Applying effective 21st Century leadership practice within International School education.

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ABSTRACT

Research into effective 21st Century leadership practice suggests that an environment needs to be created which allows for collaboration, distribution of leadership and the creation of a shared vision, supported by appropriate strategic planning, in order to achieve shared goals. Within an International School context, creating such a leadership structure is made more challenging due to the transient nature of students, teachers and leaders. It is vital, therefore, that senior leaders support growth of leadership capacity throughout the organisation in order to maintain stability and consistency, so as to achieve an environment conducive to 21stC learning.

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Rationale

This study is a wide-ranging review of research evidence and theory focusing on the application of effective 21stC leadership practice within International School education, in order to develop leadership structures, systems and capacity. The focus of this study has been selected due to the belief, based upon my studies within this Masters Degree, that there are aspects of leadership within my own educational context that could be further enhanced, developed and centred upon 21stC leadership theories. In addition, it is my hope that the information contained within the study, together with the recommendations and conclusions reached would be of some use and guidance to those currently in leadership positions, and for those with responsibility toward the development of leaders within International School education, in terms of assessing organisational climate and areas for improvement. Evidence included within the study is of two types. Firstly, a review of current literature with regard to 21stC educational leadership (see page 7), moving on to focus on the key themes of; Strategy & vision, Leadership structure & communication, Induction and support, Professional development and career advancement opportunities, Quality Assurance (QA), and finally, Leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools. The second strand of this research is quantitative and qualitative data based around the key themes listed above. This section of the research has been undertaken within my own educational context, a large International School in Dubai, UAE, which is, in addition, part of a much wider group of schools both within the region and worldwide, managed by the same education provider. In the interests of anonymity, the International School in question will be referred to as 'the school' throughout this research study.

Aims

1. To review current research literature with regard to 21stC leadership within education.
2. To explore cultural and systemic barriers specifically impacting on the International School setting.
3. To analyse leadership within my own International School context using both quantitative and qualitative research data.

Objective

To review theory regarding 21st C leadership within education, specifically within International Schools, combining it with research undertaken within my own educational context, in order to provide International School leaders with key recommendations for leadership and system development.

Introduction

The school on which this study is based is a British Curriculum International Primary School in Dubai, UAE. Originally, the school was government owned but was taken over seven years ago by a large educational provider. The school has expanded from 200 pupils to now over 1100 pupils from over 80 different countries and cultures with a corresponding increase in staffing numbers. Additionally, significant investment has been made to expand and develop facilities at the school. It has clearly been a time of significant change and growth, which has undoubtedly been a challenge for leadership. This type of change within the International School context is not unusual, however. Brummitt (2007) states that; *"by their nature, change is the norm in International Schools"* (Brummit, 2007:26). Matthews (1989) claims that student mobility within International Schools could be as great as 35% annually. Hardman (2001) states that staff within International Schools are usually employed on short-term renewable contracts. In addition, Hardman (2001) highlights that Principal /CEO contracts typically last somewhere between three and five years. Furthermore, Littleford (1999) affirms that the contracts of up to 80% of Principal/CEO's in International Education are terminated. Howley (1995), claims that there is only a 50% chance that school Principals within International Schools will stay longer than three years. This turnover may be linked to factors such high levels of accountability to school owners, in an environment where schools are often run as profit making businesses and annual inspection cycles greatly increasing pressure on the incumbent Principal. These issues will be discussed further within this report. It is therefore vitally important that schools within this sector have robust leadership structures and systems in place in order to cope with inevitable and regular change. It should be noted, however, that there has been, thus far, only a limited amount of available research with regard to the International School sector.

Leadership is an area that has received significant research attention and is a highly important issue for many, this is equally so within the field of education. There have been numerous contradictory theories put forward, somewhat confusing the picture with regard to the best methods, models or strategies of leadership. Part of the reason for this confusion is perhaps due to the fact that most research studies, with regard to educational leadership, have been focussed upon the beliefs, values, skills or traits of leaders rather than the actual effectiveness of leadership practice (Leithwood et al, 2006). However, despite this apparent

confusion, there is a significant and growing volume of data-driven evidence providing a great deal of understanding toward the best methods of improving impact and outcomes for students, which should ultimately be the fundamental aim for modern day school leadership teams and the wider staff.

The broad consensus and belief regarding effective leadership, within 21stC education, is based around it being linked to school improvement, direction setting and establishing a widely agreed vision for an organisation. These beliefs will be examined and discussed further within this study.

21stC schools and school leaders are faced with continual pressure from government, communities and the parental body. Additional pressure also comes due to the requirement to demonstrate progress to external quality assurance review teams. Within the context of an International School, leaders face further challenges including structural and cultural issues, retention and recruitment of staff, accommodation, out of hours support for teachers and often a rapidly changing pupil roll. Blandford & Shaw (2001) state, *"As of yet, we do not perhaps know enough about how International Schools are led"* (Blandford & Shaw, 2001:26). This study will seek to offer additional understanding, support and recommendations for development to an area of leadership research that has still received less attention to this point.

Literature review

This review of literature surrounding leadership within education will firstly look to provide a general overview of leadership within an educational context before moving on to focus on 21stC educational leadership and the 'key themes' of this research detailed earlier.

Research highlights the importance of leadership within education. Beare et al (1992) asserted that; *"Outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools."* (Beare et al, 1992:99). Bush (2008) stated; *"The significance of effective leadership and management for the successful operation of schools is widely acknowledged in the twenty-first century."* (Bush, 2008:11).

The need for school leaders possessing skillsets which support improved student outcomes is reinforced by The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) who highlight in the 'Leadership Development Framework' that;

"The evidence on school effectiveness and school improvement during the last 15 years has consistently shown the pivotal role of school leaders in securing high quality provision and high standards….. effective leadership is a key to both continuous improvement and major system transformation" (NCSL 2001: 5)

It is important to understand what effective leadership is within the educational context.

Wasserberg (2002) suggests that the primary role for a leader is to unify people around key issues such as values, morals, emotional capability and self-awareness. Greenfield & Ribbins (1993) suggest character is important as far as personal values and emotional and moral capabilities are concerned. The theory put forward by Greenfield & Ribbins (1993) could be linked to traits, styles and skills demonstrated by a leader in order for them to fulfil their role effectively. Greenfield & Ribbins do, however, come across as being critical of the move toward a marketised system of education.

Significant volumes of research have provided evidence that personality traits are important in determining leadership aptitude. Stogdill (1948) highlights that effective leaders should demonstrate traits such as being adaptable, alert to their environment, assertive, ambitious, decisive, dependable, co-operative, dominant, persistent, energetic, tolerant, self-confident, willing to assume responsibility and able to cope with stress. Furthermore, Stogdill (1948) suggested that successful leaders should demonstrate skills such as being conceptually skilled, clever, creative, tactful and diplomatic, knowledgeable, fluent in speaking, persuasive, organised and socially skilled. Trait theory has since been supported by Mann (1959) and Zoccaro (2007). However, there has been some criticism of this theory. House & Aditya (1997) stated that it was 'futile'. Conger & Kanugo (1998) deem it 'too simplistic'. In contrast, Ng et al. (2008) offered additional support by suggesting that HR departments should use traits as a tool to unearth potential leaders.

Research into leadership styles has been equally significant. Leithwood et al (1999) highlight Transactional leadership, which suggests a leadership style where the status quo of an organisation is maintained. This type of leadership emphasises the difference between 'leadership' which looks to create a vision for change, development and improvement and 'management', which is simply the maintenance and continuation of systems and structures already in place. Dressler (2001) describes Transactional Leadership as 'being traditional.' Moujaes et al (2012) supports the need for leadership rather than management skills claiming that; "*Education systems are now in a permanent state of reform. Although education leaders still need traditional capabilities to develop successful programmes, they must also become proficient in adapting, upgrading and sustaining those programmes, which is the only way to keep pace with rapid-fire social and economic changes.*" (Moujaes et al, 2012:4). Fullan (2002) supports this viewpoint, stating; *"Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement."* (Fullan, 2002:16). Bush (2008) describes a Transformational Leadership style, which, he explains, is a collegial model where an energetic and passionate leader uses collaboration, consensus and a shared vision to move the organisation forward. This type of leadership style seems to fall into line with modern assumptions regarding the types of skills

leaders should ideally possess. However, some research studies conclude that a transformational style of leadership might have a negative impact on an organisation (Yukl, 1999). Passionate Leadership (Davies & Brighouse, 2010) shares many similarities with the Transformational style as it outlines a leadership approach involving passion, energy, optimism and, in the context of education, a belief that every child can and should succeed. George (2007) describes Authentic Leadership, detailing a leadership style built upon sincerity, honesty and integrity. Participative Leadership (Sergiovanni, 1984) highlights a style based upon collaboration and community decision-making. This model of leadership clearly has some benefits for the Principal in terms of distributing leadership responsibility, alleviating themselves of some of the burden, although one might argue that it could cause issues with regard to the quick, on-the-spot decisions that take place so often for school leaders. Touhy & Coglan (1997) put forward the Interpersonal Leadership model, in which they suggest that the relationships between followers and leaders are a vital ingredient within a collaborative environment. Professional relationships are fundamental to effective operation within organisational settings, however, maintaining these relationships can be challenging when tough decisions need to be made which impact upon staff. As something to aim for in terms of ensuring relationships are kept as positive as possible, it is a style that might be effective?

Sergiovanni, (1991) together with West-Burnham (1997) suggested that Moral leadership combined with a Managerial style are essential ingredients toward developing a learning organisation. Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) is based on leaders acting as servant first in order to have positive repercussions across the organisation. This type of leadership is prevalent in US Christian institutions; however, it may be feasible in certain International School contexts. Fielder (1967), Vroom & Yetton (1973) and Hersey & Blanchard (1982) highlight a Contingent Leadership style, which is based around a flexible approach to leadership wherein differing styles are utilised depending upon the circumstance and situation. There are limitations to this model in terms of consistency of approach; can it be considered an actual leadership style?

Thus far, there seems to be no all-encompassing style of leadership appropriate for the varied daily challenges of working within a modern day educational environment. Within an International School context, when faced with the numerous daily challenges a Principal/CEO faces, one would perhaps expect that a number of differing styles would be required on almost a minute-by-minute basis dependent upon the situation at hand. Boyatziz, Cowen & Kolb (1995) offer support, suggesting that successful leaders display a wide and varied leadership approach. Further support comes from the UK Teacher Training Agency who state; "*Generally, more successful leaders possess a repertoire of leadership styles that they are able to draw upon*" (Busher & Barker, 2003:52)

Whilst all of these theories and models of leadership regarding traits, skills and styles are indeed important, surely it is far more valuable for us to look at the *actual* impact and effectiveness of leadership strategies across an organisation?

21st Century Educational Leadership

The predominant belief within recent research is that the role of the 21stC leader is to enhance and develop the capability of their employees, thereby increasing the capacity of the organisation to be focused, agile and resilient. As Stoll et al (2006) stated; *"Building capacity is critical. Capacity is a complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organisational conditions and culture, and infrastructure of support."* (Stoll et al. 2006:221). This method of leadership calls for them to harness intellectual capital and talents. As a leader, its not necessary to know everything there is to know, in fact, knowing everything might be considered to be an unrealistic expectation. However, what is vital is that, to be successful, they will need to be surrounded by staff members who possess specific expertise in particular areas. The leader then becomes someone who can make an effective judgement based on the information he or she is provided with. Leaders within the 21stC should be looking to create networks, to link up and share information, to collaborate, cultivate expertise and enable talented staff to develop their own leadership capability. Support for this viewpoint comes from Allen et al. (2010), when they stated; *"There is a growing understanding that the patterns of hierarchical leadership that served us in the past are not well suited to the global complexity, rapid change, interdependency, and multifaceted challenges of the 21stC… Effective leaders are recognising that every person has leadership qualities that can and must be recognised and used."* (Allen et al, 2010:1)

The ever increasing complexity and speed of change within today's business and school environments make leading the organisations an increasingly demanding task, placing often unrealistic expectations on 'heroic' leaders (Yukl, 2006). As a leader within the 21stC it is increasingly difficult for individuals to possess all necessary abilities and skills that will be required to fulfil the role and competently lead the organisation (O'Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002).

Allen et al (2010) pinpoint three crucial areas that they deem essential in developing effective 21stC leadership practices. Firstly, developing a structure within the organisation that supports collective leadership, this might include distributing power and working together to form a shared vision. Secondly, providing development and growth opportunity, such as mentoring and coaching. Finally, building a learning organisation, encouraging open mindedness, self-reflection, and being accepting of feedback.

Harris & Lambert (2003) claim that distributed leadership is the key feature distinguishing 21stC education, finding that student learning is developed most significantly when the whole school community works toward a collective vision.

It seems increasingly clear that many researchers are moving away from the concept of a leader being a 'heroic' one or a 'great man' to a view of an effective leader being one where leadership is distributed (Leithwood & Mascallam, 2008:529). According to Murphy et al (2009:4) *"Without the support of the Principal, distributed leadership is unlikely to be successful"*.

A significant quantity of evidence suggests that educational leadership within the 21stC should be collaborative, distributed and developmental so that the leadership capacity of others within the organisation can be increased. It could be argued that developing leadership is of greater importance within International Schools given the transient nature of staff, time limited contracts and, as discussed earlier, the fact that a significant proportion of Principal/CEO's are often removed from their position. It is therefore vitally important that schools within this sector cultivate systems to improve distribution of leadership, increase capacity and carefully plan for succession. As Moujaes et al (2012) states, *"Leaders need to ensure the sustainability of initiatives that operate on time lines that outlast their tenure"*. (Moujaes et al, 2012:16)

When considering these 'International' approaches to leadership we should consider that a significant proportion of research has, thus far, been focussed around Western perspectives and approaches concerning the development of leadership (Lumby et al, 2008). This is an important point to consider, particularly within an International School context where leaders have to manage pupils, staff and parents of differing culture. Anglo-American beliefs and preferences may not be understood or accepted so readily by other cultures. Littleford et al (1999) summarised this viewpoint succinctly when stating; *"Where you are affects what you do as a leader"* (Littleford et al 1999:4).

Furthermore, it should be noted that Lumby (2013) argues against distributed leadership, claiming that; *"the effect of distributed leadership theory is to maintain the power status quo"* Lumby (2013:581) and that *"distributed leadership is a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power."* (Lumby 2013:592).

<u>Strategy & vision</u>

Within the increasingly complex environment of 21stC education, strategy and vision are seen as key areas on which to build a foundation of leadership within a school.

Knoff (2007) states; *"Strategic planning initially focuses on assessing the organisational climate, decision-making and other processes. It then moves into identifying, reinforcing, establishing and implementing policies and approaches that support academic and social success of students."* (Knoff, 2007: 8).

