ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine what alternative forms of assessments are being practiced in a public school with an international programme and to explore the teachers’ attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment procedures. Various assessment models and strategies have been investigated and discussed, as presenting a part of the educational practice in the primary classrooms that engage the International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme at the elementary school level (age range 6-11) in the years 0-5.

While defining my research problem, I have started from hypothesis that practicing of alternative assessment has an important positive role in the international schools supporting, promoting and improving student learning.

International schools are facing both challenging and complexity of assessment process while striving to apply both national and international programs’ recommendations concerning the testing.

Alternative forms of assessments are being used in conjunction with other forms of assessment, such as standardised tests, in order to assess both student performance and the intentions of the International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme.

This paper investigates what alternative assessment practices (portfolio, performance assessment, Exhibition, self-assessment) are being applied and used in the same school where the standardised tests are also being applied and used (text book tests, teacher-made tests, local and national test).

The hypothesis was supported and the study findings suggest that various types of assessments are needed to be utilized in order to fairly evaluate students’ needs as well as that alternative assessment has an important positive role meeting individual student’s needs supporting a process of learning.

Key words: alternative assessment, authentic assessment, International Baccalaureate Organisation, IBO programme, international education, International School in Nacka, ISN, performance assessment, primary school students, primary school teachers, portfolio, Primary Years Programme, PYP, self-assessment, traditional testing
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List of Abbreviations

IB: International Baccalaureate
IBO: International Baccalaureate Organisation
ISN: International School in Nacka
MYP: Middle Years Programme
PYP: Primary Years Programme
“Good teaching constantly asks about old understanding in new ways, calls for new applications, and draws new connections. And good assessment does the same.” Lorrie Shepard

1. BACKGROUND AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Contemporary authors’ works (Black & William 1998, Broadfoot 1996, Elwood and Klenowski 2002, Gipps 2001) about assessment generally agree about assessment having three purposes: to support and enhance learning, to provide certification for progress or further transfer and to present a form of quality assurance. They also point out a valuable link existing between assessment and curriculum, arguing that formative assessment has to be integrated with curriculum in order to reach a good quality teaching. Furthermore, they agree that assessment should not be external and formal in its implementation but integral to the teaching process. Socio-cultural context of both learning and assessment should be taken into consideration and from that perspective planning for assessment should be going on simultaneously as planning for learning.

Gipps (2001) makes an outline of the key aspects of assessment which should enable broad range of activities, offer a wide opportunity to perform, match to classroom practice, establish an extended interaction between pupil and teacher to explain the task, have a normal classroom setting which is therefore not unduly threatening and provide range of response modes other than written. She is arguing that assessment should be used to identify next steps in learning, building on successes as well as correcting weaknesses and present information on attainment and progress clearly to all involved in the learning process.

In the traditional model of teaching and learning, the curriculum is seen as a distinct body of information, specified in detail, which can be transmitted to the learner. Assessment here consists of checking whether the information has been received and absorbed [...] By contrast, constructivist models see learning as requiring personal knowledge construction and meaning making, and as involving complex and diverse processes; such models therefore require assessment to be diverse, in an attempt to characterise in more depth the structure and quality of student’s learning and understanding. While, for example, standardised multiple choice or short answer type tests are efficient at sampling the acquisition of the specific knowledge presented by teachers or textbooks, more intense, even interactive methods, such as essays, performance assessments, and small group tasks and projects, are needed to assess understanding and the process of learning, as well as to encourage a deeper level of learning. (Gipps 2001, p 73)

Discussing a four key aspects of Vygotsky`s ideas referring assessment and dynamic assessment procedures Gipps states that:

In this process, assessor and student collaborate to produce “the best performance” of which the student is capable: help given by an adult is the rule, in order to obtain best performance. In standardised tests, we withhold help in order to produce typical performance. (Gipps 2001, p 75)

During the early 1990s many researchers (Black 1998, Broadfoot 1996, Hancock 1994, Murphy 1995, Shepard 2000) at the educational fields started to be concerned about the alternative forms of assessment. Reformed vision of curriculum and con-
structivist learning theories call for a new type of assessment, the one that can be used as a part of instruction in order to aid and enhance the process of learning. It is about having a deep connection with promoting student learning, and there are various specific purposes for assessing but the common link is that - to promote student understanding. Namely, a student who understands can explain, which means that students can interpret knowledge using their own words and argue the critical points knowing, not only what has been taught, but also identifying and applying what has been learned in practical situations.

Over the years a lot of attention has been given to exploring various methods of assessing the knowledge and understanding of a student. Hancock (1994) is giving a short historical overview on the theoretical assumptions on which contemporary testing and assessment are based on behaviourist views of cognition and development. It was in 1990’s when educationalists realized that the new, alternative ways of thinking and assessing learning are needed. He suggests one useful way to think about assessment contrasting it with testing that has a purpose of serving as a monitoring device for learning and is given at a particular point in time. Usually, after the test is given, some type of reporting takes place and sometimes decisions are made based on test results. Hancock is contrasting this feature of testing to purpose of assessment as being emphasised in 1990’s.

A final important aspect of testing is that the test is usually kept hidden from the students until it is administered, indicating a degree of secrecy in order to assure confidentiality [...] Some important differences between testing and assessment become obvious. In an instructional program, assessment is usually an ongoing strategy through which student learning is not only monitored - a trait shared with testing - but by which students are involved in making decisions about the degree to which their performance matches their ability. (Hancock 1994, p 2)

Teachers and researchers in the field of assessment put forward a distinction between assessment of learning and assessment for learning, as explored by Broadfoot, Black & William, Elwood & Klenowski, Shepard and many others. The alternative assessment models are based on “the shared practice” as defined in Elwood & Klenowski (2002) article on creating communities of shared practice where nothing in the assessment process is hidden. Their research suggests that to improve learning and indeed teaching, educational assessment must be formative in both function and purpose as well as must place a student in the very centre of the assessment.

There is a range of methods that has been used striving for providing useful “double feedback” – equally important elements of the whole assessing process for both students and teachers - such as test, oral demonstrations, portfolios, examinations, practical demonstration, self-assessment etc. Feedback is affecting assessment and sharing that is important – for a student to understand how to improve their learning and for a teacher to understand how to modify teaching and learning activities. Martin-Kniep (1993) argues that traditional and externally imposed assessment

Neither promotes students’ learning, tend to measure anything more than limited and superficial knowledge and behaviours, nor support the curriculum and instructional approaches used by teachers. (Martin-Kniep 1993, p 53)

Alternative assessment on the contrary presents a process that provides an opportunity for the meaningful integration of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
Educational researches started to write more about assessment shifting focus from a traditional kind, that served a purpose of giving grades or satisfying the accountability demands of an external authority, to assessment that can be used as a part of instruction to support and enhance learning like expressed in the Shepard (2000) article on the role of assessment in a learning culture. One figure in the article demonstrates a historical overview illustrating changes in conceptions of curriculum, learning theory, and measurement by showing 20th century dominant paradigm (circa 1900s-2000+) and emergent paradigm (circa 1990s-2000+).

Figure 1. A historical overview illustrating how changing conceptions of curriculum, learning theory, and measurement explain the current incompatibility between new views of instruction and traditional views of testing (Shepard 2000, p 12)

Figure 1 illustrates the current incompatibility between new views of instruction and traditional views of testing. Shepard (2000) argues that: “A longer-term span of history helps us see that those measurements perspectives, now felt to be incompatible with instruction, came from an earlier, highly consistent theoretical framework (on the left) in which conceptions of

Scientific measurements “were closely aligned with traditional curricula and beliefs about learning. To the right is an emergent, constructivist paradigm in which teacher’s close assessment of student’s understandings, feedback from peers, and student self-assessments would be a central part of the social processes that mediate the development of intellectual abilities, construction of knowledge, and formation of students’ identities. The best way to understand dissonant current practices, shown in the middle of the figure, is to realize that instruction (at least in its ideal form) is drawn from the emergent paradigm, while testing is held over from the past. (Shepard, 2000, p 12)

Traditional testing, as clearly presented in Sheppard’s (2000) figure demonstrating an historical overview illustrating changing conceptions of curriculum and learning theory, is aligned with what she describes as “scientific measurements” that belongs to traditional curriculum.
Assessment changed during the changes of the theories and models of learning – constructive teaching and learning brought assessment in the centre and it does not have any longer purpose of presenting a form of the measurement related to traditional curricula. It is not any longer teacher who is situated in the centre dominating the assessment process – teachers’ assessment go hand in hand with students’ assessment (both peer and self-assessment) and they present dynamical parts of the social interaction in the learning process. Modern theories describes that as assessment is now being defined and seen as an integral aspect of the teaching and learning cycle, rather than being an event that serves for describing students’ achievement at the end of course or period of learning it becomes process of describing students’ performance.

According to new developments in theory of learning, teacher is opening up discussion of assessment with the student and that is actually what presents a major challenge for assessment in 21st century because it is putting demands on the teacher to obtain specific skills needed for this new, additional role. Process of learning should be assessed by more intense, interactive methods and that work should be undertaken in collaboration, either between teacher and student or a group of peers.

The common element in the modern theories of learning is stressing the role of understanding – the learner has to understand the nature of task that he/she is going to learn as well as the procedure to be followed along the stages of learning process. Better quality of teaching includes formulating of the specific instructional objectives and constant providing feedback covering three parts – teacher, peers and self-assessment.

Burke (2005) adapts a scheme from Cole as cited in Shepard (1989) that illustrates the main differences between large-scale assessment and classroom assessment. The large-scale assessment serves accountability and policy goals being formal, objective, time-efficient, cost-effective, widely applicable and centrally processed. Classroom assessment supports instruction and is informal, teacher-mandated, adapted to local content, locally scored, sensitive to short-term change in student’s knowledge, meaningful to students, immediate and detailed feedback, tasks that have instructional value and conducted in a climate of greater thrust than standardised tests.

Discussing multiple-choice tests that assess recall of factual information being rarely able to assess if or not student can organize complex problem, Burke states that:

The new cognitive perspective stresses that meaningful learning is constructive. Learners should be able to construct meaning for themselves, reflect on the significance of the meaning, and self-assess to determine their own strengths and weaknesses [...] Assessment, therefore, should focus on students’ acquisition of knowledge, as well as the disposition to use skills and strategies and apply them appropriately. (Burke 2005, p XV)

In the same research, Burke (2005, p XVII) defines assessment as the ongoing process of gathering and analyzing evidence of what student can do (ongoing, collection of data, formative) while defining evaluation as the process of “interpreting the evidence and making judgements and decisions based on the evidence” (final judgement, end result and summative).
Discussing the need for balanced Assessment Burke (2005) argues that classroom assessment provides data and feedback that standardised tests cannot, stating that:

Classroom teachers guide students over time by using continuous observations to assess what is unique to an individual. Teachers provide constant feedback to students throughout their stages of development. Furthermore, teachers assess the growth and development of students and allow them to demonstrate their learning addressing all eight of Gardner’s multiple intelligences rather than focusing on verbal/linguistic and logical/mathematical – the intelligences emphasised on most standardised tests. (Burke 2005, p 32)

Burke (2005) gives a presentation of Venn diagram illustrating some of the differences between standardised tests and classrooms assessment, along one similarity. The similarity is that both methods are used to assess student achievement; namely have the same purpose and the author argues that neither any of them is insufficient by itself nor they alone can provide a realistic, true picture of student’s learning.

Exploring this issue Burke (2005) states that a standardised tests presents just one “snapshot” of a student performance arguing that educators should be implementing a balanced assessment program in order to make an accurate and informed assessment of an individual student achievement. That “snapshot” needs to be combined with a variety of other assessment tools to provide a true picture of the student as a learner.

Arguing for a balanced assessment Burke (2005) states that “assessment should not have to generate an “either/or” a “throw out the baby with the bath water” approach stating that:

Most educators agree with Stiggins that educators need all tools at their disposal. […] No one assessment tool by itself is capable of producing the quality information that is needed to make an accurate judgement of a student’s knowledge, skills, understanding of curriculum, motivation, social skills, processing skills, and lifelong learning skills. Each single measurement by itself is insufficient to provide a true portrait of the student or learner. If educators combine standardized and teacher-made tests to measure knowledge and content with portfolios to measure process and growth, and with performances to measure application, the “union of insufficiencies” will indeed provide a more accurate portrait of the individual learner. (Burke 2005, p XXIV)

Balanced assessment, according to Burke (2005), should include three types of assessment: traditional (focusing on knowledge, curriculum and skills), portfolio (process, product and growth) and performance (standards, application and transfer).

