Pedagogical Intentions and the Perceived Learning of an ATL-based Subject Introduction Workshop: Teacher- and Student Perspectives

En ATL-baserad ämnesintroduktionsworkshops pedagogiska intentioner och upplevda lärande:
Lärar- och elevperspektiv

Andreas Henninger

Ämneslärarprogrammet (300 hp)  Examinator: Björn Sundmark
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PREFACE

Writing a graduate thesis in English Language Education turned out to be a painstaking, stressful, at times frustrating, but an equally joyful, stimulating, and satisfying endeavor. The general topic and inquiry presented in this study began to take shape in the fall of 2015, but in a lot of ways predates the educational event evaluated. My boss kept telling me to ‘dig where I stand’ and after years of hearing this, I finally decided that international education in Malmö in general, and the IB more specifically, would be the focus of my case study.

I would like to start off by thanking Malin and Magnus who were instrumental in my carrying out this project and invaluable in my finishing it on time. They helped me wrap my head around the scope and purpose of this project and provided thoughtful, constructive, and scary smart insights into what I was doing. By that same token, I would also like to thank the IB faculty and students at the target school involved in the project as well as the English Studies and Education faculty at Malmö University. A big hug and an extra thanks to Anna Wärnsby for demystifying the writing process and the art of persuasion early on.

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I’m old and wise enough not to involve my immediate family too much in what I do. This being said, I would like to thank my two younger siblings, both of whom are way smarter than I am, for checking in, and my teacher parents, who have shown me how great the teaching job can be. At this point, it seems only fitting to also acknowledge Maggie, the smallest, grumpiest, cutest, and most recent addition to the family, for always providing a critical eye. As it were.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank J. If one can dedicate a case study evaluating an ATL-based workshop to someone – and to the extent that you would want this kind of dedication – I do.

Much obliged.

Andreas Henninger
Malmö, May 2016
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the extent to which the pedagogical intentions of a social science subject introductory workshop at an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma school align with the participating students’ experienced learning. The purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of how well the IB faculty were able to implement the IB’s Approaches to Learning (ATL), a comprehensive pedagogical initiative. The research is guided by the question of the extent to which the workshop’s intended learning outcomes, constructed by the social science faculty at the particular IB school in focus, correspond with the perceived learning experienced by the students attending the workshop. The study initially introduces a theoretical framework including philosophy of the IB and the ATL initiative. It also describes the school setting and the teacher and student participants. Secondly, previous research is presented in order to situate the study in an academic context. Furthermore, the thesis discusses and evaluates the methods used. The results of the study indicate that the participating students’ understanding of the social science subjects’ interdisciplinary nature aligns well with the teachers’ intentions, and that the students are able to grasp and critically engage with the workshop’s focus on global issues in a local context. However, student lack understanding of the relationship between social science theories and the workshop’s case study which indicate a lack of implementation of the IB:s core pedagogical approach.

Keywords: IB, IB Learner Profile, Approaches to Learning, pedagogical intentions, student-perceived learning
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Learning is at the heart of any and all educational systems. However, with a plethora of different pedagogical strategies promoted by a range of different researchers as well as educational systems with their unique rooting depending on country and region, learning is viewed and constructed differently. What most education scholars, pedagogues, as well as students can agree on, though, is the fact that knowledge is something constructed, something that happens when individuals interact with materials and one another and construct meaning. In other words, learning is a process that requires activity, interaction, and creativity.

This model for learning, based on the ideas of Vygotsky and Piaget, permeates the pedagogy and operational philosophy of the IB – the International Baccalaureate – an international education program offered at primary- and secondary levels in more than a 100 countries across the globe. In a Swedish context, the IB Diploma is an expanding academic program for preschool to upper secondary students. Offered at some 30 schools, the IB is available to Swedish and international students as well as exchange students and residents lacking sufficient Swedish language skills (IBO 2016a).

In recent years, the Approaches to Learning (ATL) strategy is being introduced in a top-down initiative by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) to promote interdisciplinary and visible learning in a constructivist and socio-cultural educational setting. This strategy is based on the notion that “a large influence on a student’s education is not only what you learn but also how you learn” (IBO 2014). Learning should not simply be about the absorption and regurgitation of specific facts, but – more importantly – about students developing the mind-set to actively take responsibility for their own learning and critically assess how it is that they learn. IB schools were, as part of the ATL initiative from the IBO, compelled to make students more actively aware of this pedagogical approach during the 2015-2016 school year.

This graduate thesis is a case study that looks at how this ATL initiative was carried out and received at one particular IB school in southern Sweden. More specifically, I will
study if and to what extent the teacher intentions of the workshop aligned with the experienced learning among the participating students. At the school in question, IB teachers in different faculties developed four individual workshops for their first-year IB students (IB1:s), aimed at making students connect math, languages, the natural sciences, and the social sciences to the IB subject of *Theory of Knowledge*, a mandatory Diploma course introducing students to epistemological questions. The workshops served as a general introduction to the IB courses offered at the school in question. This case study will focus on the social science workshop, which was developed, prepared, and carried out by the social science faculty. During this workshop, the students constructed so-called knowledge questions in groups of four to five to political cartoons addressing a current event, the Mediterranean refugee crisis.

Globalization as a process affects most factions of society, education especially as individual schools – and education systems more generally – are faced with servicing an increasingly diverse student population. Transnational companies, conflicts, and migratory patterns are but a few reasons for these increasingly diverse classrooms. In light of this, educational programs like the IB are a growing phenomenon in most urban areas. Sweden is no exception to this. Therefore, shedding light on and critically assessing one of the underpinning pedagogical philosophies of a program as widespread as the IB is warranted. More importantly, identifying potential discrepancies between teacher intentions and students’ perceived knowledge gain situates the workshop in question in the context of a greater body of research dealing with students’ perceived learning processes and construction of knowledge.

### 1.2 The Subject Introduction Workshop

The Subject Introduction Workshop took place in late August of 2015. All first-year IB students (IB1:s) were required to attend this one-and-a-half day workshop. Gathering in the school auditorium after lunch on the first day, all students attend a speech given by the Assistant IB Coordinator and Theory of Knowledge teacher who introduced the idea of knowledge questions and what it is that the IB actually wants the students to learn (explained in more details below). The session was interactive with questions being asked to, and by, the students.
After the introductory session, the students were divided into four teams based on the PriIB groupings. Each attended one workshop representing one of the four major subject groups at the school: math, languages, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. For the next day and a half, the four groups attended all four workshops.

The social science workshop – the one at focus in this graduate thesis – took place in one of the school’s assigned test room; a big room with an loft and windows in three out of four directions. At this particular workshop, the students were initially given a 25-minute presentation. The presentation was based around a PowerPoint-presentation with pictures, videos, and data dealing with the on-going refugee crisis. Pictures of people on boats, an instructional video by Dr. Hans Rosling, and statistical data about the refugees were all presented in an effort to set the stage for what the students were supposed to do.

The students were instructed to break into groups of four to five and rotate between different stations, each representing a different subject within the Social Sciences. The subjects represented at the workshop were: History, Business Management/Economics, Psychology, and Global Politics. At each workstation, the students were presented with a different political cartoon dealing with the refugee crisis. They were then given ten minutes to construct two-three open-ended knowledge questions based on the cartoon. Knowledge questions are at the core of the Diploma education. It is a strategy asking students to approach different issues and concepts through open-ended questions; questions that do not contain a yes- or no answer and that imply a multitude of potential answers. One example of a knowledge question in the subject of Global Politics could be:

To what extent should human rights be viewed as a Western political construct?

Such a question has no one straightforward answer, but rather can be discussed from multiple perspectives.

The student groups spent approximately fifteen minutes at each station. The knowledge questions were written down on A3 posters and brought along from one station to the next. At the end of the fourth workstation, the student-produced sheets of knowledge questions were put up on the wall and the group as a whole reconvened. During a teacher-led discussion, the students were then asked to consider what it meant to acquire
knowledge in the social science subjects and what the different knowledge questions revealed about the different disciplines.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this graduate thesis is to critically examine the individual social science workshop offered within the target school’s ATL workshop in the fall of 2015, and the extent to which the overarching goals with the workshop corresponded to the experiences of the students attending. To clarify, this paper will evaluate the pedagogical work of the social science faculty by investigating the extent to which the intended learning outcomes, as constructed by the teachers in charge of the social science workshop, matched the perceived knowledge acquisition experienced by the participating students. For this purpose, I have constructed the following research question:

• To what extent do the intended learning outcomes – as formulated by the social science faculty in charge of the workshop in focus – correspond with the perceived knowledge acquisition of the students attending the workshop?
2 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

There is nothing more practical than a good theory.

Kurt Lewin (1953)

In this section, I introduce the IB as an organization and educational program and the IB Learning Profile and further explain the Approaches to Learning initiative. Furthermore, I address pertinent education theories as they relate to the IB pedagogy generally and ATL specifically.

