CULTURE, SOCIETY AND PERSON: A HABERMASIAN LENS UPON STUDENTS' LIFEWORLDS IN THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME

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Copyright Statement

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Abstract

In his theory of communicative action, Habermas (1984; 1987) offers a pragmatic interpretation of language that prioritises what language does over what it says. He suggests that ego-identity is formed through communicative acts which take place within the sphere of the lifeworld. This ethnographic case study provides an insight into how 136 International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) students in Hong Kong view the development of their ego-identity within their international school lifeworld.

The identification, instruction and assessment of transferable skills is a core component of the IBMYP. Previous research on the teaching of these skills has explored their role in developing independent learners, with studies predominantly focussed on programme implementation, curriculum design and educator perspectives rather than the experiences of the learners themselves.

Framed through a thematic analysis of Habermas's lifeworld components of culture, society and person, this study provides insight into how students view their journeys as learners and the contexts in which their ego-identities are formed. Collected over five years, the data indicates that students monitor approaches to learning skill development in traditional subject areas as well as in project-based learning contexts, demonstrating the importance of providing a range of learning experiences within which students can learn, practice and reflect on these skills.

This research provides valuable insight into the development of learner ego-identities at the case school, informing internal policy and curriculum development. The findings are also relevant for educators and learners in the 1,350+ IBMYP schools worldwide who seek to engender greater student voice in their development of approaches to learning skills. The study's application of Habermas' theory of communicative action to generate data and interpret findings through the lifeworld elements of culture, society and person offers an original perspective on how this theory can be applied within an educational context.

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Chapter 1: Establishing the Study and Thesis

Since my earliest days as an educator, I have been curious about how students experience learning and their views on the ways the school environment influences their growth as learners. Paired with the responsibility I have felt to nurture every child to become an independent, self-directed learner who is empowered to embrace their own identity, I have also been driven to try to create space and opportunity for students to express their perspectives with authenticity and authority. This thesis is the culmination of this curiosity and drive, presented as an ethnographic case study that explores student experiences within their learning lifeworlds at Seaside International School (a pseudonym), an international school located in Hong Kong.

As a teacher of English language arts, Habermas' theory, positioning the development of the ego in the act of communication within the lifeworld, piqued my curiosity as to how students might view their lifeworlds as learners. At Seaside International School, children as young as three begin receiving formal instruction as pre-kindergarten students. By the time they reach adolescence, many of these young people have spent thousands of hours attending school each year. The sum total of this time consequently forms a significant lifeworld in which culture, society and person all shape the growth of these students as individuals. Within the context of this study, Habermas' theory of communicative action (1984; 1987) provides a rich opportunity to invite students to reflect on their experiences as learners and elevate their voices as members of their school community.

Habermas (1984; 1987) proposes that the act of communication can serve the pragmatic function of building a shared understanding between speaker and listener. He asserts that it is through the exchange of language that individuals who exist within the same lifeworld have the opportunity to build consensus around their interpretation of elements within that lifeworld. Habermas identifies three components of the lifeworld—culture, society and person—each of which is essential to the act of communication. It is through interacting with others within their

lifeworld that an individual develops their communicative capabilities and over time develops their ego-identity.

The theory of communicative action prioritises what language does over what it says (Habermas 1984; 1987). The act of communication thus becomes an exchange in which individuals intend to reach agreements about how they interpret their shared world. They are equal participants, entering into these exchanges with an intersubjective relationship in which the speaker makes themselves understood through their relationship to the listener rather than to the external world (Habermas 1984; 1987). Habermas's conceptualisation of the lifeworld is that it is the environment within which an individual becomes self-reflective and develops an ego-identity (Murphy 2013). Whilst Habermas did not posit this theory specifically with education in mind, it has relevance in education research (Lovat 2013). For students, the lifeworld of school directly influences and shapes who they are and who they become as they form their identities as learners and as humans.

In Chapter 2, the research context for this study is presented through the literature review. The work of Hayden and Thompson (1995; 2016) and Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016) offer both historical and contemporary contextualization of the international school landscape globally, and Yamato and Bray (2002; 2003) along with Xu and Lee (2019) are used to position international education in Hong Kong. The school in which the research takes place, Seaside International School, has two distinct identities: that of an international school and that of a school in Hong Kong, and literature is presented to establish these intersecting contexts. As a school implementing the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) curriculum, Seaside International School also maintains the identity of an IBMYP school, and the context of the IBMYP's history, structure and implementation is presented through a review of the relevant literature. Li (2012), Wright *et al* (2016), Forrest (2018), Dickson, Perry and Ledger (2018) and Azzam, Mansfield and Larsen (2020) provide specific insight into previous research on the IBMYP. This chapter establishes the overarching parameters of the environment within which the student lifeworlds are positioned.

Chapter 3 outlines Habermas' theory of communicative action and its application within this study. The pragmatic elements of input—acts of linguistic exchange—and output—negotiated meaning between participants—are explained. Habermas posits that these exchanges take place within the lifeworld, and he identifies culture, society and person as the three components that form the lifeworld. He asserts that within the lifeworld and through these components, individuals form their ego-identities, which are their unique and independent characters. Culture, society and person are deconstructed and contextualised, positioning how they will be applied within this study. The role of the lifeworld as the location of ego-identity formation is also located within an educational context. The presentation of the Habermasian lifeworld and its relevance within the international school context frames the research question that was developed.

The research design is set forth In Chapter 4, where each element of the design is threaded through the elements of the lifeworld. The ethnographic case study methodology builds from constructivist ontological and epistemological paradigms and addresses the content of the research question as well as facilitates the process of communicative action within the study. The data generation tools, questionnaires and interviews, provide the interactions within which shared knowledge can be generated between researcher and participant. The process of sampling participants, analysing data, considering ethics and identifying limitations are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the findings through the three pillars of the lifeworld, culture, society and person. These elements inform the thematic analysis of the data that was generated and form the outline for the discussion of these findings. The student responses are interpreted by both quantitative and qualitative means and direct quotes from the students are used to illustrate both patterns of responses as well as unique perspectives.

In Chapter 6, I submit broader conclusions around the contributions of this study, addressing ways in which the research has been used to develop curriculum, instruction and programme delivery models at Seaside International School. Wider impacts of this study and how it can serve teachers and students at other international schools in Hong Kong as well as more globally in IBMYP schools worldwide are also considered. The application of a Habermasian lens on student lifeworlds brings new knowledge to the academic community, particularly with its application in the international school sector in Hong Kong. This application provides new insights that have not been previously surfaced in educational research conducted in this setting and suggests opportunities for further study that might build upon this investigation.

This thesis argues that Habermas' theory of communicative action is a powerful framework for considering the experiences of students within their educational lifeworlds. The findings suggest that secondary school students are aware of the influence that these lifeworlds have over their development as learners. Through questionnaire and interview responses, participants demonstrated the capacity and confidence to monitor their skill development in traditional subject areas as well as in project-based learning contexts, reinforcing the importance of providing a range of learning experiences within which students can learn, practice and reflect. The findings indicate that the deconstruction of the overarching learning experience through culture, society and person can provide greater specificity for how educators can impact positive changes that will lead to greater ego-identity formation for students, which is the ultimate goal of most educational institutions.

The research has provided valuable insight into the development of learners at the case school, informing policy and curriculum development. This study has given voice to these students as curriculum end-users, providing them with an opportunity to influence the power dynamic of their learning lifeworlds. The Habermasian lens placed over student lifeworlds offers educators and learners in IBMYP schools globally an understanding of how culture, society and person feature into the learning experiences of IBMYP students. As Habermas' theory of communicative action is based on mutually beneficial linguistic exchanges in which participants

are seeking to understand one another as equals, findings are also relevant for educators who are looking to engender greater approaches to learning skill development and student voice in their programmes.

Chapter 2: Contextualising the Landscape of the Research Locale

In this chapter, I present a review of relevant literature used to establish the context of the study, which takes place in an international school in Hong Kong that offers the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP). Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016) and Hayden and Thompson (1995; 2016) serve as important voices in establishing the context of what has historically been the international education ecosystem and what features are contemporarily recognised as defining for this subset of schools. To understand the context of the case school, Yamato and Bray (2002; 2003) and Xu and Lee (2019) provide location-specific conditions for internationals schools operating in the Special Administrative Region. International Schools in Hong Kong (2021) provides the definition used in this study to establish the parameters of an international school in Hong Kong.

In order to position the IBMYP as one of four programmes offered by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), the chapter predominantly draws on literature related to the IBMYP that has been published since 2014, as at that time the IBO introduced a wholly restructured version of the IBMYP framework which is the version considered in this study. Azzam, Mansfield and Larsen (2020), Dickson *et al* (2018), Forrest (2018), Li (2012) and Wright *et al* (2016) provide specific insight into previous research on the IBMYP, while Bailey and Cooker (2018) Bryant, Walker and Lee (2016), Gardner-McTaggart (2019), Hallinger, Lee and Walker (2011), Lee, Hallinger and Walker (2012) consider the IBMYP in conjunction with one or more of the IBO's other programmes. Research conducted in IBMYP schools with a context similar to the one in this study is sparse, therefore studies have been included in the review that were conducted in state/national schools in North America, the United Kingdom and Australia as well as literature that focuses on primary and university level international education globally as well as in Hong Kong.

2.1 Defining an International School

International schools are an established segment within the larger sector of education. Despite being a commonly used term, international schools are widely varied in their composition,

population and purpose, with Hayden and Thompson (1995) noting that 'international education' as a concept is not well-defined. They cite a historical definition offered by Fraser and Brickman in 1968, which described an international education as one that:

> connotes the various kinds of relationships-intellectual, cultural and educational-among individuals and groups from two or more nations ... [involving] a movement across frontiers, whether by a person, book or idea ... [and referring] to the various methods of international cooperation, understanding and exchange. Thus, the exchange of teachers and students, aid to under-developed countries, and teaching about foreign education systems fall within the scope of this term (cited in Hayden and Thompson 1995, p. 328).

Fraser and Brinkman grounded the concept of international education in movement and exchange, suggesting that a strong focus on relationships and global citizenship were underpinning values for those participating in an international education. Their definition was not bound to a specific region or location, however they did stipulate 'aid to under-developed countries', suggesting that international education at that time was tied to broader power dynamics between nations.

In 2008, Hayden and Thompson referred to the increasing influence of globalisation and the expansion of multinational organisations as factors for the expansion of the international school market. They remain reticent to offer a singular definition of an international school, offering an updated description from that of Fraser and Brinkman:

> These schools, then, catering largely, if not exclusively, for the children of expatriate, globally-mobile professional parents, might be described as the 'traditional' type of international school: providing a service to a community for whom appropriate education would not otherwise be available, and catering for an essentially transient group of students whose length of stay at the school is determined by the duration of their parent's contract locally. Usually fee-paying and operating outside the national education system of the host country, such schools have largely grown in an individual and, to some extent, idiosyncratic way, responding to the needs of a particular set of circumstances (Hayden and Thompson 2008, p. 21).

They go on to note that, in addition to expatriate families, host country nationals have begun to enrol their children in schools categorised as international, offering "an English-medium education through a curriculum other than that of the host country" (Hayden and Thompson 2008, p. 22). At their time of publication, they cite estimates that as many as 4000 international schools were operating globally.

In 2021, the group ISC Research reported that in 2011 the number of international schools in operation was 7655 and had risen to 12373 by 2021. On their website, the group defines an international school as one that:

> delivers a curriculum to any combination of pre-school, primary or secondary students, wholly or partly in English outside an English-speaking country, or, if a school is in a country where English is one of the official languages, it offers an English-medium curriculum other than the country's national curriculum and the school is international in its orientation (ISC Research 2021).

Also seemingly rooted in a postcolonial perspective on international education, the group's definition identifies the use of English as the language of instruction and the implementation of a non-local English-medium curriculum framework as two key pillars in what makes a school international. Gone are references to movement and exchange, with international being notionally mentioned as the 'orientation' of the school.

Beyond these definitions, a wide variety of characteristics have been cited to describe the features that make a school 'international'. Hayden and Thompson (2016) identify size, location, nationality of student populations, curriculum, government oversight, admissions requirements, learning diversity of students and language of instruction as notable features that might inform the way in which a school defines its international status. Jabal (2013) includes the diversity of student cultures represented in the community, the hiring of teachers who serve as exemplars of international mindedness, the exposure of students to others of different cultures outside the institution, the use of a balanced formal curriculum and the adoption of organisational

structure that reflects the school's philosophy as key features of different international schools. Machin (2019) highlights another added layer of complexity, which is that the dynamic nature of international schools can mean that even within a single school, the institution's identity might evolve as the organisation develops.

Given the variation of descriptions of international schools available in the literature and the lack of a singularly recognised definition, I have adopted the Hong Kong government's definition for use in this study. As the body that approves the operation of any school in Hong Kong, the government's definition describes the basic features that categorise Seaside International School as international within its local context:

> In Hong Kong, international schools generally refer to those which follow a full non-local curriculum designed for the needs of a particular cultural or linguistic group and/or whose students do not sit for local examinations. International schools mainly provide education for students who hold valid passport other than the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Passport or those who hold student visas for entry into Hong Kong for studies. International schools are operated on a self-financing and market-driven basis. They are part of the private school sector (International Schools in Hong Kong 2021).

This definition suggests that the parameters within which international schools operate in Hong Kong are flexible, and the government itself goes on to describe the international school sector in Hong Kong as "fairly diverse" (International Schools in Hong Kong 2021). Whilst the government does not offer further specification of what this means, a review of the schools it lists as international highlights a range of characteristics and features within the categorisation. Different schools offer curriculum based on or in alignment with American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, German, Japanese, Korean, or Norwegian national systems, some of them in the language of that national system. English language non-local examinations offered include Advanced Level (A Level), Advanced Placement (AP), Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBDP). Plus, a number of non-English language qualifications are also offered by different international schools.

The Hong Kong government approves the operating licence for each international school and identifies certain requirements such as the percentage of local students (defined as those who declare themselves as Hong Kong passport holders at the time of admissions). For example, Seaside International School's service agreement requires the school to maintain at least 70% of its student population as non-local children of families working in Hong Kong or non-local children who hold student visas. The service agreement goes on to clarify that "these students shall not be local children that are permanent residents in Hong Kong without holding any foreign passports" (International Schools in Hong Kong 2021). This distinction becomes important because it creates an opening for Hong Kong citizens who also hold foreign passports to enrol their children in international schools without being considered a part of the local percentage.

2.2 The Context of International Schools Globally

Initially intended to provide an education for the internationally mobile, international schools originally served the needs of the professional elite and those working in diplomatic roles (Tate 2016). Hayden and Thompson (2016) assert that with increased globalisation since the start of the 21st century, international schools have become more prominent and appeal to a broader population around the world. Today, international schools cater to both expatriate and local families seeking an education for their children that is characterised by one or more of the following ideologies: individualism, freedom, democracy, egalitarianism, rationalism, optimism and universalism (Tate 2016).

Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016, p. 3) broadly categorise international schools into three types: "Type A Traditional", "Type B Ideological" and "Type C Non-traditional". They explain that Type A schools cater to mobile families, have a diverse range of cultures represented in the student body and typically enrol expatriate, English-speaking children. Type B schools, much smaller in number, are identified as those committed to specific philosophies such as global peace or expeditionary learning. Type C schools, which are described as "having a significant impact on

the International School landscape" (Bunnell, Fertig and James 2016) are the newest and most rapidly growing type. These schools often have for-profit governance models and enrol a larger number of local students rather than the Type A expatriate community (Hayden and Thompson 2013; Bunnell, Fertig and James 2016). All three share a level of elite status, with Ingersoll (2018) identifying, for example, that the implementation of internationally-recognised qualifications positions many international school students to access top-ranked and competitive universities around the world.

In international schools around the world, the range of languages, religious beliefs and ethnicities within a single community create a highly diverse environment, permitting "students, parents, faculty and staff to interact and communicate cross-culturally" (Morales 2017, p. 37). Initially coined by Useem, Useem and Donoghue (1963), the term 'third culture' is often used to describe the cultural background of international school students whose dominant 'third culture' is an amalgamation of their parents' culture and the culture of the host country. In households where parents come from different cultures and for families that are highly transient, children may find that this 'third culture' is not comprehensive enough to describe the many cultural influences that they experience.

2.3 International Schools in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has a long history of international schools operating within the region. The first international school in Hong Kong opened in 1855 and functioned for five years, serving over 100 students from 10 different countries (Bray and Yamato 2003; Ng 2012). For most of the 20th century, a handful of other international schools opened and operated in the then-British colony, with these schools catering to non-local families and predominantly offering a British-style curriculum (Bray and Yamato 2003). It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, that Hong Kong's international school sector expanded, diversifying its clientele to include increasing numbers of local students (Yamato and Bray 2002). By the mid-1990's Hong Kong international schools went from appealing almost exclusively to foreign families living and

working in Hong Kong to also attracting local Hong Kongers who desired this type of international education for their own children.

Yamato and Bray (2002) cite several factors that triggered this expansion of the market. They note that many Hong Kong citizens returning from abroad found international school options more appealing than the local school system and that declining birth rates in the territory meant families had more financial clout when it came to spending money on international school fees which were higher than those of local curriculum options. The change of sovereignty also coincided with higher levels of education and growing wealth for Hong Kong citizens, contributing to an increased appeal for an international school education in Hong Kong at that time (Yamato and Bray 2002).

As Xu and Lee (2019) explain, Hong Kong's historical, political and economic contexts position it as a point of intersection between Eastern and Western cultures. They cite Hong Kong's history as a British colony and subsequent transition to Chinese authority as imbuing Hong Kongers with cross-cultural values and identities. The local population of Hong Kong remains relatively monocultural however "with increased movement of people and ideas through the phenomenon of globalization, the 'international' is being experienced locally" (Westrick and Yuen 2007, p. 129). The international school sector in Hong Kong is one facet of society that has been impacted by this notion of 'East meets West,' shifting from one that almost exclusively catered to international expatriates just 30 years ago to one that accepts increasing numbers of local students today (Ng 2012).

As of 2021, there were 54 international schools recognised by the Hong Kong government that served 41,015 students, 70.2% of whom were non-local and 29.8% of whom were local (International Schools in Hong Kong, 2021). This is a shift even from a year before, when International Schools in Hong Kong reported 53 schools and the percentages of the 41,133 total non-local and local students as 74% and 26%, respectively. Beyond Hong Kong's official statistics, one's interpretation of what constitutes an international school can shift the reported

number of international schools dramatically. Ng (2012) notes that a number of different types of schools in Hong Kong qualify as international, including those that offer a non-local curriculum, represent a particular national culture and were created by these national communities in Hong Kong, schools founded by missionary organisations, were created by foundations or individuals who believed that there was a strong demand for international education and offer the International Baccalaureate programmes instead of or parallel to the local curriculum. Machin (2019, p. 131) states that "at the turn of the century Hong Kong had 92 international schools and now has 176" and notes that this discrepancy is most likely due to the fact that there is no single definition for an international school and that the use of the term 'international' by a school has no restrictions. This variance underscores both the ambiguities with establishing clear parameters around international schools as well as the increasing appeal for local families to pursue an international school education for their children.

The research on international schools in Hong Kong addresses a number of areas specific to the sector. Yamato and Bray (2002) explored the impact of social and political changes on the international school landscape, specifically with regard to the increased number of international schools and growing local population opting to attend these schools. They also considered Hong Kong as a microcosm for comparing the range of educational systems reflected within its international school community (Bray and Yamato 2003).

Ng (2012) examined some of the reasons local parents choose to send their children to international schools, finding four factors: parental interpretations of what an international school is, factors that are deemed most important for individual families in the choice-making process, parent concerns about the local educational system and other issues such as cost and concepts of educational success. More broadly, Machin (2019) looked at economic factors contributing to the growth of international schools in Asia, with Hong Kong being one country of many in the region considered in the study.

A small body of research has considered the perspectives of teachers working in international schools in Hong Kong. In their study of teacher intercultural sensitivity, Westrick and Yuen (2007) conducted four case studies that comprised a combination of private, government-aided and international schools in Hong Kong, finding that whilst the international schools in the study had higher levels of intercultural sensitivity overall, individual teachers who had lived in other cultures were more inclined to demonstrate positive intercultural sensitivity regardless of their current school context. Through semi-structured interviews with Chinese language teachers, Lai, Shum and Zhang (2014, p. 78) investigated the enactment of international mindedness in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme within the Hong Kong context, concluding that schools should support teachers in applying the concept of international mindedness, which "involves a whole suite of key competencies, understanding, awareness and actions related to being global citizens and entails both cognitive and affective components", within their specific teaching context.

Professional learning has also been a focus of research conducted in the international school sector in Hong Kong. Rose and Forlin (2008) studied the efficacy of training designed to upskill educational assistants working with students who receive special education support in international schools in Hong Kong. They found that a lack of role clarity adversely affected their professional impact. Through interviews with 14 Chinese language teachers from 13 international schools in Hong Kong, Lai, Li and Gong (2016) explored the impact of teacher agency on professional learning and identified the influence of Western colleagues on pedagogy, teacher-student relationships and collegial collaboration as factors that increased agency and the lack of influence over Western colleagues as a factor that limited agency.

Two studies specifically focussed on the experiences of Hong Kong international school students by including them as participants in the research. A study of four international schools in Hong Kong found that school wide anti-bullying programmes were more likely to be effective to decrease bullying amongst Year 7 students (Wurf 2012). Jabal (2013) conducted surveys, interviews and observations with students and teachers to gain insights into institutional

identity and school culture in two Hong Kong international schools. Other studies that involved international students in or from Hong Kong centred around university-age participants, focussing for example on the experiences of migrating for post-secondary studies (Li *et al* 1996) or coping with the impacts of COVID-19 on study abroad plans (Mok *et al* 2021).

2.4 The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme

A key element of the context of Seaside International School is its status as an International Baccalaureate World School. The non-profit International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) offers four frameworks for children from ages 3 to 19 that "challenge students to excel in their studies, and encourage both personal and academic achievement": the Primary Years, Middle Years, Diploma and Career-related Programmes. The organisation's mission states that it "aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (IBO 2019). Each of the IB programmes has a strong focus on nurturing global perspectives, international mindedness and independent learners (Hill 2003; Storz and Hoffman 2018).

Bunnell (2008) gives the year 1967 as the 'birth' of the IBO, which was the first year a total of 147 students from two different schools completed IB Diploma examinations. By 1968, seven schools enrolled 349 students in the examination session and "the experiment finally had some sort of scale beyond just the pioneers" (Bunnell 2008, p. 414). The initial growth of the IBO centred around Europe, and in the early 1980s the organisation was hosting seminars in Asia and Africa to avoid the perception of being a Eurocentric entity and to spur growth in these regions (Bunnell 2008).

Founded as a nonprofit educational foundation, the IBO remains headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with regional offices established in the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Africa/Europe/Middle East (Resnik 2012) and has continued to grow globally (Dickson, Perry and Ledger 2021). As of November 2021, there were over 5400 schools in 159 countries implementing at least one IB programme, with 1682 IB programmes being offered by schools

located in the Asia-Pacific region (IBO 2022). Resnik (2012) suggests that the growth of the IBO corresponded with a broader interest in an international style approach to education. She refers to the formation of a more globalised economy and job market enabled by technological developments and the coordinated markets that grew in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse as key shifts that created space for political and cultural values to attune to the vision of the IBO. Eventually, "the IB was legitimized as a global education actor because of the reputation of the DP as the 'gold standard'" and this reputation is perpetuated through the IBO's accreditation processes for schools that implement its programmes and the IBDP's broad acceptance by universities worldwide (Resnik 2012, p. 257). Tsakiris, Smyrni and Nikita (2015, p. 440) found that the:

> IBO is heavily invested in the continuous evolution of the organisation, its international scope, the professional development of school staff, the target-setting and the acknowledgement of everyone's right to have access to education and, particularly, to IB education.

They attributed this growth to a proactive effort on the part of the IBO to expand its presence in both the international and national school sectors.

The IBMYP was developed to support the learning of children ages 11-16 and to serve as a link between the IB's Primary Years Programme (IBPYP) and Diploma Programme (IBDP). Designed to be inclusive rather than selective, the IBMYP approaches teaching and learning from a holistic perspective, integrating both academic rigour and social-emotional exploration into the framework (Dever 2019). The programme requires schools to adhere to certain tenets, for example hours of instruction in each subject area, whilst also providing flexibility to schools and teachers at the level of implementation, for example with regard to unit content. This design allows for the programme to be accessible to a diverse range of students and implemented in a wide range of contexts (Dever 2019).

As an authorised IB World School, Seaside International School is a member of a large community of practice that unites schools and encourages collaboration beyond the individual school. Despite the organisation being significantly larger than the school itself, curriculum

implementation provides a social connection between school culture and individual personality. As each school implements the curriculum frameworks in its own way based on its culture, the IBMYP framework serves to connect the broader and narrower components of the lifeworld.

A variety of global organisations have identified the types of skills and competencies young people need to acquire in order to thrive in an uncertain future. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a 2018 report that argued that in order to prepare students for an unpredictable future in which traditional jobs, technologies and global issues are impossible to predict, schools must proactively teach skills that extend beyond knowledge acquisition. Häkkinen et al (2017) and van de Oudeweetering and Voogt (2017) highlighted the Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S), Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21 Skills) and the OECD Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo) as frameworks that identify various combinations of communication, information literacy, thinking and problem solving and global citizenship skills essential to the development of future ready learners.

Whilst there is consensus that certain types of competencies are necessary for students to acquire, van de Oudeweetering and Voogt (2017) note that inconsistencies in terms, definitions and strategies for implementation have all proven to be barriers to their integration into many curriculum frameworks. To support all of its students in accessing challenging content as well as developing their own identities as learners and as people, the IB has established a mandatory set of communication, social, self-management, research and thinking skills that must be included in the curriculum of every IBMYP school. Called approaches to learning (ATL) skills, these skills are a fundamental part of the learning lifeworld of the IBMYP, as they are planned for, taught and assessed across each subject area and embedded into every lesson and assessment task.

Prepared in anticipation of the introduction of the ATL skills by the IB, Li's 2012 literature review presents commonalities of theories and practices of skill instruction across national and

international systems, pedagogical approaches to skill instruction, how skill instruction at different levels is age-appropriate and implications for the IB's development and implementation of its ATL skill framework. It frames the five skills categories selected by the IB into three target areas for student growth: cognitive, metacognitive and affective development.

The importance of student development in the cognitive domain was established by Piaget (1955) who determined that cognitive development allowed learners to process information at more conceptual levels. Building on this, Bruner (1964) found that the development of cognitive skills allowed learners to transition from iconic representation to symbolic representation, engaging in increasingly sophisticated and complex tasks. Students who are exposed to greater levels of cognitive challenge will rise to the high learning standards that have been set for them if their society supports their engagement with the demands of thinking critically and creatively (Welner *et al* 2008). In order to reach their potential, students must be supported to apply cognitive skills in increasingly complex and unfamiliar scenarios (Pellegrino 2017). Funke, Fischer and Holt (2018) recognise the connection between knowledge and problem solving and reiterate that the teaching of cognitive competencies is an essential element of preparing students to solve the problems they face in the 21st century.