1.2. Research and the structure of the study

International schools are facing both challenging and complexity of assessment process while striving to apply both national and international programs recommendations concerning the testing. Importance of broader and more balanced approach and integration of knowledge is very much present in the international education and testing isolating facts on fixed-response basis does not really demonstrate the holistic nature of the international education.

McClelland (2001) discuss issues concerning managing assessment in the international schools stating that many international schools buy into a national
assessment system, and in doing so they are adopting the highly structured curriculum and assessment.

International schools often feel quite vulnerable about assessment as they are frequently isolated schools trying to ensure that the standard of the education they provide is of the same quality as that in national systems possibly thousands miles away. (McClelland 2001, p 53)

In schools that are practicing the applying of alternative assessments the students are provided with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their learning in comparison to the school that apply only traditional kinds of assessment. However, standardised tests are considered as a measurement that the public and policymakers use to set standards, measure learner achievement, monitor the quality of education and many people would agree that standardised test scores are being valid and reliable.

Having in mind the two most important aspects of assessment - validity and reliability, it is rather challenging to combine and balance out a wide range of methods for evaluating pupil performance and attainment under circumstances where, due to teaching requirements of curriculum, formal testing and examinations have to be simultaneously used with practical and oral assessment as well as classroom based assessment carried out by teachers. Portfolio procedure and performance based assessments are used at the school in conjunction to the traditional, standardised tests.

While defining my research problem, I have started from the hypothesis that practicing of alternative assessment has an important positive role in the international schools supporting, promoting and improving student learning.

The research questions are:

- What alternative assessments are practiced in a public International Baccalaureate school?

- What are the teachers’ attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment versus traditional testing?

In this paper I examine and explore what alternative assessments are practiced in The International Baccalaureate (IB) education, focusing on the Primary Years Programme (PYP) in a Swedish public school. I also investigate and discuss various alternative assessment models and strategies, as a part of educational practice in the contemporary primary classroom that engages the International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme being a public school. Furthermore, I am exploring the teachers’ attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment. The thesis is structured as follows:

The first part of the study (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) gives an overview on some modern approaches to assessment in broad terms, presenting background of the problem by introducing some research works on assessment, defining research problem and the structure of the study. Chapter 1 introduces a certain issues related to assessment in education as viewed by several contemporary researchers. After that in Chapter 2 I give an overview of alternative assessment origin as a call for change that came in the 1990s, present some definitions of the alternative asses-
sment and some opinions concerning similarities and differences of the traditional and alternative assessing, including discussion on portfolio assessment.

Chapter 3 introduces the international educational programme for primary years International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme ethos and ideology “in a nutshell”, describing main characteristics of this model of international education referring assessment, discuss the general role and purposes of assessment and role of assessment as being integrated into “a real-life curriculum”.

Chapter 4 presents the study context at The International School in Nacka as a public school that practices both traditional and alternative assessment describing also methods and methodology used for this study, collecting, interpreting and analyzing data including ethics.

Chapter 5 presents the findings for this study describing The International School in Nacka practices that are being used within a process of applying different types of assessment, focusing on alternative assessment practices in the school. Findings from a various school documentation referring the assessments are given in Chapter 5.1. while Chapter 5.2. provides the results of survey.

The survey has been carried out among The International School in Nacka primary school teachers, having a main purpose of exploring the teachers’ attitudes towards alternative assessment and its role in the International Baccalaureate model of education in primary years. Collecting and interpreting The International School in Nacka assessment related documents, analyzing assessment models and strategies being demonstrated at the school documentation as well as analyzing the results of survey conducted among the teachers enabled me as a researcher to administrate, compare and analyse data which results are presented in Chapter 5.3 together with a final conclusions referring the alternative assessment in the International Baccalaureate Primary Years programme. The last chapter also provides a researcher’s overview on limitations of the study suggesting some recommendations for further research in this field.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1. Alternative assessment as a call for change

There are researchers (Belle 1999, Black 1998, Broadfoot 1996, Hancock 1994, Lambert and Lines 2000, Murphy 1995, Shepard 2000) in the field of education who have been arguing that traditional style assessments in the form of written (uniformed or teacher-made tests) do not present exclusive means to measuring effectively achievement of a student. These opinions opened a door to the introduction of alternative assessment into the curriculum underlining that understanding of concepts can also be measured by making use of practical and creative skills acquired along the learning process, not just analytical skills.

Gipps (2004) is making a line between traditional assessment (teacher sets and defines the task and determines how performance should be evaluated- hierarchical assessment where student presents merely the object of the assessment) and open discourse – interactive approach where a key issue is the need to understand response of the learner and communication resides in respecting the perspectives of others. Open discourse gives opportunities for student to actually negotiate with the teacher about the nature of their learning activities, participate in the determination of assessment criteria as well as undertake self-assessment and peer-assessment. The use of external supports is a key element in producing interactive and dynamic assessment – assessment which allows the use of auxiliary tools – this is about shifting perspectives from typical to best performance assessment – in standardised test teacher withhold help in order to produce typical performance while in interactive assessment teacher has to give a help in order to produce the best performance.

Assessment becomes “more collaborative enterprise” – the student is allowed and encouraged to have some input on determining the assessment process. There is also a point related to powering and empowering and difference between “specifying” and “constructing” types of assessment. Specifying one – teacher uses specific criteria and retains control and power (teacher as a provider or judge being to the student) while constructing one – sharing power and responsibility with the student (teacher as facilitator being with the student).

Gipps (2004) is arguing that when teachers involve the learner in process of assessment they demonstrate power with, rather than power over the students. Alternative assessment presents, as expressed by Martin-Kniep (1993), “both process and a product”, a holistic and integrative process that impacts instruction, curriculum and assessment. “

It is a process because it enables us to determine what and how to teach and what and how to assess through the articulation of our vision what we want to “produce” in students. It is a product in that it leads to the design of assessment tasks and documentation systems, such as portfolios, that make it possible for students to demonstrate the attainment of the outcomes we value. To the extend that educators recognize and appreciate the possibilities that alternative assessment has to offer, the design and use of alternative assessment could have an impact, not just on what and how to assess, but on what, why and how we teach. (Martin-Kniep 1993, p 57)

Alternative assessment came as a call for change in the educational world, encouraging students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by using them, instead
demonstrating comprehension or interpretation of acquired knowledge and adopted skills. The acceptance of a need for students to express themselves in other ways than standardised or teacher-made tests has been caused by considering models that would enable students to present what they learned by engaging various presentation forms.

In order to overcome the disadvantages of the traditional testing, alternative assessment, authentic assessment, self-assessment, portfolio assessment and many other procedures, were introduced and started to present an alternative to traditional ways of monitoring student progress and performance.

2.2. Some Alternative Assessment Definitions

Before presenting some definition of alternative assessment, a difference between alternate and alternative assessment has to be clear stated in order to distinguish the terms of alternate assessment and alternative assessment.

Alternate assessment presents assessment accommodation for students who need them, a different measurement approach for evaluating the knowledge or skills of a student with disabilities (such as hearing or vision impairment, limited language of instruction proficiency etc.) alternating the standardised assessment making adjustments based on student’s specific disabilities or difficulties. That alternation could be done for example by allocating more time to complete the standard test to second language learners, providing a special room with a better isolation or light for student with disabilities etc. Alternate assessment presents modifications that may include changes in the standardised assessment settings, time, mode of response and other accommodation that would meet the need of the students with disabilities and limited language of instruction proficiency (special needs students).

Alternative assessment is sometimes in the various educational papers considered as a synonym to performance assessment or authentic assessment, and presents an approach to measuring a progress of student based on the way that the student completes a specified task versus traditional paper-and-pencil tests (even if they are done on computer).

There are different terms in use describing the current assessment strategies: alternative, authentic, embedded, and performance-based, portfolio but all of this assessment have in common that student should generate a response rather than choosing the answer from those given. Alternative Assessment, which is based on making, generating response instead of choosing one of the given responses, opens the door for developing of pupils’ involvement in the area of assessment. Observation, feedback and interaction in the classroom present important features of the alternative assessment.

Black (1998) argues that there are both practical and fundamental reasons why pupils should play a role in their own assessment.

On the practical level, if pupils’ involvement means that they do some of the work for themselves, this can make it more feasible for teachers to carry through a programme of formative assessment. However, this involvement also changes both the role of the pupil as learner and the na-
ture of the relationship between teacher and pupil, making the latter shoulder more of the responsibility for learning. This leads into the fundamental reasons why pupils’ involvement is essential. (Black 1998, p 127)

Black also explains the difference between an authentic assessment and performance assessment in terms of authentic assessment being planned into the topic or scheme of work presenting an essential part of the learning experience while performance assessment can be carried out as an isolated assessment task.

A performance assessment can be an ad hoc assessment exercise, whereas an “authentic assessment” is a performance assessment in the normal learning context. (Black 1998, p 88)

Black demonstrates several definitions of performance assessment expressing the unifying idea that

It is to do with assessment of activities which can be direct models of the reality to be assessed rather than disconnected fragments or surrogates. (Black 1998, p 87)

Burke (2005) gives a schematic illustration of authentic assessment features that demonstrates the characteristics of authentic assessment: meaningful performance tasks, clear standards and criteria for excellence, quality products and performances, emphasis on metacognition and self-evaluation, learning that transfers and positive interaction between assessor and assessee.

Authentic assessment, as defined by Burke (2005), presents meaningful task, self-assessment and application and is placed under assessment while portfolio presents collection of evidence, growth and development and framework for learning under evaluation component.

The terms authentic assessment, performance-based assessment and alternative assessment are sometimes used synonymously and regardless of the different terminology, there are two central features of the alternative assessment as expressed by Worthen (1993) cited by Burke (2005).

First, all are viewed as alternatives to traditional multiple-choice, standardised achievement test; second, all refer to direct examination of student performance on significant tasks that are relevant to life outside of school. (Burke 2005, p XXIV)

Some educationalists like Martin-Kniep (1993) consider portfolio and performances as assessment measure along with other curriculum-embedded measures arguing that a performance measure

requires students to apply knowledge in solving a problem or in using it in different situations. A portfolio is purposeful collections of a student’s work that exhibit efforts, progress, and achievements. This collection is selected and reflected upon by the student, following guidelines from the teacher. (Martin-Kniep 1993, p 58, note 2)

Alternative assessment is widely defined as any type of assessment in which student creates a response to a question or task. In traditional assessment student is supposed to select a response from a given list.

Alternative assessment, widely defined, presents the form of assessment that requires students to produce instead to select from a list of responses.
2.3. Traditional Versus Alternative Assessment

Belle defines traditional assessment as:

Evaluations that include standardised and classroom achievement tests with mostly closed-ended item, such as true/false, multiple choice, and fill-in-the blanks. (Belle 1999, p 6)

Traditional standardised tests are widely considered to be providing validity and reliability but Burke (2005) questions:

How do educators ensure that every student has the same opportunity to learn” and how to apply the standardised tests correctly since “all the uses of standardised testing could become “abuses” if they are applied incorrectly. (Burke 2005, pp 30-31)

Among the factors being mentioned as those affecting test scores are, Bracey (1998) as cited by Burke (2005) family income, educational level of parents, poverty, motivation, personal hygiene and cultural factors.

Performance task is a measurement procedure in which students create their original responses to an assessment tasks and Popham (2005) in Classroom Assessment indicates that performance test differ from traditional test primarily in the degree the test situation approximates the real-life situation. He further argues that a growing number of educators have become strong supporters of performance assessment.

Because it (1) represents an alternative to traditional paper-end-pencil tests and (2) is often more authentic – that is, reflective of tasks that people need to perform in the real world. One of the things you need to understand about performance assessment is that it differs from more conventional assessment chiefly in the degree the assessment task matches the behaviours domain to which you wish to make inferences. Because performance tasks coincide more closely with such domains than do paper-and-pencil tests, more accurate inferences can often be derived about students. Another big plus for performance tests is they establish assessment targets that, because such targets often influence the teacher’s instruction, have a positive impact on instructional activities. (Popham 2005, p 202)

Many educationalists argue for use of portfolio assessment because it shows the development over a period of time and is meaningful to student allowing the student to examine its own work reflecting about the learning process. Portfolio Assessment presents a clear alternative procedure to more traditional forms of testing and presents a method by which skills and accomplishments of student can be displayed. Portfolio has been relatively new to educational purposes while it has been widely used in some other fields (art, photography, architecture, journalism, fashion etc.). An important characteristic of portfolio work is that it has to be updated in order to capture a person’s achievement and growth.

