Leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools: Evidence from Malaysia

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements
for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education
in the
Graduate School of Education,
University of Nottingham, Malaysia.

Submitted by
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2024

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible without the guidance, help and support of many individuals. It is my pleasure to be able to acknowledge and thank them here.

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Tony Bush, for his invaluable feedback, guidance, and encouragement throughout my research. His extensive knowledge and experience were instrumental in the completion of this thesis. I am also very thankful to Dr Ashley Yoon Mooi Ng, my second supervisor, for her intuitive suggestions and support over the years. Her insightful suggestions and comments pushed me to sharpen my thinking and brought greater depth to this work. I am very fortunate to have these two supervisors who believe in me and their company during this PhD journey.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to my friends and family, especially Alvin, whose patience, understanding, and support made this endeavour achievable. A special mention to all participants in my study, for their willingness to share their experiences made this work possible.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, who instilled in not just me, but my siblings too, from a young age the value of education, despite herself having only received primary education. She was the pillar of my life and the person whom I turned to when I needed to ask for a second opinion, or just to share my joy, happiness and sorrow. Her unwavering faith in my abilities and support inspired me to set high goals and work diligently towards achieving them. Thank you, mum.

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Abstract

The number of international schools globally has been growing exponentially in the last few decades. Malaysia has a similar growth rate of international schools during these two decades. As more international schools are established, more principals are required to lead the schools. This study focuses on the role of principals in leading international secondary schools in Malaysia.

A two-stage mixed methods explanatory sequential design was adopted for data collection. An electronic questionnaire survey was sent to a census sample of 109 international secondary school principals in Malaysia in the first stage, with a response rate of 31.2%. Interviews were conducted with five participants in each of the three case study schools in the second stage. Methodological triangulation is used to improve reliability and validity of the study, through the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, and respondent triangulation is addressed through asking similar questions to interview participants at different levels. Finally, comparison and triangulation take place based on the responses given by the interviewees, and also through responses from the survey questions.

The findings from the survey implies that the *origins* of the principals may have played an important part in their recruitment to an international school in Malaysia. This expectation is supported by the superordinates of the three case study schools. The main selection processes in the recruitment of principals were through face-to-face and Skype interviews. In terms of role relationships with different stakeholders, more principals rate the relationships as excellent or good, as compared to poor or very poor. This finding is similar to the ratings at the three case study schools, supported by the superordinates and SLT members. This study is a substantial addition to the existing knowledge on the roles of international secondary school principals in Malaysia as there is direct evidence from such principals through both survey and interview data. The multidirectional trust between principals, and their superordinates and subordinates, affects mutual relationship building, and may also impact on the tenure of a principal.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This study focuses on the role of principals in leading international secondary schools in Malaysia. This opening chapter begins by discussing the context of the study, including the type of international schools involved in the research, given the 'close relationship between context and leadership' (Brauckmann et. al., 2023). The next section discusses the reasons behind the growth of international schools globally and in Malaysia, followed by the policy context, institutional context, and theoretical context of the study. Subsequently, the aims and the six research questions were presented. The chapter ends with the structure of the thesis.

Context

Defining the context of study

International school education is a vast field of study. Therefore, it is important to define the context of this research topic. It is especially pertinent when researching on school leadership as there is a likelihood for researchers of the field to 'average the effects of leadership in studies across [a] large number of schools' (Hallinger, 2018:16), and the most appropriate 'leadership practices for a specific school at a specific moment in time must take into account multiple layers of the widely shared context (i.e. institutional, community, socio-cultural, political, etc.) as well as the personal resources of the leader' (Hallinger, 2018:19).

The establishment of international schools can be dated back to 1924 when the first English-medium international school was instituted in Geneva, Switzerland (Brewster, 2002; Hill, 2012; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Hammad & Shah, 2018; Hayden & Thompson, 2000). The original intention of the school was to provide 'an English-language education for the children of diplomats and business people' (Brewster, 2002: 367) so that their children could experience a similar learning environment to their home country. As many more international schools have been set up around the world since then, there are more variations in their types

and objectives. As a result, there are attempts to group the international schools, thus resulting in the growth of such groupings (Hayden & Thompson, 1995). One of the broad categorisations of international schools is by Lallo and Resnik (2008), who grouped international schools into four categories with the following attributes:

(1) the nationalities of the students are different from those of host countries,

(2) the nationality of the students is from one country, but different from the host countries,

(3) local schools but set up by people of different nationalities, and

(4) running the school with "international" as the guiding principle.

Hayden (2011b) argues that there are generally two broad categories of international school: 'equitable' and 'market place' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). The selection of international secondary schools to be involved in this study follows the definition by ISC Research, which identifies an international school as 'a privately operated school that has chosen to deliver a curriculum wholly or partly in English to some or all of its students between 3 and 18, in a country where English is not an official language' (ISC Research, 2023).

The subject of this research is the person who 'leads and supervises the daily operations of a school' (Benson, 2011:87). The title given could be head, headmaster, and school head (Keller, 2015). Others would address this person as the head of school (Machin, 2014; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010), school head (Slough-Kuss, 2014) or head teacher (Connollya et. al., 2018). The most commonly used title in the literature is principal (Bush, 2018; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Lee & Mao, 2023; Machin, 2014; Walker & Kwan, 2012), and this is also the title used in my research.

Growth and significance of international schools globally

Among the different types of international schools operating globally, offering curricula in different languages (Bates, 2012; Keller, 2015), English is the most common language used (Brewster, 2002). As mentioned earlier, the international

schools were originally set up for children of expatriates so that they could receive an English education (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). However, in the 21st century, the reasons for parents sending their children to study in international schools are more varied. According to Bates (2012:263), parents who send their children to international schools have the perception that the 'prestigious international schools are … the access route to prestigious first world universities and first world citizenship'. Wylie (2008) claims that, since we are now living in a globalised, internationalised and 'borderless' world, parents are more eager for their children to obtain an 'international citizenship' (Brewster, 2002) through an international school education.

There has been an increase in demand for international school education globally for the last 20 years (Bates, 2012; Hayden, 2011b; Lee & Wright, 2016; MacDonald, 2006; Tanu, 2016; Yamato & Bray, 2002; Yamato & Bray, 2006). The number of international schools grew eight-fold in 30 years, from more than 300 schools in the late 1960s, to 2,500 schools in 1990 (Bunnell & Gardner-Mctaggart, 2022; Tanu, 2016). The growth of international schools continued in the 21st century, from 2,584 schools in 2000 to 12,000 in 2020 (Bunnell & Gardner-Mctaggart, 2022; Tanu, 2016). According to the International School Consultancy's (ISC) research's database, there were 13,976 international schools in December 2023. It is estimated that the number of international schools will grow to 16,000 by 2026 (Bunnell, 2021).

There are also other reasons for the increase in the number of international schools. MacDonald (2006) established a direct relationship between the growth rates of international schools and that of international trade. In some other scenarios, parents resort to international schools for their children as a result of a loss of confidence in the national education system, perhaps due to a change of government, for example in Hong Kong when it was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 (Yamato & Bray, 2002). All these factors contributed to the number of international schools almost doubling from 2000 to 2009, which then further increased by more than one third from 2009 to 2014 (World Education

News & Reviews, 2014). The number of international schools continued to increase in the last 10 years by about 50%, from 8,700 in January 2013 to 13,190 in January 2023, with 57% situated in Asia (Compass, 2023).

Growth and significance of international schools in Malayia

This study is located in Malaysia, where the growth of international schools has been even more significant and profound, as a result of frequent changes in government policies. Firstly, before 2006, 'only Malaysian children with one of their parents as a foreigner, or [who] has been working overseas for at least three years, are eligible to enrol in international schools' (The Star Online, 2006). From 2006, that requirement was amended and the international schools in Malaysia were allowed to accept Malaysian students up to 40% of their enrolment without any restrictions (The Star Online, 2006; the Sun daily, 2006). Subsequently, the government announced in 2009 that the teaching of Mathematics and Science in public schools would revert from English to Malay (the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English was implemented in 2002) (The Star Online, 2009), disappointing some parents, who responded by moving their children to international schools. The third 'boosting' factor took place in 2010, in line with the government's ambitious plan to promote Malaysia as an educational hub (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Knight, 2013). The government lifted the 40 per cent quota, allowing Malaysian international schools to accept any number of local students (The Malay Mail Online, 2014). According to Kim and Mobrand (2019), the outcome of these factors was immediate and there was an increased demand for international schools from Malaysian parents (The Star Online, 2013). This resulted in a three-fold increase in the number of international schools from 66 in 2010 (New Straits Times, 2017) to 218 in 2023 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023). Malaysian students enrolled in international schools outnumbered foreign students by 2013, with the ratio of Malaysian students to foreign students subsequently increasing to two to one (Kim & Mobrand, 2019).

<u>Policy context in Malaysia</u>

After the racial riots in 1969, the National Front government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) with the primary objective to eradicate poverty and eliminate racial identification through redistribution of 'the country's wealth among the various ethnic groups', mainly to increase the Bumiputras' (refers to the Malays and other indigenous tribes) 'share of the corporate equity from 2.5% in 1970 to 30% in 1990' (Lee, 1997:30). Subsequently, there were two major policy changes which impacted on the education system. Firstly, as the government wanted to have 'a common language to unite its people', 'all English-medium schools were phased out and Malay became the sole medium of instruction in all secondary schools within the national system and in all public institutions of higher learning' in 1971 (Lee, 1997:31). Secondly, a race-based quota system was implemented when accepting students into higher education institutions, with a greater proportion assigned to Bumiputra students (Lee, 1997; Singh & Mukherjee, 1993).

The next major change took place after the passing of the Education Bill in 1995, when almost all forms of education in the national education system were brought under the purview of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Malaysia, from pre-school education to post-secondary education (Lee, 1997). This was more than 25 years after the implementation of the NEP, which resulted in a slight shift from the original focus of the government. For example, the importance of English was re-emphasised in schools, with the most obvious change being that private colleges were allowed to conduct their courses in English (Lee, 1997). In 2002, the then prime minister, Dr Mahathir, announced that science and mathematics would be taught in English (Gill, 2005). However, as mentioned above, this policy was reversed in 2009 (The Star Online, 2009).

On 1 March 2008, a restructuring of the MoE in Malaysia resulted in seven divisions within the Education Operation Sector of the MoE:
- Sports, Arts and Co-curriculum Division
- School Management Division

- Islamic Education Division

- Technical and Vocational Education Management Division

- Special Education Division

- Fully-Residential and School Excellence Management Division

- Private Education Division

The Education Operation Sector of the MoE oversees the operations of all the schools registered with the Ministry (Anon, 2014; Ministry of Education Malaysia Official Website, 2015).

All international schools are governed by the Private Education Division (PED). Any individuals or organisations wishing to establish private education institutions, including international schools, are required to apply through the PED. Several forms need to be submitted before a licence to set up the institution may be offered to the applicant (Anon, 2014). The possibility of securing a licence to open an international school may be lower now as there were already 172 international schools in the country by 2020 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020), when the Malaysian government only targeted to open 87 international schools by this date (Economic Planning Unit, 2014). This target was already achieved in 2013 with 89 international schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013)

Institutional context

One of the major decisions by owners of future international schools is to decide the type of school, in terms of 'curriculum', 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', and it is also necessary to strike a balance between satisfying 'local demands' and meeting 'international standards' (Bates, 2012:271). The policies of the country where the school is established add to the complexity of the decision-making process. For example, in Shanghai, local Chinese are not allowed to set up an international school for foreign students and Shanghainese children who only hold Chinese passports are not allowed to be enrolled into an international school (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Yamato & Bray, 2006). However, there were no such restrictions in Hong Kong (Yamato & Bray, 2002), and more recently in Malaysia, the limit on

the number of Malaysian children in an international school was lifted (The Malay Mail Online, 2014).

The four common types of international curriculum that are accepted by the MoE of Malaysia are British, Australian, Canadian and American, of which the most popular is the British curriculum (Anon, 2014). This may be because the Cambridge IGCSE certification is the most widely accepted qualification in the world (Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2024, 2024) and this is a very important factor, especially for parents who have not decided where they would want to send their child for post-secondary education.

Theoretical context

Having the right leader for a school is extremely important. Even more important is to have a school leader who is prepared to take on an expanded role, face 'the increasing complexity of school contexts', have a sense of responsibility, and last but not least, be an effective leader (Bush 2009:377). Dinham (2005) notes that an effective school leader involves the various stakeholders, especially teachers, in the process of decision making, instead of using solely top-down approaches.
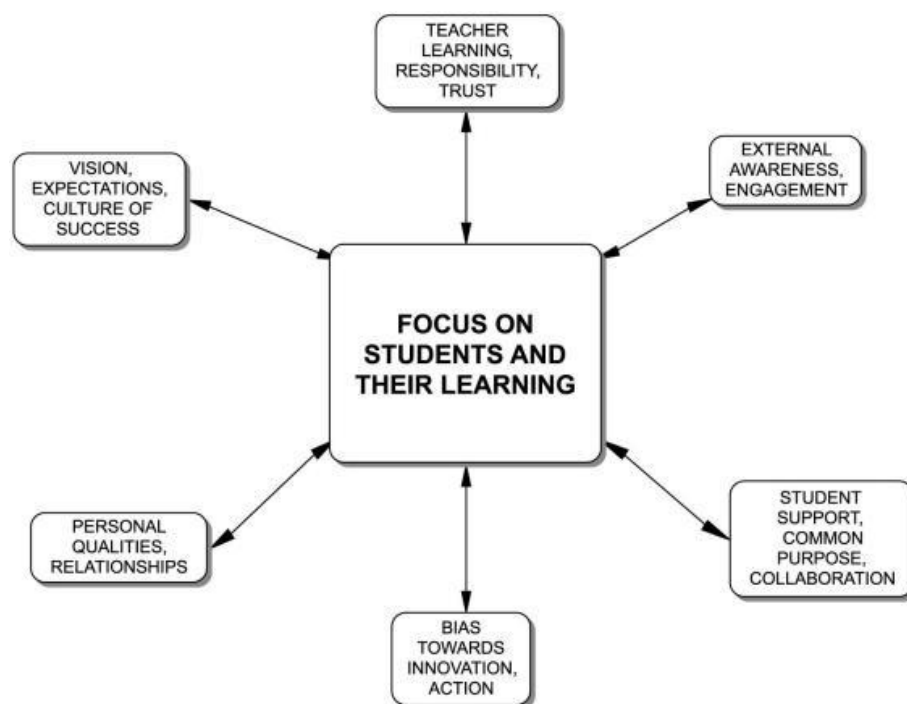
F*igure 1.1: A model of principal leadership for outstanding educational outcomes*
(source Dinham 2005)

Dinham's (2005) research, based on data from 38 secondary schools in New South Wales, Australia, led to the identification of characteristics of 'principal leadership' which produce 'outstanding educational outcomes'. Figure 1.1 shows 'a core category and six contributing categories' arising from these data. Dinham's (2005) categorisation of the six traits of a principal for 'outstanding educational outcomes' revolves around a common 'focus on students and their learning'. School leadership is an important contributor towards the success of students (Chatelier, 2022; Kelly, 2022). This is supported by Gurr et al. (2006) who state that the principals they interviewed had values that were 'strongly child-centred' and that 'all children matter' and 'all children can learn'. Leithwood et al. (2008), after an extensive review of literature, showed that '[s]chool leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning'. There are also similarities between factors and practices of successful leadership identified by Leithwood (2005), with the six traits mentioned by Dinham (2005), as shown in table 1.1.

First, the external awareness and engagement mentioned by Dinham (2005) matches the external factors stated by Leithwood (2005), while personal qualities and relationships (Dinham, 2025) can be interpreted as the internal factors by Leithwood (2005). Similarly, a bias towards innovation and action (Dinham, 2005) pairs with redesigning the organisation (Leithwood, 2005). In terms of developing people (Leithwood, 2005), Dinham (2005) calls it teacher learning. Finally, setting directions (Leithwood, 2005) are related to vision, expectations and a culture of success set by the school principal, while redesigning the organisation (Leithwood, 2005) is required to provide support to the students with a common purpose in mind.

Dinham (2005)	Leithwood (2005)
External awareness and engagement	External factors – holding schools more publicly accountable
A bias towards innovation and action	Redesigning the organisation
Personal qualities and relationships	Internal factors – skilled communicators, open-mindedness, creativity and lateral thinking
Vision, expectations and a culture of success	Setting directions
Teacher learning, responsibility and trust	Developing people
Student support, common purpose and collaboration	Redesigning the organisation

Table 1.1: Similarities in factors and practices of successful leadership identified by Leithwood (2005) and Dinham (2005)

These ideas are based on public schools but there are additional requirements for international school leaders. For example, cultural differences are important phenomena in an international school (Keller, 2015; Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). According to Roberts and Mancuso (2014:94), 83% of the recruitment advertisements for international school leaders state that the candidate needs to be 'someone who embraces diversity', which could be interpreted as someone who is ready and willing to deal with the cultural differences in an international school. In addition, since international schools are mainly 'for-profit' organisations, it is crucial for an international school leader to be able to 'balance the aims of educational and commercial effectiveness' (Machin, 2014:21).

Aims and Research Questions

Despite the rapid growth of international schools in Malaysia in the last 15 years, studies on international school leaders in Malaysia are very limited (Adams & Velarde, 2021; Bailey & Gibson, 2021; Gibson & Bailey, 2021; Velarde & Faizal, 2019). Even fewer are focused specifically on international school principals. This

study provides an understanding of the leadership roles of principals in international schools in Malaysia, including the backgrounds of the principals, the recruitment of principals, the main activities of the principals, the role relationships of the principals with other school stakeholders, and the balance between the professional and generic aspects of their role.

The six research questions are:

1. What are the origins and professional backgrounds of international school principals in Malaysia?

2. What is the relationship between the principals' origins and professional backgrounds, and their recruitment and selection?

3. How, and to what extent, were the international school principals in Malaysia prepared for the principal role?

4. What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?

5. What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?

6. What is the balance between professional and generic aspects of principal leadership in Malaysian international schools?

These questions are explained and elaborated below.

1. ***What are the origins and professional backgrounds of international school principals in Malaysia?***

This question aims to establish the background of international school principals in Malaysia, including their personal features, birth origin, educational background and professional background. It is widely understood that teachers are required to undergo training before they can become a teacher. This question addresses the parallel issue of whether this is the same for principals employed by the international schools in Malaysia. This includes exploring if the principals have gone through formal training before they take on the role of principal. There is very limited literature on the training received by international school principals before they take up the role (Bailey & Gibson, 2020). These background factors

help the researcher to build a link between the origins and professional backgrounds of the principals and the international schools that employ them. For example, it would help to establish whether a British curriculum international school would only employ a principal who is born in the UK, brought up in the UK and educated in the UK.

2. *What is the relationship between the principals' origins and professional backgrounds, and their recruitment and selection?*

The recruitment for a principal begins when the position becomes available in a school. This question will examine the complete recruitment and selection process experienced by the principals of international schools in Malaysia, beginning with how the principals became aware of the availability of the positions, for example, whether they were headhunted, or they had searched through recruitment sites for opportunities. This question will also explore any possible relationship between the principals' origins and professional backgrounds and the recruitment and selection process.

International schools in Malaysia can be broadly categorised as either for-profit or not-for-profit schools. The main difference between the two is that the school fees received not only cover the operating costs (notably staff salaries, maintenance costs, utilities costs, procurement costs) of running the schools, but for-profit schools also need to ensure that there is a surplus to pay to the investors of the schools. Not-for-profit schools do not have this concern as 'all the School's resources are focused on the development and well-being of its students' (The Alice Smith School, 2015). This is a practical consideration since the international schools in Malaysia are not funded by the government and the fees paid by the parents are used to run the school, including employing expatriates for senior positions, especially principals for some schools (Gibson & Bailey, 2021). This will provide a different insight into the research on recruitment of principals which hitherto focuses mainly on leadership styles (Roberts & Mancuso, 2014).

3. *How, and to what extent, were the international school principals in Malaysia prepared for the principal role?*

This question investigates the educational, emotional, mental and physical preparation of international school principals in Malaysia before their appointment, especially for first time international school principals. The first part of this question aims to find out what prompted the principals to seek employment in an international school in Malaysia. The second aspect relates to the questions they had prepared to ask the interviewers following shortlisting and whether roles and responsibilities was one of them.

This question also seeks to explore what research the principals from other countries did on Malaysia, what factors they considered were important when taking up the appointment, and whether other countries were considered before making the final decision to choose Malaysia. Subsequently, this question examines what preparatory work the principals did after accepting the new appointment, but before their arrival in Malaysia, such as contacting the senior leaders currently in the school, to find out more about the school, as well as to assign any tasks deemed necessary before their arrival.

4. *What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?*

Question 4 aims to ascertain the main roles and responsibilities of international school principals in Malaysia, as well as their main day-to-day activities. This question will focus on three main categories: teaching & learning, administration, and business. It also seeks to assess the differences between the principals' main activities, compared to their previous schools, especially government schools. The question also seeks to establish the similarities and differences in these activities among the different types of international schools in Malaysia. For example, there may be differences as a result of different fee levels. Another consideration is whether the composition (local/expatriates) of the students and/or staff influences the main activities of the principal.

5. *What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?*

There is existing literature on the impact of relationships between principals and certain members of the school, such as their teachers (Price, 2015; Price, 2012),

with beginning teachers (Lassilaa et. al., 2017), with staff (Watkins, 1969), and with students (Cranston, 2012). This question builds on this evidence to examine the role relationships of the principal has with different school stakeholders, namely parents, senior leadership team, middle leadership team, teachers and board members. It also investigates the satisfactions, benefits and difficulties, if any, that the principals face while trying to develop and maintain these relationships, as well as comparisons with the principals' previous experiences, especially if they were principals of government schools. The Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2018) defines satisfaction as 'a pleasant feeling that you get when you receive something you wanted, or when you have done something you wanted to do', whereas benefit is defined as 'an advantage or profit gained from something' (Oxford University Press, 2018b). This question also compares the perceptions of the stakeholders in terms of the relationships they have with the principals.

6. **What is the balance between professional and generic aspects of principal leadership in Malaysian international schools?**

The areas that an international school principal in Malaysia have to lead extend beyond academic and administrative aspects, since the schools are operated by private organisations and not by the government. These elements include the "profit making" side of the school, which is not a concern for government school principals in Malaysia. Those working in the for-profit international schools have to 'respond not only to the needs of educational stakeholders but also to the commercial demands of the 'bottom line'' (Machin, 2014:19). Even those working in the not-for-profit international schools are required to balance the 'three bottom lines: one 'financial,' one 'academic' and 'the intangible core'' (MacDonald, 2009:81).

Therefore, this question seeks to establish the time that international school principals in Malaysia spend on their professional activities (such as instructional leadership and teaching & learning), compared to that spent on generic areas (such as finance, human resource, etc.), thereby enabling a judgement to be made about how the principals strike a balance between the two aspects.

Thesis Structure

Chapter one defines the different contexts of the study, including policy context, institutional context and theoretical context. The chapter also explains the aims and the six research questions of the study.

Chapter two, the literature review, focuses on defining international schools, demand for international schools, global research on principals in international schools and Malaysian research on principals in international schools.

Chapter three explains the methodology and methods of the study. A mixed-methods approach, more specifically a sequential mixed-methods design, was utilised to address the research questions. A survey, involving a census, followed by three case studies through volunteer and convenience sampling, allowed the author to obtain data from a broader perspective. The chapter concludes with a deliberation of the ethical approaches and authenticity of the study in the areas of reliability, validity and triangulation.

Chapter four analyses the data from the survey questionnaire, with a total of eight categories, including biography, career progression, qualifications and training, recruitment and selection, stakeholder relationships, difficulties in enacting the role of principal, benefits of enacting the role of principal, and satisfaction from enacting the role of principal.

Chapters five, six and seven discuss case study schools A, B and C respectively. Each chapter adopts an integrated thematic approach to present the findings, with each theme linking to a research question.

Chapter eight discusses and analyses the themes arising from the data, linked to insights from the literature. The themes elaborated are origins and backgrounds of the principals, professional and educational backgrounds of the principals,

recruitment and selection, preparation for principalship, roles, responsibilities and activities of the principals, satisfactions and benefits reported by the principals, difficulties reported by the principals, stakeholder relationships with the principals and emergent themes.

Chapter nine, the conclusion, addresses the research questions and discusses the significance of the study and its contribution towards a better understanding of the role of international secondary school principals in Malaysia.

Overview

This chapter began by defining the context of the research. This is an important step due to the broad field of study. The process of setting up an international school has changed greatly since the inception of the first international school. Subsequently, the student population has also changed from providing only for children of expatriates to include children of local nationalities, thus resulting in the exponential growth of international schools worldwide, especially in the last three decades. The increase in the number of international schools in Malaysia has also been significant, notably in the last 20 years. As more international schools are established, more principals are required to run the schools. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to provide an understanding of the leadership roles of these principals in Malaysia. The research questions address the main aspects of the role, including backgrounds, recruitment and selection process, main activities in the school, role relationships with stakeholders, and management of professional and generic aspects of the role. The next chapter comprises the literature review.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Literature search strategy

'Literature searching is as important as the work of evaluating, comparing, and forming conclusions about the literature identified' (Jaffe & Cowell, 2014:236) and review of pertinent literature allows us to appreciate the 'breadth and depth of the existing body of work and identify gaps to explore' (Xiao & Watson, 2019:93). This study uses the narrative review approach as it is 'the most common type of descriptive review in planning' (Xiao & Watson, 2019:95), and 'is useful in gathering together a volume of literature in a specific subject area and summarizing and synthesizing it' (Cronin et. al., 2008). The main channel used to search for literature are the electronic databases: NUsearch (the University of Nottingham's online library search tool) and Google Scholar. The keywords used to search for literature were derived from the research questions, following the start small and go big approach. For example, the search began with keywords "international school principals in Malaysia", and when the results only showed a few articles, the keywords used were broadened to "international schools". Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were also used, for example "principal" OR "head of school" AND "international school". '[B]ackward search to identify relevant work cited by the articles' (Xiao & Watson, 2019:104) were also used so that a more complete list of literature could be derived. A total of 217 useful and relevant articles for the writing of this thesis were found using the above literature search strategy.

Defining international schools

Introduction

The term 'international' stems from the term 'national' and loosely means the involvement of more than two countries. Another interpretation is the word '*inter-nation* [which] involves relationships between and among countries, people, systems and cultures' (Knight, 2013:374). In the context of education, national schools (or public schools as they are known in some countries) follow the national educational systems as they are fully governed by their Ministries of

Education (MoE) and these schools are required to follow national rules and guidelines, such as the national curriculum, disciplinary procedures, assessment, and operational matters, 'providing consistency in practice' (Kelly, 2022:243). In comparison, international schools have more autonomy in terms of the curricula that they can offer and the way the schools are operated, although they are still under the purview of the MoE, to some extent. A distinctive feature is that the curriculum offered in an international school is not the national curriculum of the country where the international school is located (Fahey et. al., 2021). In general, international schools are set up to provide 'international education' to students who will become global citizens, coupled with global mindsets and views (Bates, 2012; Hayden, 2011a; Wylie, 2008).

One of the earlier attempts to define an international school was by Terwilliger (1972), quoted by Hayden and Thompson (1995). Terwilliger (1972) stated four conditions:

1. The majority of the student population are not the citizens of the country where the school is set up.

2. The proportion of members in the Board of Directors in terms of locals and foreigners is similar to the ratio of that in the student population of the school.

3. A recruitment policy where the staff to be recruited need to have significant experience working in different cultural environments so that he or she is able to use his or her personal experience to guide and help students to adapt to the new international school environment.

4. The curriculum offered is an extraction of 'best content' and 'most effective instructional practices' from the different country's education systems, so that the students face minimum resistance and obstacles when being transferred to other international schools.

From another perspective, Hayden (2011a) argues that it might be quite pointless to discuss the conditions that determine whether a school is 'international', due to the variety of international schools set up around the world. Lallo and Resnik

(2008) concur that there is limited resemblance among the international schools, except for some student-related commonalities. Lallo and Resnik (2008) cited these four common traits of international school students, based on the findings of Hayden and Thompson (1995):

1. The students are from different countries.

2. The students can be from one single country but in a foreign country.

3. The students learn their own language and culture, while also learning foreign languages and cultures which are the same for all students in the school.

4. The students are educated similarly, regardless of the international schools they study in, as the schools are 'guided by an ideology of tolerance, recognition of difference, curiosity and multiculturalism among students coming from a range of ethnic and national backgrounds', disregarding 'assumptions of particular national, cultural or religious orientations' (Lallo & Resnik, 2008:171).

Gross (2023) consolidated the attempts by various researchers on defining what constitutes an 'international school'. Before the 1980s, an international school was defined by the identity of the student population in those schools. Subsequently, the focus shifted to the curriculum offered, followed by the staff composition. The latest view (Gross, 2023) is to just accept the claim made by the schools themselves (Machin, 2017).

Different countries' approaches towards international schools
The level of acceptance of local students into international schools varies across different countries. Initially, many countries imposed restrictions to prevent their citizens from enrolling into international schools. However, recently, 'in most countries … the barrier between international schools and the local education system has been breached' at different levels (Kim & Mobrand, 2019:311). Kim and Mobrand (2019) shared examples of countries imposing different levels of restrictions on the acceptance of students into their international schools.

- *No restrictions*

International schools in Malaysia can accept unlimited numbers of local students since 2012 when the government lifted the enrolment restriction on their nationals (Bailey, 2015a, 2015b; Bailey & Gibson, 2021; Gibson & Bailey, 2022; Javadi et. al., 2017; Keeling, 2015; Nasa & Pilay, 2017). The situation is similar in Thailand with the deregulation of the private schools' market in 1992, allowing Thai citizens to enrol into international schools (Machin, 2017).

- *Partial restrictions*

There is a range of international schools in Korea which can accept Korean students at different proportions, from 30% to 100%, subject to conditions such as whether they have stayed overseas for a certain period of time, or the location of the schools. For example, there is no restriction in the number of Korean students which can be accepted by the international schools in the Free Economic Zones or Special Economic Zones (Song, 2013). The situation is similar in Vietnam where up to 50% of Vietnamese students can be enrolled into each international school owned by foreigners. This is the result of a major loosening of restrictions when the new Decree took effect on 1 August 2018 in Vietnam, where previously, the primary international schools could only admit 10% local citizens and the secondary international schools could only admit 20% (Fraser, 2018).

- *High restrictions*

Indonesia has two types of international schools: one only for foreign students and the other for Indonesian nationals. Besides not being allowed to use the word 'international' in the name of the school, Indonesian students in this second type of international/intercultural school are required to study Indonesian culture and language subjects. They are also required to take the national examinations. Similarly, Chinese citizens are free to enrol and study foreign curricula in senior secondary schools only, because the primary and junior secondary students can only study the Chinese national curriculum (Wu & Koh, 2022). Comparatively, even though Singapore has strict rules which prevent Singaporean students from

being enrolled into international schools, there are three international schools run by local operators which can accept Singaporean students.

Categorisation of international schools

One of the most common categorisations of international schools is by Hayden (2011b) who identifies them by the types of international schools that are available:

1. International schools which are set up for expatriates only and are usually not for-profit;

2. International schools which are set up by large education groups with numerous branches around the world, such as those operated by Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) which has schools in Egypt, France, India, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Switzerland, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States. Some education groups have set up more than one school in certain countries, with the schools located in different states;

3. International schools which branch out from their 'well-established parent schools', usually in the United Kingdom, such as Dulwich and Harrow;

4. Other international schools which are set up by local commercial organisations.

Hayden and Thompson (2013) subsequently simplified the above into three types of international schools, as noted by several researchers (Bunnell et. al., 2016; Cao, 2022; Gross, 2023; Hill, 2016; Poole, 2020):

A. Type A refers to the 'traditional' international schools which are similar to Type 1 schools above. They are set up primarily for expatriates who do not wish to send their children to the national schools of the country where they are working.

B. Type B are the 'ideological' international schools with the objective of educating youths from different backgrounds to promote world peace and better understanding with one another. A distinctive example given was the United World Colleges.

C. Type C are the 'non-traditional' international schools which target the local students of the host country, usually the more well-to-do families who can afford the school fees. There is an increase in the number of Type C international schools (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Bunnell et. al., 2016; Hill, 2016; Tanu, 2016). Most of the international schools in China belong to this group (Cao, 2022).

Different countries also have their own country-specific categorisation of international schools. Indonesia has two types: one for foreigners and one for their citizens, while China has four types: one (schools for children of foreign workers) for foreigners and the other three (Sino-foreign cooperative schools, bilingual schools and state schools with an international division) at senior secondary level allow their citizens to enter to learn foreign curricula (Kim & Mobrand, 2019). The latter three types of international schools are all classified under 'Chinese internationalised schools' (Jin, 2022). Primary and junior secondary education, i.e. Grade 1 to 9, in China is highly regulated and the students are required to study the national curriculum (Wu & Koh, 2022). In Australia, there are also 'international' state schools where foreign students are charged more than AUS$10,000 per year while the local nationals can study for free (Hill, 2016).

Hill (2016) suggests a scale of 0 to 10 to determine how 'international' a school is. The adapted version of his model is shown in figure 2.1. A fully national school offering the national education programme to the local citizens, and fully taught by local teachers, is at a score of 0 (zero). Both state and independent national schools, even though they differ in terms of admission criteria, funding avenues and governing structures, belong to this group too. At the other end of the spectrum, a fully international school targeting culturally diverse international students, and teaching an international education programme by culturally diverse group of staff, is at a score of 10. Between these two categories, there is a 'spectrum of institutions…which serve the multiple needs of diverse populations through diverse curriculums and in diverse locations' (Machin, 2017:133). For

example, state schools which offer international programmes (such as in China) can be rated between 0 and 5, while international schools which have mainly local students can be rated between 5 and 10, depending on how 'international' they are. As some schools offer a combination of local and global education in their schools, Lallo and Resnik (2008) described this as 'glocal education'.

- for local citizens of the country
- national education programme
- culturally homogeneous students & staff

State: totally inclusive, funded by government, accountable to Ministry of Education

Independent: sets admission criteria, funded by tuition fees, accountable to its Board, for-profit or not-for-profit

- for internationally mobile students
- international education programme
- culturally diverse students & staff
- sets admission criteria, usually inclusive
- funded by tuition fees
- accountable to its Board
- for-profit or not-for-profit
- no privileges or control to any one group

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Fully National   Fully International

Figure 2.1: Typology of schools (adapted from Hill, 2016:13)

The other manner of categorising international schools is through the curricula that they offer, which is an important factor that affects parents' decisions on which international school to choose for their children. Hayden (2011b) discusses the most offered programmes in most international schools worldwide. For the primary school programme, there is a choice between the IB Primary Years Programme and the International Primary Curriculum. Both originate from the UK and are offered by two different organisations. For secondary school programmes, there are three major options available, namely the IB Middle Year Programme, IGCSE and Edexel. The most widely accepted pre-university programmes internationally are the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and the A-Level Programme.

Demand for international schools

The original objective in setting up international schools was to educate the children of expatriates so that they could experience a similar learning environment to their home country (Brewster, 2002; James, & Sheppard, 2014). However, international schools in the 21st century no longer solely serve the children of diplomats and expatriate business people. Their clientele has expanded to include local students who form the main student population in some international schools (Bailey, 2015b; Hayden, 2011b; Song 2013; Yamato & Bray, 2002 & 2006). This has increased the demand for international school education globally, from about 1,000 in the 1990s, to almost 13,000 in mid-2022; with the number anticipated to increase perpetually until 2030 (Bunnell & Gardner-McTaggart, 15 Mar 2024). There are several reasons for this phenomenon.

Entry route to reputable universities

Social status and having a 'head start' is considered to be crucial in this highly globalised world. For example, some parents believe that being educated in an international school gives their children direct entry to reputable global universities (Bates, 2012; Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; MacKenzie, 2010), in addition to allowing them to become an 'international citizen' (Brewster, 2002). This is supported by the findings of Lee and Wright (2016) where a good percentage of students who graduated from the international schools with IBDP in China were accepted by top ranking universities in the world. In addition, Lee and Wright (2016:127) realise that 'the IBDP at elite international schools in China served not just as a vehicle for international student mobility, but as a vehicle for what [they] coin as 'elite ISM' for some students'. This 'international student mobility' (ISM) is a unique feature for the elite international schools in China, where their students have an array of top universities to choose from, following graduation from the schools. Similarly, due to the connections some of the international schools have with universities, the parents, for example those in Hong Kong, view the international schools as the 'arrival lounges' for their children so as to prepare

them when they move on to study in those institutions in the future (Yamato & Bray, 2006).

Higher disposable income

Yamato and Bray (2002) gave other situational social reasons for this trend; although specific to Hong Kong, they might be applicable to other countries, in Asia and beyond. First, there has been a reduction in birth rates in many developed countries, meaning that families generally have higher disposable income now. This could indirectly imply that parents have higher expectations for their children's education (Yamato & Bray 2002). Many Hong Kong parents are also becoming wealthier and better educated, thus allowing them to have more choices to select the types of education for their children (Yamato & Bray 2002). Similarly, there is an increase in demand for international schools in developing countries, with an 'insatiable desire for English-medium and Western-style education' (Tanu, 2016:432), due to a growing proportion of higher salaried 'global middle class' (Gross, 2023:76).

Quality education in international schools

The perceived quality of education provided by international schools is another reason which attracts parents (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). In the case of Malaysia, some parents expressed their disappointment with the 'sub-par standard of the national schools (Ignatius, 2022), regarding that standards of teaching in public schools have dropped (Nasa & Pilay, 2017). They based that opinion on the declining performance of Malaysia in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Not only did Malaysia show a drop in all three literacy measures evaluated in PISA 2022, the scores of Malaysian students were also below the world average for all the measures, i.e. reading, mathematics and science (Rajaendram, 2023). Similar concerns are expressed in developed countries, such as Germany, where the number of parents turning to education in international schools increases when German public schools perform poorly in PISA (Schwindt, 2003). In addition, some parents' inclination towards international schools 'can be linked to the deterioration of public schools in some

contexts as a result of poor management, poor facilities, and high student-teacher ratio' (Alfaraidy, 2020:222).

Comparatively, parents have greater confidence in the international curriculum provided by international schools, which is 'globally recognised and tends to have a higher standard of learning' (Ignatius, 2022). International schools are also known to cultivate global citizens since students are taught topics including 'ethics, diversity, global issues and sustainability' (FMT Reporters, 2022). This is supported by the interviews conducted by Lee and Wright (2016:128), where a headteacher shared that some university admissions officers told them they prefer IBDP students who come with 'some additional skills'; and one of the reasons an IBDP student was called for interview with a university s/he had applied for was because s/he studies the IBDP. International education, encompassing international curricula, international syllabi and international examinations, was more appealing to the parents surveyed by MacKenzie (2010). The literature reviewed by Alfaraidy (2020) also advocates curriculum as one of the two most important factors affecting parent's decision to send their children to study in international schools, and this is further confirmed by his study on 431 Saudi parents. However, Hill (2016) provided a different perspective, arguing that many parents do not pay attention to the school's education programme. He feels that '[a]s long as the school has a good reputation, and gives a sound education, they are happy for it to be a national or international programme' (Hill, 2016:19).

English-medium education

Enrolling a child to study in an international school so that s/he can receive English-medium education is the most important reason given by the parents studied by MacKenzie (2010) in Switzerland, Japan, Argentina, Israel, and Singapore. Similarly in Malaysia, according to the Chairman of the International School Consultancy, Nicholas Brummit, 'there is a massive demand for English-speaking education in Malaysia, as in several other countries' (Keeling, 2015). One of the main reasons for the increase in demand for international schools is the growth in the number of local students (Bailey & Gibson, 2021). Local parents who

send their children to study in international schools acknowledge that it is imperative for them to receive English-medium secondary education in this highly globalised society, especially for those residing in countries where the main medium of instruction is not English (Brewster, 2002; Bunnell et. al., 2020; Fryer, 2009; Nasa & Pilay, 2017; Ng, 2012; Song, 2013; Tanu, 2016; Techavijit, 2007; Yamato & Bray, 2002 & 2006). For example, 'English medium international schools have presented themselves to South Korea's privileged classes as an optimal solution to the latter's need to ensure social reproduction, closure and exclusion in the age of globalisation' (Song, 2013:153). Because 'English-medium international schools are elite-class reproducing institutions' (Song, 2013:136) and are deemed superior to national schools (Bunnell et. al., 2016), some Korean mothers go to the extent of moving with their children to other countries, including Malaysia, so that their children can study in international schools to 'gain stronger English skills and diplomas, such as IB and IGCSE, which are attractive to university admissions officers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia' (Kim & Mobrand, 2019:313). The growing ease of travelling from one country to another has also helped in the setting up of more English-medium international schools, especially in Asia (Tarc & Tarc, 2015).

Conversely, for expatriates, where education for their children is paid for by their companies but they have no choice of the school to enrol in (usually non-English nation-state international schools, for example German and Korean), the expatriates are willing to 'take a short-term economic loss, for a long-term investment in their children's education' by paying for their children's education in English-medium international schools (Adams & Agbenyega, 2019:657). Some parents also believe that, when their children are immersed in the international school environment, offering a 'certain form of cultural capital', the children can acquire a 'more prosperous and advantageous future, offering greater options and job-pathways' (Adams & Agbenyega, 2019; Bunnell & Atkinson, 2020:263).

New policies and/or change of policies

The political situation, and too rapid changes of policy and/or implementation of new policies in a country, might not be well received by the parents, contributing to the growth and demand for international school education. In the case of Hong Kong, when it was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, some parents resorted to international schools for their children because of a loss of confidence in the national education system due to the change of government (Yamato & Bray, 2002) and 'an endless and constant stream of changes' (Ng, 2012:122). Many Hong Kong parents also felt that the local education system was too rigid, and focussed too much on academic performance, thus prompting the parents to choose international school education for their children (Yamato & Bray, 2002). A further contributing factor that supported this trend was when the mother tongue, i.e. Mandarin, education policy was launched in 1998 by the post-transition government. The parents worried that this might imply that their children will have reduced time or opportunity to receive English-medium education in the public schools (Ng, 2012; Yamato & Bray, 2002). In addition, some parents were unable to adapt to the regular 'ill-received and inconsistent reforms' implemented by the government in the public schools in Hong Kong, thus having 'lost confidence in the education system and [they] do not want to see their children's future put at risk' (Ng, 2012:130).

These phenomena could also be used to explain the situation in Malaysia as both are Asian countries with strong Asian cultural background and values, and because the residents of both countries turned to international school education as a result of dissatisfaction about their respective government's educational policies. Similarly in Malaysia, frequent changes in government policies have prompted the parents to opt for international schools for their children (Kim & Mobrand, 2019). Since its independence in 1957, the Malay language has been stipulated as the national and official language in the field of education in Malaysia and this was specifically reinforced after the racial riots in 1969 (Gill, 2005). In order for Malaysians to become more competitive in the fields of science and technology, the MOE announced that Mathematics and Science would be taught in English

from 2003, beginning with Primary One and Secondary One and then ultimately applied to all levels (Gill, 2005; See, 2010). This policy received both positive responses (See, 2010) and negative resentments (Gill, 2005) from people with different perspectives. Subsequently, the MOE reversed its decision for these two subjects back to Malay in 2012 (See, 2010). According to See (2010), if the government had not been 'too ambitious' when implementing the original policy in 2003, by only involving some schools, as well as giving options for the parents to decide on which schools they would like to send their children to, there might not have been a necessity to reverse the policy.

From a broader perspective, the trend of globalisation has resulted in the governments of some countries amending their policies, to increase student enrolment and setting up international schools in their country, including Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea, and India (Gross, 2023; Machin, 2017).