Alongside instruction that targets cognitive growth, teachers must also nurture metacognitive development. In the effort to create problem solving students, non-cognitive skills must also be taught and assessed (Funke, Fischer and Holt 2018). Flavell (1979, p. 907) defined metacognitive thinking as "consist[ing] primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises". This definition underscores the importance of integrating both the what of learning with the how, asking learners to recognise and label the stages of their learning journey. A learner who has metacognitive knowledge is aware of how she learns, and her ability to use metacognitive control processes means that she can influence and regulate her learning (Schraw and Moshman 1995). The ability of that individual to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate understanding is a foundation for the development of more sophisticated skill attainment.

When learners can apply metacognitive understanding in this way, they can monitor comprehension over the course of a task or set of tasks and make appropriate adjustments to positively impact on comprehension (Hattie, Biggs and Purdie 1996). Schunk (1991) asserts that metacognitive skills are what prepare students to engage in new or unfamiliar content and to do so with a sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities as learners.

A third skill domain, the affective domain, is also crucial for the overarching development of student ego-identity. Affective skills encompass student attitudes and dispositions towards learning. This classification addresses attributes such as motivation, confidence, empathy and identity that were identified by Dewey as early as 1938, who suggests that a commitment to holistic education values affective skill development in equal weight to subject area knowledge (Dewey 1980). Jeno and Diseth (2014) include a student's ability to control emotion and maintain emotional balance as well as use personal organisational strategies as key skills that help individuals maintain motivation and self-determination. Habits of mind regarding student value, inclination, sensitivity, capability and commitment towards the application of affective skills encourage students to create patterns of thinking to respond to their emotional states as learners (Costa and Kallick 2009). With his focus on emotional intelligence, Goleman (1995, p. 34) identifies "abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope" as key affective skills. By providing students with structured approaches for and strategies to foster the development of affective skills, students can take ownership for their learning and the impact on their motivation can be positive (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck 2007).

Despite being a central element of the IBMYP, research on the implementation of ATL skills in schools, and specifically student experiences with these skills, is limited. In their literature review on the impact of the International Baccalaureate on teaching and learning, Dickson, Perry and Ledger (2018) found that of the 58 articles they reviewed, only 3% focussed explicitly

on the IBMYP, another 3% focussed on both the IBMYP and IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) and 7% addressed the full IB continuum.

As was introduced at the start of this chapter, the IB introduced a new version of the IBMYP in 2014. Of the research conducted on the programme since then, much of it has focussed on the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders other than students. A study by Forrest (2018) explored teacher evaluation of a professional development programme intended to support teachers in centralising ATL skill instruction to be student-centred and process-driven. Wright *et al* (2016) explored factors and motivations for implementing the IBMYP, focussing particularly on the perspectives of IB Coordinators in the IB Asia-Pacific region as compared to IB Coordinators in other parts of the world. As a part of the study, they note that only one large scale, multi-country empirical study on motivations for offering the IBMYP had been conducted prior to their research. IBMYP Coordinators were the focus of a 2014 study in which they were found to be responsible for working with both administrators as well as with teachers to embed the framework's pedagogical principles into the school (Gibb cited in Dickson, Perry and Ledger 2018). In their evaluation report on the implementation and impact of the revised IBMYP framework, Azzam, Mansfield and Larsen (2020) found that IBMYP students consistently reported being internationally minded and think that they are prepared for their next educational steps. They noted that in schools where teachers report high levels of ATL skills implementation, students reported lower levels of active community membership and internationally mindedness and more negativity towards school.

Other studies have explored a range of questions that address aspects of the IBMYP alongside one or more other IB programmes. Lee, Hallinger and Walker (2012) interviewed students, teachers and administrators about the distribution of leadership responsibilities in five schools that implement two or more of the IB programmes. They found three key leadership practices contributed to a coherent through-school approach to IB implementation: an articulated curriculum, the development of cross-programme initiatives and intentional hiring and staffing across IB programmes. Bryant, Walker and Lee's (2016) quantitative and qualitative study

explored student demonstration of IB learner profile attributes, comparing the capacity of students who had participated in more than one IB programme with those who had only studied at the DP level in their final two years of secondary school. Participants included students, teachers and leaders who completed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In his study on the relationship between the IB learner profile and senior leaders in international schools that offer multiple IB programmes, Gardner-McTaggart (2019) interviewed six international school heads and found that the operationalisation of the learner profile was dependent on their alignment with a school's values. In their study on pro-social education in three-programme IB world schools, Bailey and Cooker (2018) conducted case studies in nine international schools and found that whilst the IBPYP, IBMYP and IBDP all encourage the development of caring students, many schools implement limited interpretations of caring within their contexts. Hallinger *et al* (2011) surveyed IB coordinators in three-programme and two-programme IB international schools to explore the transitional challenges students face as they move from the IBMYP to the IBDP.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, the literature presented is used to contextualise the scope of this study in four key areas: defining the term 'international school', providing a frame of reference for international schools globally, presenting the landscape of international schools in Hong Kong and introducing the IBO as an organisation and the IBMYP as a curricular framework.

There is a broad range of characteristics used to define what makes a school 'international' and the literature reiterates that there is no single, agreed-upon definition of an international school. Because of this, the definition applied in this research to specify the international status of Seaside International School is that of the Hong Kong government, which is the definition by which the school is licensed as international. International schools operate within a distinct educational sector, referred to by Ingersoll (2018, p. 259) as "elite educational enclosures". The expansion of schools beyond traditional institutions that cater to expatriate communities and offer English-medium curricula and ideological institutions that are philosophically aligned with

educational movements such as outdoor education includes a growing non-traditional segment of typically for-profit schools that target local families of moderate to significant wealth.

Within this global domain, the landscape of international education of Hong Kong has a rich history, starting with a single school in 1855 and growing to over 50 recognised institutions today. These schools bring Eastern and Western ideas and values together, resulting in increased numbers of local Hong Kong citizens who are seeking broader social and political perspectives to enrol their children in the territory's international schools. The IBO is influential within the international school community, and its IBMYP offers a holistic, inquiry-based framework for learners ages 11-16. The Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills, a core element of the IBMYP, serve to provide support for students to develop the cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills critical to their success as learners.

These characteristics of international education, the Hong Kong environment and the tenets of the IBMYP establish the context of teaching and learning at Seaside International School. In the next chapter, Habermas' theory of communicative action will be presented as the theoretical framework that further situates the focus of this study.

Chapter 3: Establishing the Habermasian Lifeworld

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of Habermas' theory of communicative action, clarify the role of the lifeworld in ego-identity formation and articulate the ways in which Habermas asserts that culture, society and person shape an individual's development. A review of previous applications of Habermas' theory within educational research is presented, which identifies a gap insofar as this theory has been applied to explore student perspectives and experiences within their school lifeworld. In response to this gap, I will contextualise how I have applied the three lifeworld pillars within the scope of this study, positioning their value in the educational research sector.

An effectively applied theoretical framework reflects a researcher's beliefs about knowledge, contextualises those beliefs within the scope of the study, provides guidance for its rationale and importance, establishes a literature base and focusses the methodology and methods selected (Grant and Osanloo 2014). The selection of Habermas' theory of communicative action as the theoretical framework for this study has been pivotal in framing the inquiry that has taken place, in which I explore the experiences of students within their learning lifeworlds.

3.1 Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action

In his theory of communicative action, Habermas (1984; 1987) puts forward a social theory that it is through linguistic communication that an individual comes to understand the social world. Finlayson (2005) asserts that through his analysis of the influence of communicative acts on individual development, Habermas posits a pragmatic theory on language use. Parkin (1996, p. 424) explains that Habermas' theory serves to "account for and validate critical theory's own critical standards" and "provide a social theoretical framework within which the social pathologies and paradoxes of late modernity can be adequately comprehended". To this end, the theory of communicative action can serve the needs of the contemporary researcher in framing the ways in which environments influence and inform the development of their members.

In Habermas's 1987 work, he suggests that action is coordinated through speech, and that language is how people reach agreements about how they interpret their shared world. Regmi (2020) reinforces Habermas' notion that it is through language that humans share cultural knowledge, reach mutual understanding and connect to society. Habermas' theory, as interpreted by von Ahlefeld Niser (2017, p. 875), "emphasises the procedures and norms of communication where the ideal is a communication free of domination". Skibsted (2020) reiterates that through day-to-day interactions, individuals exchange the information they draw upon to make meaning within their lifeworlds.

Habermas (1984) identifies two aspects of rationality in the theory of communicative action. Communicative reality is achieved by an individual when they "[reach] an understanding about something in the world with at least one other participant" (p. 11). Purposive-rational action is achieved when an individual chooses "*ends* from a clearly articulated horizon of *values* and organizes suitable *means* in consideration of alternative *consequences*" (Habermas 1984, p. 281). Both of these aspects of rationality are essential to the process of making meaning that Habermas describes in this theory. It is through communication as well as intentional action that an individual comes to understand who they are in the world, reiterating that it is through language and choice that one makes meaning (Habermas 1984). In an educational context, Regmi (2017) asserts, the conditions exist for an individual to elevate how the intersection of communication and action help them to make meaning and form their identity.

The theory of communicative action establishes the lifeworld as the boundary within which individuals communicate to arrive at shared knowledge through reaching mutual understanding (Habermas 1984; 1987). By suggesting that communication becomes an act of negotiating meaning between individuals perceived as equals within the lifeworld, Habermas frames these exchanges as ones in which the lifeworld members should feel empowered to share their perspectives openly and confidently (von Ahlefeld Niser 2017). Building on this notion, Long (2017) suggests that an agreement is reached only when all participants reach a shared knowledge. Within the lifeworld, it is "everyone's right to state their options and values based

on their experience and knowledge and everyone's willingness to speak in an understandable way" (von Ahlefeld Niser 2017, p. 875).

It is assumed that lifeworld participants engage in mutual acts of communication with good intent and a commitment to sincerity, which he refers to as validity claims (Habermas 1984; 1987). He goes on to state that a linguistic act can have one of three different validity claims: a validity claim to truth, to rightness and to truthfulness. According to Finlayson (2005), validity claims are inherent in speech acts and have moral, rational and practical implications for the social order established within a lifeworld. von Ahlefeld Niser (2017, p. 888) describes these claims as "help[ing] to identify what makes collaborative consultation a democratic and inclusive process, and they recognise awareness about ethical values and attitudes". Two benefits of validity claims highlighted by Moran and Murphy (2012) are that they create opportunities for an individual's needs to be surfaced and shared and that the rules surrounding these sorts of interactions invite equal engagement and voice on the part of each participant. They cite these as core conditions for a democratic society.

3.2 Ego-Identity and Individuation

Habermas builds on the work of Mead (1962) and Durkheim (1933; 1957) to establish the role of communication in the formation of ego-identity. Through the act of communicating, the ego can engage in a process of self-awareness, which leads to self-determination and self-realisation (Habermas 1987). This process requires an individual to form identity within the confines of their lifeworld, resulting in the development of a person who both understands who they want to be and views themselves as a reliable source of self-understanding (Habermas 1987). Habermas asserts that ego-identity is inclusive of both the pathic and practical self, both of which are needed to engage in self-criticism that takes place "under conditions of autonomous action" (Habermas 1987, p. 100).

Whilst the outcome of ego-identity is independent action, the initial process of identity formation is social. Habermas (1984, p. 58) explains that "[i]ndividuals owe their identities as

persons exclusively to their identification with, or internalization of, features of collective identity; personal identity is a mirror image of collective identity". He highlights that for children, the social world of which they are members and the subjective world to which they have access directly influence identity (Habermas 1987). The progression of the development of the ego within the lifeworld of school is first informed by societal input; over time, the process of individuation, of gaining increased autonomy through the improved ability to problem solve, shifts the locus of influence from external to internal (Habermas 1991). Societal influences take many forms in the lifeworld of school: teachers, peers, cultural norms or socio-economic conditions of a community might shape the individual student's experience. This requires learners to internalise and adapt to these forces of influence. In responding to any one force, the conditions of the lifeworld will be altered, thus the learner will ultimately change as well (Habermas 1987; 1991).

Habermas (1987) places explicit value on self-determination and self-realisation, functions that originate from and yet are independent to associated social groups. By recognising the development of ego-identity Habermas elevates the lived experiences of the individual who is simultaneously also a part of a larger whole. Individuals with developed ego-identities are able to recognise the role that their lifeworlds have played on their own development and understand the need to be able to function within increasingly diverse lifeworlds moving forward (Murphy 2013). This underscores the importance of students' understanding the influence that the lifeworld of school has on the development of their ego-identities.

3.3 The Role of the Lifeworld

Habermas (1984; 1987) frames the process of communicative action and the development of ego-identity as taking place within the lifeworld. He asserts that the lifeworld is the place in which speaker and listener come together and mutually reach understandings, forming "a context that, itself boundless, draws boundaries" around the objective, social and subjective worlds of those individuals (1987, p. 132). Regmi (2017) suggests that the concept of the

lifeworld is fundamentally important to Habermas's theory because it establishes the parameters within which communication and action occur.

Murphy (2013) identifies that within a Habermasian lifeworld, claims communicated by an individual speak to the objective world, references to cultural norms or values communicated by an individual speak to the social world and personal perspectives communicated by an individual speak to the subjective world. Skibsted (2020) suggests that how one acts and communicates within their lifeworld directly influences how that person sees the wider world. It is through their interactions with these different worlds, within the context of the lifeworld, that an individual exists and develops their identity. Individuals can occupy multiple lifeworlds at any one time, however they only experience a discrete communicative action according to the lifeworld within which it has taken place. Habermas (1987, p. 126) points out that individuals "are always moving *within* the horizon of their lifeworld; they cannot step out of it", underscoring the influence of the lifeworld on how one comes to understand and learn.

Habermas' theory also recognises the importance of the lifeworld for preparing individuals to be active participants within that lifeworld as well as within the others of which they are members. It can serve as a scaffold, providing new members with the types of resources and skills they might require to become active participants within their lifeworld (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2006). For Habermas (1987, p. 124), one can "think of the lifeworld as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns". In applying Habermas's theory to this research, I am asserting that a school, as an organisation with a clearly defined culture and established patterns of language, becomes a lifeworld. Participants change, however the mission and vision of the organisation remain intact, establishing the background knowledge of the lifeworld for new members.

3.4 The Threat of the System

Alongside the lifeworld, Habermas (1987) presents the system as another space in which individuals find meaning and form identity. The system is the "aspect of society where imperatives of technical efficiency and bureaucracy have precedence" (Murphy 2009, p. 82) as the influencers of societal and individual development. Habermas delineates a difference between systems in tribal and politically/economically stratified societies, referencing the growing complexity of social systems as a rationale for why we might "conceive of societies *simultaneously* as systems and lifeworlds" (1987, p. 118). Within a modern capitalist society, money and power are the subsystems that wield influence over culture, society and individuation. These subsystems are intended to further capitalist priorities, that is the production of goods and services that perpetuate financial gain for those in power, rather than protect individual decision making and independent thinking. This effect is described by Habermas as system integration, with institutions such as the state and corporations usurping culture and society; what becomes institutionalised is concentrated into the hands of those with the greatest authority rather than being distributed through more collective means.

Imbalances of power are reinforced and even exacerbated within the system. Unlike communication in the lifeworld, which is presumed to be intended to reach mutual understanding, actions within the system may be more manipulative in nature (Habermas 1987). Agents can hide their intentions within systems and disregard the consequences of their actions, with the two subsystems of money and power both having the capacity to impose external influence on individuals (Finlayson 2005). In a capitalist system, money and power can replace language as the means by which meaning is made (Regmi 2020), ultimately undermining the power of communication as a vehicle for ego-identity development.

The lifeworld is a self-sustaining and self-replicating phenomenon, supported by the constant nurturing of culture, society and person (Habermas 1987). The system, however, is reliant on the meaning that comes from the lifeworld in order to be maintained (Habermas 1987). The relationship between system and lifeworld is parasitic; the system is embedded within the

lifeworld and reliant on the cultural and societal pillars already in place within the lifeworld to survive. And whilst Habermas uses the conceptualisation that patterns of communicative action are prioritised over patterns of instrumental action as a way to reinforce the hierarchy of lifeworld prior to system, he recognises that in the modern world the lifeworld remains under constant threat from an increasingly powerful system (Habermas 1987). Finlayson (2005) suggests that the system is maintained by redirecting decision making away from the lifeworld, shifting agency from the individual and into the hands of those with authority within the system. This shift may decrease transparency, as the intention of mutual understanding inherent in communicative acts is no longer present (Habermas 1987). Regmi (2020, p. 224) specifies that "when the three components of the lifeworld are not mediated by communicative actions the lifeworld becomes incapable for performing the three basic functions of the lifeworld". Habermas (1987) refers to this as the colonisation of the lifeworld, which is when the competition between social and system integration reaches a point at which the systemic acts begin to wield more influence than the linguistic acts. Loss of meaning, alienation and psychopathologies can all result from this colonisation (Regmi 2020).

For schools, contemporary bureaucratic structures and increased political decisions about programmes, curricula and success criteria can be seen as system threats to the learning lifeworld. Habermas (1987) directly addresses the threat of colonisation in education, stressing the importance of protecting students and parents against oppressive measures such as examinations, the restriction of rights through disciplinary consequences and socialisation that is based on administrative needs rather than student centred initiatives. For teachers, he goes on to address the potential of the system to restrict pedagogical freedom, inhibit teacher independence and dictate cultural behaviours and norms. The literature suggests that the application of the theory of communicative action in education can support lifelong learning (Regmi 2017), holistic learning and wellbeing (Lovat 2013), self-directed learning (Mezirow 1985) and citizenship education (Cherryholmes 1981). In order for the programmes and structures that deliver these outcomes to be effectively implemented, the lifeworld needs to be protected from colonisation. Specifically for international schools (see 2.1), the relationship

between the learning lifeworlds that exist within individual school communities and the bureaucratic systems such as the International Baccalaureate that dictate how those schools develop and implement curriculum must be carefully monitored.

The threat posed by the system colonising the lifeworld is great, thus the uncoupling of the system from the lifeworld is of particular importance (Habermas 1987). Parkin (1996, p. 423) notes that "[e]xtraordinary work accomplished through ordinary communicative interaction, such as the establishing and reproducing of patterns of belief, of consent and legitimacy, of status and identity, and of perception". To maintain these aspirations, the three components of the lifeworld need to be perpetuated through the reproduction processes of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation (Habermas 1987).

In the next section (3.5), I present an overview of literature that considers how the theory of communicative action has been applied in educational research. The literature highlights a range of possible benefits that might come from increased attention on communicative acts, as well as how this attention might serve as an entry point to addressing power dynamics inherent in schools. The opportunities for educators to proactively surface, address and mitigate power imbalances through communicative acts is intertwined with the system's colonisation of the lifeworld. Schools can attend to this threat by perpetuating the lifeworld elements mentioned earlier in this section within their own communities.

3.5 The Theory of Communicative Action in Educational Research

In considering the influence of Habermas on the field of education, Fleming and Murphy (2010, p. 203) assert that:

> Education has the task of ensuring that democratic skills and processes are handed on from one generation to the next. This involves not only handing on skills, information, leadership abilities, the understanding of dangers to democracy, but also the creation of classrooms that provide an experience of democratic investigation, critique, and collaborative action planning and implementation…In this kind of education, reflective

> practice becomes more akin to the critique of ideology and an exercise in communicative action.

For students in this type of educational environment, the lifeworld of school directly influences and shapes who they are and who they become as they form their identities as learners and as humans. Developing communicative competence empowers individuals to engage with their learning so that they can apply knowledge and understanding to their social and personal lives, and education allows the lifeworld participant to transfer cultural knowledge to social contexts then ultimately to personal experiences (Sarid 2017).

Ewert's 1991 literature review of Habermas' influence in educational literature between 1972 and 1987 presents technical, practical and emancipatory interests in his work as well as the connections between theories of knowledge and communicative action, predominantly focussed on research related to the sociology of education. Lovat (2013) suggests that through his theory of communicative action, Habermas establishes the idea that through authentic knowledge, a learner can become increasingly self-reflective. In modern educational models, Habermasian theory is used to "justify philosophically and explain the practical effects of an approach to learning that is aimed at the full range of developmental measures in the interests of holistic education and wellbeing" and is used as a lens through which to explore both structural and procedural elements of curriculum design (Lovat 2013, p. 78). Sarid (2017) asserts that Habermasian theory can be used to restructure educational curricula to develop communicative competencies and promote self-realisation for learners.

Habermas' theory of communicative action is leveraged to advocate for values and citizenship education (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; Lovat 2013; Sergiovanni 2000). Through this application of the theory of communicative action, communicative practice becomes a moral imperative of a school community. This application requires these schools to strike a balance between lifeworld development and traditional curriculum requirements. By integrating pedagogical approaches such as negotiated assessment (Gosling 2000) and feedback (Dann 2016) these schools can transform traditionally transactional experiences that originate with the

teacher and are directed at the student into purposeful negotiated agreements between these two parties, shifting the balance of power towards the student who now plays a more active role in monitoring and influencing their own learning journey.

3.6 The Pillars of Culture, Society and Person

This study aims to explore student experiences within their learning lifeworlds through the lenses of culture, society and person. Habermas's theory of communicative action establishes the importance of both communication and action on the formation of ego-identity, all of which takes place within the context of the lifeworld (Habermas 1984; 1987). Through the application of his theory, the three structural components of the lifeworld offered by Habermas—culture, society and person—are deconstructed and positioned within the educational sphere. Culture supplies the knowledge from which community members apply as they develop their understanding of the world within and beyond that lifeworld. Society becomes the smaller groups within that lifeworld that a participant associates with over time. Lifeworld participants might self-select memberships or may be designated into groups that form smaller societies. The individual person within this lifeworld has the capacity to speak and to act, positioning them to engage in processes and reach understandings that ultimately lead to the development of ego-identity. This pattern of engagement with culture, society and person is reproduced within each lifeworld, testing the limits of the lifeworld for that individual.

Each of the components of the lifeworld are thus essential elements within the act of communication. Habermas (1987, p. 120) uses the labels in columns two and three as indicated in Table 1 to deconstruct the function of the elements within that process, writing that "[s]peaker and hearer use the reference system of the three worlds as an interpretive framework within which they work out their common situation definitions''. The exchanges provide participants with opportunities to both arrive at shared understandings and grow as individuals.

Component of Habermas' Lifeworld	Internal and External Worlds	Validity Claim	Application of the Lifeworld Components in this Study
Culture	Objective world - everything about which true statements can be made	Truth	Mission & Culture
Society	Social world - all relationships that can be legitimately regulated	Rightness	Curriculum
Person	Subjective world - all experiences about which a speaker has access and can address publicly	Truthfulness	Self-determination

Table 1: Habermas' Lifeworld Elements and their Application in this Study

Individually, culture, society and person all hold important weight in the process of reaching understanding. Culture is "the stock of knowledge from which participants in communication supply themselves with interpretations as they come to an understanding about something in the world" (Habermas 1987, p. 138). This is where the objective world is positioned within Habermas' theory of communicative action, the world of facts that establish what a lifeworld actor can come to know as true (Regmi 2020).

By engaging with facts and truth within the objective world of the lifeworld, an individual both reproduces the knowledge that is a part of their culture and at the same time reproduces their relationships and the ego-identity formed within that lifeworld (Habermas 1987). This also reinforces the continuity of cultural traditions and coherence of cultural knowledge within that lifeworld, ultimately serving to rationalise the knowledge accepted by its members (Habermas 1987). Within Habermas' conceptualisation of the lifeworld, culture sits as the first and largest influence over the individuals who operate in that environment.

Society refers to structures through which participants are members of social groups through which they secure shared experiences (Habermas 1987). Regmi (2020) describes this social world as the place within which interpersonal relationships solidify a lifeworld participant's membership and identities both within the group and as a group.

Habermas presents society through the interpretation of two traditions of social theory. Referring to Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society* (1933), Habermas connects social theory to the lifeworld specifically through the lens of society. In this interpretation, culture and personality become secondary to the importance of society (Habermas 1987). He then contrasts this to Mead's interpretation, which instead suggests that "culture and society enter into consideration only as media for the self-formative processes in which actors are involved their whole lives long" (Habermas 1987, p. 140). Habermas asserts that society serves to link together the situations encountered within a lifeworld, providing stability to the identities of the groups within that context. This linkage also offers a sense of community and solidarity to the group members, connecting the experiences to broader collective actions and responsibilities taken by individuals who will become members of that group at a later date (Habermas 1987).

Habermas (1987, p. 138) understands the concept of a person to include "the competences that make a subject capable of speaking and acting, that put him in a position to take part in processes of reaching understanding and thereby to assert his own identity". This is the subjective world, where each individual's experiences are known only to them until such a point as they engage in communicative action to share these perspectives with others. Through this interaction with others, individuals process new information and situations and develop their identities (Regmi 2020).

As the most individualised element of the lifeworld, the development of the person emerges from the collective experiences that have influenced ego-identity development (Habermas 1987). It is through strongly developed ego-identities that personality can influence the

maintenance of the lifeworld, and it is within a dynamic lifeworld structure that individual personality can flourish.

In considering the lifeworld lenses of culture, society and person, it is critical to retain the dual purpose of exchanges between speaker and listener. Habermas (1987, p. 139) argues that:

> [t]he one-sidedness of the culturalistic concept of the lifeworld becomes clear when we consider that communicative action is not only a process of reaching understanding: coming to an understanding about something in the world, actors are at the same time taking part in interactions through which they develop, confirm, and renew their memberships in social groups and their own identities.

This notion of renewed membership is evident in the ways in which each lifeworld lens has been contextualised in this study, as culture, society and person are explored as dynamic and self-sustaining elements of student experiences at Seaside International School.

3.6.1 Contextualising Culture

Culture includes the norms, traditions and values of a community as well as the beliefs present in commonly used language and referred to by its members on a regular basis (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; MacNeil, Prater and Busch 2009). It serves to shape the behaviours of its members and can determine the long-term effectiveness of the organisation (Kartal 2016). Sarid (2017) suggests that education mediates between formal cultures and everyday life.

Like any lifeworld, schools have distinct cultures that influence the actors within those lifeworlds. Sergiovanni (2000, p. 14) contends that:

> [c]ulture is generally thought of as the normative glue that holds a particular school together. With shared visions, values and beliefs at its heart, culture serves as a compass setting, steering people in a common direction. It provides norms that govern the way people interact with each other. It provides a framework for deciding what does or does not make sense.

School culture shapes patterns of interaction between its members, nurturing teacher leadership and fueling school improvement (Ohlson et al, 2016; Cansoy and Parlar 2017; Lee and Louis 2019). von Ahlefeld Nisser (2017) and Schipper et al (2020) suggest that the culture of a school also has a direct impact on students, influencing their academic achievement.

In an international school, the multinational nature of the students, parents, faculty and staff form what is referred to as a 'third culture' in which the range of languages, religious beliefs and ethnicities in a single community create a highly diverse environment (Useem, Useem and Donoghue 1963; Morales 2017; Lijadi and van Schalkwyk 2018). It is often the case that in international schools, the host country itself is also visible within the culture (Langford 2012; Lyttle, Barker and Cornwell 2011). In Chapter 2, Xu and Lee's 2019 study is referenced as positioning Hong Kong's historical, political and economic contexts as a point of intersection between Eastern and Western cultures. This undercurrent of the local culture contributes in part to the cultures of its international schools. The melding of culture within highly diverse international schools takes place through communication, which serves to share this cultural knowledge and preserves the culture for future generations.