2.1 The International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate (IB) was founded in the late 1960’s with its founding office in Geneva, Switzerland. According to the IBO website, the mission of the organization is to “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect” (IBO 2016d). It is a non-profit foundation focusing on education with four distinct programs:

- PYP (Primary Years Programme) – primary school education offered to learners ages 3-12
- MYP (Middle Years Programme) – middle school education offered to learners ages 11-16
- DP (Diploma Programme) – upper secondary education offered learners ages 16-19
- CRP (Career-related Programme) – career-related education offered learners ages 16-19 (IBO 2016b)

As such, the IB syllabi cover the early childhood school year through upper secondary school. The IB Diploma Program is offered at 4000+ institutions across all six continents. In a Swedish context, the IB is offered at a total of 38 institutions. The earlier years programs is offered at ten and nine schools respectively, while the upper secondary Diploma Programme is offered at 31 schools. Its growing popularity is not only visible in Sweden; in fact, between 2011 and 2016, the IB saw a nearly 50% increase in the number of programs offered worldwide (IBO 2016a).

2.1.1 The IB Learner Profile

In order to understand why the IB is currently instructing all of its Diploma schools to implement ATL, it is important to look at one of the core aspects of the education program: The IB Learner Profile (see Appendix 3). The IB has developed a list of traits
that students attending the program should possess or strive towards. This list of traits is referred to as the *IB Learner Profile*. The ATL initiative is an attempt at implementing a pedagogical approach aimed at making students acquire these straits.

The overarching goal of the *IB Learner Profile* is “to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world” (IBO 2016c). According to Lineham (2013), such goals are a common attribute in international educational programs. “International curricula tend to include as an aim the development in students of attributes such as intercultural understanding and respect, or international understanding” (p. 260). The ten traits stipulate that students should become:

- Inquirers
- Knowledgeable
- Thinkers
- Communicators
- Principled
- Open-Minded
- Caring
- Risk-Takers
- Balanced
- Reflective (IBO 2016c)

The workshop at focus in this essay (described in section 2.3) was an attempt on the part of the school faculty to make the students aware of how they ought to develop their *IB Learner Profile* traits when studying subjects from the different IB subject groups.

The *IB Learner Profile* goals, according to Räsänen (2007), reflect the nature of the IB as an international education program. IB students need “to be prepared for an increasingly multicultural and globalized world” (p. 58). According to Wells (2011), the IB Learner Profile is one of the main tenants of the program. Especially important, argues Wells, is the ethical considerations associated with international education, and particularly the “acquisitions of attitudes” (p. 176). Lineham (2013), in line with Wells, suggests that “academic subjects and the core curriculum are used as a vehicle to help develop the ideals and values outlined in the IB mission statement” (p. 265). In other words and as previously stated, the education the students receive ought to transform their way of thinking and enable them to acquire the *IB Learner Profile* traits.

### 2.1.2 Approaches to Learning (ATL)

*Approaches to Learning* (ATL) is a pedagogical initiative at focus in this essay. According to the IBO, ATL is supposed to permeate the different IB programs. While attaining the traits of the *IB Learner Profile* ought to be considered the end goal, ATL
should be viewed as a tool to that end. The ATL initiative has been constructed as five skills that students should develop through their studies. The first one of these skills – thinking skills – is defined by the IB as “exercising initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions” (IBO 2016d). Secondly, Communication skills is included for two specific reasons: (1) the students need good communications skills in order to succeed in their subjects through collaboration and individual work, and (2) to form interpersonal relationship with other students, teachers, and administrators. Thirdly, Social skills, like the previous one, is stressed by the IB because its key in the students’ academic success and personal growth. On their website, the IB directly quotes Vygotsky in arguing that “learning is a fundamentally active social process” (IBO 2016e). The penultimate skill, self-management, is divided up into two separate categories: organizational skills and affective skills. The former relates to the students managing their time and their studies in an effective and constructive manner, while the latter refers to the students being able to motivate themselves and be aware of their own well-being. The last skill outlined in ATL is research skills: the ability to independently conduct research. This also includes being aware of academic malpractice (IBO 2016e).

The IB implementation of ATL is characterized by the organization itself as something that has “always been part of the IB teaching, but now the IB is providing more explicit support for teaching these skills” (IBO 2014). In other words, the implementation of ATL is not a brand new pedagogical initiative, but rather something that has been part of IB teaching all along. Now, however, IBO wants make these strategies for learning more explicit for both teachers and students. It is against this background that the ATL-based workshop at focus in the study was carried out.

As previously stated, ATL can be viewed as a means to the end of having IB students fulfill the IB Learner Profile. The initiative is also based around three general themes. Firstly, IB students are supposed to learn how they learn. This refers to students developing knowledge about themselves and how they learn (metacognitive knowledge) as well as how this can be used to better their learning (metacognitive performance). This kind of self-awareness is closely linked to the second theme – structured inquiry – which asks the students to “develop natural curiosity together with the skills needed to enable them to become autonomous learners” (IBO 2014). The main purpose for this is
for the students to conduct their own research, assess the strengths and weaknesses of said research, analyze the materials collected, and be able to problem solve when they come upon obstacles. The third and last theme overlaps with the first two and deals with the students’ abilities to engage their critical thinking faculties. “To think critically means students reflecting on, thinking about and analysing a text, argument or opinion so that they do not just accept what is stated but form their own judgment” (IBO 2014).

2.2 Theory Linked to the IB

Räsänen (2007), Wells (2011), Lundahl (2012), and Lineham (2013) are but a few scholars who identify social-constructivism as the core pedagogical philosophy guiding the IB. According to social-constructivists, learning is something that does not solely happen in the formalized classroom setting; it happens in all stages of life and is an essential part of the human experience. Assuming that learning is a process means that learning happens in steps, both internally through cognition, and externally through interaction (Kozulin 1999, p. 78). Within social-constructivism, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget are household names; however, it is often argued that the respective research the two carried out during their lifetimes stood in opposition to each other. As Glassman (1994) puts it: “Piaget and Vygotsky are often presented as debating partners on opposite sides of the culture and cognition question” (p. 186). He argues that while there are differences between the two, viewing them as polar opposites “short-changes both paradigms” (p. 186).

Vygotsky’s theory on learning is based around the idea that learning happens in a socio-cultural context and that there is an intimate relationship between communication and cognitive development. Learning, according to Vygotsky, happens in the context of communication between people negotiating meaning, and is dependent on scaffolding (Glassman 1994, p. 186). This notion directly connects to the IB pedagogical approach as it pushes for using language as a tool for higher-level cognitive processes, with teachers and instructors providing support for students in their own active learning. Lineham (2013) makes the link between the IB program and social-constructivist theory visible in the following way: “By getting students to discuss ideas, we are helping them to learn, think and develop those ideas, thereby improving the creativity of the thought process” (p. 264).
Piaget puts far less emphasis on external scaffolding and instead argues that learning is primarily a cognitive – or an internal – process. Piaget’s theory differs from Vygotsky on what communication actually is. Like Vygotsky, Piaget argues that learning is based on activity – not passive exposure to language and information, but where Vygotsky believes that communication happens both between people and within the individual learner, Piaget argues that communication is solely the interplay between people (Lightbown and Spada 1999, p. 23). Both Vygotsky and Piaget, thus, subscribe to the Constructivist school of thought, but while Vygotsky takes a more socio-cultural approach Piaget puts greater emphasis on the cognitive process. Kozulin (1999) creatively dubs Vygotsky and Piaget’s different learners in the following way: Vygotsky’s learner is referred to as ‘the Poet,’ while Piaget’s is called ‘the Scientist’ (p. 78-79).

In addition to these household names, Harvard University’s *Project Zero* serves as a prominent research platform that the IB education approach is drawing from. Project Zero (PZ) is a research initiative out of Harvard Graduate School of Education, which was loosely founded in the mid- to late 1960’s by an eclectic group of researchers. The institute focuses much of its attention on education issues and is closely linked to the social-constructivist school of thought. For this reason, there is also a clear link between PZ and the IB. In fact, when reading through the bibliography on the IB report on *Approaches to Learning*, one sees that the IB initiative is heavily informed by PZ research (IBO 2016e). This is also indicated on PZ’s website, where it states that the institute collaborates with “‘smart schools’ that encourage creative and critical thinking” (Project Zero).