Diverse personal reasons

As well as the other reasons discussed earlier, some parents have their own individual reasons. For example, Yamato and Bray (2002:28) comment that the children of some returning migrants to Hong Kong 'could no longer fit into the local education system'. This could be due to differences in the curriculum and/or ethos of the education systems the children have studied in other countries. Language barriers could be another concern, for example, when the children are not fluent in Chinese, and they could not enrol into Hong Kong's local schools. Another personal consideration relates to when parents are preparing to migrate to other countries, or the intention to send their children to study overseas in the future (Bailey, 2015b; Velarde, 2017). The parents may feel that it is better for their children to have early immersion into the education system, including the language used, of the destination countries (Bates, 2012; Yamato & Bray, 2002). Parents may also send their children to study in international schools for their own and/or their children's wellbeing. For example, a parent commented that, when their son was studying in a local school in Hong Kong, 'there was no life for both of [them]' as '[t]here were so many things to do' (Ng, 2012:130). The parent might

have to spend time to assist with the son's schoolwork. Some more affluent families send their children to study in English-medium international schools, to avoid the comparatively more stressful environment in the public schools (Song, 2013). Similarly, some Malaysian parents opt to send their children to study in international schools because they saw 'their children struggling to cope with the national school syllabus, or meet the demands of vernacular school curriculum' (Nasa & Pilay, 2017).

Supply of international schools

It is equally important to look also at the supply of international schools because, if there is no corresponding increase in the supply to meet the demand, there may be very limited growth in the international school sector. The number of international schools globally is expected to double with an additional 7,200 schools between 2017 and 2027 (Bunnell, 2019). MacDonald (2006) established a direct relationship between the growth rates of international schools with that of international trade and added that international schools are a multi-billion-dollar industry globally. While international schools were mainly non-profit organisations more than 50 years ago, 'most international schools are for profit [now] and the future will continue to be dominated by profit-making schools and school groups' (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013:30). The international school industry is a viable and 'profitable' business (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013) and more English-medium international schools are set up to target wealthy local households (Hayden, 2011b ; Tanu, 2016). Despite the extremely high fees that international schools are charging (some as high as 45 times more than the local school fees), the demand for international school education remains high (Song 2013; Yamato & Bray, 2002, 2003, 2006).

The traditional perception that demand creates supply could be reversed here, so that supply triggers demand, at times. Some examples include the setting up of secondary schools for girls in Norwich (Sperandio, 2002) and the emerging popularity of English-medium schools in Bangladesh (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2017). In Malaysia, for example, the government set up education hubs, including

two high-profile ones which are known as EduCity Iskandar in Johor and Kuala Lumpur Education City (Keeling, 2015), to attract students from other countries (Knight, 2013). Malaysia managed to attract students from adjacent Asian countries to study in their international schools (Dolby & Rahman, 2008).

The establishment of international schools in a country could be boosted by its economic development. After China opened its doors in 1970s to external investors, the number of foreigners working in the country consistently increased, thus providing the international schools market with the children of these expatriates, particularly in Shanghai (Yamato & Bray, 2006). The number of international schools in Shanghai grew from one in the early 1980s, to 25 by 2001; by 2004, there were 60 international schools in China (Ng, 2012). In 20 years, as of February 2024, the number of international schools in China has grown by almost 19 times to 1,127 in China, with 212 in Shanghai (ISC Research). Shanghai was also one of the pioneer cities in China being granted the liberty to introduce new policies, including allowing foreign investment in education. More international schools were set up as a result and they are popular with the Chinese migrants too, who have returned to China and are eligible to be enrolled in international schools (Ng, 2012). This also happens in other Asian countries, resulting in 'market creation', when they compete for foreigners to work in their countries. This has 'promoted the growth of corporate-oriented international schools to serve economic purposes,… [so as to] offer top-rated education facilities for the children of foreign staff' (Kim & Mobrand, 2019:313).

Conversely, it is noteworthy that, amidst the increase in demand for international schools worldwide, not all kinds of international schools are well sought after. Those which cater to the more niche markets could even experience a drop in student enrolment, or eventually having to shutter, such as the final International Israeli School outside Israel, located in Paris, which had to close its doors in 2005 (Lallo & Resnik, 2008). This is because more Israeli diplomats are choosing not to send their children into the 'state-sponsored educational institutions' overseas as they want their children to experience 'international education' when they are

staying overseas. This is similar to the discussion above where expat parents would rather pay for the school fees of their children to study in English-medium international schools, even though their companies can sponsor their children to study in the non-English nation-state international schools (Adams & Agbenyega, 2019). This emphasises the importance of supplying the correct type of international schools to meet the demands of the market.

Global research on principals in international schools

<u>Introduction</u>

Although the number of international schools has increased rapidly over the past few decades, research on international school leadership is still 'thin on the ground' (Lee & Walker, 2018:465), 'very under-reported and under-theorized' (Bunnell, 2021:560), with 'relatively little research focused on the particularities of leading international schools' (Chatelier, 2022:2). Kelly (2022:245) adds that the 'leadership needed in international schools is different from school leadership as practiced in national public education systems'. As aptly stated by Bunnell (2021:560), 'leadership in 'International Schools' (globally) is a neglected area of concern'. The rest of this chapter will review available literature on international school principals internationally and in Malaysia.

There are many different interpretations about the 'leader' of the school. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013:841) view anyone in the school who is 'in [the] leadership position such as director, principal, vice principal, head of department, level coordinator, or similar position that is formally designated by the school' as a leader. To Hill (2014:185), 'each teacher is the 'leader' of his or her class'. Alternatively, one could regard the leader of the school as the single topmost position holder of the school, who is commonly known as the principal, headmaster/headmistress, head of school, etc. (Hayden, 2011a; Keller, 2015; Roberts & Mancuso, 2014). This 'single topmost position holder' is the focus of this research and, for ease of reference, we refer to this person as the principal. The key areas of review in this section are selection and recruitment of

international school principals, main challenges faced by principals, and activities of principals.

<u>Selection and recruitment of international school principals</u>

Selecting the right person to be the principal of a school is an important decision. This is because it is becoming more apparent that 'principal leadership is a key factor in school improvement' and there is now a 'shift towards school-based management [that] places new demands of autonomy, efficiency and accountability on the principal' (Wildy et al., 2010:308). Hill (2014:187), citing Hersey (2012:134), states that 'a principal's beliefs and values are central to developing and supporting the vision and culture of a school community, especially in relation to the moral imperatives of education'. That is indicative of the high influence a principal has on the school and on the type of school it will turn out to be under the direction of the principal.

There are several other aspects of leadership in international schools which are seldom found, or less prominent, in a national school context. The first, that requires the 'sensitive touch' of the principal, is the managing of 'cultural dualities' (Keller, 2015) in respect of the staff (local and expatriate) and students (local and foreign). The cultural background of the principal could be the 'third culture' that the principal needs to consider, especially in a 'new country where a new language, directions, and customs might differ significantly from his or her own' (Murakami-Ramalho, 2008:83). This is further supported by Hill's (2014:184) stance claiming that '[a] school leader has legitimate authority to act, but that will not be sufficient for sustained leadership if those actions are not in line with a moral order, values, beliefs and metaphors which are common to the staff, students and parents'.

Therefore, having the right principal for an international school is even more important, due to the unique nature and organisational structure of the international school. Given the variety of international schools, there is no single kind of leadership style that can be classified as *the* way to run an international

school (Hill, 2014; Hayden, 2011a). However, based on the analysis of advertisements looking for international school principals, the most commonly used term is managerial leader (Roberts & Mancuso, 2014). This is because a good international school principal is expected to manage the three bottom lines well, 'financial', 'academic' and 'the intangible core' (MacDonald, 2009). The other traits sought after by school boards of international schools, when recruiting principals, include 'good communicator', able to embrace diversity, 'inspirational motivator', 'good interpersonal skills', have 'a sense of humour' and 'approachable and friendly' (Roberts & Mancuso, 2014).

Westerners, especially those who are White, appear to have higher chances of being selected and recruited to be principals of international schools. Recent research by Bunnell and Gardner-McTaggart (15 Mar 2024) on 247 'premium non-traditional international schools' gloabally found that these schools are dominantly (88%) led by White senior leaders. After combining the 2021 study, *Determining the Diversity Baseline in International Schools* by the Council of International Schools on 175 not-for-profit traditional international schools, the percentage of White senior leaders remain high, with 83%, out of '422 well-established and well-regarded premium international schools' being White (Bunnell & Gardner-McTaggart, 15 Mar 2024:10). This figure is very similar to the finding by Phan (2019), reported by Bunnell and Gardner-McTaggart (15 Mar 2024), where 82% out of 190 international school senior leaders are White. In the study by Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013), although the respondents are not solely principals, which include vice-principals, heads of department and level coordinators, it is safe to conclude that those international schools are led by White senior leaders, as 93.3% of the 193 leaders are Caucasians.

Main challenges faced by international school principals

International schools are complex entities and leading one could be challenging. For example, while its stated vision may be to 'promote equity and sustainability', it is also a contributor towards the 'reproduction of inequality' as more international schools are now catering to the privileged locals who could afford

high schools fees (Chatelier, 2022:1). Amid the many challenges faced by the leaders of international schools, Gardener-McTaggart's research found that 'the leaders themselves are a large part of those challenges' (2017:59) because of the precarity of an international school principal (Bunnell, 2021; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). As Keller (2015:908) puts it, the international school is seen as 'a jungle filled with dangers of power, conflict, competition and organizational politics [and] the leader must be an effective advocate and skilled with political savvy'. Caffyn (2018:504) views challenges metaphorically as 'vampirism' since they drain energy, are 'zones of conflict' and 'locations of … struggle'. The rest of this sub-section will adapt the model of Speirs (2017) to examine the seven main categories of challenges faced by the international school principals, i.e. parents, students, staff, governance, external local environment, internal school community, and personal and family issues. I have added managing the triple bottom line, as the eighth category of challenge.

1. Parents

As an international school in a foreign country, parents have certain expectations of the school, including the 'right balance' of curriculum to be offered in the school (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). While the main objective is to ensure that their children are fully immersed in an environment of international pedagogy and curriculum, the parents also want their children to not only remember their roots, but to be proud of them (Keller, 2015). This is stated as an important reason why some parents choose a dual-language international school for their children in Hong Kong (Fryer, 2009). In a study by Ng (2012:129), a parent selected a particular international school for the son so that while 'he was able to work freely on his personal, social and academic development…, [he will keep] what we Chinese value a lot about being respectful to elders, parents and teachers and about keeping their manners…, [and] he understands that he's not a Westerner, that he's a Chinese'. Differences between local and expat parent characteristics could also result in diverse parent expectations (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Speirs, 2017; Techavijit, 2007). Another example of conflicting expectations in IBDP schools could happen when the

schools focus on IB philosophy while parents pay more attention to examination results which are required for admissions to universities (Lee et. al., 2018). It was also challenging to the principals when the owners of the schools intervened immediately when 'something did not look right to the parents' (Kelly, 2022:251).

2. Students

Several international schools are set up in countries where English is not the main language. As a result, '[t]he biggest challenge [to some of these principals] is trying to provide an international standard curriculum at all grades while the majority of students enrolling have limited English language skills' (Speirs, 2017:35). Next, when students move with their parents from one place to another due to different job postings (Murakami-Ramalho, 2008), this causes high turnover of students in international schools (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). Students who migrate frequently with their parents could become 'Third Culture Kids' (Bailey & Cooker, 2019; Speirs, 2017), meaning that their cultural attachment may not belong fully to the country of the passports they are holding, or the place they are staying currently. As Bailey and Cooker (2019:127) aptly put it, '[a] Third Culture Kid (TCK) will feel a sense of connection to all of the cultures involved, but not feel that they belong fully in any'. The school, and thus the principal, has a very important role in shaping and developing these children in how they perceive the world, 'their aspirations towards future mobility; their perception of their own access to different cultures; and the conception of their position within the world as a 'global citizen'' (Meyer, 2019:13).

3. Staff

'Transience is a constant in international schools' (Kelly, 2022:245) and the most crucial teacher-related challenge which international school principals need to address is the high turnover rate of teachers (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). This is largely because most expatriate teachers are employed on short-term contracts (Murakami-Ramalho, 2008), around one to three years (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018). Questionnaire

respondents to Speirs (2017:35) commented that '[r]ecruitment is the most important thing [s/he does] all year' and '[s]taffing is the biggest challenge facing international schools today'. The principal plays a very important role here for as 'a supportive head was considered to be the most important factor in teacher retention' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018:155). Besides that, principals need to act as mediators when middle managers and teachers do not 'work effectively together, often having very diverse views and attitudes toward learning' (Caffyn, 2018:509). Managing staff from diverse backgrounds is another challenge because, to a school leader, his/her 'pastoral challenges are staff issues, not student matters' (Speirs, 2017:36).

4. Governance

'[G]overnance was the number one issue for heads' (Kelly: 2022:248) and the involvement of the board members (Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010) creates tensions for principals, especially when they are 'in conflict with leadership' (Caffyn, 2018:512). The 'complexity of governance in international schools, with respect to autonomy for leaders and the ambiguity and lack of stability around governance and school practices', for example not being involved in the resource- and programme-purchase decisions, could be partly responsible for that (Kelly, 2022:244). Furthermore, according to Machin (2014), some principals are unhappy, or even angry, when the board members micro-manage them. Organisational context challenges (Lee et. al., 2018) such as this is also reported as one of the main reasons for the resignation of principals (Benson, 2011; Keller, 2015).

5. External local environment

Although international schools usually enjoy greater autonomy in running the schools as compared to the national schools, most, if not all, countries set up departments within their MoE to oversee the private, including international, institutions. This poses a challenge to the principals when coping with 'local regulations and legalities' (Speirs, 2017:36), especially when they do not understand the rationale behind those rules. For example, in Qatar, international

school principals find it puzzling not being able to recruit teachers who are above 50 years of age and inability to change facilities without the approval of the MoE (Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2023). In Saudi Arabia, sex segregation is a rule set by the MoE where boys and girls must study in different buildings and only be taught by same-sex teachers (Hammad & Shah, 2018), resulting in logistics, administrative and building management issues. International schools in Saudi Arabia are also expected to follow the local to foreigner recruitment ratio of 1:10 (termed 'Saudization') and this is an issue to some principals who view the Saudi teachers as 'less qualified and having lower commitment to work than their expatriate peers' (Hammad & Shah, 2018:766). Cultural dissonance could happen when there are distinct cultural differences between two parties, for example having 85% expatriate teachers being managed by 100% locals in the board (Speirs, 2017). A greater challenge occurs when the balancing act is between the 'international' of the international schools which promote a multicultural approach, and the conservative 'national' where 'monocultural nationalism' is more prominent in the host countries (Hammad & Shah, 2018). Language barriers are another challenge for principals when English-medium international schools are set up in countries where English is not commonly used (Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2023).

6. Internal school community

School histories (Caffyn, 2018), and high turnover of school leaders, could be a challenge to the principals. For example, Murakami-Ramalho and Benham (2010) wrote about an international school principal, who had worked in the school for almost 20 years, and was asked to leave without any reasons given. The departure of this principal was impactful, causing many teachers to resign and 'leaving the remaining ones confused and bitter' (Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010:632). The inability of the two subsequent principals to allay the situation worsened it and they did not stay in the school for long. The fourth principal was only told that there were 'restrictions' during the interview, without being informed of the details. However, she only managed to turnaround the school after putting in extra time and effort and was fortunate to find out these histories from the longer

serving teachers at the school. Another example of school history having an adverse effect on school leadership, in turn making it challenging for the principal, is the practice of having lesser long-term staff as compared to new staff, resulting in 'constant turnover of transient staff' (Caffyn, 2018:507).

7. Personal and family issues

Principals could feel lonely and isolated (Caffyn, 2018) when there is a lack of support (Benson, 2011; Speirs, 2017), or when they need to address 'the contested ambiguities of staff goals, student needs, parental pressure, local regulation, and board demands' (Caffyn, 2018:508). The principals may even need to adjust their leadership approaches, when in countries with cultural context which 'conflicted with their personal beliefs, ideals, and values' (Hammad & Shah, 2018:763). Similar to the expatriate teachers, the expatriate principals could face difficulties having real friends 'when everyone you know is inside the school community' (Speirs, 2017:36).

8. Managing the triple bottom line

Most current international schools are for-profit institutions (Bunnell, 2021). Therefore, the principal is in the arduous position of having to manage the 'triple bottom line', encompassing the 'financial bottom line', 'academic bottom line' and 'non-tangible cores' (MacDonald, 2009). The principal is expected to strike a balance between the academic goals (internal expectation) and the financial goals (external expectation) (Bunnell, 2021; Kelly, 2022). This is a difficult task for some principals who see this 'for-profit paradigm' as 'a potentially uneasy paradox' (Machin, 2014:21), especially when the 'focus is to generate a profit, which could indirectly compromise teaching and learning' (Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2023). This has created 'an uneasy borderland between economic and learning goals' (Caffyn, 2018:508), for example being pushed to accept students whom the principals feel would not benefit from the school, due to commercial reasons (Machin, 2014). Therefore, it is a difficult task for the principal who is 'at the frontline of a fight not only for hearts and minds but also for wallets and cheque books' (Machin, 2014:25), as he/she is 'required to balance the aims of educational and

commercial effectiveness, required to be both educator and manager and required to be [the] guardian of educational values and protector of the financial bottom line' (2014:21).

These eight challenges could have contributed towards the low average tenure of an international school principal of about three years (Benson, 2011; Keller, 2015; Kelly 2022; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010), causing them to be considered as short-term staff (Caffyn, 2018). This is shorter than the four-year period, cited by a principal interviewed by Benson (2011:93) as 'a solid chunk of time' needed for a principal to have a significant impact on a school. This would mean that long term planning cannot be carried out and that stability is affected (Kelly, 2022) if the principal of an international school changes every three years.

Activities of principals

Research shows that the daily activities of principals are an important aspect of their leadership (Ärlestig et. al., 2016). While there is ample literature discussing the role of principals, 'less has been published regarding the role of heads of international schools' (Slough-Kuss, 2014), and specifically on the daily activities of international school principals. Since this is important to gain a better understanding of the role of international school principals, the activities of principals in the government/national schools will be used as a reference point.

Various researchers categorise the activities of the principals differently. Bristow et. al. (2007) group the activities of the principals under eight broad task groups: strategic leadership, management, administration, external stakeholders, internal stakeholders, continuous professional development, personal issues and others. Earley and Bubb (2013) modified the categories identified by Bristow et. al. (2007), removing the categories of external stakeholders and internal stakeholders and put several activities under the categories of management and administration, arguing that it is more important to know the time spent on an activity rather than 'who the time was spent with' (Earley & Bubb, 2013:786). The categorisation of the activities by Spillane and Hunt (2010) was further simplified to only four

groups, 'Instruction and curriculum', 'Administration', 'Fostering relationships' and 'Own professional growth'. There is no 'Personal' group as the principals were told to only comment on 'school-related activity' (Spillane & Hunt, 2010). Table 2.1 compares the categories identified by the different researchers and the percentage of time the principals claimed to spend on them.

Bristow et. al. (2007)		Earley & Bubb (2013)		Spillane & Hunt (2010)	
Categories	Percentage	Categories	Percentage	Categories	Percentage
strategic leadership	7%	Leadership	32%	Instruction and curriculum	22%
		Teaching	1%		
Management	*15%*	*Management*	*46%*	*Administration*	*63%*
Administration	*24%*	*Administration*	*17%*		
External stakeholders	*17%*	N.A.	N.A.	Fostering relationships	9%
Internal stakeholders	*9%*	N.A.	N.A.		
Continuous professional development	9%	Continuous professional development	1%	Own professional growth	6%
Personal issues and others	4%	Personal	3%	N.A.	N.A.

Table 2.1: Groupings of principal activities by three groups of researchers

(Bristow et. al., 2007:50; Earley & Bubb, 2013:788; Spillane & Hunt, 2010:298)

Table 2.1 shows that 'Management' is not included in the categorisation by Spillane and Hunt (2010) as that is likely to be grouped together with 'Administration' because most of activities under that category consist of the word 'manage' (budget & resources, personnel, schedules, campus and students). When examining the activities by the three groups of researchers, there are many common tasks, for example manage budget and resources. Therefore, it is possible to combine the four groups ('Management', 'Administration', 'External stakeholders' and 'Internal stakeholders') by Bristow et. al. (2007), and the two groups ('Management' and 'Administration') by Earley and Bubb (2013), to make comparisons about 'Administration'. All three groups of researchers have

'Administration' as the area principals spend the most time on, with similar percentages of 63% to 66%.

By analogy, it seems likely that the main activities of international school principals could also be administrative. For example, besides 'general management and pedagogical challenges', there are 'other complex issues of school environment, diversity of school population, parental expectations and preferences, students' identity, local culture, religious orientation, context-specific social practices such as sex-segregation, and many others' (Hammad & Shah, 2018:769) which are administrative tasks and take up a lot of principals' time. Budget, finance and resource management is one of the main tasks in the three studies discussed above, and this also applies to the role of international school principals. This is because for some principals, 'task related to commercial or market-focused activities… were considered a significant distraction' from their role as educationalists, where one principal had to assign 'education to others' while he 'manages the business side of things' (Machin, 2014:22). MacDonald (2009:95) further emphasises the importance of the financial tasks of international school principals by commenting that 'any educational leader who aims to measure his or her school's success, and set its priorities, should consider having three healthy bottom lines [i.e. 'financial', 'academic' and 'the intangible core'] results as a good report card for the school'.

Malaysian research on principals in international schools

There is limited academic and empirical research on international schools in Malaysia, even though they have a long history, with some of them in existence for more than 60 years (Garden International School, 2015; The Alice Smith School, 2015; The International School of Kuala Lumpur, 2015). The research on Malaysian international school leadership is even more limited, and the areas of focus vary in scale and topics. Velarde and Faizal (2019) conducted a small-scale study on the perspectives of 13 teachers from one international school, about their middle and senior leaders. Velarde (2017), and Adams and Velarde (2021),

studied the practices of six leaders from three international schools and three principals from three international schools respectively. Javadi et. al. (2017) carried out a large-scale study of middle leadership involving 12 heads of department, 36 teachers and four principals from four international schools in Malaysia. However, none of these articles discuss selection and recruitment of principals, the challenges faced by principals and the activities of principals.

Although not specifically on the selection and recruitment of principals, the article by Gibson and Bailey (2022) provides some insights on the type of principals sought by international schools in Malaysia. In their sample of 30 international school principals in Malaysia (12 from face-to-face interviews and viewing of 18 principal profiles from their school web sites), all, except one, were from Western countries, with the principals' 'western whiteness being clear' (2022:413). This implies that 96% of the schools have White principals, which is higher than the research by Bunnell and Gardner-McTaggart (15 Mar 2024) discussed in the previous section! One reason for the high demand in White principal in Malaysia could be because the country was ruled by the European colonisers for more than four centuries from 1511 to 1957 (Gibson & Bailey, 2022), and could still retain the 'logics of white supremacy' (Koh & Sin, 2022:659). Even some principals in the study of Gibson and Bailey (2022) noticed or experienced 'the presence of ingrained racial hierarchies and racial ideologies in institutional and everyday life' (Koh & Sin, 2022:662). For example, when the only non-white principal in their study attended a professional meeting for international school principals in Malaysia, she was 'the only dark-skinned person' among 200 attendees at the meeting and, according to her, the treatment she received was disdainful. Another interviewee commented that 'his school had always appointed an expat principal' (2022:413), while one other pointed out that 'international schools want white faces' (2022:412), elaborating that one of her senior leaders could not get a job in another international school because he is a 'turban-wearing Sheikh'. The above discussion implies that westerners, and more specifically those who are White, have a higher chance of being employed as a principal in Malaysia, compared to their peers who are non-White.

Bailey and Gibson's (2020) study is notable as it addresses the key challenges faced by 12 international school principals in Malaysia. This allows comparisons with the challenges faced by international school principals globally, using the model of Speirs (2017), mentioned in the previous section, consisting of parents, students, staff, governance, external local environment, internal school community, and personal and family issues. The six challenges gathered by Bailey and Gibson (2020) are loneliness, transience, cultural differences, governance, business elements and managing school composition. The first four challenges can map with some challenges of Speirs (2017), for example loneliness with personal and family issues, transience with students and staff, cultural differences with external local environment and governance with governance. The business elements challenge maps with the eighth challenge, i.e. managing the triple bottom line, which I have added in the previous section.

Managing school composition, the sixth challenge listed by Bailey and Gibson (2020), could be contextually related and challenging for principals in Malaysia, which is culturally and racially diverse. This happens when some principals wish 'to maintain a balance between the different cultures in the school' (Bailey & Gibson, 2020:1020) with varying degrees and preferences in terms of composition of students and/or teachers, spoken languages and accepting students with special educational needs, although restrictions limiting the number of Malaysians to be enrolled into international schools were lifted in 2012 (Keeling, 2015; Nasa & Pilay, 2017; Ignatius, 2022). Bailey and Gibson (2020) added that not one principal stated the parents as a challenge, contrary to findings reported by Speirs (2017), Hammad and Shah (2018) and Kelly (2022). Similarly, Bailey and Gibson (2021) remark that their interviewees rarely mentioned MoE as one of the challenges for international schools in Malaysia, although the external local environment (Speirs, 2017) is a challenge to the international school principals in some countries, specifically when they need to comply with rules and regulations set by the MoE (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Sawalhi & Tamimi, 2023).

Overview

This chapter begins by defining international schools, in terms of curriculum, and the characteristics of students, staff and boards of governors of these schools. This is followed by discussion of restrictions set by different countries on the admission of their citizens into international schools. There are different ways to group international schools, with the categorisation of international schools into Type A (traditional), Type B (ideological) and Type C (non-traditional) by Hayden and Thompson (2013) being one of the more commonly used approaches. The next section discusses the various reasons which contribute towards escalating demand for international schools globally, resulting in the number of international schools increasing exponentially in these four decades. The global research on principals in international schools includes discussion of the selection and recruitment of international school principals, the main challenges faced by them, and their activities. These three areas are relevant as they provide insights into the role of international school principals. The final section of the chapter investigates the literature on international school principals in Malaysia, specifically on leadership, selection and recruitment of international principals in Malaysia, and the challenges faced by them. The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods for the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

As Leedy and Ormrod (2010:5) aptly put it, methodology is the '[u]nderlying and unifying … [catalyst of] any research project', implying the significance and impact methodology has on research. This is elaborated by Scott and Morrison (2006:153), cited by Morrison (2012:15), that 'it is through methodological understanding that researchers and readers of research are provided with a rationale to explain the reasons for using specific strategies and methods in order to construct, collect, and develop particular kinds of knowledge about education phenomena'. This illustrates the importance of selecting appropriate methodology and methods so that the outcomes of the research project could be achieved. This chapter will discuss the various important aspects of it, namely research approaches and paradigms, research methods, sampling, instrument design and data collection, data analysis, ethical approaches and authenticity.

Research Approaches and Paradigms

This is an empirical study, where data collected are 'based on direct experience or observation of, or interaction with, the world'; not 'by reasoning alone, or by arguing from first principles', for example those from a 'theoretical research, conceptual-philosophical research [or] historical research' (Punch & Oancea, 2014:3). Punch and Oancea (2014) divide the data for empirical research into two broad categories: quantitative data (in the form of numbers) and qualitative data (not in the form of numbers). This provides simplified definitions of quantitative research (i.e. empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers) and qualitative research (i.e. empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers).

A paradigm sums up 'the beliefs of researchers' (Doyle et.al., 2009:176) and the term can be used reciprocally with 'world view' and 'theoretical lens'. Paradigms are also known as 'epistemological assumptions', 'epistemes', or 'traditions' (Morrison, 2012:16) and the three main paradigms are positivism, interpretivism

and pragmatism. The paradigms for research projects should relate to the research questions, as the answers expected of them may indicate the approach to be used, i.e. quantitative, qualitative, or a mixture of the two (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The author adopted a mixed methods approach within the interpretivist paradigm for the study, with the research questions and the matching research approaches as shown in table 3.1.

Research Questions	Approach
1. What are the origins and professional backgrounds of international school principals in Malaysia?	Quantitative
2. What is the relationship between principals' origins and professional backgrounds, and their recruitment and selection?	Quantitative & Qualitative
3. How, and to what extent, were the international school principals in Malaysia prepared for the principal role?	Quantitative & Qualitative
4. What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?	Quantitative & Qualitative
5. What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?	Quantitative & Qualitative
6. What is the balance between professional and generic aspects of principal leadership in Malaysian international schools?	Qualitative

Table 3.1: Research questions and matching methodology

As table 3.1 indicates, a mixed-methods approach was utilised to address the author's research questions as both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The extensive literature review conducted by Johnson et. al. (2007) offered various reasons for adopting mixed methods, including triangulation and methodological pluralism. The following discussion elaborates on definitions of

mixed methods research and provides justifications for adopting this approach for my study.

Mixed methods research combines the use of quantitative and qualitative research elements. A 'more comprehensive' definition is given by Johnson et. al. (2007:129), after analysing the definition of mixed methods research by 19 groups of experts in the field: 'Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results.'

Mixed methods research is given different descriptions, for example 'third paradigm', 'third methodology', 'emerging field' and 'distinct approach' (Timans et. al., 2019:197). Johnson et. al. (2007:118) add that other descriptors include 'blended research', 'integrative research', 'multimethod research', 'multiple methods', 'triangulated studies', 'ethnographic residual analysis' and 'mixed research'. Although the term mixed methods research was only formalised at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Crawford & Tan, 2019; Sammons & Davis, 2017), it has gained in popularity during recent years (Heyvaert et. al., 2013; Johnson et. al., 2007; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007; Timans et. al., 2019) in the study of complicated educational matters (Sammons & Davis, 2017). This could be because 'education was one of the fields where the mixed methods approach was first referenced explicitly' (Crawford & Tan, 2019:791) and 'also the first to cite the first textbooks and handbooks of [mixed methods research]' (Timans et. al., 2019:203). The above provides further justifications on the use of mixed methods for my study.

Crawford and Tan (2019:778) claim that the advantage of mixed methods research in collecting 'multiple data using different approaches, methods and analysis techniques allows for a combination that draws on complementary

strengths and eliminates potential design limitations'. In addition, a '[w]ell conducted and reported mixed methods research studies can provide a way to engage policymakers in the understanding of complex education issues and valuing qualitative methods through the integration of both quantitative (answering 'what/how many') and qualitative (answering 'why/in what way') research outcomes' (Crawford & Tan, 2019:792). Similarly, Williams and Ghimire (2018:447) feel that 'mixed methods research always has the ability to counterbalance weaknesses of one data source with another and to provide different and redundant measurement possibilities' and this 'can lead to increased confidence in study results and conclusion'. This is supported by Johnson et. al. (2007:127) who remark that mixed methods research is able to 'eliminate potential design weaknesses by combining methods', providing 'a more robust understanding than that which can be gleaned using either approach in isolation'. Use of mixed methods research can also 'help paint a better picture of the phenomenon under investigation' (Doyle et.al., 2009:179). Therefore, the interviews in the second stage of my data collection complements the data I have collected in the first stage through online survey.

Even though researchers are still 'continuously developing [the use of mixed methods research] as its components are being redefined in diverse ways to adapt to a wide range of research studies' (Crawford & Tan, 2019:781), they are largely similar, despite being named differently. For example, Crawford and Tan (2019) present their adapted groupings of mixed methods research approaches in two levels, i.e. level 1 research paradigms and level 2 research designs. Sammons and Davis (2017:481) provide a typology of mixed methods research consisting of five broad groups of designs, i.e. parallel mixed designs, sequential mixed designs, conversion mixed designs, multilevel mixed designs and fully integrated mixed designs. Similarly, Kiessling and Harvey (2005:33) mention sequential studies, parallel/simultaneous studies, equivalent status designs and dominant – less dominant studies as the four main situational-based mixed methods approaches.

Research Methods

Research methods comprise 'tools or techniques used to collect, analyse and interpret data' (Scott, 2012:117). '[G]uided by the research purposes and research questions' (Sammons & Davis, 2017:485), the researcher adopted a two-stage mixed methods sequential design (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007) for data collection. Different methods were used for consecutive stages of the data collection period. This mixed methods approach within the interpretivist paradigm provides both breadth and depth.

The first stage applied the quantitative research method using survey, the most common mode of collecting quantitative data (Baruch & Holtom, 2008; Muijs, 2012; Williams & Ghimire, 2018), and is very flexible (Muijs, 2012). The main advantage of using surveys is that 'data are collected from a large number of respondents' (Scott, 2012:112). Qualtrics, a web-based software, was used to create the electronic questionnaire survey. An invitation email, consisting of descriptions of the study (including the project title, background of project, participants background, guidance for invited participants, benefits to participants, and security measures for the data collected) and a link to the survey, was emailed to all 109 international school principals in Malaysia, based on the *Education Destination Malaysia: Guide to International & Private Schools 2016-2017 Edition*. Qualtrics has functions which allow the responses received to be compiled in table-form and/or bar graph, and subsequently transported to Microsoft Excel or Microsoft PowerPoint, or saved as a pdf file.

Qualitative methods were used to derive qualitative data in the second stage. The researcher visited the case study schools and five people (the principal, the superordinate of the principal and three SLT members who report directly to the principal) from each school were interviewed individually and privately. As the principals are the main subjects of the research, more questions were asked and the time spent with them were between 40 to 60 minutes, about double the time

spent with the other interviewees. Most questions for the superordinates and SLT members were similar to those for the principals, to ensure consistency and reliability for data triangulation.

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, survey followed by case study, allowed the author to obtain data from a broader perspective, offsetting the limitations of questionnaires 'in length and depth of responses' (Muijs, 2012:141). The mixed methods design also provides potential for generalisation through the survey data, before exploring more deeply through the case studies (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012).

Sampling

Sampling is the process of deciding the population, and subsequently the sample of a study (Muijs, 2012). The population is defined as 'the group of people or things we want to reach a conclusion about' (Muijs, 2012:143) and the sample is a subset of the population, who take part in the research. Sampling for the first stage of data collection for this study was 100% of the population, or a census (Schreiber & Ferrara, 2017; Murthy, 1969; Waksberg, 1968). This means that all 109 international school principals in Malaysia were invited to participate in the questionnaire survey. One main benefit of having a census sample is not being required to make sample decisions and sample selection (Collins, 2017). As a total of 34 responses were received, i.e. a response rate of 31.2%, the sample size of the questionnaire survey is 34.

According to Taherdoost (2016), there are two broad categories of sampling techniques, probability or random sampling (Schreiber & Ferrara, 2017), and non-probability or non-random sampling. Examples of probability sampling include simple random, stratified random and systematic sampling, while examples of non-probability sampling include quota sampling, snowball sampling, purposive and convenience sampling. Volunteer sampling, another frequently used non-random sampling methods in educational research (Muijs, 2012), was used for the

second stage of data collection since principals were asked to volunteer as case studies (by indicating their consent in the last question of the questionnaire survey) to be researched in greater depth. Therefore, samples for the two stages of data collection have a 'nested sample relationship' because 'sample in one phase serves as the source for selecting a subset of sampling units to participate in another phase' (Collins, 2017:285).

Originally, six principals agreed to participate in the second stage of data collection, from their responses to the electronic survey. However, when the researcher contacted the respective principals to make arrangement for the interviews, he encountered 'attrition' of participants, a sampling challenge shared by Collins (2017).

Four potential participants were no longer available or eligible:
   (a) one was transferred to Vietnam;
   (b) two decided to withdraw from the second stage;
   (c) one was found to be the principal of a primary school, not the secondary school.

The researcher approached the new principal for school (a) above, and the principal of the secondary school linked to primary school (c). However, there was no response from them, and the researcher proceeded with the interviews with the other two case study school participants. For the third case study, the researcher's supervisor connected the researcher with a principal, who eventually agreed to participate in the second phase of the research. This is an example of convenience sampling (Muijs, 2012) and of 'using a pre-existing social network', which is particularly important for researchers 'seeking data from executive populations' (Baruch & Holtom, 2008:1157).

Instrument Design

According to Muijs (2012), there are three stages to follow before the data collection stage when designing a survey, of which only the first and third stage

are of relevance to this research project. First, the research objectives and design need to be defined, with reference to the research questions of the research project. Following that, the most critical stage, is to devise specific questions to ask the interviewees, in order to meet the research objectives. Interview 'is a powerful method of data collection', which can be in the form of open-ended or closed questions (Kiessling & Harvey, 2005:34). Kiessling and Harvey (2005) share the four main groups of data collection approaches initiated by Caracelli and Greene (1993), where the first three involve interactions with people and the fourth one makes use of data recorded by other people. The first three were used in the data collection stage of this research, i.e. 'asking individuals for information and/or experiences', 'seeking what people do, recording what they do or making inferences' and 'asking individuals about their relationships with others' (Kiessling & Harvey, 2005:34).

The survey was written in English and comprised questions linked to research questions 1 to 5, following some key guidelines shared by Bielick (2017:644), for example not to use jargon (McMahon & Milligan, 2023) and ambiguous words, not to have 'double-barrelled questions' or 'leading questions', and to ensure that the response choices are 'mutually exclusive'. It is also important to make the 'questions clear and simple', and not to use acronyms and 'double negatives' (Muijs, 2012:152). The final question in the survey asks if the interviewee would agree to a face-to-face interview, as well as further involvement in the research. To maximise the response rate for the questionnaire survey, it mainly comprised closed questions (i.e. multiple choice questions or 5-point Likert type scale questions) as they take a shorter time and less effort to complete (Muijs, 2012). Open-ended questions were mainly reserved for face-to-face interviews for the case study schools since those principals who agreed to take part either have more time to spare (Muijs, 2012) or are generally interested in the research project. The objectives and context of the research were also clearly stated to show that the findings would be of interest to the participants.

An interview is defined as 'a social encounter in which one person asks questions (interviewer) and another responds (interviewee)' (Marvasti & Freie, 2017:624). The four types of interview shared by Marvasti and Freie (2017) are structured, in-depth, ethnographic, and focus group. The continuum model for interviews, which Punch and Oancea (2014:183) adopted from Minichiello et. al. (1990:89), provides a comprehensive overview on the spectrum of interviews, ranging from structured interviews, focused or semi-structured interviews, to unstructured interviews. Examples of structured interviews given by Minichiello et. al. (1990:89) include standardised interviews, survey interviews and clinical history taking. These interviews consist of 'questions and … response categories [which] are pre-determined and repeated with little variation across all respondents' (Marvasti & Freie, 2017:627). Unstructured interviews, at the other end of the spectrum, include in-depth interviews, clinical interviews, group interviews and oral or life history interviews (Minichiello et. al., 1990:89). These interviews are 'in-depth explorations of interviewees' experiences and interpretations, in their own terms' (Punch & Oancea (2014:185). Semi-structured interviews consist of in-depth interviews, survey interviews and group interviews (Minichiello et. al., 1990:89), and they 'are guided by a set of questions and prompts discussion but have in-built flexibility to adapt to particular respondents and situations', making it 'among the most popular forms of interviews in education research' (Punch & Oancea (2014:183). The researcher deemed semi-structured interviews (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) to be the most suitable approach for this study. Some questions were structured, 'for consistency (or reliability) of data collection' (Marvasti & Freie, 2017:628) because comparisons and triangulation of responses are needed: between and among interviewees within the same school, and across different case study schools. The other questions, especially those for the principals, have some characteristics of in-depth interviews where 'follow-up questions or probes [were asked or given to the interviewees] to elaborate on their answers' and/or provide 'inner truths' (Marvasti & Freie, 2017:629).

Data Collection

As noted above, the first stage of data collection was an electronic questionnaire survey emailed to all 109 international school principals in Malaysia, drawn from the *Education Destination Malaysia: Guide to International & Private Schools (2016-2017 Edition)*. Emailing the surveys 'increase[s] efficiencies and decrease[s] costs', as compared to posting paper surveys, illustrating that 'technologies can complement traditional methods' (Williams & Ghimire, 2018:432). This method has gained popularity (Muijs, 2012) and it helps to achieve a better response rate (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). In addition, an electronic survey allows anonymity (Muijs, 2012) for the participants so that they can provide more honest responses (Du Plessis & Marais 2012). A '[g]ood survey … is important to education research' (Bielick, 2017:640) and using survey is a 'dominant form of quantitative data sourcing in mixed method studies' (Johnson, 2015:341).

The first round of survey data collection received a very low response, with only six principals (a response rate of 5.5%) completing the survey. An improved response rate is required because that brings about 'larger data samples and statistical power as well as smaller confidence intervals around sample statistics' (Baruch & Holtom, 2008:1140). To increase the response rate, and deal with the issue of 'reluctance of people to respond' (Baruch & Holtom, 2008:1141), the researcher first went through the individual school's website to identify the name of the principal. After that, he resent the email to all the principals individually, as compared to mass mailing it previously. The principals were addressed directly with their full names, for example "Dear Ms Debera de Dustin", replacing the generic opening of "Dear Sir/Madam" in the first email. In addition, the researcher revealed in the resent email that he is also a principal of a private national secondary school, hoping that the email recipients are more willing to complete the survey after knowing that the researcher is working in the same industry. More responses were received after this first reminder email. A second reminder email was sent a month later and no new response was received. Following all

these approaches, the researcher received a total of 34 responses, a response rate of 31.2%.

The second stage of data collection applied the qualitative research method. It comprised individual interviews with principals (and their superordinates and subordinates) who indicated their willingness to participate in this stage of data collection. The interviews were conducted fully in English and there were no second language issues as all the schools offer English curricula.

The researcher planned to add documentary analysis, for example principals' job descriptions, intended to be carried out using a thematic approach (Prior, 2008; Willis et. al., 2012), to triangulate against the findings from the surveys and interviews. However, this method could not be adopted because the three principals were unable to provide documents showing their job scopes or descriptions. One principal could not recall having received a job description, while the other two were unable to retrieve this document. They only shared verbally what they could remember or what they assumed should be their job scope or description.

Data Analysis

Grolemund and Wickham (2014:185) view data analysis as 'the investigative process used to extract knowledge, information and insights about reality by examining data'. They further explain that data analysis is 'a sensemaking task' (2014:189) and each analysis aims to 'educate an observer about some aspect of reality', and therefore the 'data [needs] to be manipulated and preprocessed' so that 'the analyst can assign meaning to [it]' (2014:187). Given that a mixed methods approach was used, both quantitative and qualitative data, i.e. 'multidata', were collected and they were analysed using 'multi-analysis' (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012).

The quantitative data obtained were *quantitised* using numbers (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012). The method of 'simple frequency distribution' is applied to 'summarise and understand the data' (Punch & Oancea, 2014:312). The data were exported to Microsoft Excel where 'individual scores in the distribution [were] tabulated, according to how many respondents achieved each score, or gave each response, or fell into each category' (Punch & Oancea, 2014:313). Both absolute numbers and percentages were presented in the tables of scores for ease of reference. The role relationship scorings between the principals and the different stakeholders were presented in pie charts, allowing comparisons to be made 'at a glance' (Punch & Oancea, 2014:312). The qualitative data obtained from the last three survey questions on difficulties, benefits and satisfaction experienced by the principals were *qualitised* using themes (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012). After they were compiled, they were presented using bar graphs to show the 'shape of the distribution' of the various themes (Punch & Oancea, 2014:312).

The interviews conducted in the second phase of data collection are semi-structured. This helped in framing themes, mainly based on the questions asked, for example recruitment and selection, preparation for principalship in Malaysia, activities of principal, roles and responsibilities of principal, role relationships and professional and generic aspects of principal leadership. The data were analysed using the technique of content analysis, through the process of 'editing, segmenting and summarising' (Punch & Oancea, 2014:224). Berelson (1952:18), in Crescentini (2014:176), defined content analysis as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication', implying the importance of selecting the appropriate tools to analyse the data collected during the fieldwork of the research project.

Kiessling and Harvey (2005:36) share the four mixed data analysis approaches outlined by Caracelli and Greene (1993), which are data transformation, typology development, extreme case analysis and data consolidation/merging. This research project uses mainly the fourth approach since data collection took place sequentially.

Ethical Approaches

Researchers have different emphases on the ethics to be observed while conducting a research project. The ethical principles to be addressed in this study are confidentiality, informed consent, avoiding harm and anonymity.

Confidentiality refers to 'robust data protection and (usually) not discussing private details given by participants with other people outside the study', including 'not sharing it beyond agreed limits' (Farrimond, 2017:83). Many universities have in-house ethics committees to assess the ethical aspects of empirical research projects carried out by their students and staff (Farrimond, 2017). For this study, the author applied for ethical approval from the University of Nottingham School of Education's ethics committee. The document submitted included sections on study protocol, research ethics checklist, participant consent, participant information, sample questionnaire and interview guide. Upon approval and throughout the data collection stage, the author operated in accordance with the University's ethical protocols, for example how to handle confidential data and the ethical principles to be observed when dealing with human participants (University of Nottingham, 2015). The researcher assured each participant at the start of each interview that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous, and the data received are securely kept.

