

# The Reasons Why Schools Adopt the International Baccalaureate Programmes: A Review of the Literature

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to review literature on the reasons for the adoption of the International Baccalaureate (hereafter called IB) programmes by school leaders around the world. The result of this literature review suggests that there are significant variations among IB schools in the world with regard to why they decided to use the IB programmes. School leaders seem to adopt the IB programmes for various reasons beyond the IB founders' original intentions, which include: fostering internationalism in a school community; being accountable to stakeholders and local authorities; and gaining competitive advantage in an education (or a quasi-education) market.

The findings of this study should remind researchers, as well as parents and other stakeholders, that discussing the IB programmes by putting all IB schools in one basket may lead to misunderstanding. School leaders of each IB schools have their own motives as well as strategies for using the IB programmes that reflect the social, political and economic circumstances in the regions where the schools are situated.

## Key words

International Baccalaureate, IBO, IB Diploma programme, Adoption of international curriculum, 国際バカロレア, ディプロマプログラム

## 1. Introduction

The IB programmes were developed originally in order to remove the disadvantages of geographically-mobile students whose parents worked for international organisations; the IB programmes were therefore associated traditionally with international schools. However, in many countries, not only *international* schools but also *national* schools (i.e., state schools, state-funded private schools and nationally-located private schools) have adopted the IB programmes, and the number of such schools has increased worldwide considerably over the years. However, it is not so clear why these schools decided to use the IB programmes. This study review literature on the reasons for adoption of the IB programmes into schools in English speaking countries so as to better understand why

school leaders decided to use the programmes in their local settings.

## 2. Method: Identifying the literature

Relevant literature was searched for using a number of electronic databases and internet search engines. Examples of keywords used in the database search are International Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate Organization, the Diploma programme, the Middle Years Programme, and the Primary Years Programme. The abbreviations of these terms (IB, IBO, DP, MYP, and PYP respectively) were also used to locate articles.

As a result of the search strategies explained above, a relatively large number of articles on the IB programmes were found. Interestingly, much of the research identified was written for postgraduate dissertations or theses as part of degree requirements. Findings from those research studies have appeared sometimes in scholarly journals. Typically, the researchers were people who had been involved in the IB programmes in the past as teachers or leaders of IB schools where they had developed their interest in the IB programmes.

Although a great deal of literature written in languages other than English may well exist in non-English-speaking countries only articles written in English were examined in this paper. It was the strategic decisions made by the author to make the literature review manageable. The findings of the literature are reviewed in the following sections.

## 3. Reasons for adoption

This section first reminds readers briefly of the founding purpose of the IBO and the IB Diploma programme (3.1). This is followed by a review of the literature that has addressed the contemporary reasons why schools decided to adopt the IB programmes (3.2).

### 3.1 Founding purposes: Uniting students of different nationality

The IBO was founded to solve a common problem that a growing number of international schools faced after the World War II. This was that teachers had to divide senior students into small national groups to prepare them for university entrance because the syllabus requirements and examination systems were very different from country to country (Fox, 1998; Peterson, 2003). The Diploma programme (hereafter called DP) was developed to establish a common curriculum for the last two years of secondary education, an examination system, and a portable entry credential that led to university acceptance around the world (IBO, 2010; Peterson, 2003). The development of the programme was

also motivated by the post-World War II vision of internationalism. In fact, schools such as United World Colleges and the United Nations International School adopted the IB for ideological reasons (Hayden, 2006; Peterson, 2003). For those schools, the IB provided quality assurance in international education (Cambridge, 2002) and the opportunity to inculcate humanitarian values in their students who were becoming world citizens (Hill, 2007). As the IBO extended its services in different age cohorts such as middle schools and primary schools, and increased its influence in nationally-located schools<sup>(1)</sup> where the majority of students were mono-lingual and in less multicultural learning environments (Hill, 2006), issues arose with regard to the reasons why the latter schools used the IB programmes (Bagnall, 2005; McGhee, 2003). Selected articles and research studies that focused on the implementation of the IB programmes in actual school settings from around the world shed some light on this issue.

