

LOW STUDENT ENROLLMENTS AT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY
OF A UGANDAN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL.

by

LAURA AGABA

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DEDICATION

To God, who has strengthened and enabled me to overcome all the roadblocks that made it seem impossible for me to complete this book, to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Kyomukama, who were pillars of strength, to my husband Allan Agaba, who has always believed in the value of excellence and our dear children, whom I hope will pursue this excellence.

“If we accept people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat them as though they are already what they should be, we help them to become what they are able to become”.

Goethe

DECLARATION

I, Laura Agaba, hereby declare that this dissertation for the Master's in Education degree with specialization in Education management, at the University of South Africa has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university, and it is my work in design and execution and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore some of the reasons for low student enrollments at alternative schools, through a case study of a Ugandan alternative school, Heritage International School.

The study was carried out in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, in a small town called Kansanga, where Heritage International School, is located.

Various people were interviewed in different categories, to find out their views on low enrollments at HIS.

The literature review in the study included the theoretical perspectives on reasons for low enrolments in various schools that had the characteristics of HIS. This review was very helpful in steering the direction of the research as it highlighted various causes for low enrolments at alternative schools.

This research was able to highlight the causes of low enrollment that were particular to HIS and therefore give some recommendations on to how to solve these problems.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Background

Just over 12 years ago, a group of Christian women in Uganda, after a Bible Study, began to talk about a matter that was causing them great concern. These were missionaries who had come to Uganda from various mission bodies to build churches and local schools and to train pastors, among other things. They were concerned about the type of education their children were receiving. This is not a new problem. In the 1970s there had been a similar problem in the U.S, where some Christian parents did not agree with the curricula in the public schools and decided to pull their children out and start their own faith-based schools. As Slutz (May, 2007:1) reports in his newsletter, *Responsive Communities: Faith-based schools* (in America):

By the late 1990s, an estimated five million (ten percent) of the nation's school-aged children were in faith-based elementary and secondary schools; about one-quarter of them in evangelical Christian schools. The motivation behind these newly founded schools was clear. The parents who started them wanted to shelter their children from the perceived dangers—moral and physical—of public education. (Responsive Communities, Vol1, no 4)

Further more, the British Humanist Association in a paper entitled "*Faith or Religious Schools – Why Not*" (2007:1), writes:

it is widely assumed that "religious" (or "faith-based" or "faith") schools are a good thing. The British government green paper *Schools Building on Success* (2001) welcomed the Church of England's proposals for a hundred extra church secondary schools because 'they have a good record of delivering a high quality education'.

The children of the missionaries in Uganda (who were from various Western countries), attended international schools, which are schools built for the main purpose of providing

a certain standard of education for expatriates' children, whose parents have had to move from their home countries usually as a result of their jobs' demands. These schools however, did not uphold the missionaries' Christian values. The parents wanted an international school that would be based on strong Christian principles and at the same time provide the highest quality education in terms of material taught, and moderate class sizes of up to 15 children per class from ages 3 to 18. The previous international school that these missionaries' children attended, used an American based curriculum, so this is what they opted to start with, at the same time making sure that it was Christian based. Thus, Heritage International School was started in a small town called Muyenga, about 2 miles from the capital city, Kampala, in September 1994.

In that year the school started with 30 students from pre-school to grade 6 (3-11 yrs), in a rented home. Each following year, a grade was added until it got to 12th grade (18year olds). By 1998, the school had grown to about 100 students and since the original idea was to own property then expand, land was found and later purchased in a small town called Kansanga about 10 minutes from the school's original location. A huge loan was obtained from a bank to buy the land and construct the school buildings. In the initial stage, classrooms, an administration building, and a cafeteria were built. Though the school was started to provide education for missionaries' children, it was open to any who would be interested in this type of Christian education for their children. The plan was that as the school grew to accommodate 15 students per class, the income would increase, and from this the loan would be paid off, and in the subsequent years, expand to include boarding facilities for children whose parents worked outside town, teachers' houses, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a chapel and a good sports ground.

In order to cater for those who valued international education but could not afford the fees at other international schools, Heritage International School was asking for an amount that would encourage these parents to bring their children, without compromising the quality of education offered. The school is a non-profit organization, and it was hoped that the income from the students would be enough to maintain and run the school

adequately, and at the same time provide the highest quality education while maintaining manageable sized classes.

After 1998, the number of students did not increase. In the elementary section (3-11 years), numbers were fairly good with classes of up to 10 students per class, but in the secondary section, 7th- 12th grade (12-18 years), the total number of students has been about 20, with some grades having less than 5 children or even no child for a particular grade.

As a result of the low student numbers, financial income has been low which in turn has led to difficulties in affording a number of things for the school. The school has struggled to meet its financial obligations to the point of barely making it to the end of the academic year, putting the vision of expansion on hold. The school has a number of missionary teachers who raise their own support in terms of financial upkeep, while the school pays for their housing. There is also a certain percentage of locally hired teaching and support staff whose salary is paid by the school. Most of the income from the school fees is spent on purchasing educational material, wages of locally hired staff and housing of expatriate staff. On top of all this, the school has to meet its monthly loan payments.

Other international schools do not seem to be facing as big a problem as Heritage International School (HIS) is, in regard to student numbers. For example, the International School of Uganda whose tuition is about three times the fees of HIS, has a student population of 450, while Rainbow International School whose tuition is a little less than HIS', has a student population of 664. Aga Khan is a fundamentally Muslim school but uses an international curriculum and does not seem to have a problem with student numbers, while Kabira International School has a population of about 300 students and its tuition fees are much higher than Heritage International School's.

The researcher here is interested in finding out what the cause could be for the lack of growth in student numbers at Heritage International School. As stated in the beginning, the school was started because a group of women felt that there was a growing need for a Christian based international school. There really was not much research done to

establish how great this need was or how many missionaries were in Uganda that would like to have their children in a Christian International School, or better still, what percentage of the people in Uganda who are not missionaries see the value of this type of education. In Kenya, a neighbouring country, similar schools, seem to be doing very well regarding student numbers. Could it be that the need was greater there than it is in Uganda because there are more missionaries in Kenya?

Another area to consider would be the curriculum. There are basically 3 types of curricula that international schools use: an American-based curriculum, an International General Certificate of Schools Education (IGCSE) curriculum and an International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme.

An IGCSE curriculum is a curriculum which is designed to encourage high academic standards through a practical approach to teaching and learning. The curriculum consists of a two-year course of study leading to an examination which is typically taken at the end of what is equivalent to Grade 10 in an American-based curriculum. The subjects offered in this curriculum are in 5 subject groups that include; Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences, Sciences, Mathematics, and Creative Technical & Vocational. The IGCSE covers a broad range of subjects with syllabuses which are regularly reviewed to keep pace with developments in educational practice and to meet the needs of schools throughout the world (2008: <http://www.gsis.ac.in/igcse.htm>).

The IB Programme is an internationally recognized curriculum that offers 11th and 12th grade students an opportunity to earn the IB diploma. This is a two year programme and is a rigorous pre-university course of studies that meets the needs of the highly motivated secondary school students between the ages of 16 and 19 years. It is a comprehensive curriculum that requires students to demonstrate knowledge and skills through both in-class and outside assessments in six academic areas that include; Language, a Second Language, Individuals and Societies, Experimental Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science, and Arts (2008: <http://www.norreg.dk/ib/ibnorregframe.htm>)

An American curriculum is hard to define because technically there is no such thing in the way that there is a National Curriculum of England and Wales, or a French national curriculum. Each of the fifty states in U.S.A set their own curriculum frameworks, priorities, funding, standards, tests and scheduling. However, there are some basic similarities found in the different curricula used throughout the United States and Canada and this (excluding the specific differences) is what will be referred to as an American-based curriculum.

Although an American curriculum is hard to define, HIS has been using an American - based curriculum. This is not much different from other types of curriculum at the primary level in that the basic subjects like Mathematics, Language (this includes Spelling, Grammar and Reading Comprehension), Social Studies and Science that are taught at primary level in an American-based curriculum are the same basic subjects taught in say a Ugandan based curriculum. The difference comes in the way these subjects are taught. However in the subject of Social Studies in an American-based curriculum, the studies are based on the history and geography of the United States or Canada. The major difference comes in the High School. Where as in an American-based curriculum, the subjects taught say sciences, a topic will be taught for a whole year, in other types of curricula (like the IGCSE and IB programme used at other international schools), all three science subjects (Chemistry, Physics and Biology) will be taught throughout the year. Further more, during the last two years of high school, a student following these other curricula, has to choose three or four subjects to specialise in. In any type of curriculum in the United States and Canada, students are required to take all subjects and even when they get to university, during the first year they can take a number of subjects not specialising in any until they are sure which direction they want to go.

At this point, about 20% of the school population is from the United States and Canada. This in itself gives a big statement as to the direction of the curriculum. The researcher wonders for instance, if other missionaries who are not from the United States or Canada and who have no intention of taking their children to North America for further studies

are not turned off by an American-based curriculum. This is not only a consideration for the missionaries but for others who may want a Christian based education for their children. Much as the quality of education is very high, why would a parent choose this curriculum for their child if they had no intention of living in, or sending their children to North America?

In her article, “*Clientele, Curriculum and Economics: Factors in the Survival of Rome International Schools*”, Short (2002) identifies curriculum as one of the factors that influence student growth in international schools. She points out that “many of the existing international schools in Rome had either an American or British curriculum. This was fine for the British and Americans whose children would get their university education from their countries. The Italian population in these schools, however, began to grow and many wanted their children to be able to go to any university in the world hence the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Programme (IB)”. IB schools are “characterized by a growing awareness of the need to broaden educational goals to include knowledge of cultural and social contexts other than the ones into which we were born” (Peel 1998:12).

It is important to note that none of the other international schools in Uganda follows an American-based curriculum; they are either following the IGCSE or the International Baccalaureate Programme (IB).

A number of the teaching staff at HIS are missionaries and are short-term missionaries. These teachers raise their own support and this is usually not much. This means that they are able to offer their services for 1-2 years. Omar Ezzeldine (2004:1), in his article, ‘*How to recruit and retain the best teachers*’, says:

Teacher turnover is known to be related to low student achievement. While most private school administrators perceive that high teacher turnover is simply a result of the low salaries paid in private schools, some research suggests that, while less

pay may be related to turnover, it may not be related to retention of teachers in private schools.

HIS has a very high turnover of teachers, which has its effects on the school. Whether this is due to the low income they receive in terms of support or for other reasons such as the school culture, is yet to be seen. Omar Ezzeldine (2004:1) further states, ‘Retention has to do with the attractive factors of a school rather than its deficits. The factors that motivate teachers to remain in school are subsumed within the larger topic of school culture. These factors include positive interpersonal relationships within the school, active administrative support and teacher participation in decision making.’

Laitsch (2004:1) in his article, *The Effects of Chronic Teacher Turnover on School Climate and Organization*, writes, ‘Schools with chronic staff turnover tend to have higher minority enrollments’.

Laitsch (2005:1), in another article, *The Effects of New Teacher Induction Programs on Teacher Migration and Attrition*, writes:

One of the key components to a successful school is the staff employed within that school. High-quality hiring and support practices can positively affect the longevity of staff and the extent to which teachers are effective in the classroom. Researchers have found that the historically high rate of turnover among new teachers—leaving the school (migration) or the profession (attrition)—plays a central role in exacerbating teacher shortages. High rates of turnover can also be extremely expensive as districts continually work to hire and train new staff...

Since HIS is not yet independent, especially since it is still paying back the loan, it cannot afford the expenses of high teacher turn over, which among other things, threaten its stability, causing prospective parents to think twice about bringing their children to the school. If parents do not bring their children to the school, numbers cannot be expected to increase and therefore the problem of low student numbers remains.

Between 1998 and 2006, the student population at HIS was about 100. This is still below the target level. Despite rising costs, the income has not increased, leading to a standstill in development, and other financial difficulties.

Socio-economic factors do have their role in the enrollment problems of HIS. Cambridge et al (2001:14) write, “In many less developed countries, international schools provide opportunities for the children of the social elite of the host country to turn their backs on their own education system and embrace the rest of the world.” The social elite do not include the majority of the population and many of the locals who may value Christian education, are not able to afford the fees charged at HIS.

The literature to be reviewed in this research will start by trying to establish the type of school that best describes HIS, to establish if the definition and identity of the school contribute in any way to the problem of low student enrollment at HIS. The literature review will look at what literature has to say about curriculum and schools and how this may affect student numbers: marketing of schools; high teacher/student turnover; the socio-economic standards and how these may affect who comes to the school and also how its ‘uniqueness,’ being a Christian international school may or may not affect its student numbers. The literature review will give guidelines as to the direction of the research.

Through the literature review, the study will look at various examples of schools that are similar to HIS and have faced similar problems to see how these, if at all, relate to HIS and what HIS can learn from them. The theoretical perspectives on some of the factors that influence the low enrollment of students at HIS will be discussed.

This study will explore a number of factors that may have possibly contributed to the low student numbers at HIS, such as the school’s curriculum and its relevance to the customer, the marketing of the school, and the need for such a type of school in the existing community. What realistic number of students should HIS hope for?

1.2 Statement of the Problem

HIS is an international school that seeks to provide high quality education and at the same time provide an education based on strong Christian principles. This study is aimed at finding out what the reasons are for low student numbers at HIS despite all its good efforts.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1.3.1 How is HIS viewed by Ugandans in its immediate vicinity and those not in its immediate vicinity?
- 1.3.2 How do the HIS curriculum and marketing or lack of, contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?
- 1.3.3 How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to this problem?
- 1.3.4 How can HIS stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?

1.4 Aims of Research

- 1.4.1 To find answers to the problem of low student numbers at HIS and how to turn the situation around, to enable HIS to be better equipped in combating these factors and surviving in a highly competitive environment.
- 1.4.2 To help HIS and other similar schools who may be experiencing the same problem to be more efficient in meeting the demands of the customer/consumer.
- 1.4.3 To communicate these findings to the management and Governing Body of HIS and recommend the way forward.

Those involved in education must realize that the choice of schooling is determined by the overall demands of society. Kotler and Fox (1985) argue that students are raw materials, graduates the product and prospective employees the customer. This research will therefore contribute to the understanding of how to best meet the needs of the consumer/ customer.

1.5 Motivation of Research.

HIS is a school that was started to provide quality education with strong Christian principles. In spite of all its good efforts, the school has remained small with regard to student numbers. This research will help the management of the school understand why this is so. It will also highlight the changes that may be needed in order for the student numbers to increase or whether the school should settle for low student numbers considering its ethos.

Furthermore, from this research, similar schools facing student growth problems, will be given a clear perspective on some of the factors influencing lack of student growth in their schools and how to make a change in order to grow or maintain their numbers, in the ever changing and highly competitive society.

1.6 Research Methodology

Qualitative research will be the method of choice. This is a method that suggests grounded propositions, provides explanations to extend our understanding of a phenomenon and promotes opportunities of informed decisions for social action. Qualitative research contributes to theory, educational practice policy making and social consciousness (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 393).

The researcher will use a case study approach. "A case study provides a detailed description of the case, an analysis of the themes or issues, and the researcher's interpretations or assertions about the case. These interpretations may be called 'lessons

learned”” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:37). The case study in this research is Heritage International School (HIS), which is a Christian international school, found in Kampala the capital city of Uganda, one of the countries in East Africa. HIS is found in a small town called Kansanga, about 2 miles from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, and it is an area where many of the elite or people of high social class reside.

For this study the researcher will use various categories of people to enable her to get as much information as possible and also information that is accurate. The researcher will interview some parents who do not have children in the school, some parents who have children in the school, some teachers, a board member and the school administrator. The reason for the choice of the people above is that they represent the key informants that the researcher needs to carry out her research.

The method the researcher will use to collect data will be mainly the interview. This will enable the researcher to observe the interviewees and get accurate and in-depth information that will be needed for the research. The researcher will also use some questionnaires with questions that are close-ended. These will be for those who do not have time to sit for the interviews.

1.7 Definition of Terms.

Curriculum: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia quotes that, “in education, a curriculum is the set of courses and their contents offered by an institution such as a school or university” (Wikipedia 2007:1).

Jansen (1984:132) is quoted in the *Unisa Study Manual II of Education Management: School Management* (2005:31) as defining “the term broad or total curriculum” of a school as ‘the structuring of the collection of subjects and activities in school phases, courses or fields of study.’

U.S.A - based curriculum: This curriculum offers a wide range of courses from kindergarten to twelfth grade, with the guiding principle that children will eventually know their own minds better, and make better choices about their own fields of study, if they have a good sampling and basis in a number of areas extending through their high school years. Major differences are observed in the high school where a subject topic is taught for the whole year as opposed to other types of curriculum where a number of subject topics are taught simultaneously through out the year.

IGCSE: This stands for International General Certificate of Secondary Education. It is a curriculum which is designed to encourage high academic standards through a practical approach to teaching and learning. The curriculum consists of a two-year course of study leading to an examination which is typically taken at the end of what is equivalent to Grade 10 in an American based curriculum. The subjects offered in this curriculum are in 5 groups and include; Languages, Humanities and Social Sciences, Sciences, Mathematics, and Creative Technical & Vocational (Good Shepherd International School 2008:1)

IB Programme: IB stands for International Baccalaureate This program is an internationally recognized curriculum that offers 11th and 12th grade students an opportunity to earn the IB diploma. Further more:

‘To earn the IB diploma, students complete the IB Programme and test in six IB subjects; write an extended essay of independent research guided by a faculty mentor, complete 150 hours of creative, action, and service activities (CAS); and participate in a critical thinking course called Theory of Knowledge. This advanced, comprehensive program of study offers an integrated approach to learning across the disciplines with an emphasis on meeting the challenges of living and working in a global, technological society. Students who take IB courses without completing the entire program may earn IB certificates by testing in selected IB courses.’ (Texas Education Agency 2008:1).