Strategic planning assists schools and school leaders with direction setting by discovering and recognising issues that need to be addressed and putting in place a plan to determine priorities for action. It is important to recognise differences between strategic planning within education and that practised within the business sector, although, arguably there is some overlap when considering International Schools as they are often 'for profit' businesses such as the school within this research study. Eacott (2007) stated; *"Many of the misconceptions with strategy began with is use in the corporate sector"* (Eacott, 2007:3). Bush (1998) argues, with regard to strategy, that schools are too different to commercial companies in the nature of their business. However, International Schools might be considered at odds to this viewpoint, with most set up to be profit-making companies. Nevertheless, strategic planning does take place within most modern schools, including International Schools and takes many forms, using a variety of methods including, amongst others, Force Field Analysis, Surveys, SWOT, SCAMPER or SEF. Often, within schools, these methods assist leaders to draw up a more detailed overall school development plan or strategic development plan in line with the school mission and vision. Effective strategic development plans should also be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time limited).

Davies & Davies (2006) developed a list of characteristics which they believed successful strategic leaders possessed; Dissatisfaction and restlessness with the present, ability to create mental models, ability to prioritise their personal strategic thinking and utilising powerful professional and personal networks (Davies & Davies 2006:131). Going further with this research, Davies & Davies (2006) also highlighted a list of five essential areas that strategic leaders should involve themselves in; Enabling staff, direction setting, translate strategy into action, develop strategic capabilities and determine effective intervention points (Davies & Davies, 2006:123). It is important to note that any individual within an organisation can act as a strategic leader, which brings in the idea of a distributed leadership model, to be discussed in more detail later. In terms of incorporating strategy in a practical sense into the day to day running of schools, Eacott (2007) suggests that the focus of key meetings should be to analyse where the school is in relation to its strategic plans.

Developing a shared vision within an organisation is frequently highlighted within research as a vital ingredient in order to ensure all stakeholders are involved in its development. Vision statements are developed to convey, with clarity and simplicity, the direction of the organisation. It follows then that the vision of what an organisation aims to become would link in with strategic aims of how to reach that goal.

Creating a shared vision is seen as an increasingly important component of effective school leadership together with establishing clear goals, which are understood and supported by all school stakeholders. Beare, Caldwell & Millikan (1989) suggest that outstanding leaders demonstrate a vision for the organisation, communicating it effectively, ensuring commitment from others and thereby institutionalising the vision. Although outside of the educational environment, an excellent example of institutionalising a vision comes from Tim Cook, CEO of Apple (January, 2009) when he stated; *"We believe that we are on the face of the earth to make great products. We are constantly focusing on innovating. We believe in the simple not the complex. We believe in saying no to thousands of projects, so that we can really focus on the few that are truly important and meaningful to us. We believe in deep collaboration and cross-pollination of our groups, which allow us to innovate in a way that others cannot. We strive for excellence in all that we do. We have the self-honesty to admit when we're wrong and the courage to change. And I think regardless of who is in what job those values are embedded within Apple."* (Cook, 2009).

Returning to the educational environment, although it should be re-stated that International Schools often lie at the intersection between business and education, Fullan (1992:83) claims that building a vision is a complex process that few organisations can sustain. However, despite some criticism of leadership and vision, Greenfield, Johnson & Licata (1992) found that teachers supported a clear and well-articulated vision from their Principal and believed it to be in the best interests of the children. It seems reasonable to claim that a clear, understandable and well-supported vision has the potential to develop organisations and schools. Huffman (2001) also supported this view, stating: *"Results show that incorporating shared leadership and shared vision within the professional learning community is important for student success and school improvement."* (Huffman, 2001:1). In addition, Bass (1997) believed that 'buy-in' could be fostered through the creation of a shared vision, declaring that; *"Leadership is the ability to cast a vision and enable others to become a part of the process."* (Bass, 1997:29).

Wenger (1999) argued that 'communities of practice' enable workers to function more effectively. His belief being that schools should become a community of practice, operating as a shared enterprise, a learning organisation. This aligns with the importance of creating a shared vision with steps toward it created by shared strategic goals. Within the educational context, this might incorporate CPD training programmes being linked to the school development planning process and sharing of good pedagogical practice between colleagues, in order raise levels of teaching and learning performance across the school community.

Leadership Structure and Communication

Leadership structure is an interesting area to approach given the significant and understandable differences in size, demographic, culture and type of institution. No two schools could be expected to be the same,

even those that are the identical in terms of buildings facilities and pupil roll, due to the differences in staff, children and families within them. However, from a leadership perspective, it is important to consider the most appropriate structures for developing and structuring a team capable of meeting 21 st C educational challenges. As highlighted earlier, according to Harris & Lambert (2003), 'distributed leadership' is the key leadership structure that distinguishes 21 st C education. The greatest impact upon students learning comes when whole school communities, including all stakeholders, work toward a shared vision. Yet we must consider that simply distributing leadership across a staff that are not ready or trained to lead is also fraught with dangers. Firstly, staff need to be developed.

Hartle (2004) put forward a six-step approach toward leadership development; generate a culture supporting growth, identify what type of leaders are needed, seek out able staff and those with potential, monitor and evaluate performance and develop leadership talent.

Gronn (1999), in an earlier research study, suggested that there are four stages of leadership development comprising; formation, accession, incumbency & divestiture. Clearly, the development of leaders will take place at different rates dependent upon the staff at the disposal of the Principal, their prior experience and the opportunities available to provide additional training. Additionally, people are very different, not all will progress and develop at the same rate over the same timescale. In support of theory suggesting leaders develop through leadership stages, Bush & Glover (2004) put forward scientific, humanist and pragmatic, where they highlight development through stages of being overly controlling and managerial in nature to reaching a point where they are increasingly focused on empowering and developing others. To achieve an efficient distributed leadership model it would seem advantageous to provide developing leaders the opportunity and support to grow into their role, there are a variety of methods that may support this development, which will be discussed later. Kouzes and Pozner (1999) summarised this type of support for development as 'superleadership' where, within the educational context, Principals or senior leaders provide the necessary provision for staff to learn to lead themselves. As staff reach a stage where they become more capable of leading, a distributed leadership model may become an increasingly viable option.

There has been some confusion regarding the concept of distributed leadership with regard to its actual meaning. Is it simply implying collegiality, or is it a real attempt to distribute genuine power away from senior leaders or the Principal? Bennett et al (2003), writing for the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) suggests three key properties of distributing leadership as being; 'an emergent group or network, an openness of boundaries toward leadership and the view that a variety of expertise is distributed across the many, not the few' (Bennett et al, 2003:7). Distributed leadership might seem to be at odds with strong leadership within a school, however, one might certainly argue that the open sharing of ideas and expertise

should be seen as a leadership strength and not a weakness? Gronn (2002) proposes that; *"Distributed leadership has especial relevance and applicability in contemporary, information-rich society – schools now operate in data-rich task environments as never before"* (Gronn, 2002:18). Gronn (2002) believes that a distributed leadership model is an effective method of coping with the increasingly complex information-rich society we now live in. Gronn (2002) goes on to argue that distributed leadership has organisational advantages, in terms of capitalising on individual strengths and improving bonding.

Including a wider group of leaders could be linked to Bass's (1990) theory of shared leadership and, additionally, might be considered to have similarities with Belbin's (1993) team role theory, which considered that; *"A team is not a bunch of people with job titles, but a congregation of individuals, each of whom has a role which is understood by other members. Members of a team seek out certain roles and they perform most effectively in the ones that are most natural to them."* (Belbin 1993 :141).

Furthermore, Savery et al (1992) put forward that: *"people are more likely to accept and implement decisions in which they have participated, particularly where those decisions relate directly to the individuals own job"* (Savery et al 1992:24). This belief ties in well with shared leadership in terms of making staff more accountable for their part of the distributed leadership network within the school. However, Harris & Spillane (2008) point out that; *"Distributed leadership is not without its risks, as it inevitably means holding up the looking glass to schools and being prepared to abandon old leadership practices. For those genuinely seeking transformation and self renewal, this is a risk well worth taking"* (Harris & Spillane, 2008: 33)

Communication within schools goes somewhat hand in hand with a distributed leadership model. Genuine distribution and shared leadership is not possible without clear lines of communication between all parties in order to ensure that collaboration works effectively. According to Kowalski, Peterson & Fusarelli (2007) research suggests that many leaders fail due to 'communicative incompetence.' (Kowalski, Peterson & Fusarelli, 2007). It is important, therefore, to ensure that the methods of communication are effective. Utilising verbal interaction rather than relying solely on email, displaying positivity rather than negativity, demonstrating integrity and honesty, listening, being able to empathise and encourage are skills which will help to support communication and collaboration.

Redefining the professional culture and structure of a school so that teachers can work collaboratively can be difficult due to the fact that, historically, teaching has been characterised by a culture of isolation. This has, perhaps, prevented teachers from working together and learning from each other. However, developing this type of culture, combining effective communication and collaboration is vital as Fullan (1998) points

out; *"student achievement increases substantially in schools where collaborative work cultures foster a professional learning culture among teachers and others."* (Fullan 1998:8).

Many school leaders appreciate that well-defined, two-way communication between leadership and staff is vital to the success of the organisation. Collins (2001) writes, *"A primary task in taking a school or business from good to great is to create a culture wherein people have a tremendous opportunity to be heard and, ultimately, for the truth to be heard"* (2001:88).

Without doubt, opening up lines of communication so that all can be heard can be perilous for leadership as it also opens up the opportunity for negative comment. However, what seems very clear from the majority of research is that 21stC schools need to be looking toward this type of structure in order to create the greatest benefit for their pupils. What also seems clear is that schools should be looking to ensure systems of communication with parents and children are equally robust in order to ensure all stakeholders are involved in the key goal of supporting children's learning.

Induction and support

Putting together induction and support systems for staff would seem appropriate in any workplace but particularly within the International School context where, often, staff members come from all corners of the globe, are frequently young and less experienced and may require an increased support network to become settled in their new environment. For International Schools, supporting the needs of staff is crucial and can be likened, certainly when staff first arrive, to the physiological and safety levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), which is something most organisations do not have to deal with. The school is, therefore, not only an employer but in some respects a guardian for staff both within school and outside of it. Only by meeting these lower level needs can International Schools aid staff in reaching higher levels within their professional teaching or leadership role, helping to develop esteem and personal growth. This is clearly vital for the school to make continued forward progress.

In terms of induction, Fielder & Haselkorn (1999) suggest that many researchers do not have a clear idea of what induction actually means. They believe that many schools identify teacher induction as just a one-day orientation or being provided with a mentor. Creating a structured induction programme, which transfers into a support and mentoring programme including feedback, formal evaluation process and targeted training once teachers are settled within the environment has been shown to be greatly beneficial. For example, research suggests that there is an increased chance of newly recruited teachers continuing in their schools when they are provided with coaching and mentoring by other teachers within their subject area

(Cohen, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Other researchers suggest that induction programmes should provide targeted training for new teachers and should pair them with judiciously chosen mentors, given the time and guidance to provide support (Anderson & Pellicer, 2001; Shields et al, 2004).

Developing this type of support and induction structure is particularly relevant within British Curriculum International School education, given the fact that schools inspected and approved by British Schools Overseas (BSO) the overseas UK inspection body following OFSTED guidelines, has now been granted permission to provide UK NQT's with their formal statutory induction training programme.

According to Gobinathan et al (2008), induction should be considered as a formal stage in the development of a teacher. Therefore, it requires a comprehensive programme of induction that must, firstly, establish goals that go beyond simple assistance and support, instead promoting career development and enhanced teaching quality. Secondly, it should look beyond the initial (NQT) year of teaching and last for an extended amount of time, forming part of the whole-school teacher support structure. Finally, it should involve multiple partners working within well-defined roles.

Professional development and career advancement opportunities.

Hunt (2009) states; *"As studies have shown, the steps we take to improve teacher skills and knowledge will pay off in better results for children. Other fields, from medicine and management to the military do a far better job of providing ongoing lea rning opportunities and support for their professionals"* (Hunt, 2009:2)

Continued development should be part of the professional role of any teacher, particularly within a 21 st C educational context, given its propensity for change. It would be difficult to find any teacher that was not aware that ideas, methods of teaching and performance goalposts didn't change regularly within the education field. It is vital then that schools put into place systems for professional development, provide staff with opportunities to attend training and be involved with mentoring, either by being mentored or mentoring others. It is also important that schools set up performance management systems which monitor and track teachers' involvement and commitment toward their own professional development. Hirsh (2009) claims that; *"Improving professional learning for educators is a crucial step in transforming schools and improving academic achievement."* (Hirsh, 2009:3)

Darling-Hammond et al (2009) supported the view that professional learning and development for teachers improves practice and student learning, providing some key findings in support of continued professional development, highlighting that; *"Professional development should be intensive, ongoing and connected to practice, it should*

focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content, it should align with school improvement priorities and goals and it should build strong working relationships amongst teachers." (Darling-Hammond, 2009, 9-11). In support of these findings, it was suggested that school based coaching together with an induction and mentoring programme may support teacher effectiveness.

Providing systems for ongoing professional development and creating distributed leadership networks, giving teachers and junior leaders the opportunity to develop is undoubtedly going to give numerous members of the organisation the desire to move forward in their careers. This could create positive and negative impact on the organisation. On the one hand it will encourage staff to work hard in order to move up the career ladder, but also, on the other, it may increase their aspiration to leave for further career opportunities. The management of these increasingly experienced and aspiring leaders will be something to consider and discuss later, in light of the research evidence to be gathered at the school.

Quality Assurance

Education has, for the most part, always had some form of checks and balances in place to ensure quality is maintained, but only more recently has this been described as 'quality assurance.' *"Quality assurance is a term that is new to education but that has rapidly become very important."* (Allais, 2009:9). In the case of the school within this research, inspections take place on an annual basis by both DSIB (Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau) BSO (British Schools Overseas), which is the overseas QA team that ensures that British Curriculum International Schools maintain the same general standards as OFSTED inspected schools in the UK. However, it should be highlighted that QA can just as easily be on a much smaller scale such as Year Leaders checking books or random lesson 'drop-ins' taking place by SLT in classrooms. In its simplest terms, QA is ensuring quality standards are being maintained and, ideally, improved based on a consistent and agreed set of standard measures. In more technical terms, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) defined QA as *"a planned and systematic pattern of all the actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product will conform to established requirements."* (OECD 2004; in Chong, 2009:303). QA is an area that, as a school within the 21stC, there is simply no getting away from. Therefore, leaders need to ensure robust systems are in place to ensure that they are compliant.

Accountability is another more recent buzzword within education and has links to QA. Perry & McWilliam (2007) state that *"unlike Headmasters of old who were emperors of their own domain, school Principals are now under constant pressure to provide an account of all school policies and practices to anyone and everyone; governments, boards, inspection teams, staff, parents - current and potential, students and numerous others."* (Perry & McWilliam, 2007:32). These accountability measures are seen as a method of ensuring schools are performing in a manner that is

visible to all. As highlighted earlier, the time limited contracts offered to Principals within International School education, combined with increased accountability measures may be a significant contributing factor in the high turnover of leaders within this sector of education.

It is worthwhile pointing out, however, that not everyone agrees with the level of validity and reliability within school inspection QA. Policy Exchange (2014) a UK think tank states; *"Inspections should be scrapped…the evidence suggests that when it comes to relying on judgement of a trained inspector you would be better off flipping a coin."* (Policy Exchange, The Telegraph, 17th March 2014).

Undoubtedly, these wide-ranging QA measures and significant accountability requirements will take up a great deal of time a school leaders time in terms of ensuring compliancy, perhaps, regrettably to the detriment of their role as educational leaders?

Leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools

Leadership within International School education is 'an underdeveloped field of inquiry' (Bunnell, 2006; Hayden, 2006; Walker & Cheng, 2009). Given the growing importance of this education sector it was surprising that a search of literature uncovered only a limited number of published empirical studies (Lee et al, 2011).

'Leadership in International Schools is indeed dynamic' (Blandford & Shaw 2001). Without doubt, all schools face challenges, for example, achieving QA goals, meeting progress and attainment targets, dealing with difficult parents and sensitive issues. International Schools, however, face further challenges. Often these types of schools are a business, rapidly growing and needing to make profit for an external group, who may place further pressures and targets on the Principal/CEO. Howley (1995), points out that the chances of the Principal of an International School staying longer than 3 years is less than 50%. Additionally, leaders in these types of schools are often involved in culturally rich settings involving numerous distinct cultural groups, working within an incredibly transient International community environment (Bale, 1984; Vogel, 1992). International Schools need to not only be culturally sensitive but be aware that cultural differences can have a significant impact upon learning (de Nooji & Reidel, 2010).

In terms of leading and managing staff, International Schools often need to provide accommodation, set up utilities, provide furniture, provide staff with information on basic needs such as where to shop, how to use transport systems, provide visas, help teachers adapt to a different pace of life and support their integration

with the local culture in addition to providing the professional help and guidance that would be expected within any modern 21st C educational environment.

Clearly there are numerous hurdles for leaders to overcome within the International School context. Leading any school is a challenge in itself. Leading within the International School context, integrating staff, students and parents from all corners of the globe with the aim of working toward a shared vision is a task that would test any leader.

This research study will now look to analyse the leadership systems, structures and practices within a diverse, rapidly growing and developing International School, in order to attempt to offer guidance toward applying best practice for leaders working within this type of educational environment.

Methodology

Re-statement of aims and objective.

Aims

1. To review current research literature with regard to 21st C leadership within education.
2. To explore cultural and systemic barriers specifically impacting on the International School setting.
3. To analyse leadership within my own International School context using both quantitative and qualitative research data.

Objective

To review theory regarding 21st C leadership within education, specifically within International Schools, combining it with research undertaken within my own educational context, in order to provide International School leaders with key recommendations for leadership and system development.

Research method

This research study utilised a pilot questionnaire (Appendix 1) as a directional tool, providing participants the opportunity to put forward quantitative and qualitative data offering their views on the current state of leadership and structures, taking into consideration the organisational climate within the school. This 'climate' is particularly relevant given the rapid pace of change and external Governmental pressures in the form of annual inspection cycles and compliance placed on schools in the UAE. Stoten (2011) states; *"The concept of an organisational climate, with its perception of organisational life, is a useful concept to use when investigating teachers' views on leadership and management"* (Stoten, 2011:295). The pilot study proved successful in terms of delivering a simple method to discover the thoughts of staff with regard to structures and organisational climate. There were no significant issues that were highlighted following the initial pilot study. Participants willing to share their views face to face reported that they understood the questions. Data was collected from 30 members of teaching staff within the school in June 2014. Purposive sampling was used as teachers had common characteristics relevant to the study. The participants consisted of a mix of staff at various levels of leadership within the school ranging from class teachers to the school Principal/CEO. Follow up discussions with those willing to reveal their identity to the researcher, together with further elaboration on questionnaire responses provided additional comments and suggestions for leadership and school system development. Assurances were made to preserve the anonymity of those identifying themselves to the researcher. Additionally, following use and analysis of the pilot questionnaire, an interview was undertaken

with the school Principal/CEO in order to triangulate staff response and leadership response with theory based on the development of leadership within an International School context. Discussion and interviews allowed exploration of issues and permitted further in-depth probing and elaboration.

This study has been based on the ontological belief that, despite needing to apply 'best practice' as far as 21st Century leadership models are concerned, International Schools face different challenges from a leadership perspective, such as cultural barriers, increased support for staff living away from their home countries, retention of staff and continuity of leadership. This epistemological position originates from my experience and observation within a variety of differing school types and cultures.

Ethical concerns were taken into account. Participants completed an informed consent to participate form (Appendix 2) in order for interview and questionnaire response data to be used within the study. Participants were able to ask questions before committing to their involvement in the study. All responses were dealt with in accordance with the signed consent. Participants were provided with an option to receive a debrief and summary report of the research data then complete. Participants were offered the options to both participate in and to withdraw from the investigation prior to publication of the research. No questionnaire response data was shared without consent and has been kept anonymous and confidential. Research questions were designed to be self-explanatory, however, where needed additional clarification was provided.

The methodological approach, utilising a questionnaire, was used due to minimal cost, simple but effective processing of quantitative data, its anonymity and its reduction in biasing error. The structured nature of the questionnaire format additionally aids validity and reliability. Qualitative data gained from staff elaboration, follow up discussion and interview provided more detailed responses and helped to triangulate staff beliefs regarding the current state of leadership.

The findings, discussion and conclusion of the research, following detailed literature review and research response analysis will aim to produce recommendations for applying effective practice in 21stC International School Leadership based around the key themes of this research; Strategy & vision, leadership structure & communication, induction and support, professional development and career advancement opportunities, QA, and finally, leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools.

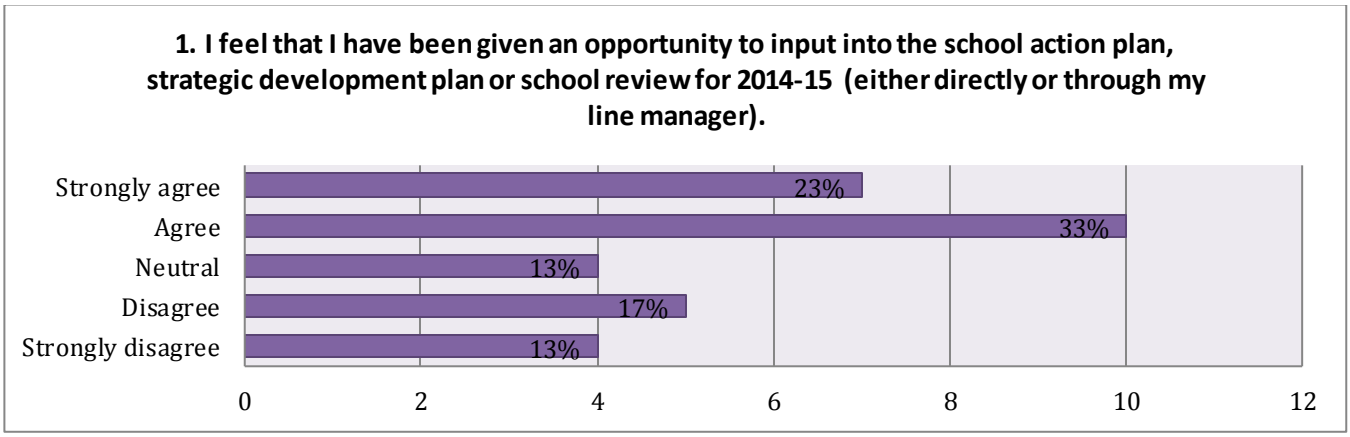
Findings

Applying effective 21st Century leadership practice within International School education

Questionnaire response data summary

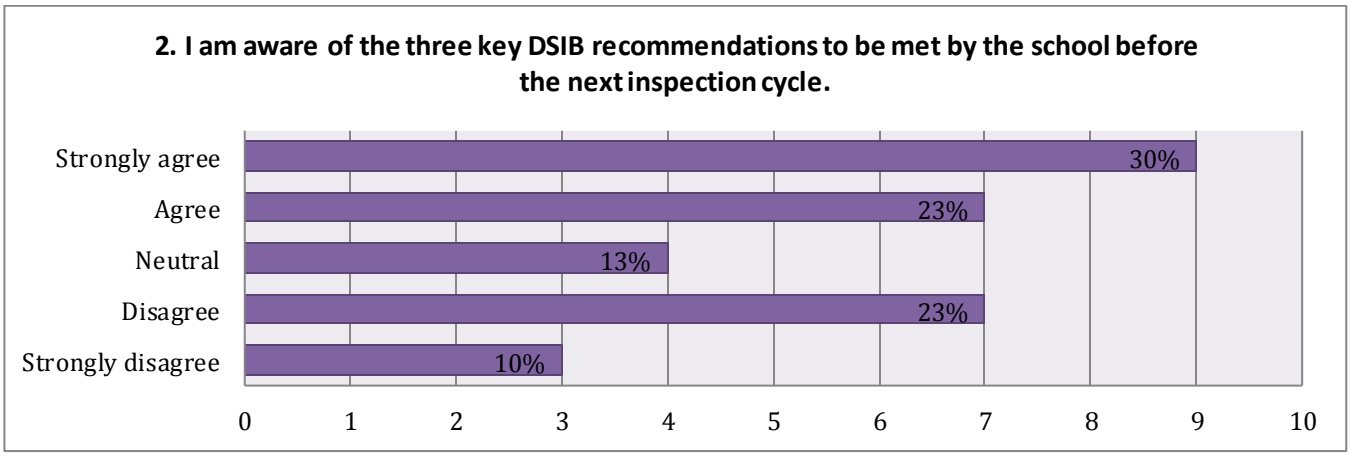
Data collected from 30 teachers and leaders within the school, June 2014. Follow up discussions with those willing to reveal their identity to the researcher, together with further elaboration on questionnaire responses provided additional comments and suggestions for leadership and school system development.

Strategy and vision



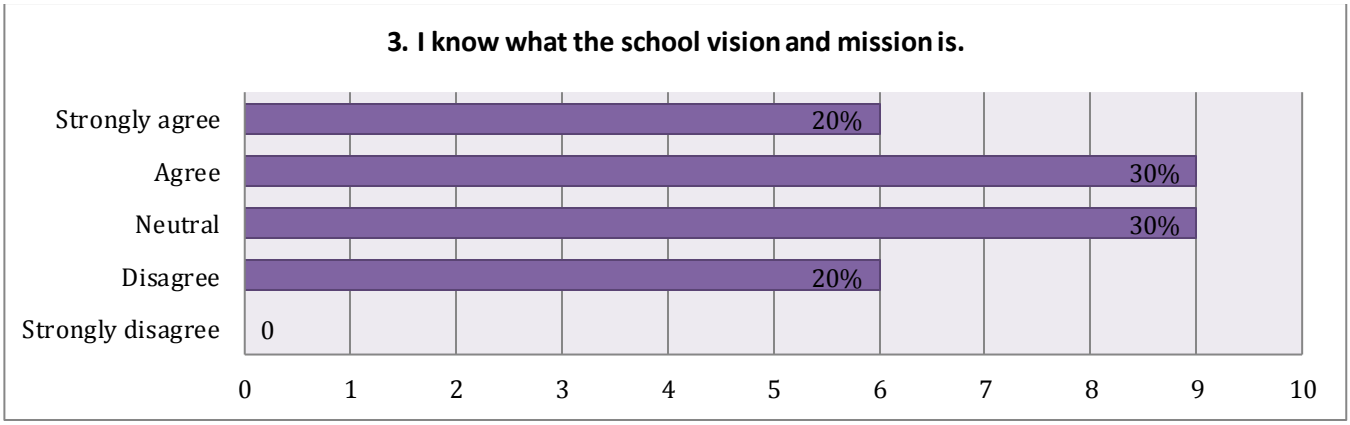
Can you elaborate further?

- Agree – Year group SEF's are completed. Voice is not always heard.
- Strongly disagree – I did it for my year group but had no opportunity to input into whole school plan.



Can you elaborate further?

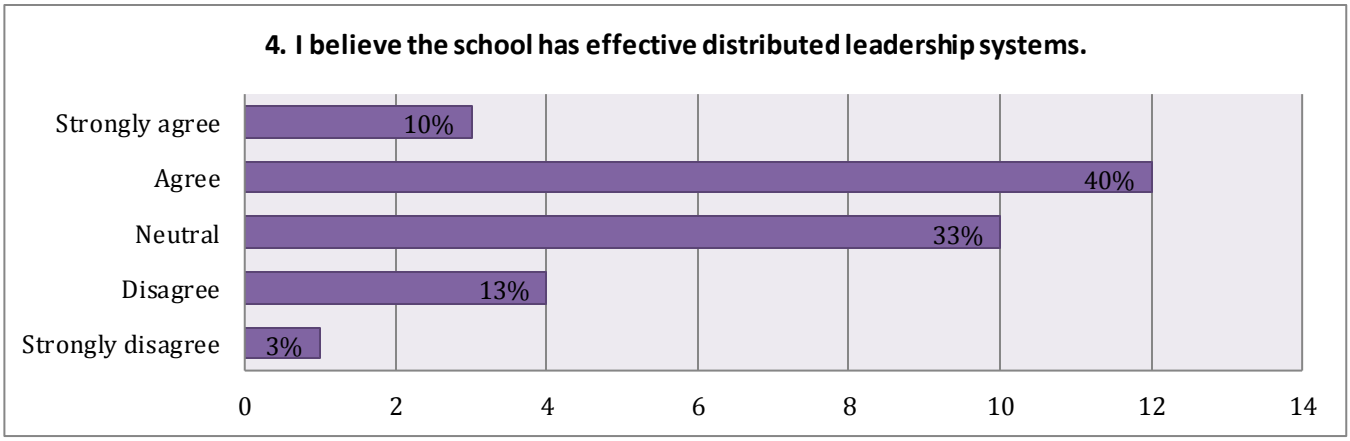
No comments.



Can you elaborate further?

- Disagree – Not visible around school.