Portfolio presents one method of collecting and storing information that can be used as a part of documenting and assessing student progress and achievement. Burke (2005) defines portfolio as a collection of evidence to show how students are meeting goals and standards helping the students to “analyze their strengths and weaknesses and set both short-and long-term goals”.

Popham (2005) discusses pro and contra of portfolio assessment stating that the greatest strength of the portfolio assessment is that it can be tailored to the individual student’s need, interests and abilities but it
Suffers from the drawback faced by all constructed-response measurements. Students’ constructed responses are genuinely difficult to evaluate, particularly when those responses vary from student to student. (Popham 2005, p 215)

Another problem related to portfolio assessment is that it takes time to carry out that assessment properly and is time-consuming because work samples have to be chosen, scoring rubrics developed; students taught how to use those rubrics etc. It has been the similar issue involved in the exploring the performance assessment, since it takes time to come up with various tasks, to devise scoring rubric and to score the responses.

There has been a lot of discussion about level of adequacy of certain subject areas in the portfolio work. In addition, many teachers need a sufficient training helping them to use portfolio assessment well. Educationalists who are pro portfolio assessment would defend their attitudes by expressing opinion that the self-evaluation it fosters in students is truly important in guiding students’ learning over time and that student benefit from the personal ownership and the progress they experience regarding their own work.

3. INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ETHOS AND ORGANISATION

3.1. The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme as a real-life curriculum

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), founded in 1968, is a non-profit educational foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland. The organisation provides three related programmes and engages 500,000 students in approximately 1,700 authorised schools situated world-wide in 125 countries: pre-university Diploma Programme (DP or students aged 16-19), Middle Years Programme (MYP for students aged 11-16) and the Primary Years Programme (PYP for students aged 3-12).

Each programme includes a curriculum, student assessment appropriate the age range, professional development for teachers and a process of school authorisation and evaluation. Over 40 years, the programmes have gained a reputation for preparing students for life in a globalized world, the high academic standards and for helping to develop the future citizens of a worldwide community who will create a more peaceful world.

International Baccalaureate Organisation education emphasises critical thinking and exposure to a variety of viewpoints in order to develop an intercultural understanding of the world. The Organisation work with schools around the world (both public and privately funded) that share the International Baccalaureate commitment to international education.

International Baccalaureate Organisation mission statement describes the overall aims of the programme:

The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural
understanding and respect. To this end the IBO works with schools, governments and interna-
tional organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous
assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, com-
passionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also
be right. (IBO 2007, p 2)

The common ground on which International Baccalaureate schools situated in dif-
ferent parts of the world stand, the essence of what they are about, is developing
international-mindedness and the teacher needs to interpret attributes of The Inter-
national Baccalaureate Learner Profile in a manner that would be adequately accom-
modating the age and the development of the student.

In the PYP, it is both recognised and appreciated that students come into programme from va-
rious backgrounds and with a wealth of experience. All teachers have a responsibility to assess
student development in the context of the IBO learner profile; it affects all students throughout the
programme. Schools have a responsibility on behalf of all students to assess and report on pro-
gress in the development of the attributes of the learner profile.

What, then, is PYP school? It is a school that, regardless of location, size or constitution, strives
towards developing an internationally minded person. What is an internationally minded person? It
is a person who demonstrates the attributes of the IBO learner profile. (IBO 2007, p 3)

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is the official curriculum framework and tea-
ching methodology of the International Baccalaureate Organisation developed to
meet the needs of children in the primary years of schooling (early childhood, age
11-12). It emphasises learning through active inquiry and aims to develop the whole
child in order to meet attitudes outlined in a learner profile. Using structured inquiry
as its basic approach, Primary Years Programme teachers pose open-ended
questions and encourage students to ask the questions that will help them through
the learning process.

The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme provides a relevant and
engaging educational framework for all students by being based on a true partner-
ship between students, teachers and parents in the school community. The primary
Years Programme (PYP) focuses on the development of the whole child as an in-
quirer, the child exploring both in the classroom and in the world outside.

At the heart of the Primary Years Programme is a commitment to structured inquiry
and each year students are involved in six units of inquiry driven by a set of key
conceptual questions matching the following six universal organising themes: Who
we are, Where we are in place and time, How we express ourselves, How the world
works, How we organize ourselves and Sharing the planet. Students explore subject
areas through these six themes. The units are interdisciplinary, spanning and inte-
grating different subject areas.

The Primary Years Programme involves a scope and sequence curriculum of skills
and understanding in the major curricular areas illustrated as a hexagon with the six trans-
disciplinary themes surrounding six subject areas: language, social studies,
mathematics, arts, science and technology and personal, social and physical edu-
cation.

Students are actively engaged in learning about issues and themes of universal
importance, encouraged and developed to be active learners and critical thinkers.
Students learn to take socially responsible action and promote attitudes of: tolerance, respect, integrity, independence, enthusiasm, empathy, curiosity, creativity, cooperation, confidence, commitment and appreciation.

These attitudes present the ways of reaching the final outcome, internationally-minded young person who will be having the attributes of Learner Profile: Inquirer, Thinker, Communicator, Risk-Taker, Knowledgeable, Principled, Caring, Open-minded, Balanced and Reflective. The Learner Profile reflects The International Baccalaureate Organisation philosophy and the whole school community should strive to have these attributes because we are all life-long learners.

The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme believes that international education must extend beyond intellectual attainment to include not only responsible attitudes but also thoughtful and appropriate action.

International schools can and should meet the challenge of offering all learners the opportunity and the power to choose their actions, to act and to reflect on these actions in order to make a difference in and to the world.

In order to make the action component of the curriculum as powerful as possible in terms of student learning the Primary Years Programme advocates a cycle of involvement which provides students with opportunities to engage in meaningful action.

![Figure 2. The Action Cycle (IBO 2007, p 26)](image)

There is a dynamic cycle applied to every part of the learning process in the Primary Years Programme, which of course applies the assessment too. Namely, there is an action-choice-reflection process (Figure 2. The Action Cycle) that helps teachers to facilitate the learning process and have students get deeper understanding.

Primary Years Programme defines assessment as the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It identifies what students know (knowledge), understand (concepts), can do (skills) and feel (attitudes/action) at various stages in the learning process. These three components form a cycle that leads students to deeper level of understanding as they construct their own meaning based on past
experiences, exploration of their own questions, appropriate learning experiences and assessment of their learning.

The action component of the various services enables students to grow both socially and personally, developing skills such as cooperation, problem solving, conflict resolution and creative and critical thinking. These actions are, moreover, ways in which the students exhibit their commitment to the attitudes that are promoted within the International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme classroom using the attitudes as the tool to rich elements of The Learner Profile.

Moreover, these actions are ways in which the students exhibit their commitment to the attributes of the learner profile and to the attitudes that we seek to engender within the PYP classroom. In fact, the actions that the students choose to take as a result of the learning may be considered the most significant **summative assessment** of the efficacy of the programme. (IBO 2007, p 26)

### 3.2. Assessment in the International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme

The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme curriculum encompasses three areas of curriculum:

1) **The Written Curriculum – What do we want to learn?** This includes five essential elements: concepts, skills, attitudes, action and knowledge

2) **The Taught Curriculum – How best will we learn?** Development of unit planners, applying a range of strategies, professional development of teachers, ensuring a thorough continuum of curriculum

3) **The Learned Curriculum - How will we know what we have learned?**

Assessment presents an integral part of the curriculum model of the Primary Years Programme and the learned curriculum considers approaches to assessment, data recording and reporting. The Primary Years Programme describes the taught curriculum as the written curriculum in action and assessment presents the means by which we analyse student learning and the effectiveness of our teaching. Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It identifies what they know, understand and can do at different stages in the learning process.

Furthermore, The International Baccalaureate describes good and effective assessment practice as those which allow the child to: have criteria that are known and understood in advance, analyse their learning and understand what needs to be improved, demonstrate the range of their conceptual understandings, their knowledge and their skills as well as synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts. Effective assessment in Primary Years Programme presents a means of improving learning and meeting the needs of all students making the programme challenging and engaging for all students.

Effective assessments allows student to use a variety of learning styles, multiple intelligences and abilities as well as to participate actively in a reflection process, self and peer assessment.
Students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing the students’ progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self-assessment skills. Teachers need to be mindful of the particular learning outcomes on which they intend to report, prior to selecting or designing the method of assessment. They need to employ techniques for assessing students’ work that take into account the diverse, complicated and sophisticated ways that individual students use to understand experience. Additionally, the PYP stresses the importance of both student and teacher self-assessment and reflection. (IBO 2007, p 44)

Effective assessments allow parents to see evidence of student learning and development providing opportunities to support and celebrate student learning.

The assessment of the development and learning of young students is an essential component of the curriculum, and helps to inform continued development, learning and teaching. Students should be observed in a variety of situations, and a wide range of assessment strategies should be implemented. The teacher observes the young student in order to:

- build up a clear picture of the student and his or her interest
- identify what and how the student is thinking and learning
- assess the effectiveness of the environment on the student's learning
- extend the student’s learning […]

It is important to identify the needs of each student and to view learning as a continuum, with each student achieving developmental milestones in different but relevant ways. Through listening and observing, areas of learning that the students particularly enjoy can be identified, and stimulating experiences can be planned to consolidate or extend the learning further. (IBO 2007, p 47)

Discussing the assessment in Primary Years Programme Jennifer Giddins (2001), the head of the Primary Years Programme (in 2001) stresses the importance of teachers ascertaining the previous experiences and the level of competency of each student prior to structuring the learning environment and new learning experiences because the assessment should be meeting the needs of all students.

Effective assessment acknowledges that each student learns in a variety of different ways that change and develop over time, unique or shared with others in the class. Student need to know what the expectations are and how “good” is defined, so that they can monitor their engagement and progress. Student work assessment, recording and reporting should take into consideration each student’s progress in the following areas: the PYP student profile, application of subject knowledge and skills, mastery and application of transdisciplinary skills, understanding and application of transdisciplinary concepts. Each student should have a role in deciding what goes into the portfolio so that there is an opportunity to reflect and describe progress. The IBO does not validate grades given to student work, and so the IBO does not offer students a certificate to indicate successful participation in the programme. Consequently it is very important that each school draws up a list of essential agreements on assessment – as school-wide assessment policy- that best serves the interest of that particular community. (Giddens 2001, p 21)

The Primary Years Programme divides assessment into three components:

- assessing – how we discover what students know and have learned
- recording – how we make note of our findings about what students have learned, choose to collect and analyze the findings
- reporting – how we communicate that information on to parents, administration and other parties directly involved in students’ learning
Assessment in the Primary Years Programme presents a part of learning and a daily activity that takes various forms. There are two main categories of assessment: formative and summative.

Formative assessment provides information that is used for planning the next stage of learning and is directly linked to teaching functioning purposefully together promoting learning by giving regular and frequent feedback. This kind of assessment in Primary Years Programme is interwoven with daily learning and helps teachers and students find out what children already know, understand and can do in order to plan for further student learning and growing. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked and neither can function purposefully without each other and is included within the Primary Years Programme planner for each of the six units of inquiry. It occurs throughout learning process and along the unit of inquiry as students and teacher finds out what they already know and what more they want to learn presenting actually the essence of the structured inquiry approach. Formative assessment in Primary Years Programme involves sharing goals of learning with students. Pupil takes part of an ownership for his/her own learning and is feeling more responsible.

Summative assessment provides a clear insight into students’ understanding to teachers and students. It gives the students an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned and it informs and improves student learning and the teaching process. This kind of assessment takes place at the end of learning unit or process enabling students, teachers and parents to evaluate progress, show and demonstrate what has been learned over the defined period of time or process. Summative assessment tasks are also included within the Primary Years Programme planner for each of the six units of inquiry and include acquisition of data, synthesis of information as well as application of knowledge and process.

Assessment in the Primary Years Programme involves steady feedback, student/teacher/parent conferences and portfolios at work. In the last year of the Primary Years Programme, student design and carry out an extended, big collaborative project called the Primary Years Programme Exhibition under the guidance of their teachers/mentors.