AP- Advanced Placement: The Advanced Placement Program is a program that offers college level courses at high schools across the United States and Canada.

Christian-International Curriculum: This is an education where the fundamental principles of the school are based on Christian philosophy. Depending on the choice of 'international' education a school uses, one thing that stands out is the school's Christian base. In this curriculum Bible is taught as a subject and in subjects like Science, the topic of Creation is taught as the true way in which the world came to be as opposed to 'Evolution' and the 'Big Bang' theory.

Christian Home-School Curriculum: Home schooling is a choice made by some parents to provide elementary, middle or high school education to their children in their own home. Many parents, frustrated by corrupt school boards, lack of religious instruction, underpaid teachers or unsafe conditions, have opted to teach their kids at home. Most parents cite family togetherness, more control over curriculum, and having a say over what their children learn as reasons to home school. Many of the families who home school also do so for religious reasons (Ng, 2003:1).

HIS- Heritage International School. –A Christian International School in Uganda that was started for the purpose of offering education upholding Christian values and at the same time providing high quality education.

International Schools: These are schools found all over the world and are built for the main purpose of providing a certain standard of education for expatriates' children whose parents have had to move from their home countries to other countries usually as a result of their jobs' demands.

In their article on *International Education*, Hayden & Thompson (1995:1) wrote:

The term international school is a pragmatic shorthand device to signify one of a growing population of institutions around the world serving the educational needs of globally mobile students and whose culturally diverse constituency includes the

children of diplomats and employees of multinational companies, parastatal bodies and non-governmental organizations as well as host country nationals.

The major differences between the international schools and the local schools is that while the international schools focus on trying to get the children to learn through doing (American); encouraging high academic standards through a practical approach to teaching and learning (IGCSE); and offering an integrated approach to learning across the disciplines with an emphasis on meeting the challenges of living and working in a global, technological society (Norre G 2008:1), the Ugandan curricula is still focused on learning visually and orally.

Growth Rate: Measure of growth of the student population in the school.

Marketing Strategies: Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and events to create and maintain relationships that will satisfy individual and organizational objectives (Boone and Kurtz, 1998). From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, marketing strategies are defined as “those plans designed to reach marketing goals, policies and action sequences (tactics) into a cohesive whole. The objective of a marketing strategy is to put the organization into a position to carry out its mission effectively and efficiently and they are basically based on the firm’s mission.”

High Teacher/Student Turnover: This is when every year many teachers/students leave the school and/or many teachers/students join the school.

Socio-Economic Environment: This refers to the relationship between the society and economy of the people within a certain geographical area. Those that are materially well off are able to afford the high education costs of international school as opposed to those who are not well off.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the reviewed literature is based firstly on the definition of where exactly HIS falls- an international school, an alternative school or a faith-based school. Secondly, literature is reviewed and discussed under various themes such as student enrollment in relation to curriculum, marketing, teacher/student turnover, and socio-economic factors.

2.2 Definitions

HIS is a unique school and may easily fall into three categories of schools. First it is an International School. According to Cambridge and Thompson (2000) in Hayden and Thompson 1995:1), in their article, '*Internationalism, International Mindedness, Multiculturalism and Globalisation as Concepts in Defining International Schools,*' an international school is:

...a pragmatic shorthand device to signify one of a growing population of institutions around the world serving the educational needs of globally mobile students and whose culturally diverse constituency includes the children of diplomats and employees of multinational companies, parastatal bodies and non-governmental organisations as well as host country nationals.

HIS serves the needs of globally mobile students. Some are children of diplomats, others' parents are employees of multinational companies and many are children of missionaries.

One frequently used description of an international school is:

“...integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of...education” (Knight, 2003: 1).

HIS does not operate for profit. It enrolls many students who are not host nationals, it has a multinational board and a multinational teaching staff, and has students and staff who are representative of a number of cultural and ethnic origins, qualifying it to fit under the umbrella category of an international school. Its curriculum however, does not fit in the category of an international school. HIS satisfies some, but not all of the requirements for international schools as described by and Knight.

In some cases HIS may fit in the category of an alternative school. According to Menno Simons Christian School in Alberta, Canada, in their school’s Act 21(1), “an ‘Alternative programme’ means an education programme that

- a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject matter or
- b) uses a particular teaching philosophy, but that is not a special education programme, a programme referred to in section 10 (Francophone) or a programme of religious education offered by a separate school board (Catholic or Protestant in St. Albert).”

HIS, which is a Christian International School, may be described as an alternative school that emphasizes its Christian principles. It also uses a particular teaching philosophy that is not a special education programme.

In his paper, *Alternative Schools and the Students They Serve (2003)*, Lehr reports that according to their review of literature, Lange and Sletter (2002) found that alternative schools are generally characterized as having small enrollment, one-on-one interaction between teachers and students, supportive environments, opportunities and curriculum relevant to student interests, flexibility in structure and an emphasis on student decision making.

HIS has a small enrollment but not limitless opportunities and a flexible curriculum, and the emphasis is not on student decision-making. According to Lange & Sletter (2002)'s description of an alternative school, therefore, HIS does not fully satisfy the requirements for an alternative school.

The State Department for Education Approval in America (Sept, 1998:1) defines an alternative school as, “a separate school, within a public school district and with its own principal, which offers an educational program leading to a high school diploma or GED. To qualify as an alternative school, the program is designed to meet students' individual needs and includes the minimum course requirements approved by the State Board of Education.”

A Michigan Government document from America (2007:1) defines alternative education as, ‘a separate programme within a K-12 public school district or charter school established to serve and provide youth a choice or option whose needs are not being met in the traditional school setting.’ It further goes on to give three indispensable goals for alternative schools as being:

1. That students attend by choice.
 2. That the school or programme be responsive to unmet local needs.
 3. That the student body reflects the racial and socio-economic mix of the community.
- (2007:1).

HIS has some components in this description, in that it provides education for children from K-12 whose ‘faith’ needs are not being met in the traditional school setting. It however does not meet the needs of those who are interested in following a Ugandan curriculum for their children. Students also attend the school by choice and the student body reflects the racial and socio-economic mix of the community.

The third category of schools that HIS may fall into is a ‘Faith based school’.

The Wikipedia web definition of Faith based schools is ...“a type of private school which engages in religious education in addition to conventional education....” (2007:1)

In a study by Hiemstra and Brink (2002:1), *'Faith-based School Choice in Alberta: The Advent of a Pluriform Public Model?'* A "faith-based" school or school program is defined as:

Schools or authorities that (1) publicly self-identify themselves as religious, (2) openly affiliate with a religious group, or (3) are run by, or exclusively serve, a religious group or society.' They further go on to say that, ' The practical implications of a school being 'faith-based' may vary from allowing religious observances and symbols, offering religious courses (almost all Alberta schools may do this), to allowing faith to be integrated, or permeated, throughout the curriculum and practices of the school.

At HIS, the Christian faith is integrated throughout the curriculum, particularly in elementary.

Julie Hanahan writes in a family magazine, *Choosing the Perfect Faith-based School for your Child*, that, 'The obvious difference between secular private schools and faith-based schools is the religious philosophy and theology that shapes the environment of the latter—both inside and outside the classroom. Using Christian schools as an example, Cannon (2007:1) explains that "the Christian world view pervades all curricula. The teachers teach with materials that incorporate Biblical principles, while appreciating that students learn from the very lives of their teachers.'" Glenn (2000:315) reports that organizations that are faith-based (in this case, schools), have an ethos that helps them enforce moral codes and demand individual responsibility, this is very true of HIS.

The definitions and descriptions of the different types of schools above illustrate that of these school categories discussed above, "faith-based school" most accurately describes HIS.

Still, HIS is a unique school in that it embraces a bit of each of the above- mentioned types of schools. It is international because it enrolls students who are mainly not from the host country. Its teachers are multinational and so is its Board of Governors. HIS is

alternative in that it uses a particular teaching philosophy that is not a special education programme. It also emphasizes a particular religion and it is characterized by small class sizes. It is faith-based because it allows its faith to be integrated throughout the curriculum and practices of the school. The best description therefore would be a Christian International School, 'Christian' embracing its 'alternative' nature.

2.3 Student Enrollment in Relation to Curriculum

In her article, "*Clientele, Curriculum and Economics: Factors in the Survival of Rome International Schools*", Short (2002:1) identifies curriculum as one of the factors that influence student growth in international schools. She points out that:

Many of the existing international schools in Rome had either an American or British curriculum. This was fine for the British and Americans whose children would get their university education from their countries. The Italian population in these schools, however, began to grow and many wanted their children to be able to go to any university in the world hence the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Programme (IB).

IB schools are "characterized by a growing awareness of the need to broaden educational goals to include knowledge of cultural and social contexts other than the ones into which we were born" (Peel 1998:12).

When the international schools in Rome, changed to the IB programme, their student numbers increased. The International School of Uganda is one of the oldest international schools in Uganda and it started as an international school with an American based curriculum, but has now changed and adopted the International Baccalaureate Programme, which is an international curriculum that is recognized worldwide and students who follow it have no trouble enrolling into any university of their choice where as an American – based curriculum is mainly recognized in America and students may not be admitted into universities outside North America. As a result of this change the

student numbers in this school have more than doubled. A school in Northshore School District, U.S.A, reports that, ‘while students can enroll in individual International Baccalaureate (IB) classes that are a bit more akin to AP (Advanced Placement Certificates) classes, the IB Diploma Programme offers a more global approach to learning; is good for overall scholars; offers comprehensive exams; is well respected by a growing number of colleges and universities; and requires a service component (Northshore School District 2007:1). Presently, the International School of Uganda has a student population of about 450 and its tuition is almost three times that of HIS. Though this may not be the sole reason for its big numbers, it is significant enough to consider as a factor that may contribute to student numbers in international schools. HIS follows an American-based curriculum and yet the Americans make up 20% of the school.

In the concluding statement of her paper, Short (2002:14), observed:

The schools that have managed to survive the longest have been the most flexible. Changing their criteria for admittance, changing their curriculum and changing their priorities. More in-service days for staff development, more communication between schools to share problems and solutions and more open minded attitude to accepting students from the host country, have been reasons for their success.

Furthermore, Halia (2000:230) reports that, “schools that offer a relevant curriculum and a supportive climate would be expected to have higher retentions rates.”

The success of Cayman International School in Georgetown, Cayman Island, was attributed to the adaptation of the curriculum to the individual needs of the multicultural student population. At Cayman International School, ‘the curriculum is based on learning standards developed and implemented in exemplary American and International schools and is designed to address the individual needs of the multicultural student population. Recognizing the diverse academic programme the students will matriculate to after the Cayman International School, an international approach to education is fostered...’

(<http://www.iss.edu/GovSch/cayman.html>).

The curriculum has been a concern of some parents who have children especially in the higher grades at HIS. As mentioned earlier, the upper school sometimes had a total population of 20 students and in some cases no student for a particular grade. This may be because parents are more concerned at this stage as to where their children will go after they graduate from HIS. Will they be able to fit in their next level of education easily? Bearing in mind that only 20% of the school population is North American; would not it be wise to have a more international approach to education in the upper grades, which would cater more for the multicultural student population? Maybe the school would then be able to enjoy the same success that has been seen at Cayman International School.

We cannot diminish the importance of the future prospect of the children as Steele (1996:1) reports, “Let me put it this way, if I’m going to be one of 40 graduates competing for 200 jobs, it doesn’t make much difference where I go to school. Employers aren’t going to be asking me where I got my degree. But if I’m one of 200 graduates competing for 40 jobs, I would want that degree to be from a place like the University of Pittsburgh, which is not only well known nationally but has a strong reputation internationally.”

With the present curriculum at HIS, students are not able to go to any university of their choice. In other words their choices are limited because of the present curriculum. If the curriculum is one that is recognized globally, this should not be a problem and the children will be able to enroll in prestigious universities of their choice and therefore have a better opportunity for employment of highly marketable jobs.

In her article, *Foreign Language and International Studies*, Herron (1985:1) writes, “generally the academic curriculum (of both public and private high schools) emphasizes foreign languages, social sciences and communications. The purpose of all three curricular areas is to help students develop the competencies necessary for effective participation in an international environment”.

HIS is an international school with children from many different countries. Is the curriculum developing the competencies necessary for effective participation in their own countries when the children return to their countries, or is it focused on one country?

Herron (1985:1), further reports :

These schools (Foreign and International Studies High Schools) have adopted a two-pronged approach: Students choose between (1) preparing for and participating in a career-focused internship with an international company abroad or in an urban American center during the junior and senior years and (2) preparing for the International Baccalaureate Examination during the last two years of school.

This approach would focus on preparing the children to go either way. It could be remodeled to suit the needs of the children, by, for example, having the curriculum prepare students for the Advanced Placement (AP) exams, which are well recognized by the well-known universities in North America, and at the same time offer to prepare students for the International Baccalaureate Examination, which is recognized internationally.

Palardy et al (2002:1) have this to say about student retention and the curriculum, “Schools that offer a relevant curriculum and a supportive climate would be expected to have higher retention rates.” They go on further to say that, “Schools that can create supportive environments that promote positive attitudes to school and retain students to completion are schools that are providing those students with increased life opportunities.”

The high school at HIS has very few students because at this time the parents seem to be more concerned about how the school is preparing their children for future entries to Universities or Colleges. If the curriculum is relevant to only a few then the rest are going to look for other schools with a more relevant curriculum.

An international school in Germany has many of the expatriates' children flocking to the school because of the school's adaptation of its curriculum to one that is relevant. As Halia (2000:230) reports :

Many English-speaking expatriates are educating their children in one of Germany's international schools, and an education at such a school has numerous advantages... the curriculum among international schools is uniform, allowing ease of transfer. They usually are accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) and offer the International Baccalaureate as well as the American High School Diploma and sometimes the German Abitur.

This school has gone to great lengths to make its curriculum relevant to the international English-speaking expatriates and therefore has many of them going to that school.

The literature suggests that HIS may have to make changes in its curriculum. The question is: to what extent will the changes compromise the school's founding mission to provide quality education with strong Christian principles or how far can the school change without upsetting the founding mission and philosophy of the school? How can HIS use the successes of other schools that have adapted their curriculum to suit the needs of a global society and at the same time incorporate its Christian philosophy? On the other hand, there are faith-based schools like Roselyn Academy and Rift Valley Academy in Kenya, a neighbouring country, using an American-based curriculum that are successful and seem not to have a problem of low enrollment.

In its May 16, 2005 issue, *Newsweek* published a list of America's best high schools based on which schools were getting many students ready for higher education. It reported that, "All the high schools listed by *Newsweek* are obviously educating some of their students well." Governor Wise wrote, "Those young people who are taking Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes are no doubt better prepared than many of their peers for the demands of college or other postgraduate

training” (*Newsweek*, May 16, 2005). Many parents are aware of this fact and would therefore opt for schools that are offering these options.

While Wise (2005) acknowledged that a rigorous course work is a necessary element of a successful high school education, he maintained that students also need “caring, well trained teachers, effective programmes to help raise their literacy levels, individual learning plans that help them achieve their academic objectives over a four or six year period, personalized learning centers, *relevant curricula*, (emphasis, mine) and a variety of other supports that will make the difference between success and failure”(*Newsweek*, May 16, 2005). Once again, we are pointed to the fact that an international school or any school must look at what curriculum is relevant for their children in order to be prepared for the demands of college.

The publication, *School Guide Magazine in America, Your Complete Guide to Learning in the Triangle: Private Faith-Based Education in the Triangle*, asks, ‘How effective is faith-based private school education?’ “According to the Educational Perspective brochure of the Association of Christian Schools International,” says Cannon (2007:1) “Year after year, standardized achievement test scores affirm that students taught by Christian school educators achieve well above the national norm.” Cannon (2007:1) adds that, in addition to academics, “Christian private schools often provide a wide range of student programmes that can include fine arts, speech meets, academic meets, student leadership conferences and strong athletic programs.” So we go back to the question: What is it that HIS, as a Christian school, is doing or not doing that has led to small student numbers? Is the type of education offered relevant for the clients in the community that HIS exists in?

We have seen examples of schools that adapted their curriculum to one that was more international and increased in their enrollment; however none of these schools was or is faith-based or intended to have their school built on a faith-based philosophy. We have also seen some faith-based schools that do not face a problem of low student numbers. It will be interesting to discover where HIS’ problem lies.

2.4 Student Enrollment in Relation to Marketing Strategies.

The marketing strategy of schools is another very important factor that influences student growth in schools. A centrally important principle of marketing is that all marketing activities should be geared towards what the consumer wants. It implies a focus on the consumer or end consumer of the product or service. If customer requirements are not satisfactorily fulfilled or if customers do not obtain what they want and need, then marketing has failed both the customer and the organization. As Kotler and Anderson (1987:1) put it, 'Marketing concept is a corporate orientation to business that starts with consumers and integrates marketing into every other corporate function. The traditional view of marketing orientation is that "the keys to achieving organizational goals reside in determining the needs and wants of customers".'

In her article on "*Marketing Schools and Consumer Choice*," Harvey (1996:26) highlights an important point in this aspect by stating, "To survive, an industry must identify the needs at a price which the customer can afford to pay. This appears to create an ethical minefield for public services: to what extent should the quality of their provision be geared only to that for which client customers are willing or able to pay?"