3.6.2 Contextualising Society

Society is a defining feature of the lifeworld, building relationships and providing shared experiences for members of social groups. Yelland et al (2021, p. 1) state that "[a] dynamic education system forms part of this ecosystem, both producing and attracting participations and creating aspirational opportunities for citizens that are flexible and globally focussed". Whilst culture enables a lifeworld member to make meaning within the objective world, society does so through interpersonal relationships and offers a sense of kinship to the individual within their lifeworld (Habermas 1987). Society thus becomes a key factor in the nurturing and development of individual identity for lifeworld participants.

The social theory of learning upon which communities of practice are based integrates the components of meaning, practice, community and identity (Wenger 1998). These components

echo those of Habermas's lifeworld, and O'Donnell *et al* (2003, p. 7) make the connection between the lifeworld and communities of practice explicit, suggesting that "the socialisation process is a gradual integration of individual interests and motivations into a shared collective focus". By Habermas's (1987) assertion, as a component of the lifeworld, society serves to bring members together and unite them through shared experiences. The three dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire posited by Wenger (1998) position these communities of practice at the level of society within the lifeworld.

In providing a framework for the written, taught and assessed general curriculum, the IBMYP requires that schools use the many component pieces of the model, including a set of subject area categorisations, interdisciplinary units and learner profile attributes. The IBO has also identified a set of cognitive, affective and effective skills known as approaches to learning skills. These skill sets sit near the centre of the programme framework and are intended to support students in accessing challenging content as well as developing their own identities as learners and as people (IBO 2014). The skills selected by the IBO connect the lifeworld to the external world and prepare students for an unpredictable future in which traditional jobs, technologies and global issues are impossible to predict (OECD 2018). The clusters of skills in these frameworks establish the socialisation patterns and experiences Habermas cites as the structural importance of society within a lifeworld.

Solving problems, thinking critically, demonstrating creativity, completing research and communicating effectively are the cognitive skills included in the approaches to learning skill sets (Li 2012; IBO 2014). These skills can be task-related and also stretch learners to be creative (Hattie, Biggs and Purdie 1996). The need for individuals to innovate and explore situations from various perspectives will be increasingly important in the future (Kaufman 2013).

The development of cognitive skills allows learners to transition from iconic representation to symbolic representation, engaging in increasingly sophisticated and complex tasks (Bruner 1964). Learners can process information at a more conceptual level as they develop cognitively

(Piaget 1955). This clear focus on the development of the cognitive realm suggests that teachers serve an important role as models and guides in this process. In order to reach their potential, students must be supported to apply these skills in increasingly complex and unfamiliar scenarios (Pellegrino 2017). Students who are exposed to greater levels of cognitive challenge will rise to the high learning standards that have been set for them if their society supports their engagement with the demands of thinking critically and creatively (Welner *et al* 2008).

Metacognitive thinking "consists primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises" (Flavell 1979, p. 907). The application of metacognition is another skill set within the approaches to learning framework (IBO 2014). A learner who has metacognitive knowledge is aware of how she learns, and her ability to use metacognitive control processes means that she can influence and regulate her learning (Schraw and Moshman 1995). This ability to engage in metacognitive thinking and action is essential to ego-identity development within the lifeworld of school.

Affective skills encompass student attitudes and dispositions towards learning: a student's ability to control emotion and maintain emotional balance as well as use personal organisational strategies help learners maintain motivation and self-determination as learners (IBO 2014; Jeno and Diseth 2014). This classification addresses many of the attributes identified as important for educating the whole child, as motivation, confidence, empathy and identity are skills that a commitment to holistic education values in equal weight to subject area knowledge (Dewey 1980; Miller 2010).

Habits of mind regarding student value, inclination, sensitivity, capability and commitment towards the application of affective skills encourage students to create patterns of thinking to respond to their emotional states as learners (Costa and Kallick 2009). With his focus on emotional intelligence, Goleman (1995, p. 34) identifies "abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to

regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope" as key affective skills.

Adolescence is a time of great change for a person as transformations occur physically, emotionally and cognitively (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck 2007). During puberty, significant changes occur in the brain which impact significantly upon the emotional stability of teenagers, resulting in situations in which keeping control of one's emotions can prove nearly impossible for some students (Wolfe 2010). The explicit teaching of mindfulness to adolescents is one way to teach students strategies for reducing stress, developing attention and regulating emotions (Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor 2010; Weare 2013). By providing students with structured approaches for and strategies to foster the development of affective skills, students can take ownership for their learning and the impact on their motivation can be positive (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck 2007).

The influence of society within the lifeworld and on the individual challenges traditional curricular and lifeworld structures. Sarid (2017) posits that in a post-modern educational context in which previously held traditions related to curriculum structure are no longer sacred, the very notion of subject specialisations can be called into question when considered through the lens of Habermas' theory of communicative action. He presents this tension of prioritisation within the structure of the curriculum as a dichotomous one:

> On the one hand, traversing or breaking down disciplinary boundaries reduces the gap between knowledge and everyday life but undermines the autonomous logic of each expert culture (and thus the very notion of the project of modernity as portrayed by Habermas). On the other hand, preserving the strict separation of disciplinary boundaries upholds modernist culture but since it increases the distance between knowledge and social life, it makes societies evermore vulnerable to various forms of domination (Sarid 2017, p. 460).

This application of Habermasian theory to the model of subject area schooling is another example of the appeal the theory held for me as a researcher. In Chapter 5, the lifeworld element of society is used to explore student learning experiences within both traditional subject area instruction as well as in project-based learning experiences.

3.6.3 Contextualising Person

In the Habermasian lifeworld, the person sits as the key actor within the lifeworld as well as the main beneficiary of communicative action. It is within the context of the lifeworld that an individual has the potential to develop an understanding of the world and of oneself. Over time, the individual shifts from knowledge being formed through engagement with culture, to the increasing influence of society, to finally forming meaning through ego-identity (Habermas 1987).

Self-determination theory suggests that it is within the capacity of a learner to self-regulate behaviours related to learning (Deci, Ryan and Williams 1996; Deci and Ryan 2013). Thus, when we imagine the person within the lifeworld of a school, we picture a self-regulating individual who is motivated to make informed choices about learning based on a clear understanding of goals, the steps that need to be taken to reach those goals and the inclination to acquire the skills, knowledge and conceptual understanding to take action. An individual who has the capacity to self-regulate in this way has an increased likelihood for academic success (Deci and Ryan 1985; Deci, Ryan and Williams 1996; Brooks and Young 2011). Increased student choice encourages students to self-regulate their learning (Deci, Ryan and Williams 1996). Self-directed learning experiences have the potential to build understanding by encouraging her to pursue personal passions, increasing her motivation for learning (Brooks and Young 2011; Jacoby, Tasker and Koehn 2011). This self-regulation leads students to be able to identify when and where skills are needed and to apply these as they feel best match the learning targets and intended outcomes (Li 2012).

When teachers contextualise skills instruction and provide opportunities for students to apply these skills to subject area content, student engagement with and use of skills can improve (Hattie, Biggs and Purdie 1996). Ideally, the process of contextualising learning engages students in high-interest tasks and experiences to increase the likelihood of self-regulation of skill usage (Deci, Ryan and Williams 1996; Yeager et al 2013). In his zone of proximal development, Vygotsky (1978) asserts that identifying the appropriate level of challenge for a student helps him or her avoid both confusion and boredom. One of the outcomes, then, of ego-identity formation is to position a person in this optimal zone with the goals of nurturing independence and empowering her to self-determine and self-realise her own learning. Learners change and develop over time and have the potential to acquire and refine skill sets at any point in their development (Dweck 2006; Yeager and Dweck 2012). Within the context of the lifeworld, the development of the person is one that demands the belief that self-determination and self-realisation are not inherent but learned. A focus on ego-identity development in a person will see increased levels of motivation and effort in their classrooms (Blackwell et al, 2007).

In order for students to become more independent within their lifeworld, the culture and society of that lifeworld needs to emphasise the importance of heutagogy as the study of self-directed learning. The shift should be towards student self-direction and then on to student self-determination as this double loop learning approach effectively prepares students to engage in increasingly sophisticated and complex learning experiences (Hase and Kenyon 2000; Blaschke 2012). To best support the development of ego-identity in students, teaching should be integrated into the cultural context of the learner as well as should be modelled by not only adults but also peers (Schraw and Moshman 1995).

Ultimately, heutagogical instruction prepares students for the transition beyond the lifeworld of school. In order to most effectively position adolescents to make this transition successfully, instruction should become more focussed on providing opportunities for authentic experiential learning to occur, that is "…the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 1984, p. 38). Increased authenticity that provides the

learner with an opportunity to connect learning experiences to personally relevant contexts elevates self-determination (Jeno and Diseth 2014). This approach integrates student experiences and perspectives into the development of cognitive, affective and effective skills and provides learners with meaningful opportunities to apply and reflect on their ego-identity development, resulting in persons who self-regulate independently of instruction (Jeno and Diseth 2014). Sarid (2017, p. 466) posits that "Habermas's notion of *self-critical appropriation*, which involves the more personal-existential endeavor of self-clarification, provides the grounds for bringing the above two (seemingly) contradictory perspectives [distinct subject areas and learning experiences connected to everyday life] into a single curricular framework."

When learners are immersed in a lifeworld that recognises their current level of performance as their starting point, they will feel more motivated and confident as learners (Jeno and Diseth 2014). Cultures and societies in which students are challenged at the level that engages them without overwhelming them allow these students to enter the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1978, p. 32). Strongly defined and well-supported school cultures in which societies are malleable and meet learners where they are can transform learners into dynamic self-regulators of their learning journeys (Erickson and Lanning 2013). Back in the 1930's, Dewey was advocating for these types of learning environments as ones that could provide opportunities for students to apply both knowledge and skills in meaningful and contextual learning experiences and become places where habits of life-long learners could thrive (Dewey 1980). The strength of the communities of practice within a society and the broader culture that establishes the beliefs and values of the school community is that it integrates the learning of the person with the perpetuation of the group, creating a lifeworld that is a sustainable entity (Habermas 1987).

3.7 Students as Agents of Their Own Learning

The selection of Habermas' theory of communication as the theoretical framework for this research provides a lens through which to explore the lifeworld from the perspective of students. Gosling (2000, p. 296) asserts that "[a]ccording to Habermas, and those he has

influenced, education is a key element in the achievement of autonomy and responsibility, but, to be successful, educational practices must permit and encourage forms of communication which are not distorted by imbalances of power or other blocks to open and rational discussion."

Habermas' theory of communicative action suggests that learning is social, as meaning is made through linguistic interchanges at the levels of culture, society and person within the lifeworld. Regmi (2020, p. 225) argues that the theory establishes the interconnectivity of the lifeworld structures as the foundation for learning as a social experience and "becomes a necessary condition for learning because it is the most valid way for producing knowledge, examining the validity of existing knowledge, and providing opportunities for acquiring contextually useful knowledge for each citizen". In addition to fostering communication within the lifeworld of school, educators should actively engage students in learning experiences that invite them to integrate knowledge from their external lifeworlds into the school lifeworld. This serves to enrich their understanding and secure their position within the school lifeworld (Skibsted 2020).

This elevation of the experiences of students as members of the lifeworld of school also contributes to the literature around student voice and agency. Student voice is currently underutilised in studies related to student engagement (Quaglia and Corso 2014; Yonezawa *et al* 2009; Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris 2004). A lack of data from the perspective of students means that teachers often make choices about their instructional approaches based on assumptions about what children need rather than on evidence gathered from or with students that might justify the approach (see Cook-Sather 2002; Fielding 2004; Flutter 2007; Robinson and Taylor 2007).

Schools in which the teachers value the collection of data with regard to how students learn and are prepared to move beyond assumption and focus on evidence-based instruction can create cultures of thinking which promote the development of every child's intellectual character (Ritchhart 2001). Through the theory of communicative action, Habermas "requires us to shift

the focus to recognising that pupils have a role in controlling and regulating their learning. Agreeing actions through communicative processes...should be considered to help align intentions and consequences, through negotiated meanings" (Dann 2016, p. 402).

At the level of the classroom teacher, the concept of the lifeword underscores the value of designing learning experiences that scaffold and support communication, interaction and collaboration between students (Skibsted, 2020). These engagements should be designed in a way that creates safety for students to share their perspectives and be receptive to those of their peers. The same openness and desire for mutual understanding should also be present in communicative actions between teachers and students. Quaglia and Corso (2014, p. 3) found that:

> When students believe their voices matter, they are more likely to be invested and engaged in their schools. When students believe teachers are listening to them, mutual trust and respect are likely to flourish. When students believe they are being heard and influencing decisions, schools become more relevant to students' lives and are more likely to be seen as serving their needs. When adults and students partner, schools become laboratories for the multigenerational, collaborative, shared decision making that is part of most contemporary businesses, organizations, and companies. In addition, students' insights, creativity, energy, and confidence offer important perspectives that can help schools improve.

Ordinary communication can have an exceptional impact on an individual, "such as the establishing and reproducing of patterns of belief, of consent and legitimacy, of status and identity, and of perception" (Parkin 1996, p. 423). Integrating increased opportunities for student voice and self-directed growth into the curriculum could elevate the impact of communicative action on self-actualisation (Sarid 2017). In order for educators to increase dialogue through which consensus is reached between student and teacher, they must recognise and value the uniqueness of each student's lifeworld experiences (Harris 2019). Every communicative act in the school lifeworld should be recognised for its potential impact on the ego-identity development of students.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, I present an overview of Habermas' theory of communicative action and its contention that individuals develop their ego-identities through communicative acts that take place within their lifeworlds. A review of how this theory has been applied previously in educational research is presented, and a gap is identified with regard to the use of this framework to give voice to student perspectives on their experiences within their learning lifeworlds. To position the way in which Habermas' theory has been applied within this study, culture, society and person are each contextualised accordingly. Literature related to the importance of student voice is presented to further situate the value of applying the theory of communicative action as a means through which this study explores the formation of student ego-identity. In the next chapter, I present the research design that emanates from this theoretical framework.

Chapter 4: Designing the Ethnographic Case Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the learning lifeworlds of International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) students in an international school in Hong Kong. Chapter 2 of this thesis presents a review of the literature which establishes the context of the research locale, Seaside International School, an international school in Hong Kong that offers the IBMYP. In Chapter 3, Habermas' theory of communicative action is set forth as the theoretical framework for this study. The role and function of the lifeworld, the space within which Habermas argues that communicative action takes place, serve as the foundation upon which this research is built.

In this chapter, I first introduce the research question and present my constructivist research paradigm. My development of an ethnographic case study methodology is positioned in relation to the theoretical framework and its influence on the construction of the study. I then describe the process by which this study was designed and conducted in order to address the research question and present its mixed methods approach. I describe the sample of participants, how data were generated through the use of questionnaires and interviews, the thematic analysis process that was used to interpret these data, the ethical considerations that shaped the research design and the limitations of the methodology.

4.1 Research Question

Habermas's conceptualisation of the lifeworld is that it is the environment within which an individual becomes self-reflective and develops an ego-identity (Murphy 2013). The theory of communicative action provides a lens through which to explore curriculum construction, teacher delivery and student experience and establishes a process by which transformational learning can occur (Dann 2016; Ewert 1991; Murphy 2013). A gap that still exists in the literature is the application of the theory of communicative action to understand the learning lifeworld from the perspective of students. There is a paucity of research eliciting student experiences within international schools in Hong Kong, providing another opportunity for this study to contribute to the body of research conducted within this sector.

This gap in the literature resonated with my curiosity about the learning experience of secondary school students and my interest in considering these experiences through a Habermasian lens, leading me to formulate the following research question:

> ***How do International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme students in an international school in Hong Kong experience culture, society, and person within their learning lifeworlds?***

In order to investigate the answers to this question, I designed an ethnographic case study which was informed by my constructivist research paradigm.

4.2 Research Paradigm

As a set of assumptions, a research paradigm "represents a person's conception of the world, its nature and their position in it" (Waring 2021, p. 17). Guba and Lincoln (1994) reinforce the process of inquiry as the bedrock of a research study, suggesting that a researcher answers questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology—and in that order—to define their paradigm.

I have entered into this process believing that both the perspectives I hold as an educator and the experiences that the participants will share should form the new knowledge this study will generate. My researcher identity is that of an ethnographer, as I value the immersive mindset one must adopt to engage with participant perspectives as well as their own. These beliefs and values shape the way I perceive the world professionally and personally and thus have led me to adopt a constructivist research paradigm. As ontology is "concerned with the assumptions we make in order to believe that something makes sense or is real" (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, p. 27), it serves to support the researcher to focus their thinking in regard to the research question at hand. As I have a constructivist ontology, I believe that reality and truth are subjective to the individual based on their personal experiences. Epistemology describes how I arrive at that

truth or reality and how I determine what should be considered as knowledge as a researcher. For me, knowledge is constructed through the interactions between researcher and participant and the perspectives offered by participants based on their lived experiences (see Bunnis and Kelly 2010; Crotty 1998; Gray 2021). This constructivist epistemological stance will help me determine what approaches to take as I determine what constitutes knowledge in this study.

Based on my constructivist ontology and epistemology which underpin my constructivist research paradigm, I have undertaken an ethnographic case study. Within a constructivist ontology, reality is localised and specific to a given context, however aspects of that reality might be shared by many individuals or groups beyond that context (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Creswell (2014) suggests that at the end of a constructivist research study the perspectives of others, rather than those of the researcher, will have been what developed the knowledge gained. As the main research question focuses on exploring student experiences, this study, in Creswell's terms, aims to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (2014, p. 8). He argues that this approach demands that interpretations of data and subsequent findings must be reached with considerations for the context of the community in mind.

Emanating from this position, a constructivist epistemological stance meant that the responses of research participants were used to establish the knowledge that surfaces through the study. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 111) describe this as a process in which "the investigator and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds". It was through this type of an interactive process that I developed this study's body of knowledge.

In considering methodology, the inquirer identifies how they will go about finding out whatever it is they hope to know (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Newby (2014) offers further specificity to the definition of methodology, noting that it is the collection of methods used by a researcher to find out the knowledge that they seek. My decision to develop an ethnographic case study

stemmed from my perspective that this methodology would allow for the generation of rich data in response to the research question I had crafted.

The theoretical framework, Habermas' theory of communicative action, influenced the ethnographic case study methodology of this study in two ways. From a content perspective, the pillars of culture, society and person that make up Habermas' theory of communicative frame the generation and interpretation of the data. From a process perspective, the desire to nurture mutual recognition through communication informed the creation of an ethnographic case study.

4.2 Ethnographic Case Study Methodology

Ethnographic case studies have their roots in two distinct methodological paradigms: ethnography and case study. Some authors present ethnography and case study as two methodologies (see Creswell 2007; Thelwall and Nevill 2021; Willis 2007), whilst others consider ethnographic case study as a methodology (see Angers and Matchtmes 2005; Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2017; Parker-Jenkins 2018). In an ethnographic case study, data can be generated that allows for the exploration of the relationships between sets of data and accommodates the study of theory in a real world setting (Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2017). This theoretical perspective is supported by the use of Habermas' theory of communicative action as the theoretical framework—through communication, research participants are empowered to define the realities of their lifeworld experiences. By developing an ethnographic case study, this methodology supported the narrow focus of the case and elevated my presence as an ethnographer.

Angers and Matchtmes (2005, p. 777) define an ethnographic case study as "prolonged observations over time in a natural setting within a bounded system." This definition resonates with Hammersley's (2018) description of ethnography as having a variety of features including but not limited to long-term data collection, a focus on personal experiences and the importance attributed to these by an individual, location within a defined context or culture and

the researcher's presence within that context or culture. Ethnography empowers the researcher to interpret and argue how the data best fits together based on their experiences and perspectives (Newby 2014). Mills and Morton (2013, p. 3) go as far as to assert that ethnography can be interpreted as a mindset that offers a researcher a "way of being, seeing, thinking and writing". They suggest that adopting an ethnographic mindset requires a researcher to be empathetic towards the experiences of participants as well as remain aware of the researcher's assumptions and biases.

One key characteristic of an ethnographic study is the identification of a field, or location, in which the research is conducted. Wolcott (2008) emphasises that in an educational context, ethnography might be of interest to researchers who are seeking to delve into aspects of culture within their study. Other topics he highlights as perhaps well suited to ethnographers include environment, social networks and language, all of which resonate with the elements of Habermas' lifeworld.

Through an ethnographic lens, I intended to place value on the everyday experiences of students within their educational lifeworlds. The emphasis that exists on post-secondary opportunities often seems to overlook the lived realities of secondary school students, whose experiences as learners are their real lives at that moment in time (Cook-Sather 2002). In an ethnographic study, individual stories are gathered and synthesised, validating and giving meaning to the personal experiences of participants (Mills and Morton 2013). By soliciting student experiences within their educational lifeworld, my study centred on the voices of students and surfaces new knowledge about aspects of culture, society and person. This investigation contributes to institutional knowledge and practice, seeking to elevate these everyday experiences and encounters.

Returning to Angers and Matchtmes's (2005, p. 777) definition of an ethnographic case study, they locate research taking place "within a bounded system," which references a core element of case study methodology. Gerring's (2016) description of a case study is that it is a highly

focussed exploration of a single case or small number of cases that draws upon observational data to potentially provide insight into a larger population. Both Yin (2012) and Stake (1995) assert that the selection of a case study methodology is motivated by a researcher's desire to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific person, organisation or event. When defining a case, a researcher typically endeavours to choose one that is authentic rather than manufactured (Yin 2012). It can be highly effective for investigations that focus on the "how" or "why" of a defined context (Gray 2021; Yi 2018). It is also typical for a researcher to have identified a case prior to undertaking a research investigation (Swanborn 2010; Yin 2012).

Yazan (2015, p. 137) draws on the work of Stake who "mainly conceives of the qualitative case study researchers as interpreters, and gatherers of interpretations which require them to report their rendition or construction of the constructed reality or knowledge that they gather through their investigation." Within ethnographic studies, Stake (1994) offers two categorisations of case study types, intrinsic and instrumental: intrinsic studies focus predominantly on understanding the specific case, whilst instrumental case studies serve to illustrate an idea or issue. Stake (1994, p. 35) suggests that one of these categorisations must supersede the other at the stage of research design, declaring that "both cannot be primary in a study...there is a tension, sometimes outright conflict between the two" and notes that recognising their differences is essential to addressing any tension that might arise. This research undertakes an instrumental case study: the question of student perspectives about the learning lifeworld takes precedence above the case itself.

An ethnographic case study invites the researcher to use data collection methods common from both methodologies and consider causality links not necessarily evident in standalone ethnographies (Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2017). Parker-Jenkins (2018) note the overlaps between the ethnography and case study include the employment of flexible and dynamic research methods and the commonality of tools used to generate data. She problematizes the distinction of these methods, instead suggesting that a researcher should "turn this around, and ask, how do we approach research ethnographically" (Parker-Jenkins 2018, p. 23). And when bound by

the case, this ethnographic approach to the research process can make the process more manageable for researchers under time constraints (Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2017). In considering my role as a member of my school community, my involvement in various aspects of culture and society within this lifeworld and my status as a professional doctorate candidate, leveraging the strengths of both ethnography and case study within an ethnographic case study methodology.

Greene (2014) underscores the importance of researcher awareness when conducting insider research and the influence of the researcher throughout the study. When conducting insider research, Rizvi (2009, p. 113) states that "[i]t is impossible to look at a place or a culture without seeing it as interrelated to other places and cultures". With this in mind, it is essential for me to acknowledge how my membership in this lifeworld will influence my collection and interpretation of data. Leitch and Day (2006) highlight the importance of maintaining a clear focus on the participants and the data collected. As I reflect upon and celebrate my own professional development as a researching practitioner, this will be recorded in Document 6, and my evolution as a researcher is also reflected in the evolving research design.

4.3 Sampling Procedure

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007, p. 107) reiterate the importance of considering sample size in qualitative research design and offer five generalisations that influence virtually all qualitative studies:

> (a) from the sample of words to the voice; (b) from the sample of observations to the truth space; (c) from the words of key informants to the voice of the other sample members; (d) from the words of sample members to those of one or more individuals not selected for the study; or (e) from the observations of sample members to the experience of one or more individuals not selected for the study.

In the context of this study, both of the above points (a) and (c) are generalisations that apply to the research design and the consideration of these generalisations is applied to the findings and discussion (Chapter 5) and conclusions (Chapter 6). The identification of the students who

would participate was informed by my role in the school at the time of its initiation, which was that of IBMYP Coordinator, and my focus on exploring students' perspectives on their Habermasian learning lifeworlds.

Thus, the research question established students in Grades 6 and 10 as the targeted participants in this study. As with the selection of the site, purposive sampling means that the intentions of the study can be achieved through the selection of participants (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). To better understand the development of ego-identity at different stages of student learning journeys, I aligned the selection of grade levels with the curriculum framework used within Seaside International School. Grades 6 and 10 were identified because these students are in their initial and final years of the IBMYP, respectively.

In the design of this study, I identified questionnaires and interviews as the two data generation tools. These were selected as they could solicit a broad range of student perspectives as well as generate both quantitative and qualitative responses. This mixed methods approach offered flexibility that was beneficial to this study, particularly as it spanned a longer period of time than initially intended.

The research took place in two phases, with different participants involved in each phase (Table 2). The first phase was intended to be the only phase of the research, however a number of programmatic and professional disruptions slowed down my progress. In Document 6, I go into more detail around these interruptions, which included the departure of my original supervisors, a sudden reassignment of my role in my school, the allocation of two new supervisors and then the extended impact of the pandemic in Hong Kong including protracted school closures and intensive anti-epidemic restriction.

One byproduct of this unanticipated delay of my research was the opportunity it provided for me to refine and deepen my understanding of Habermas' theory of communicative action and how to elevate the centralisation of the theory within my processes of data generation and

interpretation. Particularly through regular tutorial sessions with my new supervisory team, I was encouraged to immerse myself more deeply in Habermas' work and to expand my critical engagement with the theory. Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 9) describe good coding as an interpretative and organic process that is intended "precisely to capture the researcher's developing and deepening interpretation of their data". As I strengthened my understanding of the theory of communicative action and my own identity as a researcher (see document 60, it became necessary to introduce a second phase which built upon the findings from phase 1 and more robustly applied the concept of the lifeworld and its elements to the questionnaire and interview tools. This allowed me to reposition the theory of communicative action as the central lens through which I would generate, code and interpret the data (see Chapter 5).

Phase 1 of Research 2014-15	**Phase 2 of Research 2019-20**
Questionnaire (Completed May 2015) 69 participants: ● 47 students in Grade 6 ● 22 students in Grade 10	Questionnaire (Completed May 2020) 67 participants: ● 37 students in Grade 6 ● 30 students in Grade 10
Interviews (Completed June 2015) 4 participants: ● 2 students in Grade 6 ● 2 students in Grade 10	Interviews (Completed June 2020) 8 participants: ● 4 students in Grade 6 ● 4 students in Grade 10
Total Participants in Phase 1: 69	Total Participants in Phase 2: 67
Total Participants in Phases 1 & 2: 136	

Table 2: Participant and Data Collection Procedures

By including two phases, the study produced a rich body of data that provided the school with robust insights that informed the ongoing development of the curriculum and programme structure for students in Grades 6-10 at Seaside International School. I was able to leverage the unintended gap between phase 1 and 2 of the study to conduct a more comprehensive application of Habermas' theory of communicative action in phase 2. In this phase, stronger framing of the lifeworld pillars as a driver of the interpretation process helped me to refine the

data generation process and it also informed the thematic analysis of the data corpus, which will be further explained in section 4.5.

