



CHARACTERISTICS THAT DEFINE A TOP INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
ACCORDING TO STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES. A THAI CASE STUDY.

A thesis submitted by

Matthew Fahey, B.Com., MBA, M.Ed.

For the award of

Doctor of Education

2019

## **Abstract**

International schools have been around for more than 100 years (Thompson, 2018) but it is in the last 20 years that they have experienced a boom in growth (Gaskell, 2016). This recent boom has resulted in many more current students receiving an international education than at any other period in history. The resulting implication is that research in the international school market has lagged behind the commercial growth of international schools (Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012). The purpose of this research is to improve current knowledge of international schools by identifying the ten most important items in international schools as reported by three different stakeholder groups (administrators/teachers, parents and students).

Due to a lack of research in this area, a readily available research tool was not available to the researcher. It became therefore imperative that the researcher developed a tool for this process and the tool was created through interviews and utilization of a Delphi framework. The creation of this tool resulted in a questionnaire with 68 possible items; it was then trialled via a pilot study so the tool could be improved. These improvements were implemented and the tool was utilised to receive information from the three stakeholder groups associated with the case study school.

These results were then compared for similarities and differences between the three stakeholder groups. It was found that these groups were not statistically independent on 46 items, and that two or more groups were statistically independent on 22 items. This indicated that for most items the different stakeholder groups shared a common perspective on their relative importance. The research results were then analysed to identify the top ten items as reported by each of the three stakeholder groups. There was much similarity in the results with four items appearing in each stakeholder group's top ten and six items appearing in two out of three stakeholder groups' top ten.

### **Thesis Certification Page**

This Thesis is entirely the work of Matthew Fahey except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award.

Principal Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Henriette van Rensburg

Associate Supervisor: Dr. Rahul Ganguly

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University of Southern Queensland.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to pay tribute to my two amazing supervisors Associate Professor Henriette van Rensburg and Doctor Rahul Ganguly. Before you both agreed to be my principal and associate supervisors I was floundering and destined for failure. With your expertise and the generous time you have both given I have not only completed this thesis but the quality of the end product has benefited greatly from your contributions.

Thank you to Henk Huijser, Christopher Phillips and Éamonn Dunne for your expertise in proof reading; Taryn Axelsen for your statistical assistance and suggestions; Chutharat Duangmanee, Suwanna Fahey, Joy Narumon and Kittima Nurak for your translation between English and Thai; Dianne Fahey and Joshua Fahey for your transcribing of recorded interviews; Ron Pauley for giving suggestions, locating and electronically mailing resource materials; Warren Midgley for chairing, and Shirley O'Neill and Gavin Austin for being members on my confirmation panel. You have all contributed much to the completion of my thesis.

Thank you to the hundreds of people who agreed to be interviewed or completed a questionnaire for the benefit of this research. Without people participating human research would not be possible.

Thank you to the Australian Commonwealth Government for the Research Training Program, and the Graduate Research School. Your financial assistance has made this research possible.

To my wife Suwanna, my children Dianne, Joshua, Keara and Kaden, and my sister Jenny-Lyn: the love and support you all exhibit toward me every day makes a bigger difference than you can ever know.

Finally, I present this research in memory to my parents, Barry and Dianne Fahey.

## Table of Contents

Title page	I
Abstract	II
Thesis certification page	III
Acknowledgements	IV
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Setting	1
1.3 Background	1
1.4 Statement of the problem	4
1.5 Aims and objectives	4
1.6 Nature of the study	5
1.7 Conceptual framework for the study	5
1.8 Purpose of the study	8
1.9 Where this research fits into the existing body of knowledge	8
1.10 Definition of terms	10
1.11 Procedures	10
1.12 Significance of the study	11
1.13 Organisation of the study	12
1.14 Research assumptions	12
1.15 Summary	13
Chapter 2 Literature review	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Process of the literature review	14
2.3 Administrators and teachers	15
2.4 Parents	19
2.5 Students	21
2.6 Curriculum	22
2.7 School in general	24
2.8 Summary	25
Chapter 3 Research methodology, including analysis of data	27
3.1 Introduction	27
3.2 Purpose statement	27
3.3 Inductive theory or pattern	27

3.4 World view	27
3.5 Process of the methodology	28
3.6 Research design and methodology	29
3.7 Phase 1 (Delphi Framework)	30
3.8 Phase 2 (Pilot Study)	39
3.9 Research tool development	41
3.10 Research tool test for reliability	47
3.11 Phase 3 (online questionnaire)	48
3.12 Summary	56
Chapter 4 Results and Findings	57
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 Demographics of phase 3 participants	57
4.3 Results and findings phase 3	58
4.4 Open ended questions	64
4.5 Feedback themes generated by the stakeholder feedback	64
4.6 Summary	65
Chapter 5 Analysis	66
5.1 Introduction	66
5.2 Analysis of administrator and teacher-related questions	66
5.3 Analysis of parent-related questions	71
5.4 Analysis of student-related questions	73
5.5 Analysis of curriculum-related questions	75
5.6 Analysis of school in general-related questions	77
5.7 Summary	83
Chapter 6 Discussion	84
6.1 Introduction	84
6.2 Stakeholders' top ten most important characteristics	84
6.3 Administrators' and teachers' as well as parents', but not students', top ten most important characteristics	89
6.4 Administrators' and teachers' as well as students', but not parents', top ten most important characteristics	90
6.5 Parents' and students', but not administrators' and teachers' top ten most important characteristics	93

6.6 Administrators' and teachers' top ten most important characteristics	97
6.7 Parents top ten most important characteristics	100
6.8 Students top ten most important characteristics	102
6.9 Research limitations and recommendations for further research	103
6.10 Summary	104
Chapter 7 Conclusion	105
7.1 Introduction	105
7.2 Findings	105
7.3 The importance of this research	107
7.4 Summary	108
References	109
Appendix A Ethics Approval	117
Appendix B Participant Information Sheet (Interview)	118
Appendix C Consent Form for Under 18 (Interview)	120
Appendix D Consent Form for 18 and over (Interview)	121
Appendix E Consent Form for Under 18 (Questionnaire)	122
Appendix F Participant Information Sheet (Questionnaire)	123
Appendix G Mean values and standard deviation for administrators and teachers on each item in the questionnaire	125
Appendix H Mean values and standard deviation for parents on each item in the questionnaire	130
Appendix I Mean values and standard deviation for students on each item in the questionnaire	135
Appendix J Feedback	140

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains what the term ‘international schools’ means in this study, the speed at which these schools are currently growing in Thailand, and it also introduces the problem. There is not enough research on what the main characteristics are for a school to be regarded as a top international school. Subsequently, this chapter delivers an overview of the research including the conceptual framework and its purpose and where it fits with existing research. The chapter concludes with a procedure to be followed, the importance of the research and its limitations.

### **1.2 Setting**

This research officially started after the researcher received his Ethics Approval on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of November 2017 (Appendix A). The research was inspired by many administrators, teachers, parents and students talking about top international schools. Many stakeholders talk about top international schools on a regular basis but when challenged to give an explanation of what a top international school is, they cannot. In order to develop greater meaning to the term ‘Top International Schools’, this research will endeavour to elicit opinions from stakeholders associated with the Superior International School (a pseudonym developed for this research). The Superior International School is located on the outskirts of Bangkok. This school does offer scholarships to students who might otherwise not be able to afford the tuition and it actively tries to recruit students who are not Thai nationals. However, the demographic segments that dominate the student population comprise of affluent Thai nationals.

### **1.3 Background**

According to Dugonjic (2014), the International School of Geneva is regarded as the oldest international school in existence today. It was first opened in 1924 under the simple, but auspicious name of International School. Thompson (2018) contradicts this claim by pointing out that Kodiakanal International School in India was established in 1901, and five years later the Rift Valley Academy in Kenya



was established. According to Thompson (2018), international schools have been around for more than 100 years.

Attention needs to be focused on what we determine as being an international school. “There is no one school that completely exemplifies all facets of an international school, but there are dozens of excellent schools, public and private, that provide a glimpse” (Jackson, 2004, p. 211). State schools and national school systems are coming on board with their recognition in the value of an international education. These schools and systems continue to implement more and more initiatives so their students can experience what is considered to be an international education (Carber, 2011). However, after all of these years, the term *international school* still does not have one clear, universally accepted definition (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Machin, 2017). Rather, it is a broadly used term that includes a variety of school systems that encompass many different formats and curricula (MacKenzie, 2010; Nagrath, 2011). There are no guidelines or requirements that all international schools must adhere to. As a result, different schools have implemented different ideas and techniques to enable students to achieve an international education (Carber, 2011).

The experts generally agree, for a school to be recognised as an international school, it must follow a national or international curriculum which does not belong to the host country (Hayden & Thompson, 2008; Nagrath, 2011; Thompson, 2018). Five criteria that help interested parties recognise whether a school is truly an international school or not are:

- the founding purpose of the school,
- the educational programme of the school,
- the percentage of students from the host nation,
- the cultural diversity in senior management of the school, and
- the percentage of tuition paid by the students (Hayden & Thompson, 2008; Hill, 2016).

These five indicators represent a traditional international school (Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016). The early international schools’ purpose was to educate the children of missionaries who would, most often, return to their home countries (Thompson, 2018).

Having established the initial concept of international schools, the chapter now considers the new direction of the international school concept. With an increase in non-English speaking locals desiring an English education, the founding purpose and percentage of local students are less important when being recognised as an international school (Hu & McKay, 2012). The perceptions and realities of what represents an international school have evolved since the initial inception of such schools over one hundred years ago. Often, current international schools are professionally managed to be profit making enterprises, and they accept a higher percentage of wealthy local students compared with the traditional international schools (MacKenzie, 2010). Many of these schools are considered to be international because they teach through the medium of English in a non-English speaking country; not because they have a high percentage of students from other nations (Bunnell, Fertig & James, 2016). This evidence highlights changes in what society recognises as an international school in today's use of the term. For the purpose of this research, the explanation of international schools provided by Bunnell et al. (2016) will be applied to expand on the educational program indicator provided by Hayden and Thompson (2008), as well as Hill (2016). Thus, the characteristics these academics have highlighted, and which this research will use to recognise international schools, will be as follows: firstly, it must teach a curriculum that is not from the host nation, and secondly it must teach through the medium of English in a non-English speaking country.

International schools have experienced enormous growth in all parts of the world with major growth in Asia (Thompson, 2018). In the year 2000, there were 970,000 international school students world-wide attending 2,584 international schools (Gaskell, 2016). By 2016, this number had increased to 4.52 million international school students attending 8,443 international schools (Gaskell, 2016). The Independent Schools Council projects that by the year 2026, there will be 10.22 million international school students attending 16,940 schools throughout the world (Gaskell, 2016). As of September 2016, Thailand had 182 international schools with 63,950 students attending (Gaskell, 2016). This growth is partly fuelled by rapid globalisation and also by teachers willing to live abroad in search of new opportunities (Hrycak, 2015). As a result of wealthy locals demanding international educations for their children, Asian international schools in particular are enjoying lucrative market conditions (Machin, 2017).

With the rapid growth of the international school market and much conversation among international school stakeholders being centred on the concept of what is a top international school, it is an area that requires empirical research for greater clarity and understanding. As the supply continues to grow, effective ways to govern international schools are now in need of some discussion. Moreover, the obligations around the services such schools should provide students, parents, educators and the wider community need to be investigated. There is a need to canvass the opinions of multiple stakeholder groups to produce better and more comfortable learning environments for international school students.

Having established the emergence of international schools in the modern world, there is an apparent dearth of research and information on important questions related to international schools. This lack of research on all aspects of international schools is surprising. Given the extraordinary growth of international schools, the lack of research on them might be explained by two reasons: first the prominence of international schools is relatively new as the explosion is recent when one considers that at the turn of the century less than one million students were in international schools world-wide, and second there is a comparatively insignificant number of international schools compared with national schools in host countries.

#### **1.4 Statement of the problem**

There are no criteria, or measuring sticks available for interested parties to appropriately define a top international school. With the explosion of international schools comes a need to develop a greater understanding of what excellence means within these schools. An increased understanding of excellence will provide the different stakeholder groups the ability to make better decisions and have more informed conversations. While there is evidence of such research being conducted in state schools throughout the world, no such research has been conducted within the Thai international school market. This has created a gap in the existing knowledge, which this research attempts to address.

#### **1.5 Aims and objectives**

The aim of this research is to use a case study method to investigate which characteristics are considered important for an international school to be recognised as a top or exemplary international school in Thailand. These characteristics will

likely have different levels of importance for the different stakeholder groups (administrators/teachers, parents and students). Stakeholders are considered to be any group of people with similar characteristics who have a vested interest in the school. This vested interest is a result of the actions and decisions of the school that directly or indirectly affects them (Lominé, Muchena, & Pierce, 2014). In this study, these stakeholders come from the case study school and they have been asked to contribute their opinions toward this research. The stakeholders' opinions were then compared for similarities and differences between and within the stakeholder groups. The researcher has searched for similar research, but within the limited research into international schools, such research was not found.

### **1.6 Nature of the study**

To understand the important characteristics, this study has implemented a two-fold approach. Firstly, the study utilised a Delphi framework and pilot study to create the study tool. This involved interviews and feedback on the study tool from stakeholders and experts both inside the Thai education context and outside of this context. When the initial version of the tool was produced, the pilot study was employed to test the tool and possibly make alterations to the tool. Secondly, this study was a case study of one specific international school, the Superior International School. This case study part of the quantitative research involved the final version of the questionnaire that incorporated a qualitative question as the final question.

### **1.7 Conceptual framework for the study**

The researcher's investigation of the existing academic research did not uncover a conceptual framework that would adequately answer the overarching research question: "what are the characteristics that define a top international school?" Therefore, it became incumbent upon the researcher to build such a framework from the existing research that could be appropriately applied to this research question. The conceptual framework that underpinned this research combined an adaptation from the writings of Hayden and Thompson (2008), as well as from Chan and Ross (2014).

International schools are distinct from national schools with regards to their administrators, teachers, students, curriculums, management, leadership and governance (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). As these characteristics are listed as

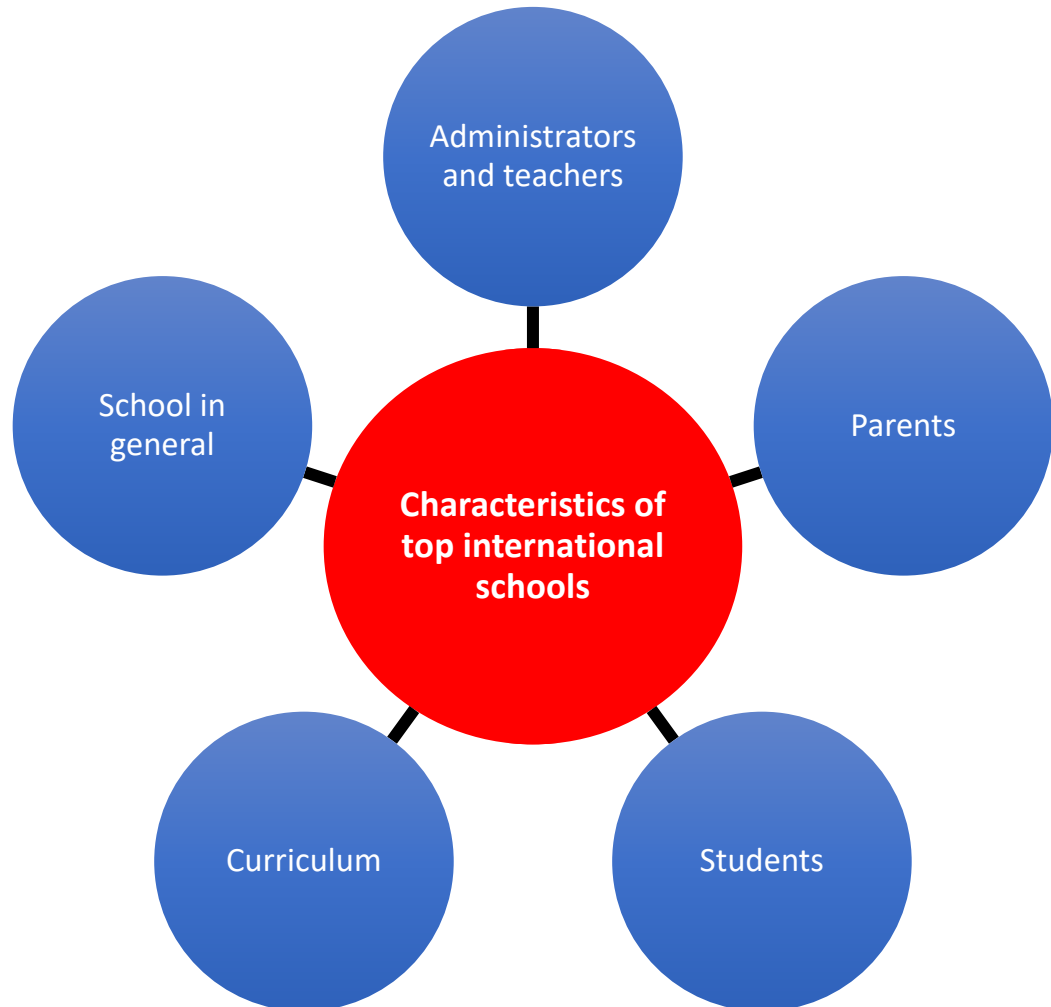
distinguishing factors that separate international schools from national schools, the top international schools should have a superior advantage in most, if not all, of these characteristics. These characteristics formed the initial components that were employed in the conceptual framework to measure what constitutes a top international school.