Particularly important in the second phase of data collection is the 'principle of 'informed consent'…, stemming from the notion that individuals have personal autonomy and decision-making capacity to decide for themselves whether or not to participate in a given research project' (Farrimond, 2017:77). Before the start of each interview, the researcher explained to the participants the objectives of the study, informed them that the interviews would be audio recorded, allowed them time to read the participant information sheet, as well as 'asking participants to sign consent sheets so that a record of involvement can be kept' (Farrimond, 2017:78). In the process of conducting the interviews, ethical issues emphasised

by Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:319) for interviews were adhered to, which include 'protecting the interviewee's information', 'effectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study', and 'reducing the risk of exploitation'.

'[A] person with integrity typically will want to serve the interests of change for the better of all' (Van Der Walt & Potgieter 2012:223). This is regarded as 'a fundamentally important part of educational academic practice' (Farrimond, 2017:72) because, when participants are invited to take part in a research project, 'the researcher is also agreeing to protect participants from harm and violation of their privacy' (Busher & James, 2012:100). Upholding this principle gives assurance to the participants that they can trust the researcher and can therefore contribute wholeheartedly and truthfully towards the research project (Busher & James, 2012). This was particularly important to the SLT members who report to the principals directly since they were asked to comment about their principal. During the interviews, the SLT members might 'share information that could jeopardise his or her position' (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:314). Busher and James (2012:100) emphasise that 'sovereignty of the individual is critical in research that involves gathering data about personal experiences'. Therefore, to enable the SLT members to 'speak freely and honestly' (Farrimond, 2017:82), and 'share as much information as possible, unselfconsciously and in his or her own words' (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:317), the participants were promised that their principals (and the superordinates) would not have access to the content of the interviews.

The fourth important aspect is the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity to participants. Anonymity 'means that we do not name the person or research site involved... [and] we do not include information about any individual or research site that will enable that individual or research site to be identified by others' (Walford, 2005:84). We also do not 'tell senior staff in a school the views offered by participants in a project' as that 'would breach ethical agreements with participants to preserve their anonymity and protect them from potential harm' (Busher & James, 2012:91). To avoid the schools, and subsequently the

participants, being identified, letters were assigned to the three case study schools, as Schools A, B and C. This mode of labelling is extended to the participants. For example, for School A, the superordinate is identified as AS, the principal as AP and the three SLT members are ASLT1, ASLT2 and ASLT3 respectively. For Schools B and C, the letters B and C replace the letter A in the example above to represent the respective participants. Anonymity can also prevent harm to the SLT members by their superiors when the research findings are published. Conducting research is meant 'to be of reciprocal or mutual benefit to researchers, participants and society' (Busher & James, 2012:91).

Authenticity

The authenticity of a research project can be deduced from the processes used to ascertain its reliability, validity and triangulation (Bush, 2012). Researchers have different views about these three aspects. For example, Leedy and Ormrod (2010:29) opined that 'reliability is a necessary but insufficient condition for validity', or for Bush (2012:81), 'reliability may be achieved only by reducing validity'. From another perspective, both reliability and validity can be viewed as 'under the wider umbrella of believability' (Schreiber & Ferrara, 2017:836). The three aspects of authenticity relevant to the study are discussed below.

Schreiber and Ferrara (2017:836) define reliability as 'the stability of the data whether it is gathered once or over multiple trials'. Similarly, Bush (2012:76) says that 'reliability relates to the probability that repeating a research procedure or method would produce identical to similar results… and replicating the process would ensure consistency'. To Punch and Oancea (2014:295), reliability 'basically means consistency'. Conducting surveys with structured questionnaire is a reliable method for the first stage of data collection of this study because 'reliability is a notion associated with positivist [research]' (Bush, 2012:81). To ensure that the survey emails were sent to the relevant principals, the researcher went through the websites of all the schools to obtain their direct email addresses, if available. Acknowledging that there is increasing 'difficulties involved in seeking

reliability in interview research' (Bush, 2012:79) and 'applying the concept of reliability to case study research is problematic' (Bush, 2012:81), the researcher aimed to attain reliability in the second stage of data collection by being the sole interviewer, followed an interview guide, and audio-recording the interviews.

'Validity concerns the quality of the inferences people make from the data' as it 'is not a 'thing' that is obtained once and it exists forever' (Schreiber & Ferrara, 2017:837). From another perspective, 'validity is used to judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon that it is intended to describe' (Bush, 2012:81), or to put it simply, validity is related to 'quality of measurement' (Punch & Oancea, 2014:297). According to Bush (2012:82), there are two main types of validity, internal validity which 'relates to the extent that research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation' and external validity which 'relates to the extent that findings may be generalised to the wider population'. As the response rate of a survey has a direct relationship with validity (Bush, 2012), the validity of the survey questionnaire was improved when the response rate increased from 5.5% to 31.2%., after sending a personalised reminder to the principals individually. To minimise bias for the interviews, the researcher kept to the interview guide prepared during interviews. For external validity, having a census sample in the first stage of data collection allows some form of generalisation to take place.

Bush (2012:84) describes triangulation as 'comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information or phenomena'. Some advantages of triangulation shared by Johnson et. al. (2007:115) include allowing 'researchers to be more confident of their results', provide 'thicker, richer data', 'lead to the synthesis or integration of theories' and 'uncover contradictions'. The study uses methodological triangulation to improve its reliability and validity, through a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews with participants from different schools. In addition, respondent triangulation is addressed through asking similar questions from participants at different levels in the three case study schools. Finally, comparison and triangulation take place based on the responses given by

the principals, as well as with their subordinates and superordinates, among the case study schools, and also through responses from the survey questions.

Overview

Methodology plays a critical role in a research project as it 'provides a rationale for the ways in which researchers conduct research activities' (Morrison, 2012:15). While attending to the different components in this chapter, the researcher constantly asked the question: 'what is the focus for my research?' (Briggs et. al., 2012:7). This chapter began with the discussion of research approaches and paradigms. Justifications were made on the adoption of mixed methods research for the study, with reference to the research questions. This is followed by the decision on using sequential mixed-methods design as the research approach because there are two stages of data collection. Census sampling was used in the first stage, while volunteer and convenience sampling were used for the second stage of data collection. Principals were asked to volunteer as case studies by indicating their consent in the last question of the survey. In the section of instrument design and data collection, the researcher explained the considerations involved when preparing the survey questionnaire and interview questions, and also the processes of the two data collection stages. As 'multidata' were collected, they were analysed using 'multi-analysis' (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012), using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Ethics is an important aspect when conducting a research project. The ethical principles observed in this study are confidentiality, informed consent, avoiding harm and anonymity. Finally, this chapter concluded with 'a focus on reliability, validity and triangulation [, which] should contribute to an acceptable level of authenticity sufficient to satisfy both researcher and reader that the study is meaningful and worthwhile' (Bush, 2012:87). The next chapter presents the findings from the principals' survey.

Chapter Four: Survey Findings

Introduction

As noted in chapter three, a sequential design was adopted in the collection of data. The first stage invited all 109 international secondary school principals in Malaysia to participate in an electronic questionnaire survey. A total of 34 principals (response rate of 31.2%) completed the survey. The survey findings were analysed thematically in the following eight categories:

- Biography
- Career progression
- Qualifications and training
- Recruitment and selection
- Stakeholder relationships
- Difficulties in enacting the role of principal
- Benefits of enacting the role of principal
- Satisfaction from enacting the role of principal

Biography

Questions 1 to 4 seek to understand the biography of the international school principals in Malaysia. Table 4.1 shows the responses for questions 1 to 4. Almost half of the respondents have British heritage, with 38.2% stating that they were born in the United Kingdom (UK), 47.1% stating *British* as their nationality, 47.1% had their secondary education in the UK, and 52.9% studied the British curriculum in their secondary education. This could be because most of the international schools in Malaysia teach the British curriculum.

The responses to questions 1 to 4 were also quite consistent, implying that the respondents received their secondary education in the country they were born in and still citizens of the country, except for three British citizens, one born in Singapore and two born in Germany, but received their secondary education in the UK. Three Malaysian respondents also stood out from their counterparts as

two studied British curriculum in a secondary school in Malaysia while the other one had his/her secondary education in India.

Questions	Options	Number	Percentage
Q1 **Which country were you born in?**	United Kingdom	13	38.2%
	Malaysia	9	26.5%
	Canada	4	11.8%
	USA	2	5.9%
	Australia	2	5.9%
	Singapore	1	2.9%
	Sweden	1	2.9%
	Germany	2	5.9%
Q2 **What is your nationality?**	British	16	47.1%
	Malaysian	9	26.5%
	Canadian	4	11.8%
	American	2	5.9%
	Australian	2	5.9%
	Swedish	1	2.9%
Q3 **In which country did you receive your secondary education?**	United Kingdom	16	47.1%
	Malaysia	8	23.5%
	Canada	4	11.8%
	USA	2	5.9%
	Australia	2	5.9%
	India	1	2.9%
	Sweden	1	2.9%
	Switzerland (a respondent replied Malaysia & Switzerland)	-	-
Q4 **Which kind of curriculum did you study in your secondary education?**	British	18	52.9%
	Canadian	4	11.8%
	American	2	5.9%
	Australian	2	5.9%
	Others	8	23.5%

Table 4.1: Responses for Questions 1- 4

Only just over a quarter (26.4%) of the respondents are Malaysians and this could be because most schools still prefer to employ principals who are native speakers of English, as the main medium of instruction in the international schools is English.

Career progression

Questions 5 to 9 address the professional background and career progression of the principals. Table 4.2 shows the responses for questions 5 to 9.

Questions	Options	Number	Percentage
Q5 **How many years have you been in the education industry?**	<10 years	1	2.9%
	10-20 years	9	26.5%
	21-30 years	16	47.1%
	31-40 years	5	14.7%
	>40 years	3	8.9%
Q6 **What other roles were you in before becoming the principal? (You may tick more than one)**	Head of Subject or equivalent	20	58.8%
	Head of Department or equivalent	25	73.5%
	Curriculum Coordinator or equivalent	16	47.1%
	Level Coordinator or equivalent	8	23.5%
	Subject Coordinator or equivalent	7	20.6%
	Key Stage Coordinator or equivalent	6	17.6%
	Vice Principal or equivalent	24	70.6%
	Others	10	29.4%
Q7 **In total, how many years have you been a principal?**	<5 years	13	38.3%
	5-10 years	14	41.2%
	11-15 years	5	14.7%
	16-20 years	1	2.9%
	>20 years	1	2.9%
Q8 **How many years have you been a principal in this current school?**	<3 years	23	67.7%
	3-5 years	8	23.5%
	6-10 years	2	5.9%
	>10 years	1	2.9%
Q9 **Have you been a principal of a national / government school before you become the principal of an international school? If yes, which country was it?**	Yes (one stated China and Canada, one stated United Kingdom and two other principals did not elaborate)	4	11.8%
	No	30	88.2%

Table 4.2: Responses for Questions 5-9

Almost half (47.1 %) of the principals have been working in education for between 21-30 years, with many (70.6%) indicating that they were vice-principals or equivalent before they became principals. This implies that the remaining respondents (29.4%) did not follow what is often assumed to be the natural progression of becoming a vice-principal before becoming a principal. In addition, most (79.5%) of the principals have less than ten years' experience as a principal, of whom half have less than five years' principalship experience. Only one respondent has more than 20 years of experience as a principal.

Almost all (91.2%) of the principals have been with their current school for less than five years, of whom three-quarters have spent less than three years with the school. This finding confirms previous research which shows that the average tenure of an international school principal is only about three years (Benson, 2011; Keller, 2015; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). The great majority (88.2%) of the principals indicated that they had not been a principal of a national or government school before becoming the principal of an international school.

Qualifications and training

Questions 10 and 11 focus on the qualifications of the principals and the training they have received, as shown in table 4.3.

Questions	Options	Number	Percentage
Q10 **What is your highest qualification?**	Graduate	7	20.6%
	Post Graduate Diploma	5	14.7%
	Master	18	52.9%
	Doctorate	4	11.8%
Q11 **Did you receive formal training before you became a principal, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme from the United Kingdom? If yes, in which country did you receive the training?**	Yes	17	50.0%
	No	17	50.0%

Table 4.3: Responses for Questions 10 and 11

Table 4.3 shows that a little more than half (52.9%) of the respondent principals have a master's degree, while more than three-quarters (79.4%) have a postgraduate qualification. In addition, half (50%) of the principals stated that they have received formal training, such as the English National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme, before becoming a principal. Among the 17 principals who were formally trained, half of them were trained in the UK, as shown in table 4.4.

Countries	Number
United Kingdom	8
United States of America (a respondent cited London & Miami)	7
India	1
Canada	1
Hong Kong (a respondent cited England & Hong Kong)	*(1)*
Total	17

Table 4.4: Countries where principals received their formal training

Recruitment and selection

Questions 12 to 17 provide an insight into the recruitment and selection processes of the principals while question 18 asks the principals the number of years they expect to remain in their current schools. Table 4.5 shows the responses for questions 12 to 18.

Questions	Options	Number	Percentage
Q12 - How were you recruited into this current position?	Headhunted	8	23.5%
	From advertisements in job recruitment sites on the internet or in newspaper/ magazine	15	44.1%
	School's website	1	2.9%
	Recommendation from friends/relatives, etc.	0	0.0%
	Others	10	29.4%
Q13 - From the time of application, how long did the whole process take before you were finally offered the job?	<3 months	27	79.4%
	4-6 months	6	17.6%
	7-9 months	0	0.0%
	10-12 months	1	2.9%
	> 12months	0	0.0%

Q14 - What selection processes did you have to go through before being offered the job? (You may tick more than one)	Written test (includes filling out an extensive application)	3	8.8%
	Skype interview	19	55.9%
	Face-to-face interview includes school visits)	24	70.6%
	Others (e.g. Company's arrangement, recommendations, phone interviews, headhunted, promotion)	8	23.5%
Q15 - How many interviews did you have to go through?	One only	10	29.6%
	Two	14	41.2%
	Three	5	14.7%
	Four	1	2.9%
	Five or more	4	11.8%
Q16 - Who were the interviewers? (You may tick more than one)	Board of Governors	15	44.1%
	Board of Directors	13	38.2%
	Immediate Superordinate	11	32.4%
	Current Principal	12	35.3%
	SLT Members	9	26.5%
	Others (e.g. Staff, Students, Parents, Teachers, Council of Education, former head, company Vice President, CEO, PTA, Academic Director)	9	26.5%
Q17 - Reason(s) for accepting the appointment in your current school (You may tick more than one)	Attractive salary	6	17.6%
	Gain exposure	3	8.8%
	Personal challenges	26	76.5%
	Time to move on from previous school	14	41.2%
	Push factor from previous school	3	8.8%
	Other reasons (present situation of school, worked with campus principal previously, working in a second overseas country, returning to Asia, calling, school reputation, location, seniority, desire to work abroad, passion, promotion)	15	44.1%
Q18 - How many more years do you foresee yourself to remain in this school?	<2 years	17	50.0%
	3-5 years	9	26.5%
	5-10 years	4	11.8%
	>10 years	1	2.9%
	Not sure	3	8.8%

Table 4.5: Responses for Questions 12-18

When asked how they were recruited, almost half (44.1%) of the principals stated that they applied for the job after seeing advertisements on job recruitment sites on the internet, or through newspaper or magazine advertisements. The process from application to job offer was completed in less than three months for most (79.4%) respondents, while 17.6% took between four to six months, and only one principal, i.e. 2.9%, took 10 to 12 months.

The main selection processes experienced by the principals were face-to-face interviews (70.6%) and Skype interviews (55.9%). The other processes included presentations to the board, visits to the school, telephone interviews, and interviews with other stakeholders of the school, such as students, parents and other staff. Two of the principals was promoted from within.

Almost three quarters of the respondents (70.4%) had to undergo more than one interview. The interviewers mainly comprised the Board of Governors (44.1%) and the Board of Directors (38.2%). It is noteworthy that a substantial proportion (35.3%) of respondents were interviewed by the current principal. A slightly lesser percentage of principals (32.4% and 26.5% respectively) were also interviewed by the immediate superordinate, and/or the SLT members.

While more than three quarters of the principals (76.5%) stated "personal challenges" as one of the reasons for them to apply for their current position, close to half (41.2%) explained that it was time for them to move on from their previous school. However, concurrently, almost half (47.1%) of them do not expect to remain in their current school for more than two years, and about three quarters (76.5%) stated that they will stay in their current school for less than five years.

Stakeholder relationships

Relationships with the various stakeholders of the school are an important influence on the success of the principal and on how s/he carries out the work.

With good relationships, principals are able to obtain the assistance and cooperation required to fulfil their roles.

Figure 4.1 shows the perceptions of the principals about their role relationships with their superordinates.
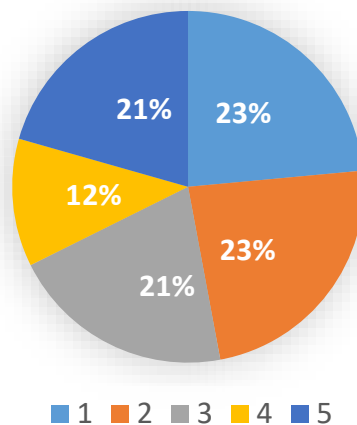
(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.1: Role relationships of principals with their superordinates

The principals expressed mixed views about relationships with their superordinates. Almost half (46%) of them rated their relationship with their superordinates as above average. However, one-third (33%) of the respondents rated the relationship as below average, with about one-fifth (21%) rated the relationship as very poor.

Figure 4.2 shows the perceptions of the principals in terms of their role relationships with their SLT members.

(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.2: Role relationships of principals with their SLT members

While more than half (57%) of the principals viewed their relationship with their SLT members as above average, with a high 38% believing that the relationship is excellent, more than one-quarter (28%) of the principals regarded their relationship with their SLT members as very poor. Only 6% of the respondents have an "average" relationship with their SLT member. This indicates that most (94%) of the principals are very clear about whether their relationship with their SLT members are either above or below average.

Figure 4.3 shows the perceptions of the principals in terms of their role relationships with their department heads.

(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.3: Role relationships of principals with their department heads

More than half (55%) of the principals feel that their relationship with the department heads is above average, with 43% stating the relationship as good. This is an exceptionally high value, considering that most principals might not have as close a working relationship as they have with their SLT members. However, almost half (42%) of the respondents have below-average relationships with their department heads.

Figure 4.4 shows the perceptions of the principals in terms of their role relationships with their teachers.

(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.4: Role relationships of principals with their teachers

Almost half (47%) of the principals rated their relationship with their teachers as favourable, with 18% stating that the relationships are excellent. However, a similar proportion of the respondents (44%) feel that their relationship with the teachers is below average, with slightly more than a quarter (26%) stated the relationship as very poor.

Figure 4.5 shows the perceptions of the principals in terms of their role relationships with their non-teaching staff.
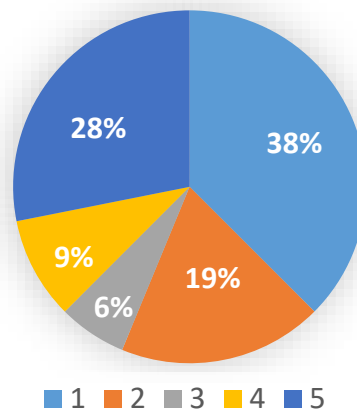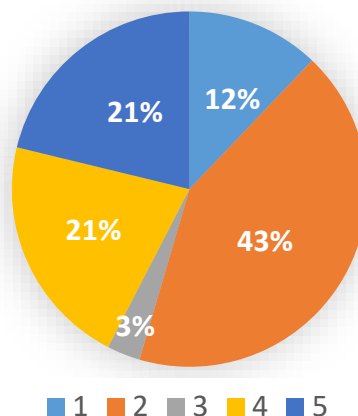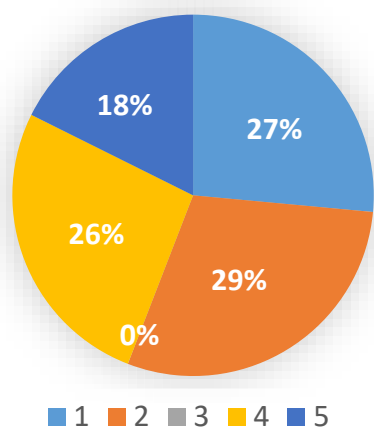

(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.5: Role relationships of principals with their non-teaching staff

All the principals were able to rate their relationship with their non-teaching staff as either above average or below average, with no neutral responses. 44% principals rated the relationship as good to excellent, and the balance 56% rated it as poor to very poor.

Figure 4.6 shows the perceptions of the principals in terms of their role relationships with the parents.
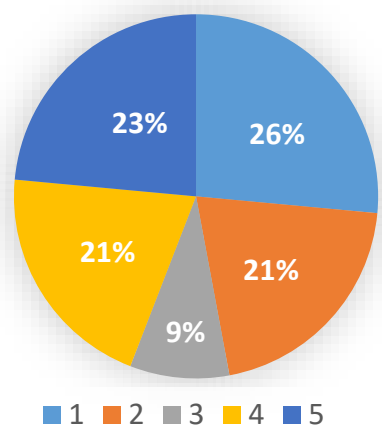
(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.6: Role relationships of principals with the parents

The survey results show that there is quite an even spread of ratings on the principals' relationship with the parents, except for 'average'. While slightly more principals (26%) feel that their relationship with the parents is excellent, similar numbers of principals rated the relationship as good (21%), poor (21%) and very poor (23%). Overall, an almost equal number of principals rated their relationship with the parents as either above average (47%) or below average (44%).

Figure 4.7 shows the perceptions of the principals in terms of their role relationships with the students.

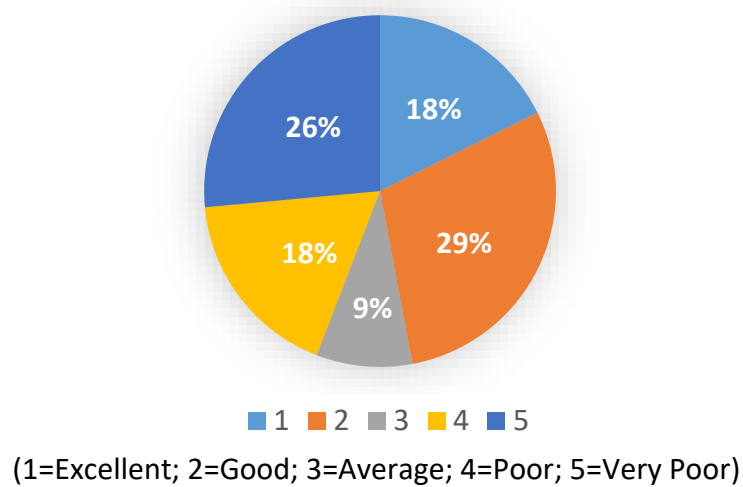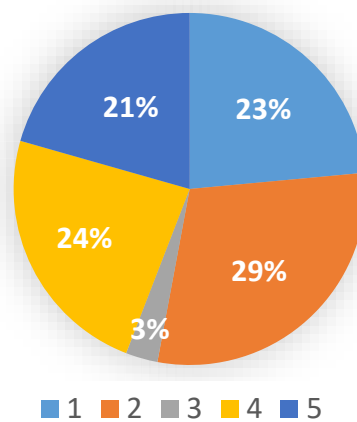
(1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Figure 4.7: Role relationships of principals with the students

More than half (52%) of the principals perceive that their relationships with the students are above average. However, almost as many (45%) feel that their relationship with the students is below average. Only 3% of the principals were unable to determine if their relationship with the students were above or below average.

Difficulties in enacting the role of principal

The principals were asked to indicate the three greatest difficulties which they faced when enacting the role of an international school principal in Malaysia. Figure 4.8 shows that the most frequently identified problems relate to staff, parents, cultural, board/owner/superordinate, procedural, competition, language and financial issues.
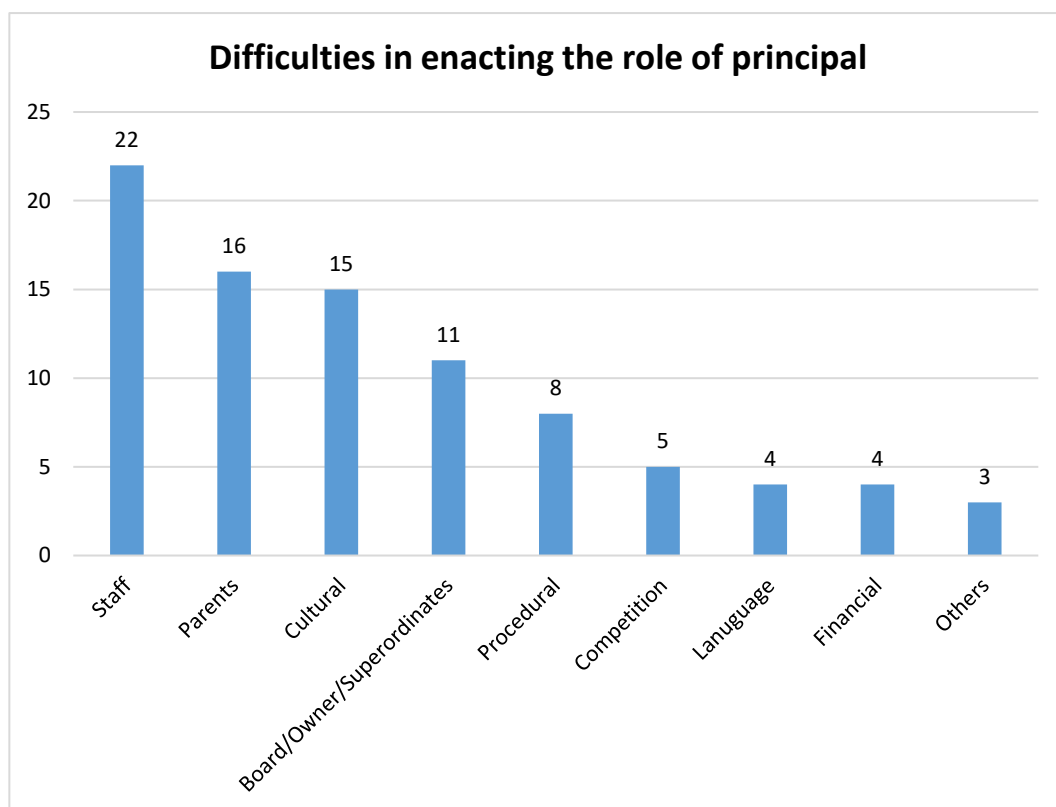
Figure 4.8: Difficulties in enacting the role of principal

Staff

Staff issues were the most frequently cited problems by the survey respondents. Recruitment and retention are the main staff-related difficulties identified by the principals. The principals also cited that handling poor performing staff is a challenge. The problems include attitude issues, poor work ethic, resistance to change, or according to principal 7, the "lack of attention to customer care requirements" and expats who "walk around with a superiority complex". Other staff-related concerns cited by the principals include getting the expat staff to mix

with the local staff, staff development, less trained staff, absenteeism and "hesitancy of local staff to speak out" (principal 11).

Parents

The second main area of difficulty relates to issues with parents. These include meeting their expectations, such as expecting that the "international school must and should be better than a public school" (principal 31), expecting that the principal must be a foreigner or an expatriate, or simply "unrealistic expectations of parents" (principal 8). Principal 2 mentioned that "cultural differences in the parent body" pose a difficulty, while principal 32 stated "language barriers to parents" as an obstacle not easy to overcome. Other respondents mentioned unspecified difficulties relating to different parent categories, such as "local parents" (principal 5 and 25), "regional parents" (principal 25), "parent issues" (principal 24), "parents" (principal 15) and "demanding parents" (principal 9).

Cultural

Managing cultural differences aspects is the third most commonly mentioned difficulty, named by 15 principals. The examples given include "understanding cultural differences" (principal 27), "working within a multicultural context in the best way possible" (principal 17), "navigating cultural differences" (principal 17), or simply "the many cultural differences of being British" (principal 3).

Board/Owner/Superordinate

Dealing with the owner of the school or the Governing Board is a challenge for 11 principals, as are relationships with their superordinates. Their comments include "being micro-managed by people with little education knowledge" (principal 33), "lack of trust and constant interference" (principal 33) and "lack of school autonomy" (principal 8). Other respondents were less specific, simply stating "school owner" (principal 25) or "Board of Governors" (principals 3 and 4). This could be due to the immense pressure put on the principal by the owner of the school in order to achieve the enrolment target since most of the international schools in Malaysia are owned by profit-seeking organisations or companies,

when profit was never a concern for principals who previously worked in government schools. This may mean that the principals have to 'bend' their principles in order to please the parents, who are fee-paying customers.

Procedural

Becoming familiar with local procedures is another difficulty, mentioned by eight principals, specifically in understanding and dealing with agencies of the government, such as the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The general concern is related to time and efficiency, in particular in terms of the "length of time it takes to get any official paperwork" (principal 4).

Competition

Sustaining the enrolment of students in the highly competitive environment is another difficulty, mentioned by five principals. This is not surprising because, as a result of the government's ambitious efforts to promote Malaysia as an education hub, the number of international schools has grown to 89 in 2013 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013), exceeding the 87 international schools that the Malaysian government targeted to open by 2020 (Economic Planning Unit, 2014). The *Education Destination Malaysia: Guide to International & Private Schools 2016-2017 Edition* shows a further rise in the number of international schools, to 109, a 18.3% increase from 2013 to 2016.

Language

The national language of Malaysia is the Malay language and that is a problem for four principals, especially when communicating with parents and other people "whose command of English is limited" (principal 27). Principal 32 concurred by stating "language barrier to parents" as one of the difficulties.

Financial issues

The principals identified two types of financial problems. First, as most of their schools are profit-making organisations, principals may have a limited budget for teacher training and for student resources. From a broader perspective, some

principals had concerns over "constant currency devaluations" (principal 27), "financial crises" (principal 5) and the "national economy impacting enrolment" (principal 14).

Benefits of enacting the role of principal

While the principals faced certain difficulties, as discussed in the previous section, there are also certain benefits from being the head of the school. The principals were asked to indicate the three greatest benefits which they experienced when enacting the role of an international school principal in Malaysia. Figure 4.9 shows that the most frequently identified benefits relate to students, autonomy, culture, sense of satisfaction, positive living experience, parents, staff, professional development, relationships, good salary and location.
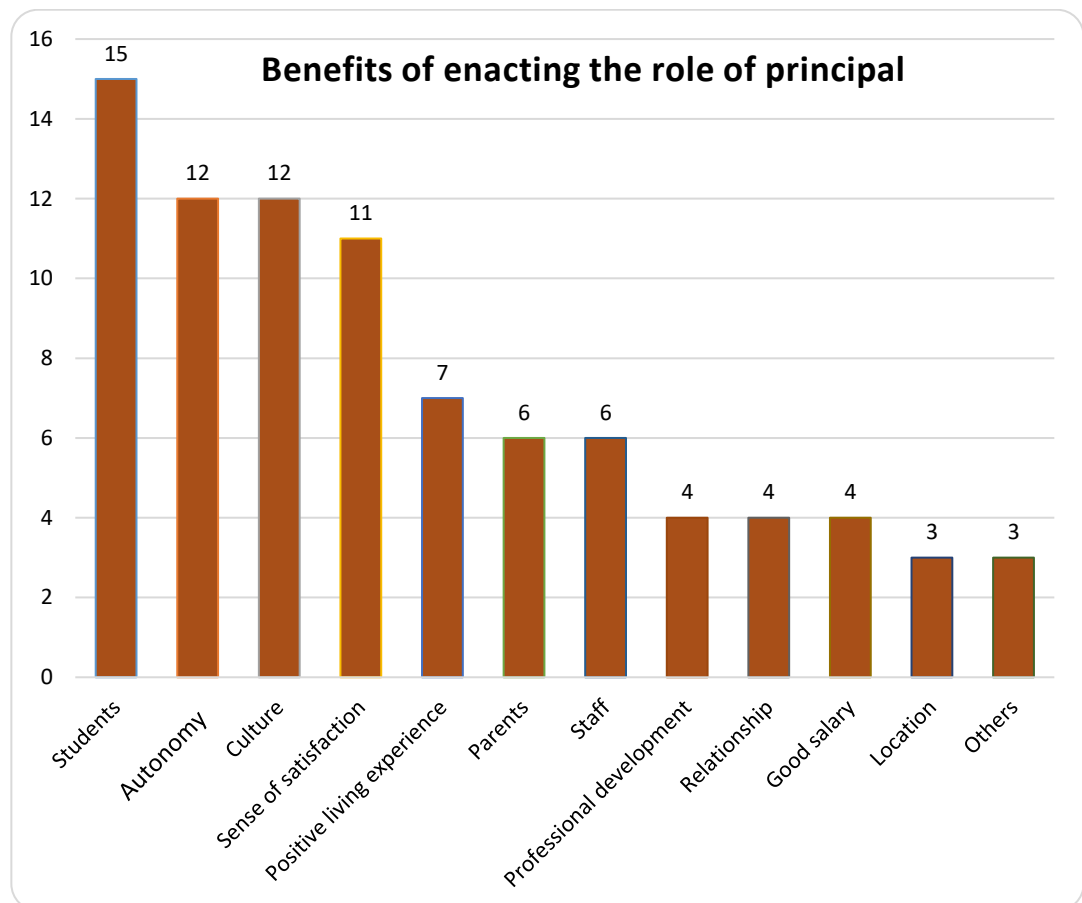
Figure 4.9: Benefits of enacting the role of principal

<u>Students</u>

Almost half (15) of the principals were full of praise about the students they have in their schools, which is seen as one of the greatest benefits of being the principal of the school. They used words such as good, amazing, brilliant, lovely, motivated, positive, wonderful, well behaved, and high aspirations, to describe their students, or, as simply put by principals 11, 22 and 25, who just stated "students".

<u>Autonomy</u>

More than a third (12) of the principals enjoy the autonomy they have in many aspects in their schools. Three specified the autonomy which they have from the control of either the local Ministry of Education (principals 9 and 14) or the "U.K. inspection bodies" (principal 12). Three other principals (2, 10 and 31) are glad to have a say in the curriculum to be delivered in their schools. "Easy access to items" (principal 13) and "not too much red tape" (principal 32) are the other two benefits which many principals value as this saves a lot of time or effort. Principals 33 and 6 are pleased that they are able to "lead and create change", and 'be innovative and forward thinking" respectively, or as principal 19 puts it, he/she appreciates the "opportunity to implement initiatives to educate & nurture the students".

<u>Culture</u>

While the diversified, multi-racial and multi-cultural environment poses a difficulty for some principals, 12 of them view that as a benefit. Some take it positively and use it as an opportunity to learn from or about other cultures (principals 12 and 17). Principal 17 mentions "finding ways to take advantage of the local culture, history and environment to enrich the learning of the students", while principal 33 uses this "learning about other cultures to blend this into the school framework".

<u>Sense of satisfaction</u>

The next benefit, stated by 11 principals, is the sense of satisfaction they are able to derive from their position and their ability to make a difference. First, being the

'principal' is considered as a status "held in esteem" (principal 21), or being "recognised as having a different status" (principal 10), especially in a society which places great emphasis on education with the "school [being] valued as [the] centre of the community" (principal 26). Principals 16 and 33 are glad to be involved in the development of teachers and students. At the macro level, principal 14 is happy to be able to bring about "educational change" and "being part of the development of the local market".

Positive living experience

On a personal level, seven principals referred to their positive living experiences in Malaysia, giving examples such as "healthier environment" (principal 28), "quality of life" (principal 32) and "international in flavour" (principal 13), while some others just like the food, lifestyle and weather of Malaysia.

Parents

Although "parents" are ranked second highest in terms of the difficulties faced by the principals, six principals mention "wonderful parents" (principals 1 and 23) and "supportive parents" (principal 4) as one of the benefits of working as a principal in an international school in Malaysia. However, principal 7 adds that relationships with the parents are good, provided that "they are communicated with openly and honestly".

Staff

Six principals are appreciative of their staff. Principal 30 commented that "the staff are dedicated and committed" and principal 9 is glad to have the opportunity in "working with the expatriate teachers and learning from them". Principals 4 and 6 are pleased to have "good staff" and "amazing staff" respectively.

Professional development

Four principals are happy about their opportunities for professional learning, from teachers and students, as well as "learning and managing the new curriculum and

co-curriculum" (principal 9), thus contributing towards their professional development.

Relationships

The opportunity to work closely with all stakeholders, and building relationships with them, is a benefit mentioned by four principals.

Good salary

Four principals are satisfied with the salary which they receive due to the relatively lower "cost of living" (principal 13) and principal 30 commented that "money is not an issue".

Location

Three principals are especially pleased with the location of Malaysia and principal 1 also mentioned "the many holidays and great work-life balance" that one can enjoy, due to Malaysia's "easy access to the rest of Asia and Australasia".

Others

Principal 24 uniquely stated that the benefits gained from working in Malaysia include the ability to develop, and put into practice, "problem solving skills", "critical thinking skills" and "creativity".

Satisfaction from enacting the role of principal

The principals were asked to list the three greatest satisfactions from being the principal of an international school in Malaysia. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2018), satisfaction is defined as 'a pleasant feeling that you get when you receive something you wanted, or when you have done something you wanted to do'. This is quite different from benefit, discussed in the previous section, defined as 'an advantage or profit gained from something' (Oxford University Press, 2018). Therefore, while the effects or

outcomes of both satisfaction and benefit are positive and pleasant, there are still some differences between the two categories.

Figure 4.10 shows a thematic categorisation of the satisfaction the principals derived from their role.
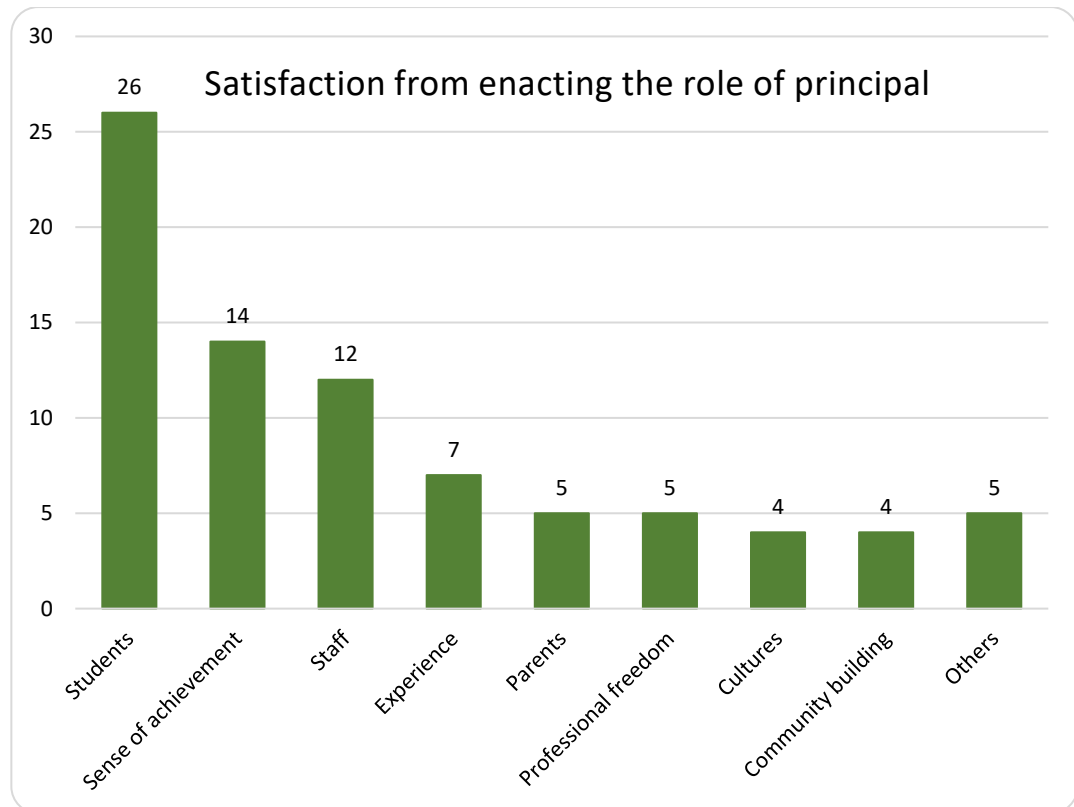
Figure 4.10: Satisfaction from enacting the role of principal

Students

More than two-thirds (24) of the principals derived their greatest satisfaction from the students in their schools. Two of the principals mentioned the students in two of their three responses, thus resulting in 26 responses about students. For example, principal 1 stated "getting great results as the students are so academically driven", and "seeing students develop holistically and able to gain entry into the best universities", while principal 28 shared the joy in "seeing the connection students make with others" and "seeing the accomplishments of the students". At the same time, principals 1, 4, 16, 19, 28 and 30 are all proud of the achievements of their students while principals 1, 8, 9, 11, 20, 27 and 31 are

pleased to see their students develop and grow. The attitude of the students towards learning also impresses principals 17 and 32. To some other principals, their students are simply "amazing" (principals 7 and 21), "wonderful" (principal 9), "respectful" (principal 22) and "motivated" (principal 2).

Sense of achievement

More than a third (12) of the principals (two cited two similar 'satisfactions') developed a sense of achievement in their role. While principals 17 and 28 are proud that they are able to make a difference in general, the level of satisfaction felt by principals 22 and 13 were even greater as they have turned "a failing school around quite rapidly" and have "set up a new school from scratch and watched the children and the school develop" respectively. As most international schools only employ expatriates as the principals of the schools, it is not surprising that principal 1*1* proudly said that "I love the idea that, as a Malaysian, I am the Principal of an international school. One does not need to be an expat to lead an international school." Principal 11 further justified that "having worked in Malaysian schools previously, and in the UK, I am able to understand and deliver the international curriculum effectively - weighing the benefits of both." This could be the reason for having an advantage over the other expatriate principals. Three principals (8, 25 and 26) stated good results as one of their achievements.

Staff

Staff is the next main area of satisfaction for 11 principals, especially for principal 32, who is pleased to be "with teachers who want to learn" and "seeing teachers grow and develop". Similar sentiments were shared by principals 6, 8, and 28. Other principals are appreciative of having staff who are "committed to the school" (principal 19), "keen" (principal 13), "good" (principal 8), "motivated" (principal 2), or just simply "amazing" (principal 6).

Experience

The kind of experience gained working in Malaysia is appreciated by five principals. Having previously worked in Burma, principal 7 is pleased with the

country itself, stating that Malaysia is a "polite", "friendly", "modern" and "up-together" country. As for principal 33, the opportunity to "mix with the students and their parents" and "working with staff from a variety of countries" is something which is valued, with the latter also mentioned by principal 3.

Parents

Five principals feel gratified for having parents who are respectful and supportive.

Professional freedom

Five principals appreciate their professional freedom. Three principals (2, 6 and 9) derived great satisfaction from the ability to innovate and "try new approaches" (principal 9). Principal 22 notes that s/he is fortunate to have a "supportive Board of Governors", while principal 31 is glad that, in his current school, "learning can be put at the forefront [as] compared to a government school in the UK".

Culture

The opportunity to learn about other cultures, thus gaining a deeper understanding of them, provides satisfaction for four principals.

Community building

Four principals commented that having an impact in the local community gave them a sense of satisfaction.

A noteworthy observation is the number of common themes mentioned by the principals under satisfaction and benefits. Table 4.6 shows the number of times different themes were mentioned by the survey respondents for those two questions. Out of eight themes from the list of satisfactions and 12 themes from the list of benefits, seven themes are common themes which can be found on both lists. These seven themes can be combined and they make up 84% of the total responses. Students is the number one reason which the principals derived their satisfaction from, and also the greatest benefit working in an international secondary school in Malaysia.

Satisfaction			Benefits			Satisfaction & Benefits		
Themes	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Themes*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Combined Themes*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Students	*26*	31.7%	*Students*	*15*	17.2%	*Students*	*41*	28.9%
Sense of achievement	*14*	17.1%	*Sense of satisfaction*	*11*	12.6%	*Sense of achievement / satisfaction*	*25*	17.6%
Staff	*12*	14.6%	*Staff*	*6*	6.9%	*Staff*	*18*	12.7%
Professional freedom	*5*	6.1%	*Autonomy*	*12*	13.8%	*Autonomy*	*17*	12.0%
Cultures	*4*	4.9%	*Culture*	*12*	13.8%	*Culture*	*16*	11.3%
Experience	*7*	8.5%	*Positive living experience*	*7*	8.0%	*Experience*	*14*	9.9%
Parents	*5*	6.1%	*Parents*	*6*	6.9%	*Parents*	*11*	7.7%
Community building	4	4.9%	Personal development	4	4.6%	Total	142	100%
Others	5	6.1%	Relationship	4	4.6%			
Total	82	100%	Good salary	4	4.6%			
			Location	3	3.4%			
			Others	3	3.4%			
			Total	87	100%			

Table 4.6: Satisfaction and benefits reported by survey respondents

Overview

The data collected provide extensive insights into principal leadership in these Malaysian international secondary schools. Some of the results might have been expected, such as the biography of the principals, where almost half of the respondents are of British heritage, given that most of the international schools in Malaysia teach the British curriculum. Similarly, "students" being at the top of the list of greatest benefits and satisfaction is also a finding which reaffirms what is often found in the literature. However, "staff", "parents", and "cultural/cultures", all appear in the lists of difficulties, benefits and satisfaction, an indication that the experiences of the principals are diverse, even though they are all working in the same country and in similar schools teaching the same curriculum.

The next chapter presents the findings from the first case study school. These data provide more in-depth understanding of principal leadership in this specific international school.

Chapter Five: Case Study School A

School Context

This international school is located in the Klang Valley, Selangor. The school is an English-curricula school and is owned by a local public-listed company. The composition of the teaching staff is 50% expatriates and 50% locals. Most (80%) of the students are Malaysians and the rest are foreigners.

Interviews were conducted with the principal (AP), her superordinate (AS) and three of her longest serving Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members (ASLT1, ASLT2 and ASLT3).

- AP is British and this is her first international school experience. Prior to becoming the principal of the current school in Malaysia, AP held the positions of head of subject, head of department and vice-principal. Her highest qualification is Post Graduate Diploma. After being in the education industry for more than 30 years, including more than 10 years as a principal in a British government school, AP felt that it was time to move on for greater challenges. Therefore, upon seeing the job opening on a job recruitment site, she decided to go for it. AP has been principal of this school for four years.
- AS is the CEO of the education division of the company and she was the one who shortlisted, interviewed and recruited AP.
- ASLT1 is British and is the Vice-Principal (Achievement). She has worked in the school for five years and has been an SLT member for four years. She has been working under AP as an SLT member for four years.
- ASLT2 is Malaysian and is the Key Stage 4 Director. She has worked in the school for six years and has been an SLT member for two years. She has been working under AP as an SLT member for the same period of time.
- ASLT3 is British and is the Key Stage 5 Director. He has worked in the school for six years and has been an SLT member for four years and nine months. He has been working under AP as an SLT member for four years.

The findings are presented through an integrated thematic approach, with each theme linking to a research question.

Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment of the principal is a senior management-level procedure and decision which involves only the top management of a company. Therefore, only AP and AS were asked questions pertaining to the recruitment and selection.

When asked about the required background of the potential candidates, AS stated that candidates need to have relevant educational and professional background, such as having studied the British curriculum and having experience as a principal of a British school.   The recruitment process followed a specific sequence:

a)   A head hunter, or recruitment agency, is engaged.

b)   The agent sends all suitable curriculum vitae for shortlisting, based on the requirements given by the school.

c)   Shortlisted candidates are interviewed through Skype.

d)   Candidates are further shortlisted and the agent speaks to them to give them further information about the position.

e)   The final selected candidate is flown to Malaysia for face-to-face interviews.

Steps a) to e) are repeated if the candidate is not chosen or does not accept the position.

AS added an important condition that "it's not just about us finding the right person, I think for the principal it also must be the right school for them, the right country, the right overall position".

AS also shared that AP was not selected during the first round of shortlisting "because she had no international experience" and that, looking at the pool of candidates they had, there were "many with international experience" and thus they wanted "all the boxes ticked" for the selected candidates, even though AP caught AS's attention during the very first round of shortlisting. AS felt that, as a

principal, it would be good to have international experience because s/he will be leading a team of expats who may not have international experience". Eventually, when all the shortlisted candidates did not make it past the first (Skype) interview, AS immediately thought of AP. After interviewing her via Skype, AS realised that "her experience was very relevant" and the concern about her lack of international experience was eased as AS felt that "she was flexible and adaptable enough". AS added that she has come across a number of principals who, although they have international experience, "are not adaptable", "not flexible" and do not "understand the cultures of the countries that they are working in". AP was eventually flown to Malaysia for a face-to-face interview and was offered the job on the same day.

AP shared that the interview was very different from her previous experience. There were two stages for the interview. The first was a Skype interview with AS and the incumbent principal, with questions revolving around her track record in achieving good results for the students and the management of difficult staff, as well as her reasons for wanting to move to Malaysia. The second stage of the interview took place in Malaysia. AP described this second stage interview as "very, very informal" with a few key persons of the school and all took place within a day.

The subject of values was identified by both AP and AS as an important factor during the selection process. As stated by AS, "integrity is also very important". This was further emphasised when AP met the chairman of the company, where the conversation revolved only around values. According to AP, during her two-hour interview with the chairman, it was the "most intense conversation" she had and "it did not have anything to do with the technical skills of a principal, but more about values, what my values were and what were the values of the company and the school and whether I could fit in into that".

In addition, both the chairman and AS relied heavily on the references during the shortlisting of candidates. The chairman was also reported to have used them as

a basis for a large part of the conversation with AP, asking her for the reasons behind the comments her referees have made about her.

The whole process of face-to-face interviews with the various management staff, to the position being offered and accepted, took only one day, even though it took between four to six months from the time AP applied for the position to the moment she was finally offered the job.

Preparation for Principalship in Malaysia

Work begun for AP immediately after she accepted the job and before she reported for work. She emailed the SLT members to introduce herself, as well as conducted Skype meetings with the vice-principals. She also contacted the Key Stage 5 Director, who was doing the timetable, and gave him a curriculum spreadsheet for the allocation of teachers. She also sent the company some job descriptions. In addition, she did a lot of interviews in the UK, alongside the outgoing principal, for the teachers who were joining at the same time as her. She feels that was unusual as she had yet joined the school officially and was already recruiting new teachers in the UK. These teachers, whom she had interviewed and appointed, arrived in Malaysia together with her. This was perceived to be "always good, rather than having all inherited people".

Activities of the Principal

AP said that she follows a standard day-to-day routine, "to a certain extent". This is concurred by the three SLT members (ASLT1, ASLT2 and ASLT3) who work closely with AP. All three SLT members noticed that she reaches school very early in the morning. ASLT2 even labelled AP as a "workaholic because she's here the earliest" while ASLT3 commented that AP "works weekends", "here till very late", and she will even send emails "in the middle of weekends, demanding things".

AP plans what she is going to do each day, such as "line management meeting, walking around the school [and] visiting lessons". AP shared that she spends most

of her time meeting people and rarely allocates any school time to do any administrative or paper work, which she completes before the school starts, after school, or at weekends. This is because her philosophy is that "anything that involves people, you have to do in the school day" and "anything that involves just bits of paper, you can do outside of the school day". This was clearly noticed by ASLT2 who said that AP's focus during school hours is meetings, which AP "cannot do after work", or where she needs to have "that face-to-face interaction with somebody, or observing a lesson, observing some activity". Therefore, for "checking some reports or going through a testimonial", and "coming up with the school improvement plan", ASLT2 shared that AP will say that "I'll bring it for this weekend" or "I'll do this after work". ASLT1 further substantiated that AP goes to school "very, very early, around 6.30am" to do "her own individual work, checking on emails, replying to people, and so on". After the school has started, AP will have "various meetings with people", "weekly line management meetings with each of the SLT members and then meetings with the other principals". That is similar to the observations made by ASLT3, that AP has "lots of meetings", such as "management meetings", "line management meetings", "SLT meetings" and "operational meetings".

ASLT1 added that AP ensures that she does "one walk around the school every day, and attend any of the staff meetings that are necessary after school". ASLT1 thus labels AP as a "very visible principal". ASLT3 also notices that AP "does walkabouts", but "not routine" and "she does that sometimes". On the contrary, ASLT2 mentioned that she does not see AP "stepping out of the office" after she is in school, "mostly on emails or there's people in her room, on the phone, back to back meetings".

As far as possible, AP has her meetings and briefings on Mondays and Tuesdays so that she is able to "do other things during the other days towards the end of the week". AP also shared that a lot of the structure and management of time is around when different meetings are planned. Last, but not least, AP added that one must always be ready to change the structure because "one of the biggest

things about the life of a principal is the unpredictable" and one "can't keep a lot to a set structure". However, one can have "someone to help to manage it when things are . . . difficult".

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

When AP was asked the difference between what was stated in her job description (JD), and what she actually does, AP replied, "I don't remember if I got one. I forgot to get one from the HR (Human Resource) as I do not have time." However, AP believes that the HR Department should have sent it together with the application package when she applied for the position. Furthermore, as she puts it, "I don't really work like that. I would never look at my job description and think I am just doing those things. I can imagine that it's very very closely linked to what I do." She also believes that the JD would have "a lot relating to quality assurance of what goes on in the school" as that "would be the most important job of a principal, (which) is to ensure that the standards of teaching and learning are as they should be". She added that she is expected to focus on "quality assurance, management of people, management of resources and management of facilities". When comparing with when she was the principal of the public school in the UK, AP commented that she spent "very little time on quality assurance of what went on in the classroom" and "somebody else has to do all of that" because she spent nearly all of her time "dealing with unions, dealing with governors, dealing with budgetary matters, dealing with HR issues, disciplinary hearings, capability hearings, pupil exclusions, and students' behavioural matters". She "had to deal with a lot of social welfare cases" then because her previous school is in a "very socially deprived part of London". In her current school, "there aren't so many behavioural problems". Therefore, her responsibilities have "to do with the context of the school you're leading, where you end up putting your focus" and not "just the difference between public and private, and national and international". Therefore, in her current school, her focus is "on the teachers, the students and the parents".

AS shares the same understanding as AP who, when asked about the roles and responsibilities of the principal, commented that the person takes care of "the whole school in terms of operations", "academic operations" and "student services". AS elaborated that the principal's "main role really is to ensure the school runs well, to make sure that the students get the kind of education that they deserve so that they can be the best that they can be, and their talents or whatever skills they have can be honed to the best that we can", or basically, to "bring out the best in every student". As compared with the principal of a government school, AS expects the principal of this international school "to give much more than what the curriculum is", having "added value" and "doing things way beyond what one would get in a government school". Therefore, "it has to encompass not just academic learning, it also has to encompass character development, overall development of the child" and "mentoring". This would mean that the "expectations here are much more". The principal is also expected to "work with the community a bit more", as well as "working with the corporation overall".

ASLT1, on the other hand, feels that AP's main role is to focus on the staff, to be "a very supportive member to all of the staff with their ideas and initiatives moving the school forward". ASLT1 added that AP is expected to encourage the staff to "fulfil their potential", keep "everybody on track" and "coming up with a solution" to problems "in agreement with everybody so that there are no conflicts amongst people". ASLT1 also feels that AP is involved in "recruitment and retention of staff" and "policy making to some extent".

ASLT2 also feels that AP's main focus is on the staff. ASLT2 commented that "I see her managing us as a team, even her senior leader team very well, making sure that we're ok - well-being, our emotional, whatever needs is ok. She'll tend to walk out and just have a quick chat with us in the morning." ASLT2 added her personal experience that AP "used to do that much more frequently with me when I just became an SLT". Other roles and responsibilities of AP, as observed by ASLT2,

include "back to back line management meetings", "meetings with parents" and the "parent focus group".

From the perspective of ASLT3, AP's "obvious" role is to assume "academic leadership of the school", through "setting the vision and the mission of the school, in the general direction of the school". In the process, according to ASLT3, "[AP ensures] that we're all doing our jobs in terms of quality control, running our particular roles… Making sure that quality control procedures are being applied, reviewing academic performance." ASLT3 added that the other responsibilities AP has include "recruitment", "structure the timetable", "staff management", "budget control", "managing the overall processes", "managing everybody else to manage the programmes", "dealing with issues", "advise on what the strategies going to take", "deal with management", "write reports", "meet the parents" and having to organise "parent focus groups".

AP and AS have a similar understanding about the roles and responsibilities of AP. This could be because of the regular communications they have, something which was discussed during the interviews. The other SLT members, on the other hand, have a narrower perception of AP's roles and responsibilities, which revolve mainly around the staff of the school.

Role Relationships

All five interviewees were asked to comment on AP's role relationships with the various stakeholders, her superordinate (AS), SLT members, department heads, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and students. The interviewees were asked to rate the respective relationships from a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor.

1. *Role relationship with superordinate*

AP's rating: 1

AS's rating: between 1 and 2

ASLT1's rating: 1

ASLT2's rating: between 1 and 2

ASLT3's rating: 2

AP commented that she has "a very good relationship" with AS. They meet "virtually every week, unless something gets in the way". It is also "a very open relationship" where AP can tell AS "things that are causing challenges in the school" and AS can tell AP "things that are not meeting her expectations from the corporate point of view of what is happening". This was concurred by AS who shared that her relationship with AP "is very satisfying" and added that, "we are very open in our sharing and though we may not always agree on the same thing initially, after open discussion and looking at the whole thing, at whatever issues, for instance, we can all collectively come to an agreement and align the best interest of the school."

Both AP and AS also "set vision together", "discuss a lot about what needs to happen to take the school forward" and what needs to be done to keep "improving rather than allowing students starting to drop off". More importantly, it is "very much a dialogic approach" and no agendas are set during the weekly meeting. AP elaborated that "when I go into the CEO's room for a meeting, she does not have things she wants to talk to me about first. It's all about *what do you want to talk to me about this week*. So I always make a list before I go. And it is only until I have gone through all of those that she says if there is something that's really being bugging her about what's happening in the international school." AP feels that their relationship is in "the right balance of knowing what's happening without interfering" and that "the academic side of things is down to me". AP reiterated that AS "never, never interferes with anything" and said that AS only "does step in to offer advice or give direction when something that concerns more about the operations or the management of the school or something that needs to fit in with the corporate style of things", but "that is not that often". There were "only a couple of occasions" where they "had to agree to disagree" and then it was up to AS to make the final decision as "she is the person in charge".

Based on ASLT1's observations, AP is able to call AS, whenever she feels the need, and AS "has always have been very supportive of all of the things that [AP] has tried to introduce in the school". AP and AS also "know each other quite well through spending the time together as they have in the UK on the recruitment trips". As ASLT1 indicated, "I think they just understand each other and know what each other is wanting for the school, which really helps."

ASLT2 thinks that AP "really looks up to" AS. This is because ASLT2 "never really heard something negative being said" about AS from AP. AP also makes the effort to provide "reasoning and understanding for both sides" when certain requests made by ASLT2 are not fulfilled. ASLT2 also knows that AP and AS "do a lot of recruitment together" and thus she assumes that "they've a very good relationship" as "it always turns out very well and she's always given very positive feedback". And when "there's like a massive parent complaint", AP will always seek advice from AS. This made ASLT2 feel that their relationship is very good because "if you don't have a good relationship with the person, I don't really think you'd seek that person's advice for such occasions". Nevertheless, ASLT2 is "not very sure" if she should rate the relationship as excellent.

ASLT3 began with uncertainty of whether to rate the relationship as 1, 2 or 3 and finally decided that it should be a 2. This is because he felt that AP would like to have "a proper operational budget control", as how one would "have in the UK school", and "she'd like to be in charge of the school". ASLT3 added that AP also faces "management interference", something "different from what a Board of Governors would do". When asked to elaborate, ASLT3 replied, "Well I don't really want to go into that. Because - confidential."

In general, all five participants have rated the relationship between AP and AS as excellent or good. AP and AS both gave examples of how they are able to be give direct opinions about issues, as well as mutually respecting each other. Then, through their conversations with AP, the three SLT members were also able to further confirm the good relationship AP has with AS, except for ASLT3 who has

some reservations about giving a rating of 'excellent' as he has detected some challenges between AP and AS, about which he was reluctant to elaborate.

2. *Role relationships with SLT members*

AP's rating: 1

AS's rating: 2

ASLT1's rating: 1

ASLT2's rating: 1

ASLT3's rating: 1

AP believes that she has "quite good relationships" with her SLT members. She is especially proud to "have a mixed SLT, with some Malaysian teachers and some expatriate teachers". However, she feels that it is "a bit less favourable at the moment because the principal and both the VPs are all expatriates". She would like to have a "balance" where she can have "a Malaysian vice-principal and an expatriate vice-principal". This is because the school has "a 50% Malaysian teaching staff" and there is a need for them "to see a role model of somebody who can be successful right to the top and from their own background, also somebody who they may feel more willing to open up and talk to [them], than perhaps, [they] would to an expat". In AP's opinion, having a Malaysian vice-principal also allows the SLT members "to always understand the culture and context of the school". Furthermore, AP added that, even though she has line management meetings every two weeks, and with her vice-principals every week, "they can still come in at any time, and then just raise anything". AP also tries not to micromanage her SLT but instead tries to "give them a free rein". At the same time, she will not "just let them flounder" and will "intervene and see what [she] could do to help". But having said that, AP shared that "I always like to try to be involved in everything. Do what I am asking them to do." AP also revealed that her line management meetings are also very structured because she wants "to make sure that this is done, this is done, this is done" and "just go through all the things" before she asks the SLT members if there is anything else s/he wants to talk to her about.

AS began by giving a disclaimer that she does not really know how to rate as she does not "deal with them directly". Nevertheless, AS gave it a rating of "maybe a 2" since some of the SLT members have stayed beyond two years and "they seem to speak well of her". She supported that rating by stating that comments from parents "are all very positive" and "parents are very happy with the school generally and so on". She also said that "the results seem to show that they get along well because otherwise the school will not be able to perform to the high level that it does".

ASLT1, ASLT2 and ASLT3 all gave the rating as excellent, in agreement with AP's rating of her relationship with her SLT members. One of the reasons given was that ASLT1 "never feels worried about going in and telling [AP] something if it hasn't gone to plan", as she feels "supported and mentored in the role that I'm doing here". ASLT2 concurred with the support she is also experiencing with AP.

> *"I've been very, very transparent with her. Very truthful… I know that whenever I need support, I wouldn't go to anyone else or go through any other means, but I'll go directly to her." (ASLT2).*

ASLT3 elaborated that AP "is an effective principal" and he "always got great respect for her", even though he may not "agree with her all the time".

Based on the findings, one can conclude that AP has a good relationship with her SLT members. This is because her three subordinates, together with her, have all rated the relationship as 'excellent'. AS, who does not work directly with the SLT members, gave a 'good' rating because the school is run well and there is positive feedback from the parents. In addition, ASLT1 thinks that "everybody [in the SLT] generally feels the same" as she does. This could be largely due to what ASLT2 shared, that when something bad takes place, AP "tends to sit back and think how it could possibly happen [and] not immediately play the blame game" and "she's a really good at sitting back and thinking, ok let's see how we can solve this", thus

further verifying what ASLT3 claimed, that they are "a pretty tight team", "a good team" and "a good working team".

3. *Role relationships with department heads*

AP's rating: 2

AS's rating: 2

ASLT1's rating: between 1 and 2

ASLT2's rating: between 1 and 2

ASLT3's rating: 2

The reason why AP has rated her relationship with the department head as 2 is because "there is not very much of a direct relationship" between herself and the heads of subject because she leaves that "to the rest of the SLT who line manage them". She does not even go to the heads of subject meeting now, even though she used to, as she feels "that impedes the vice-principal in charge from taking things in the direction that they think it should". She now relies on the minutes or her line management meeting with the relevant senior leaders. However, those heads of subjects who have been here for a long time, as long as AP has been here, and/or those who know her well, will still see her "if they need to, or if they feel that they are not getting what they want from their line manager". Nevertheless, AP admitted that this is "definitely a different relationship" from that she has with the SLT members.

This is concurred by AS, who feels that AP's relationship with the department heads "would be similar to the senior leadership team", but "maybe not as close as the SLT, because she will not work as closely with the heads of subject, but the head of subjects probably work more closely with the deputies". However, AS added that, once again, based on "the performance of the school and so on", the department heads' "respect has to be very high for her".

The immediate response from the ASLT1 for the 'drop' in rating is that, while there is "no real criticism", the department heads "have more communication and

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spend more time" with the two vice-principals "than they would do with [AP] as a principal".

As for ASLT2, the justification for the rating is the "high turnover", where there are "not only new members of staff", they have "new Heads of Subjects". Therefore, even though AP has been "very, very cooperative" and "gives people ample time to settle in", "there are times where she does struggle with very new departments, [and/or] big departments having incompetent head of departments". These are the situations where "she will have those difficult decisions to make, and difficult conversations".

On the whole, ASLT3 feels that "she manages them well" and "the output is good", despite having "some issues" and once having to "remove the Head of English". While ASLT3 feels that the relationship has been "effective", "it's good but isn't excellent". However, he does not think that AP is "not a good manager", but more due to the pay structure of the company where the allowances paid to the heads of subjects are not attractive compared to other international schools. This results in "the quality of staff reducing over time" and "the good staff are leaving". With the turnover of staff and pay constraints, AP has to "compromise on the quality", thus having "variable quality in the heads of subjects".

Although most of the interviewees have given a slightly lower rating when asked to comment on AP's role relationship with the department heads, they were able to justify with reasons which are beyond AP's control. This means that the less-than-excellent relationship is not due to the fault or incompetence of AP, but rather because of the circumstances.

4. *Role relationships with teachers*

AP's rating: 3

AS's rating: 2

ASLT1's rating: 2

ASLT2's rating: between 1 and 2

ASLT3's rating: 2

AP admitted that it is "really difficult to have in depth relationship with all [the] teachers" since she has 112 staff, of whom about 100 are teachers. AP sees her teachers most during "return to work interviews" which she conducts for teachers who are back to work from medical leave. She also has "casual conversations with the teachers" when she walks around, especially during "lunch and break time when people might be out and about". Besides that, she "drops in to a lot of lessons". Nevertheless, she ensures that she does not "go into the staffrooms" as she "think[s] people would find that uncomfortable".

AS reiterated that she could "only assume that (the relationship) is generally fairly good", "based on the results". Furthermore, she acknowledges that with "so many different personalities", one cannot "expect all relationships to be good with all teachers". In addition, she feels that the principal and the teachers are "on different sides of the fence" where "a principal probably wants them to do more" but a teacher may think, "I would like to have more time on my own". Nevertheless, AS feels that AP "has the respect" and "the respect is there" for AP. Furthermore, AS feels that as long as there are no "significant operational issues or problems", it means that AP has managed the school well, even though "there are always challenges with teachers, academic staff in general".

Respect towards AP is the main reason for the rating ASLT1 and ASLT2 have given for the relationship between AP and the teachers, even though, as ASLT2 said, "in every school, teachers will moan, and they will moan about everything". ASLT1 commented that AP is "very much a figurehead for the whole school" and the teachers "know that [AP] is supporting them". This is "really really important for making the school what it is today". ASLT2 feels that "teachers are not scared of [AP], but they really respect her". Although ASLT3 also acknowledges that teachers "moan about the principal all the time" and "not all staff are happy", he still feels that the teachers think that AP is "generally fair".

Except for AP, the interviewees feel that AP's relationship with the teachers is good, although there exist certain challenges, such as the large number of teachers, the different characters and different expectations. From AP's point of view, the 'average' rating she has given could be due to the limited interactions she can have with the teachers, which is confined to certain occasions only.

5. *Role relationships with non-teaching staff*

AP's rating: 2

AS's rating: 2

ASLT1's rating: 2

ASLT2's rating: 1

ASLT3's rating: between 1 and 2

AP categorises her non-teaching staff into two groups, those who work in the administration office, and the support staff of the school, such as the science technicians and librarians. AP commented that she has "very close relationships" with the administrative staff and she "know[s] them really well and their strengths and weaknesses, [and] what they do" since they "have been here … since [she] arrived, and [there] hasn't been much movement". AP specifically highlighted that, with her personal assistant, "it is almost a symbiotic-led relationship" as "she is just so good at fielding everything to do with parents", such that "very rarely things get to [AP] now because [the personal assistant] will deal with them, helping [AP] to be prepared for meetings, helping [AP] to keep on track (and) on top of everything". According to AP, her personal assistant is "amazing". However, for the other group of non-teaching staff, i.e. the support staff, AP commented that she has "very little contact with them". Except for "the odd conversations when [AP is] doing [her] walkabouts", she only "meet[s] them once a year for the appraisal" and "that's about it". Nevertheless, "everyone from support staff to the SLT know that they can see [AP] if they need to" but they have to make an appointment. AP's "open door policy" only applies to "the SLT [who] can drop in anytime when they can". AP shared that she "could never say to the whole staff

to have an open door policy because you would never get anything done and also some people might misuse it".

AS stated that she "really wouldn't know" as she doesn't "have the opportunity to see any interaction with them". However, since she does not "see that there seem to be people leaving … then generally it's ok". She added that, if "people are leaving for, let's say, a better position, it's normal". In conclusion, AS said she does not "see any concern".

ASLT1 concurred with AP, commenting that "with the people who are immediate to her… she has a much better relationship with them". Therefore, she has rated AP's relationship with the administrative staff as 1 while her relationship with the support staff is rated as 2. For ASLT2, she defined AP's relationship with the non-teaching staff as "excellent", because "she's always very polite and she's humble", while ASLT3 felt that the relationship "just seems to be ok" because "there's no friction".

For the non-teaching staff, all the other four interviewees, except for AP herself, rated AP's role relationships mainly on the basis of how AP interacts with admin staff in general. This is because she does not see the support staff as much and she may only see some of them once a year during appraisals.

6. *Role relationships with parents*

AP's rating: 1

AS's rating: 1

ASLT1's rating: 2

ASLT2's rating: 1

ASLT3's rating: 1

AP confidently stated that "I certainly have got a very good relationship with all of the parents who are on my Parent Focus Group…They are very helpful, very constructively give us feedback on [the] school." In addition, when she meets

parents at the school events, she has "quite a good rapport with them" and she also gets "very very few complaints from parents". AP also shared that "so many parents always think that the only person that they want to talk to is the principal but when you probe a little bit, (the principal is) probably the least useful person for them to talk to because [the principal has not] gotten the direct information so we just try and divert them". AP also "very very rarely gets direct emails" from the parents as "very few of them have got [her] direct email address".

AS also agrees that AP has "very good" relationships with the parents, based on the "people [she] hear[s] from outside", the "parents themselves", or "sometimes through colleagues" and their "friends". AS once again demonstrated her trust in AP by stating that, even though not all the feedback and comments have been positive, "I have been around long enough to know which comments are more substantiated".

However, ASLT1 said that "it would be very hard to give that [relationship] a 1 because of the type of parents that we have". Furthermore, she added that "there will always be some parents who are going to be critical of what is being done in a school like ours" and "there will be some who just think that no matter what we do is not good enough for their child". However, ASLT1 acknowledges that "the group of parents that [AP] has on the parent focus group are very much on board with what she's doing" and "they are welcomed here into the school". In addition, "any parent can come in and meet with [AP at] any point".

Both ASLT2 and ASLT3 feel that AP's "relationship with the parents [is] excellent" and "she's got a very good reputation with the parents", "especially with the parent-teacher focus group". ASLT3 added that there is "open communication, and she's good at handling parents" and "the parents have confidence in her".

All, except for ASLT1, rated AP's relationship with the parents as excellent, based on what they have observed and the feedback from different people. Even for ASLT1, she attributed the lower rating to the clientele the school, where there is

a group of parents who will never be satisfied with what the school does, and not because of the AP's lack of ability in dealing with the parents.

7. *Role relationships with students*

AP's rating: 2

AS's rating: 2

ASLT1's rating: 2

ASLT2's rating: 1

ASLT3's rating: 1

AP feels that she has "got a very good relationship with the students" and she "still get[s] involved in a lot of their things", such as being "interviewed or to judge something". She still "see[s] them a lot in lessons when [she is] walking round" or if she covers lessons of teachers who are absent. She has "very little negative contact with students" and she added, "I think I'm just a figure head there they know that if they have to be seen by me any time about something negative, they'll be really worried about it, but again, [ASLT1] takes the role of being the bad cop, so I don't really have to deal very much poor behaviour." AP added that "one of the things that was remarked upon in the ISQM [International Schools Quality Mark] that was told to them from students and staff, that I was very much a presence around the school and that they felt that that was a positive thing." To conclude on challenges with students, AP mentioned, "No, none, I would say." She elaborated that "the most challenging thing is dealing with the adults, and even among the adults, it's more challenging dealing with the teachers than the parents. Because you are having to make them understand the standard that is expected and you know, obviously, you have a certain control over their job and livelihood, so teachers are always going to be more difficult, I think."

AS feels that AP's relationship with the students "is pretty good also". This is because, "if the relationship with parents is good, the relationship with students generally would also be quite good", even though AP "is not so much the kind of person who goes down and talks to the students".

ASLT1 commented that AP's relationship with the students is "very good, in particular with the older students" and "she really gets to know the IB students, and will know [the] individual thing, things about each of them as individuals, and is very, very caring towards the students as well – [and she] wants the best for them". She also added that "it is such a big school that, as a principal, it would be hard to have… a relationship with every single one of those students and be able to quantify it, but I would probably rate it… [as] 2".

ASLT2 shared her observation about AP that, "since she's come here, she has put in a lot of things for the students… especially leadership" and ASLT2 has "really seen how our students have grown and developed under her leadership". ASLT2 also feels that AP is "inspirational" and parents and students are able to see the "impact she has made on the school".

From ASLT3's point of view, "I'll give that a 1, yeah. I mean, definitely. The students [are] definitely happy." ASLT3 added that the students "follow the ethos of the school", "pretty much aware of what they need", "never heard the kids complain" and are "very positive about the school". He concluded "that's certainly got to be about the principal" as the "school is all about the principal". In ASLT3's opinion, a school has "a bad principal when the kids are whining". Furthermore, "with the ISQM audit, they thought [that] the kids were fantastic and [there was] no negativity". ASLT3 also said that he would "give it a 1 based on experience with the IB kids and general talk".

All five participants agree that AP has very good relationship with the students. They are also able to cite different examples to substantiate the ratings they have given, from their observations, to their conversations with the students and from the reports from the international school assessment organisation.

8. *Role relationships overview*

AP has, in general, very good role relationships with the various stakeholders of the school, as shown in table 5.1, which were further verified by her superordinate and SLT members. No one gave a rating of less than *good*, except for one *average* rating with the teachers, which was given by AP herself, not by her superordinate or SLT members.

Role relationships with	*AP's rating*	*AS's rating*	*ASLT1's rating*	*ASLT2's rating*	*ASLT3's rating*	**Average**
superordinate	2	between 1 and 2	1	between 1 and 2	2	**1.6**
SLT members	1	2	1	1	1	**1.2**
department heads	2	2	2	2	2	**2.0**
teachers	3	2	2	between 1 and 2	2	**2.1**
non-teaching staff	2	2	2	1	between 1 and 2	**1.7**
parents	1	1	2	1	1	**1.2**
students	2	2	2	1	1	**1.6**
Average	**1.86**	**1.79**	**1.71**	**1.29**	**1.5**	

(Note: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor; a rating of 1.5 was assigned where the interviewee gave a rating of "between 1 and 2")

Table 5.1: AP's role relationships with the various stakeholders of the school

It was also apparent that AP has a very good role relationship with AS and that AS trusts AP a lot. For example, AS described her working relationship with AP as "very satisfying". Furthermore, when AS was asked to comment on AP's role relationships with the other stakeholders of the school, especially department heads, teachers and non-teaching staff, even though she usually started off saying "I don't think I can really comment on that because I wouldn't know", or "I really don't know how to comment on that", and even "I have no basis to comment because I don't see", her ratings are all between 1 (Excellent) and 2 (Good).

AP also has very strong support from her SLT members (which is evident based on the rating of 1 from AP herself and the three SLT members who were interviewed) and that is important and necessary as she "basically gave them free rein". At the same time, the SLT members also "very much feel supported and mentored in the role". ASLT2 said that, "whenever I need support, I wouldn't go to anyone else or go through any other means, but I'll go directly to her". Even for ASLT3 who "may not agree with [AP]" and "probably didn't make a good start", "has got great respect for her" now.

Professional and Generic Aspects of Principal Leadership

AP shared that, in her current school, "I don't really have to balance it very much because I have very little to do with the [generic aspects of principal leadership]" and she spends "very little time on finance or resource matters, very very little time". However, AP added that she does "spend a lot of time on recruitment and counselling staff". She only makes her "budget proposals and then have it ignored for the rest of the year" because "we have got very good back office support here, so we have got people doing all of those things". She compares this to a fellow international school principal, who "has to spend so much time on the financial aspects of things", as well as being "responsible for getting the fees in" and having to deal "with parents who don't pay their fees". AP is feeling "so grateful" she does not have to deal with "all of those things". She added that, "sometimes it is really lovely because, as soon as parents start mentioning anything to do with fees, I would just say, sorry, I do not have anything to do with that. Haha… you can just speak to the finance department or speak to the registry department. I am sorry, that has nothing to do with me."

When asked to comment about the main difficulties of her role, "I think the biggest one for me is staff turnover." This becomes "extremely challenging" when there is "a constant change of staff" as she was "trying to create an ethos", or "even just operational systems that are consistent". As a result, she has "to reiterate this is how we do things around here, this is what the ethos of the school

is, what is expected of you", "every single year", "and that is a huge challenge". The second main difficulty AP shared is "managing people's expectations of what can be provided", such as "having to explain to a PE department why they can't have this, this and this because it has to fit in the priorities and why we can't just employ more people for this or more". This is because, as mentioned earlier, AP does not "have to do any of the technicalities of finance" and also because of "the corporate nature of the school". While AP believes that "the management of this company does not just see this as a profit making exercise", she also understands that, "if you're in a corporate environment, there are going to be priorities, and [there are] things people can have and things people can't have". Therefore, she is "constantly trying to get that balance between everybody feeling the company also wants to do the best for the students with… oh well that can't be the case [as] otherwise they would have given us much better packages to keep us… that type of thing".

As for the main benefits of her role, AP replied, without a doubt, "having such fantastic students". She elaborated that, "I don't really have a problem with students, don't really have a problem with parents. The parents are so supportive, so driven, having wonderful facilities, despite all the pressures and challenges, as compared to what I had in the UK there, a lot better. Being able to focus on the right things, rather than governors' meetings [and] disciplinary hearings." AP also shared that her "work-life balance is much better here" as she "rarely has to do anything in school in the evening", as compared to when she was in the UK, where she has "horrible meetings to attend till 10 o'clock at night".

The main satisfaction for AP is "seeing students achieve [and] getting fantastic results", "seeing the delight on the children's faces when they win a prize or get a certificate from me in an assembly [which] seems to mean so much to them", "the complete school positiveness and aspiration", and "the kind of parents who have… to [make] sacrifice[s] [so that]… their children… get everything they can out of education".

Despite AP not having any experience in an international school, as a teacher or a leader, she is an adaptable person and is able to adjust her work styles and approaches quickly to suit the environment. As compared to the government schools in the UK, where she has to put in a lot more time and effort on the generic aspects of the principal's role, she is able to spend more time on the teaching and learning aspect in her current school, which she sees as a pleasant difference. However, in her current school, she has to be able to see the company's point of view, where profit making is one of the main objectives, as it is a public-listed company. This is a totally new experience for her.

"The way that you lead as principal of an international school, or any other kind of school, actually changes all the time, according to context, and according to who you are leading, where they are, and their experience journey. I think there isn't one way to lead a school. You've got to be adaptive all the time to the context and the people." (AP)

Overview

AP is a very experienced educator, who has more than 30 years' experience in education, including more than 10 years as a principal in a British government school. Despite this being her first international school experience, she seems to have been coping very well, starting with being offered the job on the same day she met her superordinate 'in-person'. The positive encounters AP has with the different stakeholders, coupled with better work-life balance, was such a satisfying experience that AP feels that she will continue to work in the current school for another three to five years.

The next chapter presents the findings from case study two.

Chapter Six: Case Study School B

School Context

This international school is located in the Klang Valley, Selangor. The school is an English-curricula school and is owned by a not-for-profit educational foundation registered in Malaysia. The composition of the teaching staff is 92% expatriates and 8% locals. Malaysian students make up the greatest percentage of students from a single country (40%), while another 30% are from the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. The rest of the "30% would be every nationality under the sun", according to the school principal, with "approximately 50 different nationalities represented" "at any one time".

Interviews were conducted with the principal (BP), her superordinate (BS) and three of her longest serving Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members (BSLT1, BSLT2 and BSLT3).

- BP is British and has never been a principal of a government school. Prior to becoming the principal of the current school in Malaysia, BP held the positions of head of department, subject coordinator, vice-principal, and head of secondary. Her highest qualification is a master's degree. BP accepted the appointment in the current school due to the attractive salary, personal challenges, and the feeling that it was time to move on from the previous school. She was also attracted by the "reputation of the school" and at the same time felt that it was time to "return to Asia". BP has been a principal of this school for four years.
- BS is the Head of School for both the primary and secondary schools and he was the one who shortlisted, interviewed and recruited BP.
- BSLT1 is British and is the Vice-Principal (Achievement and Progression). He has worked in the school for 13 years and has been an SLT member for two years. He has been working under BP as an SLT member for two years.

- BSLT2 is British and is the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching). He has worked in the school for one and a half years and has been an SLT member for the same period of time, working under BP.

- BSLT3 is British and is the Vice-Principal (Students). He has worked in the school for five years and has been an SLT member for the same period of time. He has been working under BP as an SLT member for four years.

The findings are presented through an integrated thematic approach, with each theme linking to a research question.

Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment of the principal is a senior management-level procedure and a decision which involves only the top management of a company. Therefore, only BP and BS were asked questions pertaining to recruitment and selection.

BS indicated that there are three qualities and/or qualifications that candidates for the position of principal need to have. First, "experience is one [important] factor" and they "were looking for someone who had experience at leadership level", "preferably in other international schools", so that the candidates "knew the context of what they would be stepping into, working in an international school environment". The second quality are the "soft skills that would be required", such as the "interpersonal qualities" and the candidates' "ability to communicate effectively", as the principal will need to deal with a "range of issues", given the size of the school. The third quality is the "knowledge, skill and understanding of pedagogy [in] learning and teaching". According to BS, "in many aspects, those things are a given". Therefore, the candidates who reach the final face-to-face interview would already have "those fundamental skills". Following that, it is "a matter of looking at whether or not the person is the right fit or match for [the] school community", where the interviewers "have to experience with the candidates, based on their interactions and dealings in the selection process".

The recruitment process begins with the drafting of "the job description and the person specifications covering the scope and nature of the job", which is "advertised internationally", such as "the Times Educational Supplement [which] tends to attract the widest range of candidates worldwide". The second step is the process of having the curriculum vitae and letters of application reviewed, background checks on the schools where the candidates have previously worked. This leads to the elimination of "quite a few of the candidates based on the qualities [they] are looking for". The third step involves going through the "longer short list" "where some of the candidates are sifted out based on further specific skills that [the school is] looking for", as well as following up with the references for their comments about the candidates. If necessary, Skype or phone interviews are arranged with the candidates "before deciding on the final short list".

The "final short list" usually consists of three to four candidates, where in the case of BP, there were four. All four "were brought into the school for a final three-day selection process", which according to BS, "really is the key to the final selection". The candidates had "a series of meetings with senior staff [and] with students". In addition, they went through "an interview process, a presentation process", as well as "discussions with parent groups". A recommendation was made at the end of "the three-day final selection process" to the board of governors by BS, based on the feedback he received and his analysis of the feedback collected. A job offer will then be presented to the "first choice candidate… within a period of three to five days".

From BP's account of her experience, there was no other interview prior to the face-to-face interview. She did not have any Skype or phone interview. "It was straight to a face-to-face interview", after her submission of the CV and application form. As compared to BS, who sees it as a three-day interview process, it was a "four-day process" from BP's point of view, as it began on "the first evening, Sunday evening dinner and drinks with the board of governors" where she was asked questions "related to family, to professional background [and to] interests". Following that, what she experienced was consistent with BS's view;

meetings with "a series of different panels", comprising students, parents and teaching staff, who "asked her different types of questions".

The student panels asked BP "about student voice", her "thoughts", her "student involvement" and "student leadership". The curriculum leadership team asked questions about her "curriculum knowledge" and "questions related to the difference between I.B. and A-Levels", and "inquiry-based learning". For the pastoral team, they asked BP "about pastoral care, welfare [and] child protection". In addition, BP had to do a presentation on "challenging leadership situations" and she talked about how to manage "underperformance in staff", "how do you handle complaints", and in general, "anything and everything relating to the role".

A job interview is a two-way process. Therefore, while it is the time for the company to determine whether a candidate is the right fit for the organisation, it is also an opportunity for the candidate to find out whether the company is suitable for them. This was especially important for BP due to her experience in her previous school where "it wasn't as expected" and "a mismatch of expectations". Therefore, to BP, culture is her main concern. She wanted to understand "the culture of the school", "about relationships", "about the development plan", "the strategic plan", "what had been put into place" and "how that was being monitored, evaluated and reviewed". She was also interested in "the next key goal and the next step for the school". As BP had emphasised, "I was trying to ascertain if I was a good fit for the school and if the school was a good fit for me in terms of what I was wanting." Therefore, she "wanted to make sure that it was everything that [she] thought it was" by "talking with students" and "staff at the break time and the lunch times and asking questions when [she] was on the tour", in order "to get a sense and a feel of the school". Therefore, from the very beginning, BP is very clear about what she wants and she also clearly knows the different avenues in verifying the information given by the different groups of people in the school.

Preparation for Principalship in Malaysia

Having worked in an Asian country for a number of years, BP "know[s] a large number of international schools in South East Asia", including her current school. In fact, the school's reputation is "one of the key things" which prompted her in applying for the position. In addition, she researched online to find out "as much information as possible" about the school, as well as contacting her ex-colleagues in Hong Kong to find out "if they had any further information" about the school's latest development. At the same time, BP also received "a lot of information" from the school, including "the strategic plan". With the information she had gathered, BP gauged whether her experiences and skill sets "were a good match for the school". She "felt that they were" and thus she "made the application, fairly sure that it was somewhere where [she] want[s] to come and work". As she "applied very very close to the deadline", her interview "took place quite quickly".

Having the support from the family is an important consideration for BP. Therefore, before coming for the interview, her son, her husband and she had agreed that she would take up the offer "if it felt right". In view of that, during the three days she was in the school, BP ensured that she was "able to speak to all the different stakeholders, all the different members of the community, from staff, parents, students and the board". Those conversations allowed her to be "very well-informed" and "able to piece together all the information that [she] had previously gathered". At the end of the interview, she "did get a very good sense" and "a very good feel of the school", an indication that she was highly likely to accept the job if she was offered it.

Activities of the Principal

BP acknowledges that she follows a routine, concurred by her three SLT members (BSLT1, BSLT2 and BSLT3), who "think[s] so", "to an extent" and "think there is a theme" or "a structure there". For example, BP "arrive[s] at school at around 7.15 every morning" and the day begins with "a review with [her] PA about the day that is to come". Following that, BP's day is filled with "scheduled meetings" with

the various position holders of school. For example, she spends "every Tuesday almost all day" with BS, the Primary School Principal and other directors (finance, development and buildings and administration) of the school. She also meets her vice-principals on a one-to-one basis every week to have "a coaching conversation" "about where they are in their planning, their development and their work". Based on the observation of BSLT1, other regular meetings which BP needs to attend are "sub-committee meetings", "council, sub-council meetings", "developmental meetings in any particular area of her choice" and "staff meetings".

Additionally, BP has "time set aside each week" to "do cover lessons for absent colleagues" so that she can be "out and about and talking with [the students]". She has "a time allocated each week for learning walks". This is because BP tries to "be out as much as possible" to have "conversations with people and just checking in".

On the whole, BP's day is "a combination of all of those things". Her "week would remain fairly consistent", although "a standard day may differ". It is also worthy to note that, as mentioned by BSLT3, there is "a framework" to BP's daily or weekly activities, or more specifically, an "adaptable framework". For example, BSLT3 was supposed to have a meeting with BP in one of the weeks but that didn't happen because both were busy then. They managed to "catch up on an ad hoc basis at other times during the week". This is also experienced by BSLT2, who claims to know where BP "is going to be" "50% of the time" because BP's obligations "are very visible". However, "a lot of what happens in the other times is quite spontaneous", such as "liaison with the external agencies or with parents", or "a particular incident has occurred". BSLT2 added, "All those things that I've just mentioned, in terms of regular commitments, are sometimes put aside if the situation dictates."

Therefore, the participants agree that BP's daily activities are quite standard, mainly comprising meetings with various stakeholders. However, these meetings

may not be executed as a result of other more urgent matters which may require her immediate attention. As BP aims to be a principal who is 'on-the-ground', she tries to "be out as much as possible" to have "conversations with people and just checking in".

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

BP was not able to compare the roles and responsibilities of a principal in a public school with one who works in an international school as she has not worked in a public school before. However, when asked to comment on the differences between the roles and responsibilities as stated in her job description, and what she actually does, BP replied that, while there is no difference between the two, one can "never quite prepare for all the challenges that come up, all the difficulties, all the situations". Therefore, it is not so much about "what there [is] in the job description". BP illustrated that with an example where "there were three very challenging situations to deal with [in the previous week], and everything else just gets parked". While "it never ceases to amaze [her] how it is those things that take [her] off track", "there are no surprises in terms of the work that [she does] on a daily basis from what [she] was expecting from the job description".

BP also shared that, among her many activities, "recruitment is one of the most important things, the biggest thing that [she does]". This is because "the process of removing somebody from another country to Malaysia requires a very different approach" (BP). She wants to ensure that the new teachers have sufficient information to make sure that they are "making the right decision in coming to [the school], as well as the other way around". To ease the transition process, she will "match them up" with "a curriculum buddy" and "a social buddy", who will provide the new teachers with "appropriate information about the school". BP also remains in "contact with them" so that she can attend to their questions directly and that they are "comfortable and confident about the move for themselves and their family".

BP elaborated further her focus towards the teaching staff by sharing that she "foster[s] a culture of entitlement in many ways" and that "everything is looked after", "something that's caring and … more of a family situation than they would face in the UK". For example, when new staff arrive, they are given "SIM cards", "a Touch 'N Go card", have "bank accounts [ready] for them", and even "support with [finding] accommodation [and] buying cars".

BS, BSLT1, BSLT2 and BSLT3 have rather different perspectives when asked to comment about the roles and responsibilities of a principal. As compared to BP who has evidently placed her greatest emphasis on the teaching staff based on her elaborations, BS adopted a wider perspective and mentioned that the principal is responsible for the three main stakeholders of the school, i.e. students, staff and parents. BS elaborated that BP is "completely responsible for the day-to-day running of the secondary campus", which "involves the academic side, the quality of learning and teaching, and all the expectations that come with producing a learning environment where there are high quality learning opportunities and outcomes for the children". For the staff, "it involves the management [of] quality assurance of practices", which "involves working closely with the staff" and ensuring quality of "professional growth and development of [the] staff". BS added that the principal deals "with all the aspects of communication with the parent body". With the support of "a very strong leadership team", the principal "works through the leadership team and middle leadership structures to make sure that the campus is running smoothly and effectively".

As for the differences between the roles and responsibilities of the principal in this school, as compared to one working in a government or national school, BS shared that "there will certainly be similarities and there would be many overlaps", "but there would be some distinct differences as well". The main difference is that their school is "an independent school" where they "report directly to a council of governors" on "the quality of learning and teaching that happens in the school". "We don't have any other departments or bodies that really oversee or dictate to

us about how the school might operate or run. So we have got quite a bit of autonomy in that respect, although we do need to comply with quality assurance processes." (BS)

With the local authorities, they only need to "comply with standards required to be registered as … an international school … in Malaysia with the government". It is the sole responsibility of the school in ensuring the "quality and the standards of the teachers [that they] recruit" as they do not have to "report to an overarching Department of Education". Instead, an "external agency… come[s] in and accredits [the] school" to evaluate their "practice". Furthermore, as "a not-for-profit school", BS feels that they "report directly to the parents" and are "responsible directly to [their] parents". In his words, "the parents actually own [the] school". Therefore, given "the way the school is designed and the purpose of the school makes it a very different context to a local school, to a local government or to a national school". All these contribute towards a difference in the roles and responsibilities of the principal in this school as compared to one working in a government or national school.

BSLT1 argues that the principal has "to have a strategic view … that aligns with the strategic long-term vision of the council of governors", a point agreed by BSLT2 and BSLT3. BSLT2 elaborated that the principal is "there to set direction", "to prompt people into action", "to remind people of key priorities" and "sort of almost keeping the ship on course" when the day-to-day operations "cloud [one's] vision of what was agreed strategically". BSLT2 termed that as the "intangibles", which are the school's philosophies, ethos and values that they "hold dear". To BSLT2, the principal is "ultimately the person who makes the final decision to see an issue through to its final conclusion and then communicates that to the school, to the wider community".

BSLT1 commented that the principal also needs to "have an operational response to the school on a day-to-day basis, ensuring that the infrastructure of the school is sound and solid and actually meets the correct function that it needs to". This

concurs with what BS has mentioned, where BP is "completely responsible for the day-to-day running of the secondary campus". BSLT3 substantiated this claim and mentioned that the principal is also in charge of the "health and safety of everyone on campus", as well as "nurturing", "reviewing", "reflecting", "listening", "understanding" and "coaching".

The various comments illustrate the difference between having first-hand experience and being an observer. BP had subconsciously shared that her main role and responsibility is towards the staff, because "recruitment is one of the most important things" which she does. This could be due to a high turnover rate of teachers in the school, where more than 90% of the teachers are expatriates. In contrast, BP's three SLT members see her main roles and responsibilities relating to "strategic" and "operational" aspects, perhaps a change of emphasis more than a change of substance.

Role Relationships

All five interviewees were asked to comment on BP's role relationships with the various stakeholders: her superordinate (BS), SLT members, department heads, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and students. The interviewers were asked to rate the respective relationships from a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor.

1. *Role relationship with superordinate*

BP's rating: 1

BS's rating: 1

BSLT1's rating: 1

BSLT2's rating: 1

BSLT3's rating: 1

The five interviewees unanimously gave the "Excellent" rating on the relationship BP has with BS. BP said that her relationship with BS is "very strong and very

positive", which was supported by BS who mentioned that he and BP "have a very, very close working professional relationship". BSLT1 and BSLT2 also commented that there are no challenges between BP and BS, and BSLT2 noted that "there is a really close working relationship [and] a great deal of mutual respect" between them, even "in the informal exchanges" which he gets to see. BSLT1 added that he has not seen any "disharmony between the two" and so thinks "their relationship is sound and solid".

BP attributed the excellent relationship with BS to their "roles [being] very, very separate[d]" and BS is there "for support and to bounce ideas back and forwards" when they meet. BP elaborated that she "will always bounce ideas off him if [she is] planning something major, or if [she is] thinking of a big change". Their "offices are right next to each other and [they have] an open door policy". They meet continually to discuss issues and BP will go to BS if she has any concerns, or "if she needs to seek [his] opinion", "wants [his] support", or if she requires his "point of view on issues she may be dealing with". This is also noticed by BSLT3 who shared that BP "is able to go to [BS] on a regular basis if she needs to".

BP appreciates this "level of autonomy". This is because "even though that was in writing, it wasn't the same practice" in her previous school, where the headmaster "was a lot more involved and it was quite challenging at times". Over here, BS is "very clearly delineated" and they work on the principle where BP is "responsible for the secondary campus fully". This is agreed by BSLT2 who "get[s] the sense that [BP] is given the freedom to carry out her role as she sees fit and she's respected in that". He assumes that is "because she does it very well" and she "doesn't need to be challenged too much". This is further substantiated by BSLT3 who feels that BS trusts BP, especially since BS "knows the secondary school", after "having been principal of the secondary school" before. As "he has got enough on his plate in terms of leading the whole school", BSLT3 said that "[BS] entrusts [BP] to do the job". Furthermore, BSLT3 does not see BS in BP's "office on a very regular basis, and that's good". Therefore, even though BS is BP's supervisor and her line manager, they "very much work collegiately".

Subsequently, BS added that he is "very much responsible for [BP's] professional growth and development", and at the same time "also responsible for her accountability as principal of the campus". So "if there are issues with things going wrong, with things not being what they should be", they will discuss and "try to sort those out". Therefore, they have "never been at loggerheads on any issues". When they have "had differences of opinion on certain matters", they are "able to resolve professionally and amicably by talking them through". "There's never anything that's ever been impossible to resolve and to find a positive outcome", which is "partly because [they] both approach things in a similar way, and [they] are] able to talk things through, to discuss, to find a way forward". They have "a similar mindset in terms of what [they] want to achieve in school, in terms of what [they] see as the things that are most important to [them], in terms of [their] leadership roles, in the areas [they] feel have the most impact in the quality of learning that occurs in the school". It has therefore "been a positive experience".

This is substantiated by BSLT1 who shared that he has worked with BS longer than he has with BP and he thinks that "both characters are very accommodating and sensitive". Therefore, "whilst they may differ in opinion on things, [he] would imagine their relationship still remains quite intact" and "they have a professional approach to their work".

At the same time, BP maintains a certain level of respect towards BS. She will "let [BS] know enough so that he's not blindsided by something". For example, if there is an issue, she does not "want him to hear about it from somebody else for the first time", such as from a parent, i.e. "just making sure that he has enough information". On that basis, "the key challenge [for BP] really is how much or how little to tell [BS]".

To BSLT2, the only challenge he has ever seen the two "dealing with are ones that are externally imposed and they generally work very well together to deal with those". "Although [he] can be aware of differences in perspective" between BP and BS, he notices that "it never appears to result in tension that in any way affects

their ability to do their jobs". This is in consistent with what BS claimed, that "there is a great deal of mutual respect" between himself and BP. To BSLT3, the only challenge the two faced is "just finding the time". This is because there are two separate campuses and BS is "not here all the time".

Despite the minor challenges shared by BP, BSLT2 and BSLT3, all the interviewees agreed that BP and BS have an excellent working relationship. That is mainly because BP and BS have always worked on the basis of "what's in the best interest of the school, what's in the best interest of the children, the staff, the community" (BS). Some of the SLT members were, to a certain extent, envious about the working relationships BP has with BS. For example, BSLT3 mentioned that BP "is able to go to [BS] on a regular basis if she needs to" and BSLT2 even remarked, "in terms of my perspective of their relationship, [it] is one that I would very much like to have if I was in her position."

2. *Role relationships with SLT members*

BP's rating: 1

BS's rating: 1

BSLT1's rating: 1

BSLT2's rating: 1

BSLT3's rating: 1

All five interviewees also gave an "excellent" rating on the relationship BP has with the SLT members. BP said that she is "very collaborative and collegial in [her] leadership" and she believes in "empowering people". Therefore, she usually takes the role of being supportive. For example, during her weekly "coaching conversation", it is very much a "check-in" with her SLT members on how she is able to support them. It is "all about coaching" and about her "asking questions to help move their thinking forward, rather than [her] being completely directive". They also have "strengths workshops together" where they discuss where their "strengths were", where "areas for development" are, "how [to] build on each

other's strengths" in order to "quickly learn where support" is needed and how to "all think differently but also come together".

In addition, BP believes in building relationships with her team. They have "social events" and "lots of teambuilding" regularly. She, however, clarified that the events are not those where they "go out and do teambuilding things", "but more about learning to know each other and learning to work together". She also ensures that her team is "open, honest [and] transparent" with her and that they will inform her if they are "struggling", likewise if they are "celebrating". Therefore, the "ability to be open, to share, to be honest, is something that [they] continue to develop and [they] continue to work on", and "that was [also] one of the first key things to work on".

However, BP admits that "there are ups and downs", as "there are in everything", which was supported by BS who acknowledges that "there are always challenges". BP elaborated that "the challenges are that sometimes when you have a strong relationship with somebody, that if something is not working, [you need to be] able to sit down with them and then work through that with them". Fortunately for BP, she is able to do that with her SLT members. This is further affirmed by BS who notices that "any issues that do arise are able to be resolved and worked out". BSLT1 also shared that, while he and BP "may not always agree on certain things [they] need to do nor certain ways that they are meant to be done", he is offered "the space that he need[s] to operate his role".

> At times, "and there aren't that many, where things have to be done in a specific manner, either because she requires information to be given in a certain way or is required by the council or the Head of School, we conform to that and get that done as it needs to be done". (BSLT1).

Therefore, when "there are concerns about things that may be happening within her areas of responsibility, she will talk those through [and] thrash those out" (BSLT1). This is in line with the "coaching model", which they are developing

throughout the school, "where those sorts of conversations are a common practice in terms of making sure [they] are delivering the quality of learning [they] are expected to".

Based on BS's conversations with "[BP's] colleagues, her vice-principals and associate principals that she brings on board" and observations "on a day-to-day basis", he is convinced that BP is "a great leader". Furthermore, when BP is away, "people are stepping up to be acting principal on the campus". He feels that that is an indication of her leadership as she has the "confidence in them to be able to do their job effectively". Furthermore, "she is very supportive as a leader [and is] very encouraging". There is "a great deal of respect and confidence" that she "has engendered from her colleagues [and] her senior leadership team colleagues because of her abilities, and because of what she has demonstrated as the campus leader", thus allowing "her to establish a very strong, positive, high quality relationship with the leadership team".

> *"[There are] no challenges that affect the positive dynamic of that relationship because people are accepting that there are these areas of accountability and they have responsibilities that they must meet within those and they are prepared to talk through and to deal with any issues that may arise". (BS)*

Both BSLT2 and BSLT3 express their appreciation of the trust BP has in them. BSLT2 shared that "the trust that I think [is] placed in her by her reporting officer, I feel, is absolutely granted to me." He elaborated that he has "the freedom to express [his] own kind of professional creativity" and his values "happen to align very well" with BP's. He attributed that, in part, to "her skills in recruiting", as BP was the one who selected him and thus BSLT2 assumes that one of the reasons he was selected is because their values are aligned. Because of that, "if there is any difference of opinion or difference of perspective on something, [they]'re able to go right the way through in a very reasoned manner". BSLT2 feels that BP's "coaching skill has got a lot to do with that".

"And even when I'm coming across things which I think are difficult, and I'm not sure I'll be successful with, she either genuinely, or putting on a really good act, shows she believes that I will just find a way. And she's been right!" (BSLT2)

Therefore, it is not surprising that BSLT2 is full of admiration towards BP. He "put[s] a great deal of respect towards [BP] for either being brave enough to do that or just simply having the experience and the vision to know, to be able to assess the situation and know that this person has what's required to see it through".

While BSLT2 claims that he has "always been very fortunate to have really good working relationships with [his] immediate line managers in any role that [he has] had", "this is particularly good". He is also glad that he gets a lot of time with BP and "she makes herself very available and gets a good balance between challenging [him] and supporting [him]". In terms of challenges, BSLT2 and BP have not "come across a situation where [their] views are so different and so strongly held that [they] have a serious problem that impedes progress on any particular issue".

BSLT2 is "fairly open-minded about the way [they] take a particular strategy or [when they] deal with a particular situation". If, at times, BP wants "to set the pace and set the direction", he "absolutely respect[s] her right to do that". While he may not have approached it the same way, BSLT2 has faith in BP's ability and he is "more than happy to follow her lead when she feels that she needs to do that". At the same time, "on most things that [BSLT2 has] dealt with so far, or worked on strategically, [BP] has let [him] lead the way and has been happy with the results".

Although BSLT2 is uncertain about whether all these are because "this is a honeymoon period", as "it is relatively early days", he "thinks that [they have] been through enough and a great variety of situations to start to get a good understanding of how each other thinks".

BSLT3 experiences a similar kind of trust that BSLT2 has experienced with BP and he commented that, although he does not "agree with everything [BP] says", neither does "[BP] agree with everything [he] says", "the crucial thing comes back to trust". There is evidence that BP "trusts [him] to do the job because … she doesn't micromanage". The underlying message he receives from that is "go ahead and do". While he "appreciate[s] that autonomy", he is also appreciative that BP is available whenever he needs to "find out more".

When asked about the challenges which they face, BSLT3 "feel[s] almost as if [he's] saying something for the sake of it". Nevertheless, BSLT3 said that the challenges would be "differences of opinion and it's not because one person is right and the other person is wrong, it's just a matter of, sometimes a decision just needs to be made, and whichever decision is made, you make it successful". During those times, they will "have some interesting discussions", but BSLT3 emphasised that "they are generally discussions, they're not arguments". On the whole, BSLT3 does not "necessarily foresee any challenge", but he added that "there's always a challenge of time", "there's challenge of just being tired" and "there's the challenge of inheriting a setup in this school which isn't as good as it can be, and then manipulating that to be better".

Overall, all participants are mostly positive about BP's relationship with her SLT members. One strong reason for that could be her "open, honest [and] transparent" (BP) approach which allows her SLT members to speak their mind, especially when they have different opinions. Furthermore, based on the SLT members' feedback, their working experience with BP has been very positive. The word "respect" is also a common word mentioned by a number of the interviewees, at times more than once. Therefore, even though it was a new team formed during last academic year and a "tricky year in terms of coming together as a team" after two very long-standing vice-principals left, BP feels that they have "a strong relationship as a team".

3. *Role relationships with department heads*

BP's rating: 2

BS's rating: between 1 and 2

BSLT1's rating: between 2 and 3

BSLT2's rating: 1

BSLT3's rating: between 1 and 2

As compared to the previous two relationship ratings, where all five interviewees gave a unanimous "excellent" rating, the participants gave different ratings when asked to comment on the role relationship BP has with the department heads. That could be because "the relationship is not as close . . . as what she would have with the vice-principals", according to BS, even though BP still "works with the middle leadership team but that relationship is not as close as [one] would expect because of the size of [their] school, and because of the leadership structure [they] have in place". The relationship is "more diffused". It is the role of "her senior team", in particular "some of the vice principals [who] have responsibility for working with different middle leaders".

BP gave the reason for her rating, in that she "get[s] torn in so many different directions". She is "not even on this campus" "half of the time". Furthermore, in her middle leaders' structure, she has the "heads of faculty and key stage leaders", followed by the "heads of departments and heads of year". She ensures that she communicates regularly "at least at faculty level", thus resulting in her "relationship with heads of faculty stronger than with heads of department because [she has] more contact with them".

BP added that "relationships are the bedrock of school and the bedrock of culture". Therefore, it is essential to "spend time getting to know people". It is important to "understand who they are as a person, ideally how they think, how they may react to things so you can have conversations". BP gave an example where, before she brings in something new, she will talk to people three weeks in advance to find out their reactions and "who needs a little bit more time". BP

elaborated that "knowing and understanding who they are as people", is the "absolutely key". BP concluded by stating that she has "strong relationships" with her department heads, adding that it's "not that the relationship is weaker [by rating it a 2]", just that she does not "have much to do with them".

However, BS feels that BP is still very heavily involved with her department heads, "partly through the coaching model", and also through the school's "professional development" and "growth model in supporting and developing leadership qualities and management qualities in middle leaders". From that aspect, BS commented that BP still "has a very close involvement" with the middle leaders, in terms of how they are being developed as leaders, "but not so much in day-to-day management in the work that they do because that's devolved down to the next level". Therefore, BS "would describe that relationship again as a positive one" as "there's a lot of respect for [BP] as the leader of the campus", which BS again "pick[s] that up from when [he's] talking to people, on the confidence in the work that she's been doing".

In terms of challenges, BS said that "the expectations are very high" and, as the campus principal, BP constantly needs to deal with "the staff feeling about management of change, pace of change, about things that the school may embark upon which may be a challenge for some middle leaders in terms of how they manage their time". To assist them, BP has to "to work [her] way through that", "on a one-to-one basis where there may be more of a struggle for some of those middle leaders", in order "to build up their confidence, their abilities as leaders, in terms of how they manage their time and how they cope perhaps with additional pressures that may come about, because of some of those things that the school has undertaken". There is also the issue of "individual personalities" to manage and BP needs to ensure that "there is strong collegiality, making sure the people are on board with some of the agreed steps [they] were taking as a school and helping to support people". "And when necessary, helping to influence those people to make changes where there need to be changes."

The three SLT members have rather different opinions in terms of BP's relationship with the department heads.

BSLT1 commented that BP is "slightly more removed" from the department heads "because she doesn't directly line manage them", similar to the very first remark given by BP and BS. This is further substantiated by BSLT3 who explains that the rating he has given is "because of distance", "which demotes that relationship a little bit". The department heads "don't know all the time what [BP]'s doing [and] she doesn't know all the time what they are doing". However, to BSLT3 "that's not necessarily a negative, [and] sometimes that's a necessity".

When BSLT1 thinks "about an occasion where she is generally with them, [he] think[s] that that relationship, again, is very good and professional". However, he added that the "relationship is two way" and thus "her relationship to them might not be particularly reciprocated". This is because the department heads appear to be "a little bit indifferent…at times" when BP explains to them how certain things "need to be done in a [particular] way or the school makes certain choices".

> *"[BP] would find her relationship with them is good, probably 1 or 2; they might find that due to the position that she holds, that their relationship may be a little bit stifled, a little bit artificial in some ways, so they don't relate to her what their concerns might be [and] what their frustrations might be." (BSLT1)*

The department heads may "in some instances…find that as a tension itself". Therefore, BSLT1 said that he "wouldn't be surprised if people would say maybe a 2 or a 3 from that angle". BSLT1 added that "it could be dependent on the department leader themselves [too]".

> *"So, if there is a sense of antagonism, it would tend to be during a moment where there is potentially a question over a department head's performance or response to something. So, when all is ok, I would think everything is great, so it would be a 1. Where there are things where a department head needs to be*

reprimanded or questioned, or supported more through a difficult thing, then I would imagine that relationship is a bit tricky." (BSLT1)

This is because, despite BSLT1 seeing BP "being quite supportive within her framework", "other people may interpret the need for that support to not be required". BSLT1 also pointed out that "your relationship might be good, but you might be having a very difficult conversation, and so navigating that can be quite difficult". From that point of view, BSLT1 feels that BP's "relationship with the members are very good" because she usually does not need to have "difficult conversations" with the department head as either the vice-principals or "somebody else is having them".

"In instances where I have seen her involved in very difficult conversations, I think she has managed that particularly well, in terms of keeping relationships very firm, proper and clear. I've seen, however, other staff members come out very disgruntled and upset by the encounter, so I don't know how to number that, from their behalf." (BSLT1)

In contrast, BSLT2 thinks that the relationship is "good" "overall" and he knows "anecdotally, that middle leaders speak very, very highly of [BP]".

"I don't know if it's because it's the nature of my role, I often become aware of interactions between them on difficult matters, where the heads of department, the middle leaders, may have very, very strongly held views on an issue that is within their particular sphere. And you always have that tension between absolute[ly] respecting the strength of their feelings about the issue that is within their sphere, but then recognising the fact that they don't know and sometimes can't know how that fits in or does not fit in with the bigger picture." (BSLT2)

BSLT2 also notices that BP "doesn't leave people in any doubt and sometimes that means that they've to be disappointed by what the outcome is". Furthermore,

BSLT2 believes that "those things stand the test of time [and] the relationship doesn't suffer as a result because her reasoning and her values are clear". Furthermore, according to BSLT2, BP "creates very strong arguments" such that "even if a person comes away disappointed, they can understand the logic, [and] they can understand the reasoning." However, BSLT2 added that, even though he rated the relationship as excellent, he does not mean that "the relationship is always completely harmonious". What happens is that, when there is disagreement, BP gives "people the time that is needed to be listened to" and at the same time being "clear", "resolute" and "fair". To BSLT2, BP "has a real strength of character and decision-making . . . [and] she manages to combine that with a very, very personable approach". That seems to amaze BSLT2 as he feels that it is "quite difficult to have strength in both those areas".

According to BSLT3, BP is "probably one of the best, if not the best principal [he has] worked for, because she doesn't judge, and [he doesn't] see her judging the heads of faculty and heads of department". He feels that they respect her and listen to her, which is vice versa for BP, who will listen and ask questions, and with the objective of "asking questions to find out more rather than for the sake of asking questions".

"You can ask a question and it's not going to inform your decision, but you can ask a question and it really helps you understand the situation, which then informs your decision. [BP] does the latter rather than the former. And I think she's a good role model for us in that regard." (BSLT3)

BSLT3 added that, "in any leadership position, you're never going to be in a situation where people always agree with you". A leader also does not "want that" and "you want to challenge each other". Therefore, BP "will ask them challenging questions" and "they will ask [BP] challenging questions, but that methodology of asking to understand, helps formulate a common way forward". At the same time, BSLT3 thinks that "everyone appreciates that you can't please everyone", and that

"sometimes you don't want to please everyone, because if you're pleasing everyone, sometimes you're pleasing no one".

Overall, as a result of BP being "slightly more removed" from the department heads, it is difficult for BP to build similar strong relationships with the department heads as she has with her SLT members, who line manage most of the middle leaders. The other main contributing factor is time, as BP is unable to spend as much time as she would like with the department heads because she "get[s] torn in so many different directions".

However, BP will handle the middle leaders directly when she is needed to do so. For example, while most of the "difficult conversations" with the middle leaders were managed by the SLT members, BSLT2 commented that BP "absolutely does not shy away" from the even more difficult conversations she needs to have with them. BP is "completely open", "transparent" and "will stick to her guns" to give "straightforward and clear answers". BSLT2 thinks that "people respect her for that". That would include the SLT members as they know that BP is behind them and will give them the support which they need and when they really need it.

4. *Role relationships with teachers*
BP's rating: 2
BS's rating: between 1 and 2
BSLT1's rating: between 2 and 3
BSLT2's rating: 1
BSLT3's rating: 2

BSLT1 feels that, with the teachers, BP is "one more step removed", as she "has little interaction to do with the kind of professional accountability", which is "line managed [by] the head of department". The teachers do not "see her particularly very often", "because of the nature of her position". This is supported by BSLT3 who thinks that "exactly the same would apply" for BP's relationship with the teachers as compared to her relationship with the department heads.

"If you got a principal who's got a very high rating for that, then maybe they're not, [as] they're spending too much time with teachers understanding their perspective, and that's not the only perspective to understand". (BSLT3)

This is because there are "the parents", "the board", "the whole school leadership team", and all "these different contingent that make up the school" to understand about and "[one] can't be all things to all men". Nevertheless, based on BSLT3's working experience with six principals so far, he thinks that BP has "got a very strong relationship with staff".

BP seems to agree with BSLT 1 and BSLT3 as she wants to make a deliberate effort to be "out" and "chatting". This is largely due to her having a "huge campus", being "off campus" and being "in London" for recruitment. Her approach may be "quite mechanical", in that she has "gotten a list of all staff" where she will "check off when [she has] spoken to them". This is because, in the previous term, she has "only spoken to one member of staff once in about six weeks". She does not "want to be that principal that sits in the third storey office in the corner and never gets out". She wants "to bring things into practice" and have that "little check and balance", even if it is "Hello, how's the weekend?", "How was your football match?" or, "Have you read that book?".

"All those little tiny things make a difference and the learning walks are now very scheduled in the calendar; and I do 'praise postcards' rather than me offer any learning feedback, it will always be a 'you know, thank you very much, I saw this and this was fantastic', so there is that building up of relationship." (BP)

BP added that "the demands on time mean that [she is] not always as focused as [she] would like to be on some things".

Reaffirming his trust towards BP, BS began his answer with "again, very positive", based on the "feedback" he receives when talking to the teachers. In addition, he

shared that they have a "staff survey every year" to "look and compare how things are on a year-by-year basis", such as "how people feel about the job" and the "levels of job satisfaction".

"And the feedback we're getting is very positive. In terms of the investment, people feel that the school has a strong commitment to their investment as professionals, that they get the support that they need to grow as a professional, that the leadership team is supportive of them if they need help and assistance. (BS)

Therefore, BS feels that the level of staff morale is "very positive and very high". This is noticed by BSLT2 too, who said that BP has created "a staffing structure and a set of school priorities that backpedal". There is a "very, very rich culture of improvement and professional growth" and BP will commit the required resources for the high standards which she demands for.

To BS, "the most challenging" part for BP would be having to deal "those one-to-one issues with teaching staff personally and professionally". For example, the "individual cases" "where new teachers [on] probation period" are "not meeting the standards" which the school has set and there is a "need to extend that probation period", or that the school does not "confirm their contract for the full two years". There may also be "a staff member who is very sick and [BP is] at the forefront of dealing with that, one-to-one in supporting them and helping them". That "can be quite difficult". In addition, there could be a "professional issue" where a "staff member who [BP has] to challenge and look to, to change their practice and support and improve their practice to get up to the standard [the school is] expecting". This is similar to the challenges which BSLT1 shared.

"It can be a very staid or managed environment so they might not be particularly very comfortable, and then take that to the extreme of being held accountable or having your contractual renewal conversation, that's going to be uncomfortable, and that's probably going to feel a level of upset, distrust,

mistrust or whatever that might be, so probably say that could easily ascend to a level of 3 or 4 in those kind of conversations." (BSLT1)

However, BSLT1 added that "those are very few and far between" and even "they again are managed very well". This is because he thinks that "her general approach and engagement with staff is always very positive". BS agrees too that those are "more individual issues" and "not so much collective staff issues". Therefore, "overall, [he] believe[s] [that] she has a very positive working relationship with the staff in the campus". In general, "there is high staff morale on the campus" and BP is "highly regarded" and "well respected as the campus principal". BS further supported with examples where "staff would want to come and see her" for "all sorts of issues", from "a personal issue", "to a personal leave matter", "or it could be related to a professional matter". She also "meets regularly with staff reps, who are sort of the spokespeople for other staff who will bring issues to her that [they] would like to have discussed and resolved".

BSLT2, similar to BS, again feels that BP's relationship with the teachers "is very, very strong" and he "can't really see any reason why it would be more than 1". BSLT2 added that BP "understands the difficulties that teachers face in the day-to-day pressure and it's easy to forget those once you're not in the classroom, but she doesn't forget them". Therefore, even though the school expects a "huge amount from teachers", they are continually supported to meet those expectations and standards and BP is "fully committed to their development".

Overall, being "one more step removed" makes it more difficult for BP to build strong relationships with the teachers. This makes the ratings by the respective interviewees more subjective as they comment rating based on their individual observations and/or opinions, which explains why BSLT1 rated the relationship as between 2 and 3 while BSLT2 rated it as 1. However, they all substantiated their justifications, and differences of view may be situational, rather than BP being unable to assume her role well. As BSLT2 has shared, there is that "hard edge which is necessary for [BP] to achieve the things she wants to achieve" and "that

can create challenges". However, BP "will work with people on that" and "will enforce the fact that all these things do need to happen", and that they are "not going to start backing down any of these things and move them because it's difficult".

5. *Role relationships with non-teaching staff*

BP's rating: 2

BS's rating: 2

BSLT1's rating: 1

BSLT2's rating: 1

BSLT3's rating: 2

BP thinks that her relationship with the non-teaching staff is "positive" and "strong". She has tried "really hard" in the past four years to "bridge the gap" between the teaching and non-teaching staff. This is because she feels that "there's always been a bit of a divide between non-teaching staff and teaching staff", even though "everybody on this campus is a member of a team". She sets the example by beginning with herself from "saying thank you" to "learning everybody's name". She will even make an effort to chat with the guards "when coming in or when leaving at the end of the day".

Although BP feels that she is "even more one-step removed because of language", as she doesn't speak Nepalese, Tamil and Malay, she makes sure that she will "go and sit with the domestic staff" at times to "just have a chat". BSLT3 concurs that "language could be a barrier" with "some of the domestic or maintenance staff whose English is much weaker".

However, BP has brought together "for the first time, all of [her] staff for celebration days and celebrations in the evening". This replaces the usual practice of having two separate events, where one is for the teaching staff and one is for the non-teaching staff. BSLT2 noticed this effort by BP and said that the school generally "does a lot to try and cross the divide that naturally exists between

teaching and non-teaching staff" and BP has "been instrumental in that, along with [BS], to create events, to create opportunities for those relationships to grow". Furthermore, BSLT3 feels that BP's initiative of "engaging them [and] bringing them in to be part of the community" is fabulous as they belong to "one happy family".

In addition, BP thinks "a smile", "an acknowledgment and appreciation and a box of chocolates or a cake, and all of those things go a long way to form that culture that [they] want", in that "[they] have different roles but [they] are all very much one team", even though that is still "work in progress". BSLT3 agrees, adding that "little things…like smiles [and] thank you's" "mean a lot". To BSLT2, that gesture of BP shows that she "place[s] a great deal of emphasis on gratitude" in "her daily interactions with non-teaching staff", including "formally acknowledging" their work.

As a result, BP says that the non-teaching staff have begun to approach her on their own, which "they haven't done previously". This is a positive sign that "people are more able to raise any concerns that they may have". In addition, "everybody is a member of a house" and all the maintenance and domestics staff are involved in the sports days and "inter-house athletics". "Everyone will be in house t-shirts" and the non-teaching staff are "encourage[d] to come along now". Therefore, there is "a change in culture" which BP thinks is "a positive one".

BS feels that BP generally has "a positive relationship" with the non-teaching staff, which includes the different directors who are responsible for the different areas of the school, as well as the "support academic staff" who work with the academics and provides the administrative support. However, he also added that BP may work "more closely with some of those staff than others".

BSLT1 also thinks that BP's relationship with the non-teaching staff is "very cordial and very positive", very close to being rated as excellent, as "there's no expectation of them towards her". This is because BP does not line manage the

non-teaching staff. BSLT1 is implying that, when there are no expectations, "there is no level of antagonism".

However, BSLT2 added that "that was one side of it" and he "wouldn't want to paint this picture that…everybody feels completely comfortable with each other, and there's no hierarchical thinking, because there is". He acknowledges that that is unavoidable but he thinks that BP "makes a deliberate attempt to ease those issues and to ensure everybody feels valued". Furthermore, BSLT3 shared that the cultural differences among the staff also resulted in differences in expectations and "demands that we place on ourselves".

Overall, despite the various challenges BP faces with the non-teaching staff, including being unable to speak the languages, "which has been all non-existent" to her, there is a deliberate effort by her in wanting to understand them better. Furthermore, she has initiated opportunities to bring the teaching and non-teaching staff together, such as the celebration day and including the non-teaching staff in the houses. Those initiatives are seen as commendable by BS and the SLT members.

6. *Role relationships with parents*
BP's rating: 2
BS's rating: 2
BSLT1's rating: between 1 and 2
BSLT2's rating: 2
BSLT3's rating: between 1 and 2

All five interviewees feel that BP's relationship with the parents is generally positive. BP "believes" that her relationship with parents is "positive" because she has "a very open door policy" and "the office door is always open here" for parents who want to see her. BS agreed that BP's relationship with the parents is "very positive", based on the feedback from the "parent survey" which they do "every year". In addition, when BS speaks to the parents, "they comment very positively

on the secondary school, the way the secondary school is being led and the way it's going". In general, "their view of the school is a positive view". BS also noticed from the "workshops with parents", and "regular coffee mornings that [BP] would attend", that "her interactions with the parents" and "her working with parents" "are always very positive".

BSLT3 feels that BP has "got a very positive relationship with the parents", which "come[s] about as a result of them trusting [her]". BP has sought to gain "a lot of people's trust and respect in the way that she operates". BSLT1 agrees, stating that "[BP] is a character who is very difficult to distrust in any way", as he thinks that "she's quite welcoming [and] explorative to people's ideas". BS also commented that BP has great "interpersonal skills" and she knows how to use "different styles of communication" to deal with "different personalities" and "different attitudes".

Furthermore, even though there is a link person, BSLT3, who works "with the PTA on key events", BP knows all the parent members and has spoken to them. BP is also involved in the planning of major events, although BSLT3 is responsible for them. This could be the reason why BS commented that BP "has close links with the Parent-Teacher Association". BP also communicates with the parents through the weekly newsletter where the parents can have an "insight" into the school.

BS added that "[BP's] written communication is very, very good, as is her face-to-face communication". BP is also "always present at meetings and at parents' evenings". However, BS acknowledges that one "can't please all the parents" and "some parents are more outspoken than others". This is further elaborated by BSLT1 who shared that, "with 80% of the parents, it's all very nice", because what BP usually needs to say to those parents are, "well done to your child, he's done very well and thank you for being in this school". However, with the other 20%, "it might be very difficult" as "the child might not have done very well". According to BSLT3, this occurs when a problem raised by a parent, which is not being resolved at the lower levels, and gets escalated upwards, "there's more challenge

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to that". There will be "more emotional involvement". One will become "more emotionally engaged in that situation" and "the parents can sometimes become very protective, understandably".

BSLT2 has a similar view and explained that "the only reason why [his rating is] tainted slightly" is because, as a principal, BP usually has to attend to "parental complaints or dissatisfaction" on a daily basis and it is difficult to always end them happily. This usually happens during the "one-to-one contacts … behind closed doors". Those situations "can taint a parent's perception" of the school management. This is because, in many cases, they cannot be resolved with an outcome that everyone is satisfied about "because it's often about something that has happened that's far from acceptable". Therefore, BSLT2 thinks "that makes the relationship difficult" and "the relationship just cannot be perfectly amicable".

> *"When you're at this level, there'll be things that happen that have nothing to do directly with how you've done your job; it's a requirement that you deal with that, you hold people accountable if necessary, you do as much reparations as can be done and you try and repair that parent's faith in the school and it's standing as a particularly good school in the area or in the sector. And that can't always go well, so that's sometimes very difficult, I think." (BSLT2)*

BSLT1 commented that it also depends on how one defines relationships. For instance, one can be in a good relationship with another person, but may be having a difficult conversation with each other, as a result of the topic of conversation. The point which BSLT1 wanted to make is that BP "exudes that sense of wanting to listen" and so, when the situation is difficult, she faces them instead of shying away from them. Therefore, BSLT1 feels that her relationships with the parents are good "even if they're talking about something difficult". In conclusion, BSLT1 thinks that, while the parents may not agree with BP fully, they "do respect her". Similarly, BSLT2 commented that "some of the characteristics… about [BP's] resolve, and her ability to draw a line that can't be crossed, is a huge strength". They "need that" and "the school needs that".

BSLT3 also shared the process 'Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing', which takes place "when you put a new team together", and that "was very apparent with [BP]". He feels that they are now at the 'perform stage' where "one of the things she did [well] was meet with the parents, share a couple of discussion forums with the parents [on] what's good [and] what could be better" and he thinks that the parents "respected that".

Meanwhile, BP added that she is "not the principal who will stand up and has to be seen", as some parents want, "the person who charges from the front waving the flag". She feels that she is not that kind of person. She "believe[s] in a team-based approach and it's a 'we' rather than an 'I'". Therefore, when a query is raised by a parent, she will usually direct them to the relevant person in charge who will be able to resolve the issue more quickly. This is also because she believes that "there are other people in school who need a platform…to grow and develop as well".

Overall, handling parents is seen as "a balancing act" (BP). She understands that she does not have the time to liaise with the parents directly all the time and thus BSLT3 has been assigned to be a representative of the school at the PTA. However, she ensures that she maintains her visibility by going for meetings and workshops involving parents, hosting regular coffee mornings, and writing in the weekly newsletter. One can also attribute her positive relationships with the parents to her character of "wanting to listen", "welcoming" and being "difficult to distrust". These characteristics enable her to begin conversations with the parents in a positive manner, which is especially important during difficult situations.

7. *Role relationships with students*
BP's rating: 2
BS's rating: 1
BSLT1's rating: 1
BSLT2's rating: 2
BSLT3's rating: 3

BS stated that BP's relationship with the students is "again, it's a positive one", and she is "well-liked" and "well respected by the students". He added that this was already apparent when BP met the "selective sample of students from the student council, from ages 12 through to 18" when she came for the interview. The "feedback from the students was very positive" and they "saw her as someone who is warm, someone who they could relate to". BP was able to continue portraying that image after she started working in the school and BS feels that BP "has a good connection with the student body". As BP has a child studying in the school too, BS said that this helps BP to "understand things from the perspective of a parent, as well as to be able to step back, oversee and be able to manage things from the side of being a school leader". BS had experienced that himself a few years ago and he feels that that is an advantage as "it helps to give you a good insight into what students are perhaps feeling and experiencing".

BP described her students as "absolutely fantastic" and they are the inspiration for her team to be the best that they can be "on a daily basis", like "kids do everywhere". Unfortunately, "one of the biggest grumbles" that BP has about her role is that she does not "spend enough time with children". According to BP, the students only see her "as the person in assemblies" and "the person that will wander around and will have a chat with them during break and lunch times", but that is "quite superficial". All the other participants made the same point, that BP "wishes to have more exposure to students than she does" and she is "definitely not as visible [as she] would like to be" as "it's just tough to find the time, to find the opportunity to spend quality time with the students".

BSLT1 noticed that, "when [BP] does work with students, it's generally in a counselling manner [where] she would be asking for their advice". The other possible times where BSLT1 sees BP interacting with the students would be when she "walks around the school", "visits and observes lessons" and at the "annual events", such as 'the drama productions" and "school competitions", where she is "generally in a congratulatory role" and "giving an award". Therefore, in the latter situations, the students "would find her very good" and BSLT1 does not

think that the students "expect anything different of the relationship" anyway and "probably are quite comfortable in the relationship that they're having with her". BSLT1 added that the relationship is considered as excellent from that perspective "but it's quite superficial".

BSLT2 added that, due to the location of the admin block, where their offices are located, which "doesn't look too dissimilar to an ivory tower", they "probably are a little bit detached from the day-to-day student experience". The situation for BP is worse as "she's out of school more than she would like to be, and then, when she's in school, she's locked away in a meeting room, or in her office with external agents or with parents or governors and more than she would like to be". He claimed that if BP "was able to make as much contact with [the students] as she would like to", "it would strengthen the relationship because she'd know more about their experience".

BSLT3 shared that the relationship is "more of a challenge" and added that "you can walk around the school, and say 'hi' to the students, and that's fine, but to actually get the proper relationship going with students, that's really tough". This is based on his own current role where he has to work "very, very hard at getting that relationship up to where it needs to be" and "maintaining and extending those connections takes time and energy", which he implied are something which BP "struggle[s] to find".

Although BP "has catch up lunches" with "the Head Students" where they "talk things through", as well as "through learning walks" and "lesson observations", where she will talk to them, BP "miss[es] teaching" and "that connection". BP elaborated that "there's a connection but it's a superficial connection". She would like to have the kind of connection that can only be achieved "when you teach, when you really get to know the kids, and they get to know you", which is more than the "surface level". Therefore, that is one of her "biggest regrets" and something which is on her list of things which she aims to improve on.

BP added that, given the number of students in the school and the "turnover", there is still a group of students who do not know who she is, such as those who "haven't seen [her] at the beginning of the year at assembly, or the middle of the term at assembly, or the end of the term at assembly" as they only have whole school assemblies "three times or four times a term". The "weekly or the fortnightly or monthly, smaller" assemblies are "run by the Year Group teams or the Key Stage teams". To BP, having some students who do not even know who she is, "is really worrying" and it "upsets" her, as "we all got into teaching because we love children" and she does not "get to spend enough time with kids".

Overall, BP's relationship with the students is seen as "quite superficial". This is understandable as BP's interactions with the students are usually on the surface only, during her casual chats with the students when she sees them during break and lunch times. This is a typical experience and scenario for a principal in a school of that size, who does not teach in the classroom, and thus has limited opportunities to get to know the students in-depth. Furthermore, BP's days are usually occupied with meetings, and with staff being her greatest focus, this further limits her time with the students. That may also explain the varied ratings given by her three SLT members, who could be rating the relationship based on their observations of the limited interactions BP has with the students, as well as their own subjective criteria and interpretations.

8. *Role relationships overview*

BP has very good role relationships with the various stakeholders of the school, as summarised in table 6.1. The averages of all ratings are less than 2, indicating that BP's role relationships with the stakeholders were *good* to *excellent*, substantiated by her superordinate and SLT members.

The ratings which stand out the most are those between BP and her superordinate and SLT members, which are unanimously *excellent*, as noted by all five interviewees. This indicates that BP's perception that her relationships with them are excellent, are confirmed by her superordinate and SLT members, showing that

she has great support from both her direct reporting officer and her immediate subordinates. These are also the only two ratings which are consistent for all the interviewees. This further verified BP's claim that she has "very strong and very positive relationship" with BS and "strong relationships with [her SLT members]".

Role relationships with	BP's rating	BS's rating	BSLT1's rating	BSLT2's rating	BSLT3's rating	Average
superordinate	1	1	1	1	1	1
SLT members	1	1	1	1	1	1
department heads	2	between 1 and 2	between 2 and 3	1	between 1 and 2	1.7
teachers	2	between 1 and 2	between 2 and 3	1	2	1.8
non-teaching staff	2	2	1	1	2	1.6
parents	2	2	between 1 and 2	2	between 1 and 2	1.8
students	2	1	1	2	3	1.8
Average	1.71	1.42	1.5	1.29	1.71	

(Note: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor; a rating of 1.5 was assigned where the interviewee gave a rating of "between 1 and 2")

Table 6.1: BP's role relationships with the various stakeholders of the school

For the rest of the stakeholders of the school, even though BP is "slightly more removed" from them, due to her role and responsibilities, she still rated her relationships with them, as *excellent* or *good*. The other four interviewees mostly rated these relationships at the same level, or higher, than her own ratings.

Professional and Generic Aspects of Principal Leadership

The areas that an international school principal in Malaysia have to lead extend beyond academic and administrative aspects, such as the "profit making" side of the school, is not a concern for a government school principal in Malaysia. Although School B is owned by a not-for-profit educational foundation registered in Malaysia, there are still generic aspects, such as finance and human resources,

which BP needs to manage, on top of the professional aspects (such as instructional leadership and teaching & learning).

BP shared that "the aspects of administration are taken care of by" a group of directors who manage full teams on human resource, site management, etc. and they report to her directly. That allows her and her academic team to "think predominantly about learning and teaching and student welfare and well-being". She just needs to have weekly or fortnightly meetings with them, together with BS and the primary school principal, to "coordinate, and then somebody else will do" the job.

When asked about the main difficulties with being the principal of an international school in Malaysia, BP responded that "you never know what's going to happen next". She elaborated that "those are the challenges", which could be "a staffing issue", or "something that happened with a student", or "student discipline". In addition, there "is the notion of staff as family and that idea of being an international community, of being a family, the support you need to provide for people", "that sort of thing". And "from a student perspective, the turnover is quite high", with "15-20% turnover" each year. All these "constant changes and evolution of things" require BP and her team to not just "build a vision and lead that vision", but also "constantly having to re-energise and re-involve". BP also added that this could be "the same for any international school" and not "unique to Malaysia".

As for the benefits, BP said that "it's exciting, it's never dull". This is because she gets to "meet an amazing range of people from staff, students and parents". In addition, the school community is "strong", "caring", "kind" and "thoughtful". Therefore, BP feels "very privileged in many, many ways to be in this role and the opportunities" to "be able to lead and to bring people along to cultivate that culture of kindness and support" and the students will continue with "the work they do now with [the] community" when they grow up.

BP added that her satisfaction comes from her team as she "always take[s] the greatest joy from the people, whether it's a small conversation with a student", or having "an impact or an influence with a teacher who were maybe having a grotty day", or making "somebody smile". She "want[s] everyone to come into school, be they a teacher, non-teaching staff, a parent or a student" "to come in with a smile on their face" and she "want[s] them to leave with a smile on their face". She feels that that is an indication that they are "doing good work and making a difference with people in whatever way that [they] can".

Compared to principals of some other international schools, where generation of profit is one of the key performing requirements and roles of the principal, this does not seem to be a concern for BP. Furthermore, she has a group of directors who manage the administrative and operational aspects of the school, thus allowing her and her team to focus on teaching and learning. Although BP shared a few difficulties which she is facing in her role, she mentioned that that might be "the same for any international school", implying that they are not new to her and that the issues are manageable. There was also a lot of joy when she talked about the benefits and satisfactions which she gains from her job, such as seeing the smiles on people's faces, be it on a teacher, non-teaching staff, a parent or a student, as that is an affirmation that she is "making a difference with people".

Overview

BP appears to really enjoy what she is doing currently, despite the challenges she faces. One reason is that she is very clear in what she wants and is focused on what she does. At the start, she carried out research about the school before applying for the job and asked all the necessary questions with the different groups of people to make sure that there is a good fit between her and the school. BP also anticipated well the work challenges arising from the role. She is prepared to handle any matter which is related to it and is not letting any issue surprise her. Coupled with the support of a team of people who work alongside her closely and

positively, BP anticipates continuing to work in this school for another three to five years.

The next chapter presents the findings from case study three.

Chapter Seven: Case Study School C

School Context

School C is a co-educational international school, located just outside the border of the Klang Valley, Selangor. The school is a non-profit organisation where all the income is used to pay for the salary of the staff and maintenance of the school. The school teaches the English curricula and the composition of the teaching staff is 40% expatriates and 60% locals. Most (85%) of the students are Malaysians, while the other 15% are from various nationalities.

The senior leadership structure of School C is different from the previous two cases. The main subject to be interviewed, i.e. CP, holds the title Head of Senior School. She oversees Key Stage 5 and the Sixth Form. She reports to CS, who holds the title of Principal. CS is the overall person in charge of the primary school, middle school and senior school in the campus. There is a head of school for each of the three schools and they report directly to CS. CP line manages the three Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members, i.e. CSLT1, CSLT2 and CSLT3, who were interviewed as well.

- CP is British and she was promoted from within to this role. Prior to her current position as the head of a school, she was the curriculum coordinator from when she first joined the school in August 2014. Her previous experience in other schools includes head of subject, head of department and key stage coordinator. Her highest qualification is a post graduate diploma. CP has been in the education industry for more than 20 years and the reason why she accepted the appointment in her current school is because she felt that it was time to move on for greater challenges. CP has been the head of senior school for less than two years and before that, she was the head of middle school for two years.
- CS is British and his official title is the principal of the campus. He oversees the primary school, middle school and senior school, assisted by three heads of school. He shortlisted, interviewed and recruited CP.

- CSLT1 is British and is the head of curriculum. He has worked in the school for two years and has been an SLT member for two years, working with CP.

- CSLT 2 is British and is the assistant head of senior school. He has worked in the school for one year and eight months and has been an SLT member for the same period of time.

- CSLT3 is British and is the head of sixth form. She has worked in the school for three years and has been an SLT member for the same period of time. She has been working with CP as an SLT member for one year.

The findings are presented through an integrated thematic approach, with each theme linking to a research question.

Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment of the principal is a senior management-level procedure and the decision involves only the top management of a company. Therefore, only CP and CS were asked questions pertaining to the recruitment and selection of CP.

When asked about the required background of the potential candidates, CS shared that the person needs to have certain "personal qualities". He elaborated that they include enthusiasm, having "lots of energy", "resilient", "able to understand the nature of the senior position in an international school" and a "good sense of humour". He added that these are the basic attributes required for that role; "just sort [of] the personal things you'd expect[ed]". In terms of professional capability, he shared that the candidate needs to have the "knowledge of the curriculum in a secondary school". The person also needs to possess leadership traits, which means having ideas, "able to discuss those ideas", putting them forward "in an articulate way", to being able to "convince staff and take them with them when making changes".

The recruitment for the position of head of primary, head of middle school and head of senior school came about when CS wanted to change the leadership

structure of the school "from quite a hierarchical leadership structure to a flatter leadership structure". The positions were also advertised internally instead of externally. The interviews were conducted by a panel of two trustees and CS, with the same panel also making the appointment. Compared to international schools which recruit its leaders externally, this internal recruitment not only takes a shorter time, but also leads to cost saving.

CP feels that her origin and professional backgrounds have helped her to secure her current position. She shared that it is a four-year contract: "two years head of middle, two years head of senior". She was first recruited as the curriculum coordinator in the school and she decided to apply for the position of head of school when the opportunity arose a year later because "it was sensible for [her]". She elaborated that she has "a lot of background, [especially] middle school background", which enabled her to lead the school "as a head of school", "within the context [and] within the school that [she] was familiar" with. She feels that she can "build on as head of senior school afterwards". From "a professional development point of view", CP also mentioned that "it was a good idea" for her.

Her job interview took place about three years before data collection and CP could not remember most of the questions. She could only recall that she was trying to find out how "the head of middle [school] and the head of senior school would work together with regards to academic line management". This is because she felt that the structure is "a little bit unusual" and "that was something that [she] had] wanted to clarify".

Preparation for Principalship in Malaysia

CP was working in another Asian country before she applied for the position of curriculum coordinator in school C. Before she came for the interview, she "did a lot of research on the school, mainly internet-based", such as "looking up the school's website", as she did not know of anyone "who knew anything about the school directly". As CP had been to Malaysia before, she already "knew about

Malaysia". Therefore, she "[tried] to get a sense of what the culture was like from what was being shown on the [school's] website, the location of the school, the pictures of the grounds, the facilities" and also "how it performed academically".

To prepare for the job interview, CP carried out the "regular interview preparation", such as "thinking about what kind of questions" that she "would likely to be asked and what [her] answers would be".

It seems that CP had not carried out extensive preparation before she started work at her current school. This could be due to her familiarity with the work culture of an Asian country, as well as having previously visited Malaysia.

Activities of the Principal

CP shared that she has "a weekly routine", although "every day is a bit different". The routine which she follows include "fixed meetings", which happen every week on different days and at different times. Her time is also occupied by "tons of emails" which require "lots of replies" from her. CP has direct involvement with the students through the student council and the prefect board, for which she has direct responsibility. With the student council, she meets with the students to help "them get things set up". She also regularly "support[s] in some lessons", where "there's a class that's being taught and some students in the class who needs extra help", she will "sit with them and help them". This is an unusual regular activity for a head of school. CP's other activities include "strategic planning", coordinating "events in the school", "meeting with parents", "sorting out things to do with finance", "more interaction with staff" and "dealing with problems that crop up, which happens in all sorts of different ways".

All of CP's SLT members agree that she follows a familiar daily or weekly routine. They also mentioned that the main activity of CP has to be meetings which she needs to attend every day.

"She has meetings all day with various individuals around the school; her meetings are all day, every day, with different people around the schools discussing different things, that is what she does day to day." (CSLT1)

CSLT1 elaborated that CP's role in those meetings are "in multiple capacities"; they "could be meetings that she is chairing", "meetings that she's sitting in" or even meetings where she "is sitting on the side". CSLT2 concurred with CSLT1 that "a lot of [CP's] time is taken up with meeting the heads of department, to ensure that each department's roles are fulfilled throughout". As the assistant head of senior school, CSLT2 claimed that he knows CP's routine quite well, as she "shares [with him] her routine quite regularly because [they] work together quite closely on certain aspects". CSLT2 added that it is "helpful to know what each of [them] are doing at any one time". Although CSLT3 originally claimed that she is not sure if CP follows a familiar daily or weekly routine, as she does not "work with her that closely", she eventually also stated that CP spends a considerable amount of time having "meetings with other people".

According to CSLT1 and CSLT2 respectively, the other activities which CP has to do regularly include "getting involved with students and parents when the case arises" and "day-to-day management of the school, the timetable, with the curriculum, making sure that everything is running smoothly". CSLT3 shared that CP "oversees certain departments", has "whole school activities to do", "runs the prefects" and "runs the assemblies".

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

When CP was asked to compare her job description (JD) with what she actually does, she replied that her four-page JD is "actually pretty all-encompassing", even though "it doesn't cover everything that [she does]". Nevertheless, in her opinion, her contract already covers "anything that a principal [is required] to do". She also shared that "if you write a job description that's broad brush enough, it means it can cover anything".

CP used to work in a government school in the UK (her first school) and thus she made a comparison of the roles and responsibilities of a principal in a government school in the UK, with one in an international school in Malaysia. The most obvious difference is the socioeconomic background of the students in the two schools. In her first school, there were "students whose clothes wouldn't be washed" and "they didn't have enough money to eat properly". In her current school, "the parents in general can afford the fees, apart from [the] scholarship students" and so in general, the "parents are fairly wealthy as opposed to a government school". That affects "the kind of behavioural issues" which the principal needs to follow up on and "the kind of support" the principal needs to offer.

Even the kinds of "emotional support" for the students are different. CP elaborated that, in her first school, the basic needs of the students were not being fulfilled; "in a low-income family background, where the parenting is not happening where it could be, though physically in the same room as the child", the child is being ignored and in a way being neglected. This resulted in CP being unable to teach the students higher level knowledge such as "moral values and things like that", and "those were problems" which CP faced in her first schools. On the other hand, the "safeguarding issues" which she has to deal with in her current school are "a very different type of neglect". As the students are from "very affluent backgrounds", the parent might say, "Right, here is a flat in KL for you to use, I'm going to Hong Kong." According to CP, this is still neglect, "but a very different type of neglect", that CP needs to address. These are all the "different things [CP needs] to follow up on".

In CS's opinion, the main role and responsibility of CP is the "day-to-day operations of that area of school", "making sure that everything is in place that needs to be for the day-to-day operations". He elaborated with examples, such as the "line management of staff within her area", looking after the "wellbeing", "discipline" and "behaviour of the students", as well as "dealing with students, parents and staff". CP is also expected to "contribute to the more strategic overview of the school, to have meetings with [CS] and other senior people", and

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to ensure that everyone understands what they are moving towards, what they want and how to achieve them. To sum up, "the main part with it is the day-to-day operational [work], but it's also having input into the broader direction of the school".

CS also shared his views on the differences between the roles and responsibilities of a principal in their school, as compared to one working in a government or national school. CS feels that, as compared to a government school, "there's much more flexibility and freedom to make changes here". When commenting about Malaysian government schools, CS feels that they "really focused on examination results". Furthermore, there is a "separation to Science and Arts streams", where "the Science stream has greater emphasis than the Arts". His school does not "have that distinction" and there is "more freedom to do things here and a greater emphasis on the whole child, rather than just examination results, when compared to Malaysian schools".

When CS compared UK government schools with his school, he commented that the "UK government schools are very much more highly regulated by the government".

"The administration that one has to do in those schools, and the adherence to that, is far, far greater than you have, not just in this school, but in international schools in general, and that freedom is something that teachers enjoy in international schools." (CS)

Therefore, CS commented that teachers who had worked in a UK government school are "pleasantly surprised and pleased that they don't have the same bind that they do have in UK schools" when they switch to work in an international school. However, CS added that his impression of UK government schools is based on his middle leadership role "as Head of Maths in a UK school" 17 years ago. Even though things might have "changed significantly", CS still firmly believes that there

is "much more freedom to do things here in an international school than in the UK government schools" and that there is "a lot more red tape" in those schools.

The three SLT members also shared their opinions on the main roles and responsibilities of CP. All of them mentioned the "day-to-day" operation of the school. CSLT1 shared that CP needs "to be a role model", and to have and set "high expectations that encompass everything", when she leads and manages. CSLT1 also elaborated his interpretation of leadership as "providing direction" and "management is the day-to-day minuscule", adding that CP needs to do both.

CSLT2 also mentioned that CP's main role is the "management of the senior school, including the sixth form", "ensuring that the day-to-day running of the school is working correctly and functioning to its optimum". CP is also required to deal with "any immediate issues", support the teachers, and attend to "any issues that teachers may have". Timetabling is also under CP's purview, with the timetable team reporting to her.

CSLT3 feels that she has been the one who "tend[s] to oversee the sixth form, and manage the day-to-day and everything of it", although she will "let [CP] know what's going on". CSLT3 adds that CP focuses mainly on the academic and pastoral welfare of the senior students, with the help of CSLT2, who "sets up the meetings with the students and the academic concerns".

The findings suggest that anything and everything which takes place in the school is under the head of school's role and responsibility, directly or indirectly. There are also many stakeholders and many areas of foci to address. Instead of giving an overview on her involvement in the various aspects of the school, CP mainly discussed her responsibilities and involvement with the students. This could be an indication that students are her main priority and very close to her heart. Comparatively, her superordinate, CS offered a broader view, stating that CP is responsible for the "day-to-day operations" of the school, as well as contributing to the "strategic overview" of the school. The three SLT members also have quite

different views on the other roles and responsibilities of CP, aside from "day-to-day operation", based on their respective observations and interactions with CP.

Role Relationships

All five interviewees were asked to comment on CP's role relationships with the various stakeholders, her superordinate (CS), SLT members, department heads, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and students. The interviewees were asked to rate the respective relationships from a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor.

1. *Role relationship with superordinate*

CP's rating: 1

CS's rating: 1

CSLT1's rating: 2

CSLT2's rating: 3

CSLT3's rating: 1

CP feels that her relationship with CS "is very positive and it's maintained by frequent communication". Other than "a fixed weekly meeting", when they "spend about forty-five minutes with each other, one on one", CP has other meetings "with him and other people present as well". Besides the meetings, they "frequently drop into each other's office". Although there is "a bit of communication by WhatsApp", it is mainly used to decide whether the meeting will go ahead or not, "rather than to solve a problem", as they "prefer face to face communication".

In terms of the challenges which she is facing with CS, CP replied that there is "one thing [she] would like to change in that relationship", which is that CS "manages things very, very closely". She just hopes that he would "devolve more decision-making" to her and let her "get on with something" since he "knows exactly" what she is doing. However, CP acknowledges that is "the way that he manages"; "he

has to be very much in control" and he does not only do that to her. Moreover, CP commented that she is already "used to it" and if she still kept saying, "this is a surprise! this is a surprise!", then she "would be pretty stupid" "for not picking up on it". Overall, CP still feels that she has a "really good relationship" with CS as "there's not something that [she] wouldn't feel able to go him and say, and if [she is] frustrated, [she] can tell him [she is] frustrated".

CS concurred with CP that they have a "very good relationship", a "very positive relationship" and a "very professional relationship". They "have mutual respect for each other" and "have the ability to question each other". CS added that they "certainly don't always agree" and that is the kind of relationship he is looking for as he does not want "people who are continually going to say yes to [him] all the time because it doesn't help the institution, it doesn't help [him]". It is also a plus point that CP "has very good opinions and good ideas to share and discuss".

However, CS did not deny that CP is "frustrated at times and not being able to make some of the changes that she wants to make". He added that he has stopped some of those, not because they were not good ideas, "but perhaps they don't fit the culture of the school" and where he feels the "changes might damage the relationships within the school too much and the benefits from the changes are not going to be as beneficial as perhaps she might see". Nevertheless, CS reiterated that the two of them "have a very positive, professional relationship".

At the time of the interview, CS had tendered his resignation and the SLT members were aware of this. Therefore, CSLT1 gave his perspectives from two angles, before and after CS's resignation, because "[he] would imagine the answers are very different". Before CS resigned, CSLT1 feels that CP's "relationship with [CS] has very much been one where she reports concerns and also opinions on things that have been happening through multiple facets of the school". In other words, when CSLT1 liaises with CP on his concerns, instead of resolving them with him, CP has to bring it to CS first. CSLT1 added that this does not only happen to him. It is "also happening with multiple facets", "ECAs" and the "individual department

heads who report to her", "so the relationship they have is very much structured around all the different parts of the school". In view of that, CSLT1 feels that CP and he "share a similar frustration with things that don't move quickly".

Nevertheless, CSLT1 thinks that CP "is quite a jovial person, and has learnt over the time working [in school C] to maybe sit back a little bit and not be so strict and stringent on getting things done". CSLT1 also feels that the relationship he has with her "is similar to the relationship that she's had with [CS], where she calms him down and tells him "that things will be done as long as [they]'re making progress". CSLT1 believes that CS does that to CP too, "because he's done the same for many people across the school".

However, since CS tendered his resignation letter, CSLT1 noticed that "that role has changed" with CS "taking a back step, which means that [CP] has more responsibility". Before CSLT1 gave a rating on the relationship between CS and CP, he defined an excellent relationship as where one is "able to challenge that person, and negotiate with that person, and one that there would never be any distaste". With that criteria in mind, he has rated their relationship as good.

CSLT2 thinks that "the relationship is a fairly close relationship between the two of them" as they "meet fairly regularly and are able to express ideas quite comfortably". However, he also noticed the challenge in the relationship mentioned by CSLT1. CSLT2 shared that CS "has the overall actions and decisions on what will happen and what won't happen". In the event that CS and CP have a disagreement on something, CS has the ultimate "control in that situation". Therefore, "even though the leadership is distributed throughout", CSLT2 feels that there is "still quite a hierarchy in place" which "filters down even to [his] level". This means that, when there is a disagreement on things, "then ultimately it's the person that [he has] to report to who has precedence in that area", and who makes the decision.

CSLT2 gave further examples of times when things were introduced "and they got so far and then it's broken down". This "seems to be something that happens fairly regularly". In CSLT2's opinion, "there is an issue about control", where "the balance isn't always quite right in terms of that dynamic", given that CP has "to manage the whole of the secondary school" and yet CS still has much control. That is "one of the limiting factors of the relationship" between CP and CS.

CSLT3 further confirmed that CS "is quite a micromanager in some aspects" and "he likes a small team of people to work with". She added that CS, CP and the Head of Middle School make "a lot of the decisions" and "work very closely together". The three of them form the top leadership roles while the other SLT members, including CSLT3, are the "extended leadership". Therefore, CSLT3 feels that CP's relationship with CS is excellent.

Both CP and CS have rated their mutual role relationships with each other as excellent. However, one major challenge is the limited autonomy CP has in carrying out her role, which CS also acknowledges, and which was also noted by the other three SLT members. CP's approach is to accept that as the working style of her immediate reporting officer, which she needs to accept. However, for the other SLT members, especially CSLT1 and CSL2, who work very closely with CP, they are feeling the frustrations when things are not taking place as fast as they would like, due to the hierarchical organisational structure. This is quite ironic and contrasts with CS's stated intention of changing "from quite a hierarchical leadership structure to a flatter leadership structure", when the SLT members within this "flatter leadership structure" feel that the situation is still hierarchical, with CS still very much in control. The situation has changed since CS tendered his resignation, and CP has more autonomy to make decisions, as observed by CSLT1.

2. *Role relationships with SLT members*

CP's rating: 1

CS's rating: 1

CSLT1's rating: 2

CSLT2's rating: 3

CSLT3's rating: 2

CP considers her relationship with her SLT members as "very good" and they have "a very professional relationship while at the school". She shared that CSLT3 is a very close friend outside school and they "do things together which have nothing to do with school". CP also described her relationship with her SLT members as "a flat relationship" where she does not feel that she has behaved like a superior towards them, although she is not sure if they feel the same way. The reason for CP to treat her SLT members as equals is because they are "better at self-managing and they are more developed in their leadership", as compared to some of the heads of department whom CP line manages. CP gave examples of meetings with the heads of departments, where she has to be the one who sets the agenda and then having to "tell them", "ask them how they're doing in certain things", and then "prompt them" to give her the information. With the SLT members, she does not need to do that as "they bring everything to [her]". They would say that "this is what I'm doing, can I do it like this, or, can I have some advice on this?" CP is indicating that her SLT members are generally more proactive, as compared to the department heads, who are passive.

CP also described the different characteristics of some of her SLT members, indicating how well she knows them, and enabling her to manage them better. For example, CP said that CSLT1 "just wants everything to be done yesterday". He has "got ridiculous amounts of energy and talks very fast and [that] is wonderful because of all the energy [he has] but [he] just needs to be slowed down". On the other hand, CSLT3 is "much more realistic because she's a bit older". CSLT3 is also "very, very ambitious" and she "wants huge amounts of stuff". She also wants things "to be done her way". In view of the above, CP feels that it is important to note that "they have to be treated in different ways because they are different people".

CS concurs with CP that she has "very positive relationships", "in the same way" he has with CP.

> *"There would be ups and downs in all those relationships, and perhaps some of them are not as positive as she would want them to be, but the nature of the relationships that she's established, I think, is very professional and is as good as it possibly could be with some of those people." (CS)*

CSLT1 did not seem to have a smooth start in his work relationship with CP. This is because, on his second day in the school, CP told him that she was in his role previously and he "should never expect too much" at the school. That had "a really negative effect" on CSLT1, and he requested an apology from CP, as he did not expect "that attitude to exist" in a senior leader. However, after having worked in the school for more than two years, he could relate to "why somebody would feel that way".

CSLT1 feels that his role relationship with CP has "improved over the last two years". This could be due to his very open and direct character, "an unusual person", according to him, where he would tell the person how he would "like to be managed in the very first instant". He would also seek clarifications on the direction and boundaries constantly. He has "no problem with destructive feedback as long as it is constructive", implying that he is able to accept people being upfront and direct with him, as long as the feedback is constructive and allows him to make improvements. CSLT1 also shared that he works better in an "informal environment" where he and CP are able to speak their minds, and this has helped their work relationship. Although CSLT1 is still feeling frustration at times with CP, for "not letting [him] go and do things", and very much reined back with "no, can't do that", he is now able to "remind her that just because somebody says "no" doesn't mean we can't get it done". So while the relationship has grown, CSLT1 would like CP to continue to be truthful towards him, "which disappoints [him] a little bit" when she is sometimes not.

CSLT2 described his relationship with CP as "fine". He shared his frustration for having to follow a "rigid system" "on a very hierarchical basis" and that they do not "have the freedom to sort of operate without consent from prior people". CSLT2 made comparisons with his previous school where he had "a lot more freedom". In addition, CSLT2 feels that the current structure, where he is in charge of Key Stage 4 while CSLT3 oversees Key Stage 5, does not provide "a smooth transition" between the two stages. Furthermore, when CSLT2 was recruited into his current position, he was reporting to the previous Head of Senior School. CSLT2 has only been working with CP for less than a year.

> *"I think that, in terms of continuity, it's quite difficult working with one person then, having plans in place, and then, after the first year, a switch is made. I think any head teacher wants to put their stamp on the year group and the job role. … A lot of what we did in the first year was then stopped and then we started anew, sort of halfway. So I think trying to get everyone up to speed, and work at the same time, has been something that hasn't been ideal." (CSLT2)*

However, CSLT2 is "more confident now after working together for six, seven months" with CP. This is because CP communicates her vision with him so that they are "on the same page", have "clear plans" and "on the right track". Moreover, CSLT2 is very clear of his role as the "assistant in achieving that vision". CSLT2 also acknowledges that CP "is supportive and she will listen to ideas and take on board things that you are saying". According to CSLT2, that is "one of her best qualities".

As mentioned by CP, she and CSLT3 are friends outside school and were already close friends before CP had a change in her role from Head of Middle School to Head of Senior School. This change of role "adds a different dimension to things", according to CSLT3.

> *"I think I was quite apprehensive when I first realised that she was going to be Head of Secondary, because she also has a reputation of being quite controlling,*

and I'm used to being quite autonomous in my role as Head of Sixth Form."
(CSLT3)

CSLT3 was apprehensive because she has "implemented a lot of new innovations and new procedures and kind of got things up and running in a good way". Furthermore, CSLT3 found out from CP's assistant that she "checked his emails and made loads of corrections". That made CSLT3 "a bit worried" about whether CP is "going to come in and change things or control things". Furthermore, CSLT3 feels that both she and CP are "strong women" and they would feel that their "way is right". CSLT3 even spoke to CS to share her concerns at the initial stage. That resulted in CS attending their meetings "for a while". Gradually and eventually, CSLT3 realised that they "work really well together" and CP gives her the respect she feels she should have. CSLT3 thinks that could be because "the sixth form is a new area" for CP, whereas CSLT3 has been working "in sixth form for a long time". Therefore, CP will listen to CSLT3 as "she doesn't understand about all the things involved in university applications and requirements for different universities". CP has also been "encouraging all the innovations and things that [they]'ve put in".

"I've also found, pleasingly, that when I have an issue, and I speak to her about it, she's really helpful; she's all, 'have you tried this approach or that approach?' And I'm like, 'yeah, that's a good idea.'" (CSLT3)

Therefore, CSLT3's attitude towards CP has changed from being apprehensive to finding CP "very, very easy to work with" and they "work really well together" now. CSLT3 is "really pleased" that they are able to "bounce ideas off each other" and their "discussions are always productive".

CP and CS both perceive CP's relationship with the SLT members to be better than the three SLT members' ratings. This could be partly because CP may not have taken into account, or be aware of, the issues which the respective SLT members considered when they rated the relationship. For example, CSLT1 had a not-so-

pleasant experience with CP at the start of his employment with the school, which he could still recall. As for CSLT2, he is frustrated with the constant changes in the school, especially in the "hierarchical" organisational structure, while CSLT3 had some apprehension at the start of CP's role, due to the friendship which they have built outside school. The other contributing factor, resulting in differences in the ratings, could be that CP has only been in the role for less than two years. Time is required to build good relationships. Therefore, if the three SLT members were to be asked about their opinion after another two years, their ratings might be further improved. For example, CSLT1 did mention that he is "more confident now after working together for six, seven months" with CP.

3. *Role relationships with department heads*

CP's rating: 1

CS's rating: 2

CSLT1's rating: 2

CSLT2's rating: between 2 and 3

CSLT3's rating: 2

CP started by commenting that the department heads "have been here for a very, very long time" and they have not had "very much close leadership" until CP took up her current position. They were "very much left on their own", with "not much development" and "not much growth was happening" "within their subject areas".

> *"Since I've come in, I've put much more structure of expectations of things they should be doing at certain points during the year so there's more accountability there. And so, talking them through that, some of them have embraced this and found that it's helpful to have a structure and they understand what they're supposed to be doing next; others feel it's more work to do and would much rather not do it." (CP)*

In CP's opinion, this is a positive change as the department heads "start bringing more things to [her], rather than [her] initiating all the talking points in the meeting".

CP also shared that, structurally, the department heads are divided into two groups; one being line managed by her while the other group is line managed by the Head of Middle School. For academic-related matters, both of them will ensure that they "always discuss" and "come to an agreement". Although they understand that two different people cannot "hold the one-on-one meeting exactly the same", they ensure that at least "the expectations will hold for the heads of department". This is because they do not want to be compared and "it's important that [they]'re not compared", as an "advantage of one over the other as their line manager".

CS claims that there is now an improvement in CP's relationship with the department heads, as "initially there would be a greater varying degree of people describing it as being good to not-so-good". The initial comment could be due partly to CP being in "a new position and she's establishing herself in that role". Furthermore, the initial stage was more challenging for CP as "she has very high expectations and works very hard". She is also "trying to shift a culture" in the school, which is "quite hard and difficult", and it also "takes time". CS rated CP's "relationships with the majority of her staff as being very positive", although "there will be some where they're not as good". CS emphasised that that does not mean that "what she was doing wasn't good".

All the other three SLT members rated CP's role relationship with her department heads as average to above average. They also shared the challenges that CP faces with them.

CSLT1 first commented that "the relationship that she has with the department heads is good". The strength of CP is that she is "to the point", has "plans in place" and "guidance is sometimes clear". However, her weaknesses are that the

"delegation happens quickly" and "sometimes not always followed up because of the amount of work that she has to do and the amount of things to solve". This resulted in "a bit of distaste from her position in this role when she first started because nobody wants to update the curriculum", especially those who "have been teaching for twenty-five years" and "what they teach is in their head". They feel that there is "no benefit to them" in writing the curriculum down. CSLT1 feels that "they won't listen to you no matter what". As with "anybody in the senior role [who] has dealt with complaints from people underneath", CP has to deal with that too, and more.

"Those complaints, unfortunately, have gone beyond you and to your line manager, and you haven't been supported in some instances by your line manager, so you've been underpinned, and that has happened to pretty much everybody within the senior leadership team, which doesn't help." (CSLT1)

As for CSLT2, based on what the department heads have shared with him, "it can either work particularly well, or there were some heads of department who have a strained relationship" with CP. He feels that, at times, that is "because they haven't got the ability to make autonomous decisions without consent from people above them". CSLT2 added that many decisions are "still forced through", even though many department heads disagree with them. Other complaints from the department heads include "grey descriptors" and "some of the paper-based tasks that they're made to do", when "they don't fully understand the benefit of them". On a more positive aspect, CSLT2 mentioned that the department heads "get a lot of time with [CP]", where she will meet them either weekly or fortnightly. He feels that that is something good as "your line manager will meet with you so regularly and give you the opportunity to say, right, this is working, and this isn't working".

As a member of staff who is "in the middle", being "part of the extended leadership" and "amongst the staff", CSLT3 shared that she "hears from both sides at the same time", including "moans" and where people will "just say anything".

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CSLT3 personally feels that CP is "supportive" and "collegial" towards the department heads. She also thinks that CP "has quite a clear direction" and "people know what they have to do, and where they have to go". However, CSLT3 also feels that CP could have "rub[bed] people up the wrong way sometimes because she's quite direct". This resulted in some staff being unhappy with her. Nevertheless, CSLT3 "thinks that's normal anyway" as "no one's going to be completely happy with the leadership team". Furthermore, CSLT3 reiterated that CP is "a good leader", "has a strong vision", "communicates very well to the team" and "has a clear direction [where] she works hard to get people to buy in to her ideas as well".

One of the main challenges faced by CP with the department heads is that many of them have worked in the school for much longer than her. As a new leader of the school, she has initiatives which she wants to implement. It is evident that some department heads are not in favour of the changes, probably because they are in their comfort zone. As stated by CP, the department heads have been "very much left on their own". Fortunately for CP, there has been an improvement in these relationships, as noted by the other four interviewees.

4. *Role relationships with teachers*

CP's rating: 2

CS's rating: 2

CSLT1's rating: 2

CSLT2's rating: 2

CSLT3's rating: 2

The five interviewees unanimously gave a rating of 'good' in terms of CP's role relationship with the teachers.

CP shared that she does not "directly line manage" the teachers and so she knows some "much better than others". Those with whom she spends more time are, "sadly, if there's a complaint". This is because she "will have many more

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conversations with them, and ultimately get to know them better, because of that". At the same time, there are teachers who just "wanna be left alone". As the school compound is very big, "it is very possible [for them] to be left alone", resulting in CP not knowing them as well. However, CP clarified that there is no one with whom she does not get along well and "there's no one who [she] feel[s] that has a problem with [her]". Therefore, she thinks that "in general, there's a good relationship but it's not a really close relationship". Although there is a common room in the school, which is "a really good way to get to know other people", it is not heavily used. She gave an example that this is because "it's a good 5-minute walk to the Maths classrooms [from the common room], and so the Maths teachers, they all hang out with their other Maths teachers in the Maths office during their break". CP has "tried to persuade [CS] to put in a coffee machine or things like that in the common room", because she thinks that "food and drink is a really good lure", her proposal was turned down with the reason that that "is not getting any work done".

CS responds by saying that "some people being 1 and 2s, and some being 3 and 4s", there is "a whole wide range of people" who would have different ratings in terms of their role relationships with CP. Furthermore, there are both Malaysian teachers and expat teachers in the school, who "come from a different environment, different culture [and a] different education system". This results in them having "different ideas, different expectations and different cultural reference points". In general, "the Malaysian teachers [also] tended to be [working] in the school for a much longer period of time than the expat teachers".

"And trying to get everybody to appreciate the approach that we want to take in teaching and learning is another challenge because, invariably, we are looking at a more Westernised view of education here and we've got 60% of the staff [who] come from an Asian education background and that creates tensions as well at times." (CS)

Therefore, with the presence of "a mix of opinions", he has rated the role relationship CP has with the teachers as "2", which represents good.

CSLT1 shared that CP is "helping two individual teachers of the school", under the school's "Guided Teacher Assessment" programme which is executed when "a teacher is deemed to have areas for improvement that need drastic action". CP has also mentioned to CSLT1 that "having the time to do that is very difficult, and so any more than two would be too much for her". However, as compared to "a hundred" teachers, as claimed by CSLT1 in the school, "it's a small percentage". Therefore, in CSLT1's view, CP's "role with the teachers is limited pretty much only to that involvement", as her "focus is very much with the heads of departments", other than the "school wide presentations about things that need to improve" which she will give at times. However, CSLT1 feels that the amount of time CP gets involved with the teachers "is the right amount". He also gives the analogy of "just like a CEO would walk on a factory floor; that potentially needs to happen a bit more", which would improve the relationship CP has with the teachers. Unfortunately, "with the number of things that need tackling", and with CS "leading", CSLT1 feel that "it's difficult for her" to get "more involvement with that".

CSLT2 stated that CP's role relationship with the teachers is "generally positive". This is because he has never "witnessed anything that is negative" and "the lesson observations and the lines of work" "have generally been positive". CP has also been giving "good feedback" on the lessons she has observed and "the teachers are probably getting that information". Furthermore, CP "presents herself very well" in "the staff briefings and staff assemblies" and she "appears willing to listen to the teachers". CSLT2 also notices that CP "tries to rotate around as many teachers as possible" and "with a range of different staff" during lunch in the dining hall, where "a lot of the best communication…is done informally". CSLT2 acknowledges that that "is absolutely a very good thing" to do and a good "leadership trait", which would improve relationships.

CSLT3 shared a challenge which CP is facing, where "some of the staff that have been here for a very long time, are not willing to try new things". As a result of that, "one of the biggest challenges" is "getting people to try new things or develop new ways of thinking". She added that "it's a long process" "to get staff to buy into" those new initiatives. However, CSLT3 commented that CP is "really good with those challenges, and she knows how to talk to people", where "she's got a good understanding of the context here and to use that context" in the process of convincing the buy-in. CP has "a good way of working with all sorts of different staff here, from the new to the very experienced, and a good way of getting them to get on board with the innovations that [they]'ve been trying to get into the school". Where staff within departments are not getting along well, CP is "very good at mediating those situations" and helping them "to work out a common ground".

CP's relationship with the teachers is the only one where all five interviewees gave the same rating. This could be because the teachers form the largest staff number in the school and therefore it will be an average rating based on what the interviewees have observed. There are some challenges involved, especially in the initial stage when changes are implemented. However, as time passes, CP was able to get more teachers "on board". All the interviewees also recognise that no one is able to please everyone. Therefore, on the whole, all interviewees concur that CP maintains good relationships with the teachers.

5. *Role relationships with non-teaching staff*
CP's rating: 2
CS's rating: 2
CSLT1's rating: 1.5
CSLT2's rating: 3
CSLT3's rating: 1

CP admitted that, due to the size of the campus, and the number of staff in the school, there are some non-teaching staff whom she does not know at all, such as

some of the guards, maintenance staff and cleaners. For those whom she can recognise, she will "wave and say hi", but she is unable to proceed further as "a lot of them can't speak English". Therefore, "there's not really a relationship there". As for the administrative staff, due to the, location of her office, CP "get[s] on really well with them and they are a lovely group of people".

CS also feels that CP's relationship with the non-teaching staff is "very positive" and "very good". This is because she "works and builds on those relationships", although CS added that "she's not going to have as much contact with the non-teaching staff as [he] would have". Therefore, for those "people that she deals with", such as the "librarians", "HR people", "maintenance" and "people organising events", all of them "are Malaysians" and CS thinks that they "respect her" and there are no "major issues".

Although CSLT1 started by stating that he has not seen interactions between CP and the non-teaching staff, he was able to recall eventually seeing CP communicating with the cleaners and CS's secretary. Based on what he has observed, he felt that CP is "very good with the admin staff", thus the rating of between good and excellent for that relationship.

CSLT2 is also "not really aware of [CP's] liaisons too closely with the non-teaching staff" as he has "not really witnessed that happening too much". However, he commented that it is "a professional relationship" where CP will "speak to them appropriately, and ask for things to be done and they tend to get done". CSLT2 added that the "day-to-day running with the support staff is kind of done through the managers, and [CP] liaises with the management of that".

Similarly, CLST3 has not witnessed much about CP's dealings with the non-teaching staff. However, since CP is "very charming" and has "good interpersonal skills", she "obviously speaks to people in the correct way and gets people on board to do what she'd like them to do".

CP does not have much contact with non-teaching staff, as verified by the other four interviewees. However, the limited interactions she has with them have been positive, as also verified by the other four interviewees. On the whole, CP is seen to have maintained "professional relationships" with the non-teaching staff.

6. *Role relationships with parents*

CP's rating: 2

CS's rating: 1

CSLT1's rating: 1

CSLT2's rating: 2

CSLT3's rating: 1

CP shared that, in general, parents only go to see her "when there's a problem, either their child has been naughty or they want to complain", resulting in "a lot of room for poor relationships there". Nevertheless, in most cases, they will "manage to sort it out" and "everyone goes away" feeling fine. Even if there were "difficult meetings where parents cry" when "they are upset about their child", CP usually "get calls back or emails back saying thank you very much [to her]", as well as parents apologising that they had cried. There was only one meeting which CP "felt was just absolutely awful and ended badly". They also "didn't manage to bring it around before [the parents and child] left".

> *"I don't actually think I could ever done any better because they were being so unreasonable and I could never have agreed to what they were suggesting. They were just backing at their child's presence and they were suggesting that there's no way he should apologise to having really, really hurt another student. And it was happening in front of the student as well, and it was just so opposed to our school values, and my personal values, and so we left without resolution to that particular meeting." (CP)*

As compared to her previous school, where she "would see at least one parent a day", she "can go for several weeks without seeing parents" in her current school.

This could be because most of the students in the senior school are on full boarding. Therefore, she tended to see more parents when she was the head of middle school as there are "more day students in middle school".

CS concurs with CP that "the meetings with the parents tend to be when there are issues with the students". Based on his "interactions", and his "understanding of those meetings that she's had with parents", they "have been very positive", even though "when you're giving parents information they don't want to hear, they might not necessarily be very positive about that". He acknowledges that "that's just the nature of the work" as "the content of what [CP is] giving in a lot of those individual meetings with parents is not very good most of the time". On the other hand, CS feels that, when CP "presents to parents on stage and she's giving information to parents, it's always in a very good, professional manner [and she is] very articulate". CS added that "the predominance in the senior school are boarding students", and so CP does not get to meet the parents as frequently, as compared to the head of primary school.

CSLT1 shared that he has never seen CP having one-to-one meetings with the parents. Therefore, his rating is based on her "presentations in the auditorium" and her interactions with the potential customers who "come in and visit". Nevertheless, CSLT1 feels that CP "has been teaching long enough" and thus "has more than enough experience to deal with parents".

CSLT2 thinks that "the relationship [CP has] with the parents is generally good". Furthermore, he thinks that "the parents are supportive anyway" and, if CP needs to convey "something [that] is negative", she is able to "say that to the parents in a way that they still remain on board". CSLT2 also noticed that "some of her interactions with them at parent-teacher conferences and outside school events seem positive as well". CSLT2 further shared, that in a boarding school, they spend a lot of time with the students and thus "still have an influence on what [the students] will be doing further on outside the school", even when the students are on long vacations of "six to seven weeks". Therefore, the benefits of having

good relationships with the parents would mean that, when there are issues, they can be confident enough to tell the parents that "we're the professionals and in our professional opinion, this is what we think should happen". This is especially helpful as CP has "a good relationship with the parents [and] she's able to support across that".

CSLT3 has personally experienced working together with CP with a few parents. She finds CP to be "very clear with her message". CP will say "the right things" and "she listens very well to what the people are saying". In view of that, CSLT3 rated CP's role relationship with the parents as 'excellent'.

Even though their ratings differ slightly, all five interviewees feel that CP's relationship with the parents "is generally good". Due to the nature of the school being a full boarding school, CP does not meet the parents that frequently. Generally, she only meets the parents on one-to-one basis when there are issues which need to be addressed. However, most of the cases can be resolved amicably. Her other interactions with the parents are during the school events and parent-teacher conferences, where CS and the other three SLT members have noticed that the interactions between CP and the parents are positive.

7. *Role relationships with students*

CP's rating: 1

CS's rating: 2

CSLT1's rating: 1

CSLT2's rating: between 3 and 4

CSLT3's rating: 2

CP started off by exclaiming that "the students here are so lovely" and "it's really hard not to have positive relationships with the students here". She personally oversees the student council and prefect team, whom she has "meetings with frequently". For the prefect team, she meets "the head prefects more than the whole prefect team" and helps "them out with the leadership side of their jobs".

As with the student council, where the students are "much, much younger", the approach is more "guidance" and "coaching" on "how to get something done". CP values her time with these two groups of students, given her "very small amount of contact with students" and not teaching her own classes any more. On the other hand, some students would be sent to see her "because they've been naughty". The students "might be terrified by [having] to see [CP]", but they would always go away feeling that it "wasn't quite as frightening as it was going to be". Therefore, in CP's opinion, "those meetings always end up positively".

CS concurs that CP's "relationship with the students is very positive". He is also aware that CP "meets regularly with the prefects" and "student council". In addition, CP addresses "the students in assembly" and "will speak to them in a very respectful way". CS elaborated that "a lot of her dealings with the students will be when she's out and about in the school; probably doesn't get out and about as much as she would want to, and that might be a sort of negative aspect of that relationship there". Therefore, CS explained that he has rated the relationship as 'good', instead of 'excellent', "just because [CP]'s probably not out with the students as much as she could be or would like to be".

CSLT1 feels that, as CP "has a lot of experience in dealing with students and also a lot of involvement with student groups" at the school, besides heading the student council, "her rapport [with the students] is really good". That is despite her not having "taught for a long time at [the school]". Furthermore, CSLT1 shared that "students speak well of her when they [go] up [to him]".

CSLT2 has quite a different view about CP's role relationship with the students. He feels that "the relationship isn't as good as it could be". This is because CP "doesn't necessarily get involved in the sort of quality of opportunities outside of the curriculum", which he elaborated that "some of the best opportunities are ECAs and sort of events outside just the day-to-day lessons". He added that "that's potentially an opportunity missed" and "the relationship isn't necessarily there because her time is taken up with sort of running of the school". At the same time,

CSLT2 acknowledges that finding time "is difficult" as "that's how he was taken away from other things". Therefore, "the challenge may be fitting it all in and having that work-life balance", but being a boarding school, the students are in the school all the time and "they can demand your time constantly". This poses a challenge within the challenge. Nevertheless, CSLT2 shared that "if you put time and a bit of effort in with [the students], that will be paid doubled and tripled when you actually ask them to go a bit above and beyond themselves".

As for the student council which CP heads, CSLT2 thinks that "the student council isn't necessarily as effective as it could be". He added that "a lot of students see the student council not being effective" and they have commented that CP is "not listening to their views, as well as being compressed occasionally". Therefore, in CSLT2's opinion, that is "an area that should be improved upon" and CP's "relationship with the students could be better".

CSLT3 "would say [CP] has a good relationship with the students", although she knows CP does not teach and "not sure how well she knows the students". However, CSLT3 knows that, when CP is with the sixth formers, in her presence, "she has a good relationship with them". CSLT3 is also certain that CP "works closely with the prefects" and thus "she has a good relationship with them". Furthermore, CSLT3 feels that CP is "very approachable" and "quite *mumsy*", "which is a good quality to have, especially in a boarding school". The other supporting evidence is that, when CP does "the assemblies and things, she commands respect and she has a good voice of authority". Therefore, CSLT3 confirms that CP "has a good relationship with the kids".

The five interviewees have varied opinions about CP's role relationship with the students. This is based not only on what they have observed during CP's interactions with the students, but also because some of them receive direct feedback from the students themselves on their dealings with CP. Furthermore, the participants also have different perspectives on what constitutes a 'good relationship'. For example, CS's view about CP's relationship with the students is

based on the limited times when CP was addressing the students during assemblies or when CP did her walkabouts and had conversations with the students whom she met along the way. In contrast, CSLT2 had students from the student council who told him that their views were not being listened to and that they were "being compressed occasionally" by CP. At the same time, however, there were students who would go up to CSLT1 and "speak well" of CP. Therefore, the ratings given by the respective interviewees are largely based on what they have observed, experienced and heard, especially those who have direct contact with the students.

8. *Role relationships overview*

There is a range of ratings given by the different interviewees, as shown in table 7.1.

Role relationships with	CP's rating	CS's rating	CSLT1's rating	CSLT2's rating	CSLT3's rating	Average
superordinate	1	1	2	3	1	1.6
SLT members	1	1	2	3	2	1.8
department heads	1	2	2	between 2 and 3	2	1.9
teachers	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
non-teaching staff	2	2	1.5	3	1	1.9
parents	2	1	1	2	1	1.4
students	1	2	1	between 3 and 4	2	1.9
Average	1.43	1.57	1.64	2.71	1.57	

(Note: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor; a rating of 1.5 was assigned where the interviewee gave a rating of "between 1 and 2")

Table 7.1: CP's role relationships with the various stakeholders of the school

Table 7.1 shows that CSLT2 is the only participant who did not rate 'excellent' in CP's relationship with any of the seven stakeholders. This could imply that CP has not yet built a strong relationship and rapport with CSLT2, or CSLT2 could have a

different interpretation of what constitutes an 'excellent' relationship. In contrast, CSLT3 was already a close friend of CP prior to the latter's promotion. That could also have affected how CSLT3 rated the relationships. Probably also because of CSLT3's close relationship with CP, both privately and professionally, she sought confirmation and assurance a number of times that what she was going to share would not be revealed to her superiors, before she was comfortable in giving her comments.

There are issues in her initial relationship with CS. CP does not have as much autonomy from her superordinate as much as she would like, and she also has a group of SLT members with whom she needs to spend quite an amount of time and effort to secure their support. It appears that such efforts with the SLT members have paid off, and her professional relationships with them have improved. CS has also resigned and this gave increasing opportunities for CP to make decisions.

Professional and Generic Aspects of Principal Leadership

CP shared that she only needs to spend a "small percentage" of her time on the generic aspects of her role, such as the registry, finance, catering and maintenance, as there are other personnel overseeing them. Moreover, she only has "control over the budget allocated for academic spending", which is "quite a small amount" as compared to "the whole school budget". However, she has helped to "set up a system" on the "academic side of the finances", which was non-existent until she started it. The system "is quite straightforward" and "not very time-consuming". Therefore, part of her job in the generic aspect would be to train "someone when they arrive on how the process works", which is "quite small" a role. Therefore, "most of [her] time is spent on academic and student related issues".

CP faces a lot of challenges in her current role. This is partly due to the structural issues displayed in the organisation chart of the school. CSLT1 shared that even

he is struggling under the current structure, as he is "indirectly managing 18 people across the school", where some report to CP directly and the others report to the head of middle school. Further conflicts and frustrations occur when one is "a little bit more lax" than the other. In addition, CSLT2 commented that, even though CP is the head of the senior school, "she can't necessarily be held to the same, or she doesn't have the same opportunities to basically express that role", due to "outside influences and forces that are beyond her control".

When asked to comment about the main difficulties of her role, CP shared that "the thing that causes the most problems is miscommunication", which is "nothing particular to an international school in Malaysia".

> *"So, as soon as you work with someone from a different culture, you can assume that when you're talking about something they understand it in a way that you mean it, but there are many incidences when there's a complete misunderstanding and it could be because of the use of a word." (CP)*

She attributed that to "people from different cultures" who have different "understanding of what something means, it could be a word, or a phrase", and the "people [are] from many [different] cultures here". CP commented that, "even amongst the Malaysians they get confused, because of being a multi-cultural society, and they're not on the same page". Despite this difficulty, CP loves it and she thinks "it's great to have all of these cultures" and that is "one of the reasons why [she] wanted to work internationally".

The other difficulty which CP mentioned is the curriculum. She shared that, even though they are doing "an international curriculum", "there still will be aspects of that [which are] really, really UK focused, which are just not sensible". As a biology teacher, she gave an example where one who lives in England "would know exactly what a daffodil looks like". However, a Malaysian would have "probably never seen a daffodil, because it wouldn't ever grow in Malaysia". Therefore, she feels that "if that came up for the first time in the exam, that's just a silly question

[and] it's not fair". In addition, when "getting a particular textbook [which is] being printed and sold in the UK", "it costs twice the amount of money, and it takes six months to get it" here in Malaysia, "whereas if you were in the UK you could just get it in a week". CP feels that "things like that are a little bit frustrating".

CP regards the "very, very friendly" students as one of the main benefits of being a principal of an international school in Malaysia. She is confident that, when asking any of the staff working in the school, "they will [also] reply the best thing about the school is the students". This benefit has a great impact on CP, who used to work in a school "where the students sort of threatened you and sweared at you"; but "no one would do that here". The students in her current school are "very open", "very nice and respectful". They may be "naughty sometimes, but they're teenagers". CP added that "it's a really nice environment and my children are at the school here, and I think they're getting very much better and nicer education than they would if we were in the UK. So that is a nice surprise." The other main benefits CP shared include the "amazing" "diverse culture", the "most beautiful country", the "lovely", "beautiful site" and the "fantastic" "weather".

As for her main satisfactions, CP mentioned "the wonderful people" and the "beautiful environment" she works in. She also derives her satisfaction from helping students to "achieve their potential", which is much easier as compared to "a government school back in the UK" "because there are less barriers in the way". For example, many students in her current school are boarders and staff "have a lot of time with them". They are able to "help them in many, many ways" and the "teachers here are very, very good at giving out extra time to help them even more". The "class sizes are [also] not so big that teachers can't have one-on-one time with students". CP also shared that there is a culture in the school where "getting high grades is really good and it's cool, whereas in the UK it's quite the opposite". It is "not cool to do well at all; you might as well just try and drop from school and take drugs somewhere"!

Overview

CP is relatively new in her current position, less than two years, even though she has been working in the school for more than four years. During that span of four years, she has assumed two other senior leadership roles. She was recruited as the curriculum coordinator, promoted to the head of middle school, and finally changed to her current position as the head of senior school. It is evident that CP has faced a lot of challenges in her current role. Although there are positive changes recently, particularly in her role relationships with her superordinate and subordinates, they do not seem to have given CP much confidence in her career development in the school. She reported that she will stay in this school for not more than two years.

The next chapter provides a comparative analysis linked to the literature.

Chapter Eight: Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter discusses and analyses the themes arising from the findings of the survey and of the interviews conducted at the three case study schools, linked to insights from the literature. The themes, to be elaborated in the rest of this chapter, are:

- Origins and backgrounds of the principals
- Professional and educational backgrounds of the principals
- Recruitment and selection
- Preparation for principalship
- Roles, responsibilities and activities of the principals
- Satisfactions and benefits reported by the principals
- Difficulties facing the principals
- Stakeholder relationships with the principals
- Emergent themes: female principals, job titles and composition of staff and students

Origins and Backgrounds of the Principals

One of the aims of this study is to find out whether the origins of the principals of international schools in Malaysia play a significant role in the recruitment process. Research articles on the different aspects of recruitment of school principals are readily available, but those focusing on international schools are limited. Many are studies on recruitment of local, government or public, schools and are area or country specific. For example, the study carried out by Walker and Kwan (2012) focuses only on the recruitment and selection of the principals of the three out of four types of secondary schools in Hong Kong, excluding private and international schools. Similarly, the study by Connolly et. al. (2018) focuses on the recruitment of head teachers in general, for primary and secondary schools in Wales, while MacBeath (2009) focuses on the recruitment of school principals in Scotland. Lee and Mao (2023) carried out a review of 64 empirical literature studies on the recruitment and selection of school principals in the public schools of the United

States. For Whitaker (2003), the data relate to local schools from selected Western countries, not on international schools.

As those studies involve the recruitment of principals of government schools, one can safely assume that they are overwhelmingly local candidates. However, Kwan (2010) shares that other 'origins' might be in place in the selection of principals. Besides 'Generic Managerial Skills', 'Communication and Presentation Skills', and 'Experience and Credence', which are skills-based, another important selection criterion is 'Religious Affiliation and External Connection'. Kwan (2010:1859) explained that 'knowledge of a candidate's connection with, and involvement and performance in, affiliated religious bodies would seem to be a reliable alternative source of information'. She added that understanding that the candidate is 'from the same religious affiliation or school sponsoring body' gives assurances about 'continuity and stability' (Kwan, 2010:1859). The findings of her study link to consideration of the origins of international school principals in Malaysia and to the recruitment and selection process.

According to the Education Destination Malaysia (2021), there are more than 170 international schools in Malaysia, with most of them offering the British Curriculum. This is verified by Schooladvisor.my (2021) which displays a list of '136 British Curriculum Schools in Malaysia'. This implies that about 80% of the international schools in Malaysia cover the British Curriculum.

The present author's survey shows that almost half of the respondents have British heritage, with 38.2% stating that they were born in the United Kingdom (UK), 44.1% stating *British* as their nationality, 44.1% had their secondary education in the UK, and 50% studied the British curriculum in their secondary education. This indicates that the *origins* of the principals may have played an important part in their recruitment to an international school in Malaysia. The interviews with the superordinates of the three case study schools also support these data. Superordinate AS stated that the principal she is looking for needs to have a relevant educational background, such as having studied the British

curriculum. BS also mentioned that the candidate needs to have "obviously the knowledge", while CS stated that he "wanted someone who had knowledge of the curriculum in a secondary school".

However, it is significant to note that the great majority (88.2%) of the principals who responded to the online survey had never been a principal of a national/government school before they become the principal of an international school. This shows that, while having prior knowledge of the curriculum of the school to which they are being appointed is important, it is not necessary for them to have managed a school of the country of the curriculum offered.

Professional and Educational Backgrounds of the Principals

<u>Experience</u>

BS commented that having the required knowledge, skills and experience is "a given". This is further supported by the superordinates of the other two case study schools who commented that having relevant experience is a pre-requisite when they search for suitable candidates for principalship in their schools. Similarly, for the government schools in Hong Kong, Ng (2013) mentioned that, with reference to Pang (2007), before 2007, 'moving up the ranks' was the natural mode for one to become the principal, while completing a training programme was not mandatory at that time. This implies that the principals were vice-principals prior to becoming principals. The results from the present author's survey are consistent with this claim. More than half (61.7%) of the principals have at least five years of experience as a principal, and most (70.6%) of the principals had prior experience of being a vice principal or equivalent, implying that this is an important consideration when owners of international schools look for principals for their schools.

At the same time, it is necessary to reiterate that having the relevant experience can be considered as "a given". This is because literature on recruitment of principals seldom comments much on the required professional and educational

backgrounds of the candidates. The 'four-factor set of expectations', reported by Kwan (2012), shows that 'Knowledge and Experience' is ranked third, behind 'Generic and Managerial Skills', and 'Communication and Presentation Skills', and only more important than 'Religious Value Orientation'. Lee and Mao (2023), and Winter and Morgenthal (2002), comment that empirical research on recruitment of school leaders is limited.

Educational background

None of the interviewees mentioned whether the educational qualification of the principals played an important role in helping them to secure a job. However, with all the respondents to the online survey being graduates, and most (67.6%) having at least a master's degree, this may indicate the importance of having a relevant qualification.

A number of countries conduct training programmes for their prospective principals, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in England, the Certificate for Principalship in Hong Kong, the Principal Qualification Programme in Ontario and the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQEL) in Malaysia (Ng, 2017). While little is known about the qualifications needed to be an international school principal, there are some organisations which provide training or courses targeted at leaders working in this sector, such as the PTC (Principals' Training Center, 2021), AAIE Institute (Association for the Advancement of International Education, 2021) and ECIS (Educational Collaborative for International Schools, 2021). There is no 'academic research which systematically reviews such programmes', and the 'theoretical and empirical basis for these systems of principal accreditation remains unclear' (Bailey & Gibson, 2020:1008). That could be the reason why only 50% of the survey respondents had formal training before becoming a principal, implying that being formally trained is not a pre-requisite of their employment. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that some of the principal training programmes mentioned above allow the attendees to apply for credit exemptions towards a master's degree (Association for the Advancement of International Education, 2021; Principals'

Training Center, 2021). That might indicate the credibility, as well as the prestige, of the programmes offered by those training centres. Aspiring "non-trained" international school principals could consider taking up those courses.

Recruitment and Selection

The principals' superordinates in the three case study schools were directly involved in the recruitment of the principals, from drafting the criteria for potential candidates, to the final decision on the appointment of the principals. The steps they have taken are very similar to Hay Group's seven-stage recruitment, selection and appointment process, which includes *preparation*, *definition*, *attraction*, *selection*, *appointment*, *induction* and *evaluation* (Kwan & Walker, 2009; Walker & Kwan, 2012). The initial stages of *preparation* and *definition* are important as they not only allow the recruiters to 'identify and differentiate a viable from a non-viable applicant', they also enable the applicants to have a clearer understanding of what the 'hiring agencies are looking for' (Kwan & Walker, 2009:53). This is an important step. As Richardson et. al. (2016) commented, there would be difficulties in recruiting the right principals when job advertisements are not clear.

Table 8.1 summarises the expected qualities and qualifications of the candidates shared by the three superordinates. The two common traits mentioned by all three superordinates, i.e. leadership and communication, are in bold or underlined respectively in the table, thus emphasising the importance of having those two traits or qualities for principals.

Other than having leadership qualities, and the ability to be able to communicate well, the candidates also need to have experience of leading a school, preferably an international school. All these coincide with the comment made by Lee & Mao (2023:19) that 'leadership, the ability to build relationships, and experience, [are] the top three hiring criteria' and that 'superintendents value attributes such as communication skills and commitment when hiring principals' (Lee & Mao,

2023:20). Knowledge of the British curriculum was also expected by the superordinates of the case study schools. However, the superordinates have different preferences on the personal characteristics or soft skills they would expect from candidates, as shown in table 8.1.

AS	BS	CS
- Standard academic qualifications - **Experience of being the principal of a British school or an international school** - Ability to manage staff well - Flexible - Adaptable - Able to communicate well - Appropriate values, such as having integrity	- Have had experience at **leadership** level, preferably in other international schools - Have soft skills, such as interpersonal and communication skills - Knowledge in the pedagogy of learning and teaching	- Personal qualities, such as enthusiasm, energy, resilience, and humour - Understanding the nature of this senior position - Possess **leadership** traits - Sound knowledge of the curriculum in a secondary school - Have ideas and able to put them forward in an articulate way

Table 8.1: Superordinates expectations of the qualities and qualifications of a principal

In terms of the overall framework of the recruitment and selection processes, schools A and B are quite similar, as both principals were recruited externally. Both involved external agencies, either through a head hunter or recruitment agency (for school A), or job advertisement in an international education portal (for school B). This concurs with the survey findings, where 26.5% of the principals were headhunted and 44.1% applied for the position based on job advertisements. The other principals either responded to the school's website (2.9%) or applied by other means (26.5%).

Following the applications, there were shortlisting processes and Skype interviews before a few candidates were flown to Malaysia for the final interviews. According

to the survey findings, more than half (55.9% and 70.6%) of the principals had Skype and/or face-to-face interviews respectively. Most (75%) of the principals had to undergo more than one interview. This is consistent with Kwan and Walker's (2009:54) finding that 'interviews appear to be the most common, if not the only, mechanism used to select principals in Hong Kong'. In addition, when in Malaysia, there was a mixture of formal and informal interview sessions with a range of stakeholders, where the informal sessions were conversations over dinner and drinks. Those conversations were considered as part of the interview session too, as according to AP, it was the "most intense conversation" she had, even though the setting was "very, very informal".

The whole process, from application to being offered the job, took less than three months for most (77.4%) of the principals who responded to the survey. This is also what AP and BP experienced, especially in terms of the time it took for the interview panel to decide on making the job offer, which was relatively short. For AP, the whole process of face-to-face interviews to the position being offered and accepted, took only one day. Similarly, BP came for a three-day interview process, followed by BS taking about three days to submit his recommendations to the board of governors, before a job offer was presented "within a period of three to five days" (BS).

In contrast, for school C, the position was advertised from within and the whole recruitment and selection process was simplified and took an even shorter time to complete. There are advantages for internal appointments, such as 'familiarity', 'continuity', 'proven loyalty', 'established relationships' and 'values congruence' (Walker & Kwan, 2012:202). However, internal appointments are not a common practice as only two principals, out of the 34 respondents to the present author's survey, was promoted from within.

Preparation for Principalship

As noted earlier, a number of countries conduct training programmes for their school leaders to prepare them for their roles in the government schools. These include the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in England, the Certificate for Principalship in Hong Kong, the Principal Qualification Programme in Ontario, Canada, Development of Principals' Managerial Skills in Indonesia, and the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQEL) in Malaysia (Ng, 2017; Harris et. al., 2016).

On the contrary, as observed by Bailey and Gibson (2020:1008), 'little is known about how people become senior leaders of international schools' and 'there is very little written on preparation for the role of being an international school leader, or the attributes required for successful execution of the role'. There are only a few organisations which conduct training programmes for international school educators and leaders. One of them is the Principals' Training Center, which aims to provide 'unique professional development needs of practicing and aspiring principals, teachers, counsellors, admissions personnel and governance members in international schools worldwide' and creates standards for international school principals (Principals' Training Center, 2018). The other one is the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) which acknowledges the International Baccalaureate (IB) certificate in leadership practice and/or the IB advanced certificate in leadership research offered by some universities (Bailey & Gibson, 2020).

Similarly, Bush (2018) argues that principals are not sufficiently prepared in many countries. He proposes a three-phase concept of socialisation for principal preparation: professional socialisation, personal socialisation and organisational socialisation. Table 8.2 shows the preparedness, in terms of the three phases of socialisation, for the principals of the three case study schools.

	AP	BP	CP
Professional socialisation	High	Medium	Low
Personal socialisation	High	High	Medium
Organisational socialisation	Low	High	High

Table 8.2: Level of preparedness for the principals of the three case study schools

AP was perceived to be well prepared in terms of professional socialisation and personal socialisation because she has received formal principal training in the UK, has a master's degree and has been a principal for more than 10 years. She also held the roles of head of subject, head of department and vice-principal prior to becoming a principal. Her only disadvantage is in respect of organisational socialisation as she had no previous international school experience. BP is well prepared in the areas of personal socialisation and organisational socialisation as she has more than five years of experience as a principal in international schools, worked in a number of international schools, as well as having been in the roles of head of department, subject coordinator and vice-principal. Although she has a master's degree, and is pursuing her PhD, she has not undergone any formal principal training. CP is less well prepared, in terms of personal socialisation and professional socialisation. She was promoted to principalship from within the school and, although she has worked in a number of international schools before, she has only held the role of head of subject, head of department, curriculum coordinator and key stage coordinator. She has not even been a vice-principal before, a typical role prior to becoming a principal (Walker & Kwan, 2012). Furthermore, CP has not received any formal principal training and her highest qualification is a post graduate diploma. As an internal appointee, the advantage CP has in terms of organisational socialisation is the familiarity with the school culture, staff and school routines, which makes her being rated high in that aspect.

Roles, Responsibilities and Activities of the Principals

As the top leader of a school, the principal is in charge of most of, if not all, activities in the school. They are 'responsible for virtually everything' (Earley &

Bubb, 2013:790), including 'delivering agendas decided elsewhere but for which they were nonetheless held to account', (Earley & Bubb, 2013:784). The three case study school principals have the same sentiments. Although the expectations about their role and responsibilities are mainly outlined in their job descriptions, all of them feel that what they are required to do goes beyond these formal requirements. As Principal BP has aptly put it, one can "never quite prepare for all the challenges that come up, all the difficulties, all the situations" but there are "no surprises in terms of the work that [she does] on a daily basis from what [she] was expecting from the job description".

Although the categories and activities in table 2.1 in the literature review chapter are based on government/national school principals, the international school principals who were interviewed for the present research reported similar activities. For example, the principals commented that most of their time during school hours is spent in interacting with people. This could be through scheduled meetings with individuals or groups, which is the most regular activity that occurs every day. However, it is noteworthy that, as the organisational structure varies from school to school, the regular meetings in the three schools differ, except that all three principals hold one-to-one weekly meetings with the SLT members who report to them directly. At the same time, the principals could have scheduled or unscheduled interactions with the students, during their walkabouts or through covering lessons. The principals also need to meet parents. These main activities of the principals are substantiated by their superordinates and SLT members.

All participants in the present research reported that the three principals' activities follow a certain routine, either daily or at least weekly. However, the principals also acknowledged that the routine is just a structure or "framework" and they have to make changes when circumstances arise which require their immediate attention, especially when the incidents involve parents or students. Some participants had their regular meetings with their principals cancelled or postponed as a result. This concurs with Earley and Bubb's (2013:793) observation that 'no day was typical'. Therefore, the principals need to exercise

flexibility in amending their appointments or 'to-do' list for the day, where necessary.

Satisfaction and Benefits Reported by the Principals

Suleman and Hussain (2018) define job satisfaction as 'a multifaceted and complex variable that can describe different things to different people' (2018: 29). Job satisfaction is a positive feeling and emotion towards one's job (Bauer & Silver, 2018; Federici, 2013; Liu & Bellibas, 2018). People who are satisfied with their jobs are motivated (Graham & Messner, 1998), which explains why 'satisfied employees generally perform at higher levels than their dissatisfied counterparts' (Friedman et. al., 2008: 600).

According to Bristow et. al. (2007), there is ample literature on the wellbeing, work-life balance, stress levels and job satisfaction of teachers. There is less evidence on these issues for principals, although there are some important sources published in the last decade. These include job satisfaction of principals in public schools in USA (Bauer & Silver, 2018; Chang et. al., 2015; Friedman et.al., 2008), Norway (Federici, 2013), Pakistan (Suleman & Hussain, 2018) and Israel (Oplatka & Mimon, 2008). However, these all focus on the principals of public schools. There is no major published research on the job satisfaction or benefits of international school principals.

Research on the job satisfaction of teachers is extensive and include many different aspects. Those related to students include the positive relationship between the job satisfaction of teachers and their perceived relationship with the students (Lavy & Bocker, 2018), or more specifically the job satisfaction of veteran teachers with reference to their relationship with the students (Admiraal et. al., 2019; Veldman et. al., 2016), and the impact of student, school and teacher factors on the job satisfaction of teachers (Wang et. al., 2020). All cite students as the teachers' source of job satisfaction. The findings from this current study produce similar results, as more than a quarter of the responses mentioned

students as one of the greatest sources of satisfaction, as shown in figure 4.10. This shows that, even though the principals have less direct contact with students, they are still a source of job satisfaction. This is also reported by principals of public schools (Dicke et. al., 2020; Friedman et. al., 2008).

Difficulties Reported by the Principals

There is limited literature on the 'difficulties' or 'problems' faced by school principals (García-Rodríguez et. al., 2020; Saidun et. al., 2015). However, there are more sources focused on 'challenges' (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Gibson & Bailey, 2021; Gómez-Hurtado et.al., 2018; Hammad & Shah, 2018; Hult et. al., 2016; Jones et. al., 2015; Tirri et. al., 2021;). In view of that, the terms 'difficulties', 'problems' and 'challenges' will be used interchangeably in this section of the thesis.

Staff issues were the most frequently cited difficulties faced by the survey principals and by those who were interviewed for this research. However, it is rarely highlighted as a main issue in other literature on international school principals. Only Bailey and Gibson (2020) briefly mention the necessity to maintain the demographic composition of the staff, linked to other aspects of the school, which include the 'cultural make-up of the students', 'language issues' and 'special educational needs' (Bailey & Gibson, 2020:1019).

The second main set of difficulties mentioned by the international school principals in Malaysia, based on this study, relate to parents. This appears to be a challenging area for both principals of public schools (García-Rodríguez et. al., 2020; Hult et. al., 2016; Tirri et. al., 2021) and international schools (Benson, 2011; Hammad & Shah, 2018). The difficulties in dealing with parents are varied, especially in the context of an international school, mainly due to the different types of international school. The survey responses and interviews indicate that parents have higher expectations in international schools. Similarly, Hammad and Shah (2018) found that some parents compare the international schools in Saudi Arabia unfavourably with those situated in other countries. Hammad and Shah

(2018) felt that parents have not realised that the schools are still under the purview of the education ministry. In some other international schools, 'too much parental influence' is a challenge for the principals and cited by them as one of the reasons to leave a school (Benson, 2011). Even for some national schools, principals regard having to deal with a large volume of parental correspondence as a chore as these are usually negative in nature and also require their immediate attention (Hult et. al., 2016).

The third most mentioned difficulty faced by the international school principals in this study relates to cultural differences, as mentioned by principals 3, 17 and 27, for example. Bailey and Gibson (2020) argue that the most direct impact is on the relationship between the different stakeholders and the working culture of the school. As principal CP elaborated, cultural differences could lead to miscommunication as different people could interpret the same term differently, even when the same language is used. However, the cultural differences experienced by the international school principals in Malaysia are still considered to be manageable, as CP even claimed that she loves it and it is one of the reasons for her opting to "work internationally". In some other countries, cultural differences could even impact on how the school can be run, due to instructions from the education ministry of the host country, such as those international schools in Saudi Arabia that are required to practise gender segregation and Saudization (Hammad & Shah, 2018). It is noteworthy also that cultural diversity could be a challenge for national schools, due to migration (Gómez-Hurtado et.al., 2018).

The other difficulties mentioned by the international school principals in Malaysia include issues with the owner and/or the board, and financial aspects. As most of the international schools in Malaysia are privately owned, and 'for-profit', meeting the financial goals set by the owners and/or board members is a major challenge for principals. This echoes the findings of Benson (2011), Bailey and Gibson (2020), and Gibson and Bailey (2021). More than half of respondents to the survey conducted by Benson (2011) stated that they left their previous

international schools because of the school board. However, there are exceptions, such as principal AP, who needs to "spend very little time on finance or resource matters, very very little time" and she claims to have an excellent relationship with her superordinate and owner of the school.

Stakeholder Relationships with the Principals

The table below shows the average rating of the role relationships the different case study principals appeared to have with the different stakeholders, as claimed by 15 interviewees of the three case study schools.

Role relationships with	School A	School B	School C
superordinate	1.6	1	1.6
SLT members	1.2	1	1.8
department heads	2.0	1.7	1.9
teachers	2.1	1.8	2.0
non-teaching staff	1.7	1.6	1.9
parents	1.2	1.8	1.4
students	1.6	1.8	1.9
Average	1.62	1.53	1.79

(Note: 1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Table 8.3: Average rating of the role relationships the different case study principals appeared to have with the different stakeholders

There is no apparent pattern or relationship in the scores given by the different interviewees among the different case study schools. This could be because that the ratings were given solely based on the individuals' personal feelings, emotions, experience, opinions and observations, as well as their interpretation of what is good or bad, which can vary greatly from person to person and subjects to the context they are in. Based on table 8.3, it is noted that the 'best' role relationship may not be with the person(s) closest to the principal in terms of formal roles. For example, AP was rated as having the best relationships with the

SLT members and parents (with a score of 1.2), whereas BP's relationship with her superordinates and SLT member is the best (with a score of 1), and CP is rated highest in her relationship with the parents (with a score of 1.4). In addition, the value of the rating does not necessarily imply that the relationship of the principal in one school is much better/worse than that of the principal of the other school. For example, the average rating of the role relationship BP has with her SLT members is rated as 1. However, that does not necessarily mean that CP's role relationship with her SLT members is 80% worse, when the average rating it has received is 1.8.

Despite the number of variables which could affect the ratings, some implications can be drawn from the data. For example, the role relationship rating the three principals have with the teachers is the least favourable. The reason could be because the teachers are at least a level away from the principals in the school's reporting structure, as compared to the SLT members or the department heads, and the principals do not line manage the teachers directly. The other contributing factor for the relatively lower role relationship rating with the teachers is that, when the principals have one-to-one sessions with the individual teachers, they are usually those who are underperforming, resulting in difficult conversations to have, difficult situations to face and difficult decisions to make. All three principals also claimed that they have to make a deliberate effort to connect with the individual teachers, such as making a list of teachers to speak to, or being out of the office and walking around during lunch and break time, to have a casual chat with the teachers.

In addition to the above, attempts were made to determine if the relationship ratings affect the number of years the principals feel that they will remain in their current schools. This is based on the assumption that, when principals maintain good relationship with the respective stakeholders, there is a tendency for them to want to stay in a school longer, as their productivity may have increased as a result (Fonseca et. al., 1997).

The average score of the role relationships the principals have with their respective stakeholders from the survey is tabulated against the number of years the principals intend to remain in their current school, as shown in table 8.4:

Years to remain in current school	Average ratings on relationship with							
	Superordinates	SLT members	Department heads	Teachers	Non-teaching staff	Parents	Students	Overall Average
<2 years	2.82	2.88	3.12	3.00	2.94	2.94	2.82	*2.93*
3-5 years	2.67	2.67	2.88	3.33	2.78	3.11	3.00	*2.92*
5-10 years	2.00	1.33	2.25	2.75	2.25	2.50	2.50	*2.26*
>10 years	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.00	4.00	3.50	*3.50*
Not sure	3.33	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.00	2.33	*2.43*
Average	*2.77*	*2.67*	*2.91*	*3.03*	*2.77*	*2.91*	*2.83*	

(Note: 1=Excellent; 2=Good; 3=Average; 4=Poor; 5=Very Poor)

Table 8.4: Average score of relationships the principals have with the respective stakeholders against the number of years the principals intend to remain in their current school

Table 8.4 indicates that there is no significant link between highly-rated relationships with the different stakeholders and principals' intentions to remain in their school. This could be, as argued by Cranston (2012: 51), that it is difficult 'to understand the complex web of relationships that exist in schools'. Moreover, actual tenure may differ from that mentioned in the survey, with principals remaining in post for longer or shorter periods than previously indicated.

However, the findings in table 8.4 concurred with the ratings of the three case study schools where the relationship rating with the SLT members is the highest, at 2.67, where the relationship rating with teachers is the lowest, at 3.03. This supported the claim made above that the SLT members in general have better

role relationships with the principals as they work more closely with them, compared to the teachers who are at least one level away from the principals.

There is very limited research on the relationships of principals with stakeholders. Those sources that do address such relationships tend to focus on the notion of trust. Trust is commonly mentioned as the central issue affecting the professional relationship of the principals with the teachers (Moye & Henkin, 2005; Price, 2012; Price, 2015) and with other stakeholders (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Walker et. al, 2011).

Emergent Themes

<u>Female principals</u>

Sanderson (2015:330) suggests that 'traditional gender roles, and associated pressures and expectations, remain a significant barrier for women leaders in international schools'. This claim is supported by the data provided by Moreau et. al. (2005) who found that men have 3.1 times higher chances of becoming a nursery and primary school principal, and 2.6 times higher chances in becoming a secondary school principal, in public schools. However, this does not apply to the case study principals, as all of them are females. This could be linked to recent trends in some countries. As reported by McGrath (2020), there is a rapid increase in the number of female principals in the government schools in New South Wales, Australia, over the past 20 years. The percentage of female principals in secondary schools has increased from 22.0% in 1998 to 48.4% in 2018. Similarly, MacKinnon (2021) cites that, in 2013, the number of female principals in Ontario, Canada has 'increased to 65.5%' and a similar trend is taking place in Hong Kong, where there is a 'rising number of women taking up the role of principal' (MacKinnon, 2021:34). Although it might just be a coincidence, these trends may have an influence on why all the principals of the three case study schools are female. This finding cannot be confirmed by the survey, as the researcher did not ask respondents to state their gender.

International schools use different job titles to designate the person who heads the school. Robert and Mancuso's (2014) review of 84 job advertisements on international school principals, found that 77 mentioned 'School Head', three mentioned both 'a School Head and a Principal', while four mentioned 'a Principal'. A principal could also be known as the 'Head, Head of School, Headmaster' and 'School Head' (Keller, 2015). This difference in job title is apparent in the three case study schools, where two schools use the title "Principal" and the third one uses the title "Head of Senior School". In addition, it is noteworthy that all three principals' superordinates have different job titles, which are CEO (for AS), Head of School (for BS) and Principal (for CS). Keller (2015:902) mentioned that, while there 'may be different titles for the same job, often these positions may differ significantly according to context'. This further supports the claim that it is not easy to categorise the leadership and management of an international school (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018).

Composition of staff and students

There is great variety in the types of international schools (Bates, 2012; Keller, 2015; MacKenzie, 2010). James & Sheppard (2014) have drawn up a four-category model based on ownership, i.e. 'private' or 'community', and purpose, i.e. 'for-profit' or 'not-for-profit'. School A falls under the 'private' and 'for-profit' school, while schools B and C belong to the 'private' and 'not-for-profit' category, as demonstrated in table 8.5.

	Categories	School A	School B	School C
Ownership	Private	✓	✓	✓
	Community	-	-	-
Purpose	For-profit	✓	-	-
	Not-for-profit	-	✓	✓

Table 8.5: Classification of the three case-study schools based on the four-category model by James & Sheppard (2014)

The fees charged by schools have a direct impact on the resources available, including the type of teachers employed by the school. Lee and Wright (2016), and Bunnell and Atkinson (2020), regard schools which charge premium school fees, as the 'elite schools', These schools also have more flexibility and ability to provide better facilities, better activities and even better trained teachers. This observation can also be made in the three case study schools. Table 8.6 links fee levels to student and staff composition.

	School A	School B	School C
Expatriate teaching staff	50%	92%	40%
Local teaching staff	50%	8%	60%
International students	20%	60%	15%
Malaysian students	80%	40%	85%
School fees charged *(source: school websites)*	Almost same as school C	50% more than school A or C	Almost same as school A

Table 8.6: Composition of teaching staff and students, and fee levels, at the three case-study schools

Table 8.6 indicates the connection between the fees charged by each case study school and the composition of teaching staff. As a 'private' and 'for-profit' school, with mainly Malaysian students, school A only has 50% expatriate teaching staff. The same could be said of school C, which charges almost the same school fees as school A, only has 40% expatriate staff, even though it is a 'private' and 'not-for-profit' school. In contrast, school B charges fees 50% higher than the other two schools, and can afford to pay for more expatriate teaching staff. Having more expatriate teachers could be one of the reasons why it is able to attract more international students to the school. This is also the preference of the parents who want their children to be taught by teachers who are 'western-trained English speaking' and 'preferably with international curriculum and examination experience' (Canterford 2003:55). This finding is similar to the situation in Indonesia where a premium international school mainly recruits administrators

and teachers from 'white-dominant Anglophone countries such as the US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand' (Tanu, 2016:436).

Overview

This chapter discusses the eight themes based on the findings received from the electronic surveys and case study interviews. The eight themes contain information which is pertinent to aspiring international school principals who are seeking employment in international schools in Malaysia. Some of the findings substantiate what is known from previous research and literature. However, there is limited research on leadership in international schools, so comparisons had to be made with literature on government or public schools. Despite this limitation, some of the research findings are similar to those in the existing literature. In addition, three main themes, female principals, job titles, and composition of staff and students, provide important new insights about international schools in Malaysia.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Introduction

In this final chapter of the thesis, the research questions will be addressed, based on the findings from the electronic survey and the interviews conducted in the three case study schools. Subsequently, there is a discussion on the significance of the study and its contribution towards a better understanding of the role of international school principals in Malaysia.

Addressing the Research Questions

1. *What are the origins and professional backgrounds of international school principals in Malaysia?*

Four questions were asked in the electronic survey to find out from the principals if their origins had a significant role to play in securing their employment. They shared information about the country they were born in, their nationality, the country where they received their secondary education and the type of curriculum studied. Almost half of the respondents are British, and close to three quarters have western heritage. This importance of personal and professional backgrounds is further supported by the superordinates of the three case study principals, who specify that having relevant heritage is one of the basic selection requirements. AS shared that they ensure that they have "all the boxes ticked" before interviewing the candidate, including "principal of a British school", while CS stated "knowledge of the curriculum in a secondary school" as a pre-requisite.

In terms of professional background, almost three quarters (70.6%) of the principals were vice-principals or equivalent before they became principals. Therefore, having prior leadership experience appears to be an important consideration in the appointment of these principals, supported also by the comments of the interviewed superordinates. For example, AS shared that she expects the principal candidates to not only have experience as a principal, but preferably to have been "a principal of a British school, or even an international school". A similar emphasis from CS is that it is important for principal candidates

to "understand the nature of the senior position in an international school" as the person needs to "be able to convince staff and take them with them". All three principals of the case study schools also feel that their relevant origins and professional backgrounds helped them in securing their position. AP shares that, despite her not having any "previous international background", she was able to convince her superordinate that she is the right person, not only because she is British, and has experience leading a British school in the UK, but also because of the many years running a British school "effectively". Both BP and CP concur that being British, and having leadership experience in their previous jobs in other international schools, helped them in securing their current jobs.

Principals' length of experience in education is another important factor, as almost half (47.1 %) of the principals have been working in education for between 21-30 years, and almost all (97.1%) of the principals have done so for at least 10 years. This is supported by BS who states that, primarily, the principal candidates need to have "experience at leadership level", and "preferably in other international schools".

Overall, the findings indicate that having relevant origins and professional backgrounds are important criteria for appointment as a principal. Having British heritage is an advantage for international school principals in Malaysia, as almost all international schools in Malaysia use the English language as the main medium of communication and teaching, with most of them teaching the British curriculum.

2. *What is the relationship between principals' origins and professional backgrounds, and their recruitment and selection?*

There are some significant differences in the three case study schools, as well as among the 34 survey principals, in terms of the business purpose of the school (for-profit or non-for-profit), fee levels, and composition (international or local) of the teachers and students. However, despite these differences, when the schools recruit principals externally, the procedure is very similar. Case study school A

engages a headhunter while school B advertises the position in the Times Education Supplement (a site for education professionals). This concurs with the findings of the online survey where the two most popular ways for recruitment of principals are advertisements in job recruitment sites (44.1%) and use of headhunters (26.5%). The recruitment of CP was rather different, as it consists of two phases. She was recruited externally for the position of curriculum coordinator and then promoted internally to her current position.

In addition, with close to three quarters of the survey respondents having western heritage, supported by the three superordinates of the three case study schools, who specified that having relevant heritage is one of the basic selection requirements, this indicates that principals' origins and professional backgrounds influenced their recruitment and selection. One of them, AS, even specified that the candidates need to fulfil all the basic requirements, such as understanding the British curriculum and having experience as the head teacher at a British school, before they can be shortlisted for the interview. The principals of the three case study schools are also confident that their relevant origins and appropriate professional backgrounds helped them in securing the positions in their current schools.

3. *How, and to what extent, were the international school principals in Malaysia prepared for the principal role?*

Almost half (44.1%) of the principals stated that they applied for the job after seeing advertisements on job recruitment sites on the internet, or through newspaper or magazine advertisements. This could imply that they felt prepared to work in Malaysia, as they would not have applied for the job, as also noted by AP. Both BP and CP actively researched online about the schools they have applied to work in, including location and strategic plans. BP obtained more information from her ex-colleagues in Hong Kong about whether they had other information about the school and its development. In addition, BP received an information pack from the school, which allowed her to have a better understanding of the school, and feeling "fairly sure that it was somewhere [she] wanted to come and

work". It was an even easier choice for CP as she has been to Malaysia and "knew about Malaysia".

The process from application to job offer was completed in less than three months for most (77.4%) survey respondents. This means that the principals needed to have carried out sufficient research about the school, and even the country, before they applied for the position, as there would not have been much time for them to do so when the job offer was made. Some of them were expected to make this important decision within a very short span of time, including immediately after their face-to face interviews in the school. AP, for example, had her meetings and interviews with the key personnel of the school, given a job offer package, and contract signature, all taking place on the same day!

During the on-site interviews with their prospective employers, the principals used the opportunity to find out relevant further information, on the "values" (AP), "culture" (BP) and "work[ing] together with regards to academic line management" (CP).

More broadly, in terms of becoming prepared professionally for the principal role, almost half (47.1 %) of the survey principals indicated that they have been working in education for between 21-30 years, with most (70.6%) having been vice-principals or equivalent before they became principals. This prior experience helped them in preparation for their current appointments, for example, in respect of general staff management or the day-to-day operation of the school.

In addition, many (67.6%) have at least a master's degree and half (50%) stated that they had received formal training, such as the English National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme, before becoming a principal. The knowledge gained from these professional courses were perceived as helpful preparation for their headship role. However, it is not clear whether the principals had taken the courses to prepare themselves specifically for their appointments in international schools. They may have been taken as part of the preparation to

be a headteacher in the UK, although NPQH is no longer a mandatory requirement for headship in England.

4.   What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?
The main data available to address this question are the interviews with the 15 participants at the three case study schools.

All three superordinates shared that the main responsibility of the principals is to oversee the daily operations of the school, especially in the aspects involving staff and students, such as the "line management of staff" and "looking after the wellbeing and discipline of the students" (CS), "high quality learning opportunities and outcome for the students" and "working closely with staff" (BS), and to "make sure that the students get the kind of education that they deserve" (AS). In addition, the principals are expected to take part in the strategic planning of the schools, and as CS puts it, "contribute to the more strategic overview of the school".

All three principals of the case study schools concurred that they follow a certain weekly, if not daily, routine. The most common scheduled activity mentioned by all three principals was meetings, especially regular weekly meetings with the senior leaders of the school. This was noted by all nine direct subordinates of the three principals, who also mentioned meetings as one of the "obligations that are very visible" (BSLT2). The other common activities mentioned by all three principals include visiting lessons and interacting with staff, in their weekly routine. However, both AP and BP added that they needed to be "ready to change it because one of the biggest things about the life of a principal is the unpredictable" (AP). In addition, when asked to comment about what they actually do, and to compare it to their job description, all three could not remember exactly what was stated in the job description. Only one had it stored in her laptop (which took some time to retrieve), one was unable to retrieve it, while the third principal did not remember having received one! However, they believed that their activities were not too different from their job descriptions,

especially as they are phrased generically. According to CP, "if you write a job description that's broad brush enough, it means it can cover anything." It is also noteworthy that both AP and BP specifically mentioned that they have to spend a lot of time on recruitment, even though it may only happen once or twice a year.

None of the superordinates and principals of the three case study schools have direct experience of working in a Malaysian government school. Therefore, when asked to compare the activities between a government school principal and an international school principal in Malaysia, their comments are solely based on their personal opinions, or on their experience in a government school in the UK. Two themes which emerged are autonomy and attention to students' behavioural problems. As compared to a UK government school, which is "highly regulated by the government", CS said that there is "much more flexibility and freedom" in the international school, supported by BS, who added that they "don't report to an overarching Department of Education". Both AP and CP cited that behavioural problems took up a lot of their time when they were working in government schools in the UK. As there "aren't so many behavioural problems" in her current school, AP shared that she is able to spend more time on the "quality assurance of what went on in the classroom".

5. *What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?*

Having good role relationships with different stakeholders of the school is viewed by some participants as important, as that allows the principals to carry out their duties faster and more easily. For the purpose of triangulation, the ratings given by the principals of the three case study schools on their role relationships with the different stakeholders are compared against those given by their respective superordinates and SLT members. This also helps to establish how well the superordinates and subordinates know their principals. Table 9.1 tabulates and compares the role relationship ratings given by the principal with the average ratings given by their superordinates and SLT members for the three case study schools. The value in the last column is obtained by subtracting the average rating

of the superordinates and SLT members from the corresponding rating by the principal.

	Role relationships with	Principal	Average ratings by superordinates and SLT members	Differences
School A	superordinate	2	1.5	0.5
	SLT members	1	1.25	(-)0.25
	department heads	2	2	0
	teachers	3	1.875	1.125
	non-teaching staff	2	1.625	0.375
	parents	1	1.25	(-)0.25
	students	2	1.5	0.5
School B	superordinate	1	1	0
	SLT members	1	1	0
	department heads	2	1.375	0.625
	teachers	2	1.5	0.5
	non-teaching staff	2	1.5	0.5
	parents	2	1.75	0.25
	students	2	1.75	0.25
School C	superordinate	1	1.75	(-)0.75
	SLT members	1	2	(-)1
	department heads	1	2.125	(-)1.125
	teachers	2	2	0
	non-teaching staff	2	1.875	0.125
	parents	2	1.25	0.75
	students	1	2.125	(-)1.125

(Note: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor)

Table 9.1: Comparison between the role relationship ratings given by the principal and the average ratings given by their superordinates and SLT members

If the principals have close and favourable role relationships with their superordinates and their SLT members, the ratings given by both parties should be very similar, based on the assumption that they would know each other very well. Table 9.1 shows that the ratings given by AP and BP, about their role relationships with their superordinates and SLT members, are very similar to those given by the other participants, especially for school B where all of them rated their mutual relationships as excellent. This high level of understanding is further verified by the ratings with the other stakeholders, where the differences in the ratings given by AP and BP, as compared to the ones given by their superordinates and SLT members, are small (mostly less than one).

However, for school C, the difference in the rating given by CP on her role relationship with her SLT members is one, i.e., "Excellent", but her SLT members feel that it is *only* "Good", indicating that perceptions are significantly different, unlike schools A and B. This is further reflected in the relatively greater differences in the role relationship ratings for the other stakeholders given by CP and her superordinate and SLT members, when compared with those for schools A and B. For example, CP rates her relationship with the department heads and students as "Excellent", i.e. a score of "1". However, according to her superordinate and SLT members, her relationship with the department heads and students is not even "Good" (which is represented by a rating of "2"), as the average rating given by them is "2.125".

Two reasons contributed to this discrepancy between CP and her SLT members. First, the team is still trying to work within a relatively new organisational structure, implemented two years before the field work, resulting in "an unusual dynamic" (CSLT1). As a result of the new structure, CSLT2's reporting officer was changed to CP, barely one year after joining the school. This disrupted the plans CSLT2 had made with his previous reporting officer, who was involved in his recruitment and interview, while CP was not. The reporting officer of CSLT3 was also changed from CS to CP, under the new structure and within the same year. Next, trust has yet to be fully built between CP and her SLT members. This was

reflected during the interviews, especially with CSLT1 and CSLT3, who required reassurance from me during our conversations that both CS and CP would not know the content and their identity will remain anonymous, despite having been informed about that before the start of the interviews.

The top two most frequently identified difficulties stated by the survey participants are related to staff and parents. Table 9.2 shows whether such issues affect the survey principals' role relationships with the respective stakeholders, especially with staff and parents.

	Ratings						
Stakeholders	*1*	*2*	*1&2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*4&5*
Superordinate	23%	23%	46%	21%	12%	21%	33%
SLT members	38%	19%	57%	6%	9%	28%	37%
department heads	12%	43%	55%	3%	21%	21%	42%
Teachers	18%	29%	47%	9%	18%	26%	44%
non-teaching staff	27%	29%	56%	0%	26%	18%	44%
Parents	26%	21%	47%	9%	21%	23%	44%
Students	23%	29%	52%	3%	24%	21%	45%

(Note: 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Average, 4=Poor and 5=Very Poor)

Table 9.2: Compilation of role relationship ratings from the electronic survey

Table 9.2 shows that the percentage of those who rated relationships as 1&2 (good to excellent) are more than that for 4&5 (poor or very poor) for staff (comprising SLT members, department heads, teachers, and non-teaching staff) and parents. This suggests that, while the principals may feel that dealing with the staff and parents is challenging, this does not necessary mean that their role relationships with them are poor. This could be because only a slight majority (54.5 %) of those staff issues are related to the performance of the teachers, such as "underperformance", "poor work ethic", "less trained staff", "absenteeism"

and "teachers' attitude". The rest are related to staff recruitment and retention, while one principal mentioned "staff development".

Most of the superordinates and subordinates of the case study schools also feel that their principals have good relationships with the staff, even though the relationship may be "a little bit artificial" (BSLT1) and the teachers "may not have as much understanding of the need as a SLT would" (AS). The teachers could even be "moan[ing] about the principal all the time" (ASLT3). However, they still feel that their principals are positive in a number of ways, "a good role model" (BSLT3), "does not shy away from difficulties" (BSLT2), "give people ample time to settle in" (ASLT2) and "communicates very well to the team" (CSLT3).

Similarly, the relationship with the parents is considered good, as the principals are usually the person to convey good news to the parents and the parents "are welcomed here into the school" (ASLT1). Even if the principals need to meet parents regarding issues with their children, those meetings are "conducted very well" (CS) and the principals "can say that to the parents in a way that they still remain on board" (CSLT2).

6. *What is the balance between professional and generic aspects of principal leadership in Malaysian international schools?*

All three case study principals commented that they do not need to balance professional and generic aspects as they can focus almost all their time on the professional aspect of their job. They are able to focus "predominantly about learning and teacher and student welfare and well-being" (BP) as they have "people doing all of those [generic aspects of] things" (AP), or at the most, a "small percentage" of time on "the financial stuff" (CP).

It is noteworthy that despite not having to spend much of their time on the generic aspects of their role, both AP and BP specified that they are directly involved in the recruitment of teachers which requires them to travel to the UK and that takes up a substantial amount of their time each year.

Significance and Contribution of the Study

<u>Contextual and methodological significance</u>

With the increasing popularity of international school education around the world, the number of international schools has increased over the years (Matsuyama, 2022; Maxwell, 2016; Nasa & Pilay, 2017; The Star Online, 2017). While the number of studies on international schools has also increased in recent years, those focusing on leadership are limited (Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Gibson & Bailey 2021), especially those specific to Malaysia (Adams & Velarde, 2021; Javadi et al., 2017; Noman et al., 2018). Those articles which focus mainly on principals are even less common. For example, Javadi et al. (2017) target middle leaders, while Velarde's (2017) research on 'school leaders' includes the principals, heads of department and senior leaders. Velarde and Faizal (2019) focused on teacher perceptions of their school leaders. The present study, therefore, is a substantial addition to the existing knowledge on the roles of international secondary school principals in Malaysia, as there is direct evidence from such principals from both the online survey and the face-to-face interviews.

In addition, previous research on international schools in Malaysia usually adopted a qualitative approach, using interviews as the main method of data collection (Adams & Velarde, 2021; Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Bailey & Gibson, 2021; Gibson & Bailey, 2021; Javadi et. al., 2017; Velarde, 2017; Velarde & Faizal, 2019). This study differs in adopting a sequential mixed methods approach, beginning with an electronic online survey, followed by face-to-face interviews. The survey adopted a 100% sample, sent to all 109 international school principals in Malaysia, based on the *Education Destination Malaysia: Guide to International & Private Schools 2016-2017 Edition*, with a response rate of 31.2%. The number of participants for the second phase of data collection is also noteworthy as 15 interviewees were involved, whereas other studies included fewer participants, such as three (Adams & Velarde, 2021), six (Velarde, 2017), 12 (Javadi et. al., 2017; Bailey & Gibson, 2020; Gibson & Bailey, 2021; Bailey & Gibson, 2021) or 13 (Velarde & Faizal, 2019).

Another aspect of methodological significance of this study is the involvement of participants at different levels in the three case studies. Besides the principals of the case study schools, their superordinates and subordinates also participated. This mode of person triangulation (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005) improves the credibility of the information shared by the principals from different perspectives, as triangulation provides 'consistency in the evidence provided' (Sridharan, 2021:455).

Theoretical significance

This section discusses the theoretical significance of the research. The three themes addressed are tenure, preference for western principals, and cultural intelligence.

Tenure

Research which focuses solely on the turnover of international school teachers is readily available (Bunnell & Poole, 2021; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). Similarly, there are a number of research articles on retention of international school teachers (Chandler, 2010; Fong, 2018; Holmyard, 2016; Kartika & Purba, 2018; Mancuso et. al., 2010). There are also doctoral dissertations which investigate the turnover of international school teachers (Dajani, 2014; Odland, 2007).

Comparatively, there are very few articles on mobility, turnover or retention of international school principals. Benson (2011) has one well cited article, which investigates the turnover of 87 'chief administrators' in international schools. Similarly, Gomez (2017:14) examined the factors which influence the turnover of both teachers and administrators, defining administrators as the 'person[s] directly in charge of students, staff, [and] teachers' of international schools. These are mostly principals. He found that the main categories related to turnover of the principals include personal factors, professional advancement, host country characteristics and senior management. Most of these findings concur with those of Benson (2011) who found that the main reasons for the departure of principals in international schools were related to school boards and career development.

The data from my study confirm some of Benson's and Gomez's findings, as almost three quarters of the survey respondents stated personal challenges as the reason for accepting the appointment in their current school. This is also highlighted by Benson (2011:100) who said that the 'need for a new challenge' was a common theme in his survey. However, the emphasis on the school board or senior management as a factor influencing the departure of principals by Benson and Gomez is barely reflected in my study as fewer than 10% selected 'push factor from the previous school' and no one mentioned the school board or senior management. This means that most of my survey respondents had not left their previous schools because they were unhappy with the school, i.e., 'push factor from the previous school', or the school board or senior management. In contrast, the pull factors played a significant role for the survey respondents in deciding to take up the appointment in Malaysia, such as attractive salary, school reputation, location, and desire to work abroad.

However, half the survey respondents foresaw leaving their current schools in less than two years. Assuming that these respondents belong to the same group of principals who have been with the school for less than three years (67.7% of them), this implies that 50.0% of the survey respondents' tenure with their schools are less than five years. This is slightly more than the average tenure found by Benson (2011) which is 3.8 years but less than that by Gomez (2017), who found that 60.87% of his survey respondents worked in their previous school for more than five years. The discrepancy in figures from the three studies could be due to the difference in context, as the data by Benson (2011) was obtained from members of Council of International Schools (CIS), or European Council of International Schools (ECIS), whereas the survey respondents to Gomez (2017) are related to the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE). My research findings provide an additional perspective from the international school principals in Malaysia, reinforcing the limited tenure of international school principals and providing context-specific data to underpin this theory.

A culturally diverse environment is a common feature of international schools, with teachers and students from different cultural backgrounds. However, the principals are usually from the western countries only and are mainly "white". This could be due to parental preferences, resulting in 'a simple matter of supply and demand' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021:3). Therefore, schools are proud to showcase their white principals, and thus 'marketing 'British*ness*'' (Gibson & Bailey, 2022:6), as also shown in Malaysian international schools' websites. This form of 'educational marketing' (Koh & Sin, 2022:666) is appealing to parents as some of them send their children to the international schools to 'buy into a certain form of cultural capital' (Bunnell & Atkinson, 2020:263). Parents may also equate expatriates to westerners. Filipino teachers working in Malaysian international schools (Koh & Sin, 2022), or in Indonesia (Lowe et. al., 2016), who are technically expat teachers, may be doubted by parents on their subject competency and treated as local teachers (Koh & Sin, 2022).

The preference for western principals can also be observed from the six case study schools of Gardner-McTaggart (2021) where, despite the students being highly diverse, from 50 to 104 nations, the leadership team was 'all white', with the teachers 'mostly white'. This is supported by my survey results, where only a quarter of the principals (26.5%) are Malaysians, with the rest being British, Canadians, Americans, Australians and Swedish. There are also only two Malaysians out of 15 senior leaders involved in my case study interviews. The rest are British.

Canterford (2003) discusses the cultural backgrounds of international school teachers, not the principals. However, his data are relevant for this study because the 'administrators are a part of the teaching community in international schools' (Gomez, 2017:60). Canterford (2003) found that the data from the International Schools Services (ISS) show only four categories of nationalities, 'US', 'UK', 'other' and 'host'. This suggests a strong preference or emphasis on employing teachers who are from the UK and US only, implying that there is similar preference for

principals who are also from the UK and US. This is further confirmed by Slough-Kuss (2014:228) who argues that, despite diversity among students in international schools, there is an explicit 'emphasis of Western domination'.

Cultural Intelligence

Another point worthy of highlighting is the importance of principals having 'cultural intelligence' (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013), 'intercultural literacy' (Heyward, 2002), 'cross-cultural leadership sensitivity', or 'intercultural competence' (Keller, 2015). An international school principal who does not embrace a culturally diverse environment may see cultural diversity or differences as a challenge, as identified by some studies (Benson, 2011; Hammad & Shah, 2018), including those cited by Keller (2015). This is also reflected in my survey findings as the cultural aspect is the third most commonly mentioned difficulty. However, case study principals AP and BP did not mention cultural diversity or differences as one of their difficulties. This could be because they were prepared through previous experiences and had gained 'a high level of (societal) intercultural understanding' (Hill, 2018:529), allowing them to manage the cultural aspects of their schools. For example, BP worked in Hong Kong for several years and her prior experience in Asia may have been helpful. She also carried out extensive research about the school, including asking her former colleagues from Hong Kong about it. In addition, AP and BP have very good role relationships with the different stakeholders of the school (see table 9.1). This is an indication that AP and BP have developed a degree of cultural alignment, leading them to consider staying in their current school for another three to five years.

In contrast, CP clarified cultural differences as significant in her decision to "work internationally" and she mentioned that "it's great to have all of these cultures" at the face-to-face interview, despite putting "misunderstandings due to cultural differences" as one of the difficulties she faces, in her online survey. This implies that CP could still lack the required cultural intelligence or intercultural literacy, as 'leadership awareness of these cultural traits in an international school community is vital' (Hill, 2018:530). This could have affected the trust between CP

and her subordinates since trust is 'the basis for positive interpersonal relationships' and is a 'key factor in promoting effective working relationships within organizations, including schools' (Moye et. al., 2005:271). As a result, CP's working relationships with her colleagues may not be as good as she perceives. For example, even though CP rated her role relationships with all stakeholders as between excellent and good, her superordinate and SLT members rated them lower, mainly around or below good, concurring with the finding of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014:82) who found that 'teachers [who] did not trust their principals … were also likely to rate their colleagues less favourably in terms of professional judgment and competence'. In view of the above, CP stated that she will only stay in the current school for less than two years.

Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013:848) argue that 'cultural intelligence should be an important consideration in the selection, training, and professional development of international school leaders'. This is supported by Hill (2014:187) who mentioned that 'the more internationally minded the head, the more successful the head will be in bringing together the multiple perspectives of social reality to form a vision to which the school community will adhere'. This is because there is 'a plethora of human interactions whose complexities are compounded by continually evolving societal cultures' and '[p]eople will bring their own meanings to events in terms of their life experiences and interaction with others' (Hill, 2018:531). This matches my data, illustrated by the concluding comments of AP: "the way that you lead as principal of an international school or any other kind of school, actually changes all the time, according to context, and according to who you're leading, where they are, and their experience journey". She added that "there isn't one way to lead a school" and one needs to "be adaptive all the time to the context and the people".

Implications of the Research

Trust emerges as a very important issue from the case study interviews. The existence (or non-existence) of trust between the principals and their superordinates and subordinates impacted on the working relationship between and amongst them. According to Moye et. al. (2005), trust is the main factor for the principals and their subordinates in ensuring that they have productive working relationships. Musah et. al. (2018) also emphasised the importance of trust and they suggested that it can be gained when the principals build good relationships with the teachers. In case study schools A and B, several interviewees mentioned the word "trust" towards their principals or having the "trust" from their principals, and vice versa. Some other participants, while not mentioning the word "trust" during the interviews, demonstrated the trust they have with their principals indirectly, for example, by saying "very open in our sharing" (AS) and "never feel worried about going in and telling her something if it hasn't gone to plan; very much feel supported and mentored" (ASLT1). The role relationship ratings given by both principals and their superordinates and subordinates are very similar, especially for school B where all of them rated their mutual relationships as excellent (see table 9.1). This excellent working relationship, as well as high levels of understanding, is further verified by the ratings of the other stakeholders, where the ratings given by AP and BP, are very similar to the ones given by their superordinates and SLT members.

However, not having trust between the principals and their subordinates could have an adverse outcome. For example, the subordinates may sense that there is danger and 'go into a self-protective mode' (Browning, 2014:389). In case study school C, both CSLT1 and CSLT3 required reassurance from me that both CS and CP would not know the content, and that their identity would remain anonymous, despite having been informed about that before the start of the interviews. When there is no trust towards their principals, the teachers may also be doubtful about their capability and discernment (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014). Despite CS and CP mutually rated their role relationship as excellent, there seems to be a lack

of trust between them, based on what they have shared during the interviews, especially from CP. This is because CP mentioned that CS "manages things very, very closely" and she was unable to even get a coffee machine to be set up in the common room for teachers, although CS was the person who offered CP the job in her previous role, followed by promoting her job into her current position. This matches the claim by Walker et. al. (2011:487) where two of the four reasons the principals are unable to trust their superordinates, as compared to their subordinates, are because of 'micromanaging' and 'undermining their authority'. This lack of trust between CP and CS was also observed by the other senior leaders, such as CSLT1, who commented that CP and CS will "never admit that they've been separated for that reason [about CS not supporting CP], but it's clear to see that they have". In addition, there could also be a mismatch in the level of trust between CP and her superordinate and subordinates, which could result in poorer work outcomes, as compared to when the trust is mutual (Kim et. al., 2018).

The findings of this study demonstrate that having trust between the principals and their superordinates and subordinates could influence their tenures. This is because, for AP and BP, who have excellent working relationships, and therefore trusting relationships with their superordinates and subordinates, they consider staying in their current school for another three to five years. In contrast, CP stated that she will only stay in the current school for less than two years. However, there is no literature to support that connection. While there are some articles which discuss the reasons for turnover of international school teachers, such as location satisfaction (Chandler, 2010), general causal factors (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009) and stress (Santos, 2020), none discusses the impact of trust on the tenure of the teachers. Similarly, the extensive research by Benson (2011), and by Gomez (2017), which examined the turnover of principals in international schools, also did not specify trust issue as one of the main reasons for the departure of the principals. This shows that my research provides a distinctive contribution to the literature.

Figure 9.1 illustrates the discussion above.
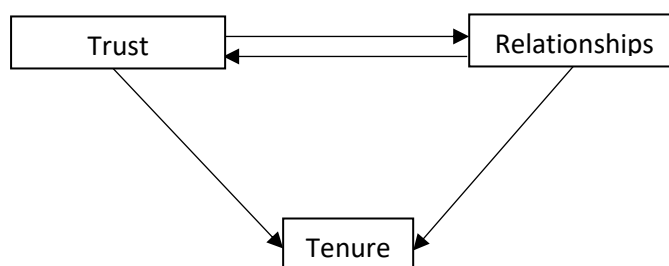
Figure 9.1: Connection between trust and relationships and their effect on the

tenure of the principals

The multidirectional trust which principals have with their superordinates and subordinates affects the relationship building between them, and vice versa. To put it simply, when there is trust, there will be good relationships, or when there are good relationships, there will be trust. When there is trust and/or good relationships, the tenure of the principals could increase; while tenure may decrease when there is lack of trust or good relationships. However, it is important to note that more empirical studies are required to substantiate this connection, especially with a bigger sample size and in different countries.

Overview

British heritage, and professional backgrounds, are shown to be important criteria for appointment as an international school principal in Malaysia. Principals who wish to work in international schools in Malaysia also need to be well prepared for the job, as the process from application to job offer was completed in less than three months.

Attending meetings is the most common scheduled activity of the Malaysian principals. Their role relationships with other stakeholders are crucial and impact strongly on principals' ability to carry out their duties. All three case study principals focus almost all their time on the professional aspect of their job, as the generic aspect is handled by other people, except for recruitment of teachers, in which two of the three principals are directly involved.

The growing popularity of international school education around the world has resulted in an increase in the number of international schools in recent years. The demand for principals to lead these schools has therefore increased proportionately. The situation in Malaysia is similar, with significant growth, following several changes in government policies, including lifting the quota and allowing all Malaysian international schools to accept any number of local students in 2010 (The Malay Mail Online, 2014). Most of the international schools in Malaysia offer the British curriculum.

The data collected provide extensive insights into principal leadership in these Malaysian international schools. Some of the results might have been expected, such as the biography of the principals, where almost half of the respondents are of British heritage, given that most of the international schools in Malaysia teach the British curriculum. While "students" is at the top of the list of greatest benefits and satisfaction, "staff", "parents", and "cultural/cultures", all appear in the discussion of difficulties, benefits and satisfaction, an indication that they have similar backgrounds, and they are all working in the same country and in similar schools teaching the same curriculum.

The findings from this study provide an additional international perspective, reinforcing the limited tenure of international school principals and providing context-specific data to underpin this theory. While a culturally diverse environment is a common feature of international schools, the preference for western principals is still evident, and 13 out of 15 senior leaders in my case study interviews are British. The multidirectional trust which principals have with their superordinates and subordinates affects the relationship building between them, and vice versa. There is also a direct connection between trust and good relationships with the tenure of the principals, but more empirical studies are required to substantiate this connection, especially with a bigger sample size and in different countries.

Overall, my study is a substantial addition to the existing knowledge on the roles of international secondary school principals in Malaysia, as there is direct evidence from survey and case study principals, about three key themes. These are tenure, preference for western principals and cultural intelligence. Finally, a connection between trust, and relationships, and their effect on the tenure of the principals has been established.

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Appendix 1: Research Ethics Checklist

Section I: Project details

1. Project title:	Leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools: Evidence from Malaysia
Level of approval required	A/B/~~C~~

Section II: Applicant details

2. Name:	Lam Chee Fong
3. Status: (delete as appropriate)	~~Staff PI~~ / PGR student / ~~Staff collaborator~~
4. Email address:	kabx4lco@nottingham.edu.my

Section III: For PGR students only

5. Supervisor's name:	Professor Tony Bush
4. Email address:	Tony.Bush@nottingham.edu.my

Supervisor: Please tick the appropriate boxes below.

The topic merits further research	✓
The student has the skills to carry out the research	✓
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate (where available)	✓
The procedures for recruiting and obtaining informed consent are appropriate	✓
Health and safety procedures are acceptable and all reasonable care has been taken to put procedures in place to protect the participants and the researcher	✓

Comments from supervisor:

Lam Chee Fong is a diligent student who has designed his research carefully in line with his research questions. He has completed all the necessary components required to secure ethical approval and I am very pleased to support his work, which should lead to very significant findings.

Section IV: Research Checklist

Please answer each question by ringing the appropriate response (please note Y & N are reversed on occasion).

	1	2
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (eg children, people with learning disabilities, prisoners, your own students)?	Y	(N)
2. Will the study require the cooperation of a gatekeeper for the initial access to the groups of individuals to be recruited (eg pupils at school, members of a self-help group)?	(Y)	N
3. For research conducted in public, non-governmental and private organisations and institutions (such as schools, charities, companies), will approval be gained in advance from appropriate authorities?	N	(Y)
4. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (eg covert observation of people in non-public places)	Y	(N)
5. Will the study involve the discussion of sensitive topics (eg sexual activity, drugs)?	Y	(N)
6. Will participants be asked to discuss anything or take part in any activity that they may find embarrassing or traumatic?	Y	(N)
7. Is it likely that the study will cause offence to participants for reasons of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or culture?	Y	(N)
8. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (eg food, vitamins) to be administered to study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	Y	(N)
9. Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants?	Y	(N)
10. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	Y	(N)
11. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	Y	(N)
12. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	Y	(N)
13. Will data be audio or video recorded?	(Y)	N
14. Will written informed consent be obtained?	N	(Y)
15. Will participants be asked permission for quotations from data to be used?	N	(Y)
16. Will participants be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving explanation?	N	(Y)
17. Will data be anonymised?	N	(Y)
18. Will participants be assured of the confidentiality of the data?	N	(Y)
19. Will the data be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2010)?*	N	(Y)
20. Does the proposed study present any risk to the researcher(s)	Y	(N)

If you answered in Column 1 to any of the questions in Section IV, you will need to ensure that any ethical issues raised are covered in your research protocol and that additional information in relation to the question is

provided. Please ensure that any health and safety issues are covered by risk assessment and written protocol.

 *

http://www.kkmm.gov.my/pdf/Personal%20Data%20Protection%20Act%202010.pdf

Section V: Agreement

Staff - Principal Investigator	
I confirm that I have read this document and will comply with the Research Codes of Conduct and ethical principles listed above	
I confirm that I will ensure that the research is carried out as described in this submission:	
Signed:	
Date:	

PGR Student	
I confirm that I have read this document and will comply with the Research Codes of Conduct and ethical principles listed above I confirm that I will ensure that the research is carried out as described in this submission	
Signed (student):	*Lam Chee Fong*
Name : (please print)	Lam Chee Fong
Date:	4 October 2016
I confirm that I have read this submission and that I will ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that the student carries out this research as described in this submission and complies with ethical principles and good health and safety practice.	
Signed (Supervisor)	*Tony Bush*
Date:	4 October 2016

Appendix 2: Invitation emails to principals for electronic survey

Subject: Research on Leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools in Malaysia

First invite

Dear Sir/Madam,

Happy New Year!

My name is Chee Fong and I am a PhD Research Student with the University of Nottingham. This is an invitation to take part in a research study about the leadership roles of principals in the international secondary schools in Malaysia. The following information is designed to tell you what it will involve.

The survey will take about 10 minutes only. Your participation is voluntary and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question or (for interview studies) stop the recording at any time, and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. For anonymous questionnaires, once you have finished the questionnaire and submitted your answers, it is not possible to withdraw the data.

Project Title: Leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools: Evidence from Malaysia

Researcher: Chee Fong Lam (kabx4lco@nottingham.edu.my)

Supervisor: Professor Tony Bush (Tony.Bush@nottingham.edu.my)

Ethics Approval Reference Number: LCF016531

What is the project about?

The number of international schools grew from 50 schools in the very early stage to 1000 in 1995 (Hayden, 2011b). This number further increased by almost 700% in the next 20 years to more than 7900 English-medium international schools in 2015 (ISC Research, 2015). This growth phenomenon is apparent in Malaysia too as the number of international schools increased significantly from 26 in 2000 to 128 in 2014 (Council of British International Schools, 2014). Therefore, not only

would these international schools need to look for candidates to fill the role of the principal, they also need to find the right principal for the school, especially since there is no single kind of leadership style that can be classified as "the" way to run an international school (Hill, 2014; Hayden M 2011a). As such, the contribution of this research would be that, by understanding the leadership roles of principals in international schools in Malaysia, future principals intending to work in the international schools in Malaysia would have a better understanding of what is expected of them. Current and future international schools would also benefit from the findings as a match in the expectations would more likely extend beyond the average tenure of an international school principal of only about three years (Benson, 2011; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010; Keller, 2015) to at least four years, as cited by a principal interviewed by Benson (2011) as 'a solid chunk of time' needed for a principal to have a significant impact on a school.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

This electronic questionnaire is sent out to all principals of international schools in Malaysia to invite them to participate in the research.

What will I be asked to do?

First, a quantitative survey will be sent to all 109 international secondary school principals in Malaysia, drawn from the *Education Destination Malaysia: Guide to International & Private Schools (2016-2017 Edition)*. Subsequently, three school-based case studies will be selected for more in-depth research. During the case study phase, face-to-face interviews will be conducted with the principal, the immediate reporting officer of the principal, and 3 members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

By understanding the leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools in Malaysia, future principals intending to work in the international schools in Malaysia would have a better understanding of what is expected of them.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. No one other than the researchers will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

What will you do with the data?

Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

Please click on the link below to complete the survey.

https://nottinghammy.asia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_efXCfCqy35FQd13

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FASSResearchEthics@nottingham.edu.my) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous.

Thank you once again for your time and participation in the study.

Best Regards,

Chee Fong

(PhD Research Student)

Dear Mr/Ms/Mdm/Dr XXX,

This is to follow up with the email I sent on 21st January which you might have missed out unintentionally. Besides being a PhD Research Student, I am also a principal (of Sri KDU Secondary School). Therefore, I can understand the number of emails you receive (and having to reply) daily, not to mention the number of issues you need to attend to and the number of meetings you need to attend. I am thus grateful of your time reading my email now.

Some context of my research:

The number of international schools in Malaysia has increased significantly from 26 in year 2000 to 109 in year 2016. Therefore, not only would these international schools need to look for candidates to fill the role of the principal, they also need to find the **right principal** for the school. Unfortunately, there is currently a lack of research in this area in Malaysia.

Therefore, your involvement and "voice" are crucial towards the findings of this study. I would greatly appreciate if you could just spend some time (less than 10 minutes) to click on the link below to complete the survey in order to contribute towards the research of leadership roles of principals of international schools in Malaysia.

Link: **https://nottinghammy.asia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_efXCfCqy35FQd13**

Thank you in advance for your time and effort. My work email is cflam@srikdu.edu.my if you would like to contact me for any further queries.

Best regards,
Chee Fong

Dear Mr/Ms/Mdm/Dr XXX,

Thank you if you have already completed the survey. As the respondents are all anonymous, I am unable to know if you have responded to the survey and thus I apologise spamming your inbox again.

On the other hand, if you have overlooked my email the last 2 times, I sincerely hope that you could spend some time to complete the online survey for me, which will take not more than 10 minutes of your time. Please click on this link below to bring you to the survey:

Link: **https://nottinghammy.asia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_efXCfCqy35FQd13**

Thank you in advance for your help and your input will definitely allow all of us to have a better understanding on the roles and responsibilities of the international school principals in Malaysia.

Best regards,
Chee Fong

Follow-up email to principals who agree to take part in the second phase of data collection

Dear Mr/Ms/Mdm/Dr XXX,

Hope that this email finds you well and you have a smooth start of the new academic year.

Thank you for completing the online questionnaire and agreeing to participate in the second phase of the research.

This next phase consists of face-to-face interviews with you, your immediate reporting officer and three members of your Senior Leadership Team (who have worked with you as an SLT member for the longest period of time).

During my one-day visit to your school, I shall

- interview you and carry out documentary analysis of your job description (which will take about an hour)
- interview the other four participants (which will take about less than 30 minutes each)

As I need to work out my schedule of visits to the 3 schools, kindly rank below the order of preference (1 being the most preferred and 5 being the least preferred) month which I can pay you a visit to conduct the five interviews.

Month	Preference
October 2017	
November 2017	
December 2017	
January 2018	
February 2018	

We will discuss on the specific day of visit after I have compiled the replies from the other principals and have worked out on the month of visit to each of the school.

I thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation and I look forward to receiving your reply soon.

Best regards,

Chee Fong

Appendix 3: Survey questionnaire

Section 1

    a) Which country were you born in? (Please state)

    b) What is your nationality? (Please state)

    c) In which country did you receive your secondary education? (Please state)

    d) Which kind of curriculum did you study in your secondary education? (Please tick)

        ☐ British

        ☐ Canadian

        ☐ American

        ☐ Australian

        ☐ Others

    e) How many years have you been in the education industry? (Please tick)

        ☐ <10 years

        ☐ 10-20 years,

        ☐ 21-30 years

        ☐ 31-40 years

        ☐ >40 years

    f) What other roles were you in before becoming the principal? (You may tick more than one)

        ☐ Head of Subject or equivalent

        ☐ Head of Department or equivalent

        ☐ Curriculum Coordinator or equivalent

        ☐ Level Coordinator or equivalent

        ☐ Subject Coordinator or equivalent

        ☐ Key Stage Coordinator or equivalent

        ☐ Vice Principal or equivalent

        ☐ Others

    g) In total, how many years have you been a principal? (Please tick)

        ☐ <5 years

        ☐ 5-10 years

        ☐ 11-15 years

☐ 16-20 years

☐ >20 years

h) How many years have you been a principal in this current school? (Please tick)

☐ <3 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ >10 years

i) Have you been a principal of a national/government school before you become the principal of an international school? If yes, which country was it?

☐ Yes, in _____

☐ No

j) What is your highest qualification? (Please tick)

☐ Graduate

☐ Post Graduate Diploma

☐ Master

☐ Doctorate

k) Did you receive formal training before you became a principal, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme from the United Kingdom? If yes, in which country do you receive the training?

☐ Yes, in _____

☐ No

Section 2

a) How were you recruited into this current position? (Please tick)

☐ Headhunted

☐ From advertisements in job recruitment sites on the internet/ newspaper/magazine

☐ School's website

☐ Recommendation from friends/relatives, etc.

☐ Others

b) From the time of application, how long did the whole process take before you were finally offered the job?

☐ <3 months

☐ 4-6 months

☐ 7-9 months

☐ 10-12 months

☐ > 12months

c) What selection processes did you have to go through before being offered the job? (You may tick more than one)

☐ Written test

☐ Skype interview

☐ Face-to-face interview

☐ Others, please state: _____

d) How many interviews did you have to go through?

☐ Once only

☐ 2 times

☐ 3 times

☐ 4 times

☐ 5 times and above

e) Who were the interviewers? (You may tick more than one)

☐ Board of Governors

☐ Board of Directors

☐ Immediate Superordinate

☐ Current Principal

☐ SLT Members

☐ Others, please state: _____

f) What types of questions were you being asked during the interview for this position?

☐ Questions related to personal attributes

☐ Questions related to character

☐ Questions related to professional background

☐ Questions related to working experience

☐ Others, please state: _____

Section 3

a) Reason(s) for accepting the appointment in your current school (You may tick more than one)

☐ Attractive salary

☐ Gain exposure

☐ Personal challenges

☐ Time to move on from previous school

☐ Push factor from previous school

☐ Other reason(s), please state: _____

b) How many more years do you foresee yourself to remain in this school? (Please tick)

☐ <2 years

☐ 3-5 years

☐ 5-10 years

☐ >10 years

☐ Not sure

c) What questions did you ask during the interview for this position?

Section 4

a) Rate your relationships with the following stakeholders of the school, 1 being excellent, 5 being very poor. (Please tick)

	1	2	3	4	5
Superordinate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SLT members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Department heads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-teaching staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 5

a) What are the 3 greatest difficulties in being the principal of an international school in Malaysia?

b) What are the 3 greatest benefits in being the principal of an international school in Malaysia?

c) What are the 3 greatest satisfactions in being the principal of an international school in Malaysia?

Thank you for time in completing the questionnaire. The second part of the data collection of this research involves face-to-face interviews with the principal, immediate reporting officer of the principal and 3 members of the Senior Leadership Team of three case study schools.

If you would like to be involved in the second part of this research, kindly provide the following information:

Name of School: _____

Name of principal: _____

Email address: _____

Contact number: _____

Appendix 4: Interview participant consent form

Project Title: Leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools: Evidence from Malaysia

Researcher: Lam Chee Fong (kabx4lco@nottingham.edu.my)

Supervisor: Professor Tony Bush (Tony.Bush@nottingham.edu.my)

Ethics Approval Reference Number: LCF016531

- Have you read and understood the Participant Information?   YES/NO
- I agree to take part in an interview that will be recorded.   YES/NO
- Do you know how to contact the researcher if you have questions about this study?   YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason?   YES/NO
- Do you understand that once you have been interviewed it may not be technically possible to withdraw your data unless requested within one month?   YES/NO
- Do you give permission for your data from this study to be shared with other researchers in the future provided that your anonymity is protected? YES/NO
- Do you understand that non-identifiable data from this study might be used in academic research reports or publications?   YES/NO

Signature of the Participant   ……………………………………….   Date: ……………….

Name (in block capitals)   ……………………………………….

Appendix 5: Information for interview participant

Project Title: Leadership roles of principals in international secondary schools: Evidence from Malaysia

Researcher: Lam Chee Fong (kabx4lco@nottingham.edu.my)

Supervisor: Professor Tony Bush (Tony.Bush@nottingham.edu.my)

Ethics Approval Reference Number: LCF016531

This is an invitation to take part in a research study about the leadership roles of principals in the international secondary schools in Malaysia. This information is designed to tell you what it will involve.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may change your mind about being involved, or decline to answer a particular question or (for interview studies) stop the recording at any time, and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. For anonymous questionnaires, once you have finished the questionnaire and submitted your answers it is not possible to withdraw the data.

What is the project about?

The number of international schools grew from 50 schools in the very early stage to 1000 in 1995 (Hayden, 2011b). This number further increased by almost 700% in the next 20 years to more than 7900 English-medium international schools in 2015 (ISC Research, 2015). This growth phenomenon is apparent in Malaysia too as the number of international schools increased significantly from 26 in 2000 to 128 in 2014 (Council of British International Schools, 2014). Therefore, not only would these international schools need to look for candidates to fill the role of the principal, they also need to find the right principal for the school, especially since there is no single kind of leadership style that can be classified as "the" way to run an international school (Hill, 2014; Hayden M 2011a). As such, the contribution of this research would be that, by understanding the leadership roles of principals in international schools in Malaysia, future principals intending to work in the international schools in Malaysia would have a better understanding of what is

expected of them. Current and future international schools would also benefit from the findings as a match in the expectations would more likely extend beyond the average tenure of an international school principal of only about three years (Benson, 2011; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010; Keller, 2015) to at least four years, as cited by a principal interviewed by Benson (2011) as 'a solid chunk of time' needed for a principal to have a significant impact on a school.

Who is being asked to take part, and why?

This electronic questionnaire is sent out to all principals of international secondary schools in Malaysia to invite them to participate in the research.

What will I be asked to do?

First, a quantitative survey will be sent to all 109 international secondary school principals in Malaysia, drawn from the *Education Destination Malaysia: Guide to International & Private Schools (2016-2017 Edition)*. Subsequently, three school-based case studies will be selected for more in-depth research. During the case study phase, face-to-face interviews will be conducted with the principal, the immediate reporting officer of the principal, and 3 members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

By understanding the leadership roles of principals in international schools in Malaysia, future principals intending to work in the international schools in Malaysia would have a better understanding of what is expected of them.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. No one other than the researchers will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

What will you do with the data?

Data from this research will be kept under lock and key and reported only as a collective combined total.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

If you have any queries or complaints about this study, please contact the student's supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the query to your satisfaction, please write to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (FASSResearchEthics@nottingham.edu.my) who will pass your query to the Chair of the Committee

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, as with any online related activity the risk of a breach is always possible. We will do everything possible to ensure your answers in this study will remain anonymous.

Thank you once again for your time and agreeing in participating in the study.

Appendix 6: Interview Guide

For principal

What are the origins and professional backgrounds of international school principals in Malaysia?

a) What other roles did you hold before becoming a principal?

(for those who answered "Others" in the online questionnaire)

What is the relationship between principals' origins and professional backgrounds, and their recruitment and selection?

b) Do you think your origins and/or professional backgrounds helped you in securing your current job? If yes, please elaborate. If not, why do you think you were selected for the job?

c) What type of questions were you asked during the interview for this position?

d) What questions did you ask during the interview for this position?

What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?

e) Do you follow a standard day-to-day routine? If yes, what is the routine? If not, how do you plan your daily and weekly activities?

f) State the differences (if any) in the roles and responsibilities as stated in your Job Description (JD) as compared to what you actually do.

g) State the differences (if any) in the roles and responsibilities when you were a public school principal (if relevant) as compared to your current position.

What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?

h) Please elaborate on your role relationship with your superordinate and the benefits and challenges involved.

i) Please elaborate on your role relationships with your SLT members and the benefits and challenges involved.

j) Please elaborate on your role relationship with your Department Heads and the benefits and challenges involved.

k) Please elaborate on your role relationship with your teachers and the benefits and challenges involved.

l) Please elaborate on your role relationship with your non-teaching staff and the benefits and challenges involved.

m) Please elaborate on your role relationship with the parents and the benefits and challenges involved.

n) Please elaborate on your role relationship with your students and the benefits and challenges involved.

What is the balance between professional and generic aspects of principal leadership in Malaysian international schools?

o) How do you balance the professional and generic aspects of your role?

p) What are the main difficulties in being the principal of an international school in Malaysia?

q) What are the main benefits in being the principal of an international school in Malaysia?

r) What are the main satisfactions in being the principal of an international school in Malaysia?

s) Is there anything else you would like to add?

For principal's superordinate

Background

a) What is your official position?

b) How many years have you been the immediate reporting office of the principal?

c) Were you involved in the recruitment of this principal?

What is the relationship between principals' origins and professional backgrounds, and their recruitment and selection?

d) What were the qualities/qualifications required for this position?

e) Could you please give me some insights of the recruitment process?

What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?

f) What are the roles and responsibilities of the principal?

g) In your opinion, are there any differences between the roles and responsibilities of the principal in this school as compared to one working in a government/national school? If yes, what are they?

What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?

h) Please describe your role relationship with the principal and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

i) Please describe the principal's role relationship with his/her SLT members and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

j) Please describe the principal's role relationship with the Department Heads and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

k) Please describe the principal's role relationship with the teachers and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

l) Please describe the principal's role relationship with non-teaching staff and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

m) Please describe the principal's role relationship with the parents and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

n) Please describe the principal's role relationship with the students and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

o) Is there anything else you would like to add?

For principal's subordinate

Background

a) What is your nationality and position?

b) How many years have you been working in this school?

c) How many years have you been an SLT member in this school?

d) How many years have you been an SLT member under the current principal?

What are the main activities of international school principals in Malaysia?

e) Does your principal follow a familiar day-to-day routine? If so, what are his/her daily/weekly activities?

f) Based on your observations, what are the main roles and responsibilities of your principal?

What are the main role relationships of international school principals in Malaysia with the other stakeholders of the school?

g) Please describe your principal's role relationship with his/her immediate reporting officer and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

h) Please describe your role relationship with your principal and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

i) Please describe your principal's role relationship with the Department Heads and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

j) Please describe your principal's role relationship with the teachers and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

k) Please describe your principal's role relationship with non-teaching staff and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

l) Please describe your principal's role relationship with the parents and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

m) Please describe your principal's role relationship with the students and the benefits and challenges involved. (Scale of 1=excellent to 5)

n) Is there anything else you would like to add?