

# Final Report:

*What are the benefits of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme for teaching and learning? Perspectives from stakeholders in Australia*

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This is a commissioned report, and expresses the views of the authors and not of the commissioning agency, the International Baccalaureate Organization



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## **Executive Summary**

The report was commissioned by the IB and builds on existing studies on the Middle Years Program. It is the first study to comprehensively examine key ‘insider’ stakeholder perspectives of the benefits of the MYP for teaching and learning in Australia. Specifically it examines the perspectives of seventeen MYP teachers, five MYP Coordinators and six school principals from three public and two private schools, and four representatives from governing bodies and public education authorities. A qualitative research design involving case studies, semi-structured interviews and document analysis was used to gather rich data about insiders’ and key stakeholders’ perspectives of the impact of MYP on teaching and learning addressing the following research questions:

- 1) What are the impediments and enablers of offering the MYP?
- 2) What are the benefits of the MYP for teaching and learning?
- 3) What are the challenges of the MYP for teaching and learning?

Data was triangulated to reveal key themes, benefits and challenges, with recommendations for the IB generated. The key findings are outlined below.

### **Benefits for Learning (L) & Teaching (T)**

- Overwhelming support exists for the aims and approaches of MYP learning framework; the philosophy of the MYP is respected and valued (T).
- More specifically, participants valued the MYP’s pedagogical approach (concept-based, student-inquiry) and assessment framework (L&T).
- Participants believed the MYP promotes approaches to learning that best suit adolescent learners (T).
- Participants believed strongly that the MYP is very effective for promoting students’ academic and non-scholastic development (L).
- Participants believed the MYP develops students’ analytical skills and independent learning (L).
- Participants believed the MYP encourages link between academic subjects and the world beyond the school. They valued its emphasis on local and global citizenship and its ability to promote connections to local community (L).
- The MYP was considered very effective for the development of teachers and a strong tool for school-wide improvement (T).

- The MYP global brand provides a point of difference within the educational marketplace. It allowed schools to attract students with valuable socio-cultural capital, for the benefit of all students in the school (T).

### **Challenges for Learning (L) and Teaching (T)**

- The MYP brings substantial direct and indirect costs to schools (T).
- Working with “two authorities” (the state jurisdiction and the IB) creates challenges for planning, timetabling, assessment and reporting and in turn increased teacher workload and stress (T).
- Participants would like more support and exemplars from IB and their jurisdiction to overcome the perceived ‘gap’ in support.
- The Australian curriculum has adopted features from the IB. This validates the MYP’s relevance and quality but may also undermine the perception that it adds value and in turn question whether benefits outweigh costs.

### **Recommendations**

Very strong support exists for the MYP, but the challenges are not insignificant. To address these challenges, we recommend that the IB consider the following:

- Enhance partnership and trust with jurisdictions to uncover efficiencies, reduce compliance challenges and improve support to schools.
- Work with state jurisdictions to discuss possibilities for increasing access to the MYP in public high schools that serve diverse populations. Schools and communities with diverse populations have fewer opportunities to access the MYP, but the benefits that may accrue could be greater than for other contexts.
- Provide detailed curricular resources and syllabi aligned with the national curriculum, each jurisdiction’s syllabi and the MYP to reduce schools’ workload and accompanying challenges. It is an investment that would value add to the IB.
- Shape the MYP as a unique standalone program that specifically targets adolescents. This would strengthen the MYP’s capacity to support the adolescent phase of learning and their development as capable and confident citizens of the world.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

International schooling is becoming more popular worldwide as a response to globalisation and an increasing recognition of intercultural understanding as a desirable outcome to cultivate in young people (Hayden, 2011). The largest and most widely recognised provider of international schooling is the International Baccalaureate (IB). Established in 1968 in Geneva, the IB introduced the Diploma Programme (DP) specifically targeting Year 11 and 12 students. The original aim of the IB was to provide a reputable and internationally transferable school qualification for expatriate, globally mobile families (Resnik, 2009). As such, IB programmes were offered by international schools that mostly catered to international families. Over time, IB programmes have been adopted by national school systems that want to give their educational programmes a more international focus (Hayden, 2011; Ledger, 2017; Wade & Wolanin, 2013). IB programmes are currently offered in more than 4,000 schools around the globe.

The IB is a highly esteemed learning framework. Based on the principles of concept-based, inquiry and student-centred learning, it is widely viewed as an authentic, rigorous and stimulating learning framework that develops students' abilities to think independently, critically and creatively (Burriss, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Stevenson et al., 2017; Wade & Wolanin, 2013). IB programmes embed learning in real life scenarios, promote global awareness and appreciation for local culture, and develop civic-mindedness through service learning. A welcome antidote to narrow forms of education that focus on "teaching to the test" (Dickson, Perry, & Ledger, 2017), IB programmes utilise a holistic approach to develop a wide range of skills and dispositions. Because of these many benefits, IB programmes are highly sought after and are growing worldwide (Ledger, Vidovich, & O'Donoghue, 2014). They enjoy a positive reputation among academic institutions and families, as a rigorous, concept driven, inquiry-based pedagogical framework that seeks to develop students' knowledge, academic/cognitive skills, attitudes and values. IB programmes are considered by many to offer outstanding preparation for university, lifelong learning, and life as a global citizen (Bunnell, 2015). Many parents believe IB programmes offer a rich curriculum while developing students' cultural fluency (MacKenzie, 2010) and ability to compete in a global market (Hayden, 2011). Furthermore, they are positively regarded by prestigious universities (Doherty, Luke, Shield, & Hincksman, 2012). With rigorous academic preparation coupled with an emphasis on independent research, community service

and a philosophical/ethical component, IB programmes are seen as a 'platinum standard' of education (Bunnell, 2015).

However, issues about the MYP have been raised in regards to limited depth of academic content (Corlu, 2014), claims of increased workload due to interdisciplinary learning and standards (Crippen, 2008), concern for the role of MYP on the IB continuum (Bunnell, 2011; Walker et al., 2014), claims that IB programs are being adopted by private international schools predominately servicing high fee paying students (Dickson, Perry & Ledger, 2016; Phillips, 2011) and concern about lack of alignment between assessments of MYP and national programs (Hallinger et al., 2011). However, corresponding research counter each of these claims; Wade & Wolanin, (2013) found higher academic performance compared with non-MYP students, Behrenbruch & Harrison (2013) respond to interdisciplinary concerns by stating it was a major selling point of the program, and the IB website's facts and figures confirm that IB schools overall are from diverse contexts (2018) excluding the Asia Pacific region, including Australia. The only concern that lacked response related to MYP's confusion as either a 'stand-alone' role or transition program to the DP (Bunnell, 2011; Walker et al., 2014).

The MYP is one of the four programmes offered by the International Baccalaureate. The Diploma Programme (DP, for ages 16-19 years), created in 1968, was the first programme to be offered, followed on by two other programmes: the Middle Years Programme (MYP, for ages 12-16 years) in 1994 and the Primary Years Programme (PYP, for ages 3-12 years) in 1997. In 2012, the Career-related Programme (CP, ages 16-19 years) was established as a second option for upper secondary students who are engaged in career-related study (Bunnell, 2015). The PYP and the MYP do not prescribe a particular curriculum content, but they prescribe how content should be taught. The DP, however, is a prescribed curriculum and also consists of external assessments (Hallinger, Lee, & Walker, 2011). The DP, the oldest program in the IB suite, is the most popular of the four IB programmes and has seen a steady growth since 2009, it is offered in more than 3,000 schools across the globe (IB, 2017).

Research about the benefits and limitations of IB programmes for teaching and learning is growing. Of the three older programmes, the DP is the most researched and the MYP is the least (Dabrowski, 2016). Of research about the MYP, studies have examined the challenges of implementing IB programs in low SES schools (Siskin, Weinstein, & Sperling, 2010), and the degree to which the IB increases standardised test scores (Sillisano, 2010). Missing however, is a bigger picture view of the benefits, limitations, challenges and



opportunities of IB programmes for teaching and learning, broadly defined. Also missing are the views of stakeholders from schools that have long established IB programs. It is likely that the views of stakeholders from such schools are different than those who are undergoing the challenging phase of implementing the IB for the first time.

### **Aims and Research Questions**

The aim of this study is to produce new knowledge about the benefits of the MYP program for teaching and learning as it is the least researched of the four IB programs (Dabrowski, 2015). Previous studies have centred on MYP outcomes, its impact on DP results, course enrolments and student achievement. National studies on the MYP have centred on the teaching and learning benefits of MYP in the UK (Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013); MYP influence on higher education performance in the US (Wade, 2011); and the experiences of parents, students and teachers in the Middle East (Stevenson, et al., 2017). However, little literature has explored the benefits of MYP from the perspective of experienced stakeholders in schools and public educational authorities.

This is the first study to examine the impact of MYP on teaching and learning from the perspective of key stakeholders who have had many years' experience with IB programs and stakeholders from state and independent educational organisations responsible for educational delivery in Australia. The study represents an opportunity to capture the experiences of these stakeholders for the benefit of other schools and educational communities that may be considering the IB as a viable alternative for their students.

The aim of this project is to examine stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of the MYP on teaching and learning. Three specific research questions are addressed as follows:

- 1) What are stakeholders' perceptions of the impediments and enablers of offering the MYP?
- 2) What are stakeholders' perceptions of the benefits and opportunities of the MYP for teaching and learning?
- 3) What are stakeholders' perceptions of the limits and challenges of the MYP for teaching and learning?

The study was conducted in Australia. Australia has the fourth largest number of IB schools in the world, after the US, Canada and Ecuador<sup>1</sup>. The International Baccalaureate has

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/the-ib-by-country/>

been recognised as an alternative model or framework of schooling in Australia since 1978. Australia has maintained a strong interest in the IB, even after the implementation of its new national curriculum, which features many IB inspired attributes. Australia continues to gain ‘*above world average*’ results in IB Diploma assessment.

Most studies of IB programs have been conducted in the US, which is understandable given that the US is the country with the largest proportion of IB schools in the world. The organizational features of educational systems in the US, however, are very different from other countries, which may reduce generalisability to other national contexts. Conducting our study in Australia therefore may be able to uncover new insights about the impact of national curriculum standards, school funding regimes, and marketization dynamics on the MYP. In addition to adding to the quantum of literature about the MYP, the findings will provide data for future generalisability and opportunities for comparative and contextual studies. To facilitate the interpretation of our findings and possible application to other national contexts, we describe the systemic features of Australian schooling later in this report.

### **The MYP**

Three fundamental principles underlie the MYP: intercultural awareness, holistic education, and communication (Hayden & Thompson, 2001). The MYP is nonprescriptive compared to other school-wide programs. As noted by Spenderio (2010, p. 143), “Participating schools choose the objectives, content material, and assessment methods, allowing for tailoring of the program to unique school needs. The program provides a detailed curriculum framework that promotes student-centered inquiry, responsible citizenship, and the importance of learning how to learn.” The MYP is a comprehensive program driven by the IB mission statement and IB learner profile that aims to ‘develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world’ (Standards & Practices, 2014, p. iii).

The proportion of MYP programmes compared to the other three IB programmes is similar in Australia than that in many other countries. Table 1 shows the fifteen countries in the world with the largest number of IB programmes, disaggregated by each of the four IB programmes. As can be seen in Table 1, the MYP represents 18% of all IB programmes in Australia, smaller than both the PYP and the DP. Many other countries in Table 1 show a similar pattern, where the MYP is also less popular than the PYP or DP. Canada has the largest proportion of MYP programmes (40%), followed by the US (29%).

Table 1: Distribution of IB programmes in countries with the largest number of IB programmes

Country	PYP		MYP		DP		CP		Total IB programmes	Total IB schools
	#	% of IB programmes	#	% of IB programmes	#	% of IB programmes	#	% of IB programmes		
US	542	25%	651	29%	920	42%	96	4%	2209	1796
Canada	84	19%	173	40%	174	40%	3	1%	434	372
Ecuador	13	4%	15	5%	265	90%	0	0%	293	265
Australia	128	52%	45	18%	71	29%	1	0%	245	183
India	75	33%	28	13%	121	54%	0	0%	224	143
China	58	30%	36	18%	99	51%	2	1%	195	126
UK	11	7%	12	7%	107	63%	39	23%	169	113
Mexico	58	34%	38	22%	71	41%	5	3%	172	111
Spain	17	12%	17	12%	105	75%	1	1%	140	108
Germany	27	23%	12	10%	74	64%	2	2%	115	79
Turkey	28	34%	11	13%	44	53%	0	0%	83	64
Japan	26	34%	14	18%	37	48%	0	0%	77	54
Indonesia	31	35%	17	19%	39	44%	1	1%	88	53
Peru	10	14%	7	10%	52	74%	1	1%	70	53
Switzerland	14	20%	11	15%	43	61%	3	4%	71	47

Source: Data compiled from IBO website, <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/the-ib-by-country/>; accessed March 5, 2018.

Established in 1994, the MYP targets 11-16 years olds and was the second program introduced within the International Baccalaureate suite of programs. The Diploma Program, established in 1968, remains the most well-established, highly regarded, globally recognised program in the IB suite. As described by Holman, Pascal, Bostan, Hosbota and Constantin (2016), the DP “fosters students’ academic persistence to a higher degree than does the traditional educational system”. The younger, vibrant Primary Years Program, established in 1997, contributed the IB learner profile to the IB suite. The latest arrival to the IB suite is the Career Programme (originally introduced as the Careers Certificate), established in 2012 with a clear purpose of providing a pathway into the workforce. The DP, PYP and CP all have a clear purpose and are typically adopted at structural transitional phases or departure points within schools, e.g. primary, secondary, vocational or tertiary track. However, the MYP is not structurally embedded in all schooling systems. Within Australia, middle schools are not common and therefore problematic for implementation purposes as the MYP straddles two phases (primary and secondary schools). Similarly, given its order in the suite of offerings and the lack of a defined ‘point of perceived difference’ other than being positioned

'between' the PYP and the DP, the MYP aim is not as clearly defined as the other programmes, a point of concern raised by Bunnell (2011).

### **Report Organisation**

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 comprises a review of the literature relevant for our study. Specifically, it reviews studies that have examined the benefits, opportunities, enablers and challenges of IB programmes for teaching and learning. Studies that have examined the MYP are reviewed, as well as studies of the other IB programmes as relevant. Including studies of the other main IB programmes, specifically the PYP and DP, are necessary since the literature about the MYP is scant. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Australian educational context. Features of Australian schooling that are relevant for interpreting and contextualising our findings are highlighted. These features include the organisation and structure of Australian schooling, as well as the features of its curriculum. Chapter 4 describes the research method and approach, Chapter 5 presents a detailed analysis of the findings and Chapter 6 provides an overview of the findings, Chapter 7 comprises a discussion of the findings, Chapter 8 summarises the main conclusions, and Chapter 9 provides recommendations for stakeholders.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Many studies have examined the International Baccalaureate programs. However, the Middle Years Program (MYP) remains the least researched, and as noted by Bunnell (2011), “the MYP has attracted little serious critical inquiry”. In this chapter we review the extant MYP literature conducted in a range of national contexts, including Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, the UK, the US, and the United Arab Emirates. The studies have covered a range of topics and employed a range of research methods which add to the quantum of valuable empirical data about the MYP. The chapter is divided into the following three sections that align with our study: learning and students; teaching and teachers; and challenges and barriers.