The responsibilities of management, leadership and governance can often be clearly separated within national schools; however, clear responsibility and separation of management, leadership and governance is much harder to identify in many international schools (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). To simplify this research and decrease confusion, management, leadership and governance represent one component within the conceptual framework. The three roles combined represent a very broad spectrum of action and decision making that collectively determines how schools run. To further simplify these collective characteristics in this conceptual framework, they are referred to as the 'school in general'. Thus, based on the work of Hayden and Thompson (2008), the conceptual framework comprises five separate components: administrators, teachers, students, curriculum, and the school in general.

When a school policy is implemented, it can have wide-reaching effects on the school's administrators, teachers, parents and students (Chan & Ross, 2014). In both Chan and Ross's (2014) research, and Hayden and Thompson's (2008) research, administrators are principals and vice principals, which is a perspective that was maintained during this research. Chan and Ross (2014) employed a model that enabled them to investigate the perceptions of the four different stakeholder groups. The important elements of this model were the stakeholder groups they investigated. The model I utilised, by Hayden and Thompson (2008), already included administrators, teachers and students. In my conceptual framework, I included parents as the sixth component keeping consistency with the four important elements in the model used by Chan and Ross (2014). The strength of this approach was that now all of the significant stakeholders could be included.

In contrast to both Hayden and Thompson's (2008) and Chan and Ross's (2014) research, the researcher combined the opinions of administrators and teachers for two reasons. First, the administrators were a very small group and each person's opinion would have a significant impact on the results for the entire group. One person with extreme views could significantly skew the average results from a

midpoint. Second, both stakeholder groups were school employees and therefore shared similar personal aims (Lominé, Muchena & Pierce, 2014). It was clear that the administrators and teachers were the two most closely related stakeholder groups. This was the justification for treating these two stakeholder groups as one.



*Figure 1.* This is a visual diagram of the conceptual framework. It indicates the five separate components that were utilised in this research.

Having established the conceptual framework, this chapter now consider how the framework underpinned this study. The five conceptual framework components each identified important characteristics that were indicators for top international schools. The first three components considered what the school provides for the stakeholder groups and what the stakeholder groups contribute in the way of improving the school. The next two components related to the school itself; how it conducts its role in society and the effect this has on the different stakeholder groups.

### **1.8 Purpose of the study**

This study investigated how different stakeholders valued the different characteristics when determining what a school required before it could be considered as a top international school. It looked at both the similarities and the differences between the different stakeholder groups when considering the top ten most important characteristics for each stakeholder group.

The main or overarching question this research answered was:

What are the characteristics that define a top international school according to the main stakeholder groups?

In answering this main question, the researcher investigated the following four subordinate questions.

1. What characteristics are the most important when defining a top international school according to the perspectives of administrators and teachers?
2. What characteristics are the most important when defining a top international school according to the perspectives of parents?
3. What characteristics are the most important when defining a top international school according to the perspectives of students?
4. Are the most important characteristics, when defining a top international school, the same for the different stakeholder groups?

### **1.9 Where this research fits into the existing body of knowledge**

Stakeholders are subconsciously benchmarking when they consider what the top international schools are doing that is of significant value to the markets they serve. Benchmarking is a process whereby you compare your business with your competitors (Lominé, Muchena & Pierce, 2014). Businesses, or international schools in this situation, focus on the market leaders in their field (or other fields) and consider what it is they are doing that is superior (Lominé, Muchena & Pierce, 2014; Morrison, 1998). The problem with benchmarking in regard to international schools is that there is no clear understanding of what exactly a top international school is. Clearly, the need exists for the establishment of an instrument that can measure excellence in international schools.

In the search for an answer to ‘characteristics that define a top international school’, the researcher did not find any research that directly answered this question. Related to this topic, there are international journals that focus on what good

administrators and teachers do, and what parents and students expect. Possibly the best example of such a journal is the *Journal of Research in International Education*. Again, such journals are limited in number, but they do provide relevant information. In general, the overwhelming majority of research does not focus specifically on international schools and focuses instead on national schools within developed countries. This current, albeit limited, existing knowledge from international journals was employed by this study. However, this research has expanded on this knowledge and has subsequently moved beyond it to develop a greater understanding of the perspectives from the main stakeholders.

Current research indicates that consistent stakeholders' opinions cannot be assumed in every context involving international schools. In MacDonald (2009), and in Zhang and McGrath (2009) there were obvious areas of overlap in opinions between different stakeholder groups. Contrarily, in Bailey (2015) and in Fryer (2009) researchers found areas where the different stakeholder groups' opinions actually differ.

International schools continually strive to be the best in the industry. Without more research such as this, international schools are merely guessing what the required factors are to be considered among the best. Until a greater understanding is gained of what it is these stakeholders want, it is difficult to truly identify what comprises a top international school. Due to the lack of research in this field, it is thus important to fill this gap in our understanding. Only when international schools have empirically-based research informing them of how they can better cater to the requirements of each stakeholder group, can they truly be recognised as a top international school.



### 1.10 Definition of terms

Table 1.1

*Definition of terms used in this thesis*

Term	Definition
Administrator	A person employed by a school in the role of principal or assistant principal. This was explained in section 1.6.
International school	A school that utilises a curriculum that does not belong to the host nation and teaches through the medium of English in a non-English speaking country. This was explained in section 1.2.
Internationally minded	A person who understands their place in the world and respects and appreciates all other races and religions. They recognise and place value on the characteristics that make people different.
Open minded	A person who does not pass judgement on another based on their race, religion or values but rather accepts people are different and tries to gain a stronger understanding and appreciation of these differences.

### 1.11 Procedures

The research design utilised a mixed-methods research model (Tondeur et al., 2015). Data were collected using a three-phased approach. The first phase used a modified Delphi framework. The second phase employed a pilot study. The third phase utilised a questionnaire, which had been developed during phases one and two.

Phase one, which was underpinned by the modified Delphi framework, involved 30 educational professionals and stakeholders, who were all independent from the case study school. The researcher interviewed each person to ascertain what they felt the most important characteristics of a top international school were. The interview results were both summarised and then converted into items on a questionnaire. Subsequently, these items were presented to the interviewees for further feedback. Their feedback was then applied to improve the items.

Phase two, which utilised the pilot study, involved ten teachers, ten parents and ten students who were all independent from the case study school and the participants from phase one. These participants completed the questionnaire and they were asked to provide feedback regarding any problems related to item clarity. This

feedback was used to alter the questionnaire in order to improve its clarity, reliability and validity.

Phase three utilised the questionnaire to solicit opinions, regarding the important characteristics of top international schools, based on the perceptions of administrators/teachers (Chandler, 2010), parents and students. These participants were all selected due to their association with the case study school. The results were then analysed to answer the research questions posed by this research.

### **1.12 Significance of the study**

The question of *what constitutes a top international school* will continue to gain relevance as the number of international school students and schools continues to grow. According to Gaskell (2016), the number of students attending international schools grew by over 350% over the sixteen years that followed the year 2000. The Independent Schools Council projects the number of students to more than double over the next ten years to 2026, making a total of 10.22 million international school students attending 16,940 schools throughout the world. With 182 international schools, Thailand has a high number of such schools (Gaskell, 2016).

The contribution this research makes to the field of research is two-fold. First, it contributes a research tool in the way of a questionnaire that other researchers can use in its entirety – or they can adapt it for their own research. Second, this research has used this same tool to identify the more important characteristics of international schools in Thailand. Without this research and other similar research, interested parties cannot fully understand the importance of each characteristic when identifying what represents a top international school. This research will therefore assist interested stakeholders who would like to match and compare international schools with confidence.

Extrapolating from this, for an international school to be truly regarded as a top international school and for others to measure themselves against excellence, there is a requirement to understand how important each characteristic is for such schools. This research provides valuable information that helps to produce knowledge regarding the importance of each characteristic for international schools in Thailand. As a result of this research, schools will be able to focus manpower and budgets to improve their own value in line with the perceptions of each of the main stakeholder groups. Finally, other researchers should be able to utilise this

methodology and use the validated tool to answer similar research questions in various other countries.

### **1.13 Organisation of the study**

Chapter 1: the researcher introduces the original purpose of international schools as well as movements away from this purpose, and any growth of these schools. The chapter then considers the problem and the purpose of this research, being that there is currently no measure of excellence in these schools. It also outlines why this research is beneficial and how it was underpinned by previous research.

Chapter 2: the researcher describes how the literature review was conducted. It also explains the current knowledge in this field and the research that has produced it. It separates this knowledge into five distinct sections of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 3: considers all elements of the research that were carried out. It outlines the design and methodology of the different phases as well as any steps undertaken in this research. It discusses the research tool that was utilised to answer the essential questions of this thesis.

Chapter 4: outlines any results and findings from the research tool developed in chapter 3.

Chapter 5: conducts an analysis of the results found for each item in the research tool.

Chapter 6: discusses the results found in chapter 5 and considers how those results answer the essential questions that were being researched.

Chapter 7: offers conclusions based on the results of this research.

### **1.14 Research assumptions**

In conducting this research there are a number of assumptions that have been made by the researcher. First, in the methodology the assumption was that the modified Delphi framework and the pilot test were the most appropriate research tools when producing a research questionnaire for this purpose. Second, there was an assumption that the research items were developed to such an extent that they were able to adequately extract accurate and valuable data from all participants. Third, there was an assumption that all participants in this research participated in good faith and answered all questions as honestly and openly as possible.

### **1.15 Summary**

Several outcomes have emerged from this chapter. The first is the relative and growing importance of international schools throughout the world. The second is the dearth of focused research on what makes any particular international school exceptional. This chapter introduces an appropriate theoretical framework for such research and describes how it was developed. Then, the framework that incorporated a three-phased methodology is presented. This framework was utilized when answering the four subordinate questions that collectively answer the overarching question. Thirdly and finally, the importance of conducting research into what characteristics are necessary for schools to be classified as a top international school have been identified.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter starts by looking at how the literature review was constructed. Secondly, it considers the important research associated with each of the separate components of the conceptual framework. It does this in the order of administrators and teachers, parents, students, curriculum, and the school in general.

#### **2.2 Process of the literature review**

This literature review began by researching articles for '*top international schools*' on EBSCOhost and Google Scholar. Due to a lack of relevant material, it was decided that the research would not be limited by the term '*international school*', as there are many schools that are not called international schools, yet meet the criteria of an international school. As a result, the term '*international school*' was expanded. American schools, Baccalaureate schools, British schools, Cambridge schools, embassy schools, English schools, European schools, intercultural schools, Oxford schools and World Schools were also included as forms of international schools. This list is not exclusive; there are many other schools that meet the criteria of an international school, but they do not use the word 'international' or any of the words listed above as part of their name. However, these words listed and the word *international* were used as they covered the majority of such schools.

The searches were conducted using the 11 terms listed above to represent the many different types of international schools. These terms were used in each search and proceeded with the following searches: 1) teachers' demands from, 2) parents' demands from, 3) students' demands from, 4) characteristics of top, 5) top, and 6) world class.

On each occasion, EBSCOhost returned zero results. The same research terms were then used on Google Scholar. Each time, the researcher read through the returned results on the first three pages of Google Scholar. Beyond the first three pages, the returns were less relevant to international schools. Each search returned a similar list of suggested resources. Unfortunately, nothing listed was of value to this researcher and this research.

Building on the idea of limited resources, Lee, Hallinger and Walker (2012), in their case study research about management in International Baccalaureate schools

in China, Hong Kong, Thailand and Vietnam, found that the dramatic growth in international schools had not fuelled sufficient research into the international schools' market. They emphasised the need for more research to be conducted into international schools. Their observation became very evident while conducting the research for this literature review. Many hours were spent reading and searching for previous research but there was a dearth of research when considering what characteristics are required for a school to be considered a top international school. Consequently, the researcher was not able to obtain one relevant source document.

Having established a lack of available research, the researcher then read through journal titles, abstracts and introductions of many different journal publications. The *Journal of Research in International Education* proved to be the most valuable resource as it focuses on both international education and the primary and secondary sectors of education. Many articles were found in this publication that did not specifically answer this researcher's essential questions but were, nonetheless, able to contribute much to this literature review. Other journals and publications have been employed in this literature review, but the *Journal of Research in International Education* dominates this review.

To further understand the international school markets and desirable characteristics, the researcher utilised websites and publications from a number of international school accreditation bodies. These bodies included the Council of International Schools (CIS), Education Development Trust, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and the Thai Ministry of Education (MOE). These accreditation bodies were selected as they are very popular and widely used throughout Thailand. The websites and publications were very important in order to build an understanding of what these accreditation bodies believed were important when they performed their audits on international schools.

### **2.3 Administrators and teachers**

In the American context, school administrators are the employees who are responsible for managing the school's day-to-day operations, as well as creating and enforcing rules and regulations (Administration, n.d.). This research also utilised this definition of an administrator. These administrators held the title of principal or

assistant principal for this research. Conversely, secretaries, counsellors and other ancillary staff were not considered as administrators for the purpose of this research.

The Council of International Schools encompasses 878 membership schools spread throughout the world (Council of International Schools: Membership Directory, n.d.). The Council of International Schools conducted a study that sent out 3079 electronic questionnaires. Valid replies received amounted to 281. Only teachers listed on the Council of International Schools' placement database were asked why they had departed (or why they were intending to leave their international school after fulfilling just one contract. The three main causes for leaving were negative perceptions concerning: 1) administrative leadership, 2) compensation, and 3) personal circumstances (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). Other significant reasons for leaving were related to private ownership, misrepresentation at recruitment, conflicts with leaders, contractual issues, and colleagues (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009).

Research on international school heads and teachers has analysed the effect leadership has on teacher retention in the recognised region of Near East South Asia (NESA) (Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010). School heads are different from principals in that they are the most senior administrator and their role is more business-orientated. Four statistically significant indicators of teachers' likelihood of remaining at their current school are connected to: 1) age, 2) salary, 3) management practices of the school head, and 4) the issue of teachers' impact on the school's decision making by administrators (Mancuso et al., 2010). Surprisingly, principals were not a significant factor in relation to the retention of teachers. Rather, "school heads who exhibit a leadership style consistent with transformational and distributed leadership are more likely to promote teacher retention" (Lujan Martinez, 2011; Mancuso et al., 2010, p. 320). It is clear that school heads who were willing to change to meet new circumstances, willing to listen, and who were willing to delegate power and responsibilities were highly regarded by teachers. In addition to these attributes, good school leaders and heads also recognise that technologies that connect school, students and teachers reduce teachers' personal time, promote teacher burnout and subsequently lower teaching effectiveness (Marvin, 2016).