One of PZ’s most prominent researchers is David Perkins (2016). He argues that education needs to be “reimagined” (p. 17) in order for learners to not simply learn to a test, but rather become lifelong learners. This is based on two notions: firstly, the learners should not simply memorize and regurgitate facts without applicability, and secondly, that abilities and critical thinking skills – as opposed to purely factual knowledge – should be premiered (p. 16-17). As Perkins puts it: “Today’s world is not the world of 50 years ago. You can find any basic information you need in a few second on the Internet” (p. 17).
Perkins’ constructivist approach is further presented in *Making Learning Whole*, where he uses baseball as a metaphorical device to explain how learning ought to be organized. These seven key principles are as follows:

1. Play the whole game
2. Make the game worth playing
3. Work on the hard parts
4. Play out of town
5. Uncover the hidden game
6. Learn from the team… and the other teams
7. Learn the game of learning (Perkins 2009, p. 8)

The first principle addresses the importance of making the entire learning experience visible to the learners. In doing so, the second principle is achieved in that students understand that the learning is meaningful and realistic. The third principle emphasizes the importance of allowing students to revise and continue working on challenging and difficult tasks. The fourth, in conjunction with the third, stresses the need for students to apply their knowledge in different contexts. The fifth and seventh principle are interestingly connected in that they aim at making the students understand underlying assumptions and rules connected to learning as well as learning to take responsibility for their own learning. The sixth principle directly links to Vygotsky’s social constructivist way of thinking in that it identifies support from others and collaboration as key in learning.

The idea of reimagining education and making education whole predates Perkins. One of the most pivotal contributions of Project Zero to education is Howard Gardner’s theory on multiple intelligences. Originally published in 1993, these intelligences include: verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, logical/mathematical, body/kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal, and naturalist intelligences (Checkley 1997, p. 9). Shepherd (2004) suggests that for each kind of intelligence, suitable activities can be developed in an effort to “provide opportunities for meaningful participation” (p. 216). Gardner also suggests that all students possess multiple intelligences and that these need to be “mobilized to understand” (Diessner 2001, p. 496). Diessner summarizes Gardner’s idea on the purpose of education in the following way:

His arguments for basing education on the pursuit of understanding truth, beauty, and goodness range from the cross-cultural clarity of these concepts, to their congruence with mind and brain research, to their established success in academic disciplines, including their usefulness in ‘teaching for understanding’ and the enhanced ability they
provide educators to actually engage students in the learning process (p. 497).

In other words, Gardner wishes for teachers to engage students in such way that the students take active responsibility for their own learning process – not simply be passive receivers of knowledge. In doing so, the student will better understand the knowledge they acquire. Gardner’s conception of education can be directly linked to the IB programs. On the organization website, the IB states that one of its overarching goals is to: “encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners” (IBO 2016d).

In addition to the research conducted by Project Zero, which clearly links to the IB pedagogical philosophy and curriculum, Hattie’s (2009) theory on visible learning is intimately connected to the IB. The key to Hattie’s theory is the notion that teachers together with students must identify the meaningful and important factors of learning; making it visible. This way of learning encourages students to independently and together with their teachers develop strategies and ‘meta-cognitive tools’ to learn more and become aware of how they learn. The students will ‘think about their and others’ thinking.’ (p. 188-193).

In directly relating visible learning to the workshop at focus in this text, it is important to note that Hattie puts additional emphasis on the notion of cooperation and collaboration. He states: “cooperative learning is certainly a powerful intervention” (p. 78). This way of envisioning learning clearly draws from the same bank of research as Perkins and Gardner. It assumes that learning happens in a constructivist context, and is thus influenced by Vygotsky’s socio-cultural learner and Piaget’s cognitive learner.
3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This section does two things: (1) it presents and critically discusses a few selected case studies focusing on teacher intent and student perception of learning in an effort to situate this graduate thesis in a specific topic of education research, and (2) it shows how this study fits in a Swedish education context as an evaluation study of pedagogical quality work.

3.1 Teacher Intentions and Student-Perceived Learning

While there is a plethora of research available on different pedagogical approaches’ effectiveness in terms of student learning – that is, what and how much the students actually learned – fewer studies have been published on students’ own perceived level of learning as a result of a specific pedagogical initiative. Furthermore, few studies examine the link between teacher intention and student-perceived learning. One study (Noels, Clément, and Pelletier 1999), carried out in second-language classroom in Ottawa, Canada, which does explore this link, examined the relationship these two variables have on student learning. In their study, Noel et al found that students were more motivated by teachers whose intentions could be linked to autonomous learning and open-ended feedback. “Perceptions of the language teacher as controlling… corresponded with lessened identified regulation and intrinsic motivation” (p. 30). The motivation, according to the researcher, is directly linked to students’ perceived level of learning. In this specific case, however, the authors also found that students who possessed intrinsic motivation (i.e. pure interest in learning a language) were less affected by the teacher’s intentions and executions (p. 31).

Beyond looking at motivation as an outcome of linking teacher intentions to student-perceived learning, some research suggests that the student interpretation of teaching practice is an effective manner in which to measure the extent to which teacher intention and students’ perceived level of learning align. Flick and Dickinson (1997) found in their study that a positive correlation between the two variables were based around three things:

1) Communication regarding teacher intention and student perceived level of learning was in both instances both implicit and inquiry-based;
2) A mutual trust and respect was established and indicated by neither students nor teachers ‘bad mouthing’ each other;
3) Extra emphasis was placed on making sure that lower achievers felt included and understood. (p. 21)

The point of friction between teacher intention and student-perceived learning, however, arose in a few instances and involved exclusively high achieving students. What the researchers found was that high-achieving students’ level of perceived learning was intimately tied to the attention (or the lack thereof) paid to their comments. “Students and teachers are not always clear on how student ideas can interact constructively with instruction” (p. 22). In other words, with high-achieving students, Flick and Dickinson found that students’ experience of learning was conditioned on their being able to ask questions.

While Flick and Dickson’s study was set in the science classroom, two studies conducted by Sindberg (2009) and Carey and Grant (2015) took on teacher intentions and student-perceived learning from a music education point of view. Sindberg, in her article, suggests that the relationship between the two variables can be characterized in one of three ways: alignment, fuzzy alignment, and misalignment (p. 19). In her article, Sindberg conducted interviews with students and asked them to describe what they thought about their music teacher’s intention and then consequently categorized the answers as one of three aforementioned definitions. Alignment was reached when students were able to accurately identify the teacher’s intentions. Conversely, misalignment represented student answer that did not at all match the teacher intention. Interestingly, fuzzy alignments referred to students who were able to identify their teacher’s intentions, but were unsure whether or not their answer was correct. Sindberg’s findings, as she puts it, suggest that students must be provided with “more opportunities to express themselves” (p. 21) as part of the learning process. This, which clearly jibes with Flick and Dickinson’s findings, suggest that students’ perceived level of understanding is heavily based on how well they feel their concerns and questions are met by the teacher.

While Sindberg’s study focused on music education, and the ensemble performing aspect to that, Carey and Grant’s (2015) research focus on one-to-one pedagogy. Their results further support both Fick and Dickinson as well as Sindberg’s findings that students’ perceived knowledge gain in relationship to teacher intention hinge on
continued communication where the needs of the individual student is met. As Carey and Grant put it:

Participants overwhelmingly viewed the one-to-one method as invaluable, even irreplaceable, for its ability to respond to the individual, its customizable nature, and its pedagogical effectiveness. Many student-participants regarded their one-to-one teacher as a musical, professional and/or personal role model, mentor, or advisor, and placed high value on this mentoring relationship (p. 17-18).

Beyond this, however, Carey and Grant’s (2015) study highlighted the link between students being able to identify their teacher’s intention and their perceived level of knowledge gain (p. 9). What this shows is that students’ understanding of teacher intention is not the same as their gaining knowledge, but is an intrinsic part of this learning process.

3.2 Situating the Study in a Swedish Context

While the IB Diploma is offered at both public, independent, and private schools in Sweden, the education system itself is autonomous in the sense that the National Board of Education (Skolverket) does not have any influence over the underpinning pedagogical philosophies, education practices, or final assessment practices. In light of this, the IB Diploma can be viewed as a parallel system offered to Swedish students. Despite the growing popularity of the program, few researchers in the Swedish educational context have focused their attention on the IB. Given its parallel positioning opposite the Swedish education system, looking closer at the IB and evaluating its practices is highly warranted.

The Skolinspektitionen report “Undervisning i SO-ämnen år 7-9: Mycket kunskap men för lite kritiskt kunskapande” (2013) evaluates what Swedish students are actually learning in the social sciences. Two points presented and discussed in the report are highly relevant for this essay: (a) the teaching methods and materials used as well as the task given to students are too strongly geared towards factual knowledge, and (b) the students, as a consequence of the first point, are not given the opportunity enough to develop their critical thinking- and reasoning skills (higher-level thinking).

Under these circumstances, the students’ ability to, for example, analyze, reflect, value, critically assess, interpret, argue, and reason – abilities the national curriculum explicitly outlines - are seldom stimulated. All students, for this reason, might not be given tasks that can be deemed cognitively challenging; in other words, assignments that encourage student
activity and provide the individual students with the opportunity to reflect and problematize (p. 14, own translation).