### **Learning and Students**

International research on the MYP has examined a range of aspects related to learning and students. These include participants’ perspectives of the philosophy and aims of the MYP, its ability to develop academic skills and values, and the relation of the MYP with student outcomes and national curriculum.

Stakeholders’ perspectives of the MYP learning framework are overwhelmingly very positive. Two large studies that examined why schools adopted the MYP uncovered participants high regard for its philosophy and approach. In their study of 54 countries and 177 schools, Wright and colleagues (2016) found that 88% of IB coordinators reported that their school adopted the MYP because they valued its pedagogical approach. Sperandio (2010) found similar results in her study of 336 schools worldwide that were applying for MYP authorisation. When asked why their school was interested in the MYP, slightly more than half of the schools (54%) stated that they were interested in the MYP because of its emphasis on holistic approach, service learning, and critical thinking, and independent learning. These aspects of the MYP, which Sperandio categorised as “innovative program features”, were the most commonly cited reason for choosing the MYP. Other commonly cited reasons were to provide a seamless fit with the DP and PYP (43% of schools), and international mindedness and global awareness (37%).

Positive perceptions of the MYP have also been uncovered by qualitative studies, conducted in a range of national contexts. Students at an international school in Turkey appreciated that they were not required to memorise notes written on the class board, enjoyed the discussions within his classroom where each other’s opinions were exchanged and heard and generally, students took more responsibility in their learning and more ownership of

completing their tasks than in a traditional local school (O'Boyle, 2009). Students, teachers and school leaders at eight private schools in Spain reported that they valued the MYP's approach to concept-based learning, research skills and critical thinking, the Learner Profile, and its assessment framework (Valle, Menéndez, Manso, Garrido, & Thoilliez, 2017). In the United Arab Emirates, students, teachers, school leaders and parents at seven schools reported that they valued the MYP's emphasis on international-mindedness (Stevenson et al., 2017). And in the UK, Sizmur and Cunningham (2013) found that students, teachers and parents from six independent schools that offer the MYP were overwhelmingly positive about the programme, specifically its focus on inquiry and concept-based learning, critical thinking and research skills, and local and global citizenship. Students also reported that they found the MYP engaging and relevant (Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013).

The MYP is positively related to student academic outcomes. Using a quantitative design and statistical analysis, Wade and Walanin (2015) found that high school students in the US who had completed the MYP were more likely to enrol in an academically rigorous course of study in upper secondary school than demographically similar students that had not had experienced the MYP. Siskin and Weinstein (2008) found that the MYP was associated with improved scores on national and state standardised assessments in the US.

Perceptions of the positive impact of the MYP on student outcomes have been uncovered by qualitative studies as well. Teachers at three schools in Turkey perceived that the MYP had developed their students' communication, research and organization skills, as found in a qualitative study by Ateşkan, Dulun, & Lane (2016). Teachers in Sizmur and Cunningham's (2013) study also perceived that the MYP develops students academic skills and non-scholastic attributes.

The MYP is also positively related to student measures of global mindedness and civic engagement. American students who had completed the MYP had higher scores on a global mindedness measure compared to non-MYP peers who attended a demographically similar high school (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2013). In the UK, Sizmur and Cunningham (2013) found that students from six MYP schools had higher scores on measures of international mindedness and civic engagement than non-MYP students. The authors of these studies conclude that it is likely that the MYP develops these outcomes but recommend further research to substantiate the findings.

Finally, although many benefits for students' learning have been identified, studies have also found that some students struggle with the workload and expectations of the MYP (Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013).

## Teachers and Teaching

Key themes about the impact of the MYP on teaching and teachers relate to its core principles about intercultural awareness, holistic education, and communication (Hayden, 2010; Stevenson et al., 2017) and the interdisciplinary pedagogical practices it employs including interdisciplinary and formative approaches to planning, teaching and assessment (Behrenberg & Harrison, 2011). They have also highlighted the difficulties some teachers encounter when changing principles into practice (Behrenberg & Harrison, 2011).

The MYP is associated with improved teaching and pedagogy. In the US, teachers and administrators in eight schools reported that IB training helped them to adopt more inquiry-based methods and embrace lifelong learning (Stillisano, Waxman, Hostrup, & Rollins, 2011). In Turkey, even experienced teachers reported that the MYP improved their practice, helping them to incorporate innovative strategies (Ateşkan et al., 2016).

The MYP is associated with increased interdisciplinary teaching and collaboration between teachers. In the US, teachers reported that interdisciplinary teaching or collaboration with teachers from different disciplines was “rare or non-existent” before the PYP or MYP programme was implemented in their school (Stillisano et al., 2011). In the UK, teachers reported that the MYP promoted collaborative curricular planning with teachers from other disciplines (Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013). Teachers from the US, Canada and the Netherlands reported that they collaborated with their fellow teachers and IB coordinators to plan curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment (Visser, 2010). In their large cross-national study of the MYP, Wright *et al.* (2016) found that the MYP’s emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching and holistic approach is highly valued, as reported by 79% and 88% of IB coordinators respectively.

Not all IB teachers use the student-centered, inquiry-based approach that is the foundation of the IB philosophy, however. Pendergast, Dole and Rentoule (2014) observed more than 100 MYP and DP classrooms and 33 teachers at an international school in Japan that enrolled students from over 70 nationalities and employed teachers from 13 nationalities. They found that only some teachers employed practices that aligned with the IB’s student-centered approach, and that neither grade level, IB programme or subject area was related to teachers’ pedagogical style. Whether a teacher’s nationality was related to their instructional style was not examined.

Teachers and school leaders have positive perceptions of the IB assessment frameworks and practices. Wright *et al.* (2016) found that 70% of the IB coordinators in their study of 54 countries valued the opportunity to use a range of assessment tools in the MYP.

Another 55% of respondents valued the MYP's external moderation of school-based assessment; this value was higher (70%) among coordinators in the Asia-Pacific region. In his study of IB teachers and coordinators in four countries (Australia, Canada, Netherlands, USA), Visser (2010) found that some teachers rated assessment as the best component of the MYP. However, assessment was also considered a point of concern (Visser, 2010). In the US, teachers reported that after adopting PYP or MYP, they reduced their emphasis on standardised testing and worksheets and increased learning and assessment opportunities that helped students to become creative and active learners (Stillisano et al., 2011). In the UK, teachers reported that the MYP promoted feedback and reflection (Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013).

### **Challenges and Barriers**

While studies have consistently found that teachers and school leaders value the aims and philosophy of the MYP, challenges and barriers have also been uncovered. These relate primarily to lesson planning, curriculum design, alignment with local/national curricula, assessment, costs and support. Many of these challenges have also been considered desired outcomes (Behrenberg & Harrison, 2011). For example, teachers believe that the MYP enhances curriculum design, but that extra work is required to do it well.

Curricular planning has been identified as both an advantage and a challenge. In their large cross-national study, Wright *et al* (2016) found that 71% of participating MYP teachers and coordinators across the globe value the opportunity provided by the MYP to develop their own content. In the United Arab Emirates, teachers valued how the MYP framework is flexible and adaptable to local contexts (Stevenson et al., 2017). On the other hand, teachers in Spain reported that they found challenging the "open" curricular framework of the MYP (Valle et al., 2017).

Difficulties aligning the MYP framework with national curricula have also been reported. Sizmur and Cunningham (2013) found that many of the participating teachers believed that it is difficult to provide the UK national curriculum alongside the MYP, citing it as the greatest challenge of delivering the MYP. Studies conducted in Spain (Valle et al., 2017) and the United Arab Emirates (Stevenson et al., 2017) have reported similar findings.

While studies described earlier found that schools and teachers value the MYP assessment framework, challenges with using the framework were also identified. Visser (2010) found that half of the teachers in his study reported that creating assessments in the MYP was a challenging process. Teachers also reported difficulties integrating MYP



criterion-referenced scales within the Dutch grading system (Visser, 2010). Many of the 68 MYP and DP participating teachers and administrators in the study by Lee, Hallinger and Walker (2012) recommended that teachers be given clear assessment guidelines to promote consistency and reduce workload. Hallinger, Lee and Walker (2011) found that many IB coordinators recommended that the IB provide standardised internal assessments in the MYP.

Taken together, studies suggest that challenges related to creating lessons that are aligned with the MYP objectives, aligning them with national curricula, and assessing these learning activities creates additional workload for teachers. Teachers in studies conducted in the UK (Sizmur and Cunningham, 2013) and Spain (Valle et al., 2017) have reported that the MYP adds to their workload.

Some school leaders perceive that the MYP is costly in terms of start-up costs and ongoing teacher training (Works Marketing, 2005). Participating school leaders reported similar views in a study by Siskin, Weinstein, & Sperling (2010), which was conducted among public four Title 1 schools in the US that offered the MYP (Title 1 schools in the US include a sizeable proportion of low-income students). Teachers and IB coordinators in the UK reported similar views, as examined by Sizmur and Cunningham (2013). This study was conducted in six MYP schools in the UK, almost all of which are private fee-charging schools that enrol students from privileged social backgrounds. So even in these affluent contexts, financing was considered a concern with some participants recommending that the IB provide more local training to reduce costs. Taken together, these studies suggest that costs associated with offering the MYP can be difficult for some school contexts, school sectors, and national contexts.

Studies have also examined stakeholders' perspectives of training provided by the IB. Sizmur and Cunningham (2013) compared three forms of training: externally provided by the IB, in-school workshops, and those designed and delivered by local collaborations with other IB schools. Most teachers found all three forms useful, and differences weren't large: 80% of teachers found the external training useful, 83% found the in-school workshops useful, and 76% found local collaboration with other IB schools useful. These are good outcomes, but the fact that 20% do not find the training useful is cause for concern. The study also found that teachers would like some avenue that would provide the sharing of practice between schools to "count" for IB accreditation.

## Summary

The literature review was divided into three sections that align with our study: learning and students; teaching and teachers; and challenges and barriers. The results in each section revealed competing and divergent items. In many cases the concerns and challenges were the same: advantages were also disadvantages, and strengths were weaknesses in relation to desirable outcomes. However, many studies converged on the complexity of bridging the gap between principles and practices, particularly when faced with national, cultural and differences of students and the professional differences of teachers. This adds context or 'where' to Field's (2011, p. 63) concern 'the "what" of the MYP programme had become fairly clear to us, but the "how" has been taking much longer to figure out.'

The literature on the MYP reflect findings outlined in Seldon's book *An End to Factory Schools*, in which he states 'the IB is not perfect – its aspirations do not always match the reality, and it can be burdensome bureaucratically – but it is the most complete system currently available in the world' (Seldon, 2010, p. 34). This current literature review on the MYP also revealed the demands of aligning national and jurisdictional mandates with the IB. It also revealed the learning and teaching practices of the MYP to be desirable and suitable for the adolescent inquiry phase of learning within schools, one that requires a purposeful connection between what they study and the real world.

### **Chapter 3: Australian Context**

As this study was conducted in Australia, it is useful to discuss features of the Australian educational context that could be relevant for understanding and interpreting the study's findings. Australia has a number of features that make its schooling system different from the others countries where much of the work about IB programmes has been conducted. These include features related to national curriculum, school funding, school accountability, and national testing, and educational marketization dynamics related to school choice and school competition. We also discuss one socio-cultural aspect that is relevant for the Australian context, namely the disengagement of adolescents from schooling. This is a significant inclusion as it directly correlates with the phase of learning that the MYP addresses.

#### **General Structure of Schooling in Australia**

*Compulsory schooling* in most states is 13 years: one year of pre-primary, plus 12 years of primary and secondary. The pre-primary year is conducted at primary school. There are two types of educational institutions: primary schools and secondary schools. Primary schools in most states provide one or two years of pre-primary education, plus 6 years of primary schooling. Secondary school starts in Year 7 and continues to Year 12. While this structure is now consistent throughout Australia, some states (e.g., Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland) in the recent past started secondary school in Year 8. Secondary schools are typically divided into lower school (Years 7-10) and upper school or senior school (Years 11-12). Another variant are combined schools, which may comprise the entire spectrum of compulsory schooling (e.g., pre-primary to Year 12), or primary and lower secondary (pre-primary to Year 10). Combined schools are especially common in the private school sector. Unlike countries such as the US, Australia does not have “middle schools” that are separate institutions for lower secondary / upper primary. The MYP is offered in combined schools, high schools, and in a few primary schools.

Australia has a very large private school sector. Public schools are also called “government” schools, and private schools are referred to as “non-government” schools. Non-government schools are further divided into two categories: Catholic and independent. Catholic schools are those that are governed by Catholic education commissions in each state and territory. Independent schools are not affiliated with a larger governing body. Many independent schools are faith-based, and somewhat confusingly, some Catholic schools are independent. This is because they are not governed by the Catholic education commission in

their respective state or territory. Overall, 35% of students attend a private primary school, and 40% attend a private secondary school in Australia (ABS, 2016).

School sector is associated with school socioeconomic composition in Australia. On average, public schools have a high proportion of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and private schools have a high proportion of students from high socioeconomic backgrounds. This does not mean that no public schools serve middle-class or affluent communities, nor conversely, that all independent schools serve these populations. Nevertheless, the association between sector and school SES is quite strong. For example, in Perth, the capital city of WA, 87% of schools in the highest SES quintile are private, and 96% in the lowest school SES quintile are public (Perry & Southwell, 2014). Similarly, data from the entire state of Victoria show that 86% of schools in the highest SES quintile are private and 90% of schools in the lowest SES quintile are public (Perry, Philips, Lubienski, & Burgess, 2018).

Most schools that offer an IB programme in Australia are located in private schools or in a public school that is located in an affluent community. As of March, 2018, 35 private schools and 10 public schools in Australia offered the MYP. Moreover, most private IB schools charge moderate to high fees, with one-fifth charging less than \$5k AUD per year and one-fifth charging more than \$20k AUD per year. These patterns result in an over-representation of economically advantaged students. Among all students in Australia that attend an IB school, 51% come from families located in the highest socioeconomic quartile, while only 7% come from families located in the lowest socioeconomic quartile (Dickson, Perry and Ledger, 2017).