The Primary Years Programme Exhibition is an example of summative assessment and is required by The International Baccalaureate. The Exhibition provides culminating experience of the Primary Years Programme student’s engagement and unites the teachers, students and parents in a project that presents the rite of passage from the Primary Years Programme to the Middle Years Programme.

The International Baccalaureate promotes use of a portfolio and defines it as a record of student’s involvement in learning which demonstrates assessment strategies and reflection as well as success, growth and creativity.

A portfolio as a celebration of an active mind at work. It provides a picture of each student’s progress and development over a period of time both as individual and group learners. It enables students to reflect with teachers, parents and peers in order to identify their strength and growth as well as areas for improvement, and then to set individual goals and establish teaching and learning plans.
Evidence of learning in a portfolio should be from a range of experiences and curriculum areas. The portfolio is used to show the development of knowledge, conceptual understanding, transdisciplinary skills, attitudes and the attributes of the learner profile over a period of time. It may also be used to document student action. Portfolio entries should document both the process of learning and the product, including images and evidence of students in the process of constructing meaning. It can be used as a tool for assessment and reporting purposes for students, teachers and administrators. (IBO 2007, p 50)

Both students and teachers in Primary Years Programme should be actively engaged in assessing the students’ progress as part of the development of their wider critical thinking and self-evaluation skills. Teachers should also be concerned with evaluating the efficacy of the programme. Using the written curriculum, and in collaboration with colleagues and students, the teacher generates questions which guide structured inquiry in the classroom. Assessment focuses on the quality of student learning during the process of this inquiry and the quality of student learning which is evident in the products of inquiry. Assessment is, therefore integral to taught curriculum. It is the means by which we analyse student learning and the effectiveness of outreaching and acts as a foundation on which to base our future planning and practice.

THE PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT IN THE PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME

- To determine what the student know and understand about the world
- To monitor student progress
- To provide feedback to all factors involved in education: teachers, students and parents
- To inform and differentiate the teaching and the learning
- To monitor the efficacy of the programme and to inform the professional development of the staff

Assessment needs to be an integral part of teaching
Assessment presents a means of improving teaching and enhancing learning
Assessment provides a means to meet the needs of all students

Figure 3. The Purposes of Assessment in the Primary Years Programme
4. THE STUDY – IBO AND ISN QUEST FOR ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

4.1. The International School in Nacka – a public school with an international multicultural profile

The International School in Nacka is situated outside Stockholm in the municipality of Nacka/ Fisksätra, near the Stockholm archipelago. International School in Nacka is a municipal school offering instruction to pupils from 5 to 16 years. Instruction is in English and Swedish for children in preschool to compulsory school, year 0-9, leisure centre for school 0-3 and leisure club for school 4-6.

In 1998/1999 the school was authorised by The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) to teach the Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme curriculum. To date (2007-02-27) International School in Nacka has approximately 330 students. Primary Years Programme section (grades 0-5) has 163 (2007-02-27) students and is divided to two sections: English and Swedish, depending on what language is being used as a first language of instruction.

The International School in Nacka is characterised by a large percentage of students with foreign background – there are 80 nationalities being represented in the student body. The staff body is diverse as well, with a people from 16 different countries working directly in Primary Years Programme and 30 mother language teachers providing tuition at the home country language to the students.

The International School in Nacka is the first school of its kind in Sweden, a public school with an international multicultural profile. The fact that this school is public makes it very different from other international schools in Sweden. The school is offering The International Baccalaureate Organisation programs at two different levels (Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme); intellectual rigour and high academic standards, strong emphasis is placed on the ideals of international understanding and responsible citizenship, to the end that The International Baccalaureate Organisation students may become critical and compassionate thinkers, lifelong learners and informed participants in local and world affairs, conscious of the shared humanity that binds all people together while respecting the variety of cultures and attitudes that makes for the richness of life.

The International School in Nacka operates solely on financing that comes from the Swedish school district and is restricted from charging tuition or other fees (a national student voucher system). The school operates on a very modest budget and is still achieving impressive results both scholastically and socially. Students may elect either the Swedish or the English section. Students travel to school from all over the greater Stockholm area.

The distribution of responsibilities at The International School in Nacka complies with the International Baccalaureate curriculum. The leadership organization, as well as meeting routines, is well defined and clear amongst The International School in Nacka personnel. The structure for carrying out developmental dialogue is followed. The International School in Nacka has developed an organized plan for meetings in order to support collaborative across-grade and across-section planning and cooperation.
The leadership endorses learning by focusing regularly on the pedagogical development. This is highlighted in the plan of action by The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme, “Building trust at The International School in Nacka” and in The International School in Nacka local work plan. Pedagogical development is more steered by The International Baccalaureate Organisation than The Swedish National Syllabus (Lpo-94) and there is more flexibility, particularly with regard to developing methods.

The International School in Nacka’s wide range goals as a school for life-long learning and a school focused on the student’s learning and social development are to offer a quality international education in a secure and safe environment. The school aims to be a “glocal school” with a balance between the local and global perspective. The school focuses on quality instruction through placing emphasis on the student’s individual development in relation to age, ability and individual needs. The holistic perspective is emphasised and developed in a pleasant, dynamic, stimulating and secure environment.

The International School in Nacka Programme of Inquiry is being made every year during collaborative planning sessions with involvement of all Primary Years Programme staff. Three areas of curriculum (the written, the taught and the learned) are planned together and delivered across the sections. Planning of the six units, that every year level is doing inquiry into, includes brainstorming, planning and engaging assessment strategies as well as a common reflection upon the unit planner delivery and action-taken component.

The International Baccalaureate Organisation, encourages using a wide range of assessment, and does not administer or encourage the use of standardised achievement tests recognising at the same time

...that there may be a local, state or national requirement concerning the use of such tests for many International Baccalaureate Organisation World Schools. Some other International Baccalaureate Organisation World Schools, not subject to these requirements, do choose to use commercially available tests in order to measure their students’ performance over time, in areas defined by the test but not directly linked to the learning defined in the academic programme. When standardised achievement tests are an option, administration and teachers should carefully consider:

- the relevance of test to the cohort of students within the school
- the relationship between what is being tested and the school’s programme
- the impact of testing on teaching and learning
- the usability of the data produced. (IBO 2007, p 50)

The International School in Nacka, the school which presents a place of this study, is engaging both standardised, traditional testing and alternative assessment forms being a subject of both local and international standards and practices. The International School in Nacka integrates The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme and The Swedish National Curriculum (Lpo-94), has a municipality as a governing body and engages a wide range of assessments.
The school has to meet both international and national standards in assessing (local requirement in the form of municipal test in grade 3 and national test in grade 5) and also The International Baccalaureate assessment standards that stress the role and importance of alternative form of assessment that accommodates the different learning needs and styles and allows creating response instead of choosing it from a given responses.

A new Swedish National Curriculum for primary school and for the upper secondary school (Lpo-94) came into effect in 1994 (Utbildningsdepartmentet, 1994) defining guidelines of the school system and national syllabus for each subject. PRIM-group researchers state that the compulsory school syllabuses indicate the purpose, content and objectives for teaching in each individual subject which are of two kinds:

Those which school must pursue and those which is the duty of schools, to give all students the chance of achieving those objectives […] The school should strive to ensure that all pupils

- develop a sense of curiosity and the desire to learn, develop their own individual way of learning
- develop confidence in their own ability
- learn to listen, discuss, reason and use their knowledge as a tool to
- formulate and test assumptions as well as solve problems
- reflect over experience and
- critically examine and value statements and relationships
- take personal responsibility for their studies…
- develop the ability to assess their results themselves and to place their own and others assessment in relation to their own achievements and circumstances. (Pettersson 1996, p 2)

There are also tests at the end of school year 5 held in three subjects Swedish, English and Mathematics in order to assess students’ level of achievement, but it is not compulsory for the municipality to use the test.

Apart of standardised tests, there is also a part of assessment connected to the alternative assessment being represented in the Swedish National Agency for Education test materials (self-assessing part). Purposes of the subject test (national test) for year 5 as cited by PRIM-group are the following:

The main purpose of the subject test for school year 5 is not only to check that the students have reached the demands of the curriculum and syllabus. They have also a diagnostic purpose. In the test material there is also a scheme for self-assessment. The teacher is advised to integrate the subject test within the ordinary teaching. It is suggested that both the ways in which the student has worked with the problem and the answer is taken into consideration. (Pettersson 1996, p 3)

4.2. Methods and methodology - collecting, interpreting and analyzing data

The research methods that I have been using for this paper are quantitative methods of researching. The collected data analysis and the survey conducted at the school provided a methodological framework covering my two research questions referring alternative assessment practices and attitudes towards their employment.

I started the research by applying a retrospective method, namely by investigating and exploring diverse school documents in order to find out what alternative assessment practices are being used in the school and afterwards conducted the survey to examine the teachers’ attitudes towards the alternative assessment.
I have been analysing various school texts and documents using the school documentation from the archive; namely examining, comparing and analysing the official school statistic and previously collected data referring primarily assessment models and strategies: Primary Years Programme unit planners, personal and group projects, paper and digital portfolios, Exhibition folder, Report Cards, Development Plan, Essential Agreement on Assessment, school observation reports, school records, client survey and other school documentation relevant for research. Investigating, exploring and analyzing these documents resulted in describing The International School in Nacka Assessment strategies, tools and ways of documenting and reporting as presented in Chapter 5 Findings and Discussions - 5.1. Findings from documents – assessment strategies, tools and reporting.

Teachers covered by this study are fully representing the International School in Nacka /Primary Years Programme teachers´ body (apart of one teacher who is on her maternity leave), and the survey has been conducted among 16 staff members. They teach at two school sections that both deliver the uniformed school's curriculum, which is integrating international (The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme) and The Swedish National Curriculum (Lpo-94). Teachers teach at the year levels 0 – 5 (preschool to the Primary Years Programme final year) using either English or Swedish as the main language of instruction. Teachers either teach certain subjects to the both sections or work only in one of them. The staff members present rather diverse respondent group, since they have different backgrounds and educational experiences. Namely, there are teachers who have not had any experience with The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme prior to coming to this school, who were teaching many years in the schools where they were exclusively following guidelines concerning the Swedish national syllabus and national assessment. There are several teachers who have been working at the other International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme schools worldwide and there are also teachers have had an opportunity to take part in delivering various both national and international programmes.

As a tool for investigating the teachers` assessing practices, attitudes, opinions and perceptions of respondents, I designed a questionnaire that is a teacher-related. It has been used as a research technique in order to serve for investigating the types of alternative assessment, frequency of their practicing and sampling the data on the attitudes towards alternative versus traditional assessment in collecting data for two research questions as being analyzed in Chapter 5 Findings and Discussions – 5.2. Survey results and analysis, completing the paper with chapter 5.3. Summary that also includes limitations of study.

Questionnaire’s first part explores mainly assessment strategies being used and frequency of alternative assessment practices. The questionnaire’s second part consists of two segments: statements and open-ended questions, providing me as a researcher with an opportunity to explore teachers` attitudes.

Some statements given in questionnaire are expressing various attitudes, which are scored 1 to 6 indicating a scale from complete agreement to complete disagreement. The questionnaire also contains some open-ended questions that provide an opportunity for respondents to describe in more details their own assessment practices or describe their reasoning during a fictive situation. Open-ended questions call for a
free response and allows for searching for information that might not be covered by the other parts of the questionnaire. Parts of the questionnaire made in a form of open-ended questions are trying to explore a specific case by qualitative approaching, leaving also the option to respondents to give additional comments and overcome limitations of the quantitative approaching. This research paper is about the alternative assessment, so making connection to a real-life situation and creating response in the questionnaire exploring that seemed natural and appropriately employed.

Ethical issues referring this paper have been discussed with the school administration, which has got informed about purpose of the study and time-line of researching. In a later phase of research, before taking a survey, the ethics was discussed with the respondents who were involved in the survey and who all gave their informed consent. The explanation about the data analysis and the data reporting were given to administration and the respondents as well as the researcher’s statement that dignity, privacy and interests of participants are to be respected. Questionnaire has been conducted anonymously, and can be solely used only for a purpose of this research paper.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1, Findings from documents – assessment strategies, tools and reporting

The general International Baccalaureate Organisation statement about assessment covers five essential elements of learning: the understanding of concepts, the acquisition of knowledge, the mastery of skills, the development of attitudes and the decision to take responsible action. Teachers within The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme have the freedom to select how they assess both individual and group performance. Teachers as well as students come up with questions which guide instruction and together, students and teachers, plan and conduct the developmental talks to report to parents on their progress.