### 3.2 Contemporary reasons: Beyond the founders' intentions

#### *Overall trends*

Overall, the literature confirms that people attached various meanings to the IB programmes beyond the founders' intentions. A wide range of reasons were identified reflecting the practical needs and desires of local school communities, as well as the social and political landscapes of the countries (or regions) in which the schools were located. Generally, these appeared to be linked to one, or a combination, of the following three needs (and/or desires):

- to foster internationalism in a school community;
- to be accountable to stakeholders and local authorities;
- to gain competitive advantage in an education (or a quasi-education) market.

Although promoting greater internationalism has been the *raison d'être* of the IBO and some schools have indeed adopted the IB programmes for this ideological reason (Peterson, 2003), previous studies (e.g., McGhee, 2003; Spahn, 2001; Tarc, 2007) suggested that the other two practical needs (and/or desires) were the real driving factors that led most other schools to consider implementing the IB programmes. Generally speaking, these needs (and/or desires) seemed to be the reflection of market-oriented education policies adopted by governments in various western countries, which in varying degrees have increased institutional autonomy and parental choice in the 'quasi-market' (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998, p. 3) within the public education sector. Many schools that introduced the IB programmes within this context seemed to have been more interested in raising students' academic standards than fostering international-mindedness in students (e.g., Spahn, 2001).

Some studies (e.g., Connell, 2010; Joslin, 2006; Rowell, 1983) reported that in many schools considerations to adopt the programmes were prompted when members of the school communities felt some degree of 'dissatisfaction with the status quo' (Ely, 1999, p. 4), or a 'performance gap' (Rogers, 2003, p. 422) between their school's performance and

what they felt it should have been. These feelings were often highlighted by falling enrolment, and negative external evaluation and school reputation (e.g., Gilliam, 1997; Glashan, 1991). However, a 'relative advantage' (Rogers, 2003, p. 229) of the IB programmes, or the perception in which the IB is viewed as better than other education programmes, may have solely triggered the adoption process in some schools (e.g., Doherty, 2009; Visser, 2010). In either case, the introduction of the IB programmes seemed to result from school leaders' efforts to make their schools more attractive to students, parents, and teachers (e.g., Andain, Rutherford, & Allen, 2006; Gilliam, 1997; Powell, 2002). Gilliam (1997) and Visser (2010) also suggested that by using the already-established brand image of the IB programmes school leaders expected to improve overall images of their schools as well as the quality of their educational offerings, including both IB and non-IB section of the schools.

The following sub-sections review the literature on the links between educational trends in western countries and the reasons why some schools decide to offer the IB programmes. The western countries included in this review are the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and the Netherlands.

### ***United States of America***

The number of IB schools in the USA grew significantly during the 1980s. Peterson (2003) suggested that a number of educational factors at that time contributed to the widespread adoption of the IB DP by US schools. These included factors such as a public concern about 'twelfth grade slump' or a lack of intellectual challenge for talented and motivated students in high schools; perceived decline of 'standards of excellence' in the American education system; dissatisfaction with the Advanced Placement programme;<sup>(2)</sup> and the academic weakness of many teacher-training programmes. These concerns were highlighted by the publication of influential governmental reports and books such as *A nation at risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies* (President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1979), and *High school: A report on secondary education in America* (Boyer, 1983). Peterson (2003) stated that 'it is not difficult to see why in such an educational climate some high schools concerned for academic excellence began to think of introducing an IB track' (p. 138). Peterson also pointed out that the decentralised education system of the United States, where control of the curriculum and standards of achievement was left mainly in the hands of individual schools and school districts, may have been one of the contributing factors that had promoted the implementation of the IB programme in the USA.

Gilliam (1997) conducted a questionnaire survey and follow-up telephone interviews with IB coordinators of 18 public schools in the USA to find out what factors led to the adoption of the DP in their schools. The findings of her research study indicated that each school had its own set of reasons that reflected the unique needs and desires of the

school community. These reasons included providing choice of a curriculum to parents, establishing a distinctive school identity as an academic magnet school,<sup>(3)</sup> widening scholarship opportunities for students, developing students' critical thinking skills, and restoring the school's reputation that had been damaged by declining student enrolment. However, the common motivation was that they were all trying to make their schools more attractive by being more accountable to stakeholders and local authorities by means of the perceived academic rigour and already-established brand image of the DP.