### **Governance and Organisation**

Schooling in Australia is primarily governed by state education authorities. Each of Australia's seven states and territories have a Department of Education (or similar) that funds and operates public schools, and a Catholic Education Commission (or similar) that supports Catholic schools. The federal government also plays a role in Australia. It provides funding (more about this later), and also administers the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

Australia has a national curriculum, which is created in consultation with professional associations and state education authorities. The curriculum is structured within three dimensions encompassing: learning areas; cross curricular priorities; and general

capabilities<sup>2</sup>. Its design draws from best practice curricula around the globe and elements of the IB programs are embedded in its three dimensional construction (Ledger, 2017). The national curriculum lists the standards and learning outcomes for eight learning areas (the Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Languages, Mathematics, Science, and Technologies). It is not, however, a detailed syllabus or programme of learning. Each state realises the national curriculum standards and learning outcomes through their own curricular design. In addition to learning areas and disciplines, the national curriculum also includes three cross-curricular priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and sustainability), which are to be developed where possible in the learning areas. It also includes seven general capabilities (literacy; numeracy; information and communication technology capability; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; intercultural understanding), that comprise an integrated set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions and that apply across all learning areas. The aim of these capabilities is to equip students to be lifelong learners who are able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich and globalized world.

National assessment of student learning is achieved through the National Assessment Programme, Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) which is administered to students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Students receive their individual assessments, and schools receive assessment scores for all students at their school. School-wide average NAPLAN scores, by year level and subject domain, are published on the federal government's publicly available *My School* website. With its reporting of school mean scores, the Australian public reporting approach is more detailed than some other countries, which for example only report the proportion of students at a school that meet a minimum standard. The stated purpose of the public reporting of school NAPLAN scores is to provide information to families for the purpose of informing their choice of schooling, and to school and education authorities for the purpose of benchmarking and improving learning and teaching.

School funding in Australia is complex. All schools, both public and private, receive funding from both public and private sources. The proportion of funding from these various sources varies by school and by sector, however. Overall, public schools receive most of their funding from state/territory governments; they also charge parents fees and "voluntary" contributions (typically a few hundred dollars at a primary school and more for secondary

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/structure/>

schools). Private schools receive most of their funding from the federal government and private sources (fees), and some, like Catholic schools, receive funding from their affiliated faith-based organisation. Fees at private schools range from a few thousand dollars to \$30,000 or even more. Federal funding to private schools is scaled so that on average, lower fee schools receive more federal funding compared to higher-fee schools. Nevertheless, even high-fee private schools receive federal funds. While the school funding landscape in Australia is complex, a few observations can be made. Per-pupil funding between public schools in any given state/territory is relatively equitably distributed; and large funding disparities exist between high-fee private schools compared to all other schools. The underlying assumptions are that a minimum standard should be provided to all schools (although the amount of this standard and how it should be met has been the subject of intense discussion and debate); that all schools, both public and private, are entitled to some of the public purse, regardless of need; and that disparities between schools are acceptable because families that are willing to pay “extra” should be allowed to receive extra.

While public funding to schools is largely centralised (i.e., is not allocated by municipalities as compared to the US and some other countries), schools have a fair amount of autonomy in how they operate their budgets. Schools that are managed by governing bodies (i.e., public and Catholic schools) receive most of their funding based on the number of students that they enrol; the more students they enrol, the more funding they receive. Schools then operate within these budgetary constraints to pay for teacher salaries, professional development, facilities, materials and special indicatives. Such constraints require creative staffing solutions, especially in smaller schools. For example, primary schools may decide not to hire a specialist physical education teacher, and/or may combine year levels into one classroom or secondary schools may restrict curricular offerings.

The last structural feature of Australian schooling that is relevant for contextualising our findings is the degree of school choice and competition that is exercised and promoted. All students are guaranteed a place at their local public school, but they may also apply to any public school of their choice. Moreover, as has already been discussed, many families choose a private schooling option. The result of this is that many students, perhaps even a majority, do not attend their local secondary public school. Schools compete for students since their funding is dependent on student numbers. Private schools have traditionally been seen by many as offering a superior educational product (Anderson, 1992; Beavis, 2004; Williams & Carpenter, 1990), a remnant of a British Commonwealth heritage and a reflection of a commonly held view that one “gets what one pays for”. Increased public subsidies that began

in the 1970s was associated with an increase in private school enrolments, especially from the middle classes (Watson & Ryan, 2010). Public schools have responded to the increased competition by creating academically-selective schools and programs within schools, as a way to attract high performing students away from the private school sector.

### **Adolescent Engagement with Learning**

In Australia, a recent report by the Grattan Institute (2017) revealed 60% of secondary students - the structural location of MYP students in Australian school settings- were disengaged with learning. Similar results were revealed in a Government report tabled in parliament by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in January 2018<sup>3</sup>. The report identified primary factors that form the foundation of student engagement in schools: friends, positive relationships, teachers who have genuine interest in children's wellbeing and future, and families who are involved and interested. The secondary factors that help accelerate student engagement were identified as: the development of positive, fair and supportive environments; teaching and learning that is interesting and relevant; input on decisions that affect students; a desire to feel safe; and strategies to overcome personal issues and feeling physically and mentally well.

The findings in this report on adolescents provide evidence that the MYP learning framework features the Australian primary and secondary factors considered important to engage students in schools. More importantly, the MYP specifically targets the phase of learning where disengagement is at its highest within Australian school systems.

### **Summary**

Taken together, the structural and socio-cultural features of Australian schooling could create unique conditions that influence the provision of IB programmes. Recent reports highlighting disengaged adolescents position MYP well to respond to a national phenomenon. Schools pay for special initiatives (including IB programmes) out of their own budget, and competing for students and providing a "niche" can be useful for attracting enrollees. Schools must teach the Australian curriculum, and embedded in the curriculum are elements that may be similar to the IB Learner Profile. Mean test scores at the school-level are publicly available and can be the cause of scrutiny and pressure from education

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au>

authorities as well as parents. All of these forces create potential enablers and challenges that may influence the viability of offering an IB programme.



## Chapter 4: Method

We used a qualitative research design to examine experienced stakeholders' perspectives of the impact of MYP on teaching and learning. We employed a qualitative case study approach involving five school sites. Data collection comprised interviews with teachers, MYP coordinators and school leaders. We also conducted interviews with four individuals who have worked with various education sectors and bodies. Most of the participants were located in an Australian state that was an early adopter of the MYP. A cross-case analysis of the findings and aligned literature review were triangulated to reveal key themes, benefits, challenges and recommendations.

Detail about our approach, sample and analytical strategy changed from our original design due to unexpected and unplanned events that unfolded when attempting to gain participants from original MYP schools. Our original intention was to examine the MYP in public schools with low socioeconomic compositions. We also wanted to limit our study to schools that had been offering the MYP for many years rather than schools that were currently in the beginning stages of implementing it. Our rationale was that stakeholders' perspectives would be more stable and less likely to reflect the unique challenges that accompany the implementation stage. As with any school-wide initiative, challenges occur and are common during the beginning stages of implementation. In our original proposal, we identified six public schools with a large number of low SES students that had been offering the MYP for at least five years. All these schools were located in the same capital city, which also made data collection more feasible. We identified these schools based on information provided on the IB website, but some were either unavailable or had discontinued MYP.

After consultation with the IB's research coordinator, we decided to broaden the scope of the study to include schools with a range of socioeconomic compositions and sectors (i.e., not only low SES public schools). Our final sample therefore differed slightly, in that four schools had long experience with the MYP but one school did not. Again, the inclusion of a school that was in the early stages of program implementation offered an opportunity for comparison. We were comfortable with these changes to the sample because it afforded the potential for different insights and comparative perspectives. Thus, the challenge of recruiting schools became an opportunity to examine our topic with a broader perspective.

Due to the revised sample of schools, we changed the title of our project. The title is the same, except "in low SES schools" has been removed.

- Original title: What are the benefits of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme for teaching and learning in low SES schools? Perspectives & evidence from stakeholders
- Revised title: What are the benefits of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme for teaching and learning? Perspectives & evidence from stakeholders

The research questions were not changed. Given the change in participant selection, cross-case analysis was added to the research design to examine whether participants' perspectives vary by school context. Table 1 in the following section lists the characteristics of the participating schools.

### **Ethics**

Ethics approval was granted by Murdoch University and relevant state education authorities. As required by our ethics approval, the names of participants and schools will remain confidential, and pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity. The location of schools will also not be identified to ensure anonymity. All five schools are located in Australian capital cities, in two jurisdictions (states or territories). Four education representatives also participated, one of whom works at a public education department. To protect the anonymity of all participants, the names of the jurisdictions are not revealed.

### **Sampling**

We used purposive sampling to recruit five theoretically rich cases. We purposely chose schools that had been offering the MYP for many years; one of the four schools was different in that its history with the MYP was recent and was currently undergoing authorisation. This “outlier” school provided an opportunity to examine whether participant perceptions were different between experienced and newcomers to the IB. We also aimed to select schools from one jurisdiction due to pragmatic and theoretical reasons. Pragmatically, it made data collection more efficient and cost-effective. Theoretically, it provided a deeper perspective from the education representatives. As all four representatives had experience with the same jurisdiction but had different employers, they were able to give different perspectives within one policy context.

The five schools are located in two jurisdictions, which in Australia means a state or territory. Four of the five schools are located in one jurisdiction (hereafter called Jurisdiction 1). Our original intention was to recruit participants exclusively from this particular

jurisdiction because it has a diverse range of schools that offer the MYP. Unlike some other jurisdictions in Australia, the MYP in Jurisdiction 1 is offered in both private and public schools. Moreover, the MYP (and other IB programmes) in Jurisdiction 1 are offered in public schools with a diverse range of socioeconomic compositions. This is in contrast to some other jurisdictions in Australia, where IB programmes are only offered in private schools and/or affluent public schools. We were unable to recruit a fifth school from this particular jurisdiction, however, so we sought a school from second jurisdiction (hereafter called Jurisdiction 2). All five schools are located in the capital city of their respective jurisdiction. All four of the participating education representatives are based in Jurisdiction 1.

We invited potential schools to participate in the study by contacting the school principal. Principals that accepted the invitation were asked to nominate three or four teachers from their school as well as the MYP coordinator to also participate. We did not provide selection criteria for the teachers, instead leaving it to the principals to nominate participating teachers.

We also used purposive sampling to recruit representatives who have worked with various education sectors or associations. We sought to include at least one representative from the public school sector, and at least one from the independent school sector. We invited ten potential participants, of which three accepted. Individuals offered a variety of reasons for declining our invitation, such as “it would not be appropriate for me to respond on behalf of the department”, “I don’t know enough about the IB,” and “I am only new here.” More information about the participating education representatives is provided in the sub-section “participants”.

### **Participating Schools**

Table 2 lists the characteristics of the five participating schools. As described earlier, identifying names and locations are not revealed as per the requirements of our ethics approvals. Pseudonyms for each school are used instead. All school characteristic data are from the federal government’s *My School* website ([myschool.edu.au](http://myschool.edu.au)). The table includes data about school sector (public or private), recurrent per-pupil funding and fees, and student demographic and socioeconomic data.

Student characteristics include the proportion of Indigenous students, proportion of students from socio-educational quartiles, the school’s Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), and a qualitative descriptor of the overall school socioeconomic composition. ICSEA is calculated by the Australian Curriculum and

Assessment Authority (ACARA) as a way to capture the educational advantage of each school. ICSEA scores are based on student characteristics (parental occupational status and parental educational attainment), as well as school geographic location and Indigeneity. These measures capture the three main educational equity groups recognized in Australia: students in rural and regional communities, Indigenous students, and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. These groups consistently have lower educational opportunities and outcomes than their peers (Thomson, De Bortoli & Underwood, 2017). The index is scaled so that the national average is 1000 and the standard deviation is 100 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014); higher scores indicate higher overall socioeconomic advantage. Scores range from a low of approximately 800 to a high of 1300, with most schools falling between 900-1100. The socio-educational quartiles shown in the table are based on parent occupational status and educational attainment, as reported by parents when enrolling their child at a school.

As can be seen in Table 2, our sample includes three public schools and two private (independent) schools. The socioeconomic profile of the schools varies considerably. At the one extreme is Oak Park, which enrolls more than 70% of its students from the top socio-educational quartile and 2% from the bottom socio-educational quartile. At the other extreme is Breton Bay, a public school that enrolls 2% of its students from the top quartile and 38% from the bottom. The table also shows the differences in per-pupil funding that is available to each school, as well as the fees and charges that are paid by parents. Within the public school sector, high schools receive more funding than primary schools because they have higher costs related to the diversity of curricular subjects offered. In addition, schools with lower socio-educational advantage typically receive more funding than other schools to compensate for their greater needs. In this study, the difference in per pupil funding available to the public primary school with the more advantaged social composition is substantially less than the amount available to public secondary school with the less advantaged social composition.

Table 2: School characteristics

School (pseudonym)	Sector	Jurisdiction	Enrolment **	Years offering MYP (since authorisation)	IB programmes offered	ICSEA	% Indigenous students	Student socio-educational advantage quartiles					Overall socioeconomic composition	Parent fees (per student and per year, in AUD)	Net recurrent funding per student
								% students from bottom quarter	% students from low-middle quarter	% students from high-middle quarter	% students from top quarter				
Oak Park	public	1	Primary (F-6); approx. 120 students per year	Since 2005	PYP, MYP*	1158	0	2	5	22	71	High	\$764	\$9,442	
Lutheran Trinity	Private - independent	1	Combined (F-12), approx. 150 students per year	Since 2001	MYP	1102	4	4	15	34	47	Middle-high	\$16,451	\$21,682	
Boulder Christian	Private - independent	1	Combined (F-12), approx. 70 students per year	Since 2005	MYP	1072	1	7	26	37	31	Middle	\$7,321	\$13,975	
Copper Mountain	public	2	Combined (F-10), approx. 100 students per year	Since 2016	PYP, MYP	1054	4	14	24	32	31	Middle	\$316	\$13,322	
Breton Bay	public	1	Secondary (7-12), approx. 100 students per year	Since 2012	MYP	955	15	38	34	22	6	Middle-low	minimal	\$16,516	

\* dropped the MYP after data collection

\*\* F = Foundation, equivalent to the last year of pre-primary / kindergarten;

Source: Data gathered from the MySchool website (myschool.edu.au, data from 2017) and the IB website

As most of participants are based in Jurisdiction 1, we provide brief context below about its involvement with the IB.

**Jurisdiction 1:** Jurisdiction 1 was an early adopter of the suite of IB programmes, with its first IB school established in 1978. Between 2009 - 2013, in response to a government call for quality education, Jurisdiction 1 utilised national partnership monies (a federal school funding scheme) to encourage the uptake of PYP and MYP programs. The state-wide initiative was known as the ‘cluster model’ during this time. Once federal funding ceased, the continuation of some of these programs was impacted.