Seaside International School introduced its first iteration of a dedicated project-based learning experience for students in the 2014-2015 school year. The purpose of focussing on this aspect of the programme was to gain a better understanding of student experiences within this new educational lifeworld, as the course sought to leverage organisation (Habermasian culture) and curriculum framework (Habermasian society) to develop ego-identity (Habermasian person).

In May 2015, 47 students in Grade 6 and 22 students in Grade 10 provided insights into their experiences by questionnaire. The questionnaire focussed on three areas: skill instruction in subject area classes, skill instruction in ATL class and enjoyment of ATL class. Interviews with four students from these target groups (two from Grade 6 and two from Grade 10) then took place in June 2015 to explore their views on the ATL class and its impact on them as learners. In the interviews, students shared their personal experiences and also responded to anonymous comments provided by students in the questionnaire.

Upon completion of phase 1 of the study, I met with the Secondary School leadership team to share my process and initial findings. In between the first and second phase of this study, the school reframed and expanded its approach to project-based learning. This refinement of the teaching of ATL skills in the IBMYP at Seaside International School warranted revisions to the questionnaire and interview questions in phase 2 of the research that to further emphasise the Habermasian lifeworld elements of culture, society and person.

In May 2020, 37 students in Grade 6 and 30 students in Grade 10 completed a questionnaire that focussed on their experiences with skill development through project-based learning, how this compares to skill development in their other classes and the roles of the teacher and student in developing skills. Out of the 67 students who completed the questionnaire, eight volunteered to also participate in subsequent interviews (four from Grade 6 and four from

Grade 10). These interviews took place in June 2020, during which each student spoke about their experiences in learning skills within the framework of the IBMYP, their experiences with and observations about the culture of the school and their individual strengths and areas for further growth with skill development and application.

4.4 Use of Questionnaires and Interview Tools

In the design of this study I identified questionnaires and interviews as the two data generation tools, as they could solicit a broad range of student perspectives and generate both quantitative and qualitative data. This mixed methods approach offered flexibility that was beneficial to this study, particularly as it spanned a longer period of time than initially intended.

Administering Questionnaires

There is a lack of consensus on the terminology regarding the data collection method of questionnaire, as both questionnaire and survey can be found in the literature addressing research methods (see Rahi, Alnaser and Abd Ghani 2019; Ricci *et al*, 2019; Younas and Porr 2018). Bryman (2016, p. 695) defines a questionnaire as "a collection of questions administered to respondents. When used on its own, the term usually denotes self-administered questionnaire." Henceforth, I will be using the term questionnaire to describe the data generation tool used in this study.

Questionnaires that include both quantitative and qualitative elements provide an opportunity for completing large-scale data collection (Borgers and Hox 2000; Williams 2003; Marshall 2005). Denscombe (2014, p. 169) offers five criteria to consider when designing a research questionnaire: "feasibility, response rate, full information, accurate information and ethical stance". Feasibility was addressed through the decision to conduct research within my own school context as an insider researcher. The response rate was also in part addressed by the distribution to a single-school student population, as well as through the suggestion that participation in the study would help give voice to students regarding future decisions that would be made about Seaside International School's model and structure for project-based learning experiences. The ethical stance included providing information to parents in the

consent form and to participants and teachers in the directions for completing the questionnaire. Further information on ethical considerations in this study will appear in section 4.6.

Each phase of the study began with a questionnaire that combined Likert scale questions that asked respondents to indicate or rate their responses with opportunities to provide open-ended answers. The use of Likert scales in a questionnaire allows participants to respond to a question or a statement by selecting the number that best represents their response (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle 2006). However, Miles and Huberman (1994) note that numbers in a Likert scale do not have a defined value that is the same for each participant nor can participants further explain or explore the answer provided when indicating a response with a number. To address this limitation, students were able to add comments to further explain their scaled responses. Whilst providing an opportunity to offer open-ended responses does not guarantee reliability, it does provide participants with an opportunity to explain and/or justify their responses (Borgers and Hox 2000; Desimone and Le Floch 2004).

Marshall (2005) suggests that the structure of the questionnaire can put respondents at ease, serving to support them through the process of completing the questionnaire in a logical and non-threatening manner. In the questionnaires used in phase 1 (Appendix A) and phase 2 (Appendix B), the format was as follows: (a) factual questions that provide basic demographic data about the participant, (b) closed questions, in this case in the form of multiple choice questions and rating scales, that are about student experiences and preferences and (c) combined closed and open-ended questions that seek further explanation or detail regarding student perceptions, preferences and opinions.

In both phase 1 and 2 of this study, questionnaires were administered in a face-to-face setting to all students at the grade levels selected for inclusion in the study (Grade 6 and Grade 10). Face-to-face administration of a questionnaire can provide an opportunity for the largest number of participants to complete the form and to ensure its return for consideration in the

overall data analysis (Marshall 2005). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) and Greene (2014) note that in the case of insider researchers, designating individuals other than the researcher themselves can help to minimise the threat that their presence might have on participants. With this in mind, instead of administering the questionnaires myself I had teachers familiar to the students serve as administrators. As these teachers administered the questionnaires in my absence, all instructions needed sufficiently explain the purpose of the questionnaire as well as provide students with an understanding of their choice to participate or not participate in the study. The data generated in the questionnaires was analysed in the discussion and findings in Chapter 5 and was also used to inform the creation of the interview questions.

Conducting Interviews

For the second part of each phase of this study, I wanted to find out more about how individual student experienced their learning lifeworlds at Seaside International School. In order to do this, I conducted interviews with volunteer participants. Kvale and Brinkmann (2014, p. 2) describe a research interview as "an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee...an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest." The hyphenations of "inter-view", "inter-action" and "inter-change" serve to transform the event of an interview into an act of communication. This description evokes Habermas' theory of communicative action and its reliance on a "cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate simultaneously to something in the objective, the social and the subjective worlds" (Habermas 1987, p. 120). Both for Kvale and Brinkmann and for Habermas, the ultimate purpose of the exchange, whether specifically an interview or generally an act of communication, is for participants to arrive at a shared and mutual understanding. The interview is a data generation tool that "provides the researcher a strategy to discuss concepts, questions, and gain clarification" (Fusch, Fusch and Ness 2017, p. 930). By conducting interviews, I could explore interpretations and perspectives on the research question and probe into student thinking as it related to each of the lifeworld elements.

I used a semi-structured interview approach in this study, which Galletta (2013, p. 45) describes as a "repertoire of possibilities". This structure allowed me to pose questions that were explicitly linked to the theoretical framework, creating an opportunity to specify with participants my desire to understand how they see and experience culture, society and person within their learning lifeworld. The semi-structured interview also allowed for personalisation depending on how a student responded. I could explore ideas that came from participants in these conversations, viewing their thinking as a part of the new knowledge this study was producing and in alignment with my constructivist research paradigm.

Kitwood (1977) suggests three considerations for the success and reliability of an interview: a skillfully conducted interview sets conditions in which the elicitation of reliable information is maximised, bias inherent in an interview should be acknowledged, and the encounter of an interview should share features of everyday conversation. These considerations featured into the approach I took to conducting each interview. At the start of each interview, I confirmed with the participant the purpose and use of the content in this study and verified that I would be recording the conversations. I restated for the participants that whilst they knew me as a teacher and/or curriculum coordinator in the school, I was undertaking these interviews as a student myself. Each student was reminded that they could answer questions to whatever extent they were comfortable, that they would be referred to using pseudonyms in the final thesis or any additional publications and if any individuals were named in their responses, the identities of these individuals would also be anonymised.

It is necessary to build trust between the interviewer and interviewee and to approach the process of interviewing through a lens of genuine curiosity about the perspectives of the interviewees (Woods 2013). In addition to reiterating technical pieces of information to students, I also considered the physical space and the sequencing of questions to put students at ease. For each conversation, I booked a conference room familiar to the student, rather than using my classroom or office, to neutralise the location. I organised the room so that the student and I could easily make eye contact, placing the recording device to the side and making

notes sparingly so that I could focus on the interviewee. Costa and Garmston (2016) describe the use of an approachable voice and invitational questions as strategies for encouraging deep thinking in coaching conversations. I called on my experience with Cognitive Coaching, which I speak more about in Document 6, to both develop and deliver questions during each interview. The design of general questions to use in each interview

4.5 Data Analysis Process

In this section, I will explain the method of analysis for both the data generated through questionnaires and interviews. Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis provided a structure within which I approached the process of data analysis. The theoretical framework shaped how I approached data generation, with the lifeworld elements of culture, society and person serving as the overarching themes within which data was analysed and presented. The data collected through the questionnaire was interpreted quantitatively and qualitatively. Any answers that required numerical valuations of experiences reported on a Likert scale were synthesised as percentages based on the number of respondents to any single question. I interpreted questionnaire data using a combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis and for interviews, I interpreted the data using thematic analysis.

Researchers need to "make choices regarding data sources, data construction, and analysis methods that best fit their research questions and to consider using multiple approaches and modes of inquiry" (Ercikan and Roth 2006, p. 23). With this in mind, I selected to conduct a thematic analysis of the data in order to develop the discussion and findings to follow in Chapter 5. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) present thematic analysis as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data". They articulate a six-step process presented as both a flexible and methodologically sound way for qualitative researchers to undertake the process of data analysis. In explaining the approach a researcher might take to thematic analysis, they highlight that "...a 'theoretical' thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 84). This emphasis on using the theoretical framework to formulate the thematic analysis will be evident in the subsequent chapter.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) present a set of key terms to describe different levels of data (Table 3) that I have applied to the explanation of my own data analysis process.

Term	Definition from Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79)	Application in this study
Data corpus	"*all* data collected for a particular research project"	Includes both questionnaire and interview data
Data set	"All the data from the corpus that are being used for a particular analysis…the data set might be identified by a particular analytic interest in some topic in the data, and the data set then becomes all instances in the corpus where that topic is referred."	Data set 1: questionnaire responses Data set 2: interview responses
Data item	"each individual piece of data collected, which together make up the data set or corpus"	Questionnaire or interview response in its entirety
Data extract	"an individual coded chunk of data, which has been identified within, and extracted from, a data item"	Extract from questionnaire or interview response

Table 3: Key Terms Used in Thematic Analysis

These terms helped me add precision to my descriptions of how I engaged with the data I generated, and will be used to explain my approach to thematic analysis in this study.

The first phase of thematic analysis underscores that "it is vital that you immerse yourself in the data to the extent that you are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 87). In my study, this immersive process included my engagement with the data corpus generated across the two phases of my study (see Table 2 in section 4.3). The questionnaire data corpus included quantitative data, which I sorted and organised according to participants' scaled responses, and qualitative data, which I transcribed and organised in alignment with its accompanying quantitative response. The first questionnaire that was administered in 2015 was completed on paper, so the organisation process involved the

migration of quantitative and qualitative responses into a spreadsheet. The second questionnaire was done using Google Forms and could be organised using the integrated spreadsheet features (Appendix C). For each interview, I recorded the conversation using audio recording software. The interviews that took place in phase one were recorded as audio files only, which subsequently required manual transcription for both data sets. In phase two, interviews were recorded via Otter, a platform that transcribes recordings as they are captured and required manual revisions to the script based on making edits whilst listening to the recordings (Appendix D). The subsequent process of transcription and refinement provided a rich opportunity to become familiar with each data set and begin to pay attention to possible themes surfacing in the student responses. My knowledge of Google Forms and Otter as digital platforms that would support data collection influenced my decision to change the method of administering the questionnaire and recording the interviews, respectively. Whilst I did not conduct a comparative study, I chose to generate charts and graphs that compared questionnaire responses from the Grade 6 and Grade 10 cohorts and also compared the data collected in 2014-2015 with the data collected in 2019-2020. This was a useful part of the familiarisation process for me, as it helped me consider broader trends that were emerging in the quantitative data.

Through the generation of codes, a researcher has the opportunity to "[i]dentify interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the set" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 89). In both the open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews, I looked for emergent themes to identify initial codes. In some cases, neutral themes were identified that were used to code responses that addressed this theme both positively and negatively. For example 'independence' emerged as a theme in the open-ended questionnaire responses to the question: 'What role does a teacher play in your use of ATL skills during [project-based learning experiences]?' Some students who rated this response as a 1 (very minor) spoke about too much independence in their open-ended responses whilst other students who rated this response a 4 (major) spoke about independence as something that the teacher helped create.

Once I had gone through the process of generating initial codes within the data, I was ready to begin considering overarching themes that were surfacing. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89) describe this phase as "sorting the different codes in potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes," and suggest that researchers "start thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes". I used this explanation to consider the relationships between my own emerging themes and developed a thematic map to connect these various themes (Appendix E).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 90) suggest that by the end of this phase, the researcher has "a collection of candidate themes, and sub-themes, and all extracts of data that have been coded in relation to them". Once I had constructed this map, I had been able to clarify the themes featured in the analysis undertaken in Chapter 4. Through this next step the researcher refines their themes, striving to ensure that "[d]ata within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 91). At this step, I further refined my thematic map which helped me to consider the validity of these themes in relation to the entire data set. By considering these within the context of the entire data set, I was able to begin to see the story that was emerging from the data.

The process of defining and naming the themes helps the researcher establish the essence of each theme and organise data extracts according to what themes will be included in the discussion (Braun and Clarke 2006). At this phase, I considered what overall story I hoped to tell about my data and sought to be able to speak to each theme in a concise and clear way. This led to the writing of the final thesis, at which point the researcher attempts to "...tell the complicated story of [their] data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of [their] analysis" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 93). I reviewed data extracts with the aim of selecting illustrative examples that could represent the perspectives shared by a number of respondents, or outlier examples that provided unique or insightful perspectives. Ultimately,

each extract needed to feed into the larger narrative, and I sought to strike a balance to both honour the individual perspectives that were surfaced in this ethnographic case study whilst also represent trends I identified in the data.

In the first phase of the research, the elements of the Habermasian lifeworld informed how I coded the interview transcripts, resulting in the iterative identification of four emergent concepts: enjoyment, choice, accountability and relevance, from the student responses is the lens through which I coded and analysed meaning generated by students. Between the first and second phase of the research, my focus shifted and the extent to which I applied the theoretical framework of Habermas' theory of communicative action increased. In preparing for the second phase of interviews, I developed questions that more explicitly surfaced student experiences in the lifeworld areas of culture, society and person and I used these themes to analyse the resulting data.

The Habermasian lifeworld elements of culture, society and person informed the themes that surfaced from the data that was generated and dictated the structure of how the findings were presented. Within this overarching frame, some aspects of the data analysis process remained consistent throughout the entire duration of the study, whilst others evolved from phase 1 to phase 2. For the interview transcripts, my initial engagement with the data involved highlighting sentences and phrases that were of interest to me. I also added codes that indicated where students commented on programme elements positively or negatively. In the transcripts from the phase 2 interviews, I also flagged the questions that more explicitly addressed the lifeworld components of culture, society and person.

Through the process of thematic analysis, I then searched for themes that surfaced in relation to how different students spoke about the lifeworld elements, which then allowed me to consider the range of responses provided by participants and look for broader trends. I also then applied the lens of culture, society and person to the phase 1 interviews, re-interpreting

through the same process to gain insight into how students experienced their learning lifeworld in both phases of the study.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018) identify five areas of responsibility related to educational research: responsibilities to participants, to sponsors/clients/stakeholders, to the community of educational researchers, for publication and dissemination and for researchers' wellbeing and development.

The involvement of minors in this study meant that I had to be aware of their vulnerability as I moved through each stage of the research process (BERA 2018). I am a person in a position of authority within the school, and for some of the participants in the study I was their English Language and Literature teacher or the school's IBMYP Coordinator at the time during which they were participating in the study. Because of this, I made the decision to have other teachers within the school administer the questionnaires. In both the invitations to participate in the study and during the interviews, I stated explicitly the purpose of the interview, the processes by which these findings would be shared and the opportunity for students to withdraw their participation up to the time of publication of the thesis.

Jason, Pokorny and Katz (2001) highlight the need to keep young participants safe in the data collection and reporting processes. The target population of this research is not the very young and the students were not asked questions of a psychological or highly personal nature or require students to admit to illegal activity. Still, student experiences can be highly personalised and intimate; as a result, maintaining the anonymity of both students and teachers is imperative. By choosing to conduct research in my own school, it is possible that Seaside International School might no longer remain anonymous once this thesis is published. I have endeavoured to select quotes from the interviews that do not compromise any member of the school community, have changed all names of both participants and community members who were named in student responses and have anonymised the name of the school in the thesis as

well as redacted the school's name from the documentation referred to in the thesis. It is my ethical obligation to do all that I can to protect identities, and thus participants, from having their identities known through association with this study both as a part of the writing process and after the publication of the thesis.

Consent for Seaside International School to serve as the research site was granted by the Head of School. I presented a research brief that included the question, theoretical framework, methodology, data generation tools and avenues for dissemination of my findings. We also agreed to a process by which the Secondary School leadership team would receive updates to inform ongoing programme development. Once the Head provided consent, I sought consent for individual participation in the study from both students and parents. Letters were sent home to parents/guardians prior to the administration of the questionnaire to inform them of the study and to provide them with an opt-out opportunity to prevent their child from participating in the research (Appendix F). Within the questionnaire, students were given written instructions underscoring their right to withdraw from participation at any time as they were completing the questionnaire or after submission of the questionnaire. Interview participation was based on student expression of interest. Parents/guardians received a letter (Appendix G) with specific details about the purpose and scope of the study and provided active consent for their child to participate in an interview.

In its ethical guidelines, BERA (2018) requires researchers to ensure that no incentives are offered to students or parents/guardians for participation in research studies. For all of the interviews, students were invited to meet with me at times that were convenient within their schedules, which was typically during a break or lunch time. Because of the disruption to their break times, students were offered small snacks and were given passes to return late to class as needed upon completion of the interviews.

The process by which questionnaires were administered contributed to the anonymity of respondents with regard to how they were reported in Chapter 5. The identities of individual

respondents were unknown to me unless students volunteered to be interviewed, in which case they included their name on their questionnaire. These names were excluded from the process by which questionnaire data were analysed, allowing me to decouple student identities from these responses. Each questionnaire respondent was assigned a number (1-136) based on the order in which I processed their data and names of interested interviewees were housed separately. Teachers who administered the questionnaire were able to observe students as they responded, however they did not have access to the full data set.

A child's participation in an interview meant that as the researcher I knew who they were and how they responded to interview questions. I spoke with each interviewee explicitly about anonymity, making it clear that I would be using pseudonyms for all students who participated in the interviews as well as for any individuals who might be named in the interview. I shared the context of how the study would be published and told them at the beginning of the interview that they could end the interview at any time or withdraw their participation after the interview had concluded.

Busher and James (2012) raise the ethical implications of conducting research within a school community and the importance of the researcher to attend to these implications throughout their process. I sought permission to conduct this research from our Head of School prior to undertaking the study and made it clear to any teachers involved in the administration of the questionnaires that the focus was on student experiences generally rather than on experiences within their individual classes. I have used a pseudonym for the school in an effort to maintain as much anonymity as possible. Whilst it is possible that the school's actual name could be linked to my status as an employee, any information that might make an individual participant identifiable has been eliminated to whatever extent possible, both from the coded data set and within the data extracts included in the thesis. As I move forward with disseminating my findings within and beyond the school community, I will have to be diligent in creating an environment for its reception that encourages honesty while at the same time protects the identities of the students who participated in the study.

4.7 Limitations

In this study, limitations were acknowledged and taken into consideration with regard to the data generation tools and participant sample size. A questionnaire allows for a wide range of respondents to share their perspectives, however it does not "provide the depth of understanding that interview and observational techniques provide [in] measuring potentially important variables such as the nature and quality of teacher-student interactions and teacher and student affect, motivation and energy" (Desimone and Le Floch, 2004: 2). How adolescents interpret specific questions or understand the intention of the research could impact the validity of their responses (Borgers and Hox 2000; Hox, Borgers and Sikkel 2003). A population spanning this age range might cognitively and emotionally respond differently to the process of completing a questionnaire, possibly impacting the reliability of the responses provided.

The use of a questionnaire limits the researcher's ability to follow up and clarify responses provided by anonymous participants in the study, potentially impacting the reliability of the data collected (Marshall, 2005; Williams, 2003). However, it also broadens participant numbers and is a tool that can encourage participants to provide honest feedback (Marshall, 2005; Desimone and Le Floch, 2004; Borgers and Hox, 2000). The acknowledgment of these limitations provided a useful opportunity for me to consider my own process of data interpretation. I was left to filter through open-ended responses and make judgements about the emotions and experiences behind what respondents wrote. As I interpreted the questionnaire data, I considered the quantitative responses along with any corresponding open-ended responses provided.

Conducting interviews with participants provided opportunities to probe into student responses and clarify the meaning behind their words, however they also eliminated the anonymity of participants. The power imbalance between the interviewer and interviewee is omnipresent throughout the interview itself; clear differences in status and standing must be confronted face-to-face during the conversation that occurs (Kvale, 2006). Fontana and Frey (1994) and Seidman (2006) also highlight the potential gap between what is said and how it is interpreted

at the point of analysis. I actively used paraphrasing as a tool during each interview to put participants at ease, reiterating that I was listening to understand and providing them with an opportunity to reframe their thinking before moving on to the next question.

Electing to conduct interviews requires substantial time and limits the number of participants that can be involved in this part of the data collection process (Newby 2014). Whilst this focus on the individual narratives provided greater insight into the individual learning lifeworlds of each participant, it did limit the number of student voices included in the study. Swanborn (2010) and Yin (2012) caution that within a case study, the represented voices can shift the balance of power to a few individuals who might be atypical rather than typical target population. I felt that the benefits of generating deeper insight into these individual experiences brought to life the application of the theory of communicative action and my desire to surface student perspectives on their learning lifeworlds.

4.8 Summary

This chapter explains the research design and the process undertaken to construct the parameters of the study. In section 4.2, I presented my research paradigm, ontological position, epistemological assumptions and methodology, all of which are informed by my identity as an ethnographer. My constructivist ontological and epistemological stance determined that the study's methodological approach needed to be one that generated knowledge bound to the context and applicable to a wider audience. Built on the foundation of the theoretical framework, the selection of an ethnographic case study served to both solicit student perspectives on their Habermasian lifeworlds and engage them in the creation of knowledge through communicative action.

Data was generated through the use of questionnaires and interviews, engaging participants over two phases of the study. The development of an instrumental case provided a landscape within which the experiences of students could be interpreted through the lenses of culture, society and person and with the application of a thematic analysis based on student responses. These themes surfaced through the process of engaging with the data and were also shaped by

the application of the lifeworld structure onto the data. With this in mind, culture, society and person shaped the ways in which I considered student responses, identified trends and highlighted responses and concepts of interest for further analysis in Chapter 5.

The ethical considerations of working with minors within my own school context provided important pillars around which consent, transparency and confidentiality were woven. I considered my role as an insider researcher and professional doctoral candidate as I designed and implemented the research. As in any study, the methodological approach and selection of data generation tools came with limitations, which were acknowledged and considered in the generation of new knowledge through this process.

In the following chapter, the findings that surfaced through the generation of data are presented and discussed as it pertains to literature.

Chapter 5: Interpreting the Data through the Pillars of the Lifeworld

In Chapter 4, I posed the research question that surfaced as a result of the literature review and application of the theoretical framework. The research design that was described included an overview of the methodology, research methods, sampling, process of data collection, ethical considerations and limitations for the study. In this chapter, the findings from 136 questionnaire respondents and 12 interviewees are presented. Relevant literature is used to interpret the data as well as to highlight this study's contribution, and the analysis is discussed through the three components of the Habermasian lifeworld: culture, society and person. Habermas (1984; 1987) considers culture to be the source of knowledge that informs the interpretations of individuals within their lifeworld, society to be boundaries that establish the social groups lifeworld members participate in and person to be the skills and capabilities that allow and individual to develop their identity within the lifeworld. In Chapter 3, I contextualised each of these elements within this study, explaining that culture refers to the general school culture at Seaside International School, society refers to the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) curriculum framework and the subject area and project-based learning experiences students engage in within the IBMYP, and person refers to individual student skill development and application.

In section 4.5, I outlined the process of thematic analysis that was used to analyse the data generated. Drawing on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006; 2022), my use of thematic analysis was reflexive in nature, allowing me to prioritise my constructivist paradigm and emphasise what they describe as the "inevitable subjectivity of data coding and analysis, and the researcher's active role in coding and theme generation" (Braun and Clarke 2022, p. 8). Through reflexive thematic analysis, I could leverage my identities as an ethnographer and insider researcher and use the pillars of the lifeworld as the organising concept for my analysis.

Braun and Clarke are clear that "[t]hemes, developed *from* codes, are constructed at the intersection of the data, the researchers' subjectivity, theoretical and conceptual understanding, and training and experience", reiterating that because "[m]ultiple analyses are possible…the

researcher needs to decide on and develop the *particular* themes that work best for their project—recognizing that the aims and purpose of the analysis, and its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, will delimit these possibilities to some extent" (2022, pp. 9-10). In order to decide on and develop my themes, I considered first the importance and centrality of the theory of communicative action, and specifically the role of the lifeworld, in my research question. I then reviewed my coding processes, paying particular attention to how my coding evolved from phase 1 to phase 2 of the study (see section 4.3) and how this evolution reflected my growing engagement with both the data and the theory of communicative action. I called on Braun and Clarke's (2022, p. 20) guidance to identify themes that I determined to be "rich, complex, and multifaceted" and that could be discussed through "a balance of data extracts and analytic narrative". The use of reflexive thematic analysis helped me integrate both the analysis of qualitative data and attend to my ethnographic mindset as I interpreted the data.

I have selected themes that I have identified as relevant to the context of an international school offering the IBMYP (see sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4), holding value in relation to the lifeworld element with which they are aligned (see sections 3.6.1, 3.6.2 and 3.6.3) and reflective of areas of importance highlighted in the literature on the application of the theory of communicative action in education (see section 3.5) and student self-directedness (see section 3.7). In Table 4, I present the specific themes as they relate to each lifeworld component.

Habermasian Lifeworld Component	**Thematic Focus in the Analysis**
Culture	● Influence of teachers ● Inclusive and safe environments
Society	● Experiences in subject-area classes ● Experiences in project-based environments
Person	● Student motivation ● Student self-awareness

Table 4: Areas of Thematic Focus in the Analysis

Each of the themes emanates from my interpretation and application of the Habermasian lifeworld components of culture, society and person within this study. Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 9) are unequivocal in their assertion that "[d]ata analysis is *always* underpinned by theoretical assumptions, and these assumptions need to be acknowledged and reflected upon". I have used the lifeworld components to frame the overall story of the data, with the themes underneath each component serving to weave the narrative together for the reader. Through this approach, I intend to present the value of each theme's consideration for individual teachers, school leaders and policy makers through the lens of communicative action.

Within each of these themes, I present both quantitative and qualitative data to interpret student perspectives of the liveworld elements on their identities as learners. Whilst these data sets are used to complement one another, Illustrative quotes are used to position the theme within the lifeworld element to exemplify either a trend or an outlier in the data. At times, for added emphasis or to offer further insight into an aspect of analysis, multiple examples are used to present varying perspectives.