The main reasons teachers seek out international schools over others are related to: travel, financial incentives, and a better life (Hrycak, 2015; Savva, 2015). Hrycak (2015) also considered both the advantages and disadvantages teachers experienced when working in an international school setting. Advantages included

remuneration packages, opportunities to travel, focused students, supportive school parents, lighter workloads, smaller classes, and a better standard of living. Disadvantages listed were: a lack of proximity to family, lack of job security, crassly profit-orientated schools, lower educational standards, and spoiled children. Ninety-eight percent of overseas teachers were happy with their decision to take up employment in international schools (Hrycak, 2015).

Another angle from existing research suggested that when administrators and teachers accept an international appointment, it is important that they “prepare themselves, since the change of location and culture, the change in the student body and colleagues, the change in parental expectations, and the loss of familiar signs and symbols may have a significant impact on their professional satisfaction and personal happiness” (Halicioglu, 2015, p. 242). Halicioglu (2015) suggests that interculturally competent teachers are more capable of acclimatising to a new international school setting and are more able to deal with the expected culture shock they experience. Teachers who are not interculturally competent or have not experienced any diversity training are likely to be less effective in the classroom (Hirsch, 2016). In support of Hirsch (2016), foreign teachers taking employment at international schools need to be prepared for changes in what they expect of leadership styles, as they often do not match what they experienced in their home countries. As for administrators, they need to be aware of the difficulties new international teachers face in an international setting, as teacher contentment (or lack, thereof) directly effects the quality of education received by students (Halicioglu, 2015).

The following section narrows the focus of this literature review to international schools in Asia. In Japan, administrators and teachers have looked at students’ academic results as a leading indicator of the educational quality (MacDonald, 2009). With such importance placed on academic results, administrators and teachers may in the future expect to see league tables of international school performances, as is the case in some national school systems (MacDonald, 2009). Academic results should only be considered if the assessment tool is consistent and the students are from similar populations (Lowe, 2000).

Research that has focused on teacher-student relationships in China found discrepancies between international teachers’ perceptions of their roles and responsibilities compared with local teachers’ perceptions (Zhang & McGrath, 2009). The international teachers did not advocate the harsh student punishment,



rules and control of their Chinese peers (Zhang & McGrath, 2009). Rather, international teachers valued students who were confident, were decision makers, and who were more independent and resourceful (Zhang & McGrath, 2009).

Administrators and teachers believe that a true international school does not require an international student body (Bailey, 2015). In contrast to student nationalities, it is of paramount importance to have international teachers giving students an appreciation of diverse cultures (Fryer, 2009), as this encourages the important timely concept of global citizenship and international mindedness (Hill, 2015; International Baccalaureate, n.d.; Rader, 2015). International accreditation agencies like the Council of International Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and the International Baccalaureate emphasise the importance of schools adopting an international mindedness approach (Thompson, 2018). Most national and international curriculum policy documents emphasise the importance of educating global citizens; however, many teachers lack the skills to deliver such an education (Ledger, 2016). To effectively educate global citizens, teachers' intercultural sensitivity needs to become a consistent mindset (Taylor, 2014). This evidence highlights what educational systems want to achieve; however, it also calls into question the ability of the different educational systems to achieve such objectives.

Expanding on MacDonald (2009), most Asian parents had very high academic expectations when sending their children to international schools. These expectations result in much pressure on students, teachers and the schools in general. Administrators in particular, as well as teachers, should address these parentally driven expectations and pressures. Many school leaders talk about the need to educate Asian parents and change their mindset by dragging them away from the expectations they hold (Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012).

In research from Malaysia, cultural comfort levels of expatriate teachers were highlighted. These expatriate teachers reported that they did not feel they could wear their preferred clothing. Also, they were not comfortable addressing important topics in relation to drugs, alcohol or sex (Bailey, 2015). They further believed the local teachers tended to spoon-feed information to their students. They opined that spoon-feeding students information did not challenge the higher-level thinking skills as outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy. Expatriate teachers described the teaching methods used by local Malaysian teachers as both outdated and inferior when compared to

expatriate teaching methods. Indeed, a number of teachers felt Malaysians needed to change their teaching methods. Consequently, some teachers went as far as to suggest that the Malaysian teachers should go abroad to learn better teaching techniques (Bailey, 2015).

## **2.4 Parents**

Schools that were originally intended to educate expatriate children now accept a high percentage of local, native students with wealthy parents (Bunnell et al., 2016; Halicioglu, 2015; Hu & McKay, 2012; Wettewa, 2016). This change means that international schools receive and perceive different expectations from parents than in the past (Halicioglu, 2015). Therefore, analysing the opinions of parents is now an important and effective method to learn about strengths and weaknesses of schools from a parental perspective (Martinez, Hetterschijt & Iglesias, 2015). The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (2017) also re-enforces the importance of parental involvement in schools by making it a key factor in their accreditation.

MacKenzie (2010) analysed research from Switzerland, Japan, Argentina, Israel and Singapore. He found that nearly all parents have similar demands in relation to eight significant criteria. Those eight criteria regularly appeared (in approximately the same order) in each of the studies, and they are, in order of importance: 1) English language, 2) good impression and belief of a child's happiness, 3) curriculum being implemented, 4) complete international education, 5) smaller class sizes than the local schools, 6) high stakes international examinations, 7) the school's reputation, and 8) access to high-ranking universities abroad (Mackenzie, 2010).

Martinez, Hetterschijt and Iglesias (2015) reinforced MacKenzie's view (2010) by finding remarkably similar results with European parents. Bilingual or multilingual approaches of European international schools were highly valued, with a high majority of participants mentioning it as a strength. Other strengths included multiculturalism, enabling students to develop desirable concepts of global citizenship, followed by high teaching standards and good practices. The majority of parents listed limited parent participation, centralism/top-down management and turgid bureaucracy as major weaknesses (Martinez et al., 2015).

Considering perceptions of education in Asia, Japanese parents are very interested in the academic results of international schools (MacDonald, 2009). MacDonald (2009) identified investors who only want to see fiscal returns. He drew a parallel from this to parents being mainly interested in academic performance figures. Fryer (2009) gained similar results to MacKenzie (2010) in his Hong Kong research, finding that parents placed a high value on their children being fluent in both English and Mandarin. Not surprisingly, bilingual education was a major factor in parents' selection of the school they chose. To further extrapolate, the parents' perceived importance of language, parents expressed remorse that their children were not as comfortable in Mandarin as they were in English (Fryer, 2009).

There is a strong social culture in East Asian countries that recognises the importance of education. This culture permeates amongst the parents resulting in them placing a very high value on the education of their children. These parents place much pressure on international schools as they expect their children will experience educational success. They will often seek high quality education that is delivered through the medium of English (Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012). The importance of academic success to parents is not lost on the international schools' marketing and public relations departments. Commercial material often highlights the school's graduates who receive admission to reputable universities worldwide (Lee, et al., 2012). News travels fast in the densely populated Asian communities and parents will select international schools based on perception. High expectations in East Asia create demands for "smaller classes, a predominance of foreign instructors, better facilities, instruction in English and other 'foreign' languages, and an international curriculum [which] are key factors in parental decision-making" (Lee, et al., 2012, p. 300).

In a study conducted in Hong Kong, Ng (2012) took a different approach by looking at what the government should do to stop parents selecting international schools for their children. The recommendations from this study were:

- educational authorities review policy and incorporate parental opinion in the changes they make;
- education authorities enquire about what it is that local parents like about international schools;
- government schools must increase the intercultural communication and improve student and teachers' language abilities in English and Chinese; and

- authorities review after school activities, making them more holistic in the student development rather than using the time to increase academic learning opportunities.

Building on the overwhelming research indicating the importance of language and in particular English, wealthy parents in Sri Lanka selected international schools primarily for the instruction in English, and secondly for the foreign curricula (Wettewa, 2016). Parents believed that a command of English would enable their children to access a wider range of books and media. It would also give them greater opportunities in the job market. The foreign curricula were seen as superior as they are constantly updated, and they promote critical thinking and independent learning (Wettewa, 2016).

## **2.5 Students**

In the current technological era, students throughout the world are becoming highly mobile. They possess greater opportunities to both study and enjoy careers outside of their home countries. Fuelled by this mobility “the pragmatic needs of highly mobile students necessitate an education which is recognised internationally or in their home countries” (Corlu, 2014, p. 794). Education systems that provide students with an opportunity to complete an external examination are afforded great attention from school administrators, teachers and their students (Corlu, 2014).

Students attending, or considering attending, international schools in Asia place great importance on the school’s academic results (MacDonald, 2009). In addition, Chinese students do not like the strict and punitive teaching methods of local teachers, preferring international teachers who place less of an emphasis on conformity (Zhang & McGrath, 2009). These students also like the creative freedom encouraged by foreign teachers, as well as their efforts to instil confidence and convert dependent students into independent learners. However, the students greatly appreciated the way Chinese teachers make their time available to them (Zhang & McGrath, 2009).

According to Fryer (2009), Hong Kong students are happy with their English acquisition. Subsequently, they do not afford the same importance as their parents do to the second language at a bilingual international school (Fryer, 2009). In opinions that conflicted with their teachers’ opinions, many students in Malaysia placed great importance on the percentage of students from the host nation when deciding

whether or not an international school is truly *international* (Bailey, 2015). This mindset is supported by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Thailand, as they have mandated that no more than fifty percent of the student body should be Thai (International Schools, 2003). However, the students in Malaysia reinforced Fryer's (2009) research, in that they believed there was an advantage for their future careers in learning through English as a medium of instruction (Bailey, 2015).

In support of the research conducted by Zhang and McGrath (2009), students in Malaysia felt local teachers placed more emphasis on student behaviour and discipline as compared to their expatriate colleagues. These students agree with expatriate teachers that local Malaysian teachers had different teaching styles. However, in contradiction to expatriate teachers, students believed both methods had value, and neither was superior to the other (Bailey, 2015). Students claimed that a strength of the school was having a combination of both local and foreign teachers. Regardless of the students' opinions, there was much concern by the expatriate teachers regarding the methods in which students were being taught. Expatriate teachers believed Malaysian students lacked motivation, they did not ask questions or offer opinions, and they were too concerned about making mistakes (Bailey, 2015). Furthermore, these perceived (cultural) failings in Malaysian students were seen by expatriate teachers as being detrimental to a full education.

Focusing on Thai international school students, Deveney (2005) found that Thai students automatically imputed wisdom and morality to teachers. In addition, Deveney also found these Thai students displaying advantageous characteristics of friendliness, non-aggressiveness, acceptance, respect, and tolerance; they were team players, non-confrontational, and they were positive about their learning (Deveney, 2005). However, the disadvantages were similar to Bailey's (2015). Thai students were seen as "passive, non-risk takers, needing to keep face, not self-reliant and lacking in motivation" (Deveney, 2005, p. 158). Some of these traits would be seen as beneficial in learning situations while others would create barriers to learning and restrict students' abilities to be creative.

## **2.6 Curriculum**

The Education Development Trust has accredited many schools spanning seven countries and spread over three different continents. This development trust offers the International Schools Quality Mark (ISQM) for schools that successfully

complete their accreditation process. The accreditation process requires schools to have a relevant and effective curriculum that is well delivered and supported by high quality teaching and resources. ISQM further highlights the role a curriculum plays in developing students' achievements, progress and growth (Education Development Trust, n.d.).

The curriculum is a very important cornerstone of the international school. In the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) handbook for evaluators there is great emphasis on the curriculum. This includes, but is not limited to, how the curriculum reflects the vision and mission of the school, how the curriculum is maintained and developed, and how the curriculum is being supported by professional development and budgets (NEASC Commission on International Education, 2014). The curriculum commands a significant amount of attention from any visiting accreditation team. This emphasis on the curriculum is mirrored by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in their accreditation procedure (WASC, 2017).

Having established the world-wide recognition of curriculum importance, the review now focuses on Hong Kong. Professional educators and the community in Hong Kong believed students achieving a bilingual language set is a "very desirable quality" (Fryer, 2009, p. 212). Academic staff believed a bilingual environment enriched the school. They believed the English curriculum was critical for students who wished to attend the best universities in English-speaking countries (Fryer, 2009).

Case study research conducted in Malaysia considered students' perceptions regarding the difference between international curricula and the Malaysian national curriculum. Students placed great importance on the international style curricula. They found international curricula to be "a revelation and a defining feature of the school" (Bailey, 2015, p. 91).

Finally, it is possible to link the international curriculum to Thailand. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Thailand permits international schools to adopt international curricula, a modified international curriculum or produce their own curricula. Regardless of what international schools choose, the MOE requires the curriculum to incorporate an average of fifty minutes a day for students to learn about Thai language and culture (International Schools, 2003). As a result, all international school curricula in Thailand can be viewed as a blend between the Thai

national curriculum and the international curriculum. However, it is prudent to recognise the dominance of the international component of the curricula as fifty minutes a day is a small part of the regular school day in Thailand.

## **2.7 School in general**

Research that spanned Africa, Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia, considered the effect location had on recruitment and the location's role in the retention of international school teachers (Chandler, 2010). Location is an important consideration when teachers look for overseas positions. In contrast, there is no link between teacher satisfaction with location and the likelihood of signing further contracts (Chandler, 2010). Personal satisfaction largely related to marriage, children, or a need to be close to family all had significant impacts on the retention of teachers (Chandler, 2010).

Lujan Martinez (2011) has outlined a five-step process for leadership to produce an authentic international school. Step one looks at the mission statement of the school. This statement must promote the desirable characteristics of internationalisation and the leadership must endorse and model the traits of the mission statement for legitimacy. Step two emphasises the importance of recruitment and retention of the right staff. Top international schools need to recruit the highest quality staff who believe in a multicultural education. Then the leadership is responsible for holding these high-quality teachers beyond their initial two-year contract. Step three highlights the importance of quality professional development for the educators. The high-quality schools are able to provide the professional development teachers require most to assist student learning. Step four is focused on the diversity of the students who are admitted to the school. Thus, true international schools should have a quota on the number of students they accept from any one nationality. The fifth step is for the leadership to provide the appropriate curriculum and assessment tools so that all members of the student body can be successful in the current climate.

Administrators and teachers alike were in unison regarding their conviction that cultural diversity within their schools represented a strength. However, the strength of diversity came at a cost by creating a variety of practical management issues (Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012). One school in Lee's case study boasted about having "54 different ethnicities" (Lee et al., 2012, p. 300). So many ethnicities

came with multiple perceptions and expectations of the school. If school administrators want to gain the benefits of diversity, they also need to ensure they can cope with the demands (Lee, et al., 2012).

In contrast, the Council of International Schools (CIS) believes that schools must focus on both student learning and global citizenship. CIS is an accreditation body of international schools boasting over five hundred accredited member schools. The CIS accreditation process ensures that schools are devoted to both their mission and vision statements, focuses on teaching and learning, student safety and well-being, and is committed to developing students as global citizens (International Accreditation, n.d.). In a similar process to CIS, NEASC also places great importance on the school's guiding statements, including their vision and mission statements, when accrediting schools (NEASC Commission on International Education, 2014).

For a school to receive accreditation from NEASC, they must demonstrate the ability to support students both academically and beyond the academics. In their accreditation handbook, NEASC specifically highlights support for students regardless of their learning styles, effective language support, and developmental advice beyond high school (NEASC Commission on International Education, 2014). This shows the importance they place on supporting the students in school and beyond. In the WASC requirements for accreditation much attention is paid to caring, concern, high expectations and child protection WASC (2017).

Deveney (2005) focused on how the Thai culture affects Thai students in international schools. Significant differences found between Thai national schools and international schools included the curriculum taught and the teaching methods utilised. In line with Bailey (2015), international schools utilise more two-way communication and this was problematic for Thai students. Also, culture and language were seen as very important issues. Thus, there is a need for foreign teachers to gain a greater understanding of both if they are to be more effective teachers for Thai pupils in their classes (Deveney, 2005).