One must be very careful so that all the different clients' needs are met, in this case, the needs of the missionaries as well as the needs of the community the school serves, and also not to allow the prospective clients' needs to divert the school from its founding mission which in the case of HIS is, "to offer quality education that equips each student to develop their God given potential for a life of faith and service" (Heritage International School Parents'/Students' Hand Book 2006:2). The contention here is how far the school can set out to meet all the different needs of the clients and yet stay true to its founding mission.

Harvey (1996:26) further goes on to state that, "Education marketing requires the identification of student and community needs and a commitment to meeting those with a high quality product... One of the major purposes of marketing therefore is to explain to potential clients the services or products they are about to purchase...schools for example

can explain what opportunities are offered to students such as how and what they are taught.”

One of the marketing strategies of any institution, in this case education, has to do with their improvement of the quality of the services provided. Still in her article, *Marketing Schools and Consumer Choice*,” Harvey (1996:26) quotes Gray as saying that, “if all staff involved in a school is trying to improve the quality of service, all must be involved in promoting “customer care” and enhancing levels of customer satisfaction.”

Harvey (1996:26) portrays this clearly when she states, “The main focus of marketing is on a dialogue between an organization and its clients, a school and its students, and parents and how their different needs can be met more effectively, issues which are at the heart of most teachers’ professional concerns. To meet these needs requires all staff to be involved in a constant systematic review of their practice in order to improve their quality of the services of teaching and learning which their schools provide. Marketing then is crucial if a school is to develop its vision for its students and maintain the practices of school improvement’.

This clearly shows that in order to establish the true needs of the community that a school targets, or it serves, there needs to be this kind of dialogue that Harvey points out. It is once again linked to the curriculum and the vision as well as the mission, because from this dialogue, parents will be able to give their views on what is applicable or relevant for their children to be learning and the teachers then can fine-tune it to suit the educational requirements or standards.

Time and time again we seem to be hit with the question, ‘How relevant is the education that HIS provides, to the community?’ Furthermore, how far can the school change its product to suit the needs of its prospective clients and the wider community and yet remain true to its philosophy- to provide a Christian based education of the highest quality?

The reputation of a school is one way to market it. Mazzarol (1998:163) in his article, “Critical Success Factors for International Education Marketing”, identified the quality of reputation and level of marketing recognition as one of the critical success factors for international education marketing. Of course this applies to all schools, even public schools. Schools have reputations, and the reputation is what attracts or repels potential students. A good reputation is quickly and easily passed on and a school like HIS can build on this aspect.

Mazzarol (1998:163) quotes Danks (1986) as saying, “institutions seeking to make use of advertising need to emphasize their positive qualities via use of testimonials.” For instance, parents could help by telling others how their children have benefited from education at the school. Mazzarol, however, cautions that we need to be very careful when marketing education because “education is a product that is both highly intangible and has characteristics which create special problems for marketing” (Mazzarol, 1998:163). Seeing that education is invaluable, how can we begin to put a price on it and have the market set a price for it?

Stokes (1997:1) puts an emphasis on relationship marketing as opposed to other traditional methods of marketing. In his study, schools had been urged to copy private sector marketing approaches. However some of the basic concepts of marketing were being challenged. “The concept of the marketing mix and the 4 P’s of marketing – product, price, place and promotion – were particularly singled out for criticism because they focused on short term transactions rather than development of longer term relationships with customers.”

Stokes (1997:1) outlines the purpose of marketing as being to establish, maintain, enhance and commercialize customer relationships so that the objectives of the parties are met. “In a move away from the traditional ‘warfare’ approach to environmental relationship marketing puts emphasis on nurturing relationships especially with existing customers.” The key marketing issue that Stokes found in the school was the falling market share with an empty classroom, unpredictable finances and a high teacher

turnover because of the uncertainty. External publicity and an extensive public relations campaign did not help matters, and neither did extensive advertising. His case study points to the centrality of relationship marketing strategies as a way of overcoming its marketing problems. He points out that the existing parents were the best kind of advertisers especially when they got involved in the school.

If the parents are the best kind of advertisers, they are the ones the schools have to please. If the parents are convinced that the curriculum followed is the one that best prepares them for entry to the best universities world wide, and if they feel the Christian values inculcated at the school are helping their children be better citizens, they will let other parents know, hence be the best advertisers for the school.

After trying out external publicity, an extensive PR campaign and extensive advertising, there was little improvement in student growth at the school Stokes studied. However when Stokes changed his tactics at this school and focused on relationship marketing, the change was dramatic. He pointed out that, “the existing parents were the best kind of advertisers especially when they got involved in the school” (Stokes 1997:1).

A review of *Alternative Schools and Roma Education in Hungary* (Orsos, E.H et al: 39) indicated that:

Despite the steady increase in the number of students enrolled in these alternative secondary schools, the total number of Roma children enrolled in these schools represents only a fraction of the total number of Roma students in Hungary. This raises two questions (i) what kind of students are attracted to these schools and (ii) why are they attracted to these schools? In order to answer the second question, we rely on interview responses of students. Most students reported that relatives, teachers and friends and other acquaintances had encouraged them to attend the alternative secondary schools.

This is another good example of marketing through reputation.

2.5 Student Enrollment in Relation to Teacher/Student Turnover.

High teacher turnover rates and their effect on student enrollment is another important factor to examine. Ezzeldine (2006:1) in his article, 'How to Recruit and Retain the Best Teachers,' says, 'Teacher turnover is known to be related to low student achievement'. He further goes on to write:

...retaining good teachers is especially important to religious schools because unlike many private schools, they are typically financially vulnerable and unless administrators clearly understand the factors that motivate teachers to stay in private religious schools they will be unable to increase the retention of teachers in this critical segment of the U.S educational system.

If a school cannot retain its teachers and this leads to low student achievement, parents are not going to want to send their children to such a school.

In Blandford and Shaw's book, *Managing International Schools* (2001:124) Hardman quotes Akram (1995) as saying, "For the children, the international school and its microcosm the classroom, is their community." Hardman questions, "But how stable and consistent is the community if the teachers themselves are part of a transient population rarely in any one school for more than two years?" (Blandford & Shaw 2001:124). This is very typical of HIS. When the school was founded, the plan was to have missionary teachers who could stay for about four years or more, but this was very often not the case. Most of the missionary teachers that come, are short-term missionaries and stay for 1 – 2 years. Can quality teachers be persuaded to work at the school and then be retained beyond their short contract? How can the school expect to maintain high quality standards with excessive teacher turnover? It is highly likely that this influences the parents' decision not to choose HIS because every parent wants some kind of stability in their children's education and also wants high quality standards and a school should be able to prove that it is providing this, especially in terms of quality stable teachers.

High teacher turnover is a problem that many schools, international and public, deal with. Blandford and Shaw (2001:124) enlighten John Hardman's use of metaphors of 'career professionals' and 'mavericks' to identify the incentives and conditions that might motivate good teachers to remain in the school beyond their original contract, and become keenly involved in the life of the school within and beyond the classroom promoting stability and continuity. HIS as a Christian school may need to look into this in their own context.

Ingersoll's (2001:5) research showed that, in particular, low salaries, inadequate support from the school administration, student discipline problems and limited faculty input into school decision making, all contribute to higher rates of turnover, after controlling the characteristics of both teachers and schools. In his final analysis, he quotes Mobley (1982) as saying, "...turnover rates of, for example, almost 25% will likely have a negative impact on organizations, such as schools, for which coherence and continuity are deemed important for effectiveness."

Seattle Times (March 30, 2005), reported that high teacher turnover negatively affects the quality of education, disrupts the continuity of school programmes and stunts school reform efforts. The Advertorial went on to say, 'Education leaders know what it takes In his final analysis, he quotes Mobley (1982) as saying, "...turnover rates of, for example, almost 25% will likely have a ns only a fraction of the total number of Roma students in Hungary. This raises two questions (i) what kind of students are attracted to these schools and (ii) why are they attracted to these schools? In order to answer the second question, we rely on interview responses of students. Most students reported that relatives, teachers and friends and other acquaintances had encouraged them to keep good teachers in the classroom. It takes among other things, making realistic assignments for new teachers, rather than giving them the tough challenges that no one else wants. It takes providing sound mentoring so that new teachers feel connected even when they close the classroom door.' It also takes what Dennis Sparks, executive director of a National Staff Development Council in one of the states in America, calls "a high- performance culture" based on focused professional development.

Another area to consider is the high student turnover. This is not because of any fault of the children but because of the nature of their parents' jobs. International schools therefore should be prepared to lose a big number of students each year. Blandford (2001:17) in her book, *Managing International Schools*, writes about international schools and mobile families and says:

As institutions that serve globally mobile families, many international schools have student populations that are in a state of flux; it is common for example, for children to spend only a couple of years at a school before moving on. This pattern of turn over is also seen among teaching staff in many international schools.

International schools such as HIS are prepared to lose a large number of students each year and at the same time gain some more. The issue now is the balance of this and how it affects student numbers in the school.

2.6 Student Enrollment in Relation to the Socio-Economic Environment.

The socio-economic environment may influence the student population of international schools. It is well known that much as international schools have a much higher quality of education than that found in most of their host countries (especially in Africa), the price is also quite high. Blandford (2001:18) in her edition of "*Managing International Schools*," quotes Sklair saying, "it may be argued that students, teachers, administrators and managers of international schools, whether they are expatriate or recruited locally, come from a narrow socio-economic group and that they share values which converge with the culture – ideology of transnational capitalist class." In many cases the community immediately surrounding the international schools, is of a much lower socio economic class and cannot afford the fees of international schools. At HIS, there have been a number of children from the host country who have had to discontinue their studies on account of inability to meet the cost of the school fees.

According to a review of Alternative Secondary Schools in Hungary (2001), the socio-economic profile of the parents and families of students enrolled in alternative secondary programmes reflects a specific level of education of the parents, their employment status, and housing conditions.

In its report on *Recommendations of the Private Schools Funding Task Force*, (2007) the government of Alberta, Canada, reported that, “Some parents choose private schools because of the philosophy, teaching methods or religious basis of the school. Some say that private schools teach values they want for their children.” This was also the impression that the founders of HIS had, that there were many parents out there who wanted a school that would teach their children good values with a Christian basis and at the same time give quality education. However, there does not seem to have been an assessment of the socio-economic profile of potential learners and the size of the pool of religious-inclined parents who would afford the school.

2.7 Research Gap

Although various studies have been carried out on how the different themes discussed in the literature review affect student enrollments in schools and in international school, no research has been carried out to see how these collectively contribute to student numbers in international schools, especially in the environment such as Uganda, and even further which one of the themes stands out as affecting the student numbers the most.

This research will therefore help alternative schools understand the important and underlying factors that need to be considered to maintain or increase student numbers in their schools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY.

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, a literature review of some of the factors that have influenced the low enrollment of students at HIS was done. This chapter covers an in depth description of qualitative research, the purpose of this research, the procedures that were applied in conducting the research, the criteria applied in selecting respondents, and the research methods.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 285), “qualitative research is one of the research approaches employed in empirical research and may have different definitions. It is the source of well grounded theory illustrated with rich (or thick) description and explanation of processes that occur in an identifiable local context.” McMillan and Schumacher (2001:393) say, “Qualitative research is an interactive or noninteractive research, termed analytical research.” “The term ‘qualitative research’ is at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, rather than the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Neuman 1997:335). “It is research that derives data from observation, interviews, or verbal interactions and focuses on the meanings and interpretations of the participants” (Holloway and Wheeler, 1995:1).

3.2 The Purpose of Qualitative Research

The purpose of qualitative research is to, “describe and explore and to describe and explain. Similar terms could be to examine and document, to understand and to discover or generate” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 397). “Qualitative research enables us to make sense of reality, to describe and explain the social world, and to develop explanatory models and theories. It is the primary means by which the theoretical foundations of a social science may be constructed or reexamined.” (Morse & Field, 1995:1).

“Qualitative research occurs in real life situations and it is in real-life situations that respondents can provide in-depth information about phenomena” (Krueger 1988:38).

3.3 The Importance of Qualitative Research for this Study.

Qualitative research was considered for this study because it enabled the researcher to empirically explore the reasons for the low student enrollment at HIS. Cook & Campbell give the following ways which the researcher also used:

- ‘The study investigated a real-life situation.
- The researcher interacted with respondents.
- The study attempted to avoid prejudgment; the goal was to try to capture what is happening, present respondents on their own terms and to try to represent them from their perspectives so that the reader can see their views. This process is always imperfectly achieved – it is a quest’ (Cook & Campbell 1979:34).

For the researcher to be able to answer the research questions comprehensively and thoroughly without bias, she needed to carry out in-depth interviews. Observations of the interviewees’ behaviour during interviews and verbal interactions were also necessary in order to find out the various views of the participants.

The researcher wanted to get answers that would reflect the perspectives of the respondents, in order to see their unadulterated views. This could only be done through qualitative research.

The researcher used a case study research design. A case study design refers to a single case studied in depth. In this case, it was a descriptive study, which provided detailed information about some of the factors leading to low student numbers at HIS.

“Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships” (2006: <http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~ssoy/usesusers/1391d1b.htm>).

[Zonabend](#) (1992) in Tellis (1997:1) *The Introduction to Case Study*, states that case studying is done by giving special attention to completeness in observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the cases under study. Case study is done in a way that incorporates the views of the "actors" in the case under study.

Through the use of interviews the researcher was able to incorporate the views of the “actors under the case study.” The researcher also used a short questionnaire, though the main focus was on the interviews due to the nature of the research.

3.4 Research Questions

To investigate the problem, the researcher asked the following research questions:

- How is Heritage International School viewed by Ugandans both in its immediate vicinity and those not in its immediate vicinity?
- How do the Heritage International School curriculum, marketing or lack of, and management contribute to the problem of low student numbers at the school?

- How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to the problem of low student numbers?
- How can Heritage International School stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?

3.5 Location of the Study

Part of the study was carried out at Heritage International School, which is located in a small town called Kansanga, about 2 miles from the capital city, Kampala. Many upper class citizens and expatriates live within this area though there is also a sizeable population of low income earners.

Another part of the study was carried out within the vicinity of the school as well as areas on the outskirts of the school. However, it was all done within Kampala, the capital city of Uganda.

3.6 Sampling

3.6.1 Sample Selection

The selected sample for this study were three parents (all female) who lived within the vicinity of the school with no children in the school; seven parents (one of them male and the rest female) who did not live within the vicinity of the school and who had no children in the school; seven parents (five male and two female) with children in the school; two female teachers; a male board member and the school administrator, who is male. All these were interviewed. There were about three other parents who were questioned but could not continue the interview because they had never heard of the school.

3.6.2 Sampling Procedures

Sampling refers to the process by which a subset of population elements (sample) is drawn from the population (Stoker 1989:100). For this study, purposeful or purposive sampling was utilized. In purposive sampling, subjects are selected because of some characteristic where ‘... the sample is ‘hand-picked’ for the research’ (Hussain & Salma: 1). Purposeful sampling is also described as “selecting information rich cases for study in-depth” (Patton, 1990:169). Size and specific cases depend on the study purpose (Mugo 2004: 1).

“Purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. Purposeful sampling requires that information be obtained about variations among the subunits before the sample is chosen” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:401). The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied (Patton1990:169).

The information – rich key informants in this study were identified as parents with children in the school, parents with no children in the school, parents who live within the vicinity of the school and parents who do not live within the vicinity of the school and whose children do not attend HIS, teachers, an administrator and a board member. These different subsets were chosen because they were the groups that would provide rich information for in-depth study.

The researcher also wanted to use manageable sizes and obtain different groups’ views in order to obtain multiple views as well as information that has depth. There were two sets of parents with children in the school. The first set of parents interviewed were two parents who had had their children in the school for three years or more. These were chosen because they had more experience with the school and the researcher hoped to get their perspectives on some of the reasons for low enrollment of students at HIS. Each of these parents was interviewed individually. The second group of parents with children in the school was a group of five parents whose children had been in the school for two

years and under. The researcher wanted to find out whether their perception of the reasons for low student enrollment was any different from the parents whose children had been in the school longer.

The researcher also interviewed ten parents whose children did not attend HIS. Three of these parents lived within the vicinity of the school and seven others lived outside the vicinity of the school. The researcher chose the first group of parents within the vicinity of HIS to find out why they did not bring their children to HIS despite their proximity to the school. The researcher wanted to further find out if the reasons they gave for not bringing their children to the school would throw any light on some of the reasons for low enrollment of students at HIS. The second group of parents who did not live within the vicinity of the school was chosen so that the researcher would be able to see what the outside community thought of the school and if their thoughts did anything to highlight possible reasons for low enrollment.

The researcher chose two teachers for the interview. One teacher had been with the school for over five years and another had been with the school for just one year. The researcher chose these two different categories of teachers because she wanted to get each of their views. Sometimes when you have a problem and you are close to the problem you may not be able to tell what the actual problem is. So the researcher chose a teacher who had not been with the school for a long time to see what her views were on HIS' problem of low student enrollment, or if those closely related to the school had missed anything. From the teacher who had been with the school longer, the researcher hoped to get her views because of her experience with the school and see whether there were any similarities with the other teacher.

The administrator and board member of the school were chosen because they are part of the school management and governance and the researcher wanted to get their views on the school management. The researcher wanted to compare their views of the reasons for low student enrollment at HIS with the views of the teachers and parents with children in the school and see if there were some common reasons mentioned in each category.

These then would throw more light on the researcher's quest to find out reasons for low student enrollment at the school.