The Education Standards Board of Jurisdiction 1 regulates the provision of education and care services in the state. It oversees the fulfilment of the state’s legislation concerning educational provision and is responsible for issuing approvals and waivers to service providers, providing advice to the Minister, and conducting functions assigned to the Board by the Minister. As is common in all jurisdictions, a separate Department of Education manages the jurisdiction’s public education system. The Department of Education in Jurisdiction 1 houses an International Education Services unit (IES), which recruits international students into government schools, delivers professional training for international education professionals, provides internships for undergraduates and graduates, and manages teacher and student exchange programs. Education authorities in Jurisdiction 1 consider the International Baccalaureate as an ‘alternative curriculum’ to its school-leaving certificate.

## **Participants**

From each school, we interviewed the school principal and/or the deputy, the IB coordinator, and three or four teachers, for a total of 28 participants. All together, we interviewed six school principals or deputies; five IB Coordinators; and 17 teachers. The exact of number of participants from each school is shown in Table 3.

As can be seen from Table 3, all but one of the school participants are highly experienced educators. Moreover, all but two participants had been working at their current school for three or more years. Finally, all but five participants had been working with an IB programme, either at their current school or elsewhere, for three or more years. Four of five of the participants with less IB experience were employed at Copper Mountain school, which is undergoing authorisation to become an IB school. All of these indicators show that our participants are very experienced in terms of years working with the IB, years working at their current school, and years teaching overall. The advantage of this participant profile is

that we are taking into consideration potentially confounding factors related to professional experience that could shape our findings.

Table 3: School participants' teaching experience: principal, MYP coordinator & teachers

School	# participants	Years in profession	# novice (less than 3 years teaching experience)	# new staff (less than 3 years at the school)	Years working with IB	# unexperienced with IB (less than 3 years)
Oak Park	6	5-40 years; $\bar{X}=21$	0	0	3-15 years; $\bar{X}=7$	0
Lutheran Trinity	5	12-35 years; $\bar{X}=21$	0	0	8-22 years; $\bar{X}=13$	0
Boulder Christian	5	8-20 years; $\bar{X}=13$	0	1	.5-19 years; $\bar{X}=10$	1
Copper Mountain	5	2-30 years; $\bar{X}=16$	1	1	minimal	4
Breton Bay	5	10-42 years; $\bar{X}=26$	0	0	8-11 years; $\bar{X}=9$	0

We conducted interviews with four education representatives, all of whom work in Jurisdiction 1. One representative works for the Department of Education, which oversees public schools. The second works for the Independent Schools Association in the same jurisdiction, which provides to independent (private) schools. The third representative was recently retired but had worked for both the Catholic sector and the public education department. The fourth representative is an IB consultant who works with both private and public schools. All four representatives were experienced and knowledgeable about the MYP.

### Data Collection

Interview questions were pilot tested in March 2017, and data collection began in April and finished in August 2017. We worked around schools' and staff's schedules, aiming to be as accommodating as possible. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face on school premises. Due to schedule conflicts, five interviews were conducted remotely by telephone or video conferencing technology; another three participants responded to

interview questions by email. The interviews lasted from 30 to 80 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

In the interviews with school stakeholders (principals, IB coordinators and teachers), we gathered participants' perspectives on the opportunities and benefits of the MYP in relation to teaching and learning in their school. Teaching and learning are complex processes and include many dimensions. We also gathered stakeholders' perceptions of the limits, challenges and any negative outcomes associated with offering the IB on teaching and learning. Participants were then asked about barriers and enablers of administering the MYP at their school which may include for example, training needs, costs, resources and supports from the IB or district/regional authorities. Finally, we asked participants if they would recommend for other schools to adopt the MYP, as well as any recommendations for the IB or jurisdictional authorities or associations.

In the interviews with education representatives, we sought perspectives of the MYP from a systemic point of view. We asked similar questions about the perceived benefits, opportunities, limits and challenges of the MYP on teaching and learning within the schools they oversee. We also asked participants why they supported the IB and sought their recommendations about how the positive impact of the MYP on teaching and learning could be increased, and alternatively, how barriers or negative impacts could be minimized. We aimed to capture the support that is provided to schools, supports that they would like to be provided but are unable to, as well as any inhibitors that they would like to minimize.

In both sets of interviews, we asked broad questions to allow participants to respond accordingly, rather than attempt to channel responses along specific dimensions in the first instance. The rationale for this approach was two-fold. First, it ensured that we gather a wide possible range of perspectives without bias. Second, omissions (i.e., things that are not said) and non-verbal responses are often just as important as the things that are said. Omitting certain aspects may indicate that participants do not perceive them as important.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was guided by our research questions about the benefits and limitations of the MYP for teaching and learning. We used the MYP Standards and Practice framework to organize the findings. It provided an appropriate structure to complement the different criteria of evaluating success of a programme in the school. We also used thematic analysis techniques, as outlined by Boyatzis (1998), to identify the main themes that were common across the research questions and Standards and Practice framework categories.



The transcripts were analysed with the assistance of NVivo, a qualitative analysis software program, and involved coding based on the research questions. As each question resulted in numerous codes, we then categorised the codes into larger categories, and continued this process until we attained the main themes. As we used a multiple site design with cases that varied along a number of dimensions, we also used cross-case analysis techniques. This allowed us to examine whether particular perspectives were related to particular contexts or case dimensions.

## Chapter 5: Findings: Detailed responses

In this chapter we use the MYP Standards and Practice framework to present the findings. The framework provides an appropriate structure to frame the findings and recommendations of this study as they form the basis of how the IB measures success. The framework comprises three components (and sub-components): *philosophy*, *organization*, and *curriculum*, with the knowledge that *philosophical* underpinnings impact organisational structures and curriculum implementation. The organisation standard is divided into two sub-components: leadership and structure, and resources and support; the enactment of these support or hinder the implementation of the schools' beliefs and values (Ledger, et al., 2016). The curriculum standard is divided into four sub-components: collaborative planning; written curriculum; teaching and learning; and assessment. We then present participants' perspectives about the value of the MYP, the reason why schools take up the MYP, whether they would recommend it to other schools, and whether and how it has influenced their school's position in the local educational marketplace. Throughout the chapter we include extensive quotes from the interviews to give voice to participants' perspectives.

### Philosophy

Widespread approval for the philosophy of the MYP was reported among all participants. The majority of the participant responses recommended the MYP as a high-quality learning framework that is academically rigorous, engaging for students, authentic and holistic. Not one participant voiced concern about the underlying principles of the MYP, and the majority recognised the suitability and relatedness of the MYP to the adolescent phase of learning.

In this section, we report participants' findings that relate to the philosophical underpinnings of the MYP including the following dimensions: *pedagogy* - concept-based approach, student-centered inquiry; *holistic education* –social, emotional, physical, cognitive development; *critical thinking*, research skills and problem-solving skills; *intercultural understanding*, international-mindedness and global awareness; and *local and global citizenship*, and community service.

### Pedagogy

Participants valued how the MYP promotes *student inquiry*. “When we get a really good [interdisciplinary] unit and have inquiry going, we do feel like the kids have learned a lot and that we've achieved well. There are definitely lots of positives about the MYP”

(Teacher, Oak Park). The MYP Coordinator at Boulder Christian stated that his school choose the MYP because of its “emphasis on inquiry-based models which places the student at the centre and focus on in-depth thinking and learning”. Similarly, the principal of Breton Bay stated that his school continued to support the MYP because of, “The problem-solving, and the inquiry, the capacity for kids to learn how to talk to each other rather than having to be just like little silos on their own. Teacher talk, you listen, you write, you do test. I tell you if you’re good or not. It’s [the MYP] a very different model.” Participants valued the student-inquiry approach because they believe it makes learning relevant and engaging for this age group. As described by one of the education representatives:

If the MYP is delivered properly, then the inquiry approach and the concept-based approach is excellent for learning because it makes it relevant. Without that relevance, particularly at that age group, it's pitched at the middle years, you've gone beyond the primary where they're happy to do anything and you're before Years 11 and 12 where they're panicking so they'll do anything.” (Michelle, education representative)

#### *Critical thinking skills*

Participants also valued the pedagogical emphasis of the MYP on the development of *critical thinking and other academic skills rather than solely on discipline-based content*. Teachers, IB coordinators, school leaders and education representatives all noted positive aspects of the MYP, as illustrated in the following quote.

The world class thing about IB is the actual pedagogy, it’s not focused on content. Content’s important and we need to know stuff, but it’s how we manipulate it and it's the enquiring model. It’s about challenging kids to think critically, to have to come to a point of view. For us, it’s a much better proposition than the Australian curriculum ... which is a whole bunch of content when all of the research is saying, “Reduce the content, increase the thinking, increase the creativity, increase the problem-solving.” (Principal, Breton Bay)

#### *Intercultural understanding*

Participants also valued the MYP’s (and the IB more generally) emphasis on *global awareness, international mindedness, and intercultural understanding*. Comments from the majority of respondents were represented by the following:

That be aware, and be proud to be an Australian, but understand that other people are different. They are proud to be who they are, but scratch away the culture, and the humanity has so much

in common, so much in common and just learn that. Open mindedness. The values framework is fantastic, because it puts everything into a particular framework. The whole school is moving in a similar direction, and with a similar framework rather than and kids are still exposed to a plurality of thinking, and ideas. (Principal, Breton Bay)

One principal spoke at length about the impact of the MYP on *expanding students' horizons*. While he valued the local community, he also thought it important for students to feel comfortable navigating the larger world.

To me, that's one of the things that I thought was really good for this community. Because I was talking to you before about the perception of the kids. They don't really think they are very good. They think that, we just come from a working class area so this is what we should be content with. My view is that education should provide people with choices and opportunities. The IB is a perfect vehicle for that... This community is a wonderful community. It's very supportive of itself. It's about as close as it can get to being in a country town inside the metropolitan area. But the students in this school were limiting their options and their world view in my opinion. That was the big change, coming in here and saying, "Actually, we're not doing our students a service here. We're training them. We are enculturating them into a view of themselves as mediocre. A view of themselves as not being outward to taking any risk and move out of this local community, and so, this is our opportunity to give them some self-confidence and self-awareness". If they choose to live locally and work locally, good on them. But it's not for everybody. They should be able to have the access to a broader world view." (Principal, Breton Bay)

In addition to students, participants noted that the MYP was useful for developing the international mindedness of teachers:

I think staff have a more global mindset. We think about travel more. I just think we do. Considering going to IB conferences overseas, which would never have happened before. I think that just opens up your world. When people of any faculty are teaching their unit, they'll be thinking more, "How is this linked to the global context?" It just places it in your head. It was always there for language. With English, they'll be thinking, "How does this link to life over there, somewhere else?" (Cara, language teacher, Breton Bay)

### *Holistic development*

Participants valued the MYP's attention to the *holistic development* of students, with attention paid to both academic and personal development, through the Learner Profile, and general attention to holistic education.

My son's only four. But I've already started planning for him to come here. When people ask me why I'm sending him here, I say that, "I really love the MYP because it looks after the child as a whole." At the end of the day, that is what parents want. That's what all educators want. For their child to be the best member of society that they can be when they leave this establishment. I feel like the MYP with their holistic approach delivers that and delivers on that promise well. (MYP Coordinator, Lutheran Trinity)

For me, the middle years was always a wilderness for kids, and this is something where it's actually a really big focus of the school's attention, and it's important. School is not just about preparing for the future. School is about developing a person's needs then and there. Intellectual stimulation, social stimulation, social engagement, all these things are so important for learners, for people. (Principal, Breton Bay)

### *Citizenship*

Related to its emphasis on holistic education, participants spoke directly about the value of the MYP's emphasis on *community service / citizenship*:

I use the diagram about the student being at the centre, and the whole idea of the MYP is a path trying to develop not just subject content, but we want the students to develop as a whole, put back into the community, and see the links between learning areas. We're trying to take them on a journey so that they're building their skills so that they can develop not only internally but externally with others, take that to the workforce, and building that wider perception of not just what's happening here locally but what's going with other people and how might they be involved in issues and solutions as well." (MYP Coordinator, Breton Bay)

It's about getting a disposition in young people where they move from the natural condition of an adolescent to be egocentric and thinking about themselves only, to really developing a set of values about servicing community and non-judgment of other folk in a negative judgment. In such a pluralistic society as Australians, I think it's fundamental (Principal, Breton Bay)

Participants noted how the service and personal project components of the MYP promoted *engagement with local industry and community*, leading to real world learning and connections.

We've seen some fantastic things come out of this school because of the MYP including personal projects, ideas and service and interviews as well. We've built on fantastic relationships with other businesses and communities within our community as well through all of that. It has gotten the kids ready for what it's like in the real world. (Joe, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

Finally, participants discussed the value of the MYP Learner Profile. They valued the specific words and dimensions of the Learner Profile. They also valued how the MYP makes learner characteristics visible, guiding teaching and learning throughout the school year.

Well on learning, I guess it's teachers and students have to be a Learner. We really spend a lot of time looking at the Learner Profile, what that means really does impact a lot on what we do in our Pastoral Care program. Well, I can't say in my prior school is that we didn't concentrate much-- There wasn't something specific that we had to check off that we were teaching students how to be Learners, what a good Learner looks like and why it's important to have these particular characteristics. That's definitely a benefit. (Lilly, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

The learner profile is on the wall, in the class, and that's touched on consistently in almost every task we do it, relating back to the learner profile. I think that that's one of the, again, another positive having those in the wall, it's amazing. It's really a good way to sort of direct students back to the thinking that you want them to have, that global thinking and challenge them in that way. (Doug, teacher, Oak Park)

In summary, participant responses to the MYP Standard: Philosophy were overwhelmingly positive and highlighted all the main components underlying the MYP, affirming the suitability and relevance of the MYP for this adolescent phase of learning. The main dimensions reported by participants relate to *pedagogy; holistic education; critical thinking; intercultural understanding, and global citizenship*.

## Organisation

The MYP organization standard has two components: leadership and structure, and resources and support. The main themes in this section relate to leadership demands for training and supporting teachers, perception that the MYP can be limiting, perceptions that costs are high and supports from the IB could be improved, and tensions related to timetabling, support and compliance. Participants valued the structure of the MYP and the philosophy that underpins it, but also reported challenges with using it in their school. As noted by one participant, limitations were considered “structural rather than anything philosophical, or academic” (Principal, Breton Bay).

### *Leadership and structure*

The MYP framework was seen by participants as a vehicle for giving direction to the leadership team. They also valued how it provides a structure and common language for the whole school including parents, students and teachers. However, some common issues were apparent across the sites, as detailed below.

Some participants perceived that the MYP framework can limit flexibility in teaching. As the quote below illustrates, this was seen in regards to a requirement to teach certain subjects simultaneously:

There’s some structural limitations. If you were to ask the staff what they think the big limitations is, it would be because of the requirement for teaching certain things simultaneously that there’s probably a little less flexibility than some would want. The key limitation that I would say is structural rather than anything philosophical, or academic. I’d say that it’s just the structural constraints. (Principal, Breton Bay)

A few participants reported that not all staff in their school support the MYP, and in some instances work against it. This was reported even in schools where the MYP has been offered for many years, as illustrated from the quote below.

I think you do have a certain amount of people who are not really buying into it and certain game players and certain people that probably hedge their bets a bit and play both sides of the fence. You’re going to have all of that within a cohort of teachers, but I would say that’s the detrimental part and then you’re not going to get the consistency across the school and students. I’ve heard students pick up on that sort of thing as well. “Oh, Mr. So and So, doesn’t hand back their assignments and they don’t base it on the criteria” or they are just giving us

the observance or that kind of thing. You do hear about those. You wish you didn't. (MYP Coordinator, Boulder Christian)

The principal from the school that has recently adopted the MYP also noted the substantial demands associated with training teachers and supporting their pedagogical shift.

There's time again, in terms of teaching staff. This is the number one impact on student outcomes. We have to work hard with that teacher to change their mindset. When you start to come in, having trained staff in the MYP, it's very difficult. We have to work hard with them and to change the way that they go about their practices and the way that they affect the outcomes of students. (Principal, Copper Mountain)

### *Resources and support*

Overall comments from the participants regarding resources and support was the appreciation for external feedback from the IB and clear guidance on how to improve outcomes and consistency. This allowed clear guidelines for resource allocation and support. However, participants at all schools noted that training, support and resources for managing the extra demands associated with offering the MYP were not always adequate.

The next level of that limitation is when you are paying that vast amount of money, and then you turn up and the person running it is rubbish. Because, like I've said, I've been to a few and some of them were absolutely awesome and some of them were standing there and reading a PowerPoint. (Assistant principal, Copper Mountain)

Costs were mentioned by many participants and related to financial and hidden costs; time. Comments from participants in regard program costs, professional learning costs and hidden costs have been captured below:

Not so much in terms of the program itself, but, really, in terms of the on-going professional learning. The recent changes within the IB in terms of implementing workshops and training, I think, significantly improves on the previous roles. However, an IB workshop is going to cost us \$50,000. That is a lot of money...I think that that really is a great limitation to anyone that's implementing the IDU within a public school system. (Principal, Copper Mountain)

I feel like it doesn't necessarily acknowledge the diversity of situations that schools find themselves in. It became very evident to me that as a public school, and with all the



restrictions around being a public school and money, we don't have the opportunities to take the MYP to that next level that I've seen schools that are well funded achieve. (Incoming MYP Coordinator, Breton Bay)

Costs were felt by private schools too.

There are a number of financial, school budget as well as fee structure implications. Most schools opting to register with the IB would have had to find additional monetary resources to fund their participation (Bob, education representative)

But as also mentioned in the previous quote, the costs, especially with teacher training, ease off once the program is embedded in the school for a while.

I think now that we've been doing it for so long, I think everyone here is feeling well versed in how it works, what to expect, what we need to do. I don't think there are issues like that. Again talking to the primary schools, why are they opted out, I think essentially it's the cost, but we've elected just to continue on. (Principal, Breton Bay)

The second major theme related to resources and support centered around the challenge of aligning the national curriculum and jurisdiction demands related to it with the MYP. Participants responded that they would like more support for meeting these challenges.

I think that the next five years will be very challenging in Australia as the national curriculum develops headway- I would try to marry the two better over the coming years and set resources in place for better learning outcomes. (MYP Coordinator, Boulder Christian)

Similarly, participants discussed the resource challenges that arise from meeting compliance to the IB and the education jurisdiction.

I wouldn't say the MYP poses any challenges for learning, but one of the challenges I have from my end is compliance with status and practices and compliance with the regulation and within our system here. Compliance, in terms of action plan for the IB, but then I've also got to do an action plan for the Department of Education. I think that is a real limitation. At the end of the day for me, if we're not efficient and we're not getting the learning we want at the end game, it's just a ridiculous waste of time. That to me is a limitation, in terms of how efficient time is. (Principal, Copper Mountain)

## Curriculum

Comments on curriculum relate to the four sub strands: collaborative planning, written curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment. The main themes were that participants valued many aspects of the MYP, but unsurprisingly, also noted challenges. Most of the challenges were not due to the MYP per se, but rather the requirement to align it with the national curriculum and jurisdiction requirements.

### *Collaborative planning*

Participants valued how the MYP helps teachers work collectively to plan lessons and discuss student learning.

The MYP has caused us to be systematic and structural about it. It's got people working in teams. That wasn't happening prior to that [the MYP]. It has definitely caused an improvement in understanding of where learners are at and what their needs are, definitely. (MYP Coordinator, Breton Bay)

Both as a teacher of the MYP and a coordinator of the MYP, I feel that it has created opportunities for more collaboration to occur amongst my colleagues and my staff...But I personally feel that it allows for a lot of creativity, and it makes the teacher think outside of maybe a traditional process of teaching.. For me, the most important thing is being that team work. (Incoming MYP Coordinator, Breton Bay)

A great thing about the MYP has been the collaboration. Getting together and working on units where we're all on the same on page, we're all doing the same thing. You might deliver it in a different way, but we're all on the same page. One of the biggest benefits of working in this school, in this team is that we all get together to do our units of inquiry we can draw on each other's strengths. We're always continuously sharing documents, emailing each other with our ideas and thoughts. (Josie, teacher, Oak Park)

Participants noted some negatives too in terms of paperwork and effort:

There's an awful lot of paperwork. I think the unit planning requirements can sometimes get really a bit tedious, if we don't stay on top of them and update them regularly enough. (Carrie, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

Extra time it takes to plan and develop units at the start (Erwin, education representative)

And a sense that maybe the planning may at times be stifling:

Sometimes there's so much documentation needed, that you don't actually delve deep enough into the teaching. Because it's so much about that accountability, the plan, and that sort of thing. It sometimes takes away from the actual teaching, and probably takes away from that intuitive teaching that people have. (Acting Principal, Oak Park)

### *Written curriculum*

With regards to this sub-standard, the main themes related to the common framework are aligning the MYP with the national curriculum, foreign language learning, and IDU.

Participants believe the MYP is well planned and appreciate the common language and frameworks.

It's very well-planned. Kids aren't learning whatever. They're learning an actual unit. Very much about global concepts. Big picture-type learning as children in their age groups that has a lot more relevance to them. Because they're starting to understand the wider world. (Acting Principal, Oak Park)

With the IB, it's like everyone is on the same page globally. No matter what school you go into, it's there. I can hang my hat on it, and I know that that person is going to say that and that person is going to say that—I'm going to get that answer from there. It's going to be the same everywhere. I love that. It's real security. You feel like you can go forward and not spend hours of planning and have it waste time. (Cara, language teacher, Breton Bay)

A very common theme throughout all of the interviews relates to challenges of aligning the MYP with the national curriculum.

I think for us straddling the Australian curriculum and the IB creates challenges because we are having to make sure that we do everything from two areas. Whilst it would be nice to have the MYP and just cherry-pick from the Australian curriculum how we're going to incorporate those things in, it just makes it harder for us. It's not impossible. It just makes life a bit tougher. (Sarah, teacher, Oak Park)

I don't find that hard to put the Australian curriculum content into a planner, I think most of the teachers don't find that difficult either. It's when DET initiatives come out, for example, they'll say like, "You're expected to do guided reading." That is hard to fit into a conceptually driven unit of

inquiry and we have so many of them, that's the trouble.  
(Assistant principal, teacher, Oak Park)

The complexities and challenges faced by schools and teachers of alignment with the Australian Curriculum in terms of the Areas of Learning and General Capabilities and how these relate to the MYP Areas of Learning and the ATL. It is necessary for teachers to understand TWO systems in addition to national standards of Literacy and Numeracy. This has made teaching more difficult and complicated. (Bob, education representative)

Some participants reported that too much content requirement in the national curriculum makes it hard to align their teaching with the MYP's concept-based MYP approach.

We're always going to complain about things that happen but sometimes we look at what they expected to deliver in ACARA and you think where's the relevance to this? Do you think we have unlimited time in our classrooms? Like it seems to be a little bit outdated to me to have that kind of restriction and then that much content-based learning. (MYP Coordinator, Lutheran Trinity)

There is a little bit of concern, not about the putting together. It will be more basic. Obviously ACARA and the sheer volume of content that need to be delivered. Mood is that they're overwhelmed with how they're going to get through this. A lot of them fall back on that content delivery as opposed to the concept delivery. With that I feel like has turned the MYP a little bit on its head because they have totally forgotten the idea of MYP is the concept, not through the content. I feel like there's a few unsettled souls out there. But we're getting back into it. But like I said, it's not they dislike the MYP or think it doesn't work. It's more just how do we marry these two together. (MYP Coordinator, Lutheran Trinity)

The MYP coordinators tried to solve the issue by suggesting that the best way to deal with the challenge or addressing two masters was to not worry too much about the content of the Australian curriculum:

Definitely get away from looking at a fixed box of content because if you do that you just never going to get through everything and you're not going to do it in any meaningful way. And so using the MYP's approach through looking through concepts in their planning and teaching is the best way because if you cover the concepts a lot of that content will come

naturally with that learning. (MYP Coordinator, Lutheran Trinity)

*Second language teaching* (or Language B in MYP contexts) is problematic in Australian schools because many students and families do not value it (Bense, 2015). Participants therefore valued the MYP's commitment to language learning. They valued how the MYP requires students to learn a foreign language until Year 10, which to date has not been a requirement in all Australian schools and jurisdictions (ACARA, 2018). Participants noted that language learning is not highly valued in general in Australia, so encouraging students to study a language in high school, and convincing school leaders to commit to language learning in the face of timetabling and staffing challenges, was highly valued. The following quote from a Cara, a language teacher at Breton Bay, is illustrative:

The MYP has been great because it's brought Indonesian up to Year 10. I don't have to fight to convince students to do this language anymore. Now that we have the MYP, just to teach in a curriculum area that's already endorsed, that you don't have to fight for, has been life transforming for me. It's like no one argues with English or Maths or science but here we argue about, "Why do I have to do this language? Why do I have to do this?" Even parents would argue. Now, the conversation doesn't exist. The first couple of year's people would say, "When can I get out of this?" You can't, it's actually compulsory until the end of Year 10. "Oh, my God, I'm going to die". Well, you better pull your socks up, com'on, let's do it. (Cara, language teacher, Breton Bay)

Participants also described challenges that they faced with *Language B*. Issues ranged from timetabling conflicts, poor teachers, and an inability to cater for a large range of ability levels. Previous MYP versions allowed a curriculum flexibility clause/rule which allowed schools to not offer language in Year 8. A similar flexibility exists for having a gap between MYP and DP, as Michelle, education representative explains "within the secondary context there is the null gap rule...they're permitted to have a gap between their MYP and Diploma which means what happens to language, of course some drop it". Many of the issues that schools face with Language B are due to its perceived lack of value by students and parents.

Many schools and students have struggled with the compulsory second language studies required by the MYP framework. Despite the apparently flexible options offered across the MYP languages area of study, students at Years 9 and 10 and their parents are frequently interested in "alternative studies and

options to language continuation”. (Bob, education representative)

Finally, participants identified that there is difficulty in selling and fitting in the *interdisciplinary units (IDUs)* as it requires substantial effort to set up and maintain consistency. Stakeholders have suggested that the documents and guides for IDUs and Community, Service and Action to be flexible and more ideas to be given on how this might work in a school.

Yes, I was going to add on that the requirement to have an interdisciplinary unit in each year of the program, that is a new requirements that didn't used to be there and they're having interdisciplinary unit we have its own planner. To really to get a good one, a genuine synthesis of knowledge, that's a big ask of teachers in terms of first of all upscaling so they understand how to do it. (Michelle, education representative)

### *Teaching and learning*

Participants perceived that the MYP has been a positive vehicle for the *professional development of teachers* at all stages of career. For example, the MYP has invigorated more experienced staff, as described by a teacher and MYP coordinator:

I feel like the MYP has reinvigorated some teaching staff who have probably become a bit stagnant over time. While they might be a bit fussy about the fact that this is what they have to do, it really does change what learning looks like in a classroom, if they're doing it appropriately. (Sarah, language teacher and MYP coordinator, Breton Bay)

At the same time, it has also helped teachers with less teaching experience develop, as described by a teacher at Oak Park with less than three years teaching experience:

An advantage [of the MYP] is I've grown a lot in a short amount of time. I've tried to pick up all the criteria and make sure I've read through and understand the success criterion side of that, understand how it all works. That's helped me develop a lot quickly. (Doug, teacher, Oak Park)

When asked whether and how the MYP had improved their teaching, participants gave a range of answers, all of which were positive. Participants valued how the MYP helped teachers to focus on inquiry and skill development rather than just content, and believed that it made their assessment more rigorous and authentic.

I'd like to think that it [the MYP] helped me to plan my teaching, keeping the whole student in mind and not to just get bogged down by content... There's more to teaching and learning than just teaching the content. Also, it really makes you consider everything about what it is that you're teaching. It forces us teachers to reflect, which I think we often don't have enough time to do. We get to the end of the year or the end of the unit or the end of the term, and we forget about having to do that. The MYP forces us to take the time to reflect. I think that's really positive. (Carrie, teacher at Lutheran Trinity)

I found it [MYP] incredibly overwhelming as a beginning teacher but as I've started using it throughout the rest of my teaching career, I can just see that it makes just good sense. It makes teachers accountable not just for a grade, and not just for a "This is your final assessment" but actually needing to look at the students, like I said before, as a whole and addressing all those different needs and also do stronger community (Sophie, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

Participants also perceived that the MYP is *pedagogically rigorous*. Lilly, a teacher at Lutheran Trinity, noted this rigor and added that it prepares students well for the upper years of secondary school: "I do find that the MYP in terms of teaching and learning has a formal rigor. That does have its benefits as students are very well prepared when they do get into their senior years." Lilly is referring to final two years of secondary schooling within the context of the Australian curriculum and her jurisdiction's school leaving certificate; her school does not offer the DP.

Participants also talked about how teaching at their school had become more rigorous due to the MYP framework. As described by a teacher at Breton Bay:

I believe that since the IB has been brought in, we as a staff have been turned into a hardworking, rigorous, high-standard-seeking bunch of people. We plan out lessons much more efficiently and thoroughly. We look into the background of why we're teaching things more thoroughly. Our unit plans are-- well, I would claim that they are all there because we have to have them there. Therefore, we've been more accountable. It's brought more rigor, tighter programs. The links between concepts and global concepts and context and all of that are all there. There's more integrity in what we're doing. Before I feel like we would say we were doing something, but we weren't really. It was a bit fluffy in the classroom. (Cara, language teacher and Y8 Coordinator, Breton Bay)

This participant then continued by saying that learning had in turn improved:

I think I've noticed a lifting of the standards of what learning is here. I've noticed that the settling of classes, the focus on learning rather than just being here at the school for fun and I think with the teaching becoming more tight and rigorous then I think the learning has lifted with that. (Cara, , EFL teacher and Y8 Coordinator, Breton Bay)

Participants also reported that the MYP increased the workload of teachers, and this in turn was related to additional stress.