In light of this, the report raises a number reasons for why social science lessons ‘get stuck’ working with factual knowledge. The report points out that teacher-centered lecturing – *passive teaching structure* – inhibits student inquiry and student-to-student and student-to-teacher dialogue (p. 14). It also suggests that the kinds of questions and issues students get to work with must be open-ended in order for higher-level cognitive development to take place (p. 16). Additionally, the educator’s academic background aligning with the subject taught and whether or not the teacher is actually pedagogically certified both correlate to the extent to which he or she engages in *active teaching structures* (p. 16-17).

Beyond this, the report lifts one major underlying reason for why tasks stimulating higher-level thinking are lacking in the Swedish social science classroom. Specific abilities and critical thinking tasks are often times, according to the report, associated with – and to some extent ear-marked by – specific subjects. The example given in the report is that of source critique.

Sometimes the students would argue that source critique was something they already ‘had done,’ thus something that could be ‘crossed off the list.’ Both students and teachers would say that the students are ‘tired of source critique’ because this had already been covered by another subject, often times Swedish (19, own translation).

The Swedish national curriculum for both lower and upper secondary school (LGR-11 and GY-11), as the report points out, stress the importance of students developing higher-level thinking skills, but as the report shows, such skills are often attributed to specific subjects and not viewed as an overarching educational goal.

The findings in this report makes an in-depth look into a parallel system existing in Sweden further interesting. The IB Learner Profile, and the ATL initiative, can be viewed as an IBO attempt at lifting these higher thinking skills out of the individual subject and instead making them explicit characteristics that all IB students ought to possess once graduated. Since this is identified as something students in the Swedish system are lacking, the ATL initiative could serve as an example of how this is done. For this reason, it is important to evaluate the extent to which this IB policy – through the subject introduction workshop – can serve as a bridge between the students’ subject-specific, factual knowledge and higher-level thinking skills.
4 METHOD

This part of the paper describes and critically discusses the methodology underpinning the graduate thesis. Additionally, the section sheds light on the ethical considerations taken as part of this study.

4.1 Case Study

This graduate thesis is a case study of a specific pedagogical event that took place at the target school in August of 2015. Case studies, as outlined by Yin (2009), attempt at critically study ‘bounded system’. For this specific study, the bounded system is defined as the subject introductory workshop constructed, prepared, and executed by the social science faculty at the target school. Heigham and Croker (2009) point out that this kind of research makes use of several different kinds of sources in collecting data, which in this case involves a teacher perspective, a school administrator’s perspective, and multiple student perspectives.

While the IB curriculum and teaching is part of an internationally recognized organization and network of schools and thus does not fall under the same control of the Swedish National Board of Education (Skolverket), the target school is a publically financed institution with national programs that fall under Skolverket’s control. Furthermore, the IB program at the school in focus receives additional financial support from the national government as part of administrating the program which means that Skolverket is one of two major authorities reviewing the IB program’s progress at the school.

In light of this, it is important to include Skolverket’s guidelines and operating tenants for how case studies ought to be conducted and why this type of research is important. The report “Vi värderar kvalitet – om självvärdering och lärarens utvecklingsarbete” (2005) clearly states that case studies are important because they are not simply an observation of events transpiring, but an attempt at improving a pedagogical process. For this reason, Åsén (2002) has developed eight guiding questions – Frågor att ställa (p. 42) – to consider when doing qualitative evaluations in school environments:

- Why is the study being conducted?
- For whom is it carried out?
In answering the first questions, the reason for carrying out the study – as previously stated – is to shed light on and evaluate a specific ATL initiative at an international school and see to what extent the teacher intentions of the workshop align with the students’ perceived level of learning. The study, consequently, is not solely carried out as a graduate thesis, but also as a quality evaluation project for the IB faculty involved in the workshop. Furthermore, the workshop carried out in August 2015 was the first of its kind at the target school, but it is intended to be an annual event. The results of this study will therefore serve to improve the existing workshop. Skolverket (2005) points out that while self-assessment and reflection among teachers, administrators, and students is required for any development to take place, external perspectives are also required in ensuring continued quality education (p. 20). This study therefore positions itself as an external study of a well-defined pedagogical event at the target school.

The second to last bullet is important, seeing as the topic of study in this graduate thesis is not found within the Swedish national curriculum, but rather a parallel education program in a Swedish context. With this mind, however, parallel systems can – and should – compare and contrast their practices in an effort to better self-assess and critically reflect on what kind of education they actually offer their students. This graduate thesis, in light of this, can be seen as an attempt at bridging the discourses of the IB and the Swedish national curriculum.

4.1.1 Setting
This research project was carried out at a public, upper secondary school located in an urban area in the south of Sweden. In this paper, the school is referred to as the International Prepatory Institution (IPI). The school houses approximately 1100 students from approximately fifty different countries attending grade 10-12, usually spanning age 16-19. Students either attend one of three national programs – Natural Science, Social Science, or Economics – or the International Baccalaureate. According to Lineham (2013), there are three main components international schools need to keep
in mind in order to fully embody the values of international education. Firstly, the school needs to adhere to and implement a curriculum that explicitly allows students to explore issues and topics connected to cultural awareness and multiple points of view. Secondly, IB schools in particular then must administratively develop in accordance with IB standards and rules. Third, and lastly, the professional development of IB instructors must be premiered and must include a focus on the underpinning philosophical and pedagogical assumptions of the organization. IPI is currently educating 90 first-year preparatory students (PrIB:ers), 110 second-year students (first-year Diploma students, or IB1:s), and 110 third-year students (second-year Diploma students, or IB2:s). As a public school offering students from a wide variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds an IB diploma, the institution is referred to as an international school. This is reflected in that English is the language of communication inside and outside of the classroom.

As IPI offers both the Swedish national curriculum and the IB curriculum, students from both education programs are spatially integrated at the school. This means that national program classes and IB classes are scheduled and taught wall-to-wall in the same halls. Beyond this successful attempt at integrating the two different education programs, the school is well known for its strong, including, and cohesive school culture. With an active student union, male and female rugby team, and an official school mascot, students who enroll at IPI quickly find themselves a part of a diverse, but tightly knitted student body. First-year students quickly become IPI:ers.

4.1.2 Participants
The participants in this study can generally be organized into two separate categories: educators and students. The two educators interviewed represent two distinct functions within the school. Namely, the on-the-ground, in-the-room teacher in charge of the planning and day-to-day execution of learning, and the IB Coordinator, a school administrator who answers to the IBO directly and is in charge of the overall implementation of IB initiatives and curriculum teaching at the school. What follows below is a short presentation of the two educators:
**Bob** is a 48-year old IB teacher of Economics and Theory of Knowledge. Educated in the United States, he has worked at IPI for almost fourteen years and has in those years also taught Social Studies and Business and Management. He holds an ABD from an American university with a background in the social sciences.

**Charlie** is a 45-year old IB Coordinator and former teacher of Social Studies, History, and Religion. Charlie was educated in Sweden and holds a MA in Social Science Education and Upper Secondary Pedagogy from Lund University. He has worked at IPI since 2010, with extensive experience of the IB from previous schools as well.

The student informants were all IB1 students who attended the subject introductory workshop as participants. Between the six of them, all social science subjects are represented in the student population participating in the study. In other words, the students whose opinions and learning experiences are at focus here are collectively taking all the different social science classes offered in the IB program at the target school. What follows below is an introduction of the six of them:

**Alexandra** is a 16-year student at IPI, currently enrolled in IB1. She grew up in Sweden and attended a Swedish lower secondary school, but chose the IB because of the international opportunities it offers. Alexandra is taking two social science subjects – History and Global Politics – and she is also active in European Youth Parliament and Model United Nations.

**Paul** is a 17-year student at IPI who prior to attending IPI went to a bilingual school in the local area. He chose the IB because of the quality of the education. Paul is taking History and Global Politics and is also active in Model United Nations.

**Elsa** is a 17-year old student at IPI taking History and Global Politics. She choose the IB because she is an international student who, in her words, ‘lacked the Swedish’ to attend a national program. Furthermore, she is active in both the European Youth Parliament and Model United Nations as well as the school newspaper.
Abraham is a 16-year old international student at IPI currently taking Economics and Global Politics as part of his IB Diploma. Abraham transferred to IPI halfway through Pr-IB and because of his international status was placed at this school. He is also an active member of Model United Nations.

Saga is a 17-year old attending IPI who is taking Economics and Global Politics as part of her IB Diploma. In addition to her studies, Saga is also involved in the school’s green committee. Saga attended multiple international schools abroad before coming to IPI.

Carla is a 17-year old IPI student taking History and Global Politics as her social science subjects in her IB Diploma. She is involved in student-run NGO focusing on health and education in Africa and attended an independent Swedish school prior to IPI.

4.2 Data Collection through Interviews

As mentioned earlier, the empirical data collected for this graduate thesis was ascertained through qualitative interviews with a school administrator, a Theory of Knowledge and Economics teachers in IPI’s IB program, and six students.