3.7 Collection of Data

There are a number of methods that can be used to gather information and the researcher used the following:

- Interviews
- Written questionnaires

3.7.1 Interviews

“A research interview is a survey instrument, which involves a direct conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee with the purpose of obtaining useful information for the research” (Cohen & Manion 1989:307). Interviews provide in-depth information about a particular research issue or question. Because the information is not quantifiable (that is, not amenable to statistical analysis), the interview often is described as a qualitative research method. “A successful qualitative interview is more like an intimate and personal sharing of a confidence with a trusted friend and the information given must be treated likewise with respect” (Morse & Field, 1995:91). The main advantage of interviews is that of direct interaction, which allows for greater depth of information relevant to the topic concerned.

Interviewing was the main instrument the researcher used to gather information. The researcher carried out twenty-one different interviews in order to obtain key information. The interviews were with ten parents whose children did not attend HIS and seven with parents with children in the school. (The interviews with parents who were dropped as respondents are not included in this report.) The researcher also interviewed two teachers, one administrator and one board member.

A letter was given to each of the informants so that they would know ahead of time and schedule an appropriate time for the researcher to carry out an interview with them. Sending out a letter prior to the interview was very helpful because by the time the interview was held, the participants had prepared themselves mentally to give of their time and invaluable information.

The researcher got a response from the administrator of the school first, so she was able to carry out the interview with him at the school over lunch. This interview lasted about one hour. The next interview was with a board member who had been in that particular office for over three years and so had some very good input to the researcher's need for information. This interview took place in the morning at a time that the researcher had cleared up specifically for this interview since it was the time the board member had given that was convenient for him. It lasted about two hours. Then the researcher was able to set out time with two of the teachers in the school, whom she interviewed separately after school. One had been with the school for over five years and one had just been in the school for one year. These interviews also lasted about one hour.

The researcher also interviewed seven of the parents with children in the school, but each of the parents' interviews was carried out individually because they all had different times that were more convenient to them. Only one of these interviews took place at the home of one of the parents. Six of the other interviews were held at school. Each parent had agreed to meet with the researcher after school on a day they had specified as convenient to them. The researcher used one of the classrooms for each of the interviews and they lasted between one and a half to two hours each. There were ten parents interviewed whose children did not attend HIS. Three of these parents lived within the vicinity of the school and these were parents who were willing to participate in the interview. The researcher had previously sent letters to these parents requesting permission to carry out these interviews with them. These interviews lasted about one and a half hours. The interviews were carried out in each of these parents' homes at a time that was appropriate as indicated by them. Ten other parents were interviewed whose children did not attend HIS and who did not live within the vicinity of the school.

Once again the interviewees were chosen randomly, that is the researcher chose ten parents who were willing to participate in the interviews. The researcher went from door to door and in some cases, some were not willing to be interviewed but those who were willing, were interviewed. These interviews were carried out at their places of work which were near the vicinity of the school though they did not live within the vicinity of the school and this was done during lunch time on different days of the week as specified by each interviewee.

During the interviews, the researcher listened carefully, that is, listened with all her senses to the participant. “Listening involves being able to take on the role of the other person. To see the world as the participant does” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:439). The researcher wanted to see HIS in the same light that the participant did.

Interview Questions

These were the questions asked in each category during the interviews:

View of Heritage International School

A. The first group of three parents with no children in the school who lived within the vicinity of the school was asked the following questions:

1. What is your nationality?
2. How long have you lived in this area (Kansanga)?
3. Do you know about HIS?
4. What do you know about HIS? What is your view of Heritage International School?
5. Why don't your children attend HIS?

B. The second group of ten parents with no children in the school who did not live within the vicinity of the school was asked the following questions:

1. What do you know about HIS?
2. Where did you hear about HIS?
3. Do you think HIS is doing a great job? / In your opinion how does HIS compare with other International and Religious schools in Uganda in terms of quality education?
4. (For those whose answer to the above question is positive) If you think HIS is a good school, why are your children not at HIS?
5. (If the parent has school-age children who go to other schools) Have you ever considered sending your children to HIS? (If not) Why not?
6. Do you think Uganda needs a school like HIS? Why? / Why not?
7. (If the children are still too young) Are you considering sending your children to HIS? Why?/Why not?
8. What influences you when you choose a school for your child?
9. How do you think HIS should make itself known to parents of potential learners at the school? (This is if the researcher finds out the parent(s) had not heard about HIS before sending children to school, or they did not know much about HIS and so did not choose HIS).

Since these parents did not live within the vicinity of the school they were not expected to be aware of what was happening inside the school. The researcher wanted a completely unbiased view from other parents to see if there was any similarity with the views of parents who lived within the vicinity of the school of the reasons for low enrollment at HIS.

(How do the curriculum, marketing or lack of, contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?)

CURRICULUM

Parents with no children at HIS were asked the following questions:

1. Are you familiar with the curriculum used at HIS?
2. Would you consider – this curriculum suitable for your child's education?
3. For either answer, why?
4. Do you think the choice of curriculum in any way affects the number of students at HIS?

Groups associated with HIS already were asked the following questions:

1. Do you think the choice of curriculum in any way affects the number of students at HIS?

MARKETING

Parents with no children at HIS were asked the following questions:

What do you think of the marketing of HIS? / Has the marketing of HIS influenced what you think of HIS? / Do you think HIS could have been marketed differently? If yes, what could have been done? /What advice if any do you have about marketing HIS as a school?

Parents with children in the school, teachers, the administrator and the Board member were asked the questions:

What do you think of the marketing of HIS? /Do you think HIS could have been marketed differently? If yes, what could have been done? /What advice if any do you have about marketing HIS as a school?

Parents whose children had been with the school for less than two years were asked the following questions:

1. Why did you choose this school? (View)
2. How or where did you hear about the school? (Marketing.)

3. In your opinion what are the strengths of this school?
4. What are the weaknesses of the school?
5. The school has not been growing, what do you think are the reasons? / Have you talked to other parents with no children at HIS and heard what they perhaps think of the school?
6. (If the person does not know why other parents are not bringing children to HIS) Do you think the school fees are affordable to most people? / How do the fees at HIS compare with fees at other schools?
7. Do you think maybe HIS should go out and advertise itself more? What would be the most effective way of advertising itself (HIS)?
8. Does it bother you that the school is not growing? (For either answer) Why?

These questions were asked to get the views from parents with children in the school and the researcher hoped to see if the reasons highlighted for low student enrollment were the same in each of the two categories of parents with children in the school, or if others would be brought out if questions were asked in a different way.

(How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to this problem?)

All groups were asked the following questions:

1. In your opinion, is there a way in which the management has contributed to the problem of low student numbers?
2. If yes, how so?
3. What management changes would you suggest/make to increase student numbers?

(How can HIS stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?)

All groups were asked the following question:

The founding mission of HIS is “to offer quality education that equips each student to develop their God given potential for a life of faith and service” (Heritage International School Parents’/Students’ Hand Book: 2). Do you think the focus on Christianity is the reason the student numbers remain low at HIS while they (student numbers) are high in other international schools?

The researcher hoped to get rich information from these respondents seeing as they were closely related to the school. The researcher wanted to see if there were any similarities with those not close to the school or if there was anything this group was overlooking by being too close to the school.

3.7.2 *Questionnaires*

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001: 257), the questionnaire is the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects. A questionnaire is relatively economical, has the same questions for all subjects and can ensure anonymity. Questionnaires can use statements or questions but in all cases the subject is responding to something written for specific purposes.

The questionnaire in this study was a written close-ended questionnaire which was more or less a written survey. The questionnaires were given to fifteen parents with children in the school, ten without children in the school but lived within the vicinity of HIS, and out of the 15 teachers at HIS, the researcher chose ten to give the questionnaires to. The researcher did not follow any pattern but gave the questionnaires to any who were willing to participate. They were given about one week to complete the questionnaire and bring it back to the researcher. For the parents with children in the school, the researcher gave the questionnaires to the students to take to their parents while for the parents with no children in the school, the researcher went to the residences within the vicinity of the school and randomly chose parents to receive the questionnaires. Out of the 15 teacher at HIS, the researcher chose ten to give the questionnaires to.

The questionnaire was given to get an overview of what these participants thought was the leading reason for low student enrollment at HIS. Below are the questions asked:

CLOSE- ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you think that the cause for the low enrollment of students at HIS is due to its being a Christian school? YES/NO
2. Do you think HIS' low enrollment is due to its choice of curriculum? YES/NO
3. Is the reason for low enrollment at HIS due to weakness in marketing strategies? YES/NO
4. Do you think that the cause for the low enrollment of students at HIS is due to high teacher/student turnover? YES/NO
5. Do you think HIS' low enrollment is due to high fees charged? YES/NO
6. Is there something that management can do concerning the school that would change the state of low enrollment and increase the student numbers? YES/NO

The respondents were given papers with these close-ended questions on them and these were collected within the course of one week. These were - "yes/no"- questions and the positive responses were marked against the different categories and added up to find the total in each category. These questions were made under the assumption that one of the categories mentioned was the leading reason for low enrollment of students at HIS. The researcher used the answers to these questions to get general views.

3.8 Validity of Data

The researcher used a number of strategies to ensure validity of the investigation and data. One of the strategies was to use different data collection techniques such as interviews and questionnaires. There were formal and informal interviews.

Member checking was also used. This is where 'researchers confirm observations and participants' meanings with individuals through casual conversations in informal

situations' (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:410). The researcher had these casual conversations with some of the teachers in the school and some parents who did not have children in the school as well as some parents who did have children in the school. These casual conversations were held to establish whether the information the researcher had obtained from earlier interviews was in line with the information during the casual interviews. The researcher also wanted to find out if there was anything left out during the interviews that would come out during casual conversations held with the different participants. Further more there was need to establish whether the researcher and the respondents agreed on some of the reasons that have led to low enrollment at HIS. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001:407), '...validity of qualitative designs is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between participants and the researcher'.

To increase validity, the researcher interviewed participants from different categories in relation to the school. These were parents with learners in the school, parents with no learners in the school that lived within the vicinity of the school and also those that did not live within the vicinity of the school, teachers, an administrator and a board member. Each category was interviewed independently. The data from each interviewee were analyzed for a comprehensive integration of findings.

3.9 Limitations

The greatest limitation of this study was the researcher's closeness to the school, as a staff member. It was not always possible to create distance between the researcher and the school, and to hear faults or criticisms of the school. Some participants, especially parents, both with and without children at the school, may have held back or felt constrained in their responses when considering that the researcher was a teacher at the school. Participants could have censored themselves in their comments.

3.10 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative techniques. Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:461). The answers in the interview schedule were qualitatively analyzed during and after the field work by taking down some notes when in the field and after the field, organizing the data by themes and at the same time identifying patterns during the analyses.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter the researcher presents the data she collected and analyzes them. The data were collected using interview guides and a closed-ended questionnaire as described in chapter three. The use of interviews for the collection of data in this research was necessary for in depth understanding. Through the interviews, the researcher sought to probe on the problem of low enrollment. Through close-ended questionnaires, the researcher wanted to get general views of participants on the topic.

The purpose of this data collection was to gather rich information from varied sources so that the researcher would be able to get valid reports that would lead to highlighting some of the reasons for low enrollment at HIS. The researcher sought to obtain a fully informed view from the different categories of participants concerning the reasons for low enrollment at HIS and at the same time identify the true answer to HIS' student enrollment problems. In order to obtain a truly informed answer, the researcher used both the short answers from the questionnaire, as well as elaborate answers from interviews.

INTERVIEW REPORTS

The researcher used interviews to be able to have direct interaction with the respondents and for greater depth of information from the respondents.

The interviews were carried out in the following groups:

Group 1 (3 Parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS.)

Group 2 (7 Parents not living in the vicinity of HIS, and with no children at HIS.)

Group 3 (2 parents with children at HIS.) - These parents had had their children at HIS for more than three years.

Group 4 (5 parents with children in the school - chosen because they all had been with the school for two years and under, and the researcher wanted to get their perspective on HIS' problems of low student numbers and see if they differed in any way with the view of the parents who had been in the school for over three years.)

Teachers - One teacher had been with the school for over five years while another had been with the school for just one year. These two teachers were chosen purposely for the information they would be able to contribute to the researcher's questions as a result of the variation of the time period they had spent with the school.

Board member - The board member had held this particular position for over three years so the researcher felt he would be well versed with the school's history and problems. Seeing that he was also part of the management of the school, he would throw more light from the perspective of the school management.

Administrator

Below, data are presented according to the research questions.

1. How is HIS viewed by Ugandans in its immediate vicinity and Ugandans not in its immediate vicinity?

From this question, the researcher hoped to find out what kind of a school Ugandans within the vicinity and also those not within its immediate vicinity thought or perceived HIS to be. The researcher also hoped to find out whether this perception influenced their decision as to whether their children attended the school or not. The researcher also

wanted to find out the public's view of the schools' performance and how it compared to other international and religious schools in Uganda. The researcher wanted to further find out from the interviewees whether they thought Uganda needed schools like HIS.

VIEWS ON HIS

Group 1 (Parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS.)

Questions were asked to this particular group of people because they lived near the school and if anything this factor should have attracted them to the school. The question then was why their children did not attend the school. The researcher wanted to find out their view of HIS and some of their reasons for not bringing their children to the school in an attempt to highlight some of the reasons for HIS' problem of low student enrollment. The researcher wanted to find out the view of the Ugandans within its immediate vicinity concerning various aspects of the school like the curriculum, the marketing, the administration as well as the school's Christian foundation and to what degree these respondents thought each of these factors contributed to the low enrollment of students in the school.

Ashley, Betty and Cathy¹ did not have children in the school and were Ugandans. Ashley had lived in the area for one year, Betty 6 years, while Cathy did not live near Kansanga, though she worked near the school. They were all aware that HIS is a Christian school. Ashley and Betty said they thought it used an American curriculum and Cathy thought it used an international curriculum. However, Cathy also thought it was a school that focused on teaching Christianity and not much else - a kind of Bible school.

Ashley had children who attended Aga Khan, a Muslim school, and said that HIS is secluded and not well advertised. She also felt the student population was low and did not

¹ *All the names used for the respondents are not their real names for purposes of confidentiality.*

feel comfortable taking her children to a school with a low population because they would not be able to experience everything that they should experience in a normal school setting.

Betty said that her children go to Green Hill Academy, a local school because it uses a curriculum that she is familiar with and that HIS was an expensive school.

Cathy said that HIS was too expensive but would have loved for her children to be in a Christian school.

Group 2 (Parents not living in the vicinity of HIS and with no children at HIS.)

The researcher wanted to determine the outsiders' view of the school and to find out what people thought of the school that could have kept them from registering their children at the school. The researcher also wanted to find out what influenced them while choosing schools to see if HIS had any of these qualities and if not, how this was in any way related to HIS' problem of low student numbers.

Dan, Edith, Faith, Gill, Helen, Irene and Jan, said that it was an international school and Dan, Edith, Faith, Gill and Helen added that it was also a Christian school. Kate thought it was just a Christian school, while Lynn thought it was just an international school and Mary had just seen the sign with the name of the school but did not know anything else about the school. Dan also said it was a school for the rich because he had never seen any child walking to the school; all children were driven in cars.

Where they had heard about HIS:

Dan, Edith, Faith, Gill, Helen and Irene had heard about the school from friends and Jan, Kate, Lynn and Mary had seen a sign post somewhere.

Views on HIS in comparison with other international or religious schools.

Helen thought HIS was doing a good job from the little she knew about the school and said that the reason her child was not in the school was because it was too expensive for her.

Dan said he had very limited interest in the school so he had not really bothered to look at its performance vis-à-vis other international or religious schools, but from what he had heard, he thought it was a good school with commendable standards. He went on to say that his children were not in the school because he really wasn't interested in giving them an international education.

Edith also said that she thought that the material used at HIS was good but was not sure about the results. In other words, though the school may have a good curriculum, she had not heard anything about any good performance. She said that her children were not in the school because she had heard negative comments about the discipline of the children at the school. She had heard from other parents that the teachers were not disciplining the children enough and even though the school could be doing a good job, many would prefer to have their children at a place that adhered to strict behavioural discipline.

Faith had heard that the school was doing a good job as far as teaching Christian values but had heard that the quality of education was not all that good, so she would not like to send her children to the school. Gill said that in his opinion, HIS was doing a great job and he based this on the fact that he had interacted with a few of the children that attended the school and he realised that they had a great deal of information and life skills but more specifically their behaviour was very good.

The other parents had not heard much about the school and could not tell how well it was doing in terms of the quality of education. They had seen the academic results of other international schools advertised in the newspapers, but had not seen or heard anything about HIS in terms of academic performance.

Choosing or not choosing HIS for their children

Group 2 (Parents not living in the vicinity of HIS, and with no children at HIS.)

Dan said he had never considered sending his children to HIS because he did not know much about the school and the school he chose to send his children to followed the same system that he passed through when he was growing up and he therefore felt more comfortable with it.

Edith said she had considered sending her children to HIS because of the academic standards but when she heard about the poor discipline in the school, she changed her mind. Faith, Gill, Helen, Irene and Jan said that they had considered sending their children to the school because they value an international education for their children and more so its Christian values but they found the school too expensive.

All the parents said that the quality of education and standard of academic excellence influenced their choice of schools. About half of them added that if it had a good religious or Christian background that would positively influence them to choose the school.

Another strong influence in their choice of school was the proximity of the school and accessibility to the school from their place of residence. Others cited good environment, type of curriculum, reports from other parents, and relationships between teachers and children. Dan said for him the discipline record of the school was very important and Helen said that the number of children in the classes was a big factor in influencing her choice of schools.

Group 4 (5 parents with children in the school.)

Ann, Bob, Chris, Dick and Ezra said that the reason they chose the school was because it was a Christian school. Ann added that it also offered an international curriculum. Bob added that he knew someone who worked at the school: it was also near his home and he liked the location of the school because it was in a clean and quiet environment.