The International Baccalaureate Organisation World schools are developing their own school essential agreement on assessment allowing for assessment policy to be adjusted to the needs and demands of the school. The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme consider developing an assessment policy often the catalyst for the school to focus on achieving a common understanding of the school’s assessment aims and objectives.

An assessment policy is a written document that aims to clarify teachers’ understanding of the whole assessment process within their school setting. It is not a static document but one that is constantly evolving to reflect the assessment needs of the school. Collaborative reflection is a key component of developing an assessment policy, and must involve both teaching staff and administrators.

[...] Schools will find it helpful to develop agreed assessment practices as a part of their assessment policy. These are practices that are put into place within the school that address how the school assesses, records and report student progress. (IBO 2007, pp 54-55)
Assessment strategies and tools present the school’s answer to the question referring the assessment as a taught curriculum; the assessment tools serve as the instrument to collect the data to record information about a student’s learning.

The International School in Nacka teachers adopted The International School in Nacka/ Primary Years Programme Internal Assessment Document in Fall 2001 and they revise essential agreement on assessment every school year. That agreement illustrates Assessment scheme as a process that involves Pre Assessment, Formative Assessment, and Summative Assessment, One piece of work for the Portfolio and / or Exhibition and at least one Learning Outcome related to a topic during the Developmental Dialogue.

The school internal assessment agreement requires using a wide range of approaches to provide a balanced view of the child: observation, performance assessment, process-focuses assessment, selected responses, open-ended tasks and portfolio. Under How and when to assess the school internal agreement (2001) puts forward the following requirements:

- Assessment includes the needs of all students
- Assessing the development of the individual student within the student profile
- Should have pre-, formative and summative assessments
- Should address/ reflect the central idea
- At ISN grade level teachers should do an individual summative assessment based on their delivery of the unit
- Summative assessment could be open ended
- Summative assessment is comprehensive and incorporates the inquiry points
- Assessment reflects different learning styles. (ISN 2001, p 1)

The part of the school agreement on assessment under “Why assess student work?” gives further explanation: to find out where children are, to better plan teaching, to involve the children to their own evaluation and to find out how much have the students understood of what has been taught. The agreement states also that there should be feedback in each of the transdisciplinary themes.

Furthermore, the agreement provides the school’s approaches to effective assessment describing the following features (2001):

Effective assessment allows the child to have criteria that are know and understood in advance, analyse their learning and understand what needs to be improved, demonstrate the range of their conceptual understandings, their knowledge and their skills, synthesize and apply their learning, not merely recall facts, base their learning on real-life experiences that can lead to other questions to ask or problems to solve, focus on producing a quality product or performance, highlight their strengths and demonstrate mastery and expertise, express different points of view and interpretations, promote reflection, self- and peer-evaluation. Effective assessment allows the teacher to plan them and build them into the learning, not add them after the fact, identify what is worth knowing and assess it, include collaboration between the child and the teacher or among children, take into account different cultural contexts and different ways of learning and knowing, use scoring that is both analytical and holistic, produce evidence that can be reported and understood by children, parents, teachers, administrators and board members, inform every stage of the learning and teaching process, plan further activities which address areas of interest for the teacher and the children. (ISN 2001, p 2)

Effective assessment also involves collaboration between students and teachers beginning with the end result in mind (Primary Years Programme unit planner has an
important section for the student questions that drives the inquiry into – what students should be able to know or do by the end of learning unit or process).

The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme consider that strategies are central to the assessment process covering a broad range of approaches. It is important that they be seen as a package since they should provide a range of approaches and a balanced view of the student. The strategies are the methods of approaches that teachers use when gathering information about a learning process of the student. A variety of strategies and tools should be used in order to promote learning and when selecting appropriate strategies it is also needed to take into consideration which tools are most relevant to that strategy.

The International School in Nacka uses alternative assessment strategies in conjunction with other forms of assessment, such as standardised test, assessing both student performance and the intentions of the programme. Both student and teacher self-assessment and reflection are included in the process of school assessment.

Doing so, the school uses examples being put forward by The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme and those developed within the school: The International School in Nacka teachers use a variety of assessment strategies and tools, sometimes developing their own or adopting activities as assessment techniques and portfolios of work. Selected responses as assessment strategies referring single occasions, exercises having one-dimension are in use in the school - tests and quizzes are the most common examples. Apart of them, there are other assessment strategies being recommended by The International Baccalaureate Organisation that present a part of The International School in Nacka teaching practice.

There are hundreds ways of assessing the students in the classroom, various teaching strategies which can help develop the ability of student to explain and get a better understanding and their selection should demonstrate The Primary Years Programme approach to assessment, since it is not seen as a separate exercise, isolated from the other elements of teaching and learning.

*Observations* - students are observed often and regularly with a teacher shifting focus from the whole class to one student or one activity, changing perspective also from participant to non-participant.

*Performance assessments* goal-directed tasks that provide authentic and significant challenge with established criteria, requiring the use of many skills and usually more than one correct response.

*Exhibition* presents a special form of IB/PYP culminating project (the final PYP year) that requires demonstrating of the five essential elements of the programme which should be shared with the whole school community providing opportunity for students to exhibit the attributes of the learner profile that they have been developing throughout their years in PYP

*Process-focused assessment* - recorded observations of student’s both typical and non-typical behaviours, different methods can be employed to collect
Open-ended tasks situation based strategy when students are presented with a stimulus and asked to communicate answering in a written form, a drawing, a diagram or a solution depending on the nature of the inquiry.

Alternative assessment practices in The International School in Nacka also include a wide range of techniques, such as an essay question, oral presentation, demonstration, exhibition, portfolio, student self-assessment, peer-assessment, journal writing, experiment, various observation and performance techniques etc.

There are different assessment strategies being put into The International School in Nacka practice using the assessment tools like: rubrics, benchmarks/exemplars, checklists, anecdotal records, continuums, journals, quizzes, posters, interviews, switching roles, experiments, games, etc. and these assessment tools can provide holistic and/or analytic scores, depending on what aims have been set to.

Documenting the evidences of student learning presents an assessment strategy and teachers can use a variety of methods to document a means of assessing student understanding that might include audio records, video records, photos, graphic presentations etc.

Reporting on assessment in The International Baccalaureate Organisation describes the progress of student’s learning and contributes to the efficacy of the programme. Reporting presents a means of giving feedback from assessment and should describe the progress of learning, identify area of growth and reflect the values of the school community. Effective reporting should provide clear information that is useful to students and parents presenting the public aspect of the school assessment policy.

The International Baccalaureate Organisation World schools are required to report on each student’s development according to the attributes of the learner profile. However, that feedback neither has to be included on a report card nor has to be reported at the end of every reporting period. On the other hand, opportunities for students to consider their progress referring to the learner profile elements should be found and observations as well as the anecdotal records in relation to that could be included to their portfolios (The International Baccalaureate Learner Profile).

Conference (Developmental Dialogue) presents sharing information between teachers, students and parents can be formal and informal and have various forms (teacher-student, teacher-parent(s), student-led conferences and three-way conferences.

The written report (Report Card) presents a summative record of student’s progress for student, parents and the school and all teachers involved in the student’s progress should have an opportunity to comment.

The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme states that schools, that
are subject to local requirements that include standardised report or formats, are expected to devise additional form of reporting that take into account The Primary Years Programme assessment model and address the learner profile as well as include all the essential elements of the programme.

Reporting on The Primary Years Programme level involves three parts – parents, students and teachers, and for that The International School in Nacka school practices communication-parent conferences as 3-way conferences. Reporting at The International School in Nacka includes conferences and written reports in the form of Report Card.

The International School in Nacka’s essential agreement on assessment states that reporting should

1. Involve parents, children and teachers
2. Communication - parent conferences, dialogues, 3-way conferences.
3. Reflect the values of the school.
4. Reflect improved performances and give appropriate feedback.
5. Be easy to understand, fair and credible.
6. Be clear and understandable to all parties.

The report card should inform and involve the parents.

As teacher: draw conclusion for further teaching. Learn and grow from experiences. (ISN 200, p 3)

All students at The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme have an individual development plan. With a help of individual development plans, the school work is adapted to the student’s different capabilities. This is presented at the developmental dialogue. The development dialogue is prepared in the school. The objective is to include the student’s profile in the conference, and get an idea of the student’s progress and efforts from preschool to year 5. A selection of the student schoolwork, and written documentation of the conference is saved in a portfolio.

Development Dialogues are organised within the general process of development of each of the two terms within the academic year and students are leading the conferences. Prior to the conference, students are filing in the self-assessment form appropriate to their grade level and individual development plan is being created in collaboration between teacher(s) - student-parents who are setting the goals together.

Reporting is actually partly self-made during student-led conferences where the student plays a central role while having a developmental talk; he or she is welcoming the teacher and parents to the conference running the developmental talk speaking about his or hers own achievement and objectives subject-wised and describing himself/herself in The International Baccalaureate Learner Profile. Parents are stating what they really enjoyed learning about, were surprised to learn, and pleased to see that their child could and how they can help their child. Students are stating the thing that they want parents to understand the most, what area they could have done better job, what would they like parents to help them with and what was the most exciting part of the conference.

As a part of the assessment reporting process at The International School in Nacka, every student gets a Primary Years Programme Report Card, upon completing a term (twice a year), which is comprised of four sections: Section 1 including Primary
Years Programme Learner Profile and Teacher Comments, Section 2 referring Literacy (first language, second language) and Numeracy, Section 3 related to Units of Inquiry being taught during the term and Section 4 referring other subjects which is depending on the student’s year level.

Teacher comments in Section 1 are related the five essential elements of learning and the teacher’s role is to support and structure the student’s reflection. The Learner Profile elements are presented in this section. Section 2 refers either to the specific expectations in the language and mathematics scope and sequence documents or those described in the school’s curriculum documents. Section 3 is approaching the unit(s) of inquiry describing subject focus, central idea, acquisition and application of knowledge, transdisciplinary skills development (research skills, thinking skills, communication skills, self-management skills, social skills) and student-initiated action (if applicable). Section 4 provides a space for teachers who are teaching the other subjects than Swedish, English and Mathematics to write down their comments on student’s development.

5.2. Survey results and analysis

The survey in a form of Teacher Questionnaire has been conducted among 16 ISN teachers who fully represent the teachers’ body at the primary school level (16 out of total number 16 teachers engaged in PYP during 2006/2007 school year). All respondents filled in the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher.

The first part of the questionnaire was referring a general data, level of satisfaction with the evaluation process, frequency of the alternative assessment strategies being practiced in the school along the traditional ones and ways of assessing. A certain number of teachers did not mark any frequency level stating that they use their own methods without explaining what form they would be specifically presenting.

Respondents were using the scale demonstrating their level of satisfaction with the evaluation process and practices in their school and their own classroom. The scale was given as the scale 1 to 6, as 1 indicating not at all to 6 as extremely satisfied.

The respondents were asked to describe also frequency of assessing methods that they utilize in their school practice relating to the terms of: always, sometimes, seldom and never. Furthermore, teachers were supposed to select alternative assessment strategies that they find the most useful in their teaching practice grading them from 1 to 3 (1 that they find the most useful among them).

The second part of the questionnaire consists of diverse statements and ends with the open-ended questions. Teachers were supposed to express their attitudes towards various statements referring traditional and alternative assessment.

The last segment of the survey was designed in a form of an open-ended question, asking respondents to read about imaginary situation and think about the mentioned questions. They should first imagine that they are taking part at the conference and their school team should be taking part in debate with a group of teachers from other schools. Their school would be the only international school among them. The debate would be focused on finding the best way to evaluate what students learn.
Questions to think about were the following: How would they reason on what is the best way to evaluate student progressing and acquiring knowledge and skills? What kind of information do they use to evaluate students? How are grades determined in their classroom/school? How do they know if a student is academically/socially ready to move to the next grade? How do they meet the needs of second language learners and how do they work with the assessing of the other special needs student? Teachers were supposed to give arguments that they would use to support their statements on assessment by making a short summary of the school participation in debate.

Two questionnaires were returned without answering the last section - open-ended question.