4.2.1 The Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview

As pointed out by Hatch (2002), qualitative research has a long-standing history within the social sciences but was only in recent years widely accepted within the field of education (p. 3). The upside of applying a qualitative method to this specific project lies in the nature of the method itself. “Qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it” (p. 7). In other words, in order to assess the extent to which teacher intentions match students’ perceived knowledge acquisition it is essential to actually investigate the perspectives of teachers and students. To this end, Hatch argues that is imperative to interview informants when collecting data on participant perspectives (Hatch 2002, p. 97).

Six students, in pairs, were interviewed about their experiences attending the workshop and asked to reflect on what they learned. Conversely, two pedagogues were
interviewed and asked about the intended learning outcome guiding the development and execution of said workshop. The interviews were set up as qualitative, semi-structured (sometimes known as ‘formal’) interviews.

Traditionally, as Hatch points out, interviews were often used as a complement to more quantity-based inquiry, “but they can be the primary or only data source in some qualitative projects” (p. 91). This project’s empirical data were collected through the mode of interviews. The purpose of conducting interviews was to explore how participants make sense of their worlds in terms of structure and ways of thinking that are often times taken for granted and not reflected on by the interviewee. This way of exploring how participants make sense of the world can, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), be broken into different categories. The one this graduate thesis focuses on is the reconstructive aspects; to clarify, it aims to uncover how participants explain past events and how they experienced these (p. 268).

What is further important to note with formal interviews is the fact that both researchers and the participants are aware of the fact that the conversation will produce empirical data. In light of this, the relationship between the researcher and the participant may affect the responses given. Finally, the semi-structured, formal interview is based around set questions that are open-ended in the sense that they encourage participants to describe and provide examples as they go along. In other words, both interviewees and participants are free to depart from the specific question posed in an effort to further explore specific aspects of the issue researched (Hatch 2002, p. 95).

4.2.2 Procedures

In practice, the interviews with the participants took place over the course of one week in early April 2016. Each interviewee were given a sheet of paper informing them of the purpose and scope of the study as well as ethical consideration taken and their right to anonymity (see Appendix 1). This information was verbally repeated at the beginning of each recorded interview as well.

The interviews with the students were carried out in a regular-sized classroom fitting 25-30 students. Tables and chairs were arranged so that the student pairs sat next to each
other with the interviewer on the other side. The door and windows were closed so that participating students would feel at ease and not be distracted by outside noise. Before the recording, the students were offered water. The interviews were recorded on an iPhone 6, allowing the interviewer and interviewees to focus on the discussion rather than the interviewer sitting taking notes. Conversely, the interviews with the two educators were carried out in their respective offices. In both instances, a smaller round table was used with the interviewer and the interviewee sitting facing each other. Once again, door and windows were closed so that the participating teachers would feel at ease and not be distracted by outside noise. These two interviews were also recorded on an iPhone 6, which allowed the interviewer to focus on the discussion rather than taking notes (see Appendix 2).

As pointed out by Hatch (2002), guiding questions with follow-up probing questions enables the researcher to gently steer the conversation in a suitable direction (p. 101). Participating students and teachers were therefore initially asked to tell a little bit about themselves and then asked to generally describe the workshop they attended. The student participants were then asked what they felt they learned from approaching the workshop topic from different subject perspectives. This was followed by a question on what they took away from the workshop in terms of the different academic subjects they worked with. A third question posed asked the students to explain how the specific workshop topic may have factored into what they felt the overarching learning outcome of the workshop actually was. Finally, the students were asked if there was anything additional they wanted to add.

The questions for the two educators were similar in nature, following the same structure, but asked from their point of view. Initially, they were asked to briefly tell a little bit about themselves and summarize the workshop they had been part of making. They were then asked the purpose of having the students approach the workshop topic from different subject perspectives. Furthermore, they were asked to explain what they wanted the students to take away from the workshop in terms of the individual academic subjects they worked with; and finally, if they could explain how the specific workshop topic the students worked with factored into the overarching learning outcome and what they wanted the student to gain from that. Finally, the teachers were also asked to if there was anything they wanted to add.
Once the interviews had been carried out, the data was transcribed and read in order to extrapolate fitting categories for analysis and discussion. The categories presented in the following section (Section 5) were based on recurring themes in the data collected. These results were then presented and analyzed with relevant theoretical concepts and previous case studies referenced.

4.2.3 Ethical Considerations

It is paramount in any and all research to consider and adhere to ethical guidelines concerning how research ought to be conducted. Vetenskapsrådet (2002) outlines four specific requirements. The first one – the information requirement – was fulfilled by providing information to the informants about the purpose and scope of the research and their rights as participants in the study, both verbally and in writing. The consent requirement was met by letting the participants know that their participation was voluntary and by letting them decide when and where the interviews would take place. Thirdly, by anonymizing the school in question as well as the participants, the confidentiality requirement was also adhered to. This was done by changing the names of all the participants and giving the target school a pseudonym. Lastly, the students were informed that the data collected would only be used for the specific purpose stated. This fulfilled the procedural requirement.
5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of the data collection are presented and analyzed. The three sections presenting and analyzing the data collected from the interviews have been divided into three section based on themes that emerged in processing the data: the Interdisciplinary Nature of the Social Science (see 5.2), the Relationship between Theory and Real-Life (see 5.3), and the Interplay between Global and Local Perspectives (see 5.4). These three themes represent the intended learning outcomes as formulated by the teachers during the interview. The analysis will draw on the theoretical perspectives and the previous research presented in chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

5.1 The Interdisciplinary Nature of the Social Sciences

5.1.1 The Pedagogical Intentions

One of the overarching goals of the IB Diploma program that informed the workshop carried out at IPI is student awareness of the fact that the different subjects the students take, on the one hand, approach any given issue from different perspectives, while simultaneously being intimately interconnected. During the interview with school administrator Charlie (2016-04-20), he suggested that different approaches to learning had always been part of the IB, but that they have recently been “highlighted” and placed front-and-center of the Diploma program.

This interdisciplinary take on academic subjects permeated the social science introductory workshop, according to Bob (2016-04-18). He said that the IB uses the IB Learner Profile as a way of explaining what the IB students should become after receiving their Diploma. Connecting this to the workshop, Bob explained:

In an effort to accomplish these goals, the IB has pushed for Approaches to Learning skills that students should reach higher-level thinking skills, communication skills, social skills, self-management- and research skills. That in itself is an interdisciplinary way of thinking because it’s making learning…eh…how should we say…real. It’s an attempt to create education that matters for students (3:06-3:26).

This interdisciplinary approach, Bob points out, is not only aimed at making students see how different subjects are linked to each other, but also – to some extent – force teachers to not solely focus on their own subjects. The goal then with the social science
introductory workshop, Bob suggested, was to have the students formulate open-ended knowledge questions that linked different social science subjects to the same issue, but also showed them how, for instance, psychology and economics would approach said issue differently.

We tried to get students to see how…through an event…a concept you might call it…migration…students could…understand that there are many causes and consequences from different perspectives. So within our…eh…human science group we looked at migration…or the refugee crisis…boat crisis…and we took then an economic perspective, we took a historic perspective, a psychological perspective…a business perspective (7:31-8:32).

Linking different subjects and their interpretations of and to an on-going current event, Bob argued, encourages students to see the interdisciplinary nature of social science subjects.

From a school administrator’s point of view, Charlie further argued that students have to become aware of the fact that they – through the structure of the IB curricula – already do this, but are not always aware of it. The students, Charlie suggested, need see how different subjects “are both connected, but also what is separate”. This, he argued, is critical in order for students to become ‘Knowledgeable’ and ‘Thinkers’ in accordance with the IB Learner Profile (IBO 2016c).

5.1.2 The Students’ Perceived Learning

Among the students interviewed, all three pairs were able to identify this overarching theme, albeit from different points of view. In the interview with Alexandra and Paul (2016-04-21), Paul suggested that the content of the different subjects often “crosses into the other’s territory. Global Political focusses on stuff currently happening…history on the past”. “They’re interconnected,” interjects Alexandra.

Abraham and Elsa (2016-04-22) were also able to identify the interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences; however, they expanded upon this:

Abraham: You (the teachers) picked the issue of the refugees…and then we had…uhm… Economics, Global Politics, History…and…
Elsa: …Psych.
Abraham: Yeah…uhm…yeah we had those four subjects and we were supposed to talk about the issue. I thought it was really interesting because all of the subjects brought up new points.
Elsa: Yeah, it was very interesting…It was a nice way of showing how every discipline is important but not in isolation.
Beyond being able to identify social science subjects as interconnected, Elsa and Abraham also discussed how the subjects reinforce and strengthen each other; in other words, that applying different perspectives on the same current events actually adds to the overall body of knowledge.