Ann, Bob, Chris and Dick said that its Christian foundation was one of its strengths and Bob added that it was its location in a quiet environment with clean air and its being far from busy shopping commercial areas that attracted him. This parent also said that the school's Christian foundation is a strength that the school should utilize and optimize to meet its goals.

Does Uganda need a school like HIS?

Group 2 (Parents not living in the vicinity of HIS and with no children at HIS.)

To answer the question whether they thought Uganda needed schools like HIS, only one parent, Mary, said that Uganda did not need a school like HIS and her reason was that not everyone is a Christian and it immediately cuts off those who are not Christian because they know they will not be accommodated in the school.

All the other parents said that Uganda needed schools like HIS and they had various reasons. Most said that Uganda needed schools that promoted Christian values because parents would be sure that good morals were being taught. In addition to this, Dan said that the world is gravitating towards becoming a global village and uniformity in schools and training institutions is very important. He said that it was therefore imperative that special emphasis be put on schools like HIS whose teaching programmes are international and that failure to do this will mean that Uganda would lag behind other countries in development. (This is the same Dan who earlier said he was not interested in international schools for his children yet he points out how important they are for development in Uganda.)

Edith said that Uganda needed more schools like HIS because such schools care for the children as unique individuals, taking care of their unique needs. Still another parent, Faith, said that schools like HIS build the whole child in terms of skills, talents, and other abilities, apart from academics.

Gill also said that many Ugandans are looking for an alternative education for their children because they are frustrated with the local curriculum which focuses on rote learning. The only problem with HIS is they find it too expensive.

Helen said that the Christian values that the school promotes would help steer children in the right direction. Irene said that this international education would broaden the scope of the children and open them up to more opportunities in the world.

CURRICULUM

How does the HIS curriculum contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?

From this question, the researcher hoped to find out to what extent the curriculum of the school had contributed to low student enrollment at HIS. The researcher also wanted to get the various views of the different categories of people interviewed, to get a clearer picture of where HIS' problem lay in regards to the curriculum of the school.

Group 1 (Parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS.)

Ashley, Betty and Cathy all said that they were not very familiar with the curriculum used at HIS. Cathy thought it was definitely not local and probably an international one while Ashley and Betty thought it was an American curriculum. Betty did not think this international curriculum was suitable for her child, while Cathy was not sure, and Ashley thought an American curriculum would be good because it was more child centred and gets more out of a child and the child is more involved in the learning experience. They all said the curriculum would affect the number of students at the school negatively if the parents were ignorant about it or if it was not one they wanted their children to follow.

Group 2 (Parents not living in the vicinity of HIS and with no children at HIS.)

Bob said that the curriculum was not up to standard.

Group 3: (Two parents who had had their children in the school for 3 years and more.)

These two parents had been with the school for over three years and by questioning them the researcher was sure to get well informed answers and also hear the frustrations they had with the school year after year and if these in any way added to HIS' problem of low student enrollment.

Abby said that there has been a shift from a single Christian home-school curriculum used by some states in USA (this is a Christian based curriculum that some parents use while teaching their children at home) and was concerned that this choice would compromise and give a worldly/non-Christian influence to what students are learning. When the school started, it was modeled after a Christian home- school USA curriculum. Some Christians in USA, who did not agree with the ethos of the public schools within their area, opted to teach their children at home using a Christian based curriculum. HIS started off by using this curriculum, but as the school grew and embraced more varied nationalities, the curriculum had to change in certain ways to accommodate this, especially because a number of the students did not speak English as a first language.

Though the curriculum was adjusted, it did not change from being American-based but allowed material that was not necessarily Christian-based because HIS found the new material more suitable to the needs of the growing number of international students especially in the elementary section of the school.

Bill said that he found it suitable for his children since they were American. He however added that the choice of curriculum would definitely affect the number of students at HIS if they were not American and had no intention of ever going to America. He also said that the type of curriculum chosen made the school appear selective to others and would probably affect their choices.

Group 4 (Five parents whose children had been with the school for two years and under.)

Dick said that using an American curriculum limited the number of parents who may be interested in the school.

Views of two teachers, a board member and the school administrator at HIS on curriculum, and its contribution to low student numbers.

Questions were asked to the teachers to see from their perspective how the curriculum influenced the parents' choice of school, especially HIS.

Two Teachers (*The names Daisy and Iris will be used for the teachers*)

Daisy and Iris said that HIS is an international school and therefore should adopt an international curriculum not an American- based curriculum. They said that some children had probably left because the curriculum was not meeting their needs.

Board member

A board member of the school was asked the same questions as the teachers. The board member felt that the curriculum was suitable for his children because they are North Americans. However, his theory was that a lot has to do with the child's ability; it doesn't matter whether they follow a British or an American curriculum and also what the outcome was. Had the child received rich satisfactory education and would be able to succeed in future? If not, then the curriculum needed to be geared towards that. So the focus should not be on whether it is an American or British curriculum but on the end product.

He felt however, that by using an American curriculum the school was targeting a limited number of students, the North Americans, and not those who did not belong to this particular group. Also, there was another problem where the high school was concerned because when it came to sitting exams, those using the American-based curriculum sat for their SATs in the spring (April). These SATs are tests that show whether the curriculum used is beneficial to the child's learning. The IGCSE which is the British

based curriculum, sat their exams in June, when school is out since according to the school calendar, the school closes at the end of May. This would require some changes in the school year, either the school year starting later or making some of the holidays within the school year longer. (These IGCSE exams help determine which university the child may choose depending on the quality of the results.)

Administrator.

The administrator was asked the same questions as the teachers and the board member above. The school has one administrator and he was interviewed because he is part of the school's management team and is very involved in what takes place at the school. The researcher also hoped to get a management's point of view of what the probable reasons for low enrollment at HIS were and what challenges the administrator as part of management goes through concerning the school's low enrollment.

The administrator said that it was not important whether it was an American curriculum or not, the important thing to look at was whether it gave the children good grounding. He said that an American curriculum did not exist because in America each state has its own curriculum, so there is no so called 'American curriculum'. Those who finish high school must take an SAT (Standard Achievement Test) in order to be admitted to a University in North America. However, if a student took an IGCSE (International General Certificate of Education) exam, or an Advanced Placement (AP) test, they would not have to take an SAT before being permitted to a University in North America and the rest of the world because these exams are recognized internationally.

The fundamental concern of parents, he said, was whether their children would be able to integrate into their home countries when it was time for them to return.

MARKETING

How does the HIS marketing or lack of, contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?

Marketing was investigated as a significant factor in the problem of low enrolment. In this study it was compared with curriculum, as the researcher suspected the two to be important factors in this problem.

Group 1 (Parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS.)

Ashley said that she had only seen an advert in the magazine, *The Eye*, and thought that the school needed to be more aggressive in advertising. Betty and Cathy also said it had not been marketed enough and the marketing left a lot to be desired. Betty and Cathy said that the marketing of HIS had influenced what they thought of the school because since there was very little out about the school they thought it was a school that was not really serious in its education and therefore did not give it much thought. Ashley, who had only seen an advert in the *Eye*, decided to be proactive in finding out more about the school, since she lived near it and had heard it was an international school and was interested in finding out if it was suitable for her children's needs.

About whether HIS could have been marketed differently, Ashley and Betty said that probably HIS should not only be more aggressive but give out more information to the public about what kind of a school it is, that is, what kind of a curriculum it is following because everyone knows that Aga Khan follows the IGCSE (International General Certificate for Education) curriculum because that is what is put out in the newspaper adverts and billboards but people are not sure about HIS.

Concerning advice about marketing the school, Ashley, whose children are in Aga Khan, said that HIS may want to consider some of the strategies that Aga Khan used. She said that Aga Khan advertised quite regularly in the newspaper, publicized its results, and it

was very involved with the community, and when it did anything for the community it made sure the public got to know about it. Cathy, who was more comfortable taking her children to a school that follows a curriculum she is familiar with, suggested that probably letting the public know what kind of curriculum it is following and the benefits of such a curriculum would be a better way to market the school.

Group 2 (Parents not living in the vicinity of HIS, and with no children at HIS.)

Dan said that HIS like other international schools should be more aggressive in their information dissemination to the public. He added that they needed to put some adverts on billboards, in the newspaper and electronic adverts telling the public about their facilities, costs, teaching methods, performance records and location of the school. Irene said that the school had a huge potential to attract many children and should therefore invest in advertisements and the publicizing of its activities to others.

Jan said that HIS had been silent and that the school did not participate in anything outside the school like community work so few people knew about it and its values. She added that the school could invite other local schools over for some productions and this would help the parents of those schools to know more about it and therefore consider bringing their children to the school.

Kate said that the school should advertise its products, that is, the outcome of its services. In other words, the school must show how it performs in terms of academics as well as other curricular activities like drama, music, and sports. This then is what would best promote the school.

Lynn said that the school should also advertise in the churches since it is a Christian school. All of the parents interviewed were of the opinion that the school had to do more in the area of advertising.

Group 3 (Parents with children at HIS.)

These parents said that HIS was not being marketed enough. Abby added that the school should not only use adverts in the newspaper, television and magazines but if the school produced say a play or a musical in a national theatre and invited people to attend, it would be a very good way to sell the school. When people see good production, they would be encouraged to take their children to that school.

Group 4 (Five parents with children in the school.)

Ann, Bob, Chris and Dick had heard about the school from other parents who had children in the school. Ezra had heard about the school from someone he knew who worked at the school and he also knew one of the founders of the school.

Bob said that in his view the school was not growing because it is not known. If he hadn't known someone who worked at the school, he would not have known about the school. He added that many of his friends did not know that the school even existed and he was sure that there were many who would like their children to go to a school with a foundation similar to HIS' but had not heard about HIS.

Ezra thought that many did not know much about the school because unlike other international schools, HIS did not advertise what it did and how well it was performing.

The teachers

Daisy, one of the teachers, said that the marketing of HIS had been very low key and HIS could probably be marketed differently by putting out to the public what it had to offer that other international schools did not. She also said that the school should advertise as an international school and not as an American or British school. Iris, the other teacher, said that the school had not done very well in its advertising because she knew of many people from her home country, America that wanted to come to the country and were looking for a Christian international school but could not find anything on the website. Instead they found the other international schools very easily on the website. She added that HIS should improve on its advertising especially on the web, so that it is easily

accessible to expatriates who have not yet come to the country but are looking for a school like HIS to enroll their children once they come to the country.

The Board member

The board member said that the school had done some advertising but it was still low key. He said that the school had a potential to advertise more in the newspaper and also to come up with a prospectus. He suggested that the school could explore the use of bill boards in different parts of the city and also to upgrade the school's web site.

The administrator

The administrator said that some of the requests being made by people like the school having its own pool so that more people would bring their children to the school were irrational because it is not the pool that determines the quality of education. In any case, even though the school does not have a swimming pool, the students go swimming, because they are bussed to a swimming facility near the school. He said that when you deal with marketing, you may also have to deal with irrationalities; however, we should not be blind to the fact that if we improve on the facilities in the school, it will enhance more interest. He further said that the marketing of a school can never influence what he thinks of that school because he is in the education business and knows what truly makes a good school. The school may have very good advertising but poor outcome when it comes to the grades. Parents are interested in taking their children to schools that perform well and those are the schools they will look for.

Answering the question of how the school could have been marketed differently the administrator said that HIS has marketed the fact that it is a Christian school but now it needs to emphasize that not only is it a Christian school but also one that focuses on academic excellence.

In giving his advice concerning the marketing of the school, the administrator said that he didn't see a problem with the primary section. He said that the secondary section could be improved and that the school needed to focus on improving the quality of educational facilities, for example improving on its science laboratory. He further went on to say that the school should focus on how well the students perform in their final exams. If the school can show that the 12th grade (final year) students, are at the top of the spectrum, then they wouldn't have to focus on other marketing strategies. He said that the school would do best to focus on the students excelling and that if parents heard great things about students from the school, then more would be encouraged to send their children to the school. However, he also noted that probably a marketing professional would say that the school needed to improve on its adverts.

MANAGEMENT

How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to this problem?

From this question, the researcher hoped to find out if management had contributed to the school's problem of low student enrollment and if so, what could management do to change this and instead increase the number of student enrollment in the school.

Group 1 (Parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS.)

Ashley and Betty said that management had contributed to the problem of low student numbers while Cathy said she didn't know because she did not know much about the running of the school. Ashley said that there was a very high turn over of principals and that she had heard that since the school started about 10 years ago, it had had over 8 principals. Betty said that management had contributed to low student numbers by charging high tuition.

To answer the question of what management changes they would suggest to increase student numbers in the school, Ashley said that there needed to be stability in the administration and management of the school because with every new administration, it almost takes the school back to the beginning and the school experiences growing pains for longer than necessary. She said that for her as a parent, hearing that a school has had so many principals in such a short period of time caused her to question what was happening that caused these principals to leave. She further said that any institution that has such a high rate of turnover at the head cannot produce products of high quality.

Cathy, who could not tell whether management had contributed to low student numbers, said what management could do to increase student numbers was probably to put out more information about the school. Betty said that management could address the economic issue and find ways to reduce the fees because many of the middle class Christian parents would love for their children to be in a Christian school but found HIS too expensive.

Group 3 (Parents with children at HIS.)

Abby and Bill both felt that management had contributed to the low student numbers. Abby said that she felt the work force was very unstable making the school appear weak. She said that the school needed good leadership and consistency from the top (headmaster/principal). She desired that the work force be well trained and stable and that management should focus on ensuring the quality of education in the classroom. She also wanted management to promote teacher development which then promotes healthy, well adjusted, educated students and happy families (parents). She also said that a transient work force does little to help the problem of low student numbers.

Bill said that the school definitely suffered from a high turnover of staff but he felt that the school should not be focusing on getting more numbers but on achieving greater quality. He went on to say that growth is an indicator of effectiveness and success in being what the school is supposed to be and he expressed the following questions: Why is

HIS struggling to be effective? Why does HIS have such a huge turnover in administration? Why does the school lose teachers who come for the long term and end up leaving early and disillusioned? Has HIS compromised itself? Why has HIS lost its partners who supply personnel? (One of the founding missions that usually sent missionary teachers/personnel pulled out of this arrangement.) Why can stability not be achieved? Why can HIS not keep its administration? He ended by saying that there appeared to be a root cause for this, which needed to be explored and dealt with.

Group 4 (Five parents with children in the school.)

Dick said that the lack of growth could mean that the school appealed to a limited section of the community and management should come up with a strategy that would be more inclusive of others who may be interested in schools like HIS.

Teachers

To answer how they thought management may have contributed to the problem, both teachers said that the high turnover of the teaching and administration staff had contributed to the problem.

In response to what management changes they suggested to increase student numbers, Daisy said that management should try to make sure that the expatriate teachers that come, have a good experience at the school. In other words, they must have a great support system from the administration as well as the teachers they find there so that they can adjust and adapt well, because for many expatriate teachers, there is a huge culture shock and they need to be assisted in proper ways to adapt to the new culture and understand it better. The school should also try to find ways to support them financially. She also said that the high turnover in administration leaves a huge gap and a question as to who is in charge. She further went on to say that this high turnover leaves a problem of who will ensure continuity of what has been happening.

Iris had a similar opinion about retaining staff in the area of supporting them more in the financial area. In response to what changes in management she suggested, she said that if the school could work on consistently having qualified teachers as well as qualified administration, it would greatly raise student achievement. She pointed out that many new teachers have to start from scratch without a mentor or guidelines. These teachers would be more proficient if they stayed on for another year and this would in turn improve student achievement and create more interest in the school.

Board Member

The board member felt that management definitely had a role to play in the low student numbers and this was because of its high turnover.

He said that management should focus on having a recognizable curriculum, in other words a curriculum that addressed the needs of international students and not only Americans. He also said that if the school had more facilities it would attract more people.

Administrator

The school's administrator said that management had contributed to low student numbers in the way of high teaching and administrative turn over. Also, if there was anything that could be done to address this, it would be very helpful for the school. He said that whenever there is a high turnover, it creates a problem. He gave an example that if you had a science teacher from England, teaching science from a British perspective, their basis will be what they know and then when someone new comes to teach the same subject, it is like starting from scratch again. He said that there was a high turnover of teachers, management and board members and that made the school to always go back to the beginning making it a challenge for growth. He said that the primary section was doing quite well because of the consistency with some of the teachers there. He went on

to say that there was an element of stability, in that even if one or two left, the number that stayed on was more than the number that left. He went on to say that the secondary section was struggling because sometimes when a new year begins, all the teachers are new and there is no one to help with the continuity of what has been happening in the previous years.

FOUNDING MISSION

How can HIS stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?

From this question, the researcher hoped to ascertain whether the school's focus on Christianity had anything to do with its low student enrollment and to find out if HIS could keep its founding mission and at the same time attract higher numbers of students to the school.

Group 1 (Parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS)

In answering the question as to whether they thought the focus on Christianity had anything to do with the low student numbers, Ashley, Betty and Cathy had different things to say. Ashley said that she feared that Christianity was being pushed down the children's throats and that they were not being allowed to make their own decisions about what faith to follow. Even though her children attend a Muslim school (Aga Khan), at Aga Khan the religion is not forced upon the children and they are allowed to follow their own belief systems). She wanted her children to be able to experience everything and make their own choices. She wanted her children to be self-reliant. She went on further to say that her children were exposed to all kinds of religions in their present school, which she thought was good for them so that later they would be able to make their own informed choices. Ashley also feared that if her children went to HIS, they would be discriminated against because they are not Christians like the others. She felt that the kind of Christian environment would be too restrictive for her children and she wanted her children to meet other beliefs and be more tolerant of people in society.