The teachers’ group structure general data is following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience (mean number)</th>
<th>Years of teaching at ISN (mean number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-65</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Teachers’ group structure at ISN

Mean number concerning a total number of years of teaching experience among the ISN teachers is 24, while the mean number years of teaching at the ISN is 7 years. One teacher was listed in the category other due to the age group (exceeding 65 years) and has a long professional experience (42 years of teaching out of which 12 years at the ISN).

The three words that the teachers were using to describe briefly what assessment / evaluation in general terms means to them were as following:

Most of the teachers used the words that relate to assessment/evaluation describing it as a tool for gauging knowledge and skills (test, criteria, making statements, documentation, goal, information), reflecting over the learning process (feed-back, analyzing, planning) and developing both teaching and understanding (finding out what more is to be learned, comparing, cooperation).

The other words being used in answering this question were indicating the interactive element in assessing (performance, group project, presentation) as well as stressing an equal approach to the evaluation process as such (fairness).

The survey results show that the teachers are more satisfied with the evaluation process and practices in their own classes than the one in the school. Namely, 20 % of
them marked number 3 and 75 % marked number 4 on the scale referring the school practices; comparing with equally distributed 90 % on numbers 4 (45 %) and 5 (45 %) of the scale indicating the evaluation process and practices in their own classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of using a form of assessment</th>
<th>Traditional Assessment</th>
<th>Alternative Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day/week</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every month</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every school term</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every school year</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Frequency of assessment.

The statistic on frequency indicates that the teachers more often use some form of alternative assessment that traditional on daily, weekly and monthly basis and the only difference showed on the “every school term “category, which is due to the assessment reporting practices in the school (Report Card once a term to a parent / guardian). 76 % of the teachers were using a traditional assessment form (for example standardised text book or teacher-made test, municipal test, national test) comparing to 89 % who were using an alternative assessment form (for example rubrics, individual project, group project, class discussion, presentation, demonstration, performance task).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of using assessing methods</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill in the Blank</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubric</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Book Made Test</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Grades Test</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True/False</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Own Made Test</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Frequency of assessment methods.
According to the survey 31% of ISN teachers uses “always” Essay and Text Book Made Test, 25% Short Answer, 19% always uses Teacher Own made Test and 13% of ISN teachers use “always” Project and Traditional Grade Test.

The methods that dominate a category of being used as “sometimes” are Teachers’ Own Made Test (81%) and Project (75%), accompanied in a somewhat less degree by Matching and Multiple Choice (63%) followed by Essay, Fill in the Blank and Short Answer (50%), Essay, Text Book Made Test and True/False (43%), Traditional Grade Test (38%) and Rubric (25%).

Rubric is in the least frequent use (50% of teachers stated that they use it seldom) followed by Fill in the Blank, Traditional Grade test, Matching, Multiple choice, True/False and the other assessing methods. It has been interesting to observe that a very small percentage of teachers stated that they use Project seldom (13%) or never (0%) as well as to observe that none of the teachers selected the options of “seldom” or “never” in relation to Teacher Own Made Test.

This clearly indicates that all ISN teachers utilize Teacher Own made Test and Project as the most frequently employed assessment methods and the findings indicate that a vast majority of them utilize also Essay, Short Answer and Text Book Made Test either always or sometimes in the evaluation/assessment process.

Next question was related to the above mentioned options too, asking the teachers to state which assessment methods they feel is the easiest to correct. They expressed that Fill in The Blank and Text Book Made Test is easiest to correct (25%), Multiple Choice and True/False are a bit harder to correct (19%) while the hardest to correct would be Project and Essay (1%).

When it comes to which of the above mentioned options the teachers find most beneficial to learning, the results indicate that Project is to be considered as the most beneficial (32%), followed by Essay, Teacher Made Test and Text Book Test (19% each) even the analysis of the results also shows that it turned to be hard for the teachers to select only one. Most of the teachers stated therefore two or three options finding it difficult to choose only one and some added their own description of variation of project, essay and rubric.

Teachers were also answering the question concerning which of the assessing methods they find their students enjoy the most and their answers demonstrate that almost half of the group finds their students most enjoying Project (43%), while essay (19%), multiple choice (19%) as well as category that teachers entered themselves as combination of all (variation of project, essay and rubric) comes after (19%). It has been also interested to observe that also here it turned to be difficult for the teachers to choose one method and they were stating two or three instead.

After the question referring utilization of both traditional and alternative assessment forms, next part of questionnaire was focusing on alternative assessment. Respondents have been given an opportunity to state some other alternative assessment if has not been mentioned under the question, but there has been no any additional statements made.
Findings show that kinds of alternative assessment in use of the teachers` own classrooms that are the most represented are: games (88 %) and performance (75 %) as the most used strategies, being followed by: group project, individual project, presentation, quiz and self-assessment (each of them is employed by more than 60 % of teachers). The teachers also utilize in a somewhat less extend portfolio and role play (more than 50 % of teachers) while less than half of them (more than 40 %) uses demonstration and peer-assessment. More than 30 % of teachers use anecdotal records and checklist. Rubrics are in the least common use in the ISN primary classroom (only 13 %). Comparing the results of the survey shows that the majority of the teachers use games and performance alternative assessment strategies while a minority of them uses rubrics in the classroom practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Assessment Strategy</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Project</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-assessment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Play</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal Records</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Absolute and percentage of different alternative assessment strategies used.
The teachers were supposed to select alternative assessment strategies that they find being the most useful in their teaching practice grading them from 1 to 3 (1 that they find the most useful among them) and they selected the most useful strategies as presented in hierarchical order being illustrated on the pyramidal diagram. On the top of the most useful ones are games and group project, followed by individual project, presentation, role play, quiz and self-assessment situated in the middle part of the pyramidal shape and checklist, peer assessment, performance and portfolio located at the bottom of the pyramidal base.

Upon expressing their opinion about the most useful forms of alternative assessment in their teaching practice, the respondent group was supposed to express an opinion about ways of accommodating differences in learning styles in assessing the student’s knowledge and skills. Several teachers have ringed the multiply options while answering this question. Analysis shows that 20% of them stated that they always assess using a wide range of strategies in order to accommodate it while 10% of them stated that they use it only occasionally because it is a time-consuming.

A majority (75%) went for the second offered alternative choosing the statement “I try to use as many different assessment strategies as possible”. The teachers have expressed their strongest attempt to use as many different assessment strategies as possible in order to assess the student’s knowledge and skills respecting differences in their learning styles. None of the respondents have chosen the other options given, the other two statements which relate to having not enough training and skills for developing such strategies or traditional test having the set of stan-
dards which should be used by all students. This shows a very high level of awareness among the teachers that they possess enough training and skills for developing alternative assessment strategies as well as their disbelief towards traditional test having the set of standards which should be used by all students.

Next question was related to the ways of assessing the student acquired knowledge and skills while having student/parent/teacher conference and report card commenting. Also here the teachers went for ringing the multiply options and equal number of them (40 % average each) circled the statements that they are familiar with the curriculum demands referring the subject-areas and standards that are already set by the authority revising the set of standards for the grade level/subject-area together with the other grade teachers and evaluate according them taking into consideration student self-assessment and peer-assessment. However, the majority (82 %) ringed the following statement: “I revise the set of standards together with the other teachers and we also take into consideration the student individual development and needs.” These findings indicate on the high level of awareness among the teachers about respecting of individual development and needs of the students as well as the high level of collaboration between the teachers and importance of self-assessment part in assessing the student’s knowledge and skills during reporting on assessment.

After stating the way of revising the set of standards in cooperation with the other teachers being familiar with the curriculum and respecting the self-assessment part, teachers were asked about the ways of assessing in elements of PYP Learner Profile which is one of the IB programmes common element describing developing an internationally-minded person. 50 % of the respondent group stated that they assess that together with a student as a preparation for development talk, while (13 %) stated that they assess that depending on a student’s social behaviour in the school and in addition the other 13 % stated that student does it himself/herself as a part of his/her self-assessment. The rest of the respondent group (25 %) went for the last given option to state something if none of the above mentioned would concern them stating they their way presents a combination of the options given “a bit of all”. This diversity in answering indicates that this part of assessing presents a more optional part depending on the teacher himself/herself without a strict guidelines about ways of doing that and that there is no clearly defined policy in doing that. In the findings from the documents there has been no defined way of doing this part of assessing, not even in The ISN Internal Assessment document.

Furthermore, teachers were asked to express their attitude towards eight statements related to traditional and alternative assessment.
The table illustrating the number of teachers who have selected a certain degree of opinion referring the statement given looks as following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exact results can be expected from alternative assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative assessment adequately measures the learning outcomes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only traditional assessment gives opportunity to a teacher to satisfy demands of reliability and validity in the international education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative assessment presents an essential part of the international education for its flexibility and adjusting to the student learning styles and individual development</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative assessment should be used in the primary classroom in order to support process of learning and promote attributes of international-minded learner</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results achieved on standardised tests demonstrate an objective picture of the student’s progress in school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate feedback, formative and summative assessment do improve the instruction and affect positively the student’s learning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio presents the assessment strategy that gives an objective picture of the student’s development over time</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Teachers’ attitudes towards traditional and alternative assessment

The first statement refers an attitude about a reliability of alternative assessment and 75 % agreed to that statement, while 19 % disagreed stating that they were bothered by the word "exact" in this statement. This indicates that ISN teachers consider the alternative assessment providing a sufficiently high degree of reliability. The second statement concerned the validity of alternative assessment and 25 % teachers strongly agreed to this statement while 56 % of them agreed, showing that it is opinion of the ISN teachers that alternative assessment measures the right things and that alternative assessment is providing a slightly higher level of validity than reliability.

The third statement was given in the form of a control statement, stating that it would be only traditional assessment providing a degree of validity and reliability in the international education and 68 % teachers disagreed to that while 13 % of them strongly disagreed adding that on the contrary, it would present a bias for different learning styles and individual student’s needs.
The degree of importance of alternative assessment was strongly recognised in answering the fourth statement on being an essential part of the international education and its flexibility and adjusting to the student's learning styles and individual development. 38 % teachers strongly agreed while 50 % teachers agreed to this statement. No teacher disagreed, but two of them did not have opinion concerning this. These findings complemented by a transcription of the teachers` reasoning as given in the open-ended questionnaire part support additionally the research hypothesis about an important role of alternative assessment while stating the following:

Continuous assessment in the classroom is essential. Assessments of class work, group work, presentation gives a better evaluation than short answer / multiple choice/ true/false test. Some students panic when they realize that they are taking a test and hence perform poorly than they normally would. Traditional test/exams should not be the only method to determine if a student should move forward to the next stage or not. (A teacher in the survey)

Assessment in a class could also be a learning situation, so you should vary your methods as much as possible. In math, reading and writing we follow the student progress every day. We use a quiz in a group, presentation, building models and so on for the themes. (A teacher in the survey)

Almost the same number of teachers agreed equally to the fifth statement, the one related to utilization of alternative assessment in supporting process of learning and promoting attributes of international-minded learner (1 teacher did not have any opinion, otherwise the teachers assigned almost the same degree of importance like with the learning styles above mentioned – 38 % strongly agreed and 56 % agreed).

98% of our students are second-language learners and they cannot always express themselves well language-wise. Therefore, alternative assessment presents an appropriate gauge to measure their acquiring knowledge and skills as well as promote different learning styles calling for a deeper understanding. International student should also develop international mind and be a future peaceful citizen of the world. (A teacher in the survey)

It is important to take into consideration a student's knowledge in the second language. The second language learners need lot of help with a language in learning all subjects and they need different methods of assessing to be able to express themselves in the best possible ways. (A teacher in the survey)

The sixth statement was stating that results achieved on standardised tests demonstrate an objective picture of the student’s progress in the school and 13 % teachers agreed to this while additional 13 % did not have opinion about this. The half of the group disagreed (50 %) and 25 % teachers strongly disagreed which shows that 75 % of the total number of the ISN teachers finds results achieved on standardised tests not demonstrating an objective picture of the student’s progress. Teachers were even commenting in their own words this statement, writing that some students do not do well on the tests and that there are various factors affecting the student during the test.