## **2.8 Summary**

There were many difficulties in finding relevant research on international schools. The field of international schools remains under-researched and this has left a significant gap in the academic knowledge pertaining to this field (Lee, Hallinger



& Walker, 2012). The available research was then aligned with one of the five components of the conceptual framework. These components being: administrators and teachers, parents, students, curriculum and school in general. Throughout the literature review there were common themes that have received much attention in the current research. Some of the more common themes were associated with language acquisition, teaching styles, examination results, and opened mindedness.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research methodology, including analysis of data**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes, in detail, the purpose and methodological process employed by this research. It outlines the three steps utilised while developing the research tool. Then it elaborates on: who the participants were in each step of the research, the use of the research tools when gathering data, and the process used to analyse the data. The chapter also explains how the research tool was tested for reliability.

#### **3.2 Purpose statement**

The intent of this study was to explore what characteristics, as given by the five different components in the conceptual framework, were valued by the different stakeholder groups when considering what defines a top international school in Thailand. The purpose was to make this clear for the decision makers at international schools so they can better meet the needs of each stakeholder. A subsequent purpose was to give stakeholders a clearer understanding of required characteristics that make for a top international school. This way, a more informed decision-making processes can be initiated by all parties as a result of this research.

#### **3.3 Inductive theory or pattern**

This research was based on inductive theory, which means defining where different stakeholder groups possess different characteristics, interests and goals compared to other stakeholder groups (Kazadi, Lievens & Mahr, 2016).

#### **3.4 World view**

The researcher has a social constructivists' world view. Social constructivists believe that people make meaning of and understand the world around them based on their own experiences and their own interpretation of these experiences (Creswell, 2014). This results in a broad range of individual understandings that often do not agree (Chandler, 2010). This research utilised a mixed-methods research approach within the social constructivist world view. Many research methods and research questions necessitate the use of mixed methods research that utilises both qualitative and quantitative data for complete analysis (Fielding, 2010; Hirsch, 2016).

When detailed data about individual perceptions needed to be collected, the researcher applied qualitative research. This gave a multitude of detailed important characteristics of top international schools (Dey, 2003). When the bigger picture needed to be analysed by looking at the magnitude of the different characteristics identified by the qualitative research, a quantitative research tool was applied. A common process in research is the collection of qualitative data, and the data is then manipulated into quantitative research prior to data analysis (Blaikie, 2003). This process resulted in different characteristics of international schools being ranked by level of importance. This subsequently gave an overall picture of the perceptions and their weight afforded by the different stakeholder groups.

### **3.5 Process of the methodology**

In order to conduct this research effectively the researcher needed to locate a research tool that would adequately extract the opinions of different stakeholders, regarding what the important characteristics are in recognising a top international school. This tool needed to meet multiple criteria: firstly, it needed to use layman's language so that people not involved in the education profession could understand. Secondly, it needed to be able to compare and contrast the opinions of different stakeholder groups.

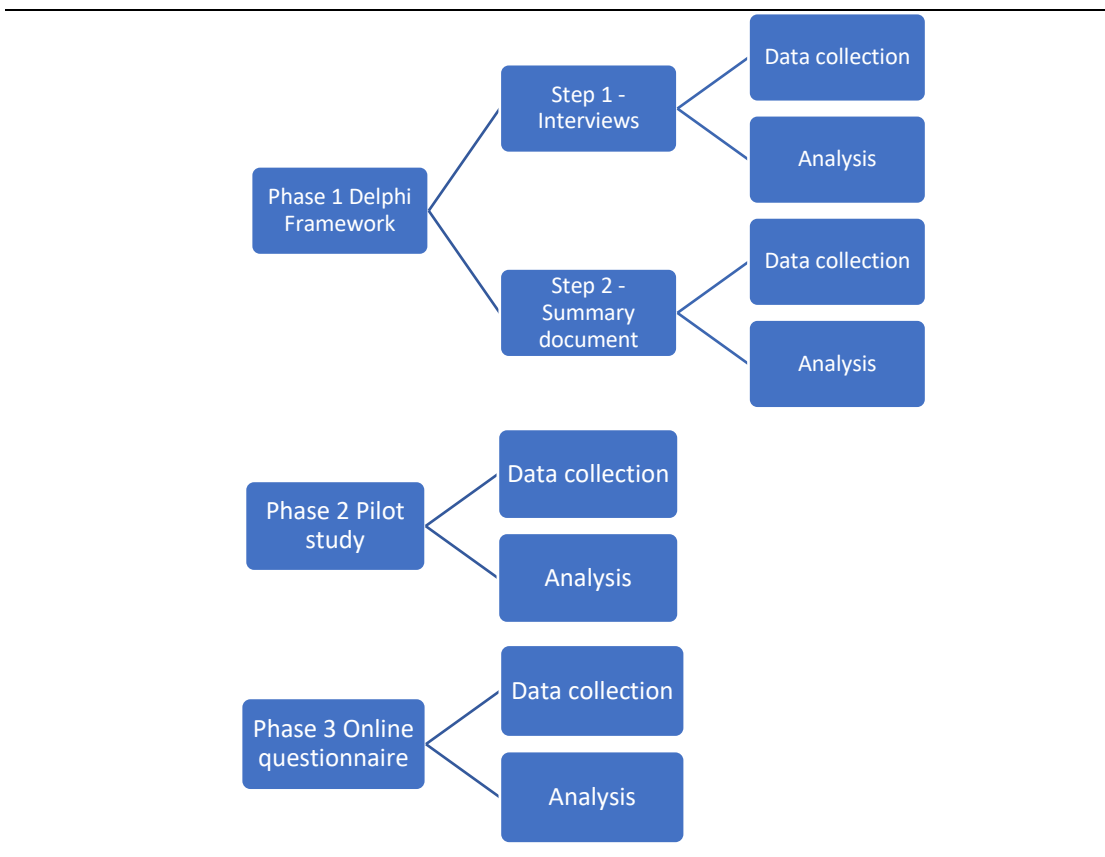
Due to the limited amount of research on international schools and none of this research being focused toward the characteristics of top international schools, there was not an appropriate tool available. It became incumbent upon the researcher to develop such a tool. The Delphi framework was selected as they are powerful when there isn't any information available (Hasson, Keeney & McKenna, 2000), or in the seminal work by Kaynak and Macaulay (1984), there is a need to analyse peoples' opinions.

The Delphi started with interviews with experts and interested parties who no longer had, or never had a connection with the Superior International School. These interviews provided qualitative insights into international schools that could generally be applied to most international schools. A questionnaire was developed from these insights to gather specific contextual opinions from stakeholders of the Superior International School that would only be relevant to other international schools with a similar student demographic.

### 3.6 Research design and methodology

The research design utilised the mixed-methods research model by Tondeur et al., (2015). Mixed methods research is very effective as it permits the researcher, or researchers, to combine elements of both qualitative and quantitative research (Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante & Nelson, 2009). Data were collected with the assistance of a three-phased approach. The first phase utilised an adjusted Delphi framework. The second phase employed a pilot study. The third phase used an online questionnaire (Deveney, 2005), developed during phases one and two. A visual of this process is displayed in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1  
*Visual representation of the research design*



Delphi frameworks are commonly used in situations where there is insufficient information (Hasson, Keeney & McKenna, 2000). Seminal work by Kaynak and Macaulay (1984) explained how important the Delphi framework is when researchers need to analyse peoples' opinions and value judgements, and qualitative information is the only information they can obtain. Delphi frameworks have been widely employed in many fields of research and are gaining acceptance

among many researchers (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). It “is an iterative multistage process” (Hasson et al., 2000, p. 1008), where multiple experts are asked their opinions about a topic. It assumes that multiple people are more likely to arrive at the correct decision (Hasson et al., 2000). The researcher collates the expert opinions on a topic area, then informs the experts of the results and proceeds to question participants again to gain greater consensus among them. This process will be repeated a pre-determined number of times or until a consensus is found (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

As a research method in education, the Delphi framework does have disadvantages when compared to other possible methods like focus group discussions. One weakness is the speed at which participants can come to a consensus. Focus groups tend to be very dynamic where ideas can be contributed, broken down and analysed enabling participants to change their stance on issues very quickly (Twin, 2019). Another weakness in the Delphi compared with a focus group is that much time can laps before participants receive feedback on their opinions.

Regardless of these disadvantages the Delphi framework does have advantages over methods like focus group discussions. These advantages were critical to this research and far outweighed any disadvantages of the Delphi. Advantages included the individual participant’s convenience to participate in this research (Twin, 2019). There were a total of 30 participants, all of whom were busy people and some who lived in other continents (O’Neill, Scott, & Conboy, 2011). With possible travel inconveniences and country time differences it would not have been possible to coordinate all of these participants so they could contribute to a focus group. Secondly, as the researcher wanted to enlist a wide variety of opinions (O’Neill, Scott, & Conboy, 2011), thirty participants would have been too many for an effective focus group. Thirdly, the Delphi framework offered participants anonymity making them more comfortable to express their opinions and less fearful of repercussions (Twin, 2019). Finally, the Delphi framework ensured that the opinions of all participants was heard.

### **3.7 Phase 1 (Delphi Framework)**

**Participants.** Through the media of face to face, telephone, Facebook, line application and Skype interviews (Deveney, 2005; Bailey, 2015), the perceptions of thirty education professionals and international school stakeholders were obtained

(Lominé, Muchena & Pierce, 2014). Interviews are very powerful research methods when researching complex issues, providing researchers with an opportunity to obtain complete clarification and understanding of complex topics (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). These opinions were comprised of one professional who advises the Thai ministry of education, two high ranking employees working in the international schools' section of the Thai Ministry of Education, two current or former principals of international schools, five current or former teachers of international schools, two current or former counsellors employed by international schools, three university lecturers who are members of the education faculties at their respective universities, five parents of international school students, five recent graduates from the case study international school, and five current students enrolled in either tenth, eleventh or twelfth grade at an international school. None of these participants were current members of the teaching, parenting or student stakeholder groups at the Superior International School. This research purposely elicited information from a wide range of professional educators and stakeholders to encourage as much scope in opinion as possible (Chandler, 2010; O'Neill, Scott, & Conboy, 2011).

Utilizing the convenience sampling method, the researcher enlisted a network of colleagues, friends and family to identify most of the potential participants for this research (Chandler, 2010). The only exception was an in-person visit to the Ministry of Education. After multiple phone calls and emails, without luck, the researcher drove to and walked into the head offices of the Thai Ministry of Education. This was a cold call on the Ministry's last official day of work for the year 2017. Fortunately, there were two high ranking employees who agreed to be interviewed.

All potential participants were first approached by the researcher, or by the researcher's friends or family. These approaches were via face-to-face communication, email, Line or Skype, and in each case the potential participants were asked if they would participate in the research. Secondly, they were all provided with a copy of the participant information sheet (Appendix B) and a copy of the appropriate consent form (Hrycak, 2015) to ensure ethical protocols were maintained (Edge & Khamsi, 2012). There were two different consent forms depending on the age of the potential participant. One consent form was for participants under eighteen years of age (Appendix C) and the other consent form was for participants eighteen years old or above (Appendix D).

Some potential participants did not answer the email request, leaving the researcher wondering whether or not they had received their email. Two potential participants contacted via Line wanted all of the details regarding the research, which were emailed to them. After that, they did not answer any communication attempts made by the researcher and the researcher assumed they did not want to participate. Two other potential participants who were contacted filled out the consent forms and returned them, but then did not answer any subsequent communication attempts instigated by the researcher. One of those potential participants contacted the researcher after many weeks and offered to participate in an interview. By that time, the quota required to represent their stakeholder group had been filled. Thus, their participation in the research was no longer required. The researcher thanked them for their interest and informed them that he would not be interviewing them as he had met his quota. The second potential participant who also filled out a consent form emailed the researcher apologising for their late response. This person chose to answer the interview question in that email. By that time the quota required to represent their stakeholder group had been filled, and all of the interviews had been coded. Their answer to the interview question was read by the researcher, but it was decided that the answer did not bring in any new themes to the research. Therefore, this person was thanked for their effort, but the answer they gave was not coded or included in phase one of the research, and this person was not contacted again.

All other participants who agreed to be interviewed were required to sign a consent form (Hrycak, 2015). Student participants were considered to be under 18 years of age and they were provided with a minor's consent form. The minor's consent form had the extra precaution of requiring signature consent from both the student and one parent, or guardian (Bailey, 2015). Half of the participants were not interested in signing the consent form because they saw it as an inconvenience. They initially gave their consent verbally or via email. They were informed that they could interview but their interview would not be included in the research until their consent form was received. Consent forms were returned as either an electronic copy or as a hard copy on paper. The hard copies were scanned and converted to an electronic format for archival purposes. It was agreed that all consent forms in their electronic format would be retained by the researcher for a minimum of 15 years after the completion of the research or abandonment of the research.

The information sheet provided to all participants was an adaptation of the standard information sheet provided by the University of Southern Queensland for the purpose of research (Appendix B). Some of the more significant parts to the information sheet were: it informed participants that they would be interviewed and the expected time required by them; it also informed participants of their right to decline the interview without ramification. Some participants had a pre-existing relationship with the researcher. To reduce cohesion pressure, the researcher made sure these participants were explicitly aware of their right to decline the interview. They were made aware of this by the researcher and it was pointed out in the information sheet. Participants were also informed that their participation in the research, plus anything they said, would be kept in complete confidence (Hrycak, 2015). This information sheet also provided participants with details on how to withdraw from this research during or after they had been interviewed (Hrycak, 2015). However, there were no participants who chose to withdraw after participating in their interview. If anyone had chosen to withdraw from the research, any information contributed by them would have been withdrawn.

**Data collection (step 1).** The steps in this research followed the Delphi framework (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Hasson et al., 2000; Haughey, n.d.; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Firstly, stakeholders who were invited to participate in this phase of the research were identified and contacted by the researcher. Most were initially approached by the researcher, but all received a personal request from the researcher for their participation. When face-to-face interviews were agreed to or requested by the interviewee, the interviewer documented the date, time, place and interviewee's name on a calendar at his place of residence for safety purposes. This calendar was always available to the interviewer's wife, who was under instructions to contact the authorities if the interviewer did not return home by 8pm that evening, and could not be contacted by mobile phone. If the individual participants preferred to communicate via phone, the Line application, Facebook or Skype interview, a date and time was organised for such an interview.

Thai interviewees were asked if they preferred the interview be conducted in Thai or in English (Snieder et al., 2017). Regardless of the language chosen, the interviews all followed a semi-structured format (Bailey, 2015; Fryer, 2009; Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012; Zhang & McGrath, 2009), which all started with the



same open-ended stimulus and question (Hasson, Keeney & McKenna, 2000). The stimulus and question solicited the opinions of participants regarding what they considered were the most important characteristics of a top international school.

The structured question was: 'I want you to focus on international schools. Can you tell me your definition of an excellent international school? What do you look for in a top international school?' The second question was provided to support the participants' understanding of the first question as both questions would likely produce similar responses. After the structured question, non-structured questions were asked to provide extra information, clarity, or to elaborate on participants' answers to the structured question (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Typical non-structured questions included: 'Do parents, teachers or students contribute anything toward a school being recognised as a top international school?' During the non-structured question time the researcher was as sensitive as possible to avoid offending participants.

Interviews were conducted in English, and there were only two people involved or present, the interviewer and interviewee, increasing anonymity and reducing interviewee inhibitions (Donohoe & Needham, 2009). The exception to this rule was the interview with the high-ranking officers who both worked in the international schools' section at the Thai Ministry of Education. The two officers requested to be interviewed together, and they took the option of being interviewed through the medium of Thai language. This was acceptable as the interviewer also speaks Thai, and on this occasion, there was an assistant who is a Thai national and fluent in English.