Betty said that she didn't think its being a Christian school had anything to do with the low student numbers because she believed that most people preferred Christian schools since a large percentage of Ugandans are Christian.

Cathy said that some people feel that Christianity puts one in a box and closes one from others. She further said that HIS needed to decide what it wanted and accept the consequences that came with that choice. She said that attracting more people may cause HIS to have to compromise and she asked whether HIS was willing to make that compromise.

Group 3 (Parents with children at HIS)

Abby said that sometimes she felt that the focus was more on making HIS 'Christian' and 'American' than on the quality of education. She said that she thought the school could focus on education without losing a 'Christ' focus. HIS did not have to feel like Church in order to be Christian. The Bible tells us to do all things as to Christ with excellence. As to whether the focus on Christianity had anything to do with low student numbers, she said it was not the school's focus on Christianity but rather the high turn over of both the teaching and administrative staff. She added that instead the school should also focus on excellence in education especially in the high school.

Bill said that the school should not change its focus on Christianity because that is what made the school unique, that was the original purpose for its founding, and therefore nothing should compromise that. He, however, said he didn't think the problem of low student numbers had anything to do with the school's focus on Christianity. He thought that the problem lay with the constant change in the teachers and administration in the school. He felt that the School Board should find out why some mission groups no longer send teachers and administrators; why the teachers and administrators of certain mission groups have left the school and why the school cannot keep administrators for a substantial period of time or have long term expatriate teachers. He said that because of this constant change in the administration and staffing of teachers, parents begin to lose

faith in the school and this is what prospective parents will hear from them and they may opt for a school with more stability.

Ann and Bob said that in addition to its Christian foundation, small classes which give a good student/ teacher ratio were another strength of the school. Good teachers and a good campus were also other strengths that were mentioned.

Teachers

Daisy said that the school's focus on Christianity could be a reason for low numbers but said that the school should not change that because that is what made the school unique. She added that there were other reasons for the low student numbers especially the lack of continuity in staffing which she thought played a major role. She said that probably the cost of the fees could be a factor because she knew of some Americans/ missionaries that took their children to Rainbow International School (an international school with a British curriculum) because it was cheaper and not for any other reason.

Iris said that the school was beginning to steer away from its Christian focus because of pressure to accommodate everyone in the hope of increasing student numbers. She felt very strongly that HIS should be a Christian school with Christian staff that taught an international curriculum because that is how it was founded. She said that the school should be a Christian school completely, glorifying Christ and making His name known that should be the centre of everything.

Iris went on to say that the high turnover of teaching and administrative staff and not focus on Christianity contributed to the low student numbers. This brought about a lot of weakness in the system and parents could see this. Both teachers felt that the school should have a clear vision about its unique identity as a Christian school and work hard on the weaknesses of the school in the area of its curriculum, that is the lack of continuity due to high teacher turnover which gives an impression that the school is disorganized, the very small range of subject choices due to small number of students, as well as the question about international the curriculum. Due to the high turnover in administration,

sometimes when new parents came in, the person who received them was also new and did not know much about the school and that gave wrong impression about the school.

Board Member

The school board member said that HIS' Christian character did not affect its student numbers, however the perception that it is a Bible school could have in some ways contributed to low numbers.

Administrator

As to whether the focus on Christianity has contributed to low numbers, the administrator said that it could be a factor especially if HIS is not seen as academically above everyone else. It is therefore very important for HIS to appear very academic or to excel academically. He said that it was incredible how great performance could change the view of a school. He gave an example of a school where he had taught before called North View Heights Secondary School. This school had a problem of low enrollment so they decided to focus on certain subjects and one of them was science. They specialized in robotics which no other school did and also on the whole science curriculum. Within 5 years the school went from being an 'open school' (a school that was open to any enrollment even outside its province) to a 'closed school' (a school that accepted students only within its province). This is because it was doing so well that parents wanted their children to attend that school and it got to a point where it had to begin to close its doors because it was full! He felt very strongly that the public's perception of a school was very important. If they felt that the school was doing very well academically, whether or not it was Christian, parents would take their children to that school and therefore he felt that HIS should focus on academic excellence.

OTHER COMMENTS ON THE SIZE OF THE SCHOOL AND ENROLLMENTS

Bob from group 4 said the high turn over of staff and principals was a big weakness. He added that a school needed some level of stability because this gives parents and children confidence that the school is giving their children high quality education. This parent also said that the road to the school needed to be worked on and the school needed to play a leading role in having this road improved.

Chris from group 4 said that the school was weak in the area of discipline. She felt that the school did not have good strong discipline measures in place. Eric said the school was weak in the area of sports and another said that there was a need for expanding the schools facilities in future for example building a bigger science laboratory and building other classrooms. Anne and Dick said that they were still new and hadn't made note of the weaknesses of the school.

Chris said that in his opinion, if the school could run a boarding facility, it would attract more students whose parents are missionaries and work in remote areas. These parents have had to send their children to a Christian international school in a neighbouring country because of its boarding facility.

Dick said that the strong Christian background limited the intake because some people would feel they were being segregated against if they were not Christian and therefore would not choose such a school for their children.

Ann was not bothered by HIS' lack of growth. Her reason was that she chose the school because of the small number of students because she felt that learning is more effective when the numbers are small. She also said it did not bother her that the school was not growing because she felt that the school was doing what she felt was most important which was to work hard to ensure that academic excellence was achieved and also build it on a strong Christian foundation.

Ann actually said that the school was growing because enrollment has been increasing numerically year by year. She however added that there is a lot of competition amongst other private schools, so maybe that was why it was not growing as fast as the school would want to grow.

Bob, Chris and Dick were bothered that the school was not growing and Bob said that without growth the school would eventually not be able to sustain itself and would not be able to cope or compete with other international schools.

Chris said that to him a school needed to be of a certain size in order for students/learners to have an all rounded experience of education.

Fees

Bob said he thought that the fees were affordable to the target group or target market but that the school was hardly known by many in the country. He said that in comparison to other international schools, the fees were relatively okay and that to make itself known, with its Christian foundation, the school should advertise in the various churches and Christian founded media. He said that this would be a cost effective option.

Ezra said that the fees were affordable to most expatriates but not to the locals, the Ugandans. He added that HIS should advertise but also had to open itself to other faiths. He said that the most effective way to advertise would be through newspapers and also to engage in local activities like some community programmes and this would help introduce the school to people who had not yet heard of the school.

Chris said that the fees were okay but that he felt that advertising may not be effective in the long run because it may bring unwanted results such as students that the school is not looking for who would eventually bring the school down in terms of behaviour.

Dick said that the fees were comparable to those of other private international schools in Uganda.

Ezra said that the school fees were affordable to a certain class of people who may not necessarily be interested in the Christian aspect of the school whereas those who valued its Christian foundation found the fees too high.

4.2 Presentation of Data Collected from the Questionnaire

Close-ended questions using a questionnaire were asked to get people's views as to the reasons for low enrollments. The researcher's questions were based on different themes that came out during her interview with other interviewees. From this questionnaire the researcher hoped to get an overview of what might be HIS' biggest problem leading to low student enrollment.

These were the results:

Reasons for low student enrollment	Results from tally
It is a Christian school	2
Choice of curriculum	9
Marketing strategies	3
High teacher/administration turn over	11
High fees	5

From other questions in questionnaire form, many of the interviewees when asked why their children did not attend HIS, their response was that they really didn't know much about the school. They were not able to answer whether they considered an American curriculum was suitable for their children because they were again not informed as to what this entailed.

Most of these interviewees said that the management had contributed to low student numbers by its failure to maintain stability where teachers and the administration was concerned.

4.3 Data Analysis

VIEW

Each of the three parents who did not have children in the school but lived within the vicinity of the school had different reasons for why their children did not attend HIS. Their different views were not Christian and therefore would not choose such a school for their children.

Ann was not bothered by HIS' lack of growth. Her reason was that she chose the school because of the small number of students because she felt that learning is more effective when the numbers are small. She also said it did not bother her that the school was not growing because she felt that the school was lived within the vicinity of the school had different reasons for why their children did not attend HIS. Their different views portray the views of the parents living within the vicinity of HIS. To some it is too small and to others, though it is known as a Christian school, the perception of 'Christian' school is not clear since some interpret this to be a sort of 'Bible' school. Even its status as an international school was not clear as two of the respondents 'thought' it followed an American-based curriculum large amounts of money on something they are not sure about. Of the parents with no children at HIS and who did not live within the vicinity of the school seven knew that it was an international school, five out of the seven had heard it was also Christian, and only one thought it was just an international school. One had only seen a sign post somewhere but did not know much else about the school. Six had heard about the school from friends and four had seen a sign post.

We can see that though most of the parents knew that HIS was a Christian international school, they really did not know what this entailed. When the two groups of parents who do not have children at HIS are compared, both those that live within the vicinity of HIS and those who do not live within the school's vicinity do not know much about the school.

Most of the parents questioned who did not have children in the school and did not live within the vicinity of the school, when questioned, could not ascertain whether HIS was

doing a good job or not because they had not seen evidence of this anywhere or read any publications of HIS' performance. They could not even compare it with other International and Religious schools because though they had seen the results of these schools published, they had never seen anything about HIS. This point was articulated by both the parents that lived within the vicinity of the school and those that did not. Some parents had heard that the school was using good material but they had not seen the results of this.

Much as one parent had heard about good Christian values being taught, she was put off by rumours that the quality of education wasn't good. Here unlike what we have seen before with poor dissemination of information we see *misinformation* about the school's quality of education.

The negative report about the discipline in the school was a factor to some for not enrolling their children at the school.

In the analysis of the view of the school, poor dissemination of information and misinformation seem to be a major problem.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum used in a school is a deciding factor in the choice parents make for schools.

The three parents living in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS were not very familiar with the curriculum used at HIS. Here we can see that there is a problem in that the curriculum used at HIS is not clear to the public and as one of the parents Cathy said, she did not feel comfortable sending her children to a school that she was not sure of. This is not only her reflection but is the reflection of other parents within the vicinity of the school.

All three parents pointed out that an international curriculum was very good because their children would have a better learning experience but as Cathy pointed out, knowing that it is an American curriculum and that it is good was not enough. If they didn't know what exactly this entailed and how it would influence their child's education adds to their reluctance in enrolling their children at the school. So, for this group of parents, the curriculum had not turned them off from HIS. For some, however, not knowing what HIS curriculum entailed influenced them against choosing HIS.

The parents who had their children in the school for over three years did not seem to have a problem with the choice of curriculum but one was aware that this choice of curriculum cut off others who were not American. It appears that those who are in the school chose the school partly because of its choice of curriculum, and therefore the school's choice of curriculum could be seen as an advantage to the school. On the other hand just as one of the parents pointed out, in trying to attract more students, the school may be tempted to make a shift in the type of curriculum and in the process lose the students it already has. In the analysis of the teacher's view of the choice of the curriculum, there seems to be some dissatisfaction that the school is using an American-based curriculum yet it is an international school and not an American school. To them this is probably why some had left the school because this curriculum did not suit their international needs.

To the board member, the end product of the education and the quality of education was what mattered even though by using an American curriculum the school was targeting a limited number of students. He raised some food for thought, would the school be able to accommodate an alternative curriculum while maintaining the original one which is the reason that many of its present customers chose the school?

According to the administrator, whatever curriculum is used the school should focus on what really concerns the parents which is whether their children will be able to get acceptance at the universities of their choice when the time came. Does the present curriculum cater for that?

In the general analysis of the role of the curriculum in the low enrollment of students at HIS, it can be seen that the lack of clarity about the curriculum used at the school and how it benefits those who go through it contributed to some parents not choosing the school for their children. On the other hand, it can be seen that many of those in the school chose the school because of its curriculum so it is not so much that HIS is using a curriculum that is used by one of the states in USA, but that it is not making clear to the public what this curriculum means for them and their children.

MARKETING

Ashley, Betty and Cathy who lived in the vicinity of HIS but with no children at HIS, said they had not seen much advertised about HIS. All these parents live within the vicinity of the school and yet had not seen much advertised about the school. This seems to be a pattern about HIS. Not much is known about it and not much advertising has been seen about the school.

From what these three parents said, it seems that poor advertising of the school sent out a message of a lack of seriousness concerning the school. There seems to be a need for the school to be more aggressive in its advertising, by marketing its curriculum, because people are not willing to play around with their children's education, and at the same time spend large amounts of money on something they are not certain about. They have to know what they are spending their money on and what kind of education they are offering their children. Ashley gave the example of Aga Khan, an international school in the country, that was not only aggressive in advertising but it also published its final year examination results. This enabled the public to know what kind of curriculum it followed and when the public saw how well the students performed, they were encouraged to enroll their children in the school. HIS has never published its final year examination results and the administrator reported that in the two final examinations that HIS' final year students took, they performed very well in comparison to other students that took these same examinations in America. The public did not hear of this and even some of the parents with children in the school, did not have this information.

Community involvement was another way that was pointed out that the school may engage in to make itself known to the public. This point was articulated mostly by the groups with no children in the school.

About making itself known to potential learners, many suggestions were given which pointed out that not only does the school have to advertise itself but also to advertise itself effectively.

The need for increased aggression in advertising is echoed and more detailed avenues are outlined like use of billboards, newspaper and electronic adverts telling the public about their facilities, costs, teaching methods, performance records and location of the school

The parents with children in the school agreed that HIS' marketing was very low key and one advised that not only should the school use more varied avenues of advertising but advertise in the form of drama productions or musical performances.

The parents whose children had been with the school for less than three years, had heard about the school from other people or parents. None of them had chosen the school after they had seen an advert. This can mean that either they had not seen any advert or that they relied more on what they heard from their friends than what they saw advertised. Reports from others about the school should be an avenue of advertising that the school should take very seriously. The customers they have are their best advertisers and may possibly bring in more students than the adverts or any other method of advertising the school may use.

The teachers pointed out that HIS had not been as aggressive as other international schools in advertising and that since there were other international schools HIS should also advertise what it offered as a Christian international school that other international schools did not.

The board member agreed with the teachers that the school's advertising was still low key and gave suggestions of alternative advertising avenues like the use of billboards and the web.

The administrator said that much as it would be good for the school to be more aggressive in advertising it would be more important if the school focused on what it had to market. It had done quite well in letting the public know that it was Christian now it should focus on its quality of education. When its good results are published, this would draw potential parents to the school.

Most of the interviewees agreed that the school should advertise itself more because many of their peers did not know about the school. They added that one way of effective advertising would be to get more involved with the community. This allows more people to hear about the school and also letting the public know that it is open to other faiths so that people do not think that by being a Christian school it excludes all others of different faiths.

From this it is clear that poor advertising has played a big part in the problem of low student enrollment at HIS. This poor advertising includes the low key advertising, few avenues of advertising and putting out to the public very little information concerning the school, especially its performance.

MANAGEMENT

All the groups that knew about the high turnover of staff felt that this was a weakness in management, and others positively linked this to the low enrollments at HIS. One parent who lived close to the school but had no child in the school stated that the high turn over of principals had caused her to have great uncertainty about the school and its management. This high turn over in management has caused great uncertainty among many prospective parents about the school's stability and quality of education.

The teachers, the board member and the administrator all stated that management had contributed to low student numbers by failing to control its problem of high turn over in

the teaching and administrative staff. This had caused problems in continuity in many areas where improvements could not be continued, say in the area of the curriculum, the administration and general running of the school. They pointed out that this made the school stagnant in growth or seem to be at a beginning stage all the time. In other words it set the school back. Teachers pointed out that management should explore ways to ensure they keep the teachers they have for a considerable amount of time. This could be done by improving the financial remuneration and general comfort for the expatriates who are in a foreign country and are missing out on many of the comforts they have in their home countries. The teachers, board member, and the administrator further pointed out the benefits this would bring to the school in terms of stability and quality education.

According to the board member, management should focus on a curriculum that addressed the needs of international students. The board member brought out the disadvantages of a high turnover in administration citing the instability in the curriculum and its effect on the secondary level which had already been noted by other groups.

High turnover among the teachers and the administration is a dominating factor in its contribution to low student numbers seeing that all the seven different groups interviewed pointed out this problem. Those closely involved with the school had suffered the effects of it while those not involved with the school were very skeptical of the quality of education with such a high turn over of staff.

Other groups blamed management for high fees, poor marketing, and poor standard of education. Even though the school felt that in comparison to other international schools it had a reasonable fee structure, some parents felt this was too expensive for them there by limiting student numbers. Cathy from Group 1 echoed what other groups had said concerning marketing of the school suggesting that management needed to put out more information about the school because when not much is known about a product, not many are willing to try it.

According to one parent at HIS, the unstable workforce had caused weaknesses in the school like poor discipline and poor standard of education in the secondary level. Good

consistent leadership was needed as well as a well trained workforce and good teacher development programmes. Another parent with a child at the school stated that the focus should be on achieving a higher quality of education and not on increasing student numbers. He pointed out that the school management should look deeper into the problem of high teacher/ administrative turn over because he felt there was much more to it than the school was willing to admit.

Five parents with children in the school pointed out that strategies that are more inclusive of students that would like to be part of the school should be looked into by the school management.

The teachers, the board member and the administrator all stated that management had contributed to low student numbers by failing to control its problem of high turn over in the teaching and administrative staff. This had caused problems in continuity in many areas where improvements could not be continued, say in the area of the curriculum, the administration and general running of the school. They pointed out that this made the school stagnant in growth or seem to be at a beginning stage all the time. In other words it set the school back. Teachers pointed out that management should explore ways to ensure they keep the teachers they have for a considerable amount of time. This could be financial and general comfort for the expatriates who are in a foreign country and are missing out on many of the comforts they have in their home countries. They further pointed out the benefits this would bring to the school in terms of stability and quality education.