Four years later, Spahn (2001) distributed a questionnaire survey to all 155 IB schools in the USA, and carried out case-study research in four US schools (two private and two public) to find out why US schools adopted the DP. He compared the data from the questionnaires with those from interviews he conducted with the school leaders and teachers in the four case-study schools. Spahn identified various reasons for the adoption of the DP, which included: responding to the dissatisfaction with a current academic programme; establishing a unique school identity as a magnet school; attracting more international students; generating an advantage for a marketing purpose; and creating better racial balance within a school. However, the principal reason common to all four case-study schools and many of the other schools Spahn surveyed was a desire to raise their academic standards. Spahn concluded that 'schools that came under pressure because of a drop in standards saw the IB as a way to boost their academic reputation' (p. 103).

Interestingly, both Gilliam and Spahn found that the DP was used often by US schools as a 'drawing card' or 'selling point' of 'magnet programmes' for attracting academically-able students from other areas, as well as for keeping such students in the schools. The decision to set up the IB magnet programmes was made to meet parents' requests to create strong academic programmes in public schools for academically-able students, to respond to and comply with the US government's desegregation policy to create better racial balance in schools, and to meet the schools' need to attract students. Similar observations have been reported by researchers in other US states. In Florida, for example, some public schools introduced the IB magnet programmes to promote a more diverse population in the district (Humphrey, 2004). In California, during the early 1990s, IB magnet schools were created in an effort to raise the academic performance of students in conjunction with state legislation that provided grant money to schools and districts to create rigorous and powerful learning environment for all students (Mayer, 2006; Willcoxon, 2005). More recent examples of schools seeking legitimacy from school communities and education authorities came from Colorado and Virginia, where school districts offered an assortment of curriculum models as options for parents in response to the US government's *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, under which parents could transfer students from schools if students did not show academic progress (Hutchings, 2010; Magee, 2005). The IB programmes were adopted by some schools in these districts because they wanted to be perceived as academically strong schools and avoid losing students in the education quasi-market created by the policy.

Although these studies have provided some reasons why US schools adopted the DP, no research that focused on the reasons why Middle Years Programme and Primary Years Programme (Hereafter called MYP and PYP, respectively) were introduced into US schools was identified, except for one descriptive case study conducted by Powell (2002), which asked why a school in the state of Pennsylvania decided to offer the MYP. His findings suggested that the implementation of the MYP in the school was a direct result of its being transformed from a junior high school (Grades 7–9) into a middle school (Grades 6–8) and adopting the middle schooling philosophy, which has been promoted by the National Middle School Association in the USA.<sup>(4)</sup> Interestingly, however, according to Powell (2002), the MYP was also perceived by some stakeholders as a desirable programme to help schools raise students' academic standards. For these people, the 'international' aspects of the MYP were perceived as a desired factor in terms of providing students worldwide bench-marking and a chance to compare and compete with their peers in other countries.

Overall, the findings from these US research studies seem to confirm Hill and Sutcliffe's (2003) analysis that the intense concern about weak academic performance within the American education system may have triggered the introduction of the IB programmes in the USA. Many schools seem to have used the IB as a catalyst for change and school restructuring (Gilliam, 1997). It appears that the introduction of the IB programmes in US schools was a response to the schools' own self-examination, direction from district offices, government education policies, and/or the market-oriented education reform.

### *Canada*

Canadian educators in the 1980s seemed to have had the same concern about declining academic standards as their American colleagues. Savage (1982) has explained why many school leaders in North America in the 1980s decided to implement the DP in their schools:

Out of a desire to keep students interested and in school, high schools offered more electives, many of which were not academically rigorous. They tried to do too much, and in so doing, seemed to lose a sense of their distinctive role as academic institutions. While clearly more students were staying in school through 12th grade, the academic efforts of the best students fell off. ... For high school educators searching for a rigorous and structured academic programme – one that would challenge their best students and teachers – the IB seemed to fit the bill, and four dozen schools in the US and Canada began offering it. (p. 602)

This suggests that the DP was adopted mainly by schools that wanted to provide differentiated programmes for academically-able students. Research studies by Rowell

(1983), Connell (2010) and Glashan (1991) seemed to provide some empirical evidence that corroborated Savage's observation.