Before the interviews began, participants were asked for permission to record their interview. Recording the interviews is very beneficial as it means the interviewer can concentrate more on the interview rather than taking notes. It also increases the accuracy of the data collection as the interviewer can check the recording for clarity (Fryer, 2009). In all cases the interviewees gave permission for the interview to be recorded. There was only one occasion where the interviewee looked decidedly uncomfortable with the interview being recorded. However, that interviewee was assured, like all other interviewees, that they would have the opportunity to change their interview transcript if they wanted to or felt it misrepresented them (Vogel, Mars, & Barton, 2016). This appeared to marginally

lower their anxiety levels. For interviews conducted over the phone the interviewer installed an android phone application and for all other interviews the researcher used GarageBand to record the interviews (Ding, 2016; Fryer, 2009). The audio files were sent to an editor who transcribed the interviews verbatim (Ding, 2016; Fryer, 2009; Savva, 2015; Vogel, Mars, & Barton, 2016). All transcripts were checked, in their entirety, against the audio files by the researcher to increase transcript accuracy.

The transcripts were then sent as a word document to the interviewees and two weeks were provided for the interviewees to make any adjustments or additions they felt were appropriate (Vogel, Mars, & Barton, 2016). Giving interviewees time to check the transcripts is an essential step as it improves the credibility of the research findings. There were four participants who made changes to their transcripts and another two who said they would make changes and then decided against it. Both of them said their changes would be more grammatical or finished off sentences in their text. However, their changes would not change the message they were trying to get across and as a result they decided not to change their transcripts.

The Thai interview involving the Thai Ministry of Education officials was treated differently to the English interviews. It was transcribed in the Thai language and sent back to the interviewees for feedback. Similar to the English transcripts, two weeks were given for any changes to be made. The interviewees did not make any changes and then their transcription underwent a double translation. The Thai transcript was the source document, which was subsequently translated into English (Ng, 2012). This is called the 'forward translation process', meaning a translation of a document from its original language to its targeted language (Roy, 2009). A qualified Thai accountant, fluent in English, assisted by conducting this forward translation. A teacher, fluent in Thai and English, translated the English version of the transcript back into Thai. The process of back translation is taking the forward translated document and then translating it back into the source language (Roy, 2009). Doing this completes the process of double translation. The original transcription was then compared with the document that underwent double translation. This was conducted by another Thai teacher and the researcher. It was decided by the researcher that there were no discrepancies that altered the meaning of what the interviewees had said. Therefore, the English version of the transcript did not need further changing before coding the transcript. It is critical to keep a permanent record of each person's

interview. This will be done by keeping both the recorded copy and a copy of the transcripts in an electrical format (Whiting, 2008).

**Analysis (step 1).** To fully understand the data from multiple interviews, researchers need to engage in the coding of that raw data (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2010). Codes were created prior to the analysis of the data, and then subsequent codes were added when data did not fit the existing codes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Snieder et al., 2017). The transcripts were coded using NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Vogel, Mars, & Barton, 2016) and then collated and summarised in the search for common themes (Savva, 2015). “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Thematic analysis is an appropriate analysis method as it effectively places quantitative data into manageable themes where evaluations can be made (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After the data was placed into themes of similar responses, the researcher went through the list three more times to see if there were any themes that could be combined due to similar meanings. After the researcher had combined as many themes as he felt could be combined, he requested the assistance of a retired international school teacher to do the same. This retired teacher kindly agreed to try and identify similar themes that could be combined. His conclusion was that all themes had enough independence from each other and therefore should not be combined.

This list of themes was then separated into the five different components outlined in the conceptual framework. The themes within each of the components' sections were identified as being either high endorsement or low endorsement themes. Highly endorsed themes were themes that were mentioned by multiple interviewee participants, whereas lowly endorsed themes were only mentioned by one interviewee participant. The researcher needed to make the difficult decision regarding which themes should be kept and which should be abandoned. At this stage in the research the researcher decided to keep all sixty-seven themes regardless of whether they were high or low endorsement themes.

**Data Collection (step 2).** After analysis of the transcripts, and in accordance with the Delphi framework of research, participants were sent a summary document

outlining the findings from the interviews. Fortunately, this summary was written in the form of the questions that would appear on the questionnaire. Therefore, the two documents were combined as one to reduce the time participants needed to spend on this research. This was purposely done to reduce annoyance participants might feel from investing much time into this research. Combining these two documents was also done in the hope that it would encourage more participants to offer feedback.

Other than the two Ministry of Education officers, all other participants were unknown to each other. This anonymity afforded participants the option to express their opinions toward the summary sheet and questionnaire without fear of ridicule (Donohoe & Needham, 2009). This round of the Delphi framework had the intention of bringing participants closer to a consensus (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Hasson et al., 2000; Haughey, n.d.; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). A complete consensus between the experts and stakeholders was not expected as they each represent different stakeholder groups with different aims and responsibilities (Lominé, Muchena & Pierce, 2014). “Diverse groups — be they students, teachers or others—can hold very different values and expectations” (Walker & Shuangye, 2007, p. 201).

In line with the Delphi framework, participants were asked to give feedback to the findings on the summary document and themes on the questionnaire. This feedback could include anything participants felt was missing or misrepresented. It also indicated which characteristics were considered high endorsement characteristics and which characteristics were considered low endorsement. High endorsement represented characteristics that were mentioned by two or more participants, whereas low endorsement characteristics were only mentioned by one participant.

The response, or lack of response, to the request for feedback on the summary document and questionnaire was rather disappointing. Most participants chose not to provide any feedback at all. This might be seen as the participants being satisfied that the themes accurately expressed their opinions. It might also be viewed as the participants lack of interest in contributing more to the research, or it could be seen as a combination of both.

There were five participants who did offer some form of feedback. Three participants said they felt the summary document and questionnaire themes were accurate and nothing needed to be changed. One participant said that many of the

high endorsement characteristics were what international schools strived for. He went on to say that the low endorsement items listed on the summary document were often just as important if a school was to be considered a top international school. This gave legitimacy to the decision that all characteristics should be retained in the research. Another participant added a vote to five of the low endorsement characteristics, elevating their status to high endorsement.

**Analysis (step 2).** In line with the Delphi framework, any feedback was employed to bring the results closer to consensus. Therefore, feedback was used to delete, change or add to the themes that were generated during step 1 of the analysis. Feedback was requested from participants to increase questionnaire validity (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Hasson et al., 2000; Haughey, n.d.; Hsu & Sandford, 2007) and to ensure cultural sensitivity of the questions. There was very little feedback given, and the feedback that was given did not remove or change any of the sixty-seven themes. As a result, all sixty-seven themes were kept without alteration.

The research themes were then strengthened by incorporating existing knowledge from the literature review (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). When the research themes did not adequately cover important characteristics mentioned in the literature review the themes were updated. This process resulted in two new themes being added to the already existing themes.

The research themes were then checked to ensure that none of the themes would be deemed offensive or sensitive. One theme was seen as having the potential to offend some stakeholders of the Superior International School. This theme was: 'A top international school should have native speaking teachers to teach their subjects'. At the Superior International School, there are a small number of teachers who are not native English speakers, but they are all exceptional teachers. These teachers, in particular, but also some of the other teachers, parents and students, may have taken offence to the theme requiring native English-speaking teachers. This theme was subsequently removed from the total list of themes, leaving sixty-eight themes that became the questions in the questionnaire (Ding, 2016).

A Likert scale questionnaire (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Tondeur et al., 2015) was then developed from the existing themes (Hasson, Keeney & McKenna, 2000). A seven-point Likert scale - Disagree very strongly, Disagree strongly, Disagree, Neither disagree/agree, Agree, Agree strongly, Agree very strongly - was utilised in

this research. The seven-point scale was selected over five-point scales as it was expected to be “more accurate, easier to use, and a better reflection of a respondent’s true evaluation” (Finstad, 2010, p. 109). Seven-point Likert scales are also considered superior when using an online questionnaire as was the case in this research (Finstad, 2010).

### **3.8 Phase 2 (Pilot Study)**

**Participants.** Four international schools were contacted multiple times using both email messages and phone calls. The intention was to recruit ten administrators or teachers, ten parents and ten students associated with a minimum of three different international schools. Student participants were likely to be under 18 years of age requiring the extra precaution of a consent form (Hrycak, 2015) signed by both their parent (or guardian) and them (Appendix E). It was a requirement that consent forms would need to be signed and either sent back to the researcher or retained by the host school, before the minor was sent a copy of the questionnaire. It was acceptable that the consent form be collected as an electronic copy or as a hard copy. Consent forms received as a hard copy were converted to an electronic format. Consent forms in their electronic form will be retained by the researcher or the school issuing them for a minimum of 15 years after the completion of the research or abandonment of the research.

All participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix F) to ensure ethical protocols were maintained (Edge & Khamsi, 2012). This information sheet disclosed the purpose behind this research and the benefit they could expect the research to bring. This sheet informed participants they would complete a questionnaire and the time required by them. It also informed participants of their right to decline participation without ramifications. The information sheet further informed participants that their participation in this research was anonymous to everyone including the researcher, and that their consent was automatically assumed once they clicked the submit button at the end of the questionnaire. If help was required in filling out the questionnaire the information sheet provided contact details of the researcher.

Regrettably, apart from one school, the other three schools contacted showed limited interest in having their stakeholders participate in this research. The

researcher further contacted other international schools with limited success. The researcher then resorted to snowball sampling by recruiting participants through existing contacts (Bailey, 2015). This method of sampling is effective when the researcher requires more participants, but these participants have unique characteristics that are hard to identify in the general population (O'Dwyer, & Bernauer, 2014). Eventually, the researcher received questionnaire responses from twelve administrators or teachers, four parents and six students.

**Data Collection.** A pilot study was performed (Ding, 2016; Hasson, Keeney & McKenna, 2000; Tondeur et al., 2015). This pilot study employed the questionnaire that was developed during phase 1. However, to avoid offence, the questionnaire was first checked by the researcher for sensitivity issues toward the Thai people, Thai culture and the Thai royal family. The researcher has resided in Thailand for more than twenty years and has a strong understanding of cultural issues in Thailand. The researcher found one question that might offend some people here in Thailand, which was therefore removed from the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then checked by a Thai teacher for the same sensitivities to ensure nobody would be offended by the questionnaire. The Thai teacher gave the all clear for the questionnaire to be piloted. Pilot studies are essential for good study designs as they collect data, help develop and test research instruments, and give valuable information when deciding if a research protocol is feasible or not (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

The questionnaire was then distributed online to the different international schools and participants. The researcher employed the same tool for different international schools and participants but they were located at different web addresses. This meant the participants were still anonymous, but the researcher was able to see which schools had participated. Knowing which international schools had participated was particularly valuable and guided subsequent contact made with these schools.

**Analysis.** All feedback from the pilot study was considered and then acted upon by the researcher. One administrator or teacher gave specific feedback regarding their personal feelings about top international schools. However, this was not related to the research tool and was therefore not considered when improving the research tool. Thus, no further action was taken other than the reading of the feedback.

A second administrator or teacher had questions regarding the clarity of two questions in the research tool. One question had been developed from information in the literature review and the other question had been developed from the interviews conducted in phase 1. The researcher went back and looked at both the source document employed in the literature review and the interview transcripts; information in them was used to improve clarity of the two questions. Both questions were then updated for increased clarity.

Two student questionnaires did not give direct feedback but they did give an indication of what the two students were thinking. Originally, the relevant pages in the research tool were titled, Administrator or Teacher, Parents, Students, Curriculum, and School in General. One student answered all of the questions except the questions on the page titled Parents. The second student answered all of the questions except the questions on the pages titled Administrators and Teachers, and Parents. As the questionnaires were anonymous these students could not be asked why they missed these questions. It was then assumed by the researcher that these students felt these questions were not supposed to be answered by them. To eliminate this confusion in future surveys the researcher changed the page titles to read 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etcetera. The researcher also went through the questionnaire and changed each question from optional to required so participants were forced to complete each question.

### **3.9 Research tool development**

The Delphi framework research method described in section 3.6 (Phase 1) resulted in a total of sixty-seven possible themes for the questionnaire. This number was later increased by two and reduced by one to finish with sixty-eight themes in total. These themes were then aligned with one of five components from the conceptual framework. As a result of this alignment, the ‘Administrators and Teachers’ component had twenty themes, the ‘Parents’ component had seven themes, the ‘Students’ component had eight themes, the ‘Curriculum’ component had seven themes, and the ‘School in General’ component had the most themes (twenty-six). These sixty-eight themes were converted into sixty-eight questions that could be answered using a seven-point Likert scale.

For the second part of the Delphi framework, the individual questions were separated into two sections. The first section was for high endorsement questions.



These were questions that had come from a theme that had been mentioned by multiple interviewees during the phase 1 interviews. The second section was for low endorsement questions. These were questions that had come from themes that had only been mentioned by one interviewee during the phase 1 interviews. Table 3.1 shows the questions generated and whether they were high endorsement questions or low endorsement questions.

Figure 3.2

*Key for abbreviations used at the start of each item*

<b>Key</b>
AT – Administrators and Teachers
P – Parents
S – Students
C – Curriculum
Sch – School in General

Table 3.1

*High and low endorsement questions from step 1. The Delphi framework*

---

**Administrators and teachers high endorsement questions**

AT1: A top international school should have highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.

AT2: A top international school should have teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.

AT3: A top international school should have an excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.

AT4: A top international school should have a blend of teachers from many different countries.

AT5: A top international school should have administrators who support and trust their teachers.

AT6: A top international school should have teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.

AT7: A top international school should have teachers who use enquiry-based or student-centred activities to educate their students.

---

---

AT8: A top international school should have teachers who can develop strong relationships with students and parents.

AT9: A top international school should have teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.

---

**Administrators and teachers low endorsement questions**

AT10: A top international school should have low levels of teacher turnover.

AT11: A top international school should have low levels of administration turnover.

AT12: A top international school should have clear communication with teachers so that they know what is expected of them before they sign a contract. For example, contact time with students, number of periods in a day etc.

AT13: A top international school should have teachers who support each other and can work together in teams.

AT14: A top international school should have teachers who can fill more than one role and have both social and academic skills.

AT15: A top international school should have teachers who can also cater to students with special needs.

AT16: A top international school should have teachers who are bilingual.

AT17: A top international school should have stakeholders in and around the school who value the teachers.

AT18: A top international school should have teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.

**Questions added as a result of research in the literature review.**

AT19: A top international school should have administrators that listen to and incorporate teachers' opinions when making decisions.

AT20: A top international school should have teachers that make themselves available to students outside of class time.

**Question removed from the data set.**

A top international school should have native speaking teachers to teach their subjects.

---

---

**Parents high endorsement questions**

P1: A top international school should have parents who are willing to offer both their suggestions and help to improve the school.

P2: A top international school should have parents who do not get too involved in the running of the school, but rather let the school go about educating their children.

P3: A top international school should have parents who support the school's goals and teachers in educating their children.

P4: A top international school should have Parents who support their children in the learning process.

P5: A top international school should have parents who apply basic pressure to the school so the school better understands what the parents want from the school.

P6: A top international school should have a role in educating parents so they can better assist the school.

---

**Parents low endorsement questions**

P7: A top international school should have parents who embrace the concept of their children becoming international minded citizens.

---

**Students high endorsement questions**

S1: A top international school should have a high percentage of students representing many different nationalities.

S2: A top international school should have motivated students who work at a very high academic standard.

S3: A top international school should have excellent results on external exams like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.

S4: A top international school should have graduates being admitted to the very best universities around the world.

S5: A top international school should have graduates who go on to become outstanding members of society and very successful in their chosen fields.

---

**Students low endorsement questions**

S6: A top international school should have students who are well behaved.

S7: A top international school should have open minded students.

S8: A top international school should have students who contribute suggestions that help improving the school.

---

---

**Curriculum high endorsement questions**

C1: A top international school should have programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.

C2: A top international school should have internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.

C3: A top international school should have a curriculum and a school ethos that encourages global or international mindedness.

C4: A top international school should have curriculums that are of high standard, up to date with the latest research, and are challenging for their students.

C5: A top international school should have a wide variety of classes that students can choose from.