Carla and Saga (2016-04-25) did not explicitly mention the term interdisciplinary or interconnected in their answer. On the question of why the students thought that they were asked to construct knowledge questions based on different political cartoons addressing the same overarching issue, Saga started off by stating that in the different social science subjects the students read about similar things. Carla then interjected by stating: “For example, economics…or psychology…why it happened form their point of view…and to see that there are connections between all the subjects…that they can work together.” This answer is closely related to Abraham and Elsa’s discussion in that it recognizes the added value of combining multiple perspectives when discussing an issue.

5.1.3 Analysis

The IB Learner Profile (2016c) emphasizes the value in students not simply reflecting on what it is they are learning, but how they learn. This resonates well with the workshop’s overarching theme of students learning about the interdisciplinary nature of the social science subjects. The ATL initiative, as previously stated, is an attempt on the part of the IB to provide “more explicit support for teaching these skills” (IBO 2014). This intended purpose is highly transparent in the workshop, based on the teacher and student comments. Bob clearly stated that the students should walk away from the workshop with a clear idea of how these subjects approach the same issue differently, but also how they are interconnected and reinforce each other. The student response clearly showed that the student participants grasped this understanding. This understanding reflects a high degree of ATL implementation in that students develop and use their thinking skills. The discussion showed that the students were able to not solely identify how the different social science disciplines approach the same issue, but the students themselves ought to approach them. This clearly reflects Hattie’s (2009) notion that students developing a metacognitive awareness is key to understanding any given learning task.
It is also worth noting that the workshop design played into the students’ perceived level of actual learning. As pointed out by both Sindberg (2009) in her research in a music education context and Shepherd (2004) in a more general classroom-situated study, students tend to experience learning more clearly when they stop being passive receivers of knowledge and feel that their learning is based on a back-and-forth between the students and the teacher. These findings support Gardner’s idea of ‘mobilizing to understand,’ where students take active responsibility for their own learning process (Diessner 2001). Relating this back to the IB, students are expected to become “active learners” (IBO 2016d).

The key terminology used by both the teacher- and student informants was ‘perspectives.’ Lineham (2013) pays extra attention to this in his evaluation of the IB. Arguing that IB students are encouraged to engage in Socratic analysis: “different viewpoints can be distilled down to their cores, and along with this, commonly held truths can be examined” (p. 266). The idea of applying different perspectives and seeing how they relate to one another was a clearly stated intent by Bob and well-recognized among the students. The initial 25-minute presentation set the stage well for the students collaborative task at the individual workstations. This also shows the value of collaborative tasks, as proposed by Hattie (2009). The collaborative aspects of the workshop also correspond with ATL communication and social skills. The fact that the students worked in groups at a workstation with a teacher present meant that the task was highly interactive. Flick and Dickinson (1997) and Sindberg’s (2009) results point to the importance of a back-and-forth between both students and the teacher when it comes to how students experience their learning. These findings, in light of this, clearly show how ATL skills can be used as tool to attain the IB Learner Profile traits.

5.2 The Relationship Between Theory and Real-Life

5.2.1 The Pedagogical Intentions

According to Charlie, from a school administrator’s perspective, an overarching theme with the subject introductory workshop was to make the connection between academic theory and real-life application explicit and apparent. Charlie, however, pointed out that using a current event like the Middle Eastern refugee crisis in the social science
workshop was not initially that apparent. “We didn’t know exactly how to do it, but we wanted to create a better understanding of the different subjects and the best way to do so was to use a hands-on example.” Bob further elaborated on this by suggesting that what came out of the teachers’ preparation of the workshop was the sense that students needed to see that education matters. By using a hands-on, real-life example, “that’s how you create enthusiasm,” Bob suggested.

However, beyond grounding the subjects in an event that the students have some familiarity with, the idea of using the Middle Eastern refugee crisis was also based around the notion that different social science theories could explain the current crisis in different ways. Bob explained what this could look like from an economic theory perspective.

To understand the migration crisis, they (the students) can use the theoretical tools provided in the different disciplines. So for example, they can take the different economic theories and apply them directly to the crisis. Is this crisis the direct consequence of a neo-liberal ideology, which they may or may not be aware of? What will happen if Sweden uses some of its resources, deficit spend for instance, to alleviate the crisis? Well, that will affect the Swedish economy.

In this way, Bob argued, the different theories can both offer students some insights into why the refugee crisis is happening, but also potentially offer an idea of how this might affect, for instance, Swedish society. Students can then begin to talk about “the economics of this, or the psychology of this, or the politics of this, or the history of this.” If the students get to this point, Bob suggested, then they can clearly see how theory can explain different events and phenomena in society, that “education matters” and “the importance of theory”.

Beyond this, however, Bob suggested that the relationship between theory and real-life events is not simply something students should learn within the context of a specific subject, but rather something they should recognize is at the very foundation of academic inquiry. As stated by Bob: “some of these theories…will be a bit better at explaining the events than others, and thereby the students can use their inductive and deductive logic…and draw conclusions.” This idea of using reasoning in weighing different theories was at the heart of the pedagogical intent of the workshop.
5.2.2 The Students’ Perceived Learning

The student perspectives on this differed greatly within the sample group; however, one of three student pairs explicitly identified the purpose of using theory to explain real-life events. Alexandra and Paul were two of the students who did not explicitly discuss this as an overarching goal of the workshop, but in their discussion they did bring up several examples of this phenomenon. As Alexandra stated:

> If we analyze political cartoons in both English and Global Politics, there would obviously be a big difference. In English, we would focus on the cartoon itself and what it’s portraying and what different techniques are used in the portrayal, while Global Politics what it’s trying to say and how it’s connected to what’s happening in the world.

Alexandra and Paul identified the fact that different disciplines are underpinned by different kinds of theories and are used to emphasize different things.

Elsa and Abraham, by contrast, did talk about the theory explaining real-life as one of the main purposes of the workshop, but did so in terms of how it served to get the students familiarized with the subjects individually. Abraham also contrasted his experiences at the workshop with “classroom economics”. He stated:

> What we did in the economics part of that workshop was really talking about why these differences in prices are there, and about the economic as a whole. I feel what we are doing in economics in class around this, or just up until now, is much more analytical and theoretical.

While making the explicit connection between theory and real-life, Abraham pointed out that his classroom experience of economics – outside the workshop – is less based around real-life examples, and more based around theoretical models. Elsa, who unlike Abraham is taking history, claimed that the workshop task connected to history very accurately reflected what they do in the history classroom. “This kind of attempt to trace the root causes of the migration crisis back to a couple of centuries ago, that is very much what we are trying to do in history, trying to differentiate between a circumstantial cause and a long-term cause.”

Carla and Saga were able to identify the relationship between theory and real-life as one of the main purposes of the workshop, but their discussion focused mainly on the reverse process; how real-life can be used to better understand complex theories through examples. Carla suggested that she had an easier time understanding the social science
theories connected to the refugee crisis at the workshop because she was given “clear-cut examples”. Saga made a comment that did reflect an awareness of the interplay between theory and real-life: “It’s easy to work with models because you can predict what happens if something changes. If this changes, then this would most likely happen, based on the model.” This answer focused mainly on how real-life examples help students understand more complex, academic theories. None of the student groups, in light of the results presented above, brought up the idea of weighing different theories against each other and use reasoning skills to arrive at certain conclusions.

5.2.3 Analysis

The responses from each student group show a disconnect between their understanding of the relationship between theory and real-life events and the pedagogical intent formulated by Bob and Charlie. Perkins (2009, 2016) does suggest that real-life examples help students conceptualize and deepen their learning. However, IBO (2016e) writes that students ought to “compare and contrast methods used to gain knowledge in different areas (such as the natural science, history or the arts).” Requiring the students to compare and contrast methods in gaining knowledge between disciplines shows that IB curriculum expects students to go beyond using specific theories to better understand a real-life event, and vice versa. Lineham (2013) suggests the goal of the IB is to make students critically engage and reason with different theories and weigh them opposite each other in order to find answers. This in turn is supported by ATL’s thinking skills. The student informants did not identify this as a learning outcome; rather, they focused solely on how theory informs real-life or how real-life examples can be used to better understand theory. Alexandra and Paul implicitly discussed the relationship between theory and real-life events, while Carla and Saga discussed the reverse process. The results here show a partial understanding of the relationship between social science theory and real-life application, but the student answers indicate misalignment with the teacher intention.

Noel et al (2002) findings suggest that students’ lack of perceived knowledge gain is based on how they view tasks they are given. Noel et al identified two general themes: the extent to which the students found the task to encourage autonomous learning, and the extent to which open-ended questions were built into task. In other words, these findings suggests that in order for the students to feel that they have learned, they need
to feel that the tasks performed was done autonomously and that interaction with the instructor was informed by openness. While questions of this nature were not directly asked during the interviews, the students’ lack of knowledge going into the workshop may have contributed to their perceiving the tasks as less autonomous.

Perkins (2009) illustrates the importance of students gaining an understanding of how theory is used to explain real-life phenomenon, and in turn how real-life can help illuminate different theories. Perkins also, however, stresses the importance of being able to weigh different theories and for students to approach knowledge in general with a critical eye. His *Play out of Town* principle is based around the notion that students need to apply the knowledge gained in different context. It emphasizes that knowledge is something learners need to construct and reconstruct when used for different purposes in different situation. This responds to the ATL *thinking skills* emphasizing that students should “reflect on how we know what we claim we know” (IBO 2016e).

Sindberg (2009), Flick and Dickson (1997), and Carey and Grant (2015) show that an essential part of learning is the two-way communication between teacher and students. Sindberg’s (2009) categories of alignment correlate to the degree of back-and-fourth communication between teacher and students. In light of this, the results indicate a lack of student-teacher communication during workstation tasks. All three student groups talked implicitly about the relationship between theory and real-life events and were to some extent able to identify the relationship between the two. The lack of an explicit discussion on the value and importance of weighing different theories – as discussed by Linehamn (2013) and outlined by IBO (2016e) – clearly puts this overarching theme in Sinberg’s *misalignment* category.

5.3 The Interplay Between Global and Local Perspectives

5.3.1 The Pedagogical Intentions

A third overarching goal with the workshop was, as expressed by Bob, to show students “the dynamic interplay between local and global perspectives”. In his mind, the refugee crisis provided an excellent educational opportunity for the social science teachers to highlight how a global event or issue – the refugee crisis – is intimately connected to the local context the students at IPI live in. From the school administrator’s perspective,
however, Charlie explained how he believed local and global perspectives are a part of the IB:

I think it’s a natural way of doing things in the IB, to have a local and global connection. So, if you look into the IB Learner Profile or whatever subject you teach in the IB Diploma Program, you should have a knowledge of how global questions affect the local community, and vice versa. I don’t even think you need to call it an intention, if you work in the IB Diploma, that’s how you do it!

From the school administrator’s point of view, all IB subjects shed light on issues and phenomena from both a local and a global standpoint, and ideally, as Charlie suggested, the subject teachers are able to show the dynamic relationship between the two.

Bob, from a teaching perspective, upheld in his interview that grounding big, important global events in the local setting is key for student understanding and, more importantly, their engagement. “That’s how you create enthusiasm,” he proclaimed. He went on to give an example of how he uses the theme of the workshop in his current economics class. “For instance now, in my class, with the IB1:s, I’m connecting back to the refugee crisis. The Swedish economy is growing with four percent, and at the same time, the government is deficit spending.” Bob suggested that linking dry, macro economic policy presented by the Swedish Minister of Finance to the refugee crisis is a way for the students to understand how decisions made on different levels affect them. The consequence of a growing economy, as Bob argues, could potentially mean more resources to the school the students are attending. Making that chain of events visible to the students helps them appreciate how global events affect the local, and in turn, how small acts on a local level affect the global.

5.3.2 The Students’ Perceived Learning
The pedagogical intent of showing the students the connection between the global and the local was explicitly brought up in all three interviews. Alexandra recalled that her group’s approach to constructing knowledge questions based on the political cartoons very much embodied this dynamic interplay between global and local.

Well, I mean, generally in the human sciences and history, there is always different levels that you can talk about, and I feel is that usually what happens. And I feel that’s how we did this, we started talking about the problem very generally, and then we narrowed it down and started talking about how it affects local people, and how it affects us, and the nation as a whole. That is definitely a big part of how we analyze.
Elsa and Abraham discussed their group’s work at the Global Politics workstation specifically in relation to global and local perspectives. Elsa, recalling the knowledge question her group created at the Global Politics workstation, stated: “To what extent do we, here in Malmö, Sweden, have an obligation to help the refugees arriving from the Middle East?”. She continued by suggesting that a knowledge question like that sheds a very local perspective on the refugee crisis. Abraham, drawing on his experience at the history workstation specifically, suggested that some disciplines perhaps were less conducive for analyzing global events on a local scale, especially given the workshop task. “When then it came to the subject of history, where the question was to summarize the origins of the refugee crisis in ten minutes, I feel like that would have been very tough.” He furthers this point by pointing out that the workshop as a whole did address the different levels of analysis, and that the fact that some subjects focused on different levels, only made his understanding of the different subjects more clear.

Carla and Saga defined the local on a different scale, arguing that the local perspective was the group actually discussing the global refugee crisis. They recalled the following:

Carla: My group was very focused on the global level. But someone said… I can’t remember who said it… but someone said that we should go local as well. Because it’s obviously a different issue at different stages, and what’s the main problem on a global level might not be the same locally…
Saga: Like, the global and local solutions are different…
Carla: Yeah.
Interviewer: Can you guys give me an example of the solution?
Saga: Well, like, on a local level, solving the integration problem. Setting up meeting points, schools and education, health care. But on a global level, it’s just a matter of ending the… it’s just not as easily fixed.

What Carla and Saga are identifying, beyond the fact that the refugee crisis spans different levels of society and the world, is that the issue takes on various forms and has to be dealt with differently on these different levels.

5.3.3 Analysis
The student responses show a high level of what Lineham (2013) refers to as “global perspectives and… international understanding” (p. 268). Carla and Saga’s discussion demonstrates an understanding of the interplay between local and global circumstances, as they are able to clearly identify how the same event plays out different depending on which level of analysis you choose to focus on. This line of thinking also corresponds well with the pedagogical intention formulated by Bob.
Abraham and Elsa took a more critical and functional approach by suggesting that given the time restriction of the workshop, certain subjects were more conducive to engaging in multiple levels of analysis. Elsa, in her response specifically, recalled that her knowledge questioned focused solely on a local perspective. This line of thinking presented in these groups clearly aligns with the intention formulated by both Charlie and Bob, and is deeply rooted in the IB Learner Profile, where the students under the heading ‘Knowledgeable’ are expected to “engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance” (IBO 2016c).

Alexandra’s reflection focused less on the dynamic interplay between the local and the global, but aligned well with Bob’s formulated intention of taking a global issue and grounding it locally as a way to engage the students. Räsänen’s (2007) idea of international education as a means to guiding students in an increasingly globalized and multicultural world is reflected in Alexandra’s answer, as she describes how her group started off with the big picture (“more generally”) and then moved towards the immediate effects it has on their community and the nation. Alexandra’s answer also shows that the students were able to navigate between the different levels of analysis and use these in furthering their understanding of, in this case, the refugee crisis. Perkins (2012) as well as Hattie (2015) note the importance of the applicability of what the students learn. At the heart of this, Hattie argues, is the need to make education more personalized.

As a final note: Bob, in light of the comments made by Carla and Saga, made an interesting note in the weeks following the workshop. He noticed that a number of students involved in the workshop started engaging with the refugee crisis locally in Malmö, “doing foot work,” as Bob put it. “We could see that something really changed within out students…their understanding…and how they were connected to this event…This is what the Learner Profile is…eh…to be caring, reflecting, risk-taking human being.”
6 DISCUSSION

This case study of how IBO’s ATL initiative was implemented at a specific school in Sweden does not lend itself to any sweeping generalizations. In light of the scope and focus of this graduate thesis, it is important to point out that this was never the intention. Rather, the purpose of this essay was to provide a micro perspective on a pedagogical initiative – ATL – with a global span and identify the extent to which the pedagogical intentions and execution align with what students participating at the workshop actually felt that they learned. What came out of the interviews with both the teacher and student participants was that everyone included seem to think that the workshop was successful in introducing the students’ to ATL through more general subject introductions. My findings show that while misalignment exists between the pedagogical intention and the participating students’ perceived learning experience when it comes the ATL implementation of thinking skills, most aspects of the workshop studies show alignment. With the part of the workshop where there was misalignment, the results show that the importance of using reasoning skills to weigh different theories explaining real-life events was not made visible to the students through the workshop (Hattie 2009, Perkins 2012). This, in turn, provides an obstacle for the students attaining the IB Learner Profile ‘Knowledgeable” trait (IBO 2016c).

Initially, my interest in the workshop was based on my knowledge (or perhaps lack thereof) of the underpinning pedagogical philosophy of the IB and the IB Learner Profile. The purpose of studying the intended and perceived learning outcomes of the social science subject introductory workshop at IPI was not fueled by how the workshop was constructed, but rather the way in which students and teachers talked about the workshop in retrospect (Hattie 2009). Placing this kind of discussion in an academic context is also important then because these interviews is a reflection of what the IB wants both teachers and students to do, namely, reflect on learning. This approach is based on social constructivism, as formulated by Vygotsky and Piaget via more contemporary education researchers, such as Perkins (2009) and Hattie (2012). These theorists form the basis for the IB pedagogical philosophy expressed in the IB Learner Profile and the Approaches to Learning initiative. The dual focus of teacher intentions and student-perceived learning seemed only reasonable as that forms the basis for all
education, regardless of system, place, or time (Flick and Dickinson 1997, Noels et al 2002, Sinberg 2015, Carey and Grant 2015).