Rowell (1983) investigated the events that led to the implementation of the DP in three public schools in the Edmonton public school district in Canada by attending district meetings, collecting internal documents and interviewing key stakeholders, including district office administrators, school administrators, and teachers. According to her, the district office administrators proposed that the schools in the district instituted the DP because they were 'aware of the absence of a differentiated programme for academically-able students at the senior high school level' (p. 50). On the other hand, the schools decided to accept the district proposal and introduced the programme because they wanted to provide opportunities for able students to excel academically. Rowell stated that the perceived need for the DP came largely from so called 'academic schools' because they had been struggling to gain external recognition for their efforts to challenge their gifted students to achieve excellence.

A similar finding was reported by Connell (2010), who researched how the DP was implemented for the first time in a public school located on Prince Edward Island, where she was involved in the project as an IB coordinator. Based on data drawn from participant observation, document analysis, and interviews with local administrators, Connell concluded that the provincial authorities in the Prince Edward Island decided to introduce the DP in the school because they felt that the current system did 'not fully address the high achieving learner[s]' (p. 7). Connell noted that 'many of our high achieving students suffer from apathy and an increasing indifference to much of the subject matter presented to them' (p. 3). The school's unfavourable results in the 2003 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) triggered the formulation of a task force on student achievement, which further led to the introduction of the DP.

The DP has also been used in the context of private schools to create a differentiated programme for academically-able students. However, the motivation to offer such a programme was somewhat different from that of the district/province-initiated public schools. An interesting case was reported by Glashan (1991), who researched a Catholic school in Western Canada that had nearly closed in the 1980s because of declining enrolments and that had been revitalised completely by the decision to offer the DP. Visiting the school over a period of 20 months, Glashan observed that the newly appointed principal 'developed a marketing plan that emphasized academic excellence as well as the traditional values of friendliness and personalised attention' and succeeded in drawing academically-able students from every corner of the catchment area. Glashan (1991) stated:

With its International Baccalaureate program, St. Patrick's [a high school] is presented as a bastion of old-fashioned intellectual rigor. At the same time, however, students are reminded of the school's aesthetic values and the importance of the fine

arts. The principal is also adept at emphasizing St. Patrick's long history and proud traditions while simultaneously highlighting its futuristic curriculum and unusual linkages with the world at large. (p. 144)

He also described how the principal of the school, 'Tony Martin (pseudonym)', used the IB brand to improve the whole school image and to attract academically-able students, which helped the school restore their academic reputation in the education market:

Although the I.B. involves only a small number of students, it serves as a magnet for St. Patrick's. It attracts capable students who ... add to the tone of the school. Thanks mainly to Tony Martin's promotional efforts, St. Patrick's is well known throughout the city for its I.B. program and its strong emphasis on academics. The immigrant population, now dispersed around the city, strongly supports the school's academic orientation. (Glashan, 1991, p. 160)

Glashan's case study illustrates how one school's leaders used IB's positive image for marketing purposes.

These studies from Canada suggest that the DP was used in the country mainly to provide academic motivation and challenges to academically-able students, as well as for attracting such students.

### *United Kingdom*

The General Certificate of Education Advanced-Level (GCE A-level) system was introduced in 1951 and has been the major post-16 qualifications system for entry to university and employment in the UK ever since, despite 'the protracted, and occasionally acrimonious, debate about the reform of the post-compulsory qualifications framework in England' (Pound, 2006, p. 3). In the GCE A-level system, each subject is a discrete qualification and students typically select three subjects among the ones offered by the various education providers. They believe that focusing only on three subjects allows students to study subject content in-depth that reflects the university entrance requirements they want students to meet. This is to say that, unlike the DP, the GCE A-level is 'not a programme of study where the relationship between the subjects is necessarily important' (Joslin, 2006, p. 36). The single-subject-based system accommodates 'a wide range of possible candidates, including mature students taking a single subject out of general interest' (Qualification and Curriculum Authority, 2003, p. 3). However, it has been criticised from time to time by people<sup>(5)</sup> who believe that the narrowness of the subject selection in the GCE A-level framework restricts students from experiencing a broad range of knowledge and skills, which is increasingly demanded by both higher education and the contemporary workplace (Phillips & Pound, 2003; Pound, 2006). For example, *Final report of the working group on 14-19 reform* argued that students should