There's a stress factor, it's a big workload for teachers.  
(Teacher, Oak Park)

I think people [teachers] are tired, I have to say. They're tired physically and emotionally with how much it calls for an extra level of effort. If you are not with that, then you're always against the grind, you're tired. If you ever think what I could be getting away with if I wasn't in an IB school, you don't want to think about that too much. [laughs] Because that would be sad, that would depress you. Because we do have-- we are a really hard working staff and I think we've all got these standards we're working towards by the end of our reporting time and learning new things all the time. That's tiring for a teacher, along with everything else that we deal with every day. (Cara, teacher, Breton Bay)

In a similar vein, a teacher at Boulder Christian notes that the MYP is demanding for teachers, but appreciates the extra effort that is required:

It's a lot of extra work. It is a lot of work put on top of what you're already doing. I think those things are essential, and that's what I like. I like the fact that I don't have to argue with people about what we're doing. It's there. "This is what we're doing, and this is how we do it and if you don't like it, then go somewhere else." (Lyn, Teacher, Boulder Christian)

Participants also noted benefits for learning and students.

It's a great framework, and I don't see anything but pluses for kids. (Deputy Principal, Breton Bay)

We want our kids to know that it's not just our little bubble here, there's always other things that are out there. We often



talk about how the MYP teaches students to learn. That's important because the job market will change and has continued to change, with automation, etc. (Principal, Boulder Christian)

### *Assessment*

A large amount of participants' responses related to the MYP assessment framework. Participants also talked about the value of the MYP *assessment framework* and how it has improved student learning at their school. Participants valued how it is standardised across the entire school:

A positive aspect of the MYP are the consistent rubrics and criterion, which enables standardization across the middle school. (MYP Coordinator, Boulder Christian)

When asked about the benefits of the MYP for learning, Carrie, a teacher at Lutheran Trinity, discussed the advantages of the MYP assessment framework:

I think it's a really good assessment framework. I think it just makes assessment make sense. Once the kids have wrapped their head around the MYP lingo, it gives them a really clear indication of how they can improve, what is required to do better. I think that's one of the best things about it. It always has that constant requirement for kids to reflect on their learning. (Lyn, Teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

The Principal at Boulder Christian remarked that the MYP assessment gives more detailed information to students about the ways that they can improve compared to traditional assessment practices.

I think the biggest one was getting used to criteria-based assessment. I think that's truly valuable. If units are set up correctly and assessment tasks are set correctly, it really gives students a guide as to what they need to do to achieve the highest standards of sevens and eights. Students are like, "This is what I need to do." They can evaluate themselves and say, "Right, yes, I have done that." Or, "No, I haven't. This is where about I am." Which makes it, also, good for teachers as well. You can say, "Here is the criteria assessment. This is the level you're at. This is what you could have done to get to the next level." That's definitely, I think, one of the positives. (Principal, Boulder Christian)

As mentioned in the previous quote, participants linked MYP assessment practices with both improved learning and teaching. The following responses highlight directly how the

MYP assessment framework has improved teaching and assessment practices at participants' schools. Teaching practices are more aligned with assessment practices, and teachers are held accountable to explicit criteria.

The way that we affect students with rubrics and with categories makes, I think, teachers more accountable in their assessment of students and their academics. It makes it, for me, personally, it makes it easier for me to mark and assess students. Also, build a relationship with the students because you've always got those students who struggle in something but when you've got multiple categories or multiple areas that you're marking them against, you can always say, "Look, you're really strong in this, but let's work on this." (MYP Coordinator, Lutheran Trinity)

The previous quote also describes how the MYP assessment framework is positive for students because it includes multiple, qualitative dimensions rather than a simple numeric score. This feature in turn helps schools communicate with parents, which has lifted standards more generally, as described in the following quote.

Also, the ability then to communicate that to parents and to standardize subject tasks I think is really important. Our growth has been a lot more consistent. Teachers are a lot more aware. They're teaching our new program and then, as a result, we've also been able to raise our standards here at the school. (MYP coordinator, Boulder Christian)

While the MYP assessment framework was regarded very positively by participants, two issues were noted. The first one relates to the feasibility of the MYP assessment criteria for particular curricular subjects (specifically, language and manual arts / design & technology). The second issue relates to the feasibility of the MYP assessment criteria in primary school contexts, where students in Australia are taught by generalist teachers for most subjects.

First, one participant, who teaches a design and technology subject, believed that the MYP assessment framework does not work well for practical subjects.

In my other teaching area, in design, I find that it is extremely repetitive. How many times do we have to assess a student in the design cycle to see that they get it? It is so word heavy. What the students are required to do in a practical based subject in terms of their written work is phenomenal. There's only one criterion, which is criterion C, where they're making the product but they're actually being assessed on the practical standard. The other three criterion are all written work and it is

really hard. Especially if the kid struggle with literacy. Yes, it encourages them to focus on those skills but it's also an area where we would like kids to be creative in another sense and not be so focused on the written stuff. And we can't. Because there's only one criterion that assesses the practical. The rest is written. Even though they might excel and do really well in their practical area, it's only a quarter of their assessment. (Lilly, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

Another teacher mentioned this issue with the subject of physical education:

Probably, with being a PE teacher, it's just some of the unit planning and developing concepts to teach in a program and trying to get them all to fit with what you're doing. I don't know. It's good but having a focus on communication in a volleyball unit, for example, is hard. I find that PE's a skills based unit and it's good to have some of those concepts in there, but sometimes I feel like we're trying to make those relationships whereas they'll probably just be more interested in getting out there and practically doing things. (Steve, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

Similarly, a participating language teacher believed that the assessment criteria for languages, at least non-European ones, are difficult to use. When asked if she had any recommendations for the IB, this was her sole recommendation:

I would say please look at your four assessment criteria, again for language. I feel like for Indonesian criteria A, the visual interpretation task, I noticed that with the European language there's so many resources that I can use and it's so limited for Indonesian and we really struggle to be able to meet that criteria. Even criteria B, which used to be stock standard reading comprehension, has changed into something much different and assessing the question, I find, is a mind blowing difficult task. (Cara, language teacher, Breton Bay)

A second problematic aspect of the MYP assessment framework was raised by participants at Oak Park, the one primary school in our study. All respondents at this school perceived that the MYP assessment framework was unsustainable and overly superficial for generalist, primary school teachers. Participants from this school also worried that the MYP assessment framework detracted from student learning because they perceived that there was too much emphasis on summative rather than formative assessment. As described by the assistant principal,

Assessment is just so full on and my concern is that there were so many assessment criteria. I think it forgets that kids like ours who are in a primary school setting are not going to different teachers for every subject. As generalist teachers for us to meet all that assessment is huge and the planning process is, we just cannot keep up with that. The documentation and our assessment requirement probably are two key things. We also worry that there's such an emphasis on the summative assessment that we lose time to do the formative assessment part of things. We feel that that's detrimental for student learning. (Assistant Principal, Oak Park)

By contrast, however, a teacher at Lutheran Trinity commented that she did substantial formative assessments. This suggests that the MYP assessment framework does not preclude formative assessment.

I do lots of observations, so I do that a lot every day. I collect books. I collect written work, so I just do constant checking of where they're up to and that type of thing. We have lots of learning activities which I would use as formative assessments as well. (Carrie, teacher, Lutheran Trinity)

Another participant described how the MYP creates extra demands on teachers in terms of lesson planning and assessment:

We are also governed by Australian curriculum and the A to E grades. We've got 1 to 8 grades in IB. We grade using the MYP rubric, but at the end of year report you have to give an equivalent A to E grade. (Josie, Teacher, Oak Park)

### **Choosing the MYP**

An important question embedded in this study was the reason why schools chose to offer the MYP. We asked participants why they thought their school had chosen the MYP and why it continues to offer the MYP, and whether it would recommend the MYP to other schools. Responses about why the school had chosen the MYP and/or continued to offer it typically highlighted a number of reasons rather than just one. In terms of the MYP Standards, the reasons usually highlighted the MYP's philosophy and curriculum. The following quote illustrate participants' multi-faceted responses.

It's about the common language, the way of building a stronger and more rigorous curriculum, through a consistent framework. That was important. It was about building the quality of the assessment approaches as well. From that, facilitating those staff conversations about deeper understanding from staff about

the needs of the students. Then ensuring that their task design and the units that they're doing, are actually meeting those needs. Again, against the quality standard, which wasn't there and that was the thing. (MYP Coordinator, Breton Bay)

For me, the key purpose for continuing in it is the rigor...the previous Chief Executive of the education department used to ask me, "Why are you so passionate? Why are you coming to see me all the time about this stuff? What can our system learn from the IB?" I said, "The key things it can learn is, have a reviewing process which is positive and affirming not just negative, and have a system that develops young people in a holistic way and stops measuring the trivial. Value what's really important". You ask any principal or educational thinker on either, one of the most important outcomes for education, they don't start naming the content of courses. (Principal, Breton Bay)

We chose the MYP because of its emphasis on international education and the benefits of a consistent curriculum for all teachers and students to follow... to be part of an international educational group with an excellent academic reputation worldwide (MYP Coordinator, Boulder Christian)

On the other hand, other participants singled out one or two primary reasons why their school offered the MYP. For some participants the primary reason was the MYP's academic rigor, for others it was the language requirement or authentic assessment, as illustrated in the following responses:

The main thing really, was around the academic rigor as opposed to inquiry or service or international mindedness. (Principal, Copper Mountain)

I think for a bit more rigor. Not saying that we weren't rigorous previously, but it's almost like we drew a line and said, "Let's take this on and let's really give it a red hot go." I think also perhaps to provide a point of difference. And I think it's been really valuable as well. But I think those two items, rigor and point of difference, for me would be the reason why we've gone on this path. (Deputy Principal, Breton Bay)

Yes, I would encourage other schools to consider adopting the MYP, because I believe it's more of a big picture thing for me. I would love to see Australia having language being more embraced by people, not think it's this weird thing. Remember when Kevin Rudd spoke Chinese on the television, everyone went, "What is that about? Is he trying to show off? What's that

about?” Seriously, that’s the culture of Australia. I’d love to see that change and to embrace difference, to accept that because you’re a Muslim, you’re a Muslim. Then there’s this other thing called a terrorist, it’s everywhere else. It’s not just in Islam, it’s everywhere. I’d love to see all that break down by language learning. (Cara, language teacher, Breton Bay)

### **MYP in the Educational Marketplace**

Given the commodification of education that currently exists around the globe, it was important to explore MYP within this global education marketplace. We asked participants about how the MYP has positioned their school in the local educational marketplace as well as the larger international community. One common thread that they discussed was the global recognition of the MYP:

I think the reason why we adopted the MYP probably had a lot to do with the fact that it was a global program, that it's recognized worldwide. (Carrie, teacher at Lutheran Trinity)

I think it’s got a reputation internationally as being a wonderful format and a consistent format. No matter where you go in the world, you know you’re going to have the same curriculum, assessment focus. I think that that appeals to people and people look at it as a prestigious thing. (Josie, teacher, Oak Park)

Big schools around the world, international schools, and having a part of being a piece of that. I think it’s a sense of, even though we’re not an international school, it gives us that sense of a global community. We’re involved in this curriculum, it’s more than just ourselves which is the idea of the IB. I think that definitely has an effect. (Doug, teacher, Oak Park)

Participants also mentioned that the MYP has *prestige*, and that this helps their school compete in the educational marketplace.

In Australia, as you’re probably very aware, the IB brings with it an elitist reputation. I don’t believe it is but it certainly still has that reputation in the Australian context. I think that that is probably the main reason for implementation here. To help this school be a top school in [our jurisdiction] and nationally. It really was used as a marketing tool, I believe, in its initial phases. (MYP Coordinator, Copper Mountain)

The school when they picked up their IB had low numbers; it was looking for a prestige factor, I think... (Doug, teacher, Oak Park)

There was a concern by the principals and staff of the local schools of the middle-class folk of the region abandoning state [public] education and going to [private] colleges in the city. They thought that if they went for IB, it was this quality assurance thing, and the perception. A lot of it was around status and qualities like branding. (Principal, Breton Bay)

In a related vein, participants discussed how the MYP had given their school an identity and a *point of difference* from other schools. Like prestige and global recognition, being “different” allows schools to compete for students.

We’ve chosen the MYP because it’s a point of difference. We have lots of other schools in the area and we’re the only school that’s IB. (Mary, teacher, Boulder Christian)

I think the idea of having a school that’s got a particular characteristic and a particular culture and it’s really good, because it gives folks a choice. Not everyone might want to go to an IB school, so they don’t have to. A lot of people might want to come here, especially because it is an IB school. To me, that’s a point of difference. ...When people come here, they know that’s what we stand for. That’s what we are. (Principal, Breton Bay)

The principal of Breton Bay noted that secondary school students were a diminishing demographic in his educational marketplace, and that the MYP was helping his school to enrol enough students to remain sustainable.

We’ve got kids who come from many schools and way outside of zone. There’s a perception that yes, it’s a quality school, because it is an IB school, and we get that feedback and we’re getting a lot of inquiries. .... There’s actually still a downward trend in our catchment area for secondary students for the next two years. So we’re maintaining a diminishing demographic, we’re doing better than what we should be. If we weren’t an IB school, God help us, I don’t know what would have happened. (Principal, Breton Bay)

As well as competing for students, participants described how the MYP has helped them to *attract middle-class students*:

We’re a public school in an area that is of diverse social economic standing, I guess, you’ve got your million dollar mansions a block away, and you’ve got your housing trust just two blocks behind us. The housing in this area is very diverse, which also brings around diversity within our students. A lot of

the families that could afford to be sending their students either into the city to private schools or more renowned public schools or even up the curve slightly to [school x], all which have buses that come down to pick up their private school students... We're originally a cluster with another high school and four primary schools. The schools got together, and as a peninsula cluster determined that having maybe a more renowned curriculum might be a good draw card for the families that were sending their kids elsewhere. (Second MYP Coordinator, Breton Bay)

At the same time we went for accreditation we became a service provider for incoming international students. We've had a lot more international students incoming because of that. The fact that it's an internationally accredited school, it's really important to these guys. They come here and they don't know anything about the Australian education system. They see that badge and they understand straight away it's a quality product." (Principal, Breton Bay)

As described above, offering the MYP helps attract expatriate families to Breton Bay high school. Having these international students at the school is another mechanism by which the intercultural understanding of the local students is developed, setting off a virtuous cycle.

## **Conclusion**

The findings revealed here in Chapter 5 are rich in detail and scope. The participant comments are invaluable and show major insight into the MYP philosophy, organization and curriculum from the perspective of participants. The findings provide insight into the actual lived experiences of those within the MYP case study schools as well as those within educational jurisdictions and governing bodies who 'view it from a distance'.

To conclude, we would like to finish with a statement from an experienced education representative in response to the question: *Would you recommend that schools adopt the MYP?*

I think, it depends on the feasibility study that they do first, and that's part of the requirements that they have to go through. So, am I in favor of it? Absolutely, 100%. Do I think it's a great program and can it benefit teachers and students? Absolutely, 100%, but I would only recommend it if the school has done a proper feasibility study and it understands just how big that shift can be for some teachers. (Monica, education representative)



## Chapter 6 Findings: An Overview

We begin with a synthesis of the findings in response to the research questions. The findings are framed using the IB Standards and Practices, the core document used to review IB school authorisation. These Standards frame the findings from the key stakeholders in Chapter 5. This is followed by a brief summary of the key findings from the previous chapter. We synthesise findings into benefits and challenges of the MYP and provide a set of recommendations within each.

The key messages from participants are that the MYP is a very high quality learning framework that provides outstanding benefits for teaching and learning. It does not come without challenges, however. These challenges relate to teacher support and professional development, financial costs of the programme and training, and increased planning and reporting workload to meet both IB and jurisdiction requirements. Participants from all but one school believed the benefits of offering the MYP outweighed the challenges. The one school that was in the process of withdrawing from the MYP was unique in that it was the only primary school in the study. Based on their responses, it appears that the challenges of offering the MYP in a primary school setting are indeed great. The challenges also appear to be more easily handled by the private schools than the public schools in our study, for two reasons. First, the private schools have greater financial resources than the public schools, which gives them more capacity to tackle challenges and find solutions. Second, private schools in our study were not held to the same curricular, accountability and reporting directives as the public schools. This meant that it was easier for them to juggle demands from the IB and jurisdiction.

### Findings in Response to Research Questions

Table 4. Impediments and enablers of offering MYP: Stakeholder perspectives (Research Question 1)

	Impediments	Enablers
A. Philosophy	Preconceived perceptions of IB; monolingual context; learning area silos; similarity to new Australian curriculum	Positive feasibility study; Alignment with school policy; global desire for 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills – conceptual, inquiry, research, problem solving, evidence based; global brand; child centred holistic approach
B. Organisation		
B.1 Leadership and structure	Leader dependent; MYP change to 3 years; limited middle school structures in Australia.	Leadership support: principal, MYP coordinator, key drivers; parent demand for IB; middle years structures; flexibility; MYP coordinator role.
B.2. Resources	Conflicting information in IB documents due to lag time; expensive; timetabling; mapping	Online access to resources; inbuilt professional learning opportunities;

	against national curriculum; release time for planning; null gap rule; isolation of specialists; high turn-over of staff; induction.	provision for collaborative planning time; inbuilt accountability and evidence.
<b>C. Curriculum</b>		
C1. Collaborative Planning	Expensive; timetable difficulties; ambiguous terminology & consistency; personality dependent; power inequities.	Inbuilt professional learning during process of collaborative planning; key driver dependent.
C2. Written Curriculum	Inconsistent understanding; 2 <sup>nd</sup> language issues; inconsistent documentation; contradictions in terms; time to plan; IDU difficult.	National curriculum shaped within Learning framework; flexible and adaptable for local context; merit of moderation; service focused; child-centred.
C3. Teaching and Learning	Assumed knowledge of concept driven & inquiry approach; conflicting pedagogies; 2 <sup>nd</sup> language flexibilities; inflexible mindset; lack of understanding of whole program; language learning demands.	Deep conceptual learners; reflective practitioners; increased quality of work; independence.
C4. Assessment	Assessment differences & alignment IB/Aus; cost of external marking; over-assessment; moderation gap; measuring on ability on four criteria (communication, reflection, analysis, research).	Teachers professional learning and understanding of 4 different approaches to assessment not simply factual - Assessment framework (A knowledge; B investigation/ analysis; C Communication; D Reflection); ongoing feedback loops; self-regulated learners.

Table 5. Benefits and opportunities of MYP for Teaching and Learning (Research Question 2)

	Benefits & Opportunities
<b>A. Philosophy</b>	Holistic and institutionally consistent across grade levels for teaching assessing and recording purposes; point of difference; consistent understanding of philosophical underpinnings; global networking; global competencies; international recognition; competitive advantage; inbuilt self-reflection.
<b>B. Organisation</b>	
B.1 Leadership & Structure	Member of global organisation; part of an international community of learners; leadership and international job opportunities – principal, middle years coordinator, IB regional and international office positions, workshop leader and school authorisation team members; students have career and professional pathways in IB providing a competitive advantage.
B.2 Resources	Access to online resources, professional learning opportunities and international job opportunities and connections.
<b>C. Curriculum</b>	
C1. Collaborative Planning	Inbuilt expectation of collaboration in planning and assessing; ongoing professional learning during process of planning and assessing; professional engagement to break down silos between learning areas.
C2. Written Curriculum	Alignment with national curriculum; development of context based local curricular units.
C3. Teaching and Learning	Targets adolescents; approaches to teaching and learning; deep conceptual learners; reflective practitioners; increased quality of work; inquisitive; self regulated and independent learners; holistic approach; development of interdisciplinary units; focus on learning how to learn; personal project; takes teaching and learning out of curriculum silos and

	into authentic context; focus on social needs and community service, citizenship; relevant concepts.
C4. Assessment	Ongoing feedback; self-regulated; assessment based on four criterion (ABCD: A knowledge, B investigation/analysis, C communication, D reflection).

Table 6. Limits and challenges of MYP for Teaching and Learning (Research Question 3)

	Limits & Challenges
A. Philosophy	Main issue identified as a gap between IB philosophy and practice due partly to difficulty changing mindset and pedagogies; Language B laudable in philosophy but challenge in implementation; lack of clearly defined aim of MYP targeting adolescents.
B. Organisation	
B.1 Leadership and Structure	Employment difficulties when transferring limit number of Australian schools that uptake MYP; schools seem reluctant to consider vertically integrated and individualised student programs; limited number of middle school structured institutions; limited visibility of IB outside of IB local context; timetable structure difficulties with Language B.
B.2. Resources	Time and labour intensive; cost of program including ongoing costs of registration, professional learning and moderation; once out of an IB school staff lose access to IB resources; ambiguity of language in documents; lag time between update of materials; problems achieving economies of scale; limited support from jurisdiction; costly interstate and international professional learning; structure of Programme Resource Centre repository difficult to navigate and disparate quality.
C. Curriculum	
C1. Collaborative Planning	Power inequities and group dynamics within collaborative planning and assessment sessions; new teachers feel intimidated by the demands; move from content to concept mindset.
C2. Written Curriculum	Time consuming planning, assessing and aligning drawing content from one and framework for delivery from another; limited exemplars from IB; nothing off the shelf to support; compounded of content rather than concept focused.
C3. Teaching and Learning	Struggle with compulsory second language studies; noting off the shelf as examples lack of videos and 'real class' contexts.
C4. Assessment	Assessment Standards and Methods for monitoring and reporting of student progress and achievement difficult; communicating the reporting standards to parents often challenging; shift from knowledge only assessment to criterion based and referenced MYP ABCD Assessment framework (A knowledge; B investigation/analysis; C Communication; D Reflection); differentiation can be difficult; tracking criterion generally task-based not developmental.

## Summary of Findings

In this section we summarise the main findings about participants' perceptions of the MYP for teaching and learning. We then summarise the main limitations and challenges perceived by participants. Within each of these categories, we also present participants' recommendations.

*Perceived benefits for teaching and learning*

- Interdisciplinary approach takes teaching and learning out of learning area silos.
- Concept based learning is more effective and efficient for teaching and learning.
- MYP principles have the capacity to change the mindset of everyone – teachers, adolescents and parents.
- Collective accountability occurs when creating multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary units.
- CAS impacts teachers' awareness of service and citizenship.
- MYP assessment processes require clear feedback to students.
- Teachers learn how to get students to demonstrate their ability over four criteria: reflection, communication, analysis, research knowledge rather than worksheets/content knowledge.
- MYP Approaches to Teaching and Learning helps change pedagogy.
- Increased expectation and standards for lesson planning and assessment.
- MYP requires teachers to know the curriculum well to be able to integrate it within the MYP learning framework.
- Access to international professional learning and job opportunities and resources such as conferences, workshops and PRC.
- Coherent pedagogy, methodology and philosophy understandings with common language and culture within the school.
- External feedback from the IB gives schools an opportunity to improve outcomes and consistency.
- Interdisciplinary Units encourage collaboration and facilitate pedagogical discussion.

*Perceived benefits for learning and students*

- MYP approaches to learning teaches children how to learn.
- MYP students see themselves and learning in a more holistic manner, personalised yet collaborative.
- MYP promotes students' critical thinking and global mindedness.
- MYP places attention on the holistic development of adolescent students and their needs.
- MYP emphasises social conscience with its commitment to community service.

- The Personal Project challenges and engages students both on the process of learning and the product, providing a unique opportunity to apply different approaches to learning.
- MYP encourages an appreciation for other cultures and languages.

### *Challenges*

- A number of financial, school budget and fee structure implications exist, including ongoing registration, professional learning, recurrent moderation fees, assessment fees and Certificate fees.
- Stakeholders have suggested that the documents and guides for IDUs and Community, Service and Action could be more flexible and provide more ideas about how they might work in a school.
- Difficulty in fitting the interdisciplinary units (IDUs) as it requires substantial effort to establish and maintain consistency.
- No single identity for MYP; it is seen as a precursor for the DP rather than a single independent program.
- Language classes can have students coming in Year 8 with no language whilst others have had eight years of language; no other subject has this issue.
- Communicating the reporting standards to parents from different subject perspectives
- Terminology associated with the MYP requires defining to parents and prepared resources do not exist.

### *Participants' recommendations for the IB*

- Provide open access to the alignment of the MYP with the Australian Curriculum, e.g. by developing exemplars for planning, teaching and assessment.
- Support and provide Language B teachers exemplars for differentiation. It is the only subject where it is possible to have an 8 year gap to differentiate for within the class.
- Provide exemplars of MYP assessment criteria: reflection; communication; analysis; research knowledge to support clarity of components.
- Provide challenging and relevant concepts and topics that address the whole child
- Explicitly present alternative assessment criteria (A-D: Reflection, Communication, Analysis/Research, Product).

- Explore ways to make MYP financially viable for schools with limited financial resources.
- Explicitly address Adolescent Phase of Learning – a period of inquiry, experimentation and massive physical, emotional, behavioural and cognitive change.
- Market the MYP and its unique adolescent focus overtly as an independent stand-alone program as well as being a stepping stone to CP as well as DP on the continuum.
- Increase visibility of the IB suite of programs within Australian education sectors, conferences, teaching journals, and professional associations.

## Chapter 7: Discussion

In this chapter we present the findings of our cross-case analysis, highlighting how participants' responses varied, or not, across the five schools. We then discuss the findings, interpreting them within the Australian context, as well as integrating them with previous literature.

### Cross-case Analysis

Cross-case analysis revealed a number of findings. Given our small sample, these findings should be treated with caution. Nevertheless, they suggest patterns that would be worthy of future study.

First, all schools, regardless of sector, structure or composition, valued the MYP framework and its underlying philosophy and goals. Not one single participant identified any feature of the MYP that they believed was detrimental to students or their learning.

Second, human resources and costs of the program were challenges noted by all schools except Lutheran Trinity, the high-fee private school. Resource challenges were more pronounced for the public schools than for the private schools, even for Oak Park, the school that has a high socioeconomic composition. The public schools simply had fewer financial resources to support the MYP and the direct and indirect costs that it brings. Moreover, indirect costs related to time spent on planning and reporting were greater for the public schools since they faced greater demands from the jurisdiction. The private schools in our study, by contrast, had more autonomy and less accountability to jurisdiction for meeting assessment, reporting and curricular planning.

Third, all schools reported challenges with having to balance the authorization demands of the IB and the curriculum and reporting demands of their relevant education jurisdiction. These competing demands were particularly acute for the public schools, who have less autonomy from the jurisdiction than private schools. At the same time, the higher fee private school had the resources to invest in software that made lesson planning to straddle the national curriculum and IB easier.

Fourth, by far the most critical of the five schools was Oak Park, the only primary school in our study. This public school ended up ceasing to offer the MYP after our data collection. While they valued the MYP, participants from this school believed the cost of offering the program and the extra burden of reporting to and complying with two authorities (the IB and the public education department) outweighed the benefits of the MYP. They also noted on numerous occasions that the features of the MYP that they appreciated – e.g.,

student-centered inquiry approach – could be taught by any school, not just those offering an IB programme. They also noted that the recently created Australian national curriculum shared many features with the MYP, e.g. intercultural awareness. We believe the reason for this school's attitude towards the MYP is due in large part to its structure as a primary school. Participants discussed how they found it difficult to teach and assess the MYP in a primary school, where there are no subject-specific classes.

The most enthusiastic and passionate participants were from Breton Bay, the public secondary school with the lowest socioeconomic composition in our sample. This school is located in a traditionally working-class community, in an industrialised zone of a capital city. The principal was a very strong advocate of the MYP, and this came out in the interview, which was one of the longest conducted of any participant. Indeed, all of the participants from this school were keen to speak at length about the MYP and its impact on teaching and learning at their school. This school's experience suggests that the benefits of the MYP for teaching and learning can be achieved in all school contexts, and could inspire similar schools to consider adopting the MYP.

### **The Australian Context**

Context matters in regards to curriculum and schooling. It is therefore appropriate to discuss the unique features of the Australian context that impact our findings. The largest difference relates to structural features of schooling in Australia.

The first structural feature is that Australia schooling does not have a separate middle school, as is common in North America. In all but one jurisdiction, primary school comprises Years 1-6 and high school comprises Years 7-12. This means the MYP is separated over two different institutions in most public schools. Structural challenges may be reduced in private schools, which often enrol students for entire primary-secondary.

Second, Australian primary schools do not have specialist subject teachers in the upper years in the main learning areas (e.g., science, English or mathematics), unlike many European countries. This may make it difficult to run the MYP in primary schools in Australia.

Third, competition between schools and between sectors is a key feature of Australian education systems. As described earlier, sector is related to school socioeconomic composition in Australia – most low SES schools are public schools, and most high SES schools are private. Funding policies over the years have increased the residualisation of public schools, whereby students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are increasingly



concentrated in some schools (Lamb, 2007; Lamb & Huo, 2017; Watson & Ryan, 2010). Public education departments have attempted to reverse this trend because it is related to stunted learning opportunities and outcomes for the students who remain in residualised schools. As shown by the OECD (2016), Palardy (2013) and Sirin (2005), the socioeconomic composition of a school is a similar or greater predictor of individual student academic performance than their individual socioeconomic status. Public education systems in Australia have combatted school residualisation by competing for socially advantaged and/or high-performing students, for example through academically selective schools, as well as through specialist programmes like the IB. Their commitment to providing a strong public education system is commendable. At the same time, however, sharp competition between the sectors can lead to heightened political pressures and competing agendas. Some of our data point to these political challenges. For example, all of the public school participants reported that support to schools from the public education department was limited. The education representatives also remarked on this.