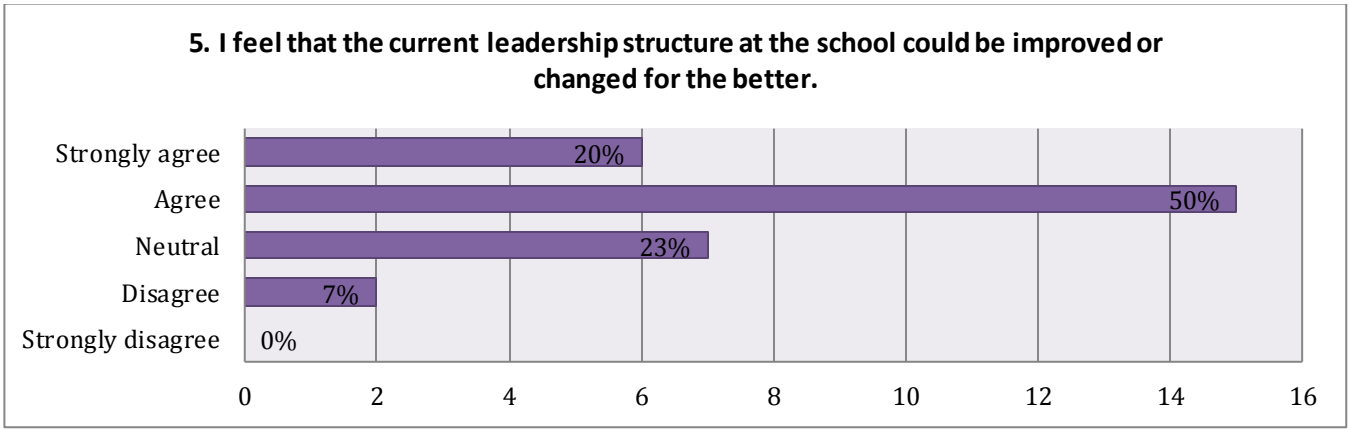
<u>Leadership structure and communication</u>



Can you elaborate further?

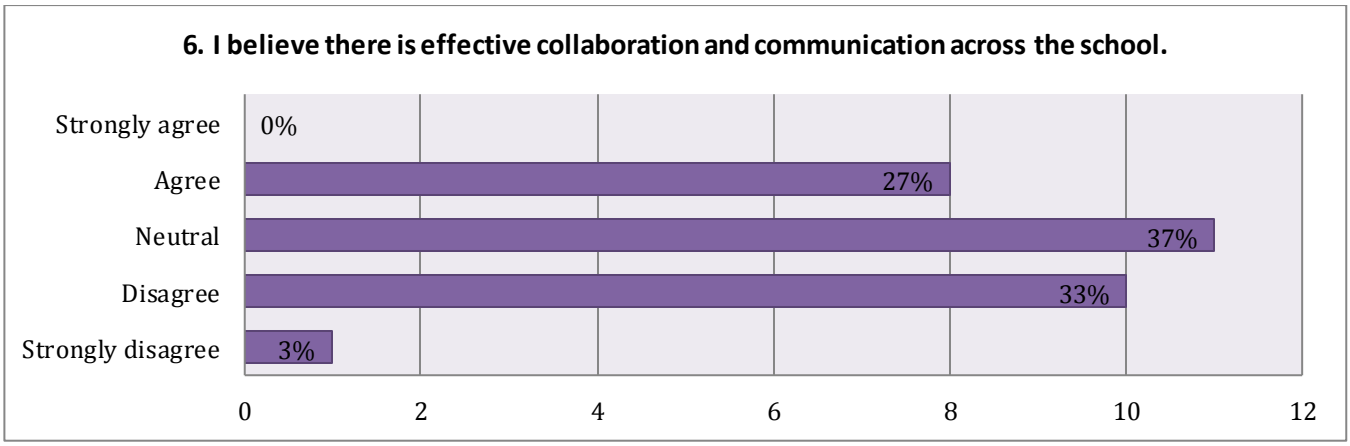
- Neutral - Would like better communication channels.
- Neutral - Discrepancies between phase/year group leader workload.
- Disagree – Not sure how much work phase leaders do if each year group has a leader?
- Disagree – The leadership "hierarchy" that is in place merely excludes ordinary teachers from direct communication with leaders.

- Disagree – There is too much leadership seemingly not doing enough and all tasks are sent down to teachers.



Can you elaborate further?

- Agree – Phase leaders could also be year group leaders?
- Agree – The roles should be made clearer and leadership should do more administrative tasks instead of sending them down to Year Leaders and teachers.
- Disagree – The year groups are so big that year leaders are needed as well as phase leaders, however this causes disagreement and friction at times with Year Leaders effectively leading Phase Leaders who are also teachers within their year group.

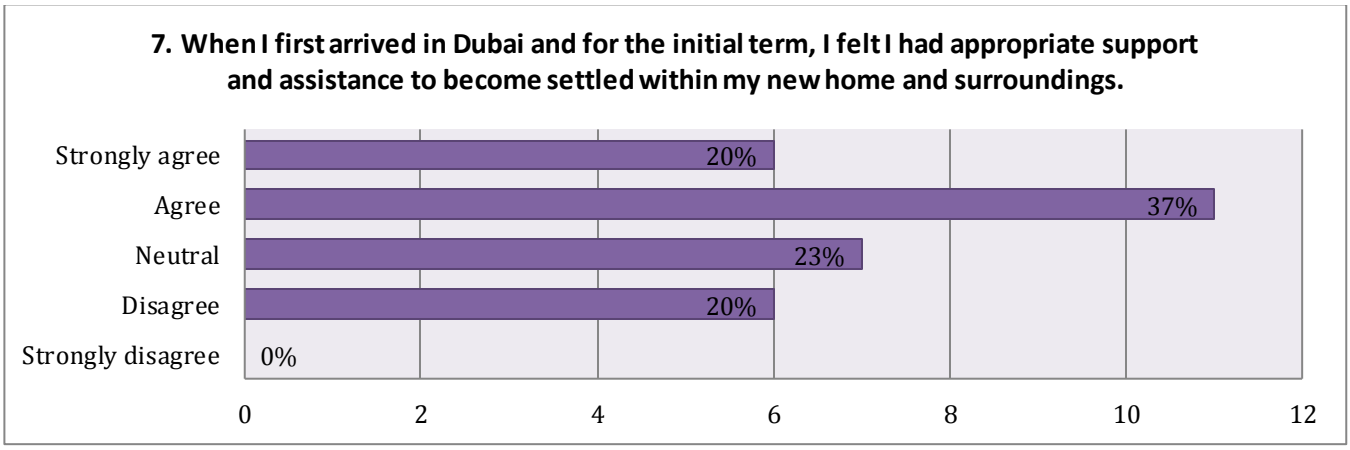


Can you elaborate further?

- Neutral - Tries to happen but school is too big.

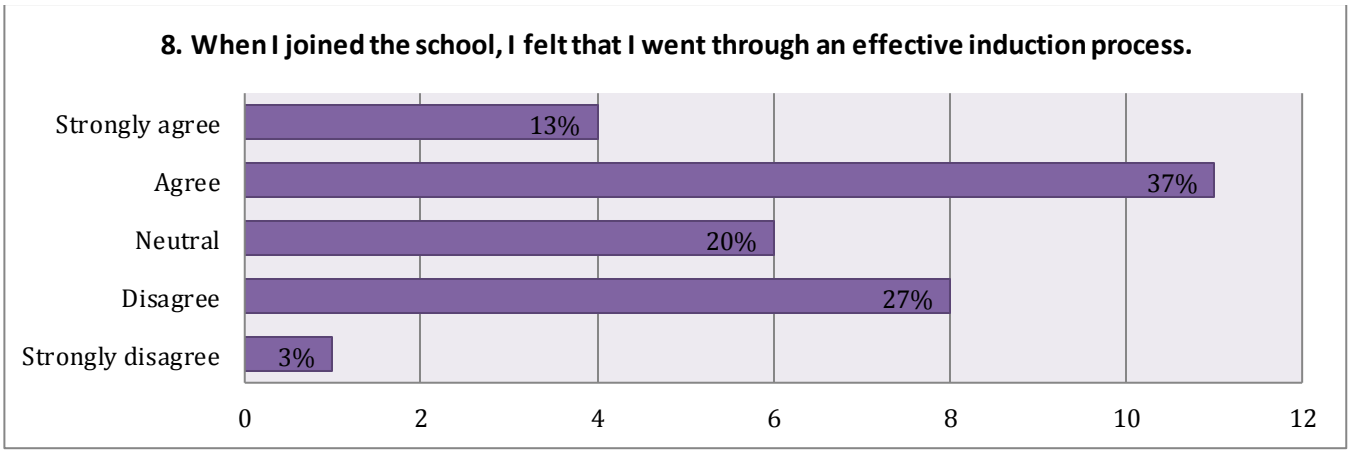
- Neutral – Sometimes effective communication.
- Disagree – Key stages work separately, information is communicated at the last minute, some of it gets lost or miscommunicated.
- Disagree – Confusion sometimes i.e various calendars being used at the same time.
- Strongly disagree – On numerous occasions I tried to communicate directly with appropriate leaders and was told that I should voice all concerns through my HoD and not liaise directly with management.

Induction and support



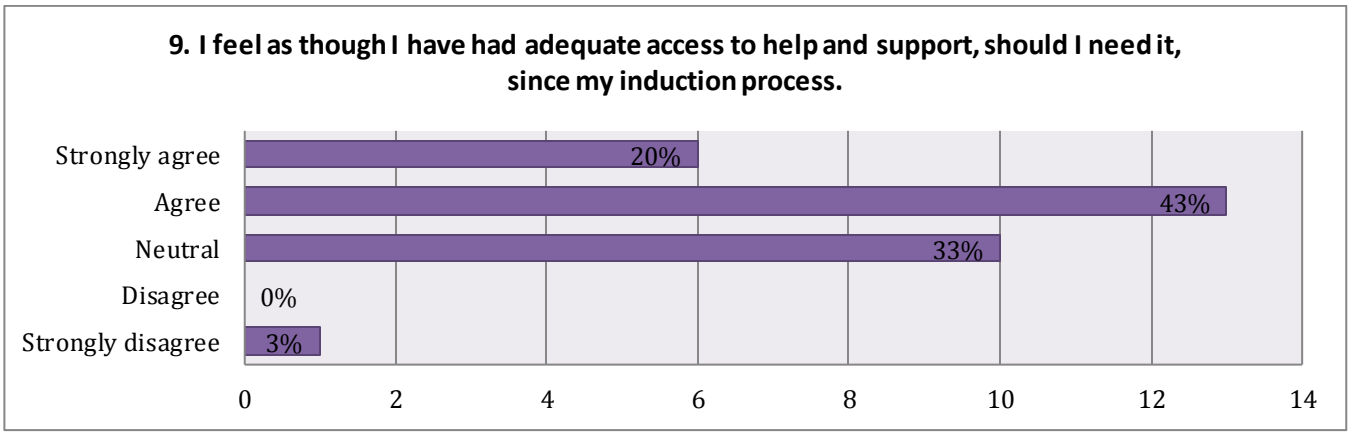
Can you elaborate further?

- Agree - Very overwhelming for new staff. Needs to be a calmer start.
- Agree – Yes, but I already knew people here, which helped.
- Agree – The people I was with helped me to settle in.
- Agree – The transition from a personal point of view was very easy.
- Disagree – Had very little induction as I joined mid-year.



Can you elaborate further?

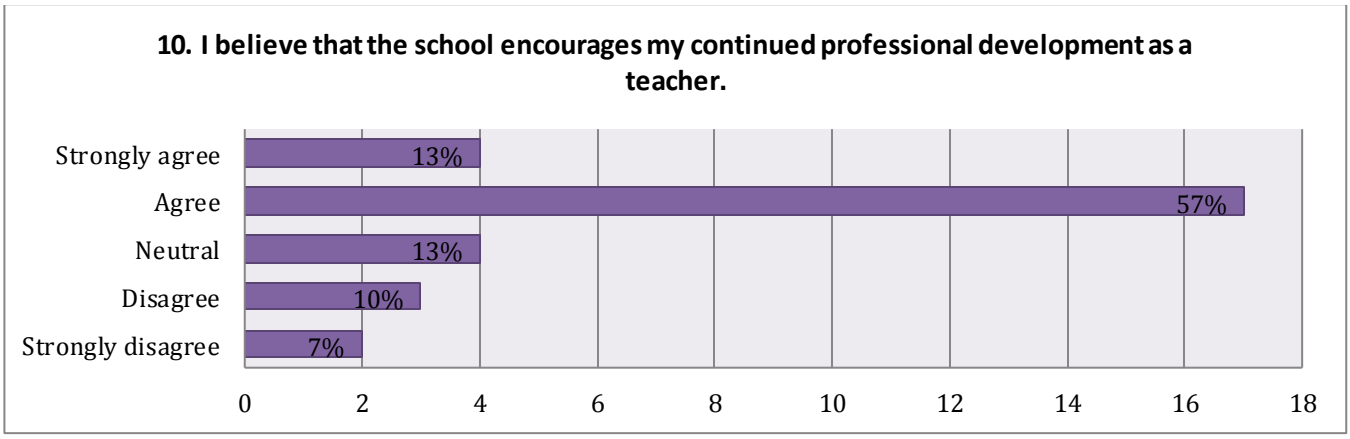
- Neutral – Considering many systems were not in place, it was a jump into the deep end!
- Disagree – Not enough time in the classroom.
- Disagree – Joined mid-year, no induction provided.



Can you elaborate further?

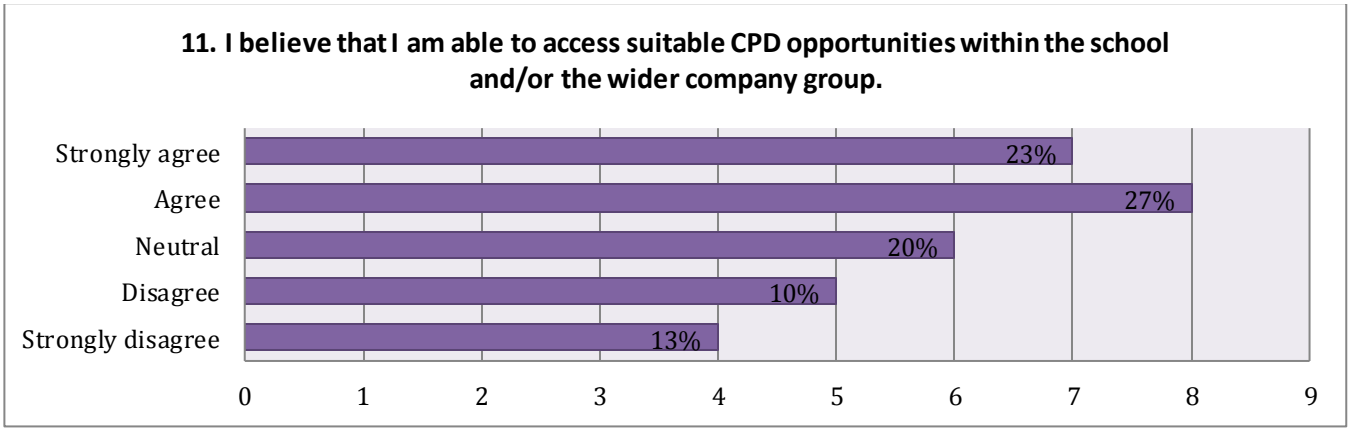
- Strongly agree – I ask for help and support and have also been given it.
- Agree – My phase leader was fantastic and a great support when I started.
- Neutral – Too much time spent on clerical and admin tasks due to lack of obtainable help.
- Neutral – Lack of resources and performance management systems are on-going issues.

<u>Professional development and career advancement opportunities</u>



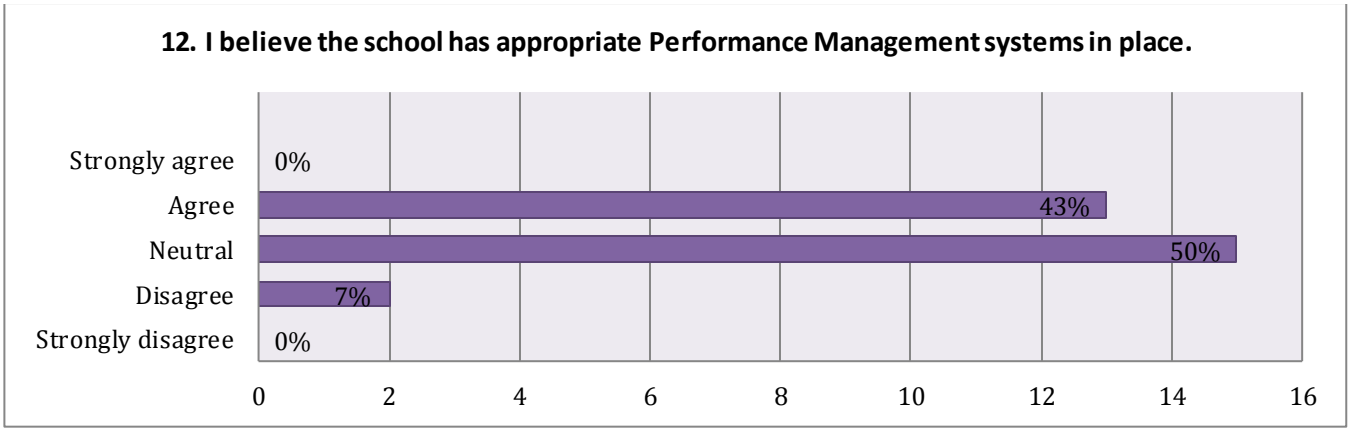
Can you elaborate further?

- Strongly agree – Courses available.
- Agree - I have engaged in many PD courses and am also an accredited PD trainer.
- Agree – When courses are available through the CPD network we are usually allowed to attend.
- Agree – Normally training sessions are approved by CPD co-ordinator. Promotion opportunities are frequently available each year, particularly for classroom teachers, with people leaving.
- Agree – Internal PD's, sharing of good practice. We could do with more quality training from outside agencies.
- Strongly disagree – I was denied attendance of a CPD course on the basis that I am leaving. This was the first subject appropriate CPD course I have ever encountered since living in Dubai.
- Strongly disagree - No training has been offered in music as a specialist teacher in over 5 years.



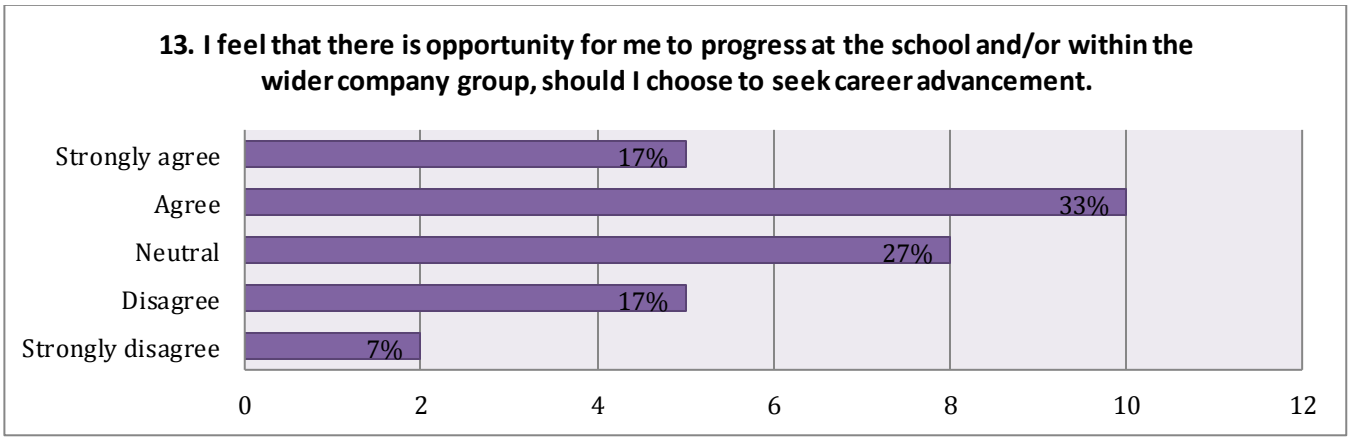
Can you elaborate further?

- Agree - Generally yes, but not in my subject.
- Agree - Excited about the opportunities working with Mark Treadwell
- Agree – CPD for PE.
- Neutral - For specialist teachers there is a shortage of relevant CPD opportunities within the company in order to gain recognised awards.
- Disagree – All CPD's are provided internally and the quality is OK, but we would benefit from bringing more experts in.
- Strongly disagree – There have been no subject appropriate CPD opportunities for my specialism at the school.



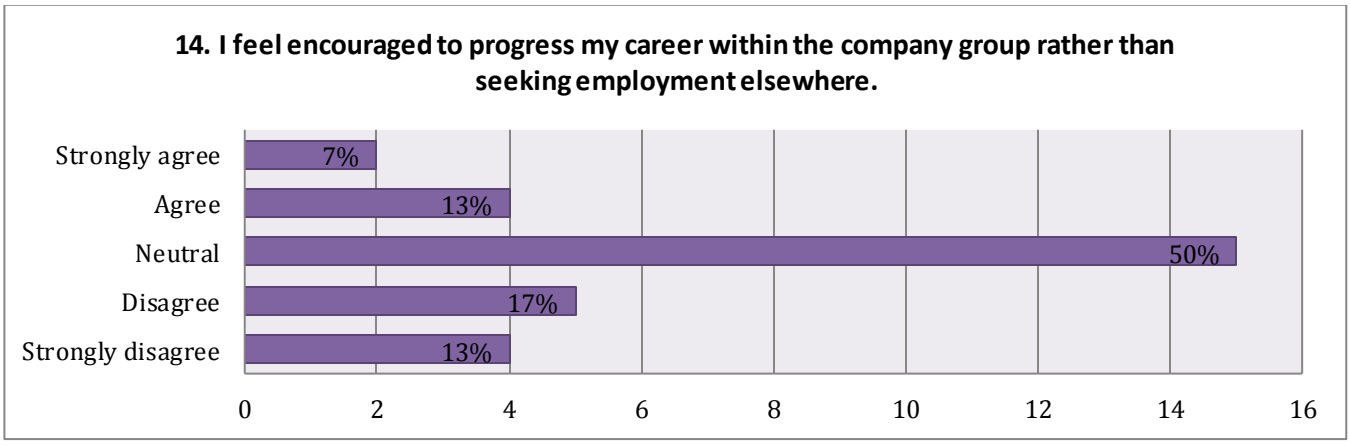
Can you elaborate further?

- Agree – PM systems based on observations and self-targets are fine but were started way too late in 2013-14, meaning that I personally did not benefit from the process due to the targets being meaningless and rushed.
- Agree – It would be better if it were spread across all terms.
- Agree – Though it is in the early stages and has not gone through a full cycle due to the introduction of a new system late this academic year.
- Neutral – The PM system does need looking at and developing.
- Neutral – For teachers who are experienced, either buddy PM or action research based PD.
- Neutral – Heading in the right direction but still focussed on judgement rather than lifting performance.
- Disagree – Irregular meetings and opportunities for discussion with the mentor/no mentors in place. Training and experience of PM managers is not consistent.



Can you elaborate further?

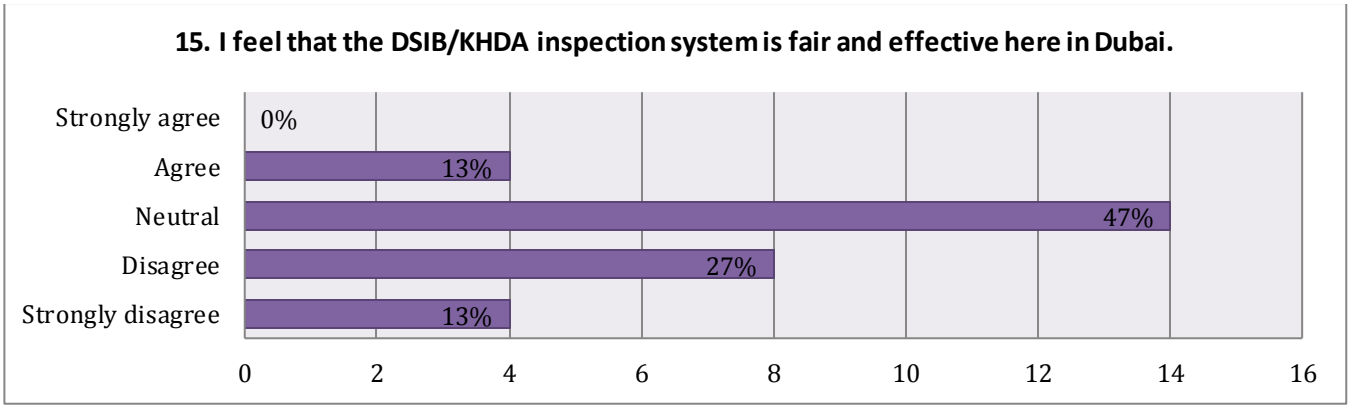
- Strongly agree - I have had the opportunity to complete a leadership course and KAGEN course.
- Strongly agree – No doubt.
- Agree – Lots of staff changes means bigger opportunities.
- Agree – Obviously this depends on more relevant CPD courses.
- Neutral - Not all opportunities are advertised internally.
- Neutral – No evidence so far, I would like to progress but suitable opportunities have not yet become available.
- Disagree – I like that a Masters course is offered through the company, however, at *the school* in particular, there has been no opportunity for me to lead my specialism subject.
- Disagree - Jobs that I would have wished to apply for within the school have been filled by external staff without the position being advertised. This is incredibly demotivating.



Can you elaborate further?

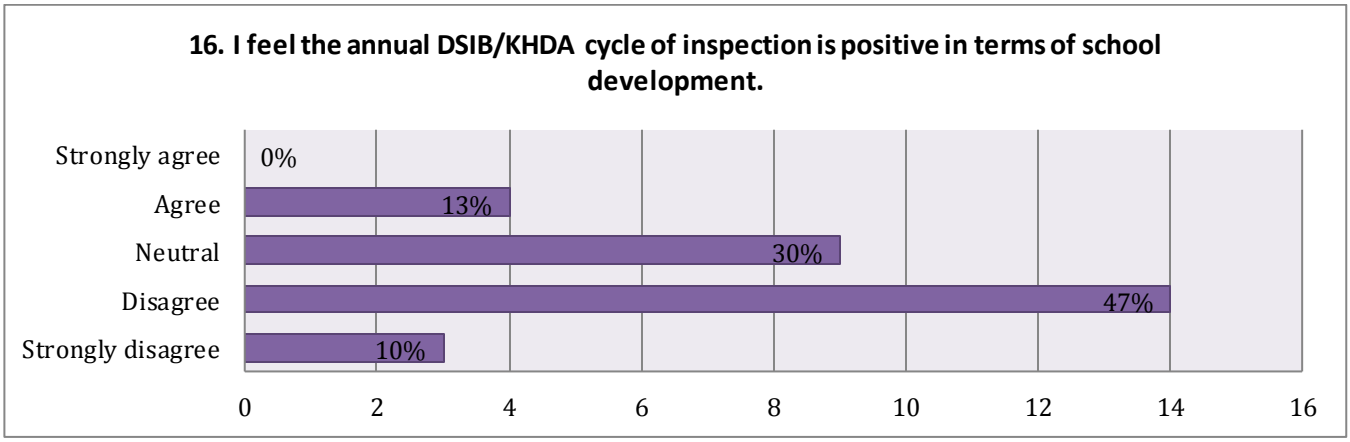
- Neutral - I can't stay for too much longer but in the past, yes.
- Strongly disagree – Positions within the school are not advertised fairly and people are often chosen for positions without correct interviews etc.
- Strongly disagree – I dislike the corporate, for profit aspect of the company. I have not had the necessary career training opportunities to progress further.

Quality assurance



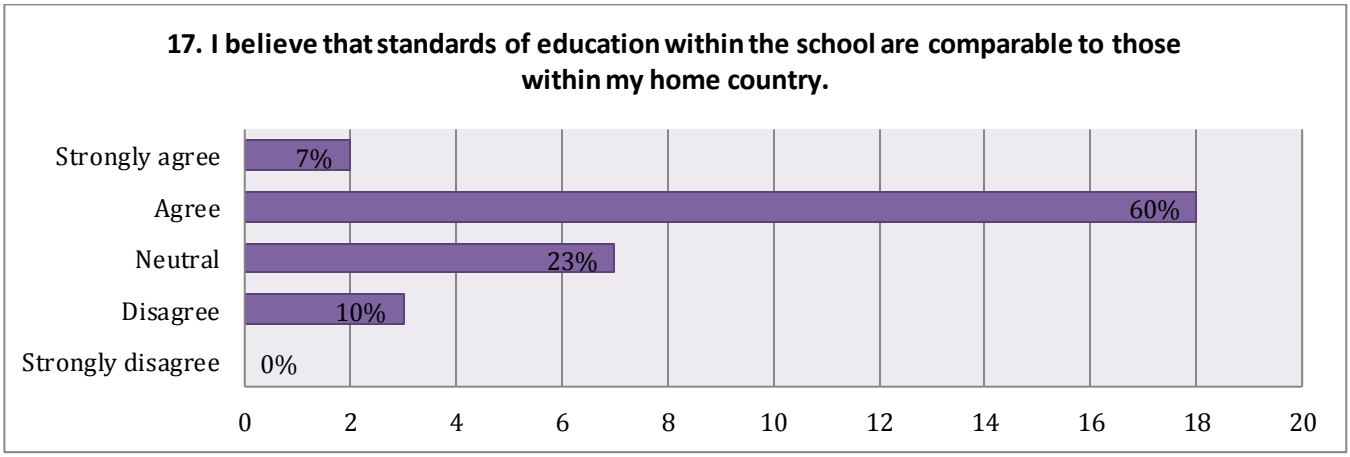
Can you elaborate further?

- Neutral – It seems like a thorough inspection although schools are given ample time to prepare for it and are aware when it is likely to happen.
- Neutral – I don't think you should know when inspection is happening. They should be every 2-3 years.
- Disagree - Only one teacher observed from department. No interview with HoD. No data looked at.
- Disagree – I believe that if they were the same inspectors each year then they would notice the change.