be exposed to a greater breadth of subjects including a foreign language, connection and coherence between subjects, and a balance between liberal arts and science subjects (e.g., DfES, 2004).<sup>(6)</sup> In fact, according to Peterson (2003), who was one of the IB founders, the initial motivation to devise an international sixth-form curriculum (which eventually evolved into the DP) was derived from his dissatisfaction with the A-level education system. He thought that '[the GCE] A-level was by far the narrowest and most specialised in the world' (Peterson, 2003, p. 11) and that it was not suited to the international students who studied in his college, the United World College of the Atlantic.

Although Peterson (2003) provided some insights into this issue, it was not clear in the contemporary context whether the desire for a broader and a balanced curriculum alone was the driving motivation for other UK schools to implement the DP. The literature offers a number of different motivations. For example, Joslin (2006) conducted a questionnaire survey and follow-up telephone interviews with heads of independent schools<sup>(7)</sup> in the UK who were members of the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC). The survey asked what motivated (or prohibited) schools in this sector to implement the DP. Her research confirmed that this school sector was dissatisfied with the GCE A-level system, and this may have led some of the schools in the sector to implement the DP. However, Joslin revealed that the main driving factor for some schools was not their desire to offer a broader and more balanced curriculum, but rather their need, as one of her research participants stated, to 'discriminate the able from [the] very able' (p. 97). Joslin also suggested that some schools perceived that the framework of the DP was rather inflexible and that it reduced students' freedom of subject choices, contrary to its image of providing a 'broader curriculum' (p. 9). Joslin found that some schools run the DP with the GCE A-level concurrently so that they can 'offer breadth of study alongside specialisation in a small number of discrete subjects to cater for a wide range of interests and abilities post-16' (p. 9).

McGhee (2003) researched four different types of schools (a private school, a comprehensive school, a city technology college<sup>(8)</sup> and an international school), with regard to why they decided to offer the DP. Her study indicated that all four schools viewed international-mindedness as 'a positive characteristic that provides benefits for the school at many different levels' (p. 3). However, the common motivation for these schools to offer the DP was that of 'carving out a distinctive identity for themselves in their local context' (p. 5). She summarised her findings in this way:

Based on the data collected for this study, there is clear evidence to suggest that shaping a unique place in the local context was the driving factor in these schools' decisions to adopt the DP. In a national educational framework that increasingly encourages developments, and which gives incentives for individual institutions to distinguish themselves, there is plenty of room and incentive for schools like the ones included in this study to pursue a specialist orientation such as the IB Diploma

Programme. (McGhee, 2003, p. 6)

Andain, Rutherford, and Allen (2006) provided three retrospective accounts on why their schools decided to introduce the DP. Andain, a head of a comprehensive school, wanted to adopt the programme in his school because ‘the [GCE] A-level system was failing to equip our students with the sorts of skills and knowledge that the late twentieth century demanded: the need for more breadth and a high profile for science and technology, to name but two’ (p. 47). Rutherford, a director of the IB programme in an independent school, stated that her school was looking for a broader curriculum because ‘[the reduction in breadth in the post-16 curriculum] was always seen as a loss for the school and the students’ (p. 53). Meanwhile, Allen, an assistant principal of newly founded tertiary college, revealed that his school adopted the DP ‘as one way to establish its new identity’ (p. 61). He also stated that the DP was chosen because the first principal of the college had ‘visionary ideas for its curriculum’ (p. 61), and wanted to differentiate its curriculum from that of rival colleges in their catchment area. The testimonies of the three leaders seem to support McGhee’s (2003) claim that ‘schools adopt the DP for a number of reasons reflecting a combination of ideology, practical needs and marketing strategies’ (p. 6).