According to the board member, management should focus on a curriculum that addressed the needs of international students. The board member brought out the disadvantages of a high turnover in administration citing the instability in the curriculum and its effect on the secondary level which had already been noted by other groups.

The contribution of management to the problem of low enrollments can be seen in its failure to control the high turnover among the teachers and the administration. This has

led to uncertainty about the school's performance by prospective parents, it has caused stagnation in the growth of the quality of the school. Furthermore it has led to weaknesses in the curriculum since what one teacher has started is not completed because of their short stay or failure of a new teacher to understand and complete what a previous teacher has started. The general running of the school has also been undermined giving a poor picture to the public and therefore, those closely involved with the school had suffered the effects of this high turnover, while those not involved with the school are very skeptical of the quality of education with such a high turnover of staff.

FOUNDING MISSION

Most parents with no children at HIS did not think that the school being founded on Christian principles had anything to do with its low student numbers. A few, however, did. For instance, Ashley's 'perception' of HIS as a Christian school, was the reason she did not enroll her children at the school. Her perception was that those who were not of the same belief would be forced to follow something they did not agree with. There are many parents who have the same thoughts about a Christian school and take it to be something more like a Bible school. Once again poor dissemination of information about the school can be seen to affect students' enrollment.

One parent with a child at HIS noted that sometimes the focus was more on making HIS 'Christian' and 'American' than on the quality of education. This is a comment from a parent with children in the school and it seems she is not satisfied with the quality of education. This parent added that it was however not the school's focus on Christianity that was a problem but rather the high turn over of staff. The other parent pointed out that it was the school's focus on Christianity that attracted most of those with children in the school to the school and he felt this was not so much a problem as the high turn over of staff. Here we can see that the school's Christian focus does not affect the school negatively, however, the high turn over seems to be a recurring problem mentioned by both those with children in the school and those with no children in the school.

Other parents with children at HIS said that its Christian foundation was the strength of the school, followed by the small teacher/student ratio. For the parents who prefer the small classes, the school's keenness to increase the student numbers is not a positive thing. This aspect of numbers will be addressed later when the staff's answers are being analysed.

Both teachers felt that it was not so much the school's focus on Christianity that limited its numbers because those parents who had their children in the school chose the school for this very reason, but the high turn over in the staff and administration which brought out many weaknesses in the curriculum and management of the school.

The board member also felt that it was not the school's focus on Christianity that hurt its image but rather the public's perception of this since some perceived it to be a Bible school. Again the school's failure to effectively inform the public what it means by HIS being a 'Christian school' is seen as contributing to the misinformation about the school.

According to the administrator, the school's focus on Christianity could affect its student numbers if the school did not seem to excel academically. He stressed that the school should seek to excel academically in order to attract more numbers.

Here we can see that the school's founding mission which is to give high quality education based on Christian principles, does not contribute to its problem of low student enrollment. It has also been seen that the perception of it being a Bible school as opposed to a Christian-based school caused some problem but not enough to say that it was a major role in the problem of low enrollments.

OTHER COMMENTS

A good Christian foundation, good curriculum, proximity to the school, good relationships between students and teachers and the good environment in the school were some of the reasons given for choosing the school. The parents whose children had been

in the school for two years or less all gave the school's Christian character as being one of the main reasons they chose the school. The choice of an international curriculum was commended due to the ever growing development in the world and the knowledge the children need to be prepared for this.

This shows that the character of the school (Christian and international) has contributed to the school enrollment positively.

Since a large percentage of Ugandans are Christian, many of them value education that upholds Christian values, so this may not be a problem for the school. More and more parents are also beginning to realise that exposing their children to an international education would be very beneficial to their children. However, these parents were still not bringing their children to the school because it was too expensive for them.

Half of the parents interviewed had considered sending their children to HIS because they valued the international education and the Christian values that the school held but they found the school expensive. This was also a problem faced by one of the parents that lived within the vicinity of the school. Much as they want their children to experience a Christian education, they cannot afford it, yet a good number of those who can afford it, do not value the 'Christian' education.

All the parents with children in the school felt that the school fees were affordable for international standards, though one pointed out that this was for a target group of people. As indicated earlier, many of the parents that valued the Christian education could not afford the fees while those who could easily afford the fees had either not heard about the school or its good performance or did not value a Christian education for their children.

Some of the interviewees stated that the care for the uniqueness of each child as well as the focus on educating the child as a whole as opposed to focusing on the academics only was why Uganda needed schools like HIS.

Lack of information about the school, high school fees structure, poor reports about discipline and high turnover of staff were some of the reasons given for *not* choosing the school. One parent, for example, after hearing the negative comments about the school changed her mind about sending her children to the school. Here we can see how important word-of-mouth advertising is which can affect the school negatively or positively.

Parents with children in the elementary sections of the school were not bothered by the school's lack of growth because they preferred the small student-teacher ratio. However those in the high school were bothered because the numbers were too small for effective learning to take place. For example it would not be cost effective to offer a wide variety of subjects for the students to choose from and so as it is now, those in high school are limited in their choice of subjects. It is also at this stage that the parents are really concerned about the subject choices of their children since it leads them to future career choices. So these parents were concerned by the lack of growth in the school.

Not running a boarding facility was given as one of the reasons as to why student numbers remained low. The school's strong Christian background was seen by others as cutting out many who would otherwise have joined the school.

One interviewee was not bothered by the lack of growth numerically but instead felt that focus should be on the growth of the school's quality of education.

Competition from other international schools was also cited as one of the reasons for slow growth in student enrollment.

In the analyses, we see a pattern coming up time and again of HIS not being clear to the public about what it has to offer. We looked at the view of the school and found that it was only those closely related to the school that were clear about what type of school HIS was, while others, whether or not they lived within the vicinity of the school were not clear about this. We also looked at the school's curriculum. The public was not clear

about what type of curriculum HIS followed or how it would benefit them. This had led to their decision not to join the school.

In conclusion we can see that there are certain main themes that come up which branch off to smaller themes. These are:

A. Poor dissemination of information - Under this theme we have other sub- themes:

- i) Ignorance about the school: We have heard the views of those living within the vicinity of the school and those living outside the vicinity of the school. The school is not known. What exactly has the school to offer? How does it or will it benefit those who go through the school? What curriculum is being followed? These were the questions that many of the public had concerning the school and since they did not have access to the answers, they opted to go to other schools that they knew more about.
- ii) Misconceptions about the school. In addition to this we have the *misconceived* view of a 'Christian' school. Many thought that by being a Christian school, it was some kind of Bible school and this is not what they wanted for their children.
- iii) Poor marketing: From many of the reports, we saw that not only has HIS not been marketed enough it has also not been marketed *effectively*. As mentioned above, this has brought about misconceived views as well as ignorance about the school.
- iv) Curriculum - In relation to poor dissemination of information, not much is known about the curriculum of the school. The origins of the curriculum – America or Britain – were not a problem to most parents, but knowing the opportunities the curriculum offered, the avenues it opened, and its strengths compared to other curricula, mattered to parents, and this was not clear about HIS' curriculum

B. The high turn over among the teaching and administrative staff.

This was the second main theme that came up during the interviews. This high turnover of staff affects other areas in the school that could be seen as minor themes:

- i) Management: There has been a very high turn over of school management and staff. This has invariably caused some weaknesses in the quality of education provided by the school. Also instead of the school growing, it has remained in a state of stagnation because it seems that the school is constantly teaching new personnel how to run the school or do what is required of them. This leads to another minor theme:
- ii) Curriculum: This minor theme is related to both main themes. Though there did not seem to be complaints about the choice of curriculum for those who were aware what curriculum was being followed by the school, there were concerns about the strength of the curriculum. It was difficult for the school to build strength in its curriculum if every year a new person was assigned to carry on what a previous predecessor had put into place.

C. School fees

Finally, we have a minor theme and this concerns the school fees. There were a number of interviewees who felt that many parents would have loved to send their children to a Christian school but could not afford the fees, while those that could afford the fees were not interested in having a Christian education for their children. This area needs to be examined carefully so that if the school considers lowering its fees, this would be done without compromising the quality that they want to maintain.

4.4 Analysis of Data Collected from the Questionnaire

The researcher used a close-ended questionnaire and the results showed that most of the people felt that the biggest problem HIS has is the high turnover in the administration.

The next strongest was the curriculum, followed by the seemingly unclear vision of the school. Surprisingly this was followed by the marketing strategies of the school and though some felt that its being a Christian school put people off, this was the factor with the least influence on the low enrolments.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, the interviews with seven different groups of people were recorded as well as the results from a brief questionnaire. The interviews were analysed as well as their interpretations given. The findings show some of the reasons for low student enrollment at HIS. A summary of the findings and recommendations are presented in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore low student enrollments at alternative schools using a Ugandan alternative school, Heritage International School as a case study. Five factors were considered for their possible contribution to the problem of low student enrollments: the view of the school, the marketing of the school, management, the curriculum and the Christian founding mission of the school.

Below are the research questions used:

- How is HIS viewed by Ugandans in its immediate vicinity and those not in its immediate vicinity?
- How do the HIS curriculum and marketing or lack of, contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?

- How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to this problem?
- How can HIS stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?

The chapter also focuses on the summary of the qualitative analysis and data interpretation in chapter 4. Recommendations are based on the findings. A summary of all the interviews carried out with the seven groups of people, in their different categories is also given.

HIS was started to provide quality Christian education, and the literature review highlighted some examples of similar schools that were facing problems of low student enrollment and how these schools addressed these problems. This was what the researcher used as a guide to see if HIS' problems were in any way related to one another and if the solutions that the various schools had to their problems would be helpful in anyway to HIS' problems of low student enrollment.

5.2 Results/Findings

5.2.1 From the qualitative analysis

In chapter 3, an analysis of qualitative research was done, and it was found that qualitative research in this particular study aimed to explore, investigate and understand the reasons for low student enrollments at a Ugandan alternative school. The study wanted to bring to the surface the views of interviewees as well as the respondents who answered the questionnaire. The research method therefore, aimed at exploring the reasons for low student enrollment at HIS.

5.2.2 From the data analysis

- *How is HIS viewed by Ugandans in its immediate vicinity and those not in its immediate vicinity?*

From the interviews carried out with the different groups, the findings show that HIS is viewed by some of the people within its immediate vicinity as a Christian international school that is unique because of its Christian principles. It is also viewed as a small school using an American –based curriculum which to some was a problem but to most people involved in the school was not a problem, seeing as that that was the reason they chose the school. Those within the school upheld the view that it is an international school but wondered why it did not have an international curriculum. To others who lived within the vicinity of HIS, this was not so.

Those who were not closely related to the school did not have a clear view of the school. Parents with no children in the school, whether they lived within the vicinity of the school or not, did not have a clear understanding of what was meant by a ‘Christian International’ school. Some interpreted ‘Christian’ school to mean a kind of ‘Bible’ school. There were also a number who, though they knew the school followed some kind of international curriculum, were not sure what exactly this entailed. Some also held the view that it was a school for the rich, while to others it was a school that was lacking in discipline and high academic standards.

Here we can see that HIS has not made it clear to the public what it means by calling itself ‘Christian’ or ‘international.’ This had affected the choices of some of these parents because they felt more comfortable taking their children to schools with whose curriculum they were more familiar. Others who had interpreted ‘Christian’ school to mean Bible school, did not want their children going to a Bible school.

- *How do the HIS curriculum and marketing or lack of, contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?*

Curriculum

Many of the members of the different groups interviewed were aware that HIS used an American-based curriculum and to the researcher's surprise, it did not present a big a problem as she had thought it would. The focus was more on the quality of what was being taught. From the interviews most of the parents with children in the school seemed happy with the primary school, in terms of numbers and what was taught, but were dissatisfied both with the numbers and with the material used in the high school. In a lengthy interview with the administrator, he talked about how the small numbers had prevented them from offering a satisfactory range of subjects for the high school students to choose from, so their choices were limited, giving them few options. From the interviews the problem of low numbers seemed to be mainly with the high school and the feeling was that if the high school excelled in what they were doing, it would do very well to attract more high school students to the school and therefore make it easier to incorporate a wider choice of options of subjects to choose from. What was considered by some to be the high fees structure had forced them to choose other schools they could afford. If this was not a problem, the school would be able to get more students and therefore incorporate a wider choice of school subjects.

Two years ago, HIS had 5 students graduate from High School. Their Standard Achievement Test Scores (SATs) in Math, Science, and Language were very good in comparison to other schools in the United States that had done the same tests. The school's performance was also quite high in comparison to the other international schools in the country. This was not published. HIS may be doing a good job, but the public does not know anything about this. However, these 5 students were also limited in their choices of subjects. Much as they excelled, they did not have a wide range of subjects to choose from.

The curriculum has contributed to low student numbers in the school to some extent. For some, by being American-based, it has limited the number of people who would otherwise have chosen to come to the school. For those presently in the school, however, this was not a problem because they preferred this curriculum. The curriculum did not seem to be accommodative of other nationalities and this discourages more potential

parents from enrolling their children in the school. The curriculum has also not been well advertised, so many potential learners have not chosen the school seeing as they do not understand its curriculum or the benefits of going through such a curriculum. The strengths of the curriculum used at HIS have not been publicized nor have the good results after major examinations taken and the word that some people have heard is that HIS has a weak curriculum.

The choice of a curriculum is not a point of contention in the elementary section of the school because it does not affect their choice of universities since they are still too young. However, in the secondary section it begins to be an issue because some good universities are particular about which students they take depending on what curriculum they followed at high school.

There may not be so much of a problem with the school's choice of curriculum as with the quality of what was taught. As seen with other parents in the study, it was the quality of education that attracted them to a school- if they heard that a school had a high standard of performance, they would be strongly attracted to that school. If the public does not hear much about the quality of education at HIS, they are not likely to make a choice to take their children to the school. A good number were also influenced by a good Christian or religious background. Being a Christian school does not seem to keep a number of parents from choosing the school, but when being a 'Christian' school is misconceived to mean a Bible school then the Christian character becomes a problem.

It became very clear that to most parents the quality of education comes first before anything else. If the school purports to provide high quality education, the public needs to know this. If there are doubts about the quality of the school's education, that will have a more negative effect on its ability to attract new students than its Christian character or American-based origins. In other words, if HIS is a Christian school and its performance is not good, this will not attract potential parents. If, on the other hand, as pointed out by one of the teachers, it shows that as a Christian school it has something better to offer than other international schools, especially in the area of high academic performance, it will go a long way in solving its problem of low student numbers.

Marketing

All the interviewees felt that HIS was lacking in the area of marketing and gave some suggestions like updating the web site, using bill boards, having a prospectus and better still improving some of the facilities within the school. Publicizing the schools' academic results, being involved in community events, as well as advertising public performances by the school were other suggestions given to better advertise the school. Churches were also suggested as one of the channels of advertising since it is a Christian school.

The area of advertising as a way of marketing the school has not been well exploited. Not only has HIS not well utilized various channels of advertising, it has not made it clear to the public what exactly it is offering as a school. It has not marketed what it means by 'Christian' and 'international' or what curriculum it offers and how this curriculum will benefit potential learners. The importance of the avenue of word-of-mouth cannot be ignored. Word is getting out that HIS has a weak curriculum. This does not help the school increase its student numbers.

The school's lack of involvement with the community is also noted. This, the researcher found was one of the avenues used by other international schools to advertise themselves.

International schools like International School of Uganda (ISU) and Kabira International School (KIS) have quite a sizeable enrollment. Another thing to note is that these schools have made it very clear to the public what curriculum they follow. They also regularly advertise their good performance. They are involved with the community and this can be seen on TV. They also periodically put out drama and musical shows in the National Theatre. As a result, many people in the public, when questioned about either of these schools, can easily say what these schools offer, which is not the same with HIS.

From the interviews it was clear that parents are attracted by a school's good performances. They see a good drama by a school or any other performance and their interest is piqued; they see or hear nothing, then they will not give heed to it. Marketing is not only about *putting out who you are* but also *what you can do*. This the

administrator and the teachers put across clearly that the best type of marketing would be excellence in academic standards.

In conclusion, from the interviews carried out, lack of or poor marketing has contributed to the low enrollment at HIS because the school compared to other international schools has been silent. Not only is the marketing of the school not aggressive in terms of avenues of marketing but very little is known about what exactly the school has to offer. Once again a pattern can be noted in the area of information about the school not getting out to the public. This was seen in the public's view of the school, as not many knew what exactly HIS was, or what it meant by 'Christian' or 'international.' Then in the area of its curriculum, the public was not aware of what exactly HIS had to offer and the benefits of following such a curriculum. We see that some people do not choose the school because they really do not know what it has to offer. In marketing, it is very important that the consumers know what product they are getting, otherwise they will not purchase it. If parents do not know what the school has to offer, they are not likely to choose it.

- ***How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to this problem?***

Many of the interviewees expressed concern about the high turn over in management and staffing within the school. As a result, the quality of the education standards was hard to maintain or improve since with every turn over it was like going back to the beginning, so instead of progress, there was stagnancy or in some cases the school seemed to be going backwards. The high turn over of staff affected the quality of work produced by the students because new staff took time to get acquainted with what was going on and by the time they learned what to do, it was already time for them to leave. This is the same with management; each new management has its strengths and does not last long enough to focus on strengthening the weaknesses in the school like weaknesses in the curriculum or in the area of discipline as pointed out by many interviewees. It seems to be in a state of struggling as a new school continuously. Since this turn over is affecting the school, what

can the school management or the school board do to retain its expatriate teachers? The management of the school is also transient; this in itself creates more problems for the school.