Fourth, school budget and per-pupil funding mechanisms that are used in Australia may create resource challenges. Schools receive a set funding amount, in large part based on the number of students that they enrol. They then work within the budget. They do not receive extra money for offering the IB. This funding model may present extra challenges that schools in other countries do not face. Requirements to offer both the national curriculum and IB increases planning and assessment workload. The high-fee private school dealt with this by purchasing software for curriculum planning, the cost of which can be prohibitive for other schools.

Other features of the Australian educational landscape that may shape our findings relate to curriculum. In particular, curricular issues relate to cultural norms surrounding the teaching of foreign languages, and issues related to the recent adoption of the national curriculum. These two issues are described below.

Foreign languages are not a key component of tertiary entrance in Australia, unlike in other countries. This means that there is less instrumental rationale for studying a foreign language. While the national curriculum requires that languages are taught, minimum time allocations are not specified. Historically, languages have never occupied a privileged position in Australia, as remarked upon by the two participating teachers, both of whom teaching the foreign language, as well as by commentators (Bense, 2015). These factors work to reduce student motivation for studying foreign languages. It also means that many schools,

especially high schools, face timetabling issues with languages. All together, these factors create extra challenges for Australian schools in their ability to offer foreign language.

The recent introduction of a national curriculum has also created challenges. Because it is relatively new, schools and teachers are still feeling the impact of change. The national curriculum also incorporates many themes that are similar to the IB. This validates the power of the MYP framework, but it also reduces its uniqueness. Finally, public schools have to meet reporting requirements to state authority as well as the IB. It is easier for independent (private) schools than for public schools to offer the MYP in the absence of reporting requirements to the state authority.

On the other hand, our findings shared similarities with studies conducted in other countries. These include a very strong appreciation of the philosophical underpinnings of the MYP framework. It also included similar challenges and recommendations. As found in other studies (Sikin et al, 2010; Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013; Works Marketing, 2005), our participants reported resource constraints. They want more support, and better training. Like studies from the UK (Sizmur & Cunningham, 2013), United Arab Emirates (Stevenson et al., 2017) and Spain (Valle et al., 2017), schools are experiencing challenges aligning the MYP with the national curriculum. Participants note that it is possible to do, but that substantial time and effort is required to do it, and to do it well. As many of participants find the MYP an expensive program, as do participants in other national contexts, providing more detailed curricular support could be an excellent way for the IB to support schools and provide value.

One interesting finding is that the MYP creates challenges that do not disappear once the school has offered the programme for many years. It is not simply a matter of “practice makes perfect”. Of course there is a learning curve and things do get easier, as mentioned by participants but they never become easy. Staff changes are ongoing, leaders come and go and the larger educational landscape changes too.

As discussed previously when identifying issues surrounding adolescent disengagement in schools in Australia, the MYP is well positioned to stake its claim on being the best program for adolescents and adolescence. In an era when education sectors are under immense pressure to be more accountable and transparent and where quality programs are desired. Adolescence is a time when students transition through massive physical and mental developmental changes, distress and personal growth. It is a time period where educators and systems acknowledge that students begin to become disengaged with schools (Goss, Sonnemann & Griffiths, 2017). The Grattan Institute claim that 60% of students in Australia attending secondary schools are disengaged with learning. As noted by participants in our

study, the MYP has great potential to improve the relevance and authenticity of schooling for adolescents, while providing rigor and personal development. The findings of this study clearly outline the direct link to the needs of adolescents and the MYP program design.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

This study concludes by highlighting the fact that all participants valued *the idea* and *principles* embedded in the MYP. Widespread support for the philosophy, goals, and approaches were revealed. The focus on concept driven, inquiry based interdisciplinary learning, a desire to be global minded and socially responsible citizens coupled with a respect for language and culture make it a desirable option in Australian schools. Not one single participant voiced concern about any inadequacies or limitations of the MYP learner framework. Many of the participants voiced very strong approval for the MYP and its commitment to the holistic child.

Yet, participants reported that the actual implementation of the MYP can be challenging for schools and teachers. One of the schools has dropped the MYP since participating in this study. When we asked school participants if they would recommend the MYP to other schools, all five of the participants who said no were from Oak Park, the primary school that subsequently dropped the program. The recent advent of Australia's national curriculum may have impacted the school's decision to terminate. However, the two biggest reasons presented by the participants themselves for dropping MYP were the additional workload due to having to report, plan and assess to two authorities (the state education department and the IB), and concerns about the cost of the program and its value given the challenges. In general, it was structural issues that get in the way, not disappointment with the MYP learner framework.

This study aimed to present new knowledge based on stakeholder perspectives of the impact of the MYP on teaching and learning by revealing benefits and challenges. The rich data collected from the qualitative study also revealed policy implications, issues surrounding change management, and strengths and weaknesses of the MYP, schools and systemic support and the gap between principles and practices impacted by context. The findings resulted in a set of recommendations for the IB and new and unique perspectives that may trigger future research and policy decisions.

### Limitations

This study has a number of limitations, related to our research design and sampling strategy. First, our study is restricted to stakeholder *perceptions* of the impacts of the MYP on teaching and learning. We did not conduct observations or attempt to independently measure any impacts. Nevertheless, stakeholder perceptions are important to examine because they capture the lived experience of participants and therefore offer a unique insight that cannot be

obtained with other methods. Second, with only five schools, our cross-case analysis was limited. Insights about the mediating role of school context on the ability of schools to maximize the benefits of the MYP for teaching and learning are only preliminary due to our small sample. And finally, we used voluntary participants, not a random sample. The principals of participating schools chose to participate or not, and these school leaders also invited teachers from their school to participate. As such, it is possible that our findings reflect the perspectives of participants who had strong opinions about the MYP or the IB generally. This could mean, for example, that they were more enthusiastic, or conversely, less enthusiastic, than a random sample of IB teachers and school leaders would generate. All of these limitations mean that the findings of our study need to be treated with caution when attempting to understand how they could apply to other contexts. As with most forms of qualitative research, our goals were to understand, not quantify, a given phenomenon. Similarly, our goal was to generate hypotheses and new insights rather than attempt to measure their generalisability to other contexts. We note, however, that many of our findings are similar to those from other national contexts.

## **Chapter 9: Recommendations**

All participants in our study –education representatives as well as teachers and school leaders – view the MYP as an excellent learning framework for developing students’ 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and for improving teaching and learning more generally. While some participants valued particular aspects of the MYP more than other aspects, no participants had concerns about the philosophy or pedagogical approach of the MYP. All participants found the MYP extremely beneficial in terms of holistic education and the cognitive, social, emotional, behavioural and conceptual development of the learner. MYP was perceived to have a teaching learning focus rather than the compliance focus which is currently experienced within the Australian schooling system as described by Lingard and Sellar (2012).

At the same time, participants agreed that schools face challenges and barriers when implementing the MYP. In the main, all participants agreed that offering the MYP requires a change of mindset and pedagogies for leaders, teachers and students, and costs money and requires an investment in time, which of course also has financial implications for schools. All participants also noted that marrying the Australian national curriculum with the MYP requires careful planning, a substantial investment in time, careful balance of content- and concept-based curricular approaches and the associated challenges related to reporting and complying with the standards of “two masters”. Finally, concern was directed to language; differentiation requirements within language classrooms, and the language issues impacting schools and teachers who have English as their second language.

Our recommendations for the IB, education authorities and schools interested in adopting the MYP derive from these two groups of findings. The main thrust of our recommendations centers on findings ways to leverage the MYP as an outstanding learning framework, while alleviating the challenges and barriers associated with offering it.

### **Recommendations for Australian Education Authorities**

- See the MYP as an alternative, not competing, pedagogical framework. Adopting the MYP does not mean that the state curriculum and assessment frameworks are inferior, rather merely different.
- See the MYP as a rigorous, authentic and holistic framework that is beneficial for all students, regardless of their post-secondary aspirations.
- Encourage more public schools to adopt the MYP as way to promote and reinvigorate Second Language and Language B.

- Given the many benefits for teaching and learning described by participants, consider how education authorities can better support MYP schools so that it is easier, not more difficult, for a school to adopt and offer the MYP.
- Work with MYP schools to see how compliance, reporting and assessment can be streamlined, to ensure sustainability. This could mean, for example, that MYP schools have a different set of reporting and compliance criteria than non-MYP schools.
- Consider that the MYP can be a valuable vehicle for promoting connections between industry and schools, for the benefit of business, communities, and young people.
- Consider that the MYP, as an internally recognised qualification, may be beneficial for attracting expatriate families, especially those who reside outside the centres of capital cities. These families provide valuable cultural and intercultural capital which can benefit local Australian students.

### **Recommendations for IB**

- Define the MYP as a standalone learning framework that addresses the needs of adolescents as well as its unique role in the continuum of DP, CP and PYP.
- Provide articulation documentation between the MYP with the Australian curriculum.
- Provide information that the MYP has inherent flexibility and capacity for a tailored national focus, e.g. including the General Capabilities into the MYP's Approaches to Teaching and Learning (ATL)
- Create more resources including program exemplars for schools. The MYP does not prescribe curricular content, but schools need to spend considerable time planning lessons so that the aims of both frameworks are attained. Providing curricular resources can reduce the costs (financial as well as staff workload and stress) that individual schools face.
- Develop the Programme Resource Centre so that is more user friendly and provides better value. For example, participants would like to see exemplars and even units of inquiry (among other things) that can be reproduced "off the shelf" as a way to build capacity and reduce workload.
- Find ways to reduce costs and make the programme financially sustainable for schools.
- Consider providing financial allowances for local context/situation of individual schools, especially for schools with limited resources and socioeconomically diverse student bodies.

- Ensure that training is accessible, top-quality and relevant.
- Seek feedback from schools about assessment of practical subjects; is there consensus that it should be improved? If so, how?
- Work with public education authorities to consider how to increase the number of MYP programmes in schools that enrol students from diverse backgrounds.
- Identify and support “flagship” schools that are especially committed to the MYP, and leverage their commitment and passion as a tool for supporting and recruiting new schools to adopt the MYP.
- Raise the profile of the MYP and the IB generally. This can be done by attending local and national conferences and networking with stakeholders, and increasing the visibility and profile of IB schooling in the local community.

### **Final Words**

Whilst the DP and PYP have distinct entry and departure points within the structure of schooling in Australia, the MYP does not. Recent systemic changes in some jurisdictions to Year 7 students moving to high school contexts and the introduction of a new national curriculum closely aligned with IB philosophy have resulted in local changes in the uptake and termination of MYP, yet at the same time the evolving educational landscape provides opportunities for the IB to respond to these changes.

One of the participants challenged the IB to “stay ahead of the curve!” (Bob, education representative). We believe there are multiple ways that the IB can respond to this challenge in Australia.

The MYP’s capacity to maximise the teaching and learning of adolescents may provide an opportunity for it to develop and increase its profile. The adolescent phase is a period of immense change in the physical, social and cognitive development of young adults. It is also a time of inquiry, experimentation, peer group pressure and disengagement in education. The MYP is well placed to raise its profile within this national educational landscape, given that its learning framework specifically targets the adolescent phase. We believe there is much scope for the MYP to be further developed as a standalone program that addresses adolescent issues such as student disengagement and that positively capitalizes on the strengths of the adolescent learner.

The MYP is also well placed to address the mono-lingualism that is currently experienced in Australian educational contexts. National and state education authorities are increasing the amount of instructional time spent on languages, which will hopefully lead to



greater uptake and interest among students and their families. This in turn may increase interest in the MYP and enhance stakeholders' perception of the value of the MYP and its approach to language teaching.

Finally, as a high quality learning framework that provides many benefits for teaching and learning, we would like to see the MYP offered in more schools, and especially in more public schools with diverse student populations. Improving access to IB programmes beyond schools that charge high fees or are located in affluent communities has been a priority of the IB (IB, 2010; IB, 2015; (Perna et al., 2015). We believe this can happen in Australia if stakeholders make a strategic effort to define and promote the MYP, find ways to make the MYP more sustainable for schools, and work with education authorities to provide mutual benefit.

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**Appendix: Research Instruments**

### Interview questions - Teachers

- 1) Background questions
  - How long have you been working at this school?
  - Where did you work before coming to this school?
  - How long have you been teaching?
  - How long have you been working with IB programs?
  
- 2) Impact of the Middle Years Programme (MYP) on teaching and learning
  - What benefits does the MYP have on *teaching* in your school and classroom?
  - What limitations or challenges does the MYP have on *teaching* in your school and classroom?
  - What benefits does the MYP have on *learning* in your school and classroom?
  - What limitations or challenges does the MYP have on *learning* in your school and classroom?
  
- 3) Have there been any adverse effects as a result of offering the MYP?
  
- 4) Have you experienced any other advantages or disadvantages associated with the IB?
  
- 5) Would you recommend that more schools adopt the MYP? Why?
  
- 6) Do you have any recommendations for the IB? For the Department of Education? For other schools?

## Interview questions - Principals and IB coordinators

### 1) Background questions

- How long have you been working at this school?
- Where did you work before coming to this school?
- How long have you been working in this capacity (as a principal or IB coordinator)?
- How long have you been working in the field?
- How long have you been working with IB programs?

### 2) Impact of the Middle Years Programme (MYP) on teaching and learning

- What benefits does the MYP have on *teaching* in your school?
- What limitations or challenges does the MYP have on *teaching* in your school?
- What benefits does the MYP have on *learning* in your school?
- What limitations or challenges does the MYP have on *learning* in your school?

### 3) Have you had to trade anything off in order to be able to offer the MYP?

### 4) What factors have allowed you to offer the MYP? What things have made it difficult to offer the MYP?

### 5) Have there been any adverse effects as a result of offering the MYP?

### 6) Have you experienced any other advantages or disadvantages associated with the IB?

### 7) Would you recommend that more schools adopt the MYP?

### 8) Do you have any recommendations for the IB? For the Department of Education? For other schools?



**Interview questions – Education representatives**

- 1) What is your opinion of the IB curriculum framework? Of the MYP in particular?
- 2) What are the impacts of the MYP on teaching and learning?
- 3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of offering the IB for schools? For students? Teachers?
- 4) What support is provided by education authorities to MYP schools?
- 5) Would you like to see more schools offering the IB?
- 6) Do you have any recommendations for the IB? For schools? For other jurisdictions or governing bodies?