Although many reasons were identified in the literature, all the schools studied were trying to make their school attractive to stakeholders in an education market (or a quasi-education market). According to Higham, Sharp, and Priestley (2000) and Higham and Yeomans (2007), since the 1980s British governments (both Conservative and Labour) have been implementing education policies to create a quasi-market in the public education sector, and have encouraged school authorities to adopt a specialised curriculum through various policies. For example, by providing parents with a choice to choose schools as well as providing schools with funding based on student enrolments, the British government hoped that the public education sector would become more responsive to local needs and improve the quality of education. Higham and his associates’ studies provided additional accounts of why some schools wanted to offer specialised programmes such as the DP in the UK context.

### ***Australia***

Hawkes (1992) and Bagnall (1991, 1994) have reported on the development of the IB DP schools in Australia in the 1980s and early 1990s. They found that some Australian schools had unique reasons for offering the programme. For example, the first school in Australia to become an IB school was a state school located in the Australian Capital Territory (in 1980). The introduction of the DP in the school was ‘strongly influence[d] by the need to cater for the large numbers of international students located in the country’s capital’ (Bagnall, 1994, p. 102). A second state school became an IB school in 1989 because they wanted to support a government initiative to secure a contract to build

submarines in Port Adelaide in conjunction with a Swedish firm. It was felt that the Swedish workers involved would need a school to send their children to, and 'the adoption of the IB would allow them to re-enter the Swedish university system' (Bagnall, 1994, p. 102). However, it appears that the DP was adopted in other Australian schools mainly because they felt that the academic rigour, the high quality of the curriculum and international orientation of the IB courses would extend some of their able students academically (Hawkes, 1992). Hawkes believed that these characteristics of the DP attracted 'those who perceive[d] an undervaluing of knowledge and less academic credibility in other secondary courses on offer' (p. 1). He also noted other reasons that might have motivated schools to adopt the DP, which are summarised below:

- The scope of the IB curriculum, which provides education in depth as well as breadth.
- The fact that the students are not restricted to academia. For example, students are required to participate in creative, action, and service activities.
- IB's emphasis on a 'learning to learn' philosophy.
- The perception that the IB programme is designed to serve intelligent, serious students and progressive secondary schools that seek to create or maintain high educational standards.
- The advantage for Australian students who want to transcend state educational boundaries within Australia: Hawkes stated that 'South Australian students, for example, are usually penalised 10% of the Matriculation score if they move interstate to go to university. No such penalty exists for IB students' (p. 1).
- The perception that the IB provides 'greater proportion of externally and marked examination' (p. 1) in comparison with other secondary courses. (Hawkes, 1992)

Hawkes (1992) revealed that in some cases the introduction of the DP in Australian schools was motivated by dissatisfaction with the newly introduced state qualification systems in the 1990s.

The last study in this section is by Doherty (2009), who researched how the IB was represented in public discourse in Australia. Both as a researcher and as a parent Doherty found that many schools used the IB as a part of their marketing strategies. She offered the following anecdote which may provide additional insight into the reasons why Australian schools adopted the IB programmes:

Like other parents, I am necessarily embroiled in my local educational market. With my third child approaching secondary school, I find I can choose not just among schools, but also among the curricula offered within each. My child can easily access four schools offering the IB: three State schools (one of which offers just the IB Diploma, the other two offering the IB Diploma alongside the Queensland State curriculum) and one private school offering IB curriculum alongside the State curriculum. This local ecology seems to have arrived at a 'tipping point' (Urry, 2003, p. 53), where if a school is not offering the IB, it will have to, in order to remain in

the game of recruiting what are considered desirable students, ‘the value-adding client’ (Ball, 1993, p. 8). (Doherty, 2009, p. 74)

Doherty’s observation suggested that some Australian parents were no longer satisfied with general education provided by schools, and therefore school leaders of those schools may have felt they needed to offer value-added, high-quality educational services to meet parents’ satisfaction. In this context, some school leaders may have decided to use the IB DP as a marketing strategy to attract students and parents. Although Doherty’s study focused on examining public discourses of the IB programmes mainly from newspaper articles, and she did not collect any empirical data from parents, her observation as a parent suggested that marketing competition may have been one of the driving factors behind the introduction of the IB DP in some areas in Australia.