Can you elaborate further?

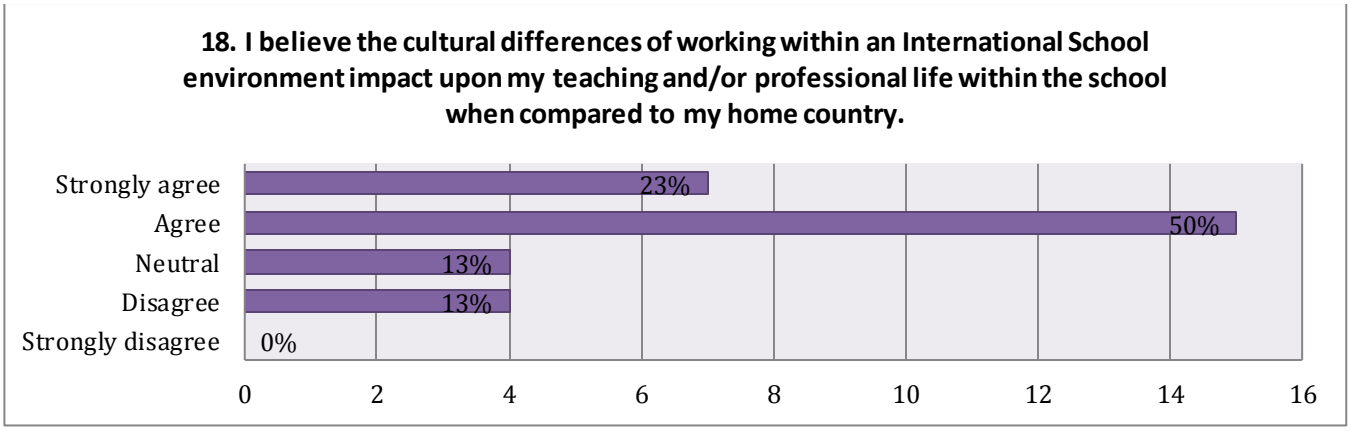
- Agree – Though inspection is too regular and reliant on inspectors being consistent, which they do not always seem to be.
- Agree – Impact happens.
- Neutral – Yes, except when leadership places blame and destroys morale.
- Neutral – It differs from school to school and can result in impromptu changes to policies and procedures.
- Disagree - Due to the transient nature of Dubai and the ever-changing staff and leadership in GWPS I feel the inspection is not a fair reflection of what the school is about in terms of progress and development. It puts pressure on staff every year to achieve unrealistic expectations. Every two years would be fairer and more realistic timeframe for inspections to take place.
- Disagree - The cycle of inspection could be longer, as in the UK, enabling the school to embed new initiatives successfully.
- Disagree – Again it is the individual inspectors opinion, also to have inspection annually creates unnecessary stress on teachers.
- Disagree – It puts a lot of pressure on teachers but yes, leads to some positive changes overall.
- Strongly disagree - No chance to act upon recommendations properly.



Can you elaborate further?

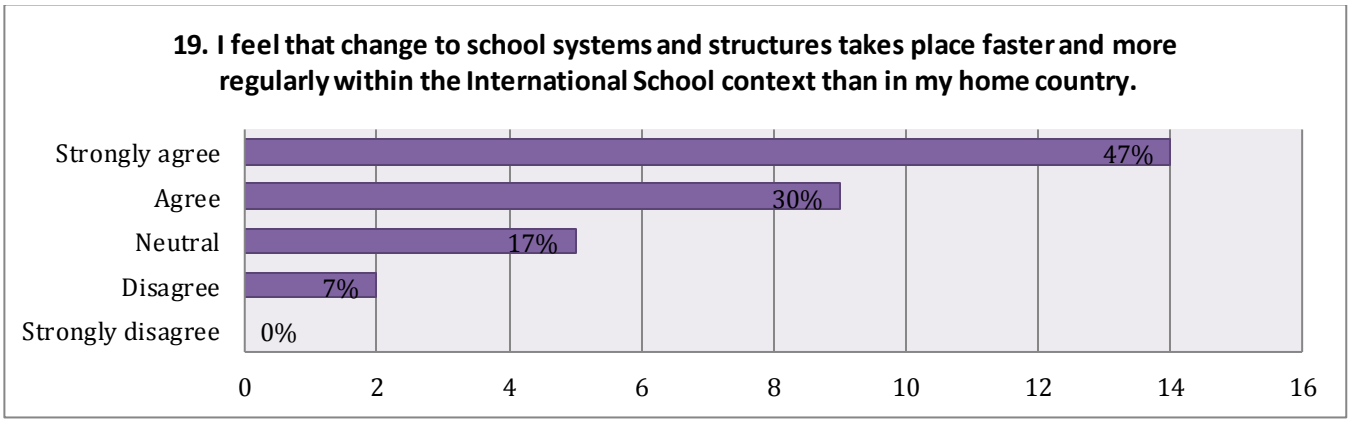
- Agree – I believe we work to a level beyond that of our home country.
- Neutral – Been away from home for a while, children are different.
- Neutral – They are different to schools I have experienced. Back home there was less pressure on results and more accents on community and social development, as well as rounded education.

Leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools.



Can you elaborate further?

- Agree – Particularly in a Muslim country, many UK songs and rhymes are deemed inappropriate.
- Agree – Numerous children with ELL. Children stay up late and are tired at school = poor concentration and retention of learning. User pays SEN provision, not state funded through health or education.
- Disagree – I worked in a multicultural school in my home country.

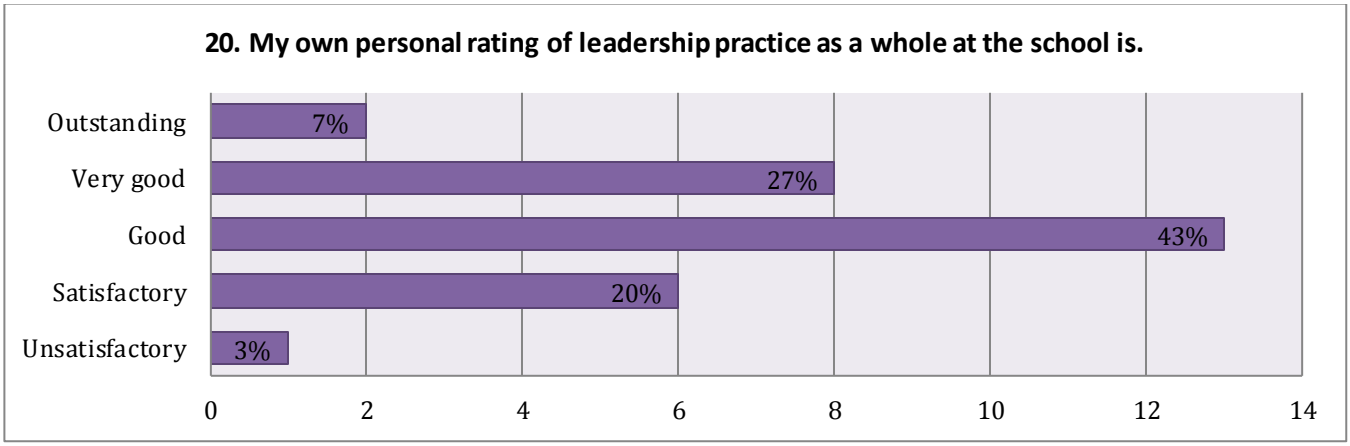


Can you elaborate further?

- Strongly agree – Too fast to make a difference to children's learning.
- Agree – Assessment procedures have changed 3 times in 3 years due to staff turnover.
- Agree – But not in a good way – it makes one suspect that leadership are not sure what they are doing as no changes are never established or consistent.

- Neutral – Not always.

Overall rating



Can you elaborate further?

- Outstanding – People work hard, try hard and want children and school to succeed.
- Very good - Due to the nature of Dubai and its transient lifestyle there is an extremely high turnover of staff and leaders in our school. This impacts on leadership and consistency of leadership across the whole school.
- Good - Lack of direction as to what our shared vision and goals are. Confusing signals as to what expectations are in the classrooms. Show for DSIB/KHDA vs. sustainable programmes.
- Good – Sometimes very good but not always consistent.

Further discussion

What does the leadership team at the school do well?

- Data analysis and provisions for pupils.
- Sharing of information/policies/inspection recommendations.
- Create paperwork!
- Parental (customer) liaison.
- Respond to urgent issues.
- Developed a good cycle of development this year so teams know this is coming up.

- Implement new initiatives.
- Good relationships with parents.

Can you suggest areas for future development?

- Training for certain specialists is needed. Only one relevant course offered in 5 years and I was not allowed to attend! There are other courses available to other staff, just not in our subject.
- Develop whole school cycle of topics with all HoD's present/inputting.
- Staff to move year groups to develop a better understanding of curriculum.
- Performance management earlier in the year to enable teachers to work on actions throughout the year.
- Less formal observations, more coaching opportunity/peer observation.
- Communicate better with teachers.
- There seems to be elements of a clique within sections of leadership; anyone outside of the group is not listened to. They need to be more open to all staff.
- Staff meetings (whole staff) so people feel they have a voice.
- Improving morale rather than negativity filtering down from the top.
- More approachable and abandonment of the 'hierarchy' and 'us and them' impression. The Principal has been approachable, however.
- Speaking to all staff members politely as normal respectful adults would.
- Regular weekly SMT meetings and collaboration/transparency of information.
- Shared calendars centrally managed.
- Clear knowledge of responsibilities and portfolios.
- Fair distribution of workloads in order to be most effective for impact on children.
- Value staff more.
- Increase lines of communication.
- Develop performance management and moderation of it.
- Offer more in house CPD and allow attendance at courses on lesson observation. Ensure all observers are consistent in terms of expectation.
- Improve the clarity and distribution of the school vision; action plan and strategic development plan with clear delegation of roles and responsibilities within an inclusive, supportive and aspiring environment.
- More community spirit and bonding events for staff.

- Less talk and more action from Phase/Executive team leaders.
- Consistency across the whole school (processes & documents).
- Listen to staff opinions more and implement 2 way communication systems.
- Stop changing everything every year.
- Ease off amount of responsibilities given to Year Group Leaders. With a large year group it's the job of a deputy head back home – very intense!

Leadership Interview – School Principal/CEO (Leaving position at end of 2013/14 school year)

1. What do you consider are the greatest success areas for the school in terms of leadership development during your time as Principal?

Leadership growth, there has been a significant growth of the leadership team which has included scaffolding to support distributed leadership. During inspection the inspection team highlighted the ability of leaders, stating that they were outstanding. Leaders stand out within the company; managers from the corporate office PD team have highlighted this. Staff are being poached by other schools and other parts of the company.

2. Do you feel the school has achieved a successful distributed leadership model? If not, how could it be improved?

See previous response. Yes, but improvement could still be made. Clarity of job descriptions and KPI's (key performance indicators) would help. Data based decision-making and accountability is also something that could be improved and developed.

3. Looking back at your time leading the school as Principal, are there any key leadership decisions that you would change or would now approach differently? If so, could you identify those you consider being of greatest importance?

Yes! Too numerous to mention! Growth was rapid; leaders developed as per need rather than as a fully structured plan. More clarification of roles and need would have benefitted with hindsight. Structure should have been in place sooner, we are still paying for some of those mistakes now.

4. Do you believe there is effective collaboration and communication across the school? If not, how could it be improved?

Generally yes. Improvement in school systems, calendars, increasing accessibility of leaders to wider staff and improving the way we look at succession would be areas I would look to develop further.

5. What have you found most challenging within your leadership role at the school?

Directives from corporate office and KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority). I might not agree with them but I have to implement the directives regardless. Things I can't control are also a challenge such as housing prices in Dubai and pay scales. I would love more flexibility in what I can offer and change.

6. How are the challenges of leading within an International School context different to those in your home country?

Associated bureaucracy, demands from parents within the private education sector. Not having complete autonomy as Principal, back home (in New Zealand) I had more freedom.

7. If you were continuing in the post of Principal at the school, are there any specific areas (aside from those recommended by the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau) that you would personally like the school to focus on and develop?

I'd like to further develop the curriculum based on collaborative learning and enquiry, combined with flexible timetabling and blended learning approach. I'd also like a greater emphasis on learning as opposed to teaching.

8. Do you believe an annual cycle of inspection is of benefit to the school or would a longer inspection cycle i.e, every 2-3 Years be more appropriate? Please give brief reasons.

Certainly a differentiated review cycle needed. Time to implement changes required, as there are only a matter of months between cycles means little time to make effective changes.

9. Do you believe the school offers suitable professional training opportunities to staff?

Training is offered within the company and staff are usually supported and permitted to attend if the training is relevant for them professionally. Internal CPD sessions provide training for the wider staff.

Discussion and analysis

This discussion section will seek to combine the quantitative and qualitative data obtained during the research process with theory and critical analysis in order to reach appropriate conclusions and recommendations. It will be approached with the same structure as the earlier literature review, looking at the key themes of this study, though now in conjunction with the data obtained during the research process.

Strategy & Vision

As discussed earlier, it is generally agreed that employing effective strategic management combined with a shared vision are vital in moving any organisation forward. Staff responses to the questions regarding this were mixed, however. For question 1, the majority (56%), agreed or strongly agreed that the school gave staff the opportunity to input into the school development plan, action plans or school review. This is positive as it implies that leadership are prepared to give staff the opportunity to input ideas into future school development. As Harris & Lambert (2003) would highlight, this allows staff to input into the future direction of the school and would have a beneficial impact upon student learning. However, this leaves 44% of staff that either don't feel involved or are unsure (neutral) about their response and indicates that an effective distribution of leadership has not yet been achieved. This is interesting as the Principal/CEO, during his interview for this research, felt that although some improvements could be made, the school had achieved a reasonably successful distributed leadership model. Comments such as 'voice is not always heard' and, 'I did it for my year group but had no opportunity to input into the whole school plan' were made by staff. Clearly this suggests that there is still some work to do in this area in terms of ensuring all staff feel as though they have a voice in wider school issues.

Question 2 is an important one, as it asks staff if they are aware of the three recommendations put forward by the DSIB inspection QA team. During interview, the Principal/CEO believed that a differentiated inspection review cycle was needed, put simply, schools who prove they are effective should have longer periods between inspections, those that are rated poorly should be inspected on a more regular basis. The Principal also felt that an increased amount of time was needed to implement required changes as there are only a matter of months between cycles, which means little time to make effective changes. That being the case, one might argue that the school should be doing everything in its power to ensure staff are fully aware of the key targets given the short timeframe between inspections. The data gained from staff was again mixed and did not seem to support the fact that it was being given adequate attention. Sample size may perhaps have been a limiting factor in determining a consensus of opinion, although participants accounted for 46% of teaching staff and were a varied cross-section of the school in terms of responsibility. 53%

believed they were aware of the recommendations, with 13% neutral and, perhaps surprisingly, 33% not being aware of the whole school targets.

Question 3 highlighted that the majority of participants (50%) knew what the school vision and mission was, 30% were neutral, perhaps unsure. 20% did not know what the school vision and mission was with a comment made that 'it wasn't visible around school.' At this point I would like to highlight a possible flaw within the research methodology, as I do not believe that 50% of staff actually do know the school vision and mission if they had been asked to repeat it. Nevertheless, the data suggests that a significant number claim to be aware of it, which is again a positive. However, I do not believe it could be stated that the school vision and mission is a shared one from a staff input point of view. Certainly, during the past five years there has been no staff opportunity to contribute to the development of the whole school vision and mission. During that period of time, almost the entire staff and pupil roll has changed. In order to work toward a shared vision, it is vital that leadership allows staff the chance to gain ownership and 'buy-in' by providing the opportunity to input into it. Equally, in order for the whole school to work toward a shared vision, there should be input from parents and children. Furthermore, the vision should be displayed openly within the school in order to help to institutionalise it.

Leadership structure and communication

Distributed leadership and efficient two-way communication are highlighted as vital ingredients toward creating a collaborative and effective 21st C educational environment (Bass 1990; Savery 1992; Fullan 1998; Collins 2001; Gronn 2002; Harris & Spillane 2008). In response to question 4, 50% of participants believed that the school utilises an effective distributed leadership model with only 16% disagreeing with that statement. Generally this is very positive, although some negative opinion came to light within the comments, which included 'the leadership hierarchy that is in place merely excludes ordinary teachers from direct communication with leaders' and 'there are too many high level leaders talking endlessly while most tasks are sent down to teachers' and 'there are discrepancies between Phase/Year Group Leader workload.' Within any school or organisation there could be some disgruntled staff that may, perhaps, not have been satisfied with decisions made in the past. However, despite the generally positive response to this question, it is important to take note of the comments made and take action to remedy them where possible. Despite the balance of research favouring a distributed leadership model there are some who argue against this type of approach. Fitzgerald & Gunter (2006), suggest that distributed leadership may be a type of managerial control. Allowing staff to feel valued, whilst growing the numbers of employees performing additional responsibilities across the school. Certainly, it could be argued that distributed leadership holds advantages

for senior leaders, encouraging more work from a significantly wider group of employees, often for minimal reward. Many middle leaders within the educational context may support this viewpoint.

Question 5 asks whether staff felt the leadership structure at the school could be improved or changed for the better. 70% believed that it could, with only 7% disagreeing. This provides a very clear message and is something that, it seems, needs addressing. Comments included 'Phase leaders could also be Year Group Leaders'; this echoes the belief in the previous question where the feeling was that Year Group Leaders had a greater workload than Phase Leaders. 'Roles should be made clearer' was another comment and one that is supported by the Principal/CEO when he stated that 'Growth was rapid; leaders developed as per need rather than as a fully structured plan. More clarification of roles and need would have benefitted with hindsight. Structure should have been in place sooner, we are still paying for some of those mistakes now.' There was also further comment with regard to Phase Leaders/Key Stage being teachers within a Year Group that is being led by one of their subordinates. This does not seem like a well-structured or considered situation and it seems that some staff agree with that viewpoint.

To the question 'Do you believe there is effective collaboration and communication across the school? If not, how could it be improved?' The Principal/CEO stated 'generally yes' (communication and collaboration did take place effectively). However, improvement in school systems, calendars, increasing accessibility of leaders to wider staff and improving the way we look at succession would be areas I would look to develop further.' The staff did not agree wholeheartedly with this statement when asked the same question for question 6, with 36% disagreeing and 37% neutral on that issue. Just 27% agreed with the statement. There were also numerous comments such as 'Key stages work separately, information is communicated at the last minute, some of it gets lost or miscommunicated' or 'tries to happen but school is too big' and significantly 'on numerous occasions I tried to communicate with appropriate leaders and was told that I should voice all concerns through my HoD and not liaise with management.' Certainly, there are some worrying statements here. Overall, this question provided one of the least positive responses and should provide leadership with food for thought as far as accessibility, approachability and achieving an environment of greater co-operation are concerned.

Induction and support

As considered during the literature review, International Schools face significant challenge over and above those faced by typical schools. In effect, they have to ensure even the most basic of safety and physiological needs (Maslow, 1943) are taken care of, certainly for the numerous staff arriving each year who are new to living overseas. The Principal/CEO highlighted the fact that house prices within Dubai and finding suitable

accommodation were amongst his greatest challenges. This is one of the most significant differences between International Schools and schools within teachers' home countries. In addition, the school needs to ensure an effective induction and support structure is in place as, within the UAE, inspections take place annually and there is a reasonable chance that new staff will be inspected within their very first term. In answering question 7, which touches on teachers' feelings regarding their initial support mechanisms, 57% believed they were provided with adequate support. Only 20% disagreed with 23% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Despite the generally positive response, 20% believing they did not have adequate support seems too high a number to be acceptable. Additionally, staff that join the school mid-year, of whom there are admittedly fewer, believe they have less support upon joining.

Question 8 asks about teachers' thoughts on their induction process. Induction has been found to be beneficial, not only for the initial joining process but in terms of retaining staff in the future (Cohen, 2005; Smith & Ingersol, 2004). 50% of staff at the school believed their induction was effective, 30% did not, with 20% neutral. Comments such as 'not enough time in the classroom', 'joined mid-year, no induction provided' and 'considering many systems were not in place, it was a jump into the deep end!' were made, suggesting that there are areas of the induction process that could be developed and improved.

Question 9 seeks to discover is staff felt they had ongoing support, should they need it, following their induction period. This was, perhaps, the most positive response to all the questions put to teachers. 63% agreed or strongly agreed that support was there if they needed it, 33% were neutral with only 3% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Comments included; 'I ask for help and support and have also been given it', 'My Phase Leader was fantastic, and a great support when I started', 'Too much time spent on clerical and admin tasks due to lack of obtainable help' and 'lack of resources available and performance management systems are on-going issues.' It seems the positive responses generally revolved around the help and support given to staff when they started at the school. Anecdotally, I would agree that the school environment is generally one of trying to help and support others, particularly new staff on arrival. The negative statements seem to be based upon a lack of help and support in the classroom and the relatively new performance management structure, introduced late in the 2013-14 academic year.

<u>Professional development and career advancement opportunities</u>

Studies have shown that improving teacher's skills pays off in better results for children (Hunt, 2009). Hirsh (2009) confirmed that; *"improving professional learning for educators is a crucial step in transforming schools and achieving academic achievement"* (Hirsh, 2009:3) Darling-Hammond (2009) also supports this view. Clearly, evidence suggests that there is a great need for the leadership of schools to provide suitable professional development

programmes for staff in order to raise the academic standards for their pupils.

Question 10 considers the extent to which staff within the school feel they are encouraged to continue their professional development. This question received an extremely positive response with 57% agreeing that they felt encouraged and a further 13% strongly agreeing that the school encourages their development. Only 17% felt they did not receive encouragement. This seems, based upon the quantitative data, to be a success area for the school and essentially something to be celebrated. Comments included; 'I have engaged in many PD courses and am also an accredited PD trainer', 'When courses are available through the PD Network we are usually allowed to attend' and 'Internal PD (is offered), sharing of good practice (is encouraged).' However, some discrepancies come to light with other comments made, such as; 'We could do with more quality training from outside', 'I was denied attendance at a PD course because I was leaving, this was the only subject appropriate CPD course I have ever encountered since living in Dubai' and 'No training has been offered in Music as a specialist teacher in over 5 years.' Despite the general quantitative agreement, there are clearly areas highlighted by the qualitative data that should be addressed. Particularly, it seems, training for specialist subject teachers.

In question 11, respondents are asked if they are able to access suitable CPD opportunities. Firstly, I should highlight a limitation of the research methodology discovered during the research process, where some participants tried to answer some aspects of this question within their response to the previous one, there is therefore an element of overlap in the comments made. However, most staff believed they were able to access suitable CPD opportunities with an overall total of 60% agreeing (23% of which strongly agreed). 23% disagreed with the statement and 20% neither agreed nor disagreed. Again generally positive responses, however, qualitative data revealed similar issues to question 10. Comments included; 'Generally yes, but not in my subject', 'For specialist teachers there is a shortage of relevant CPD opportunity within the company in order to gain recognised awards', 'All CPD's are provided internally and the quality is OK, but we would benefit from bringing more experts in' and, worryingly; 'Strongly disagree - there have been no subject appropriate CPD opportunities for my specialism at the school.' This again seems to highlight a lack of appropriate training opportunities for specialist staff and, additionally, the need to bring in more expert trainers from outside the school rather than the majority of training being 'in-house'. In contrast, the Principal/CEO commented that 'Training is offered within the company and staff are usually supported and permitted to attend if the training is relevant for them professionally. Internal CPD sessions provide training for the wider staff.' Seemingly, he felt that CPD needs are currently well catered for, which is in conflict with the views of some of the staff.

Question 12 addresses performance management; enquiring if staff believe the school has appropriate

performance management systems in place. I will preempt some of the data responses by stating that an entirely new performance management system was introduced to the school late in the 2013/14 school year, during the final term. In my view, it is perhaps more complex than it needs to be and doesn't differentiate between staff that have previously proven themselves to be 'outstanding' in terms of inspection assessments and past observation rounds. Nor does it differentiate between experienced staff and those new to the school. Quantitative responses revealed 43% believed the PM system was appropriate, 50% were neutral, having no opinion either way, with 7% displaying disagreement with the question. With regard to the qualitative comments, in the interests of brevity, I will not repeat responses that discussed the new PM system being introduced late in the year as, although it was not ideal, it should not be a factor for next academic year now that it is in place. The remaining comments included; 'The PM system does need looking at and developing. The new system does seem overly complex', 'irregular meetings and opportunities for discussion with the mentor/no mentors in place. Training and experience of PM managers is not consistent', 'For teachers that are experienced, either buddy PM or action research based PD.' This was a positive comment as it seems to suggest a next step for more experienced and able teachers to move on rather than simply being judged each year. Another member of staff highlighted this when they stated; 'Heading in the right direction but still based on judgment rather than lifting performance'. The new PM system has only just completed its first, and rather rushed, cycle. It is perhaps too soon to judge it, although the idea to progress more experienced teachers is an interesting one and should perhaps be considered further by the school.

Developing leaders and leadership capacity throughout the school is a positive as far as recent research is concerned Kouzes & Posner (1999), Gronn (1999, 2002), Harris & Lambert (2003) and Hartle (2004) have been highlighted earlier as being in support of this view. However, empowering staff can often result in them wanting to move forward in their careers, which inevitably means they may wish to move into new roles, perhaps at other schools. There is a balance to get right, therefore, between developing staff, giving them opportunity to move forward from a career perspective and, occasionally, letting them go to move forward with their careers elsewhere. The school within this study is part of a wider educational group, which gives greater leeway for staff to remain within the company but to move to a different school location. The challenge is to ensure that staff who have been developed are encouraged and remain keen to stay within the company group.

To question 13 - I feel that there is opportunity for me to progress at the school and/or within the wider company group, should I choose to seek career advancement. 50% felt there were opportunities within the company, 27% were neutral and 24% disagreed. Comments included; 'Lots of staff changes mean bigger opportunities', 'No evidence so far, I would like to progress but suitable opportunities have not become

available', 'Not all opportunities are advertised internally' and 'Jobs that I would have wished to apply for within the school have been filled by external staff without the position being advertised. This is incredibly demotivating.' These final two comments are a concern as they suggest that there is insufficient transparency and fairness within the school with regard to job opportunities. This is something that leadership needs to address.

Question 14 is based along similar lines but focused on whether staff felt encouraged to stay within the company group rather than seeking employment elsewhere. 30% did not feel encouraged to stay within the company group with just 20% encouraged and 50% neutral or unsure. Some of the disagreement with the statement could be attributed to the fact the many staff see their time working overseas as a finite period, coming to live overseas with a plan to stay for two or three years then return home. For these teachers staying within the company is unlikely. However, there are clearly some staff who don't feel encouraged to stay or progress within the group or the school. Perhaps some of the reasons for this could be found within the comments of; 'I dislike the corporate, for profit aspect of the company' and 'I have not had the necessary career training opportunities to progress further' and 'Positions within the school are not advertised fairly and people are often chosen for position without correct interviews etc.' This is the second time that issues regarding the separate issues of a lack of training opportunities and a lack of fairness and transparency in awarding career advancement roles. The fact that these issues have been highlighted repeatedly seems to suggest they are both significant problems that need to be addressed.

Quality Assurance

Allais (2009), highlights the fact that QA has become very important within education. Perry & McWilliam (2007) point out the significant amount of work that is required from Principals to ensure schools are compliant with quality control and accountability measures.

It is important that QA procedures are trusted and that schools undergoing inspection feel they are dealt with consistently. Question 15 asked staff if they felt the inspection system was fair and effective in Dubai. Only 13% felt that it was. 40% believed the system was not a fair and effective one with 47% remaining neutral. These are not positive figures overall and reveal a distrust from staff regarding the present system. Comments included; 'Only one teacher was observed from my department, No interview with HoD, No data looked at' and 'I believe if they were the same inspectors each year then they would notice the change.' The fact that inspections take place on an annual basis is another challenge as it provides little time to implement the recommended changes. The Principal/CEO highlighted this view saying; 'Certainly a differentiated review cycle needed. Time to implement changes required, as there are only a matter of

months between cycles means little time to make effective changes'. Staff agreed, with further comments including; 'I don't think you should know when inspection is happening but they should be every 2-3 years. This is an idea that the next question looks into further.

Question 16 asks if the annual cycle of inspection is felt as positive in terms of school development. It would make sense that many staff are less than keen on an annual cycle of inspection and therefore this bias should be taken into account when analysing responses. However, only 13% agreed that an annual cycle was beneficial, 30% were neutral with 57% believing it was not a positive. Feelings toward this were evident in the comments with a significant number being made. They included; 'Inspection is too regular and reliant on inspectors being consistent, which they do not always seem to be' and 'Yes, except when leadership places blame and destroys morale', 'It differs from school to school and can result in impromptu changes to policies and procedures', It puts pressure on staff every year to achieve unrealistic expectations, every two years would be a fairer and more realistic timeframe' and 'The cycle of inspection should be longer, as in the UK, enabling the school to embed new initiatives successfully'. Although the regularity of an annual inspection is out of the control of the school, perhaps there are issues with regard to morale and consistency, which could be addressed by leadership in order to support staff through this challenging period of the school year.