5.1 The Role of Culture in the Learning Lifeworld

Culture is the structural component that provides the "stock of knowledge" from which lifeworld participants develop their understanding of a given situation (Habermas 1987, p. 138). He asserts that members of the lifeworld use culture as the thread with which to connect new situations to existing understandings and reproduce cultural elements of the lifeworld for future members by acting in alignment with cultural traditions. The influence of teachers and the existence of inclusive and safe environments at Seaside International School are the cultural themes explored in this study.

5.1.1 The Influence of Teachers

School cultures can encompass identity, beliefs and behaviours, and these features of culture shape interactions between community members (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007;

Sergiovanni 2000). Because of their globally mobile families, many international schools have highly transient populations. This requires remaining community members to actively reproduce aspects of culture for new members, with teachers often serving an important role in the process of cultural perpetuation.

In both academic and social-emotional realms, teachers influence a school's culture. Stronge, Ward and Grant (2011) present four dimensions of teacher effectiveness, two of which relate to teaching practice and two of which relate to the learning environment cultivated by the teacher. Hattie (2003, p. 2) found that teachers account for about 30% of the variance on student achievement, stating that "[i]t is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation". These findings reiterate how critical a teacher's role is in setting the cultural tone in the learning lifeworld and the direct impact a teacher's approach has on student learning.

In interviews, students addressed ways that they felt teachers influenced the learning culture. Michael attributed to the high expectations of his teachers to his own motivation to improve:

> [E]veryone's very helpful in trying to help you specifically grow...Everyone's pretty selfless in helping you develop in your own way, in your journey…[Teachers] are helpful in the way that they're able to...get you to do the best that they can, by being critical on yourself and thinking 'hey, maybe I can refine this' and going through multiple, multiple drafts and doing them with you as well.

In a similar vein, Bruce felt that his teachers helped him connect what he was doing in school to the world beyond the classroom.

> [O]ur teachers have always pushed us to go beyond ourselves...they ask us to first identify how do we connect with something. And how does it connect to us. And then from there, they really try to get us to go beyond into the...wider world.

Both students draw a line between their interactions with teachers and his ability to be self-directed in his own growth. Their comments echo the findings of Yu *et al* (2018) that

positive relationships with teachers can increase the confidence and engagement of adolescent learners. For Michael and Bruce there was a strong sense of how the ways in which teachers personalised learning and respected them as individuals were indicative of the culture of Seaside International School. Showing respect and care for students is critical when nurturing a culture of relatedness and positively impacts student motivation and self-directedness (Ryan and Deci 2020). These illustrative comments reflect the view that teachers positively contributed to their learning lifeworlds.

In contrast, Eliza highlighted a unique perspective of how the role of a teacher, and the lack of a strong relationship, had hindered her as a learner:

> [M]aybe some teachers might be less creative. Some teachers, but not most of them might be...and less open minded…when they're less creative and less open minded, it makes it harder to want to work. I mean most kids don't want to work anyways but having to be told, "Why aren't you working, do something"...it just makes it a lot worse and more boring...I don't want to be around a teacher who's just going to tell me I'm not doing something right. And it's just annoying. So the teachers have an impact on the students.

Eliza's comment was an outlier, standing out for its precise description of what was missing from less effective teachers. It also serves as a non-example to reiterate Deci and Ryan's (2000) research on self-determination, which found direct connections between teacher practice and student motivation. Eliza associated a lack of creativity and open-mindedness in her teachers with her own decreased motivation, explicitly recognising the potentially positive and negative direct influences that teachers have on a learning culture. This underscores the importance of teacher craft on classroom culture, resonating with Marshik, Ashton and Algina (2017) who note that a teacher's use of instructional strategies and classroom structures could influence student motivation.

Quantitative data corroborate these findings, with students identifying teacher impact on their use of approaches to learning (ATL) skills, a set of skills foundational to their success as learners in the IBMYP curriculum. In Chart 1 and with the explanatory comments that follow, the data

generated shows how students associate teacher approach with their own effectiveness as learners.

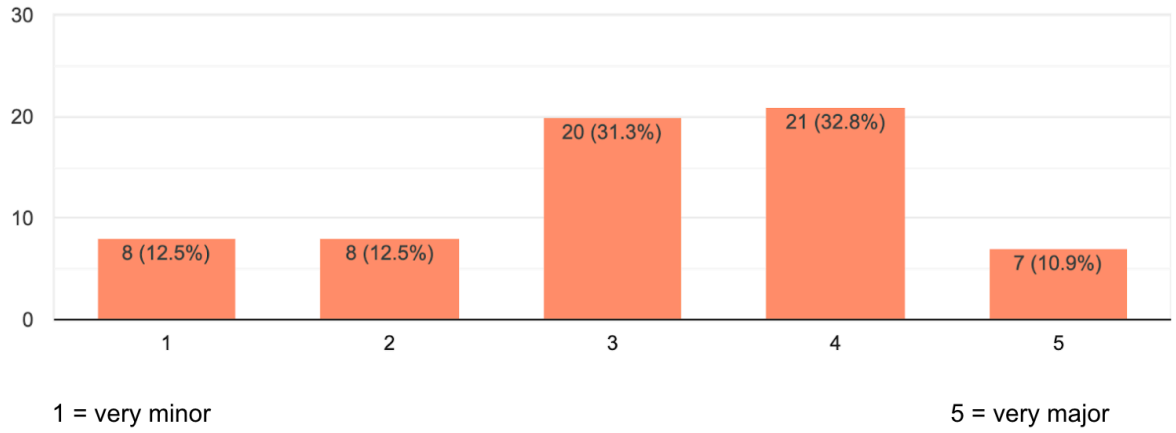

Chart 1: Role teacher plays in student use of ATL skills during PBL

Over 43% of respondents indicated that teachers had a major or very major impact and explicitly mentioned the importance of teachers posing questions, providing guidance and reminders, modelling the use of skills, offering encouragement and requiring reflection. Another 25% of respondents felt that teachers had a minor or very minor impact on their use of ATL skills. Of these respondents, almost all cited the level of independence required during project-based learning as a hindrance to their ATL development. The other 31.3% of respondents indicated that the role teachers played was neither major or minor. These respondents touched on themes such as their independent use of the ATL skills, level of instruction and extent to which the teacher made the use of ATLs relevant; some of these responses alluded to positive impact of teachers whilst others took a more critical perspective.

Some respondents also connected their attitude towards a particular learning environment to a teacher's approach. Within the quantitative data set, five data extracts make explicit the link between teacher behaviour and student enjoyment (Table 5).

Respondent	Feeling about Project-Based Learning Experience	Comment
Student 32 (Grade 6)	I like it very much	Mr. Richardson showed us fun and intersting (sic) ways to learn, I feel my organization skils (sic) have improved a lot.
Student 35 (Grade 6)	I like it very much	The teacher….The teachers presure (sic) that he puts on us
Student 36 (Grade 6)	I like it somewhat	It is fun and our teacher is nice.
Student 59 (Grade 10)	I like it somewhat	...classes would have been better if we got more explanations from teachers and chances to collaborate with each other.
Student 50 (Grade 10)	I am neutral	Teachers also try to achieve too much in one class

Table 5: Teacher impact on project-based learning experiences

In the responses that capture positive feelings towards the project-based learning experiences, students connected their own growth and enjoyment to the influence of the teacher. In contrast, other students offered areas in which they felt that better instructional decisions from the teacher might enhance their experiences as learners. The correlation between the feeling expressed towards project-based learning and the influence of the teacher suggests opportunity for further exploration. For example, Student 35 selected that they like the project-based learning experiences very much and states that the teacher puts pressure on the students, suggesting that for Student 35, teacher pressure was viewed as beneficial for their learning.

The data sets presented in this section suggest that the culture created by teachers at Seaside International School is one of care and support. In some responses, students stated that they felt understood by their teachers and as a result were successful in their learning. Other respondents noted that this was something they wished was present, suggesting that this was something they valued as an aspirational element of school culture. Habermas (1984; 1987)

presents culture as the first influence on ego-identity development within the lifeworld. In both cases, participants were making a connection between the influence of teachers and their identities as learners. This suggests an emerging recognition in these students of the relationship between culture and person, reiterating their awareness of the interdependence of lifeworld elements.

5.1.2 Inclusive and Safe Learning Communities

Having explained the first aspect of culture that was surfaced by the students, the influence of teachers on their learning lifeworld, it is important to unpack the second aspect, the influence of inclusive and safe learning communities. In their analysis of values frameworks in organisational cultures, Hartnell, Ou and Kinicki (2011) identify organisations that focus on relationships and elevate individual capacity as clan culture types. They explain that in a clan culture, trust, collaboration and support are values shared within the community and assert that members are inclined towards teamwork and open communication. The values identified by Hartnell, Ou and Kinicki (2011) as those of a clan culture align closely with many of the comments and perspectives offered by students in this study. One of the founding principles of Seaside International School is its commitment to nurturing an inclusive culture, and two representative quotes from Brian and Max respectively highlight the school's intentional approach to inclusivity:

> Brian: It's very, very inclusive, everybody's allowed to join anything, even if it's new or you played before, like in sports. Some people are brand new, some have played for a long time but they joined in the same team...it makes it more collaborative to make sure that everybody is a part of it...it's not about how skilled you are or how long you've played, it's just about that you want to try.
>
> Max: There's a lot of different people...so that everybody's really cool with being with different people and they celebrate everybody's differences. And that's kind of what I like…I kind of work with more people.

In their comments, Brian and Max each highlight one side of the mutual benefit that can come from an inclusive community. Brian couches inclusivity in risk-taking, that the environment is safe for those who have limited experience, exposure or skill are in an environment where they can try to develop. Max approaches inclusion as a positive for the person who can see difference and celebrate it within their community, that it can be enjoyable to collaborate and learn with those who might bring a very different set of strengths to the environment.

As a social justice and educational rights issue, inclusive education seeks to educate children with diverse learning needs alongside their neurotypical classmates (Farmer *et al* 2019; Haug 2017). Within inclusive schools, the belief that children with disabilities or exceptional gifts should be full participants within a learning community informs perspectives about what neurodiverse students contribute to the learning environment and broadens its definitions of academic success (Farmer *et al* 2019; Göransson and Nilholm 2014; Haug 2017). The relationship between educational philosophy and inclusive culture is developed by school leaders and shared by community members with teachers who choose to work in inclusive schools viewing their roles as educators with a set of aligned values (Sider, Maich and Morvan 2017; von Ahlefeld Niser 2017). Brian and Max's comments demonstrate that students are able to recognise the benefits of this inclusivity on their own development as learners. In the wider data set, participants directly and indirectly referenced the sense of safety that they experienced as learners. Through allusions to feeling comfortable taking risks as learners, approaching teachers for assistance or challenging themselves to try new skills, participants intimated that they felt the culture of their learning lifeworlds was inclusive and psychologically safe.

Maslow (1945) first posited the concept of psychological safety, which he characterised as an individual's confidence that their needs would be met and that they could operate without fear or anxiety. For adolescent learners, a sense of psychological safety in the learning environment contributes to positive student engagement (Holquist *et al* 2020; Yu *et al* 2018). During the interviews, students were invited to speak broadly about the impact of school culture on their

learning experiences. The following extracts are representative of how students described aspects of culture that made them feel safe as learners.

Wara made a direct correlation between the kindness present in the school's culture and how that made learning more accessible for her:

> It's nice, and the people...they're really nice, and there's a lot of things to learn…[I]t's very different from my other school because there's more people and they're a lot nicer...and you get to learn a lot more in [Seaside International School] than some other schools.

She cites an implicit sense of safety that comes from being a member of the community and a correlation between her ability to learn and the kindness she experiences from community members.

Octavia recognised that sense of calmness helped to provide the emotionally safe conditions that allowed her to more deeply engage in their learning. She made a connection between culture and learning when she identified that the sense of calm in the community provides her with opportunities to expand her thinking:

> I'd say it's pretty calm in comparison to a lot of other schools from what I hear from my friends who switch...they have like a lot of work to do and... we still have a lot of work to do as well, but I just feel like it's more...calm...I don't have to just rush to do everything...I can do a lot of thinking in between different things."

Her comments suggest that from her perspective, the community valued thinking as well as doing when it came to purposeful learning.

The inclusivity and physiological safety identified by students serve to form a key element of the culture at Seaside International School. Useem, Useem and Donoghue (1963), Morales (2017) and Lijadi and van Schalkwyk (2018) all cite international schools as communities that are often highly diverse with regard to the nationality, language and cultural backgrounds of their student populations. In these responses, however, students go further with their identification of these features as unique to Seaside International School. The specific cultural values and norms of a

community are reflected through the language of its members (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; MacNeil, Prater and Busch, 2009). The fluency with which some of these respondents referred to anchor language resonates with the importance of these cultural values throughout the community.

Both students and teachers identify student voice as a contributing factor to positive school cultures, personalised learning environments and strong teacher-student relationships (Cato 2018; Cook-Sather and Beattie 2018). In order to more authentically address the power imbalance between students and teachers, schools must address student voice at the level of culture (Robinson and Taylor 2007). Seaside International School's focus on individual pathways resonated with students in this study in a way that underscored the role of student voice within the cultural element of the learning lifeworld. Over 40% of respondents identified factors related to inclusivity and safety as being important, with 31 alluding to fun and 23 to confidence as either positive or negative factors impacting their feelings about project-based learning. Those who responded positively touched on factors such as working in their comfort zones, feeling relaxed, receiving help, being with friends and having independence and choice as positive factors in their experiences. They valued the support they received for being able to work towards goals that had meaning to them personally and were crafted to align with their own strengths and areas for growth as a learner.

Sergiovanni (2000) highlights school culture as critical to community members building a set of shared priorities. The findings in this study show that students at Seaside International School could identify many ways that culture was an explicit feature in their learning lifeworlds. They indicated specific characteristics of school culture that impacted them individually and shaped the way they engage with others. Student responses demonstrate that they view their relationships with teachers as aspects of school culture and some identify the culture of the school as unique or different from that of other international schools in Hong Kong. Both Von Ahlefeld Nisser (2017) and Schipper *et al* (2020) note the specific influences of culture on students within a school community. Students in this study agreed, identifying broad, holistic

features of the culture at Seaside International School that impact them as learners, both in positive and perhaps limiting ways.

Taking a step back from the explicit comments students offered in both the questionnaires and interviews, general participation of students provides insights into school culture at a more holistic level. As an insider researcher, the fact that students were comfortable to challenge elements of instruction, question why decisions had been made or offer critiques on what was not working for them was an indication that they viewed the community as one that was safe. Greene (2014) highlights the competing opportunities and drawbacks that can come with the level of access an insider researcher has to their community. My interpretation of the findings and subsequent discussion of these data are inexorably viewed through this insider researcher lens. As I considered my own bias and recognised that I remain outside of the learning lifeworld of students, I was also obligated to proceed with interpreting the data as best I could. Given the transparency and forthcomingness of many students to offer critical comments and feedback, I interpreted this as an indication of the way students view culture within their learning lifeworld. Drawing on Habermas' assertion that "communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge" (1987, p. 137), the opportunity in this study for community members to explicitly explore and unpack culture together served as a vehicle for cultural reproduction.

5.2 The Role of Society in the Learning Lifeworld

The previous section explored how students understood and engaged with culture as the first lifeworld element that influences ego-identity formation. After immersion within culture, society is the next lifeworld component to shape an individual's identity. Society is the element of the lifeworld in which "participants regulate their memberships in social groups and thereby secure solidarity" (Habermas 1987, p. 139). Habermas posits that within society, shared experiences help to establish group membership and norms of responsibility. Within this study, Habermas' concept of society has been applied to the student experience specifically within the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) through both subject-area learning as well as in project-based learning experiences.

Wenger (2000) suggests that within a community of practice, the event of learning is a shared one and is nurtured through the social interactions within that community. He asserts that the dynamics of engagement, imagination and alignment give members of a community of practice a sense of belonging, although the level of perceived belonging might vary from member to member as well as change over the duration of community membership. The concept of a community of practice frames the social environment in which learning can take place. At Seaside International School, the two key elements of student learning environments are subject-area classes and project-based learning experiences. Complementing the subject-area instruction that takes place in IBMYP classes, project-based learning experiences form a second distinct lifeworld within which students share experiences in social groups.

Lovat's (2013, p. 72) notion that "[the development of communicative capacity] is in a sense the fully flourished result of the historical-hermeneutical or 'communicative' way of knowing when infused with the critical-self reflective way of knowing, a veritable formula for the modern, globally competent, intercultural communicator" provides an entry point into considering the project-based learning lifeworld as distinctly different from traditional subject-area classes. Particularly within this project-based learning lifeworld, Habermasian theory can serve to frame the necessary shift away from traditional power dynamics that might be found in a more didactic setting, reinforcing the importance of nurturing self-reflective knowers through more personalised learning experiences. To critically consider this as a facet of society within the broader learning lifeworld creates an opportunity to highlight the principles and facets inherent in project-based learning which serve to influence the ego-identity development of students.

5.2.1 Experiences in IBMYP subject-area classes

In an IBMYP student's weekly timetable at Seaside International School, approximately 85% of instructional time is spent in traditional subject area classes. The IB sets out eight mandatory subjects for IBMYP students to complete: Language and Literature, Language Acquisition,

Individuals and Societies, Sciences, Mathematics, Arts, Physical and Health Education and Design.

In the questionnaire, students were asked to compare their use of the approaches to learning (ATL) skills of research, self-management, communication, collaboration and thinking in project-based learning (PBL) experiences with use in traditional subject area classes. Students were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 how they used ATL skills during the school day, 1 being most frequently in subject areas and 5 being most frequently in PBL experiences. Over 52% of questionnaire participants (34 students) responded that they used ATL skills more frequently in subject areas through selecting 1 or 2 on the scaled response. Of these, 29 opted to add a response to the open-ended component of the question. Table 6 breaks down the reasons students provided for why they felt that they used ATL skills more frequently in their subject-area classes.

Number of respondents	Reason given
11	assessment
7	relevance of ATL skill use in certain subjects
6	depth of the learning experiences
3	requirements for reflection
2	extent to which teachers instructed them to use ATL skills

Table 6: Reasons attributed to greater use of ATL skills in subject-area classes

As is evident in the table above, assessment was cited by the greatest number of students as to why they felt that they used ATL skills more frequently in subject-area classes. The following illustrative quotes in Table 7 provide greater insight into how students saw the relevance of different skills in their classes:

Respondent	Comment	ATL Skill Area
Respondent 116	Classes, such as Individuals and Societies, require ATL skills such as research and collaboration to complete a task. In addition to that, when we are given homework and material to study, we have to use skills including organization to complete those tasks to the best of our ability.	Research Collaboration
Respondent 83	I would say that we use the ATL's in class a bit more because a lot of them are needed whenever we are in class and we get assignments or tests.	Communication
Respondent 135	You need to be organised and self-sufficient in more school types of classes like Math and [Individuals and Societies], etc. More of the 'school' type of classes are more demanding.	Self-management
Respondent 91	I think that a lot more time is put into subjects and we have a lot more attention to specific elements that might use or relate to ATLS.	Thinking

Table 7: Relevance of ATL skills in subject-area classes

These comments provide insight into how students connected academic success to the application of these explicit skills, underscoring how these skills became relevant to them as learners. When considering the context within which they developed their use of ATL skills, over 50% of questionnaire respondents identified that they used these skills more frequently in subject-area classes as compared to PBL experiences. Another 29% of students responded that they used these skills evenly across both contexts, reiterating the important role that subject areas play in developing ATL skills for learners.

5.2.2 Impact of project-based learning on ATL skill development

The previous section framed the importance of ATL skill application in the subject-area classroom setting, highlighting themes such as assessment, relevance, sophistication of learning experiences, expectations and accountability. Through the process of data analysis, another theme that emerged was student perspectives on the role and function of Seaside International

School's PBL model as a component of their learning lifeworlds. Sitting in parallel to the regular IBMYP subject area courses, PBL experiences were designed to engage students in more self-directed and independent learning experiences through which they could develop their ATL skills.

Habermas is clear that it is a fiction to separate the influences of society from the development of the individual, specifying that "[a]s members of a sociocultural lifeworld, actors satisfy in principle the presuppositions for responsible participation and communication" (1987, p. 149). The contextualisation of the lifeworld element of society in this study is explained in 3.6.2, highlighting in particular the ways in which specific skills and dispositions are cultivated within both subject-area and PBL environments. The strands of communities of practice (Wenger 1998; 2000), motivation and engagement (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck 2007; Frymier and Shulman 1995; Goleman 1995;) and relevance (Hernandez-Martinez and Vos 2018; Kokotsaki *et al* 2016; Rosenzweig, Wigfield and Eccles 2019) all serve as fundamental components of the PBL model that forms these students' lifeworlds.

One of the features of the PBL model was the opportunity for students to self-select to participate in projects or activities, thus forming a like-minded partnership with other students who also opted to pursue that project or activity. These opportunities functioned as small-scale communities of practice that sat within a student's learning lifeworld. These communities of practice contain learning within them, and that containment can either foster or stifle the ways in which learning occurs (Wenger 2000). Through both questionnaire and interview responses, students reported both positive and limiting consequences of the PBL framework. Table 8 summarises the questionnaire data extracts in which students were asked to report the effect of PBL on their use of ATL skills.

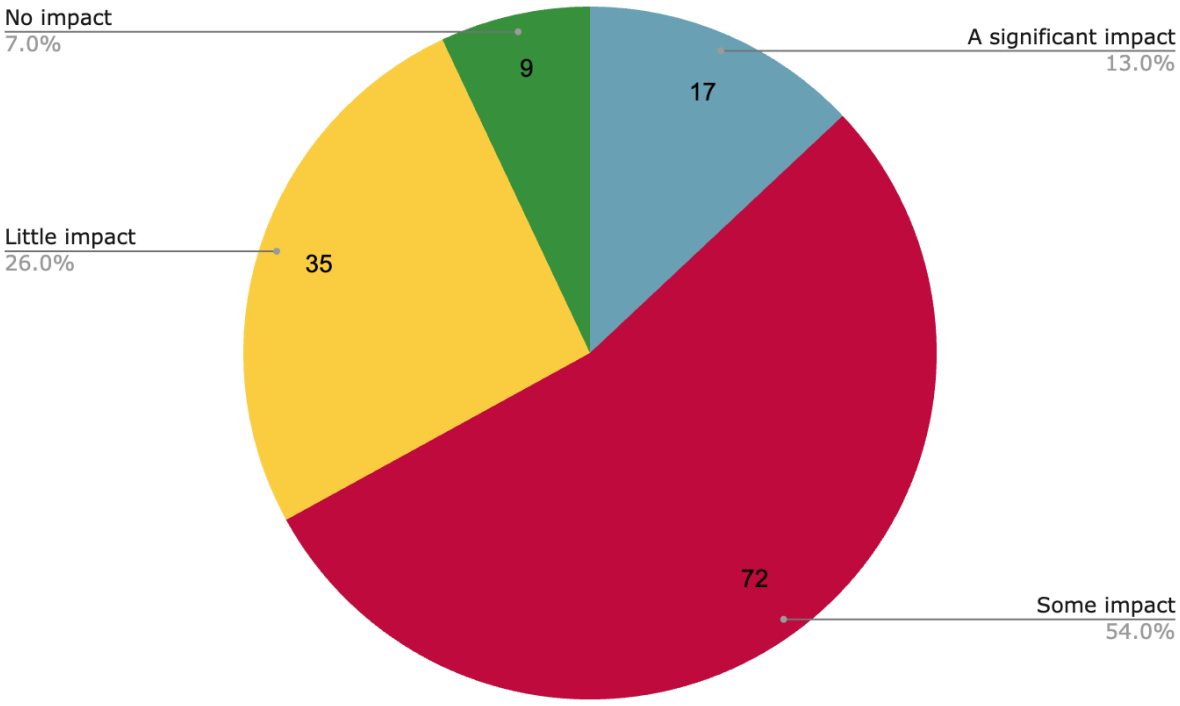

Chart 2: Effect of Project-Based Learning on Use of ATL Skills

This extract demonstrates that over two-thirds of respondents felt that these PBL experiences had at least some impact on the ways in which they developed ATL skills. The question regarding skill development in the PBL experiences was accompanied by an open-ended response question. Table 9 breaks down the responses from the 73 (of 89) students who opted to add a response about how these experiences had a significant or some impact on their use of skills.

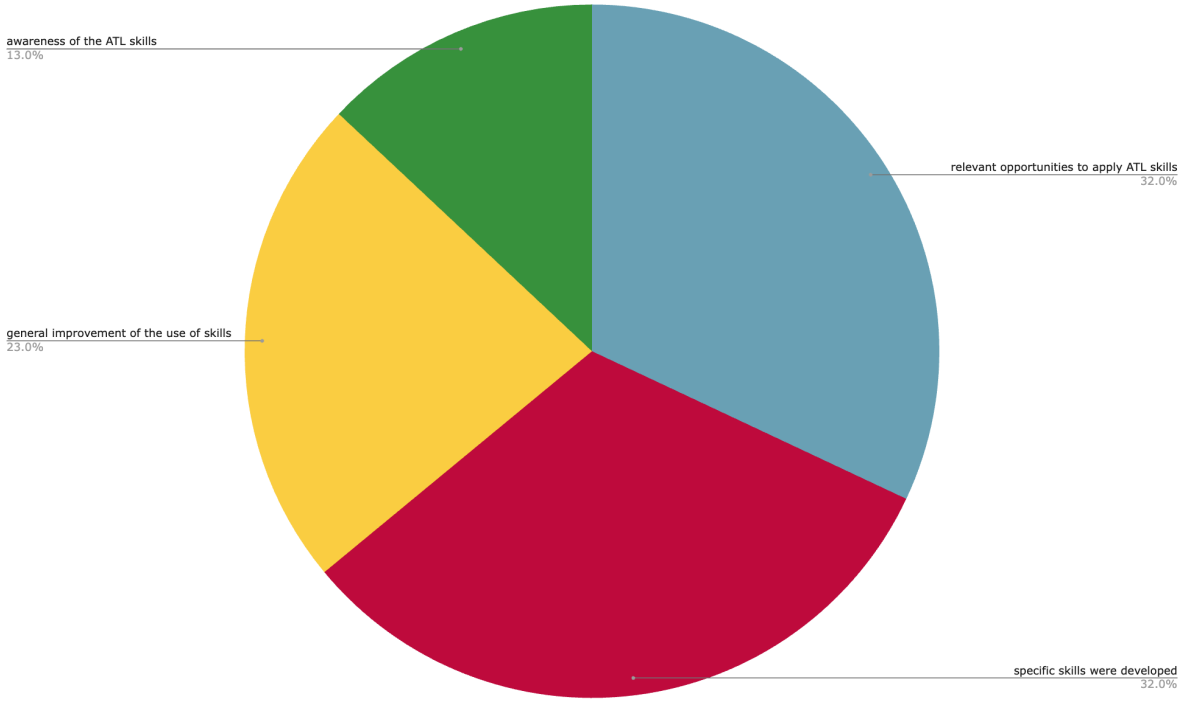

Chart 3: Reasons attributed to greater use of ATL skills in subject-area classes

Of the 23 responses related to the development of specific skills, organisation was most often cited as a skill that had improved, with communication, self-management and collaboration also mentioned by multiple respondents. Another 23 respondents cited relevant opportunities to apply ATL skills within the project-based learning context as having a positive impact on their use of these skills. Student responses included references to the use of skills in independent projects, collaborative tasks and subject-area courses as improved as a result of the project-based learning experiences. The 17 students who made comments referring to their general improvement of the use of skills noted that having a specific opportunity and allocated time for application and immersion was helpful, referred to the role teachers played in providing guidance and identified the value of explicit instruction around these skills. Of the 10 students who indicated that PBL experiences increased their awareness of the skills, they mentioned increased recognition of all five skills areas and increased ability to apply them with intention.