### *The Netherlands*

In the context of Dutch education market, Visser (2010) found that recent neo-liberal market-oriented policies have forced Dutch schools to compete with each other. In the concluding part of her research, Visser stated that these policies motivated more than 100 Dutch schools to adopt bilingual English-Dutch education as a successful brand, and some of these went on to adopt the IB MYP as an even stronger brand to survive in the intense school market. Visser (2010) reported on how the IB was used to differentiate a school’s educational offerings from others, which to some extent corroborated Doherty’s observation in Australia:

As the number of Dutch secondary schools offering bilingual programmes has by now risen to over 100, bilingual education as such no longer constitutes a benchmark for exceptional education. That at least is one of the reasons why a number of bilingual schools in the Netherlands are defining new standards for what bilingual education is and ought to be. In order to reinvigorate ‘true’ bilingual education, a number of schools have introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP), or are preparing to do so. (Visser, 2010, p. 141)

Visser’s research was interesting because it illustrated how the IB brand was used symbolically to gain ‘competitive advantage’ (Porter, 1985, p. 3), with schools using it to differentiate themselves from other like-minded schools in the education market. These schools were not dissatisfied necessarily with the bilingual education they have offered, but they decided to introduce the IB programmes to ‘reinvigorate’ their education so as to gain a competitive advantage and to secure their organisational survival. Visser’s findings also corroborates those of Rogers (2003) who pointed out that the social prestige is one of the strong motivations for adopters to seek new innovation; when others adopted the same innovation (bilingual education, etc.) it may lose its prestige value to earlier adopters, and

therefore they need to start seeking new innovations that have much higher status (IB programme, etc.). The analysis provided by Visser seems to resonate with Doherty's (2009) suggestion that the IB was used as a part of schools' marketing strategies in Australia in addition to other reasons.

#### 4. Conclusion

The literature review revealed that there were significant variations among IB schools in terms of the reasons for adoption reflecting social, political and economic circumstances where the schools are situated. Although fostering greater internationalism in school communities is the *raison d'être* of the IBO, the result of the literature review suggested that the driving factor behind the introduction of the IB into schools was the school leaders' practical needs and desires to make their schools more attractive and accountable to parents, teachers, local authorities and students, and to gain a better position in an education (or a quasi-education) market. As the IB website states, while the IB schools form a worldwide community that shares the same philosophy of internationalism, there is no such thing as a 'typical' IB World School (IBO, 2008, para. 7).

The author hopes that this study may serve as a starting point for more extensive reviewing of the literature written in languages other than English and/or for researching on the reasons for adoption of the IB programmes into schools located in the countries or areas not mentioned in this paper.

#### Note

- (1) The term includes schools such as state schools, state-funded private schools and private schools that use a national curriculum along with IB programmes.
- (2) The Advanced Placement (AP) programme offers students opportunities to take university-level courses while they are in high school. Students are able to gain university credits by demonstrating high performance in the AP examinations.
- (3) A magnet school is a public school that draws students, often motivated high-achieving ones, from the surrounding region by offering a specialised curriculum.
- (4) Although the association was founded in the USA, it has members and affiliates in 60 countries (National Middle School Association, 2011).
- (5) There was dissatisfaction with A-level as early as 1954 in terms of the number of students who were able to access to A-level study from the secondary schools (Lawton, 1992). The debate over UK's post-compulsory qualifications framework officially began when *The Crowther Report* was published in 1959. The report criticised the

A-level system by saying that ‘A-level was too narrow and specialisation occurred too early’. (CACE, 1959, p. 260).

(6) DfES stands for Department for Education and Skills, which existed as a UK government department from 2001 to 2007.

(7) The term ‘independent school’ refers to a private school in the UK context.

(8) The term ‘college’ refers to a secondary school in the UK context.

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