First of all and most important is to make the student aware of what has been expected from them. It is also important to cooperate with your colleagues and I always want a second opinion while moving up a grade to make sure that a student is ready for that. (A teacher in the survey)

You have to assess each student’s level and from there you are you should act towards the goals. You need to use as many different methods as possible for the special needs students. (A teacher in the survey)
The variation, flexibility and language are focused on when assessing. Measuring of student’s development is done throughout a year and there are measuring standards that the school has revised. (A teacher in the survey)

We have to keep in mind to take into consideration the level of knowledge when the student begins at our school and to know the goals to be achieved in a certain grade. Every student needs different strategies to get there. It is important to have individual development plans for each and every student. (A teacher in the survey)

Almost all teachers highly recognised impact of immediate feedback as well as formative and summative assessment on improvement of the instruction and their positive affect to the student’s learning as being stated in the seventh statement (50 % teachers strongly agreed while 44 % teachers agreed to this statement – 94 % all together), one teacher was without opinion and none of them disagreed.

Daily assessment in class including all varied possible ways suited to each student in cooperation with other teachers involved for your grade is of a great importance. It is also important to have students and peers assessing each other often. (A teacher in the survey)

It is important to work together with other teachers- getting information, talking, discussing along the whole process. (A teacher in the survey)

Whether a child is mature enough to attend a class academically/ socially is assessed by the way child interact with its classmates and how the child presents its knowledge and skills. When I give a test I can see what mistakes child has made and go further with my evaluation from that point. (A teacher in the survey)

Similar answer supporting the important role of the alternative assessment was given on the last statement concerning portfolio as the assessment strategy that gives an objective picture of the student’s development over time (44 % teachers strongly agreed while 50 % agreed to this statement) which means that 94 % of teachers supported this statement, none of them disagreed while one did not have any opinion about this.

I try to develop the language skills together with other learning skills. Portfolio is a concrete method for a student to view its own learning. (A teacher in the survey)

Alternative assessment forms help my students with developing empathy, self-confidence, concentration and group-collaboration skills. (A teacher in the survey)

Alternative assessment adequately measures the learning outcomes but must be a combination of assessment strategies to get a more complete picture. As it is an international school, I would do a new dialogue where students self-evaluated, show their portfolio. I would involve Second Step role-play, a read-aloud from the higher grades than preschool where the other students would play “parents” role in preparing the dialogue posing the different questions and commenting the portfolio. (A teacher in the survey)

5.3. Summary

Background of the study is based on the investigations that have put forward a distinction between two types of assessment as being described in the research works of the authors who have been exploring various models of assessing a knowledge and understanding of a student (Broadfoot, Black & William, Burke, Elwood & Kle NOWSKI, Gipps, Hancock, Shepard and many others). Assessment changed during
the changes of the theories and models of learning and it does not serve longer a purpose of being a form of the measurement describing achievement of a student but rather integral aspect of the teaching and learning cycle taken in collaboration, between teacher and student or a group of peers. The teachers and researches in this field have put a distinction between assessment of learning (assessment where not all elements of assessment process are presented to a student, assessment serves as a monitoring device for learning which serves either as a purpose of giving grades or satisfying the accountability demands of an external authority and is given at a specific time) and assessment for learning (assessment where elements of the assessment process are shared with a student, assessment serves to improve student’s understanding presenting a part of instruction that is supporting learning and is ongoing).

Theoretical framework of the study introduces different definitions of alternative assessment contrasting also the alternative assessment to the traditional one. Contemporary assessment theories are viewing the role of assessment as the aspect that describes student’s performance instead describing a measure of a student achievement related to the traditional curricula. The common element in the modern assessment definitions is actually a student’s understanding of the learning process. The student should understand a nature of task as well as the procedures along the way of working on the task and the assessment methods should be interactive, open-ended; namely allowing for a student to produce, to create a response instead selecting a response from a given list.

Alternative assessment came as a call for change in the educational world, encouraging students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by using them, instead demonstrating comprehension or interpretation of acquired knowledge and adopted skills which make a strong connection to The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme as a real-life curriculum. The International Baccalaureate ethos and organisation and its Primary Years Programme focus on development of the whole child in the classroom and in the world outside – social, emotional, cultural, physical and intellectual. Holistic as a word is applicable in describing The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme curriculum model, since that presents the essential elements as a whole; the written, taught and assessed components of the curriculum as a whole; the transdisciplinary themes and subject areas as aspects of a whole as well as the school community as a whole. The nature of The International Baccalaureate Organisation gets demonstrated by a model of the learner’s constructing meaning that flows in a two-way street direction towards written, assessed and taught curriculum surrounded by knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action elements.

Planning documents in the Primary Years Programme have a format that encourage teacher to plan in a holistic way assessment and all other aspects of the delivery. Every Primary Years Programme unit planner has a section stating an action taken and students are supposed to make a real-life connection with their unit of inquiry and the world around them. Primary Years Programme students are expected to apply their acquired knowledge in solving a problem or in using it in different situations. Hence, effective assessment in The Primary Years Programme have criteria that are known and understood in advance allowing children to synthesise and apply their learning demonstrating the action taken. Assessment being used in The Inter-
national Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme way, as part of teaching to sup-
port and enhance learning, affects process of learning and is integrated into teaching
practices.

Planning the teaching and learning in order to meet individual or group needs is
essential for The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme teacher.
Therefore, the teachers employ techniques for assessing student’s work that take
into account diverse ways that individual student use to understand experience.
Teachers practice the assessment that give adequate information about every stage
of the teaching and learning process and develop criteria for producing a quality
product of performance. Teachers in The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years
Programme school collaboratively review and reflect on student performance and
progress using scoring that is both analytical (separate scores referring different
aspect of work) and holistic. Forms of assessment used in The Primary Years Pro-
gramme cater for a variety of intelligence and ways of knowing. Furthermore, The
Primary Years Programme promotes use of authentic assessment strategies for
example, recording student’s responses and performances in real-life situations
which have real problems to solve.

Assessment is a key component of The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years
Programme program as it guides the students through the five essential elements of
learning and students have become an integral part of creating assessment tools.
Student self-assessment is done on daily basis (individual assessment, group di-
ussions, portfolio reflective part) and periodically (individual development talk,
assessing of The Learner Profile, unit of inquiry completing). Portfolio as an effective
authentic assessment tool that presents a productive means of showing the develop-
ment and stages of student learning is being encouraged in The Primary Years
Programme schools.

The Primary Years Programme Learner Profile section describes the overall develop-
ment of the student – academic, social, physical and emotional. Assessment of atti-
tudes and attributes is based on actions demonstrated by students and the profile
comprises the general comments related to personal development of the Learner
Profile. Students are consistently being asked to engage in self-evaluation also as
pupils’ feelings about their learning are among the key determinants in classroom
work – a pupils’ development as a learner is closely bound up with personal develop-
ment as a whole. Student self-evaluates and teacher comments on developing of the
profiles above mentioned stating if the student is showing that he/she is an inquirer, a
communicator, a thinker, a risk-taker, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open min-
ded, well-balanced and reflective while exploring the units based on The International
Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme organising themes.

I have been conducting my research at The International School in Nacka Sweden
(The Primary Years Programme grades 0-5; student age 6-11), which is the inter-
national public school (The International Baccalaureate Organisation World School
integrating the international and The Swedish National Curriculum) that practices
both traditional assessment (local test, national test, textbook test, etc.) and alterna-
tive assessment (performance assessment, Exhibition, personal project, group pro-
ject, portfolio, self-assessment, peer-assessment etc.).
The International School in Nacka curriculum has been created in an integrative process of comparing and putting forward together The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme curriculum and the Swedish National curriculum Lpo-94, and in both of them individual student’s needs have a very important position. The Swedish National Curriculum Lpo-94 states that education should be adjusted to the needs and circumstances of every individual student and alternative assessment provides for opportunities to adjust the kind of assessment to the individual needs of a student (learning styles, second language learners and the other special needs).

The International School in Nacka teachers stated in the study questionnaire, in their description about what assessment mean to them, that they assess in order to find out where students are, to better plan their own teaching, to involve the students in their own evaluation and to find out how much the students understood of what has been taught.

One part of my questionnaire has been designed to find out how conscious primary school teachers working with The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme are of different forms of assessment and how they use them in practice. The teachers have been rather conscious of different kinds of assessments. They have demonstrated an awareness of theory of alternative assessment and they have been both promoting and encouraging a various types of assessment trying to satisfy the needs of the learners’ styles as well as the other individual needs and special needs. They are using a various form of assessment strategies and alternative assessment forms are highly employed. While conducting a survey with the primary teachers I have observed that most of them were in favour of applying the several types of alternative assessment in order to respect the different student’s needs, but they have also expressed that this kind of assessment, using an adequate assessment tool and matching them with a particular purpose of assessment is more time-consuming and demands more efforts from a teacher.

Analysis of the results also show that, even it turned to be hard for the teachers to select only one form, the teachers actually find as being the most beneficial to learning two alternative assessment forms (Project and Essay) placing them in front of two traditional ones (Text Book Made Test and Short Answer). The survey findings suggest that various types of assessments are needed to be used in the school supporting the research hypothesis that practicing of alternative assessment has an important positive role in the school with an international programme supporting, promoting and improving learning recognizing the variety of different individual needs and learning styles. The teachers stated their strong attempt to utilize various types of assessment in order to fairly assess students’ acquired knowledge and skills.

Assessment in The International School in Nacka/Primary Years Programme is ongoing and there is a balance between the types of assessment used. Practiced kinds of alternative assessment that are used the most at the school are games, group project, individual project, self-assessment, presentation, role play, quiz, peer-assessment, performance, portfolio etc. Teachers attitudes toward employing of alternative assessment towards traditional testing have been very positive and there has been clearly expressed a school practice of having a balanced assessment/evaluation process. Teachers have also demonstrated a clear disagreement towards
the statement that only traditional test gives an objective picture of the child’s progress in the school (81 % in total disagreed).

Assessment in the school is of various ranges so as to reflect different learning styles and adjust to the individual needs of pupils, including equally low and high achievers. The results of the answering question related to accommodating differences in learning styles express the teachers’ attitudes towards traditional assessment as not having set of standards that could be applied on all students as well as that teachers consider that alternative assessment is needed for accommodating differences in learning styles.

Students of the different learning styles develop responses and understanding with their peers or other conversation partners – the appraisal by pupils is both a process of self-assessment and a part of the learning. They are making individual report to their own parents, speaking of their projects during the parents’ evening or developmental talk in form of student led conference. The International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme students make an individual report to their parents and peers, like for example speaking of their projects during the regular school time, the schools’ evening, Exhibition evening, Authors’ Night etc.

Teachers also give feedback to all students relating to the qualities of the work with advice on what student should do so as to improve the quality of his/her work but self-assessment is a very important for pupils’ motivation and self-esteem. Self-reflection part is rather engaged at The International School in Nacka / Primary Years Programme starting from the daily reflection (sometimes even by post-it papers that students can post to the classroom wall expressing what is “sunny” “foggy” or “cloudy”), frequent reflecting over the pieces to be included to a portfolio or reflecting upon completing of unit of inquiry or preparing for the development talk.

The International School in Nacka/Primary Years Programme teachers have also clearly stated that alternative assessment strategies are needed to be used as a regular school practice in order to meet student’s individual needs as well as that alternative assessment strategies present a powerful tool in a modern international classroom. The International School in Nacka has a diverse student’s body (80 nations being represented in the whole school), having 98 % of the students as a second language learners and it is of essential importance to be able to apply the wide range of assessment procedures helping student to produce and find its own way of producing answer instead of imposing standardised test that do not meet the individual needs in an adequate way. Creating of classroom environment with diversity of class activities with an emphasis of questioning atmosphere is very important feature of successful classroom.

The survey findings demonstrate that there is a strong connection between The International Baccalaureate/ Primary Years Programme and alternative assessment. Alternative assessment is being used in every ISN classroom, and the survey results demonstrated that it provides for an opportunity to get a deeper insight into the progress of student’s learning and can help improving the way of instructing. The survey results gave answers on my two research questions demonstrating very positive attitudes of the teachers towards the alternative assessment and frequency of the alternative assessment practices being used in the school supporting hypothesis.
about the important role of the alternative assessment in this model of international education. There is a wide range of alternative assessment being practiced in this public International Baccalaureate school and there is a high frequency level of their employment (50% teachers use some kind of alternative assessment on daily base comparing to 38% of them using some kind of traditional assessment). The findings from the survey demonstrate a correlation that indicates a level of balancing between using the alternative assessment along the traditional one as well as the advantage of alternative assessment at the frequency usage level. These findings strongly support the research hypothesis about alternative assessment supporting, promoting and improving a student learning.

McClelland (2001) discuss the problem related to assessment in international schools stating that the use of standardised tests can confuse students since they often test isolated aspects of knowledge and understanding. He analyses the use of tests that have been tested on a large particular sample arguing that such “tests may provide information about quality of learning, but they do not help the teacher in analysing poor outcomes and deciding what can be done to improve the situation. It should also be noted that the context in which the tests were originally standardised were different from those in the international schools and this will have a bearing on the results”. McClelland states that both teaching and assessment must be flexible enough to accommodate the skills necessary for the twenty-first century arguing for assessment being the most effective where there is a whole-school approach with an agreed system of planning and assessment as a part of school policy.

Belle (1999) explores the question whether or not alternative assessment strategies are necessary to meet students’ individual needs suggesting that teachers and students are individuals who all need various types of assessment. Alternative assessments seem to have advantages for the students and teachers in any, not only international classrooms since “This type of assessment allows a deeper look into a student’s intellect and then, can help improve the way he or she is taught”.

The alternative assessment is a process which requires student initiative and creativity which demonstrates skills or knowledge and is often interdisciplinary in focus, matching the focus of PYP interdisciplinary units of inquiry. The process assumes an active role of students in it and this shift enhance their self-esteem supporting the attributes of The Learner Profile. Action taken presents the important part of the PYP unit planner and students are supposed to demonstrate a real-life connection applying their skills and knowledge. Tasks used in alternative assessments include authentic tasks, real-world stimulations and they reflect students’ daily lives promoting learner-centred approach in a non-traditional manner. This type of tasks are concerned with understanding and problem solving and they assess integration of knowledge as well as display critical thinking skills that are to be applied both inside and outside the classroom. Alternative assessment covers more aspect than traditional and its variety allows for placing emphasis on what the student can do with the obtained knowledge. Furthermore, alternative assessment, in comparison to traditional test, can be used with students of different cultural backgrounds and learning styles.

The self-perception of student is of essential importance and learner’s beliefs about his/her capacity can affect their achievement. Challenging assignments and linking
praise to objective feedback on the work of learner lead to greater engagement and higher achievement. Feedback and sharing are two vital elements in the alternative assessment dynamic process – students are involved in review of assessment data and they do a self-assessment. Demand of self-assessment is to reflect of one’s own work and developing capacity to make a judgement of that kind is of essential importance for the whole process of effective learning. Students have their ways of communicating and they come up with a variety of peer-assessing models on their own – they are capable of generating their own criterions and the quality of them will be rising along the period of applying them in everyday classroom situations. Peer assessment is a part of classroom learning activity and their feedback is important for developing of group collaboration.

Teachers practicing alternative assessment forms encourage students to demonstrate their learning and enable collaboration in the classroom as well as provide opportunities for students to peer and self-evaluate. Pupils play a role in their own assessment and that is one of the important feature of alternative assessment – pupil takes part of an ownership for his/her own learning and is feeling more responsible. Alternative assessment strategies support process of learning by promoting student reflection and self-evaluation of The Learner Profile which is an important component in all three International Baccalaureate programs, focusing on the production of quality products or performances.

Kinds of alternative assessment provide for the dialogue between students and a teacher which is ongoing, thoughtful and reflective having a role on Double Feed Back – providing for feedback to student on how to improve and further his or her learning as well as feedback to teacher about how to adjust teaching and learning activities so as to enhance learning. It is of essential importance to create an atmosphere of good agreement between teacher and students having in mind the balance needed to be reached for having two elements present – validity and reliability. Various ranges of alternative assessment procedures provide feedback regarding different stages of the learning/teaching cycle and they are based on student needs, interests and learning styles (student-driven).

When it comes to the special needs students, alternative assessments can provide more benefits over the use of traditional standardized assessments. The most important link presents making a link between assessment and instruction since it makes it possible for a teacher to use the data upon completing the assessment task to improve an instructional part. This ensures reflecting different skills that are valued for students with disabilities (e.g. social skills, communication skills, vocational skills etc.) This allows also shifting of the students’ program goals because assessments are getting designed to measure progress towards specific goals. Constructing alternative assessment provides a space for developing performance standards which is highly important for many students with disabilities cannot meet absolute standards. Alternative assessment strategies produce evidence of student growth and learning that can be clearly reported and understood by all factors (children, parents, administrators). Various strategies of alternative assessment identify what is worth of knowing and communicate criterions for assessment to all participants in the learning process and highlight children’s strengths and allows them to express different points of views and interpretation.
The survey findings supported the hypothesis about the important positive role of the alternative assessment forms expressing the teachers` attitudes that assessment as the essential part of teaching/learning process. The effective assessment provides for the best achievement if it has been adapted to the demands and needs of the task and participants in the process. In addition, the effective assessment should be shared in all aspects from its initialing to feedback which opens door for the next step to be taken to aid further learning. Alternative assessment supports, promotes and improve the process of learning having a purpose of enabling student, through effective and continuous feedback, to fully understand his/her own learning.

Survey results show that teachers seem to consider alternative assessment as an important element in teaching and learning and view it as a part that helps students producing relevant and meaningful learning experiences. Students are actively involved and receive feedback, engaging a wide range of experiences and collaboration with their peers and there is a variety of assignments that teachers use to encourage authentic learning. Students are given a diversity of learning opportunities that help them apply knowledge and connect their learning to the real-life situations displaying critical thinking skills.

Empirical findings from this study support the theoretical framework and the hypothesis about alternative assessment as ongoing, interactive process that involves both student and teachers in monitoring students` progress and performance applying a rich range of strategies that seem to foster student academic achievement and a lifelong learning.

This research could have been deepen by comparing the data collected with the data from some other school in Sweden that is either authorised or candidate International Baccalaureate Organisation school in order to explore practices of alternative assessment in international education in Sweden. Teachers were interviewed and observed to first gauge their attitudes and feelings towards the current practice of assessing at the school. This process has been taken during preparation for and after the implementation of the big alternative assessments - Exhibition in grade 5. It could have broaden the scope of the investigation to include other aspects such readdressing the curriculum or changing the programme of inquiry, creating rubrics and assignments or to see how above views in theory match up to actual practical experiences in the classroom.

Additional things could have been investigated in relation to this study, like effectiveness and usefulness of the alternative assessment being compared to the traditional testing in the school so as to complement and deepen the teachers` attitudes towards this issue.

For the purpose of broader study it could have been possible to wide up a research range including students and parents to the study and having survey as well as interviews with them in order to investigate their attitudes towards the alternative assessment practices in the school. Some parts of the school documentation referring this aspect have been considered and included in this study (findings from self-assessment part in the planners, reviewing portfolios and journal writings etc.) supporting the hypothesis about positive impact that alternative assessment has on
students’ learning, but it would be interesting to find out more about students’ attitudes towards this issue.

Furthermore, the majority of authors in educational research field argue that grade level appears to be an important variable in investigating classroom assessment and I did not focus in my research paper on differences between different elementary grades. It could also have been possible to explore deeper types of assessment that are across the grade and subject matter having in mind interdisciplinary themes under the school programme of inquiry.
6. REFERENCES


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7. APPENDIX

7.1. Teacher questionnaire

Please, read carefully and answer the questions. Circle one of the possible answers unless state otherwise. In case you do not find answer that would adequately describe your own one please state that on the line below the question. Your contribution is extremely important and I am very grateful for your will and time. Thank you in advance for filling in this questionaire! Feel free to write down your answers in Swedish and if you need more space for your valuable answers, please use the back of the paper.

1) What is your age group? (Circle one) 25-35  35-45  45-55  55-65  other

2) Please, state the number of years of teaching experience ____________________

3) Please, state the number of years teaching at ISN ________________________

4) What three words would you use to describe briefly what assessment / evaluation in general terms means to you?

____________________________________________________________________

5) How satisfied are you with the evaluation process and practices in your school?

Please, use the scale as 1 indicating not at all to 6 as extremely satisfied.

1 2 3 4 5 6

6) How satisfied are you with the evaluation process and practices in your class?

Please, use the scale as 1 indicating not at all to 6 as extremely satisfied.

1 2 3 4 5 6

7) How often do you use some form of traditional assessment (for example standardised text book or teacher-made tests, municipal test, national test) in your work?
a) Every day/ week
b) Every month
c) Every school term
d) Every school year
e) If none of the above mentioned, please state _________________________________

8) How often do you use some form of alternative assessment (for example rubrics, individual project, group project, class discussion, presentation, demonstration, performance task, etc.)

a) Every day/ week
b) Every month
c) Every school term
d) Every school year
e) If none of the above mentioned, please state _________________________________

9) When evaluating your students, which assessing methods do you utilize? Please, circle one answer for each of the assessing methods below:

- Essay Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Fill in the Blank Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Matching Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Multiple Choice Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Project Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Rubric Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Short Answer Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Text Book made Tests Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Traditional grades test Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- True/False Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never
- Your Own Made Tests Always  Sometimes  Seldom  Never

10) Please, state the answer on the line

From the above mentioned options, which assessment methods do you feel is the easiest to correct?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
Which of them do you find most beneficial to learning?
_____________________________________________________________________
Which of them do you find your students enjoy the most?
_____________________________________________________________________

11) What kinds of alternative assessment strategies are in use of your classroom?
Please, circle these that you use as a part of your regular teaching practice.

a) individual project   b) group project
c) portfolio           d) games
e) quiz                f) rubrics
g) performance         h) presentation
i) demonstration       j) self-assessment
k) peer-assessment     l) role play
m) anecdotal records   n) checklist
o) something else, please state _______________________________________

12) What kind of alternative assessment strategies you find the most useful in your teaching practice? Please, state three of them grading them from 1 to 3 (1 that you find the most useful among them)

1.______________________   2.____________________  3.____________________

13) How do you accommodate differences in learning styles in assessing the student’s knowledge and skills?

a) I always assess using a wide range of strategies in order to accommodate it
b) I try to use as many different assessment strategies as possible
c) I use it occasionally because it is a time-consuming
d) I use it occasionally because I have not got enough training and skills for developing such strategies
e) I use it very seldom because I believe that traditional test have the set of standards which should be used by all students
f) If none of the above mention, please state _______________________________

14) How do you assess the student acquired knowledge and skills while having student/parent/teacher conference and report card commenting?

a)I am familiar with the curriculum demands referring the subject-areas and standards are already set by the authority
b) I revise the set of standards for the grade level / subject-area together with the other grade teachers and evaluate according them
c) I revise the set of standards together with the other teachers and we also take into consideration the student individual development and needs
d) I revise the set of standards together with the other teachers and we also take into consideration student self-assessment and peer-assessment
e) If none of the above mention, please state _______________________________

15) How do you assess a student progressing in elements of PYP Learner Profile?
a) I assess that depending on a student’s social behaviour in the school
b) I assess that together with a student as a preparation for development talk
c) I assess that together with the other staff members involved in working with my class
d) Student does it himself/herself as a part of his/her self-assessment
e) If none of the above mention, please state ____________________________________

16) Please, circle the comment that best describes your attitude towards the following statements:

a) Exact results can be expected from alternative assessment
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

b) Alternative assessment adequately measures the learning outcomes
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

c) Only traditional assessment gives opportunity to a teacher to satisfy demands of reliability and validity in the international education
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

d) Alternative assessment presents an essential part of the international education for its flexibility and adjusting to the student learning styles and individual development
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

e) Alternative assessment should be used in the primary classroom in order to support process of learning and promote attributes of international-minded learner
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

f) Results achieved on standardised tests demonstrate an objective picture of the student progress in school
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

g) Immediate feedback, formative and summative assessment do improve the instruction and affect positively the student learning
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

h) Portfolio presents the assessment strategy that gives an objective picture of the student’s development over time
   strongly agree   agree no opinion disagree strongly disagree

17) Please try to think about the above mentioned questions and give arguments that you would use to support your statements on assessment by making a short summary of your school participation in debate.
Imagine that you are taking part at the conference and your school work team should be taking part in a debate with a group of teachers from other schools. Your school is the only international school among them. The debate will be focused on finding the best way to evaluate what students learn.

How would you reason on what is the best way to evaluate student progressing and acquiring of knowledge and skills? What kind of information do you use to evaluate students? How are grades determined in your classroom/school? How do you know if a student is academically/socially ready to move to the next grade? How you meet the needs of second language learners and how you work with the assessing of the other special needs student?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

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