Across all questionnaire responses, 58 students spoke to the ways in which they were able to develop their ATL skills through project-based learning experiences. During his interview, Michael highlighted the role of project-based learning in developing his ATL skills:

> I think [PBL] more impacts what you do in school, because it's more often than not...that you'll develop these ATL skills during [PBL] and then you'll apply those to actual school, rather than you learn those skills in your classes and then apply that to [PBL].

The authenticity of PBL learning experiences was clear to Michael, and his comment highlights the ideal state in which students contextualise their learning and then feel prepared to transfer skills and understandings across various contexts.

In the following comment, Eliza's comment provided a unique perspective, which was the explicit connection between elements of culture that were presented in 5.1 and her engagement with the societal context of PBL:

> [In PBL] I have to work in a group of people that I usually don't work with...I don't have really any good friends in my group, or in the whole dragonflies TV [team]...[O]ne of the reasons I decided to do dragonfly TV is so I could work with different people because if I'm always with my friends then I'll always feel safe...it's good to meet new people, because I love talking with people.

Her comments link the sense of community and culture that comes from shared experiences to the societal framework within which she was learning.

In contrast to the responses presented above in Table, 44 questionnaire respondents felt that the project-based learning experiences had a limited or no impact on their use of ATL skills. A number of reasons emerged from those who chose to also include open-ended comments (Table 10).

Number of respondents	**Reason given**
8	did not need ATL skills

5	did not know what ATL skills were or did not learn about them during project-based learning experiences
2	already familiar with ATL skills outside of PBL experiences
7	use ATL skills independently so their experiences did not impact their skill use
4	do not use ATL skills
4	use of ATL skills was the same as it was in subject-area classes
2	PBL had not increased their application, but did help better understand the skills
1	not enough time to develop ATL skills

Table 8: Reasons attributed to limited or no impact of PBL on student use of ATL skills

Table 8 presents examples of open-ended comments students offered on the questionnaire sharing the extent to which they felt that PBL experiences helped them to develop their ATL skills. The distribution of examples reflects the distribution of student responses to this question, with the largest number of students (48%) indicating that the PBL experiences had some impact on their use of ATL skills.

Within regard to both subject-area instruction and PBL experiences, relevance is a subtheme present in the student responses. The ways in which students attribute relevance to the perceived value they place on different learning experiences mirrors previous findings that link relevance to student motivation and engagement (see Frymier and Shulman 1995; Hernandez-Martinez and Vos 2018; Rosenzweig, Wigfield and Eccles 2019). In Table 9, illustrative quotes demonstrating how students view their PBL experiences represent a range of responses with regard to relevance and impact. The relationship between a student's understanding of why they are doing something and the extent to which they think that activity is impactful is another indicator of the influential relationship of society on ego-identity.

Respondent	What effect has project-based learning had on your use of ATL skills?	Why do you say that?
115	A significant impact	I have been able to improve and use my ATL's through communicating with my teacher, collaborating with my friends, creative thinking, etc.
131	A significant impact	my communication skills have grown greatly through debate and shout out loud, also my ability to communicate to others.
132	Some impact	I think that [PBL] has encouraged me to use my ATL skills more, as well as making me think more about it too.
109	Some impact	Some impact because it teaches me that you can learn in many different ways.
33	Some impact	I think that I chose that answer because in [PBL] we do projects that involves ATL skills
45	Some impact	I tend to pick up things individually, and I learn very quickly. ATL class helps me understand what the skills mean and how I can use them to my advantage.
69	Little impact	Because I am slightly more aware of some skills like time management, however it isn't huge to change my habits
81	Little impact	There has not really been a relevant connection and therefore not a huge impact.
73	No impact	I don't feel like I use the ATL's at all in both [PBL] and normal classes
130	No impact	Don't really learn or be focused on ATL skills.

Table 9: Examples of Student Responses Related to Relevance of PBL Experiences

Among those who responded in the questionnaire that they felt PBL experiences had a significant impact on their use of ATL skills, their accompanying open-ended responses tended to identify specific skills that were developed as well as indicate that variety in the ways that they used these skills were important for their learning. Among those who felt there was little to no impact, their open-ended responses noted that they saw a limited connection between PBL experiences and ATL skill usage or practice.

During her interview, Viviana summed up this disconnect when she said:

> ...When we get taught all the skills, whether its self-management or research, I think that even though we're taught them [in PBL], we don't get to put them into action as much as I would like to, um, because it was really just one project and it wasn't integrated into any other classes or situations.

Viviana's comment again emphasises the importance of making the link between input and action clear to students, which has surfaced both in this study and in others related to student motivation. Kokotsaki *et al* (2016) found that it was imperative for teachers to connect learning in the classroom to the lives of their students and that they do so often and in a variety of ways, as this helped increase student motivation to learn and contributed to the development of more independent and self-directed learners. If students remain unclear as to what ATL skills are, why they are being taught in school and how they are relevant to students both now and in the future, it stands to reason that they might detach from the learning experiences in which these skills are taught. Strengthening this connection for students might support expanded independence and self-directedness for all learners.

As a component of the lifeworld, society wields influence over the development of the individual and their identity as a learner. O'Donnell *et al* (2003) highlight the essential role of society within the lifeworld to integrate individual interests into a shared focus. In this study, student participants made similar connections with the framework of the IBMYP, recognising links between their development of ATL skills and the curriculum structures of subject-area and project-based learning. The findings suggest that they were able to see some distinction between school-designed PBL experiences and those that take place in their more traditional IBMYP courses, however in both of these contexts students identified varying levels of confidence with their application of ATL skills. Some felt more inclined towards the structure and focus of skill development in PBL experiences, whilst others felt that they had more meaningful opportunities to apply ATL skills in subject area contexts. Sarid (2017) comments on the extent to which these subject-area delineations are still relevant in a post-modern educational context, considering how a Habermasian lens might impact perceptions about the

gap between knowledge and autonomy within the lifeworld. This research surfaced similar tensions, with no definitive 'right' model rising to the surface for students when it comes to acquiring ATL skills within the stratification of subject areas or within the integration of project based learning experiences. Participants in this study saw differences in the instruction, relevance and application of these skills in subject area and PBL contexts, which had varying degrees of impact on their development as learners depending on the individual.

Regardless of the context within which they felt they developed these skills more effectively, the importance of relevance was inherent as a key factor in their perceived engagement and growth. This correlates with previous research on the role of relevance in student learning (see Frymier and Shulman 1995; Hernandez-Martinez and Vos 2018; Kokotsaki *et al* 2016; Rosenzweig, Wigfield and Eccles 2019) and also reinforces society's influence on ego-identity development within the lifeworld (see O'Donnell *et al* 2003; Wenger 2000). Student responses in this study again indicated an emergent awareness of the ways that societal factors impact the development of one's identity as a learner.

5.3 The Role of Person in the Learning Lifeworld

In this chapter thus far, I have presented findings related to the ways in which culture and society shape student development within the learning lifeworld. After absorbing those external influences, Habermas (1987) asserts that the third element of the lifeworld, person, begins to influence ego-identity formation, explaining that it is through the interactions an individual has within their lifeworld that they become self-knowing persons. Habermas suggests that the lifeworld component of the person is a subjective realm, and that it is through communication with others within one's lifeworld that an individual identity is formed. Habermas refers to the work of Mead (1962) to suggest that the communication that takes place within the areas of culture and society within the lifeworld are what facilitate individuation. In particular, he highlights self-determination and self-realisation as key aspects of ego-identity formation.

These aspects laid out by Habermas directly influenced the identification of themes in this part of the analysis. In Chapter 3, the contextualisation of the lifeworld element of person in this study is specifically framed through the areas of student motivation and self-awareness, or self-regulation, of learning. Both of these features are important aspects of ego-identity development within a secondary school context and provide insights into how and why students become independent and engaged learners. They also provide students with an opportunity for self-reflection, hopefully prompting further ego-identity development through their participation in the study.

5.3.1 Student Motivation

Biesta (2020, 2009) identifies qualification as one key function of education, which he describes as the responsibility of a school to provide its students with the knowledge, skills, understandings, dispositions and critical thinking skills they will need to operate in the world. In their responses, some students recognised the impact those extrinsic factors that aligned with the construct of qualification had on their motivation.

Across both the qualitative and quantitative data sets, students identified different ways in which their development of certain types of skills would positively impact them as learners. This illustrative quote from Octavia highlights one of these types of skill sets, time management, as an area that she wanted to strengthen, directly attaching the benefits of that improvement to her aspirations to complete the IB Diploma:

> Time management [is] the biggest thing I can bring up. Sometimes I feel like I could do the work now and get it over with, but then I never actually do that so [it] piles up, and then considering how the IB has so much work, that's not going to end well. I'm just worried that I'm gonna do what I kind of did this year and just let everything pile up and then not be able to finish it before it's due.

Octavia recognises her limitations in this area, and her desire to develop her skills as a learner are attributed to the curriculum programme she wants to complete rather than an innate sense of self-improvement.

When asked “What are some of your observations about how learning is similar or different from Grade 5 to Grade 6?”, Max responded:

> [Grade 6 is] kind of different cause like you get criterias, and there’s grades...when you’re in Grade 5, you don’t have to pay attention as much as when you’re getting grades, cause it’s more like you have to focus a lot more if you want to get a better grade. So it makes you, like, pay more attention...when I got to secondary, I asked more questions because I really need to get as much information to do everything good. Because [when] you get graded on everything, all your work counts.

Brian echoed this heightened sense of accountability and motivation to improve in certain skill areas now that he was receiving grades:

> …[t]he approaches to learning never really appeared to me as something that's very important when I was in primary because there was not a lot of things that I did that involved them. But now with tests and the grades, you're going to have to make sure that you communicate with your teachers more to say “oh I don't know this,” and to try to get better grades and learn more...I find [ATL skills] more important now because... there's more tests and they're graded.

These three quotes are indicative of what surfaced for more than half of the participants, which was the value of developing ATL skills through the lens of an external motivation: academic success. Howard *et al* (2021, p. 2) define extrinsic motivation as “the psychological state evident when individuals are driven to achieve outcomes separate from the satisfactions inherent in the behavior itself”. They note that there are a number of educational approaches that elevate extrinsic motivators to encourage student achievement, which they categorise into a continuum that includes external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation. They further subdivide these to denote which are controlled types of motivation, that is which require more oversight and which are autonomous types of motivation and can be attended to with increasing independence. Within any of these extrinsic subcategories, some types of external motivation or rewards serve to increase student engagement in a given task.

Their model is presented as a continuum, with intrinsic motivation sitting at the end and falling into the bracketed autonomous types of motivation.

Intrinsic motivation was first used by Harlow (1950) to describe the behaviours of primates. Simply put, intrinsic motivation describes when individuals "engage in activities without needing external prompts or rewards" (Ryan and Deci 2020, p. 118). When learning experiences build on personal passion and interest, students experience increased intrinsic motivation and self-directedness (Ryan and Deci 2017; Ryan and Deci 2020; Howard *et al* 2021). Informed by this research base, an impetus for introducing dedicated project-based learning experiences at Seaside International School was to provide flexible time during which students could develop their own investigations and pursue areas of interest.

As evident in the example questionnaire responses presented in Table 10, students had a variety of perspectives on the extent to which they find the focus of PBL experiences relevant to their own lives, both now and in the future. Several provided specific reasons as to why they felt that explicit skill instruction was or was not relevant to them as learners.

Respondent	**Feeling about Project-Based Learning Experience**	**Comment**
Respondent 33	I like it very much	I really like [PBL] because you get to learn and work on project's of your own choice in class. I also like it because you don't get graded so it is easier to do projects.
Respondent 56	I like it somewhat	I feel like it's useful to have the class to develop skills and to give us a designated time to work on our personal project, however, I don't always enjoy the class NOTE: I feel like [PBL] is a useful class for grade 6 and grade 10...but not necessarily for the other grades.
Respondent 96	I am neutral	Now that we have the choice to choose what project we could like to focus on, I enjoy [PBL] a lot

		more, however I wasn't particularly fond of [PBL] in the beginning of the year as I didn't feel fullfilled from the experience.
Respondent 86	I dislike it somewhat	It's...unstructured and there is no motivation to get the project done on time and to a high quality which is ineffective

Table 10: Motivation for learning in PBL context

This table reflects some of the tensions that exist in schools between traditional metrics of success, often associated with external sources of motivation, and more student-centred practices that strive to inspire intrinsic motivation. Robbins and Aydede (2008) suggest that situated cognition, the understanding that physiological and social factors affect the learner as elements of the learning context, should be taken into account when designing and executing learning experiences for students. However, when a classroom contains both Respondent 33, who is motivated by a highly flexible learning environment and Respondent 86, who craves structure to support their individual growth, it can seem almost impossible for teachers to authentically meet both of these students' needs at one time. Secondary school teachers are often under pressure to cover extensive amounts of content, meaning that innovative practises which provide choice to students might go unacknowledged and unrecognised by administrators and teachers may be less likely to provide this choice to students (Jensen and Reichl 2012). These student comments reflect the realities of the classrooms that teachers walk into each day, where the pressures to meet external demands might sit in conflict with the research on what makes for effective practice.

Choice in learning was seen as both novel and valuable; participants viewed this opportunity to direct their own learning as something they would like to do more of in their other classes. Ryan and Deci (2020) assert that by providing self-determined learning experiences, teachers can encourage students to become more intrinsically motivated and more invested in their learning. The comments made by students reinforced their own awareness of the role that choice played in their inclination to or not to engage in PBL experiences.

5.3.2 Self-Awareness of Strengths and Limitations

In this study, one of the areas of focus of the role of person in the learning lifeworld of students was student motivation. The other is student self-awareness of strengths and limitations. Increasingly, educators are striving to create environments that support competency-based learning for their students and invite students to monitor their competencies with increasing independence. Ryan and Deci (2020) found that students who are striving for competence, or mastery, develop a sense that they can be successful and will continue to develop as learners over time. They identify that environments that are effectively structured, lessons that appropriately challenge students to grow and teachers who provide meaningful feedback have the greatest opportunity to nurture competency in learners. In Chapter 2, features of international schools were presented and analysed that suggest considerations of student transience, heritage language and cultural context can be particularly important for teachers to consider as they seek to develop independent learners.

Throughout this chapter, reference has been made to the ATL skills that are a core component of the IBMYP framework. In Chapter 5.1, data was analysed and presented that showed the influence of culture on the development of ATL skills, and in Chapter 5.2 this process was replicated to demonstrate the influence of society on ATL skill development. In the questionnaire, students were asked to reflect on their familiarity with each of the 13 skill subsets present in the ATL structure detached from external influences. In this data extract, several overall trends were noticeable (Chart 4). Over 50% of respondents in each subgroup reported that self-management, organisation, reflection, research, creative thinking and communication skills were familiar to them. These are skills that are explicitly taught in several IBMYP subject-area courses and are also prominent in the school's project-based learning programme. Self-management and communication skills, both of which were familiar to over 75% of respondents in each subgroup, transcend individual subject areas and are deemed essential for success in most formal school systems, thus it is to be expected that students identified them as most familiar on the questionnaire.

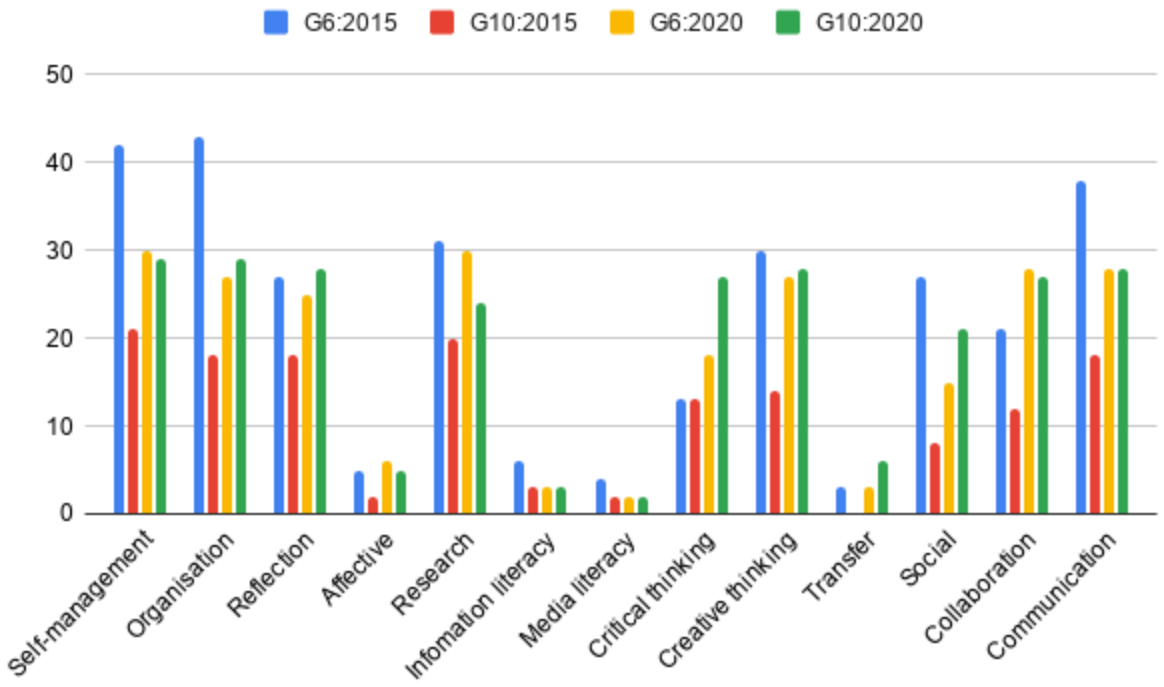

Chart 4: Familiarity with Each of the 13 ATL Skill Areas

Information literacy, media literacy, affective and transfer skills were reported as familiar to less than 10% of all subgroup respondents, however it is difficult to draw conclusions as to why these were markedly low as there was no opportunity for open-ended responses included with this question. Considering the limitations presented in Chapter 4.7, it could be that students did not have ample context to interpret these terms. For example, the term 'affective' might also have been misleading for some respondents as affective skill development is often a focus of advisory sessions and wellbeing classes and is more frequently broken into sub-skills of stress management, resilience and mindfulness. These findings suggest that a greater emphasis on these skills in both subject-area and experiential learning programmes might be considered in future curriculum development. When familiarity with ATL skills data is disaggregated by grade level, Grade 10 students in both 2014-15 and 2019-20 were much more familiar with critical thinking skills than their Grade 6 counterparts. This could be reflective of their standing as students at the end, rather than at the beginning, of their journeys as IBMYP students.

Both open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews provided examples of students reflecting on ATL skills that they did well and others that they felt could be developed. The illustrative examples provided from each data set in Table 11 demonstrate how students are aware of the types of learning experiences that might enhance their acquisition of skills and challenge their current capabilities.

Respondent 131	at times i get a bit confused and frustrated and in the ones i've done so far i have been pushed out of my comfort zone, but a personal goal of mine is to take opportunities to do things that are out of my comfort zone, get over my fears and through [PBL] i have been able to do things i couldn't before which will help me achieve hopefully great things in the future
Eliza	I think [I have improved in] organisation, Because I've become a bit more organised with my work. And even if I tell my parents I don't have homework it's because I don't want them to worry and I know I could do it in my own time. Without them pestering me and telling me to be organised because I know how to do it--I know how to be organised, but sometimes it's just a little hard.

Table 11: Self-Assessment of ATL Skill Use

In these examples, there is a weaving together of areas for growth and the recognition that growth can be difficult. The comments include words like "confused", "frustrated", "fears", "self sufficiency" and "hard", which in another context might indicate resistance to learning or a decreased desire to strive for improvement. Instead, these students have seen these indicators of stress as potential positives that they can leverage to grow as learners.

During his interview, Jeffrey provided an articulate summative comment on the opportunity that comes through struggle when he said:

> [I]f you learn something on your own or you work on it by yourself, ...you remember it better….The feeling of anxiety and, "Oh my gosh, I have this huge project to do"...it's almost part of it. I feel like working on your own and creating your own project, managing yourself and researching and thinking, organising, those are all the ATL skills, but you do them by yourself. And that way it's

> more independent. You create a better piece at the end, because you've done all this stuff and you understand it better.

Jeffrey suggested that the challenge is actually an essential element of the learning journey. The experience of going through the difficulties of being overwhelmed and having to draw upon a number of skills was what built a learner's confidence and independence moving forward.

According to Ryan and Deci (2020), initiative and ownership are essential to building autonomy for one's actions. The aspiration of building a timetable that protected dedicated time for students to independently and collaboratively pursue their own interests through PBL was fuelled by a desire to increase student autonomy. This sort of learning, however, also needs to be mirrored in subject area classes, where students are immersed in what they view as equal if not more rigorous challenges and inquiries. This reflects the work of Blaschke (2012) and Hase and Kenyon (2000), who emphasise the importance of student self-determination and self-directedness when being required to engage in sophisticated and demanding learning experiences.

In both the questionnaire and interview responses, many students identified both strengths and areas for growth for themselves as learners and were able to nest these comments in the ATL skills that sit at the heart of the IBMYP. As the innermost element of the learning lifeworld, students looked most introspectively at learning when considering their own agency and inclination to independently develop their skills. These findings reflect those of Jeno and Diseth (2014), who assert that increasingly authentic learning experiences support students to find relevance and become more self-determined. The comments of students in this study reflected that they are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically to develop their learning skills, underscoring the importance of elevating opportunities for them to monitor their growth and receive validation of their progress in ways that cater to their needs as learners.

The focus of this research was to gain insights into how students experience culture, society and person within their learning lifeworlds. In defining the parameters of the study, I opted to focus

this lifeworld on that of students at the beginning and end of their time in the IBMYP. I was interested to understand how students experienced society within the learning lifeworld of project-based learning. I wanted to gain insight into how they felt about having project-based learning formally scheduled into their school day, and how valuable they felt this time was to develop their ATL skills. I also wanted to know how they viewed project-based learning in comparison with their subject area courses.

Overall, the responses gathered in this investigation reflect a general level of self-awareness and a commitment to self-advocacy, suggesting that many students at Seaside International School are prepared to engage in dialogue about how to make the teaching and learning of ATL skills more relevant. Bron and Veugelers (2014, p. 129) assert that "students are capable of having an influence in their own education" and that opportunities to engage them in curriculum design should be increased. Going further, Quaglia and Corso (2014) assert that by extending the ways in which students are active participants in the development and design of learning experiences, teachers can increase student engagement and independence as learners.

5.4 Discussion of the Findings through the Lens of System Threat and Colonisation

The theory of communicative action has been shown to have the potential to shape educational policy and practices in a range of areas such as citizenship education, wellbeing and holistic education and self-directed learning (see, for example, Cherryholmes 1981; Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; Ewert 1991; Fleming and Murphy 2010; Lovat 2013; Mezirow 1985; and Regmi 2017). In this chapter, I present an analysis of the data through the themes of teacher influence, role of inclusive and safe environments, experiences in subject-area classes and project-based learning environments, and implications of student motivation and self-awareness to demonstrate how students experience the elements of culture, society, and person within their learning lifeworlds. These themes were selected through reflexive thematic analysis, and I have integrated literature related to each of these areas to support my interpretation of the data. Throughout Chapter 5, the analysis contextualises student experiences firmly within the lifeworld without consideration of the potential impact of system colonisation. This section will

explicitly address the threat of the system and the potential consequences of its colonisation of the lifeworld within an educational context.

With the lifeworld representing the realm of everyday human interaction, at its best it is a place characterised by open, authentic, and rational discourse (Habermas 1984, 1987). In the lifeworld, individuals have the potential to engage in mutual recognition and shared understanding, and through communicative acts actively seek to treat each other as equal participants in their exchanges. In contrast, the system comprises facets of capitalist society that dictate exchanges between actors. Rather than the individuals establishing a balance of power through communicative acts, it is the state and the market, driven by power and money, that determine the types of exchanges that take place in the system.

Towards the end of Volume Two of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987), Habermas revisits the work of Marx, Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno and critiques their views of instrumental rationalisation, their confusion of system and action rationality and the inadequacy of how they separated "the rationalization of action orientations within the framework of a structurally differentiated lifeworld from the expansion of the steering capacity of differentiated social systems (p. 333). Here Habermas also criticises Horkheimer and Adorno's inability to recognise the hierarchy of existence between lifeworld and system. Habermas posits that the rationalisation of worldviews led first to the development of communicative action in the lifeworld and that instrumental action in the system was only possible after the existence of communicative rationality. Through this hierarchy, he establishes the relationship between system and lifeworld as parasitic and warns about the dangers of the system's colonisation of the lifeworld. Habermas then goes further to explicitly address the threat of system colonisation of the education lifeworld and the detrimental effects this can have on the educational process, educators, and learners.

Habermas identifies system influence in educational matters such as the measurement of student achievement and the consequences of poor academic performance, the decisions of

schools that restrict or eliminate the basic rights of an individual through disciplinary means, the subsumption of educational policy and managing child welfare into the government's remit, and the deconstruction of socialisation in schools into administrative tasks. He goes on to cite implications of system colonisation on teachers including limits placed on pedagogical freedom and teacher initiative, pressure to inflate grades and mandates to deliver curriculum determined by politicians rather than fellow educators. Each undertaking he names is done with the system, rather than the individual or community, in mind.

In addition to considering the implications of colonisation for education through the holistic lens of the lifeworld, it is useful to also explore the consequences of colonisation through the discrete lens of each lifeworld element. Habermas (1987) presents a model for reproduction of the lifeworld through these elements, which is dependent on each element's replication and also presents an interrelated process of replication. Immediately after this, he presents the "manifestations of crisis when reproduction processes are disturbed (p. 143). He describes these as "pathologies", highlighting the negative impacts on each element if reproduction cannot freely take place. Table 12 presents these manifestations, aligning them with their respective lifeworld elements and research themes.

Habermasian Lifeworld Component	**Manifestations of Crises**	**Thematic Focus in the Analysis**
Culture	Loss of meaning Withdrawal of legitimation Crisis in orientation and education	Influence of teachers Inclusive and safe environments
Society	Unsettling of collective identity Anomie Alienation	Experiences in subject-area classes Experiences in project-based environments
Person	Rupture of tradition Withdrawal of motivation Psychopathologies	Student motivation Student self-awareness

Table 12: Lifeworld Element Crises Aligned with Research Themes

The alignment of these manifestations to the themes is at times fluid, given that students, teachers and organisations might all experience the negative impacts of colonisation within each component. It stands to reason, for example, that the manifestation of these crises for students will traverse all three components rather than be limited to one component, and that the nature of relationships between students and teachers makes it difficult to separate the impacts on these actors into isolated analyses. As a result, the discussion that follows will be organised around the lifeworld elements and themes rather than through the lens of student experiences, acknowledging that the interconnected nature of the lifeworld creates overlap across each component and theme.

5.4.1 The Consequences of Colonisation for Culture

For culture, the colonisation of the lifeworld has the potential to lead to a loss of meaning, withdrawal of legitimation and invoke a crisis in orientation and education. Lifeworld actors might begin to question what they are doing, why they are doing it as well as the systems and structures impelling them to act in certain ways. In this study, the themes related to culture are the influence of teachers and Inclusive and safe environments.

As school culture and student learning are influenced by teachers (see, for example, Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; Hattie 2003; Sergiovanni 2000; Stronge, Ward and Grant 2011), it would follow that a teacher's capacity to cultivate dynamic learning environments and contribute to positive school cultures will be inhibited if the system is free to colonise the lifeworld. Habermas (1987) states that for teachers operating under system colonisation, they might experience disenfranchisement and lessened professional responsibility, unrealistic expectations to meet external demands rather than serve the students in their classes and a lack of clarity about what they can do without adverse consequences. Milley (2008, p. 67) reiterates the possibilities that teachers might internalise gaps in programming as personal failures, "...leading to crises of motivation whereby they detach themselves from their academic identities, educational endeavours, or the labour market". These are all fundamental

components of the culture of education, and a deterioration of teacher purpose and trust in the educational system will have an adverse impact on students and their learning.

The second theme related to culture is that of inclusive and safe environments. One critique of Habermas' theory is its dependency on verbal communication as the means of achieving equitable exchanges and how this has been perceived to marginalise the differently abled (see, for example, Dahlberg 2005; Pezdek and Doliński 2017; Weinberg 2007). The inclusivity of all individuals within a lifeworld can be a challenge in the best of circumstances and with colonisation becomes an even greater challenge. Weinberg (2007, p. 82) anticipates the threat of colonisation when she asks "...what consequences might flow for Habermasian theory if in fact our efforts to sustain the assumption of communicative competence are not just temporarily interrupted but quite simply fail over the long term." For those already marginalised by the system because they are perceived to be unable to contribute to the consolidation of power or generation of wealth, sustained colonisation might so fundamentally disrupt the reproductive process of the lifeworld that they become permanently outcast. If an inclusive and safe learning community is fundamental to student success, the deterioration of the lifeworld culture might first impact those already most impacted by imbalances of power.

5.4.2 The Consequences of Colonisation for Society

The colonisation of the lifeworld threatens society through the unsettling of collective identity, anomie and alienation. The social fabric of the lifeworld deteriorates under duress, surfacing ethical dilemmas and disrupting the operating models that bring cohesion and coherence to lifeworld actors. In this study, student experiences in subject-area classes and in project-based learning environments are the themes related to society.

Limitations on teachers' ability to personalise the curriculum and a sense of curbed innovation in planning, instructing and assessing are areas addressed by Habermas in his commentary on the threat of colonisation (1987). He acknowledges that processes that should exist in schools that dictate educational programming, curriculum design, instructional priorities and

assessment expectations are increasingly outsourced to governmental bodies or private enterprises. Individual organisations have become increasingly restricted as to what decisions they can make to meet the needs of their communities (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2006; Murphy 2009; Regmi 2017). How schools self-govern in the face of conflict or other challenges may be severely limited or even truncated completely by governmental oversight. In asserting that "[e}ducation has the task of ensuring that democratic skills and processes are handed on from one generation to the next…[as well as] the creation of classrooms that provide an experience of democratic investigation, critique, and collaborative action planning and implementation," Fleming and Murphy (2009, p. 203) highlight the responsibility of society to replicate social norms and moral obligations for lifeworld members. The imposition of standardised curricula and teaching methods can limit teachers' autonomy and a school's capacity to provide this type of education to its students.

Teachers feel that processes to improve practice, like reflection, are technical and top down (Hilal, 2021). This technical approach can lead to a narrowed curriculum, where teachers may feel compelled to teach to produce outcomes rather than to develop holistic individuals. Deakin Crick and Joldersma (2006), Kemmis (1998) and Regmi (2017) consider colonisation of the lifeworld as fundamentally disruptive to achieving the philosophical aims of education. Sarid (2017) describes threats to the system such as the commodification of knowledge, the capitalistic erosion of personal stories, perspectives and reflections as core to curriculum and programme development, the diminished role of civic responsibility in society and corporate financial gain and power concentration as the drivers of technological development, explaining how these adversely impact lifelong learning, transformative learning, citizenship learning and intersubjective learning respectively. Whether in a subject-area classroom or through a project-based learning experience, the systems that support contextualised curriculum, instructional strategies that ensure differentiated access for all learners and assessment practices intended to support ongoing, spiralling learning from year to year are the tenets of society that keep learning viable and fit-for-purpose within a school and are worthy of protection from colonisation.

5.4.3 The Consequences of Colonisation for Person

Individuals within the lifeworld are threatened by colonisation because it can result in the rupture of tradition, withdrawal of motivation and manifestation of psychopathologies. The capacity for the individual to be efficacious and productive within their spheres of influence can be threatened, and potentially eliminated, by the system subcomponents of power and money. Student motivation and student self-awareness are the themes selected for this study with regard to the lifeworld element of person.

Habermas (1987) directly positions the threat posed by the system in relation to the basic human rights of students. Specifically, he names educational measures like retention and examination results, and disciplinary consequences determined by a school or department of education, as clear examples of the system eroding individual rights within the lifeworld. Whilst the application of the theory of communicative action in uncolonised lifeworlds can foster exchanges that lead to more equity in classrooms and a stronger sense of self for students (Dann 2015; Giri 2019; Huhtala and Holma 2019; McIntosh 1994), increased bureaucratic control can jeopardise the conditions in which authentic communicative action can even take place in educational settings. Kemmis (1998) talks about implications of colonisation on the conditions under which students learn, and how adverse learning conditions might perpetuate the power imbalances that would in the lifeworld be addressed through communicative acts. If students become more concerned with test outcomes than with meaningful dialogue and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, motivation could decrease and their development of critical thinking skills as well as a genuine love for learning could be hindered.

Giroux (1988, p. 5) writes that "[t]he moral, political, and social technologies that structure and drive the imperatives of public schooling are drawn from the modernist view of the *individual* student and educator as the guarantor of the delicate balance between private and public life." The responsibility of individuals to perpetuate cultural and societal values is in essence the model for lifeworld reproduction posited by Habermas (1987). It is through both individual

motivation and self-awareness that actors can perpetuate the qualities that make unique, and unifying, their specific lifewords. The commodification of education which turns it into a product rather than an individual right, might decrease the attention schools give to nurturing self-awareness through personalised instruction. A school that does not prioritise programming intended to develop interpersonal and reflective skills in its students could miss out on delivering communal and moral aspects of education (McIntosh 1994). Particularly in international schools (see sections 2.2 and 2.3), there is an inherently competitive element that requires schools to vie for students and funding. When enrollment dips or currency fluctuations impact how far school fees can stretch, decisions that would normally be made in the best interest of the student might instead be made in the best interest of the institution.

5.5 Summary

In the theory of communicative action, Habermas (1984; 1987) posits that it is through meaningful and equitable interactions with others within their lifeworlds that an individual develops a sense of self that eventually leads to the formation of identity. The three components of the lifeworld—culture, society and person—formed the framework within which the data generated through this study was analysed and determined the themes through which they were interpreted. This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the data generated over the two phases of this study within this framework. Both qualitative and quantitative data sets were used to illustrate how students articulated the influences of culture, society and person on their identities as learners. Whilst trends were evident in the data with regard to how students experienced the lifeworld elements within the context of Seaside International School, each theme also included a range of responses and perspectives, underscoring the unique experience each individual has within a shared lifeworld such as a school.

A specific focus of this study was to give voice to student experiences within the landscape of Habermasian theory in education. In Chapter 3.4, I presented a number of studies that have applied Habermas' theory within an educational context. Fleming and Murphy (2010) cite the

relevance of Habermasian theory in the construction of more democratic classrooms and Sarid (2007) highlights the potential to empower learners by developing their communicative competence. And yet the application of Habermas in the educational sector has predominantly been focussed on programme development, pedagogical approaches and teacher feedback that elevates the voices of teachers and administrators (see Dann 2016; Gosling 2000; Sergiovanni 2000). If one accepts that key function of education is "developing and reproducing traditions, solidarities, and identities that would provide the students resources for mutual understanding and consensus in an increasingly plural society" (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007, p. 83), better understanding the learning lifeworld that students inhabit might provide an insight into how to more effectively achieve this function. Habermas (1987, p. 403) concludes *The Theory of Communicative Action* by contending that "[i]t may be that this provocative threat [of the system], this challenge that places the symbolic structures of the lifeworld as a whole in question, can account for why they have become accessible to us." This call to action to protect the lifeworld, and in particular the elements of culture, society and person, from system colonisation requires schools as lifeworlds to take a proactive approach to combating this colonisation. This study aimed to explore this point, addressing a gap in the literature with regard to how the theory of communicative action might be applied to gather student perspectives on the influences of the lifeworld elements on their identities as learners.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I present my conclusions, including how this study has contributed to the development of teaching practice and policy decisions at Seaside International School, to the academic community and educational literature and to my professional identity.

Chapter 6: Concluding the Study and Moving Forward

This thesis presents an exploration of students' Habermasian lifeworlds. Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the study, where I articulated my professional motivation to undertake a doctorate and provided an overview of the thesis. In Chapter 2 I presented literature that established the research context of international schools, the landscape of international education in Hong Kong and the curriculum framework of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP). Chapter 3 described Habermas' theory of communicative action, the role of the lifeworld and the lifeworld elements of culture, society and person and how these were applied to this study as its theoretical framework. In Chapter 4, I introduced the research question and set forth the ethnographic case study methodology and research design. Chapter 5 presented the findings through the lenses of culture, society and person and discussed these findings in relation to the relevant literature.

In this concluding chapter, I reflect on the overarching outcomes of this study and the implications for practice and policy, the academic community and my professional identity. I have positioned the contributions of this study around the elements of the research question, which focussed on exploring how IBMYP students at an international school in Hong Kong experience culture, society and person within their Habermasian learning lifeworlds. I first describe how the study has contributed to practice and policy at the case study school, Seaside International School, sharing how its curriculum and programmes have been influenced by this research and continue to evolve through the consideration of themes surfaced in the study. I then explain how this research has contributed to the academic community by addressing gaps in the literature focussed on international schools, international education in Hong Kong, the implementation of the IBMYP in international school contexts and the application of Habermas' theory of communicative action to explore student lifeworlds. I then offer thoughts on possible future inquiries in the areas of international education, IBMYP curriculum development, student experiences and the application of Habermasian theory in education. Finally, I offer a brief reflection on how this research has contributed to my professional identity, which is further explored in Document 6.

6.1 Contributions to Practise and Policy

In addition to wanting to develop my skills as a researcher, one of the key purposes of undertaking this study was to conduct research within my own school setting. This was an appeal of conducting an ethnographic case study, through which I could expand my identity as a researcher and acknowledge my role within the research setting. As a school leader and classroom teacher, I wanted to contribute to my community's approach to implementing the still relatively new IBMYP framework and to our collective understanding of how students experienced that implementation, specifically with regard to the skill development. During the course of the study, I regularly shared updates on my progress with the Secondary School leadership team and data at intermediate points was used to refine ATL instruction at the school. The findings of this research have been applied to curriculum development and instructional approaches across Grades 6 to 10 at Seaside International School. As a result of this study, the Secondary School has increased opportunities for students to create self-directed learning experiences based on skills they feel need further development both now and in the future. Holistic programme evolutions and alterations such as a dedicated chunk of time for project-based experiences each day have been introduced, and outreach and professional development for teachers, parents and students has been informed by the literature review and references used in the context of this study.

This study's approach to inviting students to comment on their experiences within the elements of their learning lifeworld has elevated the value the community places on student voice within the curriculum. Mills and Morton (2013, pp. 161-162) explain the empathy involved in ethnographic research as "not the easy assumption of shared feelings and experiences, but rather the more difficult task of trying to understand other people's experiences on their own terms". This was one of the strongest motivations for me in undertaking this specific project, and also one of the greatest challenges of the process.

As a researcher, I have had to look deeply into the student experience not with the goal of trying to position that within a standardised context, rather to validate the context of the

students themselves. Stake (1995, p. 8) reiterates the importance of honouring the value and importance of the specific case when he writes:

> The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants themselves provides a rationale for this type of small-scale research that is positioned within a single school context. It gives voice to these individuals, and legitimises the perspectives that they can offer on their daily experiences within their learning lifeworlds. In an international school context, this can be a particularly valuable approach to help researchers deeply explore the unique context of their school setting. Despite having over 50 international schools in Hong Kong, each community is distinctly different from the next. For schools that want to strengthen their curricular frameworks and internal practices, using Habermas' theory of communicative action as a lens with which to explore their own contexts could be a particularly powerful tool in establishing progressive practices and policies. This theory explicitly addresses power through communication, and underscores the importance of seeking parity between speakers as a means for reaching mutual understanding within an exchange. In advocating for the creation and expansion of inclusive and equitable schools, Ainscow (2020) reiterates the importance of contextualising inclusivity and equity as the philosophical bases for policy changes. If applied with an eye to deeply understand a community's learning lifeworld, the theory of communicative action can invite teachers to be proactive in modelling and nurturing equitable classroom environments for all students through their communicative acts.

This study has helped me to gain confidence in advocating for expanded opportunities for students to be authentic voices for change at Seaside International School, inviting them to serve on traditionally adult-only committees and engaging them as leaders in new initiatives that they will present to faculty and parents. Students have led conversations within the

community related to diversity, equity and inclusion, designed a process for allocating the funds raised through student service initiatives and created a framework for portfolio-based assessment in the upper Secondary School. Whilst not related to the content explored in this study, the increased visibility of and respect for students' perspectives has been elevated, providing greater opportunity for students to shape the impacts of culture, society and person within their learning lifeworld.

6.2 Contributions to Academic Community

In Chapter 2.4, I positioned the context of Seaside International School as one of over 1,350 schools worldwide that implements the IBMYP curriculum. Whilst the number of schools implementing the IBMYP worldwide continues to grow, research on the experiences of students within the programme remains limited. This study offers insight into how students engage with the teaching and learning of approaches to learning skills in both traditional subject areas and project-based contexts.

The Habermasian lens placed over student lifeworlds offers IBMYP schools an understanding of how culture, society and person feature into the learning experiences of their students. My application of the Habermasian theory is unique within the educational sector, as it addresses a gap in the literature related to student perspectives on the learning lifeworld. This can make it particularly informative for educators who want to focus on student voice as the entry point into the process by which policy and/practical decisions are made.

As an organisation, the IBO is historically rooted in the international school community and prides itself on promoting a mission of international mindedness (IBO 2022). Despite this, the majority of research on the implementation of the IBMYP as been conducted in schools that are a part of national governmental systems, rather than independent, non-governmental international schools. This study is contextualised within an international school setting, which provides information that might be of particular interest to IBMYP programmes situated in international schools, both in Hong Kong and globally.

Of particular significance is this study's contribution to the development of what I might consider a dual application of Habermas' theoretical framework, which has influenced the design and execution of this study in two ways. The Habermasian lifeworld, in which communicative action serves to form ego-identity, consists of three elements: culture, society and person. The metaphor that has surfaced in my mind is that of constructing a house: with the theory of communicative action as the foundation, these three lifeworld elements have provided the pillars around which the frame of this study has been developed. The contextualisation of relevant literature, overarching research design, selection of methodology, development of data collection tools and thematic analysis of the data have all been walls that have formed around these pillars, shaping the various rooms that have become the areas within which thinking, analysis and reflection have had space and time to flourish. The roof that sits over the entire structure is the outcome of the use of the theoretical framework, that of researcher and participant entering into communicative acts with the intention to arrive at shared understandings.

Murphy and Bamber (2012) note that relative to other theorists, particularly those whose work had a specific focus on education, the work of Habermas has not had the same presence in educational research. In selecting Habermas' theory of communicative action as the theoretical framework for this study, I am contributing to the body of research that applies his theory in an educational context. Applying the construct of the lifeworld within an international school in Hong Kong context provides unique insights into how students experience culture, society and person as learners in this environment. This application demanded a repositioning and reconsideration of perspectives related to each lifeworld element and invited new knowledge to be created through the eliciting of these perspectives. Through an exploration of how students at Seaside International School experience culture, the unique elements of culture that they find constructive and inhibiting became accessible. Understanding the specific ways in which the IBMYP framework and project-based learning models are experienced by students in this environment shifts the focus away from those delivering the programmes to those receiving it,

elevating the value of student voice through communicative action in the curriculum and programme revision feedback cycle. Gaining insight into how Seaside International School students see themselves as learners and identify success, not through test scores and university placements and instead through their own sense of efficacy and agency as learners, is a reminder that success in schools be fostered and honed through communicative acts that meet students where they are and serve as a platform for self-directed growth.

6.3 Contributions to Professional Identity

At the outset of this journey, I was most interested in how this study could surface opportunities for engaging students in the processes of programme implementation and curriculum development. As I progressed through the research and overcame various hurdles that I speak to in Document 6, I became increasingly interested in the role that the theory of communicative action, and specifically the construct of the lifeworld, might play in my own educational discourse and innovation.

I worked at Seaside International School for over a decade and held a number of different roles in my time at the school. Throughout these years, I was a part of countless conversations exploring the practises and procedures of formal schooling today and what it will take to evolve these in meaningful and dynamic ways. At a time where the entire educational sector is facing unprecedented disruption, the application of a Habermasian lens on the lifeworld of school might offer new ways of thinking about the social construct of schools.

As a result of conducting this study, I also believe that I am more attuned to the student learning experience. I am greatly appreciative of the opportunity to formalise the role of student voice in the curriculum development process and have used this to shape my ongoing professional priorities and aspirations. I have sought out additional research opportunities, partnering with a local education university to conduct research that focuses on student experiences as a key data source. I hope that my identity as a practitioner-researcher continues to be a driving force in my professional journey.

6.4 Conclusions and Next Steps

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of individual learners through the cultural, social and personal structures that shape their lifeworlds. Before I began my doctorate, my observations as a teacher suggested that there were a number of factors that shaped who a learner became over the course of their time in school and that the more a student understood these influences, the greater their opportunity to leverage them in productive ways. Once I began to explore Habermas' theory, my thinking was consolidated, and I could see how culture, society and person were all important influences on a child's learning journey through formal education. They dictate the contexts within which learning is delivered, the data that a teacher gathers regarding that learning and the mechanisms by which the learner comes to understand her progress towards intended outcomes.

The impetus for this research investigation was my belief that a fundamental purpose of schooling is to engage students in learning that will help them develop their Habermasian ego-identities intellectually, reflexively and socially (Miller 2010; Kaufman 2013; Pring 2013). Effectively designed teaching and purposeful instructional practice can serve to motivate adolescent learners (Hattie, Biggs and Purdie 1996) and a dynamic learning environment has the potential to positively and significantly impact their learning journeys (Tishman, Jay and Perkins 1993; Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck 2007; Jeno and Diseth 2014). These factors provide learners with the best chance to finish secondary school with an individuated ego-identity intact as they transition into adulthood.

To support the transition from maintaining an identity based on socialisation to one based on individuation, the independence with which students can apply learned skills and processes is essential. Instruction that integrates contextual knowledge, social integration and personal identity would potentially create individuals who are grounded in their own perspective and have the moral capacity to positively contribute to society at large (Habermas 1987; Habermas 1991; Habermas, Lennox and Lennox 1964). Within the larger community of a school, the theory of communicative action suggests that each member will exist within a shared as well as

a unique lifeworld. As a result, this individual will undertake a personal learning journey related to, and distinctly different from, other members of the same community. In order to actively shape ego-identity development alongside communal growth that will occur within the lifeworld of the classroom, adolescents should be provided with self-directed opportunities to solve complex problems and engage in thinking routines as both are essential aspects of human cognitive and ego-identity development.

Habermas' theory of communicative action is based on mutually beneficial linguistic exchanges in which participants are seeking to understand one another as equals. To further strive for a theory of communicative action that serves to emancipate students within their learning lifeworlds, I believe there is space for researchers to study how the use of Habermasian language by educators might reduce the power inequality within teacher/student relationships. Another question left unanswered by this study is how students regard their school and non-school lifeworlds as competing or complementary spaces within which they develop their ego identities, one which could be worthy of further exploration.

Habermas reinforces these boundaries that are placed on members of a lifeword as "communicative actors are always moving *within* the horizon of their lifeworld; they cannot step outside of it (Habermas 1987, p. 126). The integration of ways of knowing in Habermas' theory into curriculum design provides an opportunity for empowerment of the learner within her lifeworld context and the opportunity to understand aspects of the (Lovat 2013). And yet, it is only when a shared understanding of that context is obtained by all members does the theory stand as valid in its application (Long 2017). By inviting students to share their experiences as learners, it is possible to elevate the impact of Habermasian theory in educational research by giving voice to those within a lifeworld and shifting the internalisation of lifeworld experiences from the adult to the child.

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Appendices

Please see appendices attached on following pages.

Appendix A - Phase 1 Questionnaire

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to take part in a project to learn more about how we teach Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills at [redacted]. The following questionnaire will ask you to share your opinions on ATL skills in your subject area classes as well as your ATL class.

If you are willing to be involved, please complete the questionnaire and return it to your teacher at the end of the class period. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering the questions, please feel free to stop and your questionnaire will be thrown away.

You are asked to put your name on this sheet of paper so that you can be contacted for an interview, but your name will not be shared beyond that process. If you are contacted for an interview and do not want to participate, you can refuse the invitation.

Kind regards,

Ms. Jennifer Swinehart

Name:

Please circle the option that best describes your answer to each question below.

Age:	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Grade:	6	7	8	9	10			
Gender:	M	F						

Subject Area Classes

Which Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills are you familiar with?
Please circle all that apply.

Communication	Research	Collaboration
Organisation	Self-management	Information literacy
Reflection	Critical thinking	Affective
Transfer	Media literacy	Creative thinking
Social		

What subject area(s) are you most interested in? Please circle all that apply

English	Mathematics
Mandarin/French/Spanish	Visual arts/Drama/Design
Humanities	Music
Science	Physical Education

How often do you talk about ATL skills in your subject area classes?

1	2	3	4	5
Very rarely				Very Often

How often do you use ATL skills in your subject area classes?

1	2	3	4	5
Very rarely				Very Often

How well do you think you use ATL skills in your subject area classes?

1	2	3	4	5
Very poorly				Very Well

ATL Class

How do you feel about ATL class?

- I like it very much
- I like it somewhat
- I am neutral
- I dlislike it somewhat
- I dislike it very much

What makes you choose that answer?

What effect does the ATL class have on your use of ATL skills?

- A significant impact
- Some impact
- Little impact
- No impact

What makes you choose that answer?

Of the skills listed below, which ones do you feel you have improved in ATL class? Please circle all that apply.

Communication	Research	Collaboration
Organisation	Self-management	Information literacy
Reflection	Critical thinking	Affective
Transfer	Media literacy	Creative thinking
Social		

Appendix B - Phase 2 Questionnaire

[redacted] Questionnaire

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to take part in a project to learn more about how we teach Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills at [redacted] The following questionnaire will ask you to share your experiences with using ATL skills in [redacted] as well as in your subject area classes.

If you are willing to be involved, please complete the questionnaire that will follow. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering the questions, please feel free to stop and close the questionnaire.

You are asked to put your name on the form if you are willing to be contacted for an interview, but your name will not be shared beyond that process. If you are contacted for an interview and do not want to participate, you can refuse the invitation.

Kind regards,
Ms. Jennifer Swinehart

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* Required

1. Optional: Name [Please include if you are interested in participating in an interview]

_____

2. Grade Level: *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Grade 6
- ◯ Grade 7
- ◯ Grade 8
- ◯ Grade 9
- ◯ Grade 10

3. Which Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills are you familiar with? Please select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Self-management
- [ ] Organization
- [ ] Reflection
- [ ] Affective
- [ ] Research
- [ ] Information literacy
- [ ] Media literacy
- [ ] Critical thinking
- [ ] Creative thinking
- [ ] Transfer
- [ ] Social
- [ ] Collaboration
- [ ] Communication

4. How often do you talk about ATL skills in your hkaFLOW sessions?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very rarely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very often

5. Please explain why you selected that response:

6. How often do you use ATL skills in your hkaFLOW experiences?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very rarely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very often

7. Please explain why you selected that response:

8. How does this compare to your use of ATL skills in your subject area classes?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
I use ATLs more in subject areas	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	I use ATLs more in hkaFLOW

9. Please explain why you selected that response:

10. What role does a teacher play in your use of ATL skills during hkaFLOW?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very minor	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very major

11. Please explain why you selected that response:

12. How closely do you monitor your use of ATL skills during [redacted]?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very rarely	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very often

13. Please explain why you selected that response:

14. How do you feel about [redacted]?

Mark only one oval.

- I like it very much
- I like it somewhat
- I am neutral
- I dlislike it somewhat
- I dislike it very much

15. Please explain why you selected that response:

16. What effect has hkaFLOW had on your use of ATL skills?

Mark only one oval.

- A significant impact
- Some impact
- Little impact
- No impact

17. Please explain why you selected that response:

18. Of the skills listed below, which ones do you feel have improved in [redacted]? Please select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Self-management
- [ ] Organization
- [ ] Reflection
- [ ] Affective
- [ ] Research
- [ ] Information literacy
- [ ] Media literacy
- [ ] Critical thinking
- [ ] Creative thinking
- [ ] Transfer
- [ ] Social
- [ ] Collaboration
- [ ] Communication

Appendix C - Sample Questionnaire Data Spreadsheet Extract

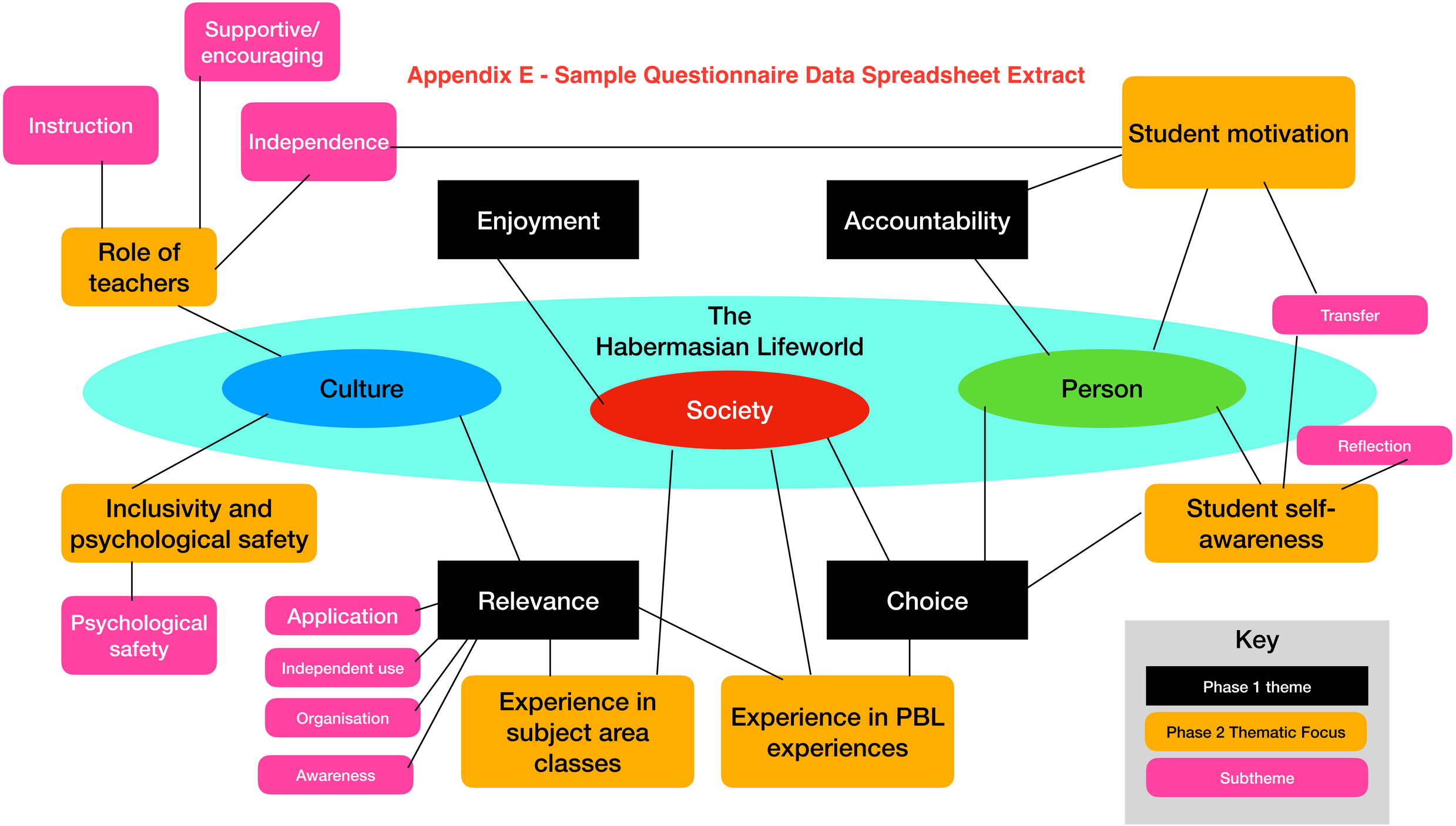
CODE	Grade Level:	Which ATL skills are you familiar with?	Which Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills are you familiar with? Please select all that apply.													How often do you talk about ATL skills in your hkaFLOW sessions? Please explain why you selected that response:	How often do you use ATL skills in your hkaFLOW experiences? Please explain why you selected that response:	How does this compare to your use of ATL skills in your subject area classes? Please explain why you selected that response:	What role does a teacher play in your use of ATL skills during hkaFLOW? Please explain why you selected that response:	How closely do you monitor your use of ATL skills during hkaFLOW? Please explain why you selected that response:	How do you feel about hkaFLOW? Please explain why you selected that response:		What effect has hkaFLOW had on your use of ATL skills? Please explain why you selected that response:	Of the skills listed below, which ones do you feel have improved in hkaFLOW? Please select all that apply.	Of the skills listed below, which ones do you feel have improved in hkaFLOW? Please select all that apply.											
		Please select all that apply.	self-man	org	ref	aff	rsch	info lit	med lit	crit think	crea think	trans l	socia l	colla b	com m	1 = very rarely 5 = very often	1 = very rarely 5 = very often	1 = sub area 5 = hkaFLOW	1 = very minor 5 = very major	1 = very rarely 5 = very often			Please select all that apply.	self-man	org	ref	aff	rsch	info lit	med lit	crit think	crea think	trans l	socia l	colla b	com m
9		Research, Creative thinking, Communication					1				1				1	Because I am new here and I don't know what it is. If I ever talk about it, it is because someone dragged me to talk about it	2 Because my hkaFLOW is now self studying.	Because I think classes are all more important that self studing	2 Because my hkaFLOW is now self studing.	2 Because my hkaFLOW is now self studing.	I am neutral	Because i don't dislike nor do i like it	Some impact	cause i found out using my ATL skills in hkaFLOW a lot more effective than i thought it was.	Self-management, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1				1			1	1		1	1
10	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1			1	1			1	1	Our teachers remind us of what ATL skills are expected of us, but we don't talk about this every lesson.	2 Sometimes you just forget about them and go off track.	I use ATL in subjects because right now in my hkaFLOW project I'm writing a book so only a few 1 of the ATL's aply.	1 What I'm doing right now is a personal project so they're not really involved.	1 Because I don't use them that often.	I like it somewhat	Because it's fun and it shows independance.	Some impact	Some impact because it teachers me that you can learn in many different ways.	Organization, Research, Information literacy, Creative thinking			1		1	1			1		
14	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Transfer, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1 Because i heard them before.	1 Because i usually just make slide shows and do video edditing.	1 IT IS WHAT IT IS.	3 IT IS WHAT IS IS.	2 IT IS WHAT IT IS.	I like it somewhat	BECAUSE		IDK DIDNT SELECT	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking	1	1	1		1			1	1			
17	6	Self-management, Organization, Research, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1			1				1		1	1	1	When we perform to the group, our teachers and team members usually explain or feature some of the ATL skills in the feedback.	5 It is really important to use ATL skills in my hkaFLOW group (Shout Out Loud) because it revolves around performing in front of others and constructing well-made performances.	Classes, such as Individuals and Societies, require ATL skills such as research and collaboration to complete a task. In addition to that, when we are given homework and material to study, we have to use skills including organization to complete those tasks to the best of 1 our ability.	3 Team members use ATL skills the most.	5 I use organization and collaboration to complete tasks and refine my performance.	I am neutral	I enjoy participating in my chosen hka Flow, but I find that it adds to my workload sometimes.	Little impact	I have been able to practice ATL skills such as organization and collaboration more.	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1				1	1	1	1
23	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Collaboration	1	1	1		1			1				1	1	Because we don't really talk about ATL'S in class maybe the first sem but not his sem	3 I dont do HKAflow i do extra academic work	1 I dont do HKAflow i do extra academic work	1 I don't do HKA flow i do extra academic work	I dont do HKAflow i do extra academic work	I am neutral	I dont do HKAflow i do extra academic work	No impact	I dont do HKAflow i do extra academic work	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1		1	1		1	1
1	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Affective, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1	1			1	1			1	1	3	3 because I do it only a few times a day	2 because I use ATLs more in subject areas	3	3	I like it very much		Some impact		Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1		1	1		1	1
2	6															2	2	2	2	2	I am neutral		No impact												
4	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1			1	1			1	1	Because my HKA flow teachers haven't mentioned anything about them yet	1 only use the ATL skills at the end of the HKA flow project for reflection	I have more assessments and I usually use the ATLs for ptsc's and reflections of an assessment, 2 i've only used them once in HKAflow.	2	2	I like it very much		Some impact		Reflection, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Communication			1				1	1			1
6	6	Self-management, Organization, Research, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1		1		1				1		1	1	1	because we kind of do, but not really because we mostly focus on our own work.	3 because sometimes they will ask me 2 questions and ill just answer them	I don't often talk during hkaflows but I communicate and ask questions when I'm in class 2 more.	i would normally just answer a question if they ask me something so if they aren't really asking me anything I wouldn't normally say 4 anything.	2 because I don't really talk during hkaflow	I like it somewhat	because some of them are not that interesting.	A significant impact	I don't know.	Self-management, Reflection, Research	1		1		1						
12	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1					1	1			1	1	Because I do not remember any specific time that we spoke about them but I'm sure we did 2 at some point	Because I use them relatively often, even if I'm not trying to. So I am bound to use them 4 at some point.	Subjects areas are constantly graded so I feel the need to use them and try harder to use them 2 when in a usual class.	3	1	I don't enjoy participating in hkaFLOW but I don't exactly what they were.	I am neutral	Because up until this point I wasn't sure hate it.	Little impact	Creative thinking							1				
15	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1			1	1			1	1	Because we talk about it sometimes but not much.	3 I help my team to interview people and communicated with each other.	In subject classes there are a lot of work as 2 research we have to do.	He let's us do our own thing but sometimes helps a ot on my group's thinking and what we 3 should do.	3 Because I use it to help my group.	I like it very much	because it is interesting and fun.	Little impact	because i feel like it is the same.	Collaboration, Communication								1	1		
19	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Affective, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1	1	1	I chose a 2 because the teacher and students don't discuss about the approaches to learning skills that we use	5 I chose 5 because I always use approaches to learning skills to finish my work and homework more efficiently and because we don't have much time to finish the project so we are currently working on.	I chose 2 because I have subjects more often than HkaFlow and I also have more units in each subject, whereas in HKA flow, we are focusing on 2 one topic.	My major improvement in ATL is self management. 2	4 I always check if I'm using the ATL skills to make my work time more efficient.	I am neutral	A lot of the times, I don't know what to do in my HKAflow because I finished all my work already.	A significant impact	It requires a lot of skills of all	Self-management, Organization, Collaboration, Communication	1	1							1	1	
25	6	Organization			1											because i never really need to show my 3 organization skills	4 i use it quite abit if stuff needs to be organized	I find that they are needed more in normal classes 2 because you need more stuff and stationary etc	2 because in my flow project i didn't need that	2	I dislike it somewhat	as i said before many times they are not a top 2 pirrity in my flow project	Little impact	because i feel like it's a waste of time when we could be doing actuall subjects that we actually need	I will say it again I never really need it						1				
27	6	Research, Information literacy, Media literacy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	2	1	am doing a personal project			1	1	1	1		1	1	1	I often draw things and I want to aquire more skills so i use these ATL skills to help 4 me study and learn more.	I mostly use them for subject areas more than 2 flow because flow requires me to do my work and classwork and my skills work well there.	My teacher plays a normal role and sometimes helps me develop the skill even 3 more.	3 I don't think about it that much, I usually just do it without thinking during flow.	I like it somewhat	Flow is a nice thing and i appreciate it	Some impact	It has helped me develop more skills.	Research, Information literacy, Media literacy, Critical thinking					1	1	1	1			
30	6	Self-management, Reflection, Affective, Creative thinking	1		1	1					1				2	I dont really talk to any one about it because its a personalized project but i talk a little bit about it with friends.	4 I use it quite often at least in the hkaflow how because it helps me with improving in drawing	I still use it in hkaflow its just that in classes it is 2 more useful at least in my project for hkaflow	A teacher doesnt have really role in my personalized project and also i like to work on 1 it more indepentlly.	3 I monitor it most of the times but in a sence that i have all the drawing ideas so i can see i have improved at the end of the hkaflow project	I am neutral		Some impact		Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Affective, Research, Social	1	1	1	1	1				1		
31	6	Self-management, Organization, Research, Transfer	1	1			1					1				Because I don't do HKA FLOW, I catches up with work.	3 Because I need to use some learning skills when I do my project, catching up with works.	Because I'm just catching up with works, so use 2 less ATL skills but in class i use more ATL skills.	It's not minor, it's not major because I don't 3 work with mt teacher.	3 I don't really monitor much but it's not like i never do, I sometimes check the skills.	I am neutral	Because I like that there is a time in class to catch up with works but it kind of boring catching up with works, staring at my laptop for 3~4 hrs.	No impact	Don't really learn or be focused on ATL skills.	Self-management	1										
36	6	Self-management, Organization, Creative thinking, Communication	1	1							1				1	We don't really talk about what ATL's we can use to help with anything but my mentor sometimes says that we will have to be creative thinkers and that we need to 3 communicate.	I do a lot of communication, I make it quite clear what I'm thinking and what my 3 opinions are.	You need to be organized and self-sufficient in more school types of classes like Math and IIS etc. More of the "schooly" type of classes are 2 more demanding.	If my teacher during flow didn't talk to us or give us feed back, we wouldn't know how to 1 improve or what to do.	1 I don't think about my use of ATL skills, I might think to myself how do I communicate in a way that other people will understand and stuff but 1 other than that I don't think about it.	I like it very much		Some impact	With hkaflow I get to work with new people so I get to work on my communications skills, I also get to work on creativity and self sufficiency because there are some things I need to do myself and I sorta learn from it.	Self-management, Organization, Critical thinking, Communication	1	1				1					1
3	6	Organization, Research, Information literacy, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication			1			1	1		1			1	1	I selected 3 because we sometimes talk about it but not always.	3 I selected 3 again because we don't use all 3 le ATL skills.	3	3	3	I am neutral	I'm neutral because I wasn't always doing the HKAflow and I did some boosts.	Some impact	I selected that because sometimes we use ATL skills.	Organization, Research, Collaboration, Communication			1		1					1	1
11	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Affective, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	i do catch up work	3 i use them to stay organised	3 i use it in both	3 they help me	2 i only monitor a few	I am neutral	its fun but sometimes if your doing a project it just outs more work on you	Some impact	i have learned how to get my work done and i learned how to stay focussed	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Affective, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
18	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Affective, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		1	1	1	We don't talk about it alot, but we get 3 reminded of the skills and we use them.	4 I dont refer the the ATL word, but i use the skills that are in ATL.	3 i use them in both the same amount.	4	My hkaflow teacher reminds us to do the tings that are in ATL.	I like it very much	Doing interviews is fun and i just generally like doing things as this.	Little impact		Self-management, Organization, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1				1	1	1	1	1	1
24	6	Self-management, Reflection, Research, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1		1		1				1	1	1	1	1	In living in history we haven't talked about atls 1 yet	In living in history we haven't talked about 3 atls yet	Because I somtimes use atl in my subject areas 3 and somtimes in flow	She doesn't really talk about the atl but tells us 3 to ask each other	2 Because I don't always think about the atl	I like it very much	because it is fun colabrating with people	Some impact	Because I have gained more experence ask and interveleing people	Self-management, Research, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1				1				1	1	1
26	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Information literacy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1	1		1	1			1	1	In the FLOW we are usually doing work and 3 not really talking to others.	4 I used them when I try and work with other and working with teachers.	I use the same in subject class and hkaFLOW the 3 same thing is the same situation with working with others.	Because they incourge us to do better with 4 using these skills	Sometimes I forget when I need to use these 3 skills.	I like it somewhat	Because sometimes they can be fun but other times they can be boring.	Some impact	Because we usually have to work with others when we do FLOW	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Information literacy, Media literacy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1
28	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1			1	1	1	1	1	1	The reason if because I haven't really attended any FLOWs that have involved a teacher or peer talking to me about any ATLs, only me developing my self management 1 skills.	4 I guess I use it quite a lot since I need to be independent when I'm doing academic sessions.	I use it in both really, since the teacher in subject classes usually wants us to be a little more responsible and comunicate, but in HKA FLOW I 3 need to build my self management.	In the FLOW session I am doing, the teacher 2 is only there to monitor us and help if we ask.	I don't really monitor my ATL skills sknce I am 2 finished instead of think about ATL skills.	I like it very much	I like it because it gives us some time for ourselves in the week and either lets us do our own thing, join in on a school project, or cath up with anything you need to. It feels free.?	Some impact	My independence and self management while doing hkaFLOW have developed since the beginning.	Self-management, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking	1				1		1	1			
29	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Media literacy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1		1	1	1		1	1	1	Because we talk about it a lot and think about it a lot	talk about it a lot and think about it a lot 3	Because I think it is a bit different but at the same 3 time it's the same.	4	3	I like it somewhat	It is fune and you learn new thing all the time.	Little impact		Organization, Reflection, Research, Collaboration, Communication			1	1	1				1	1
32	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1					1	1	1	1	1	well in the ones i have done which is debate and shout out loud communication is a big part of flow. we also have to manage our time appropriately and colaborate with our group 2 members to get the job done.	5 mostly communication and collaboration, as i said earlier shout out loud and debate use 5 communication a lot.	in flow i use a lot more of communication but in other classes i use more of other atls like self 3 management and organization.	they help me grow and become better at what i'm doing in this case communicating, they help myself and others get the job done and 5 give us guidance when needed.	it really depends on what atl with communication very often but with others not 3 so much.	I like it somewhat	at times i get a bit confused and frustrated and in the ones i've done so far i have been pushed out of my comfort zone, but a personal goal of mine is to take opportunities and do things that are out of my comfort zone, get over my fears and through hka flow i have been able to do things i couldn't before which will help me achieve hopefully great things in the future.	A significant impact	my communication skills have grown greatly through debate and shout out loud, also my ability to comunicate to others.	Social, Collaboration, Communication							1	1	1		
34	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Collaboration	1		1		1				1				1	because we usually dont talk about ATL skills in hkaflow we talk about work.	4 we use colaboration, comunication and creative thinking to make the magazine.	3 because i use ATLs equally in each type of class.	because the teacher just talks at the begining and answers questions and dosent remind me 3 of ATLs	1 because i sort of forget about ATL skills.	I like it very much	because it is fun and different from the same usual school that goes on for a long time without change.	Some impact	I chose this response because it makes us use some skills but not all of them but there are probably skills that i forgot about that i use.	Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication							1		1	1	
5	6	Social										1			1	I dont really know what atl means	3 Don't know what atl means	4 Don't know what atl means	3 Don't know what atl means	3 Don't know what atl means	I like it very much		Little impact	Don't know what atl means	Social								1			
7	6	Self-management, Organization, Research, Creative thinking, Transfer, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1			1			1	1	1	1	1	1	I sometimes say it in Flow but not always and 3 never	5 My personalized project is about it	I really use more ALTs in flow than any other 4 subject or thing	Helps me to be reminded and prepares my for 4 what I shall do	4 It depends on how I am doing	I like it very much	I enjoy doing what I like while being with my friends	Some impact	It helps me to be a better learner and thinker and classmate	Self-management, Organization, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1			1		1	1	1	1	1
8	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1						1	1	2	In my flow we rarely talk about our ATL's	4 My flow requires many Atl's	In my subjects I use ATL's but not alot but in my 4 flow I use ATL every second	Our teachers help us with our flow but not a 3 lot with ATL's	2 I never really think about ATL's when doing flow	I like it somewhat	I like how students can take a Wensday to do something unique that you don't usually get to do.	Some impact	My flow helps me with my reserch skills and many other ATL's	Affective, Information literacy, Media literacy, Transfer, Social				1	1			1	1		
20	6	Self-management, Reflection, Affective, Research, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1		1	1	1			1		1	1	1	4	We talk about organization and how we need to work in groups and comunicate our ideas so we better as a learn.	5 We use them everytime we work together which is very often.	we use ATL more so in HKAFlow because it is 4 about working together.	the teachers give a subject to work on and it is us who has to take responsibility and work as 2 a group.	4 We use it a lot in HKAFlow because we work in group.	I dislike it somewhat	I already get a good amount of work and hka flow is just adding more work on top of what I already have.	Some impact	Because I use it a lot so i am used to doing it.	Self-management, Reflection, Research, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1		1		1			1	1	1	1
35	6	Self-management, Research, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1		1		1			1				1	2	I don't know much about it so I don't talk about it often	3 some of them are usfull in HKA flow	4 I don't use ATLs in normal subjects alot	I don't know how to respond to this sorry	2 I forget them alot but when I do them I monitor them	I like it very much	It is fun	Little impact	I don't use it that much	Self-management, Research, Creative thinking	1				1			1			
37	6	Reflection, Research, Creative thinking, Social, Communication	1			1	1			1		1			1	I sometimes talk about the atl skills in my 3 hkaflows so i chose 3	4 I do formula 1 for my hka flows and I usually use my creativity skills so i chose 4	I use more atl skills in my hkaFLOWS more then my classes because I found using atl skills on 4 hkaflows easier then using it in normal class.	The teachers play in my use of atl skills in the 5 hkaflows.	4 I monitor my atl skills a lot	I like it very much	I liked hka flows so much because it's interesting and fun for me.	A significant impact	Hka Flows has impact my atl skills so I learned more about atl skills	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Media literacy, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1
13	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1	1			1	1			1	1	Last semester, I did the escape room, and I kept a blog where we answered, I think, three 4 times a question about ATLs.	Well, we do a lot of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, etc... in our 5 HKAflow (especially in the escape room).	In class I guess I do, but I definatly use a lot more 5 in HKAflow	Well, for me I need a teacher to tell me a question that can answer, but for some of them, I can just do it myself with my friends for 4 example.	1 I don't really check things about ATL, but I guess I still do them without thinking about it.	I like it very much	I get to spend some time with my friend, and I do things I really enjoy. So, yeah I think it is really fun.	Some impact	Well it is the only place (after G5) where I heard about it.	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1				1	1	1	1	1
16	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1	1				1	1		1	1	1	Because when I was doing escape room for hkaFLOW, we would always end up writing on our blogs about our ATL's that we want to achieve and goals. We would also share our 4 experiences.	For example: Communication, you usually interact with your friends and others in your 4 hkaFLOW session.	In the hkaFLOW's I have done which are making an escape room and then a personalized project with my best friend, the use of my ATL's is way higher. For example: For hkaFLOW, I did escape room adn we were put into groups. We would have to communicate, collaborate, think creative, 5 etc. These are all ATL's.	The teacher has quite a big impact by being involved to help you achieve those goals but you also have to work independently and try 4 your best to achieve your ATL's yourself.	Because during escape room, we would always send out a blog post on what we have achieved every lesson and other ATL's we 5 want to achieve or improve.	I like it very much	I like it because you can learn all sorts of things and it gives you another opportunity to improve and achieve your ATL's.	A significant impact	I have been able to improve and use my ATL's through communicating with my teacher, collaborating with my friends, creative thinking, etc.	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1				1	1	1	1	1
33	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1			1	1			1	1	I dont feel like we've been talking about the ATL's this semester	3 I use most of them sometimes, but not everytime. For example, when we are working as a group we would use collaboration and creative thinking. But when you are by yourself you would use critical thinking when trying to find an answer.	Because during normal class time, we focus more on the main objective of the lesson. We dont always use ATL skills in the subject. However, in hkaFLOW, we use more critical thinking rather than getting everything done quick. We take our time to study the material and everyone sort of 5 has their own pace.	The teachers guide us to our answers and we 5 apply the ATL skills to FIND that answer.	1	I like it very much	I like to work collabratively with others, as well as sharing ideas with others. hkaFLOW is all of it combined when everyone has to work as a team to reach the objective.	Some impact	I think that hkaFLOW has encouraged me to use my ATL skills more, as well as making me think more about it too.	Self-management, Organization, Research, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Social, Collaboration, Communication	1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1
21	6	Self-management, Organization, Reflection, Research, Collaboration	1	1	1		1							1																	1		1	1	
22	6	Self-management, Critical thinking	1						1						1	i don't seem to hear the term at all during these classes	1 i don't even know what atl am i using.										Creative thinking, Collaboration, Communication										
TOTALS			30	27	25	6	30	3	2	18	27	3	15	28	28									22	18	14	3	19	4	4	14	21	1	13	21	23

Appendix D - Sample Questionnaire Data Spreadsheet Extract

[redacted]

Transcript Quote *(Key phrases in bold as determined by researcher)*	***Themes*** ***(Overarching)*** ***(Subthemes)***
*Mattias: Um, for you know all your assignments, it should be like a class you can come and **ask for help** and **how can I integrate this skill** in and **how would I do that effectively**. That definitely seems like something ATL should focus on.*	***ask for help** = role of teachers* ***how can I integrate this skill** = experience in PBL experiences* ***how would I do that effectively** = student self-awareness*
*Viviana: That's why, I, I, definitely, I, it's good to use your teacher for that specific subject, and an **ATL teacher is good at this stuff**, and Mr. Robertson couldn't teach that cause he didn't know so there was another teacher got to come in and teach it, but I don't think it needed to be in that class. **It would have been much better just to have learned it in an ATL class and then brought it to the subject**.* *Mattias: You know, ironically, Ms. Holliday came in like in the middle of last week saying 'oh this, this is not how it's supposed to be, this is how its supposed to look, having a teacher like Ms. Holliday **who really knows her way around in text citation and researching** would be, I think would be a definite help.* *Viviana: Yeah. Cause I can't expect every single subject teacher to know how to do, I mean, everything that ATL teaches. **So I think having a class is really good.***	***ATL teacher is good at this stuff,** = role of teacher* ***who really knows her way around in text citation and researching** = role of teacher* ***It would have been much better just to have learned it in an ATL class and then brought it to the subject** = Transfer* ***So I think having a class is really good**. = motivation*
*Mattias: And I think, um, I think the teacher trying to like, you know, **motivate** and emphasise students to do this action plan, **set their own goals**, would really help, um, like...what, what stopped me, personally, from working on, you know, the last day of when it's due and it'd definitely be a help in terms of, you know, in my action plan of my personal project I said um 'have an interview by this date' um, and if I didn't meet the date I would **reflect** on how, how that went. I think integrating that into other subjects would **really be beneficial** for...for meeting deadlines.*	***motivate** = motivation* ***set their own goals** = student self-awareness* ***Reflect** = reflection* ***really be beneficial** = relevance, application*

Appendix E - Sample Questionnaire Data Spreadsheet Extract



Appendix F - Parental Consent Letter for Questionnaire

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

HONG KONG ACADEMY

Doctoral Research Consent Form

31 March 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child has been invited to participate in the second stage of a research project exploring student learning experiences at HKA. Specifically, the purpose of the project is to learn more about teaching of the International Baccalaureate Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills at HKA, both in subject area classes as well as in hkaFLOW.

The first stage of the project will be the completion of a questionnaire to be administered by your child's Language and Literature Teacher. This teacher will not be a part of the processing of any data and will not have access to the full data set generated by your child. In the second stage, students who express interest in participating in an interview may be invited to do so. The interviews will be conducted by me, the Research, Development and Communications Director.

Your child may withdraw from participation at any time during the process of completing the questionnaire. If your child is selected for interview, they can refuse participation or withdraw from the process at any time without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

This stage of the project will focus on student experiences with ATL skill instruction and application in both classroom and project-based learning contexts. The feedback from your child will be helpful in shaping and guiding the programme in the years ahead and I am grateful for their participation in the project.

Outcomes from this study will be shared with the Secondary School Leadership Team at HKA and will also be published in a final research dissertation through Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. All information related to your child's identity will be kept confidential, and no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports and presentations. Please feel free to contact me if you have any specific questions.

If you **do not wish** for your child to participate, please sign and return this form to his/her ATL teacher by Friday 3 April 2020.

_____ I **do not wish** for my child to take part in this research project.

Child's name: ..... (please print)
Parent/Guardian name: ..... (please print)
Signature: ..... Date:.....

Kind regards,

Jennifer Swinehart
Research, Development and Communications Director
Jennifer.swinehart@hkacademy.edu.hk

Appendix G - Parental Consent Letter for Interview

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

HONG KONG ACADEMY

Doctoral Research Consent Form

8 June 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child has been invited to participate in the second stage of a research project exploring student learning experiences at HKA. Specifically, the purpose of the project is to learn more about teaching of the International Baccalaureate Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills at HKA, both in subject area classes as well as in hkaFLOW. This stage of the project will focus on student experiences with ATL skill instruction and application in these learning contexts. The feedback from your child will be helpful in shaping and guiding the programme in the years ahead and I am grateful for their participation in the project.

Please know that your child may withdraw from participation at any time during the process of completing the interview at any time without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

Outcomes from this study will be shared with the Secondary School Leadership Team at HKA and will also be published in a final research dissertation through Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. All information related to your child's identity will be kept confidential, and no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports and presentations. Please feel free to contact me if you have any specific questions.

_____ I **grant permission** for my child to take part in this research project.

Child's name: ..... (please print)
Parent/Guardian name: ..... (please print)
Signature: ..... Date:.....

Kind regards,

Jennifer Swinehart
Research, Development and Communications Director
Jennifer.swinehart@hkacademy.edu.hk