Question 17 considers school standards, asking staff to compare their thoughts regarding standards of education within the school compared to their home country. It should be noted that the majority of staff at the school coming in from overseas are from the UK with a smaller percentage from Australia, New Zealand and Europe. Responses were generally positive with 67% agreeing or strongly agreeing that standards were comparable. 23% were neutral with just 10% disagreeing. Comments included; 'I believe we work to a level beyond that of our home country', 'Been away for a while, children are different' and significantly 'They are different to schools I have experienced. Back home there was less pressure on results and more accents on community and social development, as well as a rounded education.' This last comment is certainly something to consider. Are the schools in the UAE, due to the annual inspection cycle, the fact that fee increases are controlled by the government and dependent upon schools showing progress through data, combined with the competitive nature of the education market, forcing schools to prioritise data and results above learning for the students? My suspicion is that this is the case, but surely this flies against the very reason schools exist, to develop children and promote learning?

<u>Leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools</u>

This section of the research is important in terms of its relevance to International School education and in

terms of what is can offer the field of inquiry into this area of education. Bunnell, (2006), Hayden (2006), Walker & Cheng (2009) and Lee et al. (2011), all agree that research into this type of educational context has been limited. What research there has been, points out that International Schools are dynamic, culturally rich and transient (Bale, 1984; Vogel, 1992; Blandford & Shaw, 2011).

Question 18 asks opinion on whether the cultural differences working within an International School impact on professional life for teachers when compared to their home country. de Nooji & Riedel (2010) highlight that cultural differences can have a significant impact upon student learning. Significantly, 73% of staff at the school believed cultural differences did have an impact upon them with 13% neutral and a further 13% believing it had no additional impact. Comments included; 'Particularly in a Muslim country, many UK songs and rhymes are deemed inappropriate', 'No impact – I worked in a multicultural school in my home country' and 'Numerous children with ELL, children stay up late and are tired at school = poor concentration and retention of learning. Also, user pays SEN provision, not state funded'. The significant number of ELL children is certainly an area that impacts upon International Schools and it is clear that schools need to direct resources toward supporting this amongst the pupil and parent body. The fact that many families speak English as a second language also has implications for communication and homework. Additionally, it may impact upon parental engagement, which has been shown to be vital in developing the education process. As Burns (1993), points out; *"When schools and families work together, a partnership of support for children develops. Education becomes a shared venture. Their partnership enhances the entire process of education."* (Burns, 1993:39). The issue of late bedtimes for students within the UAE is an additional challenge and requires schools to try to change this cultural habit. As Ogbu (1992) states; "*Minorities whose cultural frames of reference are oppositional to the cultural frame of reference of mainstream culture have greater difficulty crossing cultural boundaries at school to learn."* (Ogbu, 1992:1).

The Principal/CEO also believed that the environment in which the school is based did have an impact on his role. He stated that; 'Directives from corporate office and KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority)' made his role more difficult and that 'I might not agree with them but I have to implement the directives regardless'. Things I can't control are also a challenge such as housing prices in Dubai and pay scales. I would love more flexibility in what I can offer and change.' He added that additional challenges came from; 'Associated bureaucracy, demands from parents within the private education sector. Not having complete autonomy as Principal, back home (in New Zealand) I had more freedom.' One might argue that some of these challenges, such as additional bureaucracy might still take place within the UK and other Westernised countries and demands from parents within the private education sector could be considered a worldwide phenomenon. However, certainly house prices, and localised directives that have to be adhered to are more specific to the International School context. It is, in addition, important to note the

very grave circumstances regarding accountability within schools in the Middle East. There is a tendency for Police officers to arrest first and ask questions later on serious matters where schools are found to be accountable, the Principal/CEO shoulders much of this responsibility.

Question 19 addresses staff opinions upon whether change happens faster within International Schools. It has been mentioned earlier that teachers and Principals/CEO's are employed on relatively short-term contracts; perhaps this has both positive and negative impact upon change? Positive because staff are aware that to be provided with another contract after their initial period they need to be performing well. Negative because of the constant change and transient nature of schools, causing a lack of continuity. Staff response showed that 77% believed changes happen faster in International Schools with only 7% disagreeing with the statement. A fairly comprehensive affirmation, therefore. Comments included; 'Assessment systems have changed three times in three years due to staff turnover' and '(Change happens) but not in a good way, it makes one suspect that leadership are not sure of what they are doing as no changes are ever established or consistent.'

With so much change taking place it seems imperative that systems provide a structure to the school in teams of leadership regardless of what leadership team is in control at the time. The Principal/CEO seems to support this view when he stated; 'Growth was rapid; leaders developed as per need rather than as a fully structured plan. More clarification of roles and need would have benefitted with hindsight. Structure should have been in place sooner, we are still paying for some of those mistakes now'. Clearly this is an area that would be of benefit for all International Schools to consider.

The final structured question, question 20, asks staff to rate the school overall with regard to leadership practice. 7% of staff rated the leadership of the school as outstanding, 27% rated it very good, 43% good, 20% satisfactory and 3% unsatisfactory. This is quite a range of opinion and highlights the very different experiences of staff within the school. Comments from staff included; 'People work hard, try hard and want the children and school to succeed', 'Due to the transient nature of Dubai there is an extremely high turnover of staff and leaders in our school. This impacts upon consistency of leadership' and, 'There is a lack of direction as to what our shared goals are. Confusing signals as to what the expectations in the classroom are. Show for DSIB/BSO versus sustainable programmes.' As a comparison, the DSIB (Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau) and BSO (British Schools Overseas) rated the school as good. Apart from a small minority rating the school as outstanding, the consensus seems to be that there are a number of areas for the school to develop further.

What should be noted as this analysis of questionnaire and interview response comes to a conclusion is that all comments should be treated with consideration and a small amount of scepticism It is not possible to reach an absolute truth, the opinions and perceptions of staff have been just that, opinions and perceptions. However, what we can take away and utilise is the variety and depth of suggestions for school improvement that have resulted from this research. Within the conclusion section I will look to put forward recommendations for the application and development of 21st C leadership practice both within the school and in other Internationals Schools who face similar leadership challenges.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Hardman (2001) highlights the fact that the short life cycle of Principals, combined with high turnover of students and teachers, pose threats to the sustainability of teaching and learning development within the International School environment. The Principal has restricted opportunity to develop sustainable initiatives when teachers are so transient (Harman, 2001). This, it seems, is a key challenge for Principals in International Schools to overcome.

In order to summarise the findings of this research, I put forward the following recommendations, aimed at addressing the areas highlighted as leadership and school weaknesses. By doing so, I aim to provide steps toward achieving an effective 21st C collaborative environment, supportive of shared leadership, enabling leadership capacity to be developed and working toward a collective vision. The recommendations are based upon the key themes of this study and have been reached via a combination of theory and the research data gathered within the school. A number of the recommendations will not only be relevant for the school in this study, but for other International schools facing comparable leadership issues.

<u>Strategy & vision</u>

Focus on developing a shared school vision with greater input from all stakeholders. This will ensure goals and policies are consistently applied and help to avoid regular changes of direction. Involve the wider staff more deeply in development planning to ensure greater buy-in. Improve the clarity and distribution of the school vision; action plan and strategic development plan to provide all with a clear framework to work toward. Provide clear and transparent delegation of roles and responsibilities. Develop a whole school cycle of topics with all HoD's having input in order to better utilise expertise and reduce repetition of work. Ensure all staff are fully aware of and regularly reminded about key DSIB (Inspection) recommendations to maintain whole school focus on the targets to be achieved. Ensure and maintain continuity and consistency

in assessment systems. Finally, aim to ensure strategies for growth, staffing and structure are better planned in advance.

Leadership structure & communication

Avoid the blame culture, which has been evident at times. Ensure all leaders are seen to be displaying and promoting positivity. Provide transparency with regard to career progression opportunities in order for staff to feel more confident about developing within the organisation. Ensure new job roles are advertised fairly, with internal candidates having opportunity to apply. Improve the approachability of senior leaders; they need to be more open and accessible to all staff. Build a relationship with staff so that they feel more valued. Develop and simplify the structure of induction, support and mentoring programmes to increase clarity and understanding. Improve collaboration and planning across key stages to develop a more holistic approach to whole school learning. Increase lines of communication with regular staff meetings, ensuring an agenda and minutes are provided and distributed. Provide increased support for Year Group Leaders, particularly those with larger year groups to manage. Avoid staff witnessing too much talk and not enough action from Senior/Executive leaders. Listen to whole staff opinions and implement improved two-way communication systems. Ensure a fair distribution of workloads in order to provide effective impact on children. Provide shared calendars, centrally managed to reduce confusion with events management. Ensure staff are appropriately informed about plans for INSET training days and twilight sessions. Ensure genuine distribution of leadership rather than 'contrived collegiality'. Reconsider Phase Leader need or provide clarification and development of their role. Speak to all staff as fellow professionals, politely and respectfully.

Induction and support

Provide increased bonding opportunities for staff in order to develop community sprit. Provide more structure to support, mentoring and coaching systems. Demonstrate that staff are valued by cultivating relationships and providing praise and encouragement. Utilise able and experienced staff within the induction, mentoring and training programmes so that they feel their experience is of value to both the school and less experienced teachers. Ensure staff joining mid-year are provided with the same induction opportunities as others.

Professional development and career advancement opportunities

Ensure staff leading Performance Management for subordinates are suitably experienced to do so. Performance management should become less judgement based, more about raising performance. The school should provide training with regard to lesson observations in order to support PM observations. Enable specialist staff to have equal access to training opportunities, as they are currently limited within the company. Staff should be given opportunity to move year groups to develop a greater understanding of age appropriate curriculum and challenge. Provide more expert trainers to deliver CPD for all staff in order to help raise levels of pedagogy. Simplify the PM system; the current system is too complex. Differentiate PM, perhaps more action research and school development based for experienced and able teachers. Outstanding teachers and leaders to act as mentors within a more structured staff development programme.

QA

Ensure all observers during the PM process are consistent in terms of expectations. Offer less formal observations, more coaching opportunity, drop-ins and peer observation. Performance management should begin early in the year to enable teachers to work on actions throughout the year.

Leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools.

More guidance should be provided for parents with regard to lifestyle, healthy eating and the importance of supporting their child's education. Provide support and training for parents (and staff) who have a weak command of English. Further develop opportunities for parental engagement. Ensure parents are aware of the link between support at home and academic performance.

Building, sustaining and developing leadership within International Schools rests on individuals and leaders who have the capability to recognise and grow the talents of staff, possess emotional intelligence and awareness to deeply understand all aspects of the organisation and the people within it, the commitment to re-structure where needed and the foresight to plan ahead for the continuation of school development, long after they have moved on. International Schools are undoubtedly challenging and exciting organisations in which to lead. It could be argued, in terms of development toward 21st C learning goals that International Schools are in a unique situation, combining greater flexibility to offer programmes of their choice, whilst utilising teachers and expertise from around the globe to further student learning and pedagogical practice. It is vital that leaders utilise this position to its fullest in order to ensure these schools are at the cutting edge of teaching, learning and educational leadership development. **(Word count – 16371)**

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APPENDIX 1

Applying effective leadership practice within an International School education

June 2014

The intention of this research questionnaire is to allow staff to reflect upon their opinions of where the school is currently in order to uncover focus areas for positive development of leadership practice and school systems. **There is space below each question for you to elaborate further, should you wish to do so.**

Responses to the questions below will be entirely confidential. Participation in the research is optional. In order to maintain confidentiality but to allow the option for responses to be withdrawn from the research at a later date once questionnaires have been returned, please include an identification code below, this might, for example, be mothers maiden name, dates of birth, pets name or any other appropriate and easily remembered identification name or number.

Identification code - …….

Please select your response to the questions listed below.

Strategy and vision

1. I feel that I have been given an opportunity to input into the school action plan, strategic development plan or school review for 2014-15 (either directly or through my line manager).

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

……

2. I am aware of the three key DSIB recommendations to be met by the school before the next inspection cycle.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

3. I know what the school vision and mission is.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

Leadership structure and communication

4. I believe the school has effective distributed leadership systems.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

5. I feel that the current leadership structure at the school could be improved or changed for the better.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

6. I believe there is effective collaboration and communication across the school.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

Induction and support

7. When I first arrived in Dubai and for the initial term, I felt I had appropriate support and assistance to become settled within my new home and surroundings.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

8. When I joined the school, I felt that I went through an effective induction process.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

9. I feel as though I have had adequate access to help and support, should I need it, since my induction process.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

Professional development and career advancement opportunities

10. I believe that the school encourages my continued professional development as a teacher/leader.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

11. I believe that I am able to access suitable CPD opportunities within the school and/or within the wider group of schools that 'the school' belongs to?

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

12. I believe the school has appropriate Performance Management systems in place.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

13. I feel that there is opportunity for me to progress at the school and/or within the wider group of schools that the school belongs to, should I choose to seek career advancement.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

14. I feel encouraged to progress my career within the school or wider group of schools the school belongs to, rather than seeking employment elsewhere.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]
Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

Quality assurance

15. I feel that the DSIB/KHDA inspection system is fair and effective here in Dubai.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

16. I feel the annual DSIB/KHDA cycle of inspection is positive in terms of school development.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

……

17. I believe that standards of education within the school are comparable to those within my home country.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

……

Leadership and cultural issues specific to International Schools.

18. I believe the cultural differences of working within an International School environment impact upon my teaching and/or professional life within the school when compared to my home country.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

……

19. I feel that change to school systems and structures takes place faster and more regularly within the International School context than in my home country.

Strongly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Neutral [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly disagree [ ]

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

Overall rating

20. My own personal rating of leadership practice as a whole at the school is;

Outstanding Very Good Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Can you elaborate further?
(optional)……

…….....

……

Further discussion (optional)

What does the leadership team at the school do well?

Can you suggest areas for future development?

Thank you for your response, it is very much appreciated!

APPENDIX 2

JUNE 2014

Informed Consent Form – For participants in 'Applying effective 21st Century leadership practice within International School education' research project.

Before completing the questionnaire (attached) please read and sign below to confirm that I may use your responses in my research.

Before you reach a decision, with regard to your participation, you should know enough to make an informed decision. You have been invited to participate in a research study looking at 'Applying effective 21st Century leadership practice within International School education.' Participation is voluntary. The research data will be used to help to support leadership development, aiming to improve current school systems where appropriate. At no point prior, during, or after the study will you be misinformed or intentionally deceived about the purpose or results of the study.

Remember, participation is voluntary. You will not be penalised in any way should you choose not to participate.

I will do everything I can to protect privacy. As part of this effort, your identities will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study. Any identification information within the study records will be kept strictly confidential. You will, additionally, be provided with the opportunity to withdraw your response data within a reasonable time after your questionnaire submission should you choose to reconsider your participation.

There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research. There are no known risks associated with involvement in this research project.

If you have any questions please ask and be sure you are satisfied with the answer before agreeing to participate.

D McKeown
D.Mckeown1@unimail.derby.ac.uk

Applying effective 21st Century leadership practice within International School education - research project.

I have read through this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I hereby agree to participate in the study knowing that information will be kept confidential.

Name …….….

Signature…….…….

I am interested in receiving a summary of the research report when available;

Yes* / No*