Any school with such a high rate of turn over is bound to suffer, so when some parents make comments about hearing that the quality of education is not good or that the school is weak in discipline others are more liable to believing this seeing there is no stability where the staffing is concerned.

We must also not put aside that there are other international schools in the same city that are even more expensive than HIS but are not experiencing the problem of low student enrollment. So there has to be more to this than the issue of expense. What is it that the management of HIS is not doing or is doing that is bringing about the problem of low student numbers?

From the groups of parents without children at HIS, most parents stated that they valued the kind of education HIS had to offer but they just could not afford it. This could be an area that the HIS management may want to explore. How much lower in fees can it go yet still maintain its international flavor?

Some parents however were concerned that in its quest to grow, HIS may lose its ethos, which is, being a school with a small student/teacher ratio. Can HIS find a balance so that it does not have too many students and lose the attraction it has as a small school or too few so that it fails to function and provide all the different options that are necessary for an all round rich education?

Management is perceived to have contributed to the problem of low student numbers under the themes mentioned in chapter 4. First of all, management is held accountable for poor dissemination of information about the school which has contributed to the varying views of the public about the school. Secondly, management is also held accountable for the high turnover in the teaching and administrative staff. These two weaknesses – poor

marketing and the high turnover of staff - have been identified as the biggest contributors to the problem of low enrollments at HIS. Low enrolments in turn are the reason the school is not going forward and experiencing growth in its quality of academic excellence. Instead of growth in the size of the school there has been stagnation, and this has been perceived as a weakness by the public.

Whether management is to blame for the turnover of staff is debatable, as employment of staff, including employment of managers is the role of the governing body/the Board. While poor marketing of the school can be justifiably blamed on management, the high turnover of staff is something the Board should take responsibility for.

How can HIS stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?

Though a few parents felt that the Christian focus may have affected the enrollment of the school, many felt that this was not a hindrance to the growth of the school numerically, since Christians are in the majority in Uganda. To the parents in the school, this was what attracted them to the school and the general consensus was that since it was a Christian school it should have high quality education standards. Many also voiced the fact that HIS should not change its focus on being a Christian school because that is what makes it unique and that its desire to attract bigger numbers should not make it change this.

HIS can therefore stay true to its founding mission and at the same time attract high student numbers by offering high quality education. It is important to maintain high standards academically while also offering Christian-based education and letting the public know of its strengths. The HIS management can do all this while maintaining the school's founding mission to provide high quality education based on Christian principles.

5.3 Discussion of Results.

In her findings the researcher found that poor dissemination of information about the school was one of the main reasons that contributed to HIS' problem of low student enrollment. This main theme was subdivided into two themes: the view of the school and the marketing of the school and how these contributed to HIS' problem of low student numbers. The researcher discovered that people living within the vicinity of the school as well as those living outside the vicinity of the school did not have a clear view of HIS. They did not really know what the school had to offer, what curriculum it followed, and how the school would benefit them. Some because of their misconception of the school being some sort of Bible school had not considered this as the kind of education for their children.

The researcher found out that this unclear view of the school was probably a result of ineffective marketing of the school. Many of the people interviewed did not know about the school and those that knew about the school did not know what it had to offer in comparison to other international schools. Harvey (1996: 26) said that... 'One of the major purposes of marketing therefore is to explain to potential clients the services or products they are about to purchase...schools for example can explain what opportunities are offered to students such as how and what they are taught'. This came up time and time again as the researcher carried on this study. Some potential parents did not know how or what was being taught at the school. As well as not being aggressive in its advertising, HIS had not publicized what it offered as a Christian school.

The second theme that came up in the researcher's findings that contributed to the school's problem of low enrollment was the high turnover among the teaching and administrative staff. As discussed in the literature review, *Seattle Times* (March 30, 2005) reported that... 'High teacher turnover negatively affects the quality of education, disrupts the continuity of school programmes and stunts school reform efforts.' This is what was reported by some of the parents who had had their children in the school for over three years, the teachers, the board member and the school administrator. The

constant changes in the school had brought about stagnation in the growth of the school and questions about the quality of education.

The researcher also came across a number of parents who would have loved for their children to attend HIS, as it is a Christian as well as an international school, but they found it too expensive. As mentioned in the literature review, Blandford (2001:1) in her edition of *“Managing International Schools,”* quotes Sklair saying, “it may be argued that students, teachers, administrators and managers of international schools, whether they are expatriate or recruited locally, come from a narrow socio-economic group and that they share values which converge with the culture – ideology of transnational capitalist class”. This was also true of HIS, because, even though most interviewees admitted that compared to fees charged by international schools generally, the fees at HIS were manageable, it was clear that this applied to a certain target group- a group of a higher economic class.

As to whether the school’s Christian focus acted as a deterrent to growth in numbers, the researcher found out that much as there were some who felt it could, most actually preferred this aspect of the school. The administrator pointed out that HIS had made the public aware that it was a Christian school, now it had to show the public that it had high quality education. The researcher also found out that in the previous two years, HIS’ standardized achievement test scores were very high, but as noted in its weakness in marketing, this information was not published and even some of the people closely involved with the school did not know this.

5.4 Reflection

It was important for HIS to experience an increase in student numbers at the school for various reasons. The most obvious one is that it would facilitate operation of the school financially. The researcher also came across various members of the community who would have loved to have their children at HIS but just could not afford the high tuition. If the numbers at HIS increased, the school would then be able to lower the fees to a

considerable amount and it would enable more people from the community to enjoy the benefits of the Christian international education they want for their children.

For those involved at the school, especially in the high school, the quality of education would improve in that a wider range of subjects would be offered since this would now be more viable with larger numbers. Also with more income, the school would be able to contribute financially to the expenses of some of the expatriate staff bringing about more stabilization. The school would then experience growth in the quality of services it provides.

The researcher started out to find out the reasons for low student enrollments at Heritage International School. From the research, the researcher found that the problem of low enrollments is not the problem of the whole school but is in fact a problem in a particular section of the school, that is the high school. Many of the parents with children in the elementary section chose the school because of its small numbers, so the school must be very careful in its quest to increase its numbers to maintain a balance, so that those who are happy with the numbers in the elementary school are not discouraged by a large increase in numbers, and those that are dissatisfied with the numbers in the high school would be satisfied with a significant increase that would not compromise the standards of the school.

Private/alternative schools are usually started for a reason. Often these schools want to uphold a particular ethos. This however must not compromise the school's educational standards. If anything, for private/alternative schools, their standard of education must prove to be higher than the regular or local schools in its area of operation.

For private/alternative schools to be successful, they must be very clear about what they are offering the public and not only use varied advertising outlets but advertise effectively, in other words advertise what it is they have to offer that parents would desire to choose this type of school over other available schools.

5.5 Contribution to the Field of Education

From this study we can see that parents value high quality education first and then the moral standards that a school has to offer second. If a school or an educational institution is interested in attracting the public, it first of all has to make sure it has the highest quality of education and then it has to be very clear about what it is offering and also make sure that what the public perceives about its product is what it wants the public to perceive. Educators must make sure they clearly publicize what type of education they are offering and how this would benefit children that go through the system.

The other contribution this study can give to the field of education is that for any educational institution to make progress or maintain high quality standards there has to be stability. High turn over of personnel negatively affects the institution and hinders growth as well as standards of excellence.

Educational institutions must also put into consideration the needs of the community/society and how valuable the education they are offering is to the public. They need to consider what their target group is and whether what they are offering is affordable to this target group.

5.6 Recommendations

From the interviews and the research carried out by the researcher, she found out that HIS' biggest problem is its poor dissemination of information about the school. First of all, we see that the public's perception of a 'Christian school' in some cases is not the same as that with those closely involved with the school, since they seem to think it is a Bible school. It is therefore recommended that first and foremost, the HIS management consider having a marketing officer for the school even if (s)he's not full-time, but given a once-off contract to start off the marketing campaign. The HIS management with the help of a marketing officer, must therefore clarify this to the public so that those who were put off by thinking it was a Bible school may understand the true significance of a

‘Christian school’ that is a school governed by Christian principles. Its Christian foundation is what its present clients value and most of the public seem to like this about the school, so this does not seem to be a problem for low student enrollment.

The marketing officer should then also work on many of the suggestions given like updating the website, getting the right information out about the school by using a good school prospectus, and as finances allow, use billboards and the television or radio, publicize the school’s good academic performance since a large percentage of parents choose schools because of their high performance. (S)He would work with the teachers to come up with school performances that could be used to let people know more about the school and what it has to offer and any other good advertising that would benefit the school. In so doing the school would be marketed effectively. This would help in correcting the view of the school and the lack of knowledge by the public about the school especially in the areas to do with its curriculum.

HIS may have high quality education but if people do not know this, it does not help the school to increase in numbers. Robert Kiyosaki in his book, ‘*Rich Dad, Poor Dad*’ (2001) was advising a great writer whose books were not selling, on where her problem lay. He pointed out that though she was a much better writer or more skilled in writing than he was, the sale of his books was much better than hers and that the secret lay in learning the skill of marketing what you have.

The school should also realize that word-of- mouth advertising is very important. From many of the interviews carried out, the researcher discovered that most of the people who knew about the school, had heard about it from other people. In order to use this as an advantage, it is recommended that the school makes sure that the word that gets out about the school is excellent. From some of the interviews the researcher found that some people had heard bad reports concerning the school’s performance and discipline. Some had heard that there was poor discipline in the school. Due to the high teacher and management turn over, there had been some slack in discipline. The high turnover in the

staff had brought about lack of stability in disciplinary measures set. This weakness had leaked out to the public.

It is recommended that the school management sets up a written code of discipline for the students of the school. This should be given to all new staff members during their orientation to the school.

Some parents had also declined to bring their children to the school because they had heard reports that the secondary section was not performing well, again a problem resulting from high staff turnover.

The high turn over in the administration and staff was a big problem according to those closely involved with the school. The school management and the board must look into this and see how it can bring about more stabilization in this area. In their search for new teachers, the school board should look out for those who can offer long term services and as suggested by one of the expatriate teachers, the school board could offer financial assistance to these teachers and make their stay as comfortable as possible by providing good housing for them and good orientation into the new culture. This stabilization would then enable the school to grow in terms of quality which will then be advertised by the parents in the school and also via the marketing avenues mentioned above. This aspect of stabilizing the turn over of expatriate staff is in itself an area of research that can be followed up by the school.

Stabilization of the school staff will then enable the school to fine tune its curriculum to the point of excellence. Is it really offering high quality education as it says it is? If so, why are there members of the public that beg to differ? From the research carried out, the researcher discovered that the primary section of the school didn't have a problem with high quality education. The negative reports came from the secondary level which was the result of the high turnover of staff. Once the school management has settled its problem of high turnover, then the curriculum in the high school can be fine tuned to the point of excellence. This then is the word that will go out to the public and instead of

having reports from the public that the school is weak, the reports will be good and more parents will be encouraged to enroll their children in the school.

Some parents, whose children did not attend the school, said that the school's fees were too high for them. It is something that the HIS management and the board need to look into. How far can it lower its fees so that it still maintains its Christian and international quality of education and at the same time allow those who value this type of education but cannot afford it, to be able to join the school. It is recommended that the school board and management use some of its parents who are trained financial advisors to look into ways in which they can cut down on the school budget so that they can accommodate a lower fee structure which would eventually pay off when the numbers increase. This fee should be one that would encourage many of those interested to join the school and at the same time enable the school to maintain its high quality of Christian education.

The balancing of the school fees could be linked with the growth of the school numerically. It is recommended that the management and board of HIS go about this issue very carefully and work at getting a balance of having just enough students to be all that it can be in the area of academic excellence and not too many so that those who came to the school for the reason of small student/teacher ratio are then turned away. In some ways the price of the school fee helps to moderate numbers but it should not be so high that it defeats the purpose and the school instead ends up with low student enrollment.

Its 'international-ness' is an area questioned by some of those already involved with the school. It claims to be an international school yet it focuses on an American curriculum and in fact a home schooling curriculum from some state(s) in the USA. What can the school do to remedy this? It is recommended that the school management and the board look into the school's curriculum and adjust it to accommodate the needs of its international population. This does not mean they need to do away with the American curriculum but they may need to add to this curriculum aspects that would make it more international. Any organization or business needs to deliver or give its clients what it professes to give. If HIS wants to be an international school, it should give its clients an international ambience especially in terms of the curriculum it offers.

In conclusion, HIS may have an excellent product for the community, offering an education that allows children to have good morals as well as high quality education, but if it doesn't market this well and the community does not know about it, the school will remain a school that nobody knows about with low student enrollment despite its good efforts to provide quality education. However, if the HIS management puts all the above recommendations in place that is, provide an international curriculum, do away with the problem of high staff and administration turn over, which will then enable it to provide high quality education among other things, it can then market itself effectively and efficiently and attract more students hence increase its student numbers.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Map of Africa: Location of Uganda



(Web page: http://www.rebirth.co.za/images/Map_of_Africa.jpg)

Appendix 2 : Map of Kampala



Point to note: Kansanga, which is the town where HIS is located, is found just between Kampala, the capital city and Gaba, which is South East of Kampala.

(Web page: http://encarta.msn.com/map_701513592/Kampala.html)

Appendix 3

Letter of Permission to Interview

May 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Requesting Permission to Interview

My name is Laura Agaba and I am a teacher here at Heritage International School, where I have been teaching for over 12 years. Presently I am doing my Masters in Education Management and as part of my course I will be carrying out a research.

My Research topic is, “**LOW ENROLLMENTS AT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF A UGANDAN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL**”. As the topic indicates, I am hoping to find out what affects student growth rate in our school and eventually leave suggestions as to how to improve this.

To be able to do this effectively I would need your help. I am requesting permission to have an interview with you, to discuss and find out your opinions and perceptions concerning low enrollment at Heritage International School.

Thank you for your help in this project,

Yours truly,

Laura Agaba

4th Grade Teacher.

Student number: 34398694

Telephone number: 0772641020

Appendix 4

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

(How is HIS viewed by Ugandans and non-Ugandans in its immediate vicinity?)

(HIS – Heritage International School)

These questions were asked to parents both Christian and non- Christian whose children do not attend HIS.

1. What is your nationality?

2. How long have you lived in this area (Kansanga)?

3. Do you know about HIS?

4. What do you know about HIS? What is your view of Heritage International School?

5. (a) Do you have children?
 - a. If so, do they attend HIS?
 - b. If not, why do they not attend HIS?

(How do the curriculum, marketing or lack of, contribute to the problem of low student numbers at HIS?)

6. Are you familiar with the curriculum used at HIS?

7. Would you consider an American – based curriculum suitable for your child’s education?
8. If your answer to the above is YES, how so?
9. If your answer is NO, how so?
10. Do you think the choice of curriculum in any way affects the number of students at HIS?
11. What do you think of the marketing of HIS? / Has the marketing of HIS influenced what you think of HIS? / Do you think HIS could have been marketed differently? If yes, what could have been done?
12. What advice if any do you have about marketing HIS as a school?

(How does management contribute to the problem of low student numbers and what difference would a change in management make to this problem?)

13. In your opinion, is there a way in which the management has contributed to the problem of low student numbers? YES/NO
14. If yes, how so?
15. What management changes would you suggest/make to increase student numbers?

(How can HIS stay true to its founding mission while attracting high student numbers?)

16. The founding mission of HIS is “to offer quality education that equips each student to develop their God given potential for a life of faith and service” (Heritage International School Hand Book 2006). Do you think the focus on

Christianity is the reason the student numbers remain low at HIS while they (student numbers) are high in other international schools?

Interview questions asked to people who do not have children at HIS and who do not live within the vicinity of the school.

1. What do you know about HIS?
2. Where did you hear about HIS?
3. Do you think HIS is doing a great job? / In your opinion how does HIS compare with other International and Religious schools in Uganda in terms of quality education? If you think HIS is a good school, why are your children not at HIS? (For those whose answer is positive).
4. Do you think Uganda needs a school like HIS? Why? / Why not?
5. (If the parent has school-age children who go to other schools) Have you ever considered sending your children to HIS? (If not) Why not?
6. (If the children are still too young) Are you considering sending your children to HIS? Why? Why not?
7. What influences you when you choose a school for your child?
8. If you find out the parent(s) had not heard about HIS before sending children to school, or they did not know much about HIS and so did not choose HIS, ask the parents how they think HIS should make itself known to parents of potential learners at the school.

Additional interview questions asked to parents with children at HIS.

1. Why did you choose this school? (View)
2. How or where did you hear about the school? (Marketing.)
3. In your opinion what are the strengths of this school?
4. What are the weaknesses of the school?
5. The school has not been growing, what do you think are the reasons? / Have you talked to other parents with no children at HIS and heard what they perhaps think of the school?
6. (If the person does not know why other parents are not bringing children to HIS you may ask :) Do you think the school fees are affordable to most people? / How do the fees at HIS compare with fees at other schools? Do you think maybe HIS should go out and advertise itself more? What would be the most effective way of advertising itself (HIS)?
7. Does it bother you that the school is not growing? (If answer is yes) Why? (If answer is no) Why?

Appendix 5

CLOSE- ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you think that the cause for the low enrollment of students at HIS is due to its being a Christian school? YES/NO

2. Do you think HIS' low enrollment is due to its choice of curriculum? YES/NO

3. Is the reason for low enrollment at HIS due to weakness in marketing strategies? YES/NO

4. Do you think that the cause for the low enrollment of students at HIS is due to high teacher/student turnover? YES/NO

5. Do you think HIS' low enrollment is due to high fees charged? YES/NO

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