This final section of the paper will discuss some of the results I arrived at based on the case study and evaluatory work I conducted. After reconnecting my results to my guiding research question, I will also discuss some of the potential implications in an attempt to widen the scope somewhat, provide a few ideas on how future research could add to this study, and then end with a few concluding remarks.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study suggest that not all, but the greater part, of the intended outcomes of the social science subject introductory workshop – as formulated by Bob and Charlie – aligned with the participatory students’ perceived learning. The guiding research question for this graduate thesis was:

- To what extent do the intended learning outcomes – as formulated by the social science faculty in charge of the workshop in focus – correspond with the perceived knowledge acquisition of the students attending the workshop?

In exploring the answer – or answers – to that question, I conducted five separate interviews; one with a school administrator at IPI, one with a ToK and Economics teacher, and three pair interviews with a total of six IB1 students. The empirical data gathered based on these interviews suggests that the workshop served its purpose and was successful in explicitly linking ATL strategies to the social science subjects. However, the study clearly suggests that there is room for improvement. The findings here indicate that more emphasis need placed on making the connection between theory and real-life on the one hand, and using reasoning skills on the other, more visible for the student participants at the workshop.

Looking at the specific ‘themes’ of the Results and Analysis section, all six students identified the interdisciplinary nature of the social science subjects and the dynamic interplay between global and local levels of analysis as learning outcomes of the workshop. Drawing on Hattie’s (2009) idea of visible learning wherein students are made aware of why and how they are actually learning. The student answers showed that they were able to see both how social science subjects are linked together – through
the use of a common issue – and how they also approach different topics differently. This dual purpose – commonality and differentiation – was present in the pair discussions. Similarly, the students’ discussion on different levels of analysis showed that they understood how the workshop intended to take a global issue and place in a local context, thus changing the focus and relating it to their own experience. Additionally, Bob’s rather personal anecdote on how the workshop and the refugee crisis had personally affected some students and made them want to participate in the #refugeeswelcome campaign clearly shows how global to the local approach had an impact on at least some students. This relates back to Perkin’s (2012) baseball metaphor, and especially his second point – Make the game worth playing – and the fourth – play out of town.

The one ‘theme’ where the teacher intention and the students’ perceived learning did not align was the relationship between theory and real-life events and how the two reinforce each other. As suggested by Charlie and Bob, the intended outcome was for the students to understand how social science theory can explain real-life events, and vice versa, but also how different theories – through reasoning – can be weighed with some offering a more applicable answer. What the students were able to identify was the importance of using examples to explain more complex theories; however, the interplay between the two and the purpose of weighing theories against each other were not identified as learning outcomes.

This misalignment between pedagogical intention and the participating students’ perceived learning experience indicate a lack of visible learning when it comes to implementing ATL in the social science subjects (Hattie 2009). The participating students did not connect the ATL thinking skills and how they (the students) ought to approach different social science subject theories. Given the focus and scope of this study, the reasons for this are difficult to completely uncover. However, one potential obstacle standing in the way of students making this connection could be the fact that the students came into the workshop with a preexisting knowledge that informed the way in which they viewed the refugee theme. Another possible reason for this is the fact that the students – at this point in time – had only been introduced to Theory of Knowledge and had not had any substantial lesson time in the subject yet. Introducing the overarching theme in the Spring Pr-IB Theory of Knowledge introduction sessions
could, for future executions of the workshop, prevent this. Another way of preparing the students for the workshop could be to give them some of the introductory materials before hand, so that they go in with a more specific idea of what the workshop will actually address.

### 6.2 Future Research

As this thesis was written based on a case study approach, there is a plethora of potential ways in which additional research on this topic could add further to what was found here. Research suggests, as pointed out in the study, that interactive, group-based tasks are highly conducive to subject areas where there is not necessarily a straightforward answer, but rather a multitude of ‘truths’. This would suggest that the setup of this particular workshop perhaps works better in a social science setting. Lineham’s (2013) findings further support this notion. For this reason, it would be interesting to study the outcome of a similarly constructed workshop in a different subject group, such as mathematics or the natural sciences. This would be interesting in part because the notion of weighing different perspectives – as outlined by the IB Learner Profile – is supposed to permeate all IB subjects. Additionally, comparing the results across multiple subject groups might give educators a better idea of the guiding beliefs students hold true about specific subject and subject groups within the IB.

Two additional ways of approaching this kind of study would be to expand the student and teacher samples and conduct the interviews closer to the actual workshop. On the second point, the interviews for this case study were conducted during the month of April 2016 with the workshop taking place in August of 2015. Interviewing teachers and students closer to the actual event might generate more, and potentially different, results. Similarly, expanding the student and teacher samples to include more students and teachers would potentially shed light on new aspects and add perspectives not identified in this specific study.

### 6.3 Concluding Remarks

As stated previously in this section, there is little point with generalizing based on the findings in this study. That stated, what this case study does is provide insights into a pedagogical initiative conducted at a public school in Sweden offering an alternative
educational program to the Swedish national one. The findings and analysis presented here serve as quality evaluation for the faculty involved in the forthcoming 2016 workshop. Looking at the workshop specifically, my findings suggest that students need to be made more aware that reasoning skills they are expected to develop in the Theory of Knowledge subject should be applied to the other subjects they are taking. To use Hattie’s (2009) language, this way of learning needs to be made more visible.

The purpose of this graduate thesis is thus to provide insight into the workings of a growing educational program largely ignored in Swedish research. The extent to which the successfullness of a workshop like this can be measured is also highly debatable. The results presented here clearly show that the ATL initiative, as proposed by the IBO and implemented at IPI, were able make the interdisciplinary nature of the social science subjects and the importance of global and local perspectives visible to the students. However, the workshop did not manage to make visible the intimate relationship between ATL thinking skills and the importance of weighing different theories through higher-level thinking skills, which in turn provides an obstacle for the students to achieve the IB Learner Profile ‘Knowledgeable’ trait. As Bob, the teacher interviewed for the study, stated though: “research should help us understand this workshop and perhaps get it to be better and better, because we will continue with this.”

The fact that the IB Diploma program is offered at numerous schools in Sweden means that academics, politicians, and other professionals with ties to educational research and policy have the opportunity to look into a different kind of education system existing parallel to the Swedish national one. This kind of research could hopefully bridge information between different facets of the education sphere in Sweden.

The value in having parallel education programs, unlike what some politicians may think, is not that competition forces these systems to hone their skills and step up their game, as it were. Rather, both systems offer different kinds of educational platforms to students (with some obvious overlap) which can serve as a source of quality and strength for both systems, provided comparisons can be made and lessons learned from each other.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

My name is Andreas Henninger, and I am conducting a case study as part of my graduate thesis in English Language Education at Malmö University. I have chosen to write my thesis on an ATL-based workshop that took place at your school in August of 2015. The aim of my research is to explore the extent to which the intentions of the teachers who set up the workshop align with the student participants’ perceived learning. In order to ascertain information about this, I need to interview teachers and students who were part of the workshop.

The interviews will be semi-structured and for the students conducted in pairs, meaning that I will ask some guiding questions with optional follow-up questions that you and your interview partner will then discuss. The teachers asked to participate will be interviewed alone. Please note that the interviews will last approximately 30 minutes. In the final product, your names and the school you work at/attend will be anonymized.

I firmly believe that you have important information to contribute and would appreciate you participating!

Should you have any questions, feel free to email me at:

Andreas Henninger (andreas.henninger@malmo.se)
Appendix 2:

**A) Background Questions**

Tell me a little bit about yourselves.  
(Name, gender, age, educational background, your relationship to the school, why you attended the workshop?)

**B) The teachers’ views on the workshop?**

Could you, in your own words, briefly summarize the workshop that you were part of last August?

What was the purpose of having the students approach the same topic/issue from different subject perspectives?

What did you want the students to take away from the workshop in terms of the individual academic subjects they worked with?

Could you explain how the specific topic/issue the students worked with factored into the overarching learning outcome of the workshop, and what did you want the students to gain from that?

Anything else you would like to add?

**C) The students’ views on the workshop?**

Could you, in your own words, briefly summarize the workshop that you were part of last August?

What do feel you learned from approaching the same topic/issue from different subject perspectives?

What did you take away from the workshop in terms of the individual academic subject you worked with?

What did you gain from talking about a global and current event in the workshop at your school?

Anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 3:

From: www.ibo.org

The IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

IB learners strive to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquirers</th>
<th>They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinkers</td>
<td>They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicators</td>
<td>They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principled</td>
<td>They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk-takers</td>
<td>They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>