency and competence in M than we think because in this environment they are not forced to use it but when they are forced to use it, it will all come out.

P3.1 My daughter had a pretty good M standard when she joined MIS as she had a teacher from Beijing in her previous school. Her pronunciation was good and her written C is no problem.

P4.1 M definitely a secondary language, even for first class students comparing written Chinese and E. I think there is still a huge gap between the two and any Personal Project written in Chinese - the parents say whoa!

P6.1 My son always tried to choose the easiest M class in IGCSE and IB just to have a bare pass. As parents, we tried to encourage him to read Chinese books, but he was not interested.

P6.2 You do not have to aim to be a world class author in Chinese, but what could be expected is that you can read and write. At a seminar if you deliver your speech in E, people should be able to have a Q&A session in M.

P6.3 We talk to our friends and the general trend is that people do have high expectations that the children could learn and apply M well.

P7.1 She talks M at home and with her relatives.

P8.1 *Are they happy that they have this dual-language?* I think so, they certainly don’t complain and are just starting to realise from ESF kids who left and went to college and have come back and can’t get jobs. They have then gone to language school in Beijing and have worked very hard for 12 months. The penny is starting to drop.

P8.2 They have both worked hard at it and are doing quite well. They probably wavered a bit in early Secondary and the teachers said not too worry.

**Table 113: Student Ability in Mandarin and English**

P6.1 The ideal case is the student who is fluent, competent, and impeccable in both languages, switching their brain from one to the other very easily.

P6.2 Say a MIS student after graduating from University is given a job in mainland China; he superficially looks Chinese but all the time speaks E and the locals try to speak M with him and they think he is strange. If you are a westerner, doesn’t matter, people don’t expect you to speak M.