C6: A top international school should have programs that develop students with strong academic English such that they can successfully study in overseas universities.

---

**Curriculum low endorsement questions**

C7: A top international school should have a smooth transition or connection from one grade level to the next.

---

**School in general high endorsement questions**

Sch1: A top international school should have a friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.

Sch2: A top international school should have a balanced programme that gives equal opportunities for students to participate in the arts, multiple sports, culture and academic work.

Sch3: A top international school should have an excellent reputation of producing high achieving students.

Sch4: A top international school should have quality professional development opportunities that supports the school's mission and helps their teachers grow and get better.

Sch5: A top international school should have excellent sporting facilities.

Sch6: A top international school should have excellent programs that provide parents with great value for money.

Sch7: A top international school should have excellent facilities for the arts.

---

---

Sch8: A top international school should have an ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.

Sch9: A top international school should have an effective discipline program for students.

Sch10: A top international school should have transparency when spending money so the different stakeholders can see where the school spends its money, giving an indication of what the school values the most.

Sch11: A top international school should have a waiting list, and the school should be very selective when deciding who they admit from that waiting list.

Sch12: A top international school should have strong, successful sporting teams.

Sch13: A top international school should have excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.

Sch14: A top international school should have obtained an internationally accepted accreditation.

Sch15: A top international school should have standards and expectations equivalent to other top international schools around the world.

Sch16: A top international school should have many clubs that students can join, from football to creativity activities to computers.

Sch17: A top international school should have a culture of constant upgrading, improvement and getting better.

Sch18: A top international school should have safe environment.

---

**School in general low endorsement questions**

Sch19: A top international school should have school leaders who have been given full authority to implement school policy that has been passed by the governing body.

Sch20: A top international school should have high quality sports coaches.

Sch21: A top international school should have strong local and global community service projects.

Sch22: A top international school should have an accessible and nice location.

Sch23: A top international school should have small classes.

Sch24: A top international school should have a strong pupil services department for students who are having problems.

---

---

Sch25: A top international school should have one common language (English) of inclusion that all students understand and that single language is promoted throughout the school.

Sch26: A top international school should have members of the governing body who come from different nationalities.

---

The important questions were the low endorsement questions. If any participants during stage 2 of the Delphi framework research wanted to object to one of those themes then removal of the question would have been considered. However, there was only one participant who talked directly about the low endorsement questions. That participant added a vote for six of the low endorsement questions. These six themes or questions were then elevated to high endorsement questions.

Each question was utilised on the questionnaire and they were placed in order of number of endorsements. The questions in first place on each page received the highest number of endorsements and the second questions listed received the next highest number of endorsements. This continued down the page until the questions at the bottom of each page, which received the least amount of endorsements and were otherwise known as low endorsement questions.

### **3.10 Research tool test for reliability**

A reliability analysis was carried out on the perceived characteristics of top international schools. A sixty-eight-item scale was developed to measure the characteristics of international schools in Thailand. Three categories of participants (teachers/administrators, parents and students) were asked to rate the importance of the school characteristics items on a 7-point Likert scale. For the teacher/administrator group, Cronbach's alpha (Tondeur et al., 2015) showed the questionnaire to reach acceptable reliability,  $\alpha = 0.962$ . Most items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. The exceptions were items AT16 and S1; removing either of them would increase alpha to  $\alpha = 0.963$ . These two items were therefore retained as keeping them still resulted in a very high reliability score, and the researcher felt there was value in analysing the responses to these two items.

Secondly, the same analysis was carried out using the results and findings from the parent's questionnaire. For the parent's group, Cronbach's alpha (Tondeur

et al., 2015) showed the questionnaire to reach acceptable reliability,  $\alpha = 0.966$ . All items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted.

Thirdly, the same analysis was carried out using the results and findings from the student's questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha (Tondeur et al., 2015) showed the questionnaire to reach an acceptable reliability,  $\alpha = 0.953$ . Most items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted. The exceptions were items AT16 and S4, as removing either of them would increase alpha to  $\alpha = 0.954$ . However, these two items were retained as keeping them still resulted in a very high reliability score, and the researcher felt there was value in analysing the responses to these two items.

### **3.11 Phase 3 (online questionnaire)**

**Population and participants.** The population in this phase was comprised of internal and external stakeholders associated with the Superior International School. The stakeholder groups were made up of three branches: 1) administrators and teachers, 2) parents, and 3) students. These stakeholder groups were totally independent of the participants from phases 1 and 2 so as not to influence the results of phase 3. Each stakeholder received an information sheet (Appendix F) (Edge & Khamsi, 2012) with an email inviting them to participate in the online questionnaire (Deveney, 2005). This information sheet disclosed the purpose behind this research and the benefits they could expect the research to bring. It also informed participants of the expected time required to fill in the questionnaire, that they were within their rights to decline participation without ramification (Hrycak, 2015), and that if they did choose to participate, their participation would be totally anonymous. It also indicated that their consent would be assumed automatically upon clicking the submit button on the questionnaire. If anyone in the population needed help filling in the questionnaire, contact details were provided on the information sheet. None of the participants who filled in the questionnaire contacted the researcher for instructions on completing the questionnaire.

Students in grades 10, 11 and 12 were likely to be under the age of eighteen, and an extra precaution was therefore required by the Superior International School and the researcher. They were sent an email with the consent form (Appendix E) (Hrycak, 2015) and the information sheet attached. The email informed students of

the research and the fact that they needed a consent form filled in before they could participate in the research. The consent form required signatures from both the student and a parent or guardian. Each email was sent as a personal email to the student to create more attention than a mass email would have attracted. A total of eight forms, from a possible 407 students, were printed and filled in by the student and the parent, or guardian.

The researcher then printed out 450 consent forms and placed each student's name on one consent form, except for the eight that had already completed the process. These consent forms were placed in homeroom<sup>1</sup> teachers' mailboxes to distribute to their homeroom students. The remaining consent forms were kept by the researcher in the event that a student had lost their consent form and needed another form. Each homeroom teacher was sent a personal email to inform them that the consent forms were in their mailboxes, and they were requested to distribute them to their students. The homeroom teachers were also asked if they would kindly keep any consent forms students gave them directly. The researcher kept in contact with these teachers offering to collect any consent forms. Some teachers chose to deliver the consent forms directly to the researcher and others kept the forms in waiting for the researcher to collect them. The overwhelming majority of consent forms were given directly to the researcher by the students.

The researcher also spent time visiting homerooms and talking with students directly, asking them to complete the consent forms. The researcher further encouraged students he was directly involved with as a teacher to participate in the research. In total, there were eight consent forms emailed back to the researcher in an electronic format and a further seventy-eight in hard copy, resulting in eighty-six consent forms being received. In general, the students indicated that the consent forms were a major drag and there was suspicion that some students forged their parent's or guardian's signature. There was no way of telling if students did forge these signatures or not, so the researcher took each consent form as being complete. Only students with a completed consent form were sent an email with a link to the questionnaire. However, this did not stop students forwarding the link to other students who had not completed the consent form. Some students expressed an interest to participate but did not want to go through the trouble of completing a

---

<sup>1</sup> Each student is assigned a homeroom and attends to receive general school announcements.



consent form. There was no way to avoid this and keep the questionnaire anonymous. The researcher believes this might have happened in a small number of cases.

Two reminder emails with links to the questionnaire were sent to each of the three stakeholder groups. Each time the researcher did see a response with extra questionnaires being filled in, but the response had gotten smaller by the third email, or second reminder. The researcher decided to send the year 12 students the questionnaire email half way through the last week of the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examination sessions, as most students would have been finished their external high-pressure examinations by this time. The email also advised students who were not finished to do the questionnaire after their examinations had been completed. This email was purposely sent near the end of the examination period so that students involved in such examinations would have more time to complete the questionnaire as well as being under significantly less stress.

Once participants completed and submitted the questionnaire, this was taken as an agreement to having their opinions and remarks contribute towards the research. Fortunately, there were no participants who decided to withdraw from the research after having completed the questionnaire. If a participant had decided to withdraw their contribution, it could not have been withdrawn as there was no way for the researcher to link their responses to them. With 170 teachers, parents from a student population of approximately 1,100, and 408 students in grades 10, 11 or 12, the researcher was hoping for as many as 500 stakeholders to fill in the questionnaire. The actual response was 422 completed questionnaires, comprising 99 administrators or teachers, 78 students and 245 parents. This number is sufficient, as only two hundred and fifty responses were needed as a minimum to conduct statistical analysis of the questionnaire responses (R. Ganguly & H. van Rensburg, personal communication, June 21, 2017).

Administrators and teachers are internal stakeholders, which increases the importance of their opinions. "Participation in daily operations allows employees to gain valuable insights into aspects of an organization that are difficult to observe as an outsider" (Favero & Meier, 2013, p. 403). The administrator participants were full-time employees who received a full-time salary for their work at the case school. The teacher participants were teachers who had teaching schedules and received a full-time salary from the case school. The questionnaire required participants from

this stakeholder group to nominate their family situation as being either: single, living with a partner, living with a partner and one or more children, or 'other' for people who felt the above options did not cover their personal circumstances. The questionnaire also segmented this group by the level they taught as being either: kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, or high school.

External stakeholder participants included parents and students from the case study school. Parent participants were any parent who had at least one child in the case study school on a full-time basis. Parents of children as young as two years of age who attended the international school's official year-long kindergarten programmes were included as parent participants for the purposes of this research. The questionnaire segmented parents by the level or levels their children were at as being either: kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, or high school. Parents were able to select multiple levels as some parents had children learning in different sections. Student participants included students who were enrolled in the case school's official grade 10, 11 or 12 programmes.

**Data collection.** The final research tool was in the form of a questionnaire and it was first sent to the University of Southern Queensland's ethics committee to receive approval. After approval was granted, it was then emailed to members of the senior management team at the Superior International School for approval. Superior International School senior management required the questionnaire to exceed cultural sensitivity standards before permission was granted for it to be issued to the school's stakeholders. All administrators, teachers and parents were invited to participate in the questionnaire via an email with a link to a Google Forms questionnaire. Students in grades 10, 11 and 12 from the Superior International School, and who had completed the consent form, were also invited to participate in the questionnaire via an email with a link to a Google Forms questionnaire. This questionnaire was deliberately written in a language that all stakeholders at the superior international school could access.

The questionnaires required participants to answer sixty-eight closed-ended items using a Likert scale (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Tondeur et al., 2015). The Likert scale employed a seven-point spread between (1) *disagree very strongly* and (7) *agree very strongly*. Nonetheless, it is prudent for the questionnaire to finish with an open-ended item to extrapolate causal factors not identified in phases 1 or 2 (Ding, 2016; Odland, & Ruzicka, 2009). This questionnaire did so by asking

participants if there was anything they wanted to add. There were many participants who used this space to give encouraging feedback, but it did not contribute to the research. However, there were three administrators or teachers, twenty-two parents, and nine students who all offered some form of feedback that is reported on in the results and findings chapter.

Parents who were not comfortable completing the questionnaire in English were offered a translated version in Thai (Ding, 2016). To make this possible, the questionnaire underwent a double translation. The English questionnaire was the source document, which was subsequently translated into Thai by a Thai teacher fluent in English. This is called the 'forward translation process', meaning a translation of a document from its original language to its targeted language (Roy, 2009). To increase the validity of the forward translated questionnaire, a second Thai teacher, also fluent in English, unknown by the first Thai teacher, and employed at a different international school translated the questionnaire back into English. The process of back translation is taking the forward translated document and then translating it back into the source language (Roy, 2009). Doing this completes the process of double translation. The original questionnaire was subsequently compared with the questionnaire that had been through double translation. There were fourteen statements of concern where the original questionnaire's meaning was thought to be different from the questionnaire that had undergone double translation. In those cases, the researcher enquired with the head of the Thai department for clarity. It was found that seven statements had not been forward translated properly or clearly, and another seven had not been back translated properly or clearly. The Thai copy of the questionnaire was subsequently updated to both correct and clarify the forward translated document with the source document. All research data from these questionnaires will be made public to assist other researchers and interested parties. However, any information that could assist a third party in identifying the true identity of the Superior International School or its participants was removed to ensure anonymity.

The researcher looked at the data results from the questionnaire and removed results from participants if it appeared they had not put appropriate effort into answering the questions. For example, if a participant clicked the same response for every question their results would not be included. If a participant only changed their response once during the entire questionnaire their responses were also excluded

from the final set of data. This is somewhat flawed in that a participant might honestly feel that every question should be answered with only one or maybe two possible responses. In this situation they have given their honest opinion, yet their data was not included in the research. Still, this method of vetting sets of data does not help if a participant selects random responses during the questionnaire and pays little attention to the questionnaire. However, in this situation it would be likely that we would see a higher number than expected of 'Disagree Strongly' or 'Disagree Very Strongly' from that particular participant. If participants selected an unusually high number of 'Disagree Strongly' or 'Disagree Very Strongly' results their answers would be considered by the researcher and they might also be excluded from the final data set.

There were 99 administrators or teachers who participated in the research by completing the online questionnaire. From this, two administrators' or teachers' results were taken from the data set. One high school's single participant selected 'Agree Strongly' for one question and selected 'Agree Very Strongly' for all the other 67 questions. Another participant from the middle school, who is married with children, selected 'Agree Very Strongly' for all sixty-eight questions. This brought the number of usable administrator and teacher data responses down to 97.

There were seventy-eight student participants who filled in their online questionnaire. From this pool of participants one student's results were removed from the data set. This student selected 'Agree Very Strongly' for every one of the 68 questions. After removal of this student's results the usable student data set was seventy-seven.

There was a total of 245 parents who participated in the parents' online questionnaire. Of this, there were 114 who completed the questionnaire in English and 131 who completed it in Thai. There was one parent who completed the questionnaire in English, and had at least one child in kindergarten and at least one child in elementary school, who selected 'Agree Very Strongly' for all sixty-eight questions. Their results were removed reducing the English results to 113.

There were two parents who completed the questionnaire in Thai. One parent had at least one child in high school and the other parent had at least one child in elementary school and at least one child in middle school. Both of these parents selected 'Agree Very Strongly' for all 68 questions. There was another parent who completed the questionnaire in Thai and had at least one child in the elementary

school, who selected 'Neither Disagree or Agree' for all 68 questions. Two parents who completed the questionnaire in Thai and had at least one child in elementary school selected 'Disagree Strongly' or 'Disagree Very Strongly' for all 68 questions. One parent in Thai who had at least one child in high school selected 'Agree Strongly' for the first question and then 'Agree Very Strongly' for the remaining 67 questions. Another parent who completed the questionnaire in Thai and had at least one child in the middle school and at least one child in the high school selected 'Disagree Very Strongly' for two questions and 'Neither Disagree or Agree' for the other 66 questions. The results from these eight parents who completed the questionnaire in Thai were removed from the pool of results. This left a pool of 124 questionnaires completed in Thai, leaving the final result with 237 responses from parents in both English and Thai.

**Analysis.** Using the IBM software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the remaining data was then screened for abnormal values (Field, 2014). There were no such abnormal values found in the data and the researcher decided to move forward with no further changes to the data set.

In SPSS the researcher ran three separate descriptive statistics reports for the three different stakeholder groups. These reports showed the number of participants who answered each of the 68 questions. This showed a perfect return as Google Forms was set up in such a way that a participant could not go to subsequent pages until each question had an answer. The three reports also showed the minimum or lowest response for each question and the maximum or highest response given to each question by members of each stakeholder group. More importantly, the report showed the mean of the responses given to each question, which gives an indication of how important the stakeholder groups' members felt that characteristic was in deciding what a top international school is (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009). Finally, these reports showed the standard deviation from the mean, giving some indication of how well the mean truly represented each person's opinion of the importance of that characteristic in determining what characteristics are needed in order to be recognized as a top international school (Mancuso, Roberts & White, 2010). The smaller the standard deviation, the closer most of the stakeholders were to the mean value. The researcher used these reports as a starting point in identifying both the highest means in each group, and the means with the largest discrepancies between the stakeholder groups. The larger the discrepancies were between the means, the

greater chance these stakeholder groups would be statistically independent of each other.

Then SPSS was used to conduct cross-tabulation between the three different stakeholder groups. The cross-tabulation was done with both raw numbers and percentages. The percentages were most important as each stakeholder group had a different number of participants. The cross-tabulation made it easy to identify where and why both similarities and differences were occurring between the three different stakeholder groups. It was also helpful as it created a greater understanding as to why the mean values were either high or relatively low.

The researcher decided to use the Kruskal Wallis H Test to identify statistical difference in the three groups (Vargha & Delaney, 1998). The researcher had concerns that the data might have violated one of the key assumptions of this test. The assumption is that nobody can be a member of more than one stakeholder group. This was a concern in that some teachers also had children in the school and they did have access to both the teacher and the parent questionnaires. If anyone was to answer the questionnaire as both a teacher and a parent, they would then be in two stakeholder data sets. There was no way of telling if this was in fact the case, as the questionnaires were completed anonymously. The researcher sent an email to all teachers who also had children in the Superior International School asking if they had filled in the questionnaire as both a teacher and a parent. Teachers were given three days to answer the email and there was only one teacher who answered that he had completed the questionnaire as a teacher, and that his wife, who was not a teacher, had completed it as a parent. Fortunately, this meant the data was not in breach of this assumption.

The Kruskal Wallis H Test was conducted with the null hypothesis that there would be no statistical difference between the three different stakeholder groups when answering each of the 68 questions (Vargha & Delaney, 1998). This null hypothesis was based on an alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05 (Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010). As there were multiple comparisons based on 68 different questions, a Bonferroni correction was implemented. This Bonferroni correction was necessary to reduce the chance of false positives when considering the hypothesis (Field, 2014). Thus,  $\alpha$  was equal to .05 was divided by  $n$  comparisons, which equal 68 giving  $\alpha/n = 0.05/68 = 0.0007353$ . After the implementation of the Bonferroni correction for the

hypothesis, that there is a statistical difference between the three stakeholder groups, the Kruskal Wallis H Test must calculate a p value of less than 0.0007353 to be true.

The Kruskal Wallis H Test also calculated a Chi-Squared value that indicates how likely it is that the answers provided by the different stakeholder groups were generated by independently different groups (Mancuso, Roberts & White, 2010; Tondeur et al., 2015). Furthermore, this test provided a Mean Rank value for each of the three stakeholder groups, which indicated which group ranked the particular character highest and therefore placed higher value on that particular characteristic.

When it was determined, by a p value of less than 0.0007353, that stakeholder groups answering a particular item were statistically independent, Dunn's post hoc tests were carried out on the pairings (Elliott & Hynan, 2011). This was done to identify which pairs were responsible for the statistical differences indicated by the Kruskal Wallis H Test.

The open-ended items were examined and decisions were made on what to do about them. They were added as written feedback in the report where they were considered as either existing causal factors or new causal factors (Odland, & Ruzicka, 2009). They were all listed in Appendix J and from the list a new set of themes was developed.

### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter has explained in great depth how the research was conducted in three distinct phases. The first phase employed a purposely modified Delphi framework. During this phase, educational experts and people associated with international schools were interviewed and then provided with a summary sheet. This phase produced the tool that would be used to collect the research data. The second phase pilot tested this tool resulting in corrections that were required to improve the tool's reliability. The third and final phase was the collection of data through the use of an online questionnaire. This data was then mathematically analysed through mean, standard deviation and cross tabulation calculations. Kruskal Wallis H Tests were conducted on the data to identify statistically different results amongst the three stakeholder groups. When statistical differences were identified, Dunn's post hoc test was implemented to identify which stakeholder pairs were responsible for the statistical differences.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results and findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results found in the final phase of the research conducted. The results are presented in tables that show the mean scores and the standard deviations given by the participants in their respective stakeholder groups. The table for: administrators and teachers is in Appendix G, parents is in Appendix H, and students is in Appendix I. These results are subsequently sorted and the top ten most important characteristics according to each stakeholder group are then presented. Finally, the qualitative questionnaire results are presented and then placed into overriding themes.

#### **4.2 Demographics of phase 3 participants**

The administrators and teachers employed at the Superior International School come from many different countries throughout the world. Even though many countries are represented, the majority of these employees come from countries that recognise English as being their native language, with the highest representation coming from the US. In Thailand, administrators and teachers enjoy an elevated status and great respect within Thai society (Deveney, 2005). The salaries received by administrators and teachers at the Superior International School are significantly higher than such positions within local Thai schools, and the salaries place these people in the highest paid percentile within Thailand.

Many of the parents in Thai society would be considered as being very affluent to be able to afford the tuition fees of the Superior International School. Some students attend the school on scholarships and their parents often do not have the same financial ability or social standing as the majority of the parents do. All of the parents have chosen to send their children to an international school to study in English, rather than the local Thai schools where students would study in Thai.

The overwhelming majority of the students in grades 10, 11 and 12 come from very affluent families within Thailand. There is a small percentage of students who attend the school on scholarships and these students often do not enjoy the same wealth as their peers. Some of these students are orphans and their places are sponsored at the school. The scholarship and sponsored students are in the minority. There is another small group of teachers' children who also receive scholarships,



making their tuition much cheaper than that of the majority of the students at the Superior International School.

### **4.3 Results and findings phase 3**

The essential questions consider the characteristics that define a top international school according to the perspectives of the three main stakeholder groups (administrators and teachers, parents and students).

The first essential question, *what characteristics define a top international school, according to the perspectives of administrators and teachers?* is answered with the assistance of the table in Appendix G. This table answers the question by calculating a mean score for each item, with a maximum possible value of seven (all participants very strongly agree with the item) and a minimum possible value of one (all participants very strongly disagree with the item). The higher the mean score the greater importance administrators and teachers place on that item. In the Likert scale employed, four is the neutral point between agreeing and disagreeing with the item. Therefore, all numbers above 4.0 indicate that the administrator and teacher stakeholder group generally agrees with the item and any numbers below 4.0 indicates that they generally disagree with the item.

The table also displays each item's standard deviation for the administrators and teachers. Standard deviation indicates how closely distributed the administrators' and teachers' opinions were around the mean. The lower this value is, or the closer the standard deviation is to zero the greater consensus within the stakeholder group regarding the item's true level of importance. Conversely, the higher this value is, or the closer the standard deviation is to three, the lower the consensus within the stakeholder group regarding the item's true importance.

In summary, the table in Appendix G indicates how important each item is to the administrators and teachers. The greater the importance, the greater the mean score, and the closer it is to seven. The most important aspect of this table was to identify the most important characteristics of an international school according to the administrators and teachers. Table 4.1 extrapolates, in order of importance, the top ten characteristics as identified by the administrators and teachers.

Table 4.1

*Top ten characteristics according to the Administrator and Teacher stakeholder group*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch18: Safe environment.	6.62	0.74
AT5: Administrators who support and trust their teachers.	6.61	0.62
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	6.6	0.67
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	6.55	0.72
AT6: Teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.	6.52	0.83
AT3: An excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.	6.4	0.70
Sch14: An internationally accepted accreditation.	6.37	0.82
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	6.36	0.77
Sch13: Excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.	6.32	0.77
S7: Open minded students.	6.31	0.86

Administrators and teachers have attributed high importance to all of these items as the mean of each item is 6.31 or above. This result being significantly closer to 7 than 1. Their individual opinions are also relatively consistent with all standard deviations being 0.86 or lower. This being much closer to 0 than 3.

The second essential question, *what characteristics define a top international school, according to the perspectives of parents?* is answered with the assistance of the table in Appendix H. This table answers the question by calculating a mean score for each item, with a maximum possible value of seven (all participants very strongly agree with the item) and a minimum possible value of one (all participants very strongly disagree with the item). The higher the mean score, the greater importance

parents place on that item. In the Likert scale employed, four is the neutral point between agreeing and disagreeing with the item. Therefore, all numbers above 4.0 indicate that the parent stakeholder group generally agrees with the item and any numbers below 4.0 indicates that they generally disagree with the item.

The table also displays each item's standard deviation for the parents. Standard deviation indicates how closely distributed the parents' opinions were around the mean. The lower this value is, or the closer the standard deviation is to zero the greater consensus within the stakeholder group regarding the item's true level of importance. Conversely, the higher this value is, or the closer the standard deviation is to three the lower consensus within the stakeholder group regarding the item's true importance.

In summary, the table in Appendix H indicates how important each item is to the parents. The greater the importance, the greater the mean score, and the closer it is to seven. The most important aspect of this table was to identify the most important characteristics of an international school according to the parents. Table 4.2 extrapolates, in order of importance, the top ten characteristics as identified by the parents.

Table 4.2

*Top ten characteristics according to the parent stakeholder group*

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	6.7	0.61
Sch18: Safe environment.	6.68	0.69
AT1: Highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.	6.66	0.64
AT18: Teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.	6.51	0.76
C2: Internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	6.5	0.84
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	6.48	0.81

AT9: Teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.	6.45	0.74
Sch14: An internationally accepted accreditation.	6.44	0.85
C1: Programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.	6.43	0.85
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	6.43	0.87

Parents have attributed high importance to all of these items as the mean of each item is 6.43 or above. This result being significantly closer to 7 than 1. Their individual opinions are also relatively consistent with all standard deviations being 0.87 or lower. This being much closer to 0 than 3.

The third essential question, *what characteristics define a top international school, according to the perspectives of students?*, is answered with the assistance of the table in Appendix I. This table answers the question by calculating a mean score for each item, with a maximum possible value of seven (all participants very strongly agree with the item) and a minimum possible value of one (all participants very strongly disagree with the item). The higher the mean score, the greater importance students place on that item. In the Likert scale employed, four is the neutral point between agreeing and disagreeing with the item. Therefore, all numbers above 4.0 indicate that the student stakeholder group generally agrees with the item and any numbers below 4.0 indicates that they generally disagree with the item.

The table also displays each item's standard deviation for the students. Standard deviation indicates how closely distributed the students' opinions were around the mean. The lower this value is, or the closer the standard deviation is to zero the greater consensus within the stakeholder group regarding the item's true level of importance. Conversely, the higher this value is, or the closer the standard deviation is to three the lower consensus within the stakeholder group regarding the item's true importance.

In summary, the table in Appendix I indicates how important each item was to the students. The greater the importance, the greater the mean score, and the closer it was to seven. The most important aspect of this table was to identify the most important characteristics of an international school according to the students. Table

4.3 extrapolates, in order of importance, the top ten characteristics as identified by the students.

Table 4.3

*Top ten characteristics according to the student stakeholder group*

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
AT1: Highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.	6.49	0.77
C5: A wide variety of classes that students can choose from.	6.48	0.87
C1: Programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.	6.45	0.80
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	6.45	0.88
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	6.44	0.79
Sch18: Safe environment.	6.36	0.99
AT6: Teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.	6.35	0.82
C2: Internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	6.34	0.99
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	6.23	0.97
Sch13: Excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.	6.21	0.92

Students have attributed high importance to all of these items as the mean of each item is 6.21 or above. This result being significantly closer to 7 than 1. Their individual opinions are also relatively consistent with all standard deviations being 0.99 or lower. This being much closer to 0 than 3.

The fourth essential question, *Are the most important characteristics of top international schools the same for the different stakeholder groups?* was answered by cross-referencing the top ten results of each stakeholder group. This indicated which items would appear in the top ten most important characteristics for two or more stakeholder groups.

**All three stakeholder groups listed the following four items in their top ten most important characteristics for an international school.**

- AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.
- Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.
- Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.
- Sch18: Safe environment.

**Administrators and teachers with parents but without students, listed the following item in their top ten most important characteristics for an international school.**

- Sch14: An internationally accepted accreditation.

**Administrators and teachers with students but without parents, listed the following two items in their top ten most important characteristics for an international school.**

- AT6: Teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.
- Sch13: Excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.

**Parents with students but without administrators and teachers, listed the following three items in their top ten most important characteristics for an international school.**

- AT1: Highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.
- C1: Programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.

- C2: Internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.

#### 4.4 Open ended question

The final question in the questionnaire was an open-ended question asking participants if there was anything else they would like to add to the questionnaire. The actual feedback from participants can be found in Appendix J. The purpose of this question was to identify themes that were not covered by the questionnaire.

#### 4.5 Feedback themes generated by the stakeholder feedback

The following eleven themes were identified: 1) *access to and control over mobile devices*, as developed by administrator and teacher excerpts 1 and 2 - with the advancement of mobile devices and the availability of these devices to many students, teachers can clearly attest to both the advantages and disadvantages of these devices in classrooms; 2) *communication*, as developed by parent excerpts 8, 9, 21 and 22 and student excerpts 1 and 8 – parents and students want a greater say in what the school is doing as well as the decisions being made; 3) *competitions*, as developed by parent excerpts 7 and 10 – parents would like to see an increase in how seriously the school takes competitions as well as encouraging more students to participate in competitions; 4) *connection with the local Thai population*, as developed by the administrator and teacher excerpt 3, and parent excerpts 3, 4 and 13 – this theme recognises that an increasingly higher percentage of Thai students makes up the student population making the school less international; 5) *diet*, as developed by student excerpts 2 and 9 – students are the largest consumers of school food and therefore they are likely to have strong opinions regarding value and what they would like to eat; 6) *direction*, as developed by the student excerpt 16 – this theme recognises, stakeholders are not all homogeneous (Wolfe & Putler, 2002); 7) *discipline*, as developed by the parent excerpt 2 – this parent feels the school should be more understanding of student mistakes; 8) *rounded school and students*, as developed by parent excerpts 6 and 23 and the student excerpt 6 – parents are advocating for students to participate in more non-academic activities whereas the student wanted the selection of such activities to be entirely up to the student; 9) *school facilities, environment and ethos*, as developed by the parent excerpt 16 and student excerpts 10, 14 and 15 – parents and students would like a school that is

more inviting in these different areas; 10) *selection of stakeholders*, as developed by parent excerpts 19 and 20 and the student excerpt 12 – the teachers and students should be appropriately vetted before being accepted by the school; 11) *teaching and learning*, as developed by parent excerpts 1, 5, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 20 and student excerpts 3, 4, 5, 7, 11 and 13 – this theme considers what and how the teaching and learning should be conducted as well as a recognition that each student is different.

#### **4.6 Summary**

In this chapter the raw data was placed in understandable and meaningful tables. The chapter sorted the data so that it has meaning when answering the essential questions. The sorting of the data was based on the mean score attributed to each of the top ten most important themes for each of the three independent stakeholder groups. An explanation of how to interpret these scores was provided so the score's significance could be better understood. The qualitative feedback has been listed in its entirety in Appendix J along with the stakeholder group that was responsible for the feedback. Finally, the chapter divided the individual feedback listed in Appendix J into different themes. An extended interpretation and clarity of these themes was provided. This interpretation was based on the stakeholder group that expressed their opinion as well as the entire text they used while explaining their positions.



## Chapter 5

### Analysis

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the results from the questionnaire. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was administered to examine all sixty-eight items for statistical differences in the responses by the different stakeholder groups (Vargha & Delaney, 1998). When the Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated a statistical difference, Dunn's pairwise test was conducted on each pair to identify the pair, or pairs, that accounted for the statistical difference (Elliott & Hynan, 2011).

#### 5.2 Analysis of administrator and teacher-related questions

**AT1: A top international school should have highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 32.10$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 157.51 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 226.29 (median =) for parents, and 204.63 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT2: A top international school should have teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.**

There was a statistically significant difference between the stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 22.43$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 173.58 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 225.08 (median =) for parents, and 188.12 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT3: A top international school should have an excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 22.64$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 252.10 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 195.89 (median =) for parents, and 179.03 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents, as well as the administrators/teachers and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**AT4: A top international school should have a blend of teachers from many different countries.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 19.36$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 248.10 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 187.08 (median =) for parents, and 211.21 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT5: A top international school should have administrators who support and trust their teachers.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 38.94$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 267.38 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 189.74 (median =) for parents, and 178.72 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents as well as the administrators/teachers and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**AT6: A top international school should have teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.**

There was not a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 3.99$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 224.61 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 200.77 (median =) for parents, and 198.66 (median =) for students.

**AT7: A top international school should have teachers who use enquiry-based or student-centred activities to educate their students.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 16.50$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 190.92 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 224.31 (median =) for parents, and 168.65 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT8: A top international school should have teachers who can develop strong relationships with students and parents.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 12.22$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 214.69 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 215.62 (median =) for parents, and 165.46 (median =) for students.

**AT9: A top international school should have teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 32.78$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 193.30 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 229.50 (median =) for parents, and 149.66 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT10: A top international school should have low levels of teacher turnover.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 54.98$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 162.60 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 241.90 (median =) for parents, and 150.17 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents as well as the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**AT11: A top international school should have low levels of administration turnover.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 37.31$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 208.59 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 227.76 (median =) for parents, and 135.77 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and students as well as the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**AT12: A top international school should have clear communication with teachers so that they know what is expected of them before they sign a contract. For example, contact time with students, number of periods in a day etc.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 4.18$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 226.29 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 200.45 (median =) for parents, and 197.53 (median =) for students.

**AT13: A top international school should have teachers who support each other and can work together in teams.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.47$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 206.07 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 215.02 (median =) for parents, and 178.16 (median =) for students.

AT14: A top international school should have teachers who can fill more than one role and have both social and academic skills.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.01$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 206.49 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 205.46 (median =) for parents, and 207.05 (median =) for students.

AT15: A top international school should have teachers who can also cater to students with special needs.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.72$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 194.49 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 207.16 (median =) for parents, and 216.92 (median =) for students.

AT16: A top international school should have teachers who are bilingual.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.18$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 183.68 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 217.21 (median =) for parents, and 199.62 (median =) for students.

AT17: A top international school should have stakeholders in and around the school who value the teachers.

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 20.05$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 244.79 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 202.80 (median =) for parents, and 166.97 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT18: A top international school should have teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 19.64$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 176.39 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 225.85 (median =) for parents, and 182.19 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**AT19: A top international school should have administrators that listen to and incorporate teachers' opinions when making decisions.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 5.61$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 225.40 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 204.81 (median =) for parents, and 185.21 (median =) for students.

**AT20: A top international school should have teachers that make themselves available to students outside of class time.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 12.50$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 170.49 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 217.54 (median =) for parents, and 215.22 (median =) for students.

### **5.3 Analysis of parent-related questions**

**P1: A top international school should have parents who are willing to offer both their suggestions and help to improve the school.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 11.90$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 186.74 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 222.42 (median =) for parents, and 179.72 (median =) for students.

**P2: A top international school should have parents who do not get too involved in the running of the school, but rather let the school go about educating their children.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.901$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 200.23 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 210.62 (median =) for parents, and 199.05 (median =) for students.

**P3: A top international school should have parents who support the school's goals and teachers in educating their children.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 20.18$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 223.04 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 215.99 (median =) for parents, and 153.81 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and students as well as the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**P4: A top international school should have parents who support their children in the learning process.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 12.16$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 209.72 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 217.40 (median =) for parents, and 166.22 (median =) for students.

**P5: A top international school should have parents who apply basic pressure to the school so the school better understands what the parents want from the school.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 53.47$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 139.73 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 238.94 (median =) for parents, and 188.10 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**P6: A top international school should have a role in educating parents so they can better assist the school.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 5.48$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 220.10 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 208.64 (median =) for parents, and 180.12 (median =) for students.

**P7: A top international school should have parents who embrace the concept of their children becoming international minded citizens.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 2.56$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 210.57 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 210.12 (median =) for parents, and 187.57 (median =) for students.

#### **5.4 Analysis of student-related questions**

**S1: A top international school should have a high percentage of students representing many different nationalities.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 10.19$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 209.88 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 193.09 (median =) for parents, and 240.84 (median =) for students.

**S2: A top international school should have motivated students who work at a very high academic standard.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.71$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 215.99 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 206.00 (median =) for parents, and 193.40 (median =) for students.

**S3: A top international school should have excellent results on external exams like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 4.68$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 195.78 (median =) for



administrators and teachers, 216.13 (median =) for parents, and 187.68 (median =) for students.

**S4: A top international school should have graduates being admitted to the very best universities around the world.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 27.68$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 174.17 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 231.35 (median =) for parents, and 168.08 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents as well as the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**S5: A top international school should have graduates who go on to become outstanding members of society and very successful in their chosen fields.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 28.89$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 199.07 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 227.53 (median =) for parents, and 148.45 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**S6: A top international school should have students who are well behaved.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 38.30$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 169.23 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 235.61 (median =) for parents, and 161.19 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents as well as the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**S7: A top international school should have open minded students.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 4.23$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 200.95 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 214.36 (median =) for parents, and 186.61 (median =) for students.

**S8: A top international school should have students who contribute suggestions that help improving the school.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 10.54$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 192.71 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 220.80 (median =) for parents, and 204.63 (median =) for students.

### **5.5 Analysis of curriculum-related questions**

**C1: A top international school should have programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 13.73$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 171.13 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 216.49 (median =) for parents, and 217.66 (median =) for students.

**C2: A top international school should have internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 13.69$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 174.44 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 220.49 (median =) for parents, and 201.17 (median =) for students.

**C3: A top international school should have a curriculum and a school ethos that encourages global or international mindedness.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 9.22$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 196.16 (median =) for

administrators and teachers, 218.87 (median =) for parents, and 178.77 (median =) for students.

**C4: A top international school should have curricula that are of high standard, up to date with the latest research, and are challenging for their students.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 7.14$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 188.71 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 218.22 (median =) for parents, and 190.19 (median =) for students.

**C5: A top international school should have a wide variety of classes that students can choose from.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 13.94$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 179.39 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 210.86 (median =) for parents, and 232.12 (median =) for students.

**C6: A top international school should have programs that develop students with strong academic English such that they can successfully study in overseas universities.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 2.15$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 195.11 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 212.58 (median =) for parents, and 199.47 (median =) for students.

**C7: A top international school should have a smooth transition or connection from one grade level to the next.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 8.12$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 186.99 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 219.01 (median =) for parents, and 189.90 (median =) for students.

## 5.6 Analysis of school in general-related questions

Sch1: A top international school should have a friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.10$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 215.23 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 203.09 (median =) for parents, and 203.34 (median =) for students.

Sch2: A top international school should have a balanced programme that gives equal opportunities for students to participate in the arts, multiple sports, culture and academics.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.51$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 206.28 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 208.40 (median =) for parents, and 198.27 (median =) for students.

Sch3: A top international school should have an excellent reputation of producing high achieving students.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 11.17$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 194.97 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 220.90 (median =) for parents, and 174.02 (median =) for students.

Sch4: A top international school should have quality professional development opportunities that supports the school's mission and helps their teachers grow and get better.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 4.04$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 216.28 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 208.98 (median =) for parents, and 183.89 (median =) for students.

**Sch5: A top international school should have excellent sporting facilities.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 19.60$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 169.64 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 226.48 (median =) for parents, and 188.76 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**Sch6: A top international school should have excellent programs that provide parents great value for money.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 20.27$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 175.40 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 227.31 (median =) for parents, and 178.94 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**Sch7: A top international school should have excellent facilities for the arts.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.96$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 200.13 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 212.43 (median =) for parents, and 193.59 (median =) for students.

**Sch8: A top international school should have an ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 4.91$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 218.63 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 207.77 (median =) for parents, and 184.64 (median =) for students.

Sch9: A top international school should have an effective discipline program for students.

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 21.45$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 203.02 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 223.50 (median =) for parents, and 155.88 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

Sch10: A top international school should have transparency when spending money so the different stakeholders can see where the school spends its money, giving an indication of what the school values the most.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 3.45$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 191.86 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 214.21 (median =) for parents, and 198.54 (median =) for students.

Sch11: A top international school should have a waiting list, and the school should be very selective when deciding who they admit from that waiting list.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.20$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 186.71 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 218.05 (median =) for parents, and 193.21 (median =) for students.

Sch12: A top international school should have strong, successful sporting teams.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 12.41$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 171.63 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 220.51 (median =) for parents, and 204.62 (median =) for students.

Sch13: A top international school should have excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.52$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 202.66 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 211.14 (median =) for parents, and 194.40 (median =) for students.

Sch14: A top international school should have obtained an internationally accepted accreditation.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 9.84$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 204.92 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 216.96 (median =) for parents, and 173.62 (median =) for students.

Sch15: A top international school should have standards and expectations equivalent to other top international schools around the world.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 11.22$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 181.39 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 220.93 (median =) for parents, and 191.06 (median =) for students.

Sch16: A top international school should have many clubs that students can join, from football to creativity activities to computers.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 10.13$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 175.77 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 218.12 (median =) for parents, and 206.77 (median =) for students.

Sch17: A top international school should have a culture of constant upgrading, improvement and getting better.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.54$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 209.25 (median =) for

administrators and teachers, 209.19 (median =) for parents, and 192.08 (median =) for students.

**Sch18: A top international school should have safe environment.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 7.55$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 207.12 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 213.64 (median =) for parents, and 181.08 (median =) for students.

**Sch19: A top international school should have school leaders who have been given full authority to implement school policy that has been passed by the governing body.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 22.83$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 219.81 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 218.57 (median =) for parents, and 149.90 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and students as well as the parents and students. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pair.

**Sch20: A top international school should have high quality sports coaches.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 17.70$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 164.18 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 221.73 (median =) for parents, and 210.26 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

**Sch21: A top international school should have strong local and global community service projects.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.18$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 202.81 (median =) for



administrators and teachers, 207.97 (median =) for parents, and 203.94 (median =) for students.

**Sch22: A top international school should have an accessible and nice location.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.46$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 204.91 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 203.86 (median =) for parents, and 213.96 (median =) for students.

**Sch23: A top international school should have small classes.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.08$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 210.16 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 213.65 (median =) for parents, and 177.23 (median =) for students.

**Sch24: A top international school should have a strong pupil services department for students who are having problems.**

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 13.41$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 184.52 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 223.03 (median =) for parents, and 180.64 (median =) for students.

**Sch25: A top international school should have one common language (English) of inclusion that all students understand and single language should be promoted throughout the school.**

There was a statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 15.53$ ,  $p < 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 177.83 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 224.19 (median =) for parents, and 185.50 (median =) for students. Dunn's pairwise tests were carried out for the three pairs of groups. There was very strong evidence ( $p < 0.001$ , adjusted using the Bonferroni correction) of a difference between the administrators/teachers and parents. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

Sch26: A top international school should have members of the governing body who come from different nationalities.

There was no statistically significant difference between stakeholders on this item ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.51$ ,  $p > 0.0007353$ ) with mean rank scores of 209.05 (median =) for administrators and teachers, 202.66 (median =) for parents, and 212.45 (median =) for students.

### **5.7 Summary**

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was administered to examine all 68 items for statistical differences. This test established that 22 of the 68 items indicated statistical differences between one or more stakeholder pairings. Dunn's pairwise test was conducted on those 22 items to identify the pairings that were statistically different.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research topic - “characteristics that define a top international school according to stakeholder perspectives” - by answering each subordinate question. The first three subordinate questions considered the most important characteristics of international schools as viewed by the three main stakeholder groups. These questions were adequately answered in chapter four as consideration was given to the ten most important characteristics of each stakeholder group. The fourth subordinate question was answered by considering any characteristics that were in all three stakeholder group’s top ten. Characteristics were then considered, which appeared in two stakeholder groups’ top ten. Finally, characteristics were considered that appeared in only one stakeholder group’s top ten.

In this discussion in chapter six, the meaning and the importance of the findings are extrapolated. There is a review of current knowledge in relation to how the findings either support or contradict this knowledge, which is a process recommended by Creswell (2014). The chapter also outlines how these results should be interpreted by the reader and what importance they hold for both the international schools in Thailand and future researchers who have an interest in this field. It further mentions assumptions and limitations of this study and possible research that is recommended to negate these limitations.

#### **6.2 Stakeholders’ top ten most important characteristics**

Students’ safety, an inclusive environment for all students, effective teachers who love their subjects, and an ethos where all stakeholders feel respected were the four characteristics that appeared in each stakeholder group’s top ten. They have been placed in order in Table 6.1, by adding up the rankings for each stakeholder group and selecting the characteristics with the lowest number.

Table 6.1

*Characteristics that appeared in each stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

Items	Rankings			
	Administrators & Teachers	Parents	Students	Total
Sch18: Safe environment.	1	2	6	9
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	3	6	4	13
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	8	1	5	14
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	4	10	9	23

**School in general item 18: A top international school should have a safe environment.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.68, then administrators and teachers at 6.62, and students at 6.36. The similarities in response can be seen by 78.1% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item, compared to 75.3% of administrators and teachers, and 63.6% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their most important item, while parents considered it to be their second most important item, and students considered it their sixth most important item. All of the stakeholder groups assigning similar levels of importance to this item resulted in them not being statistically independent. The standard deviation for the parents was their third lowest at 0.69 and it was the administrators and teachers sixth lowest at 0.74. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within these two stakeholder groups when answering this item.

Parents have a natural instinct to be concerned about their children's safety. Students are at a stage in their lives where they are least able to recognise danger or

know how to deal with dangerous situations. Adults see it as their responsibility to ensure that all members of society are safe and often children are seen as being the most vulnerable members of a society.

It was of particular interest that the students who completed the questionnaire also viewed this issue with such importance. The students who completed the questionnaire were in grades 10, 11 or 12 and the researcher did not regard them as adults; they were of an age where they could recognise dangerous situations and respond appropriately to them. I would speculate that the Thai culture has impacted on students' responses to this item. In Thai culture everyone sees each other as brothers and sisters regardless of whether or not they are truly biological brothers and sisters. Therefore, they would likely be considerate of younger students when responding to this question. If this is the case, these student results would be restricted to international schools with a very high percentage of Thai students. To improve further research in this area, safety could be separated into different categories or different areas of risk. For example, safety could refer to the risk of physical danger or it could refer to potential abuse from adults.

**School in general item 1: A top international school should have a friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.**

The mean score for this item was highest for administrators and teachers at 6.60, then parents at 6.48 and students at 6.45. The similarities in responses can be seen by 70.1% of administrators and teachers agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 66.2% of students and 65.0% of parents. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their third most important item, students considered it to be their fourth most important item, and parents considered it to be their sixth most important item. All of the stakeholder groups assigning similar levels of importance to this item has resulted in them not being statistically independent. The standard deviation for the administrators and teachers was the second lowest at 0.67, while it was the students' and the parents' seventh lowest at 0.88 and 0.81 respectively. This gives an indication of the narrow spread in opinions amongst all three stakeholder groups when answering this item.

It is very important that students in the modern world appreciate diverse cultures, and subscribe to the concepts of global citizenship and international

mindedness (Fryer 2009; Hill, 2015; International Baccalaureate, n.d.; Rader, 2015). It was not surprising, and somewhat encouraging, that this research supported previous findings and all three stakeholder groups scored this item highly on their respective lists of importance. International schools are designed for and often target students from many different nationalities, cultures and religions. The Superior International School is also an International Baccalaureate World School and a big part of this is promoting international mindedness. If there were stakeholders at this school that did not value multicultural students or embrace the concept of international mindedness, they would likely find this school and its philosophy not to be suitable for them and would subsequently find another school. These findings should be consistent for all international schools, but especially for schools that follow one of the International Baccalaureate syllabi.

**Administrators and teachers item 2: A top international school should have teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.**

The mean score for this item was the highest for parents at 6.70, then students at 6.44, and administrators and teachers at 6.36. The difference in response can be seen by 77.2% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 59.7% of students and 52.6% of administrators and teachers. Parents considered this to be their most important item, students considered it to be their fifth most important item, and administrators and teachers considered it to be their eighth most important item. Parents seeing this item as being much more important than administrators and teachers has resulted in these two stakeholder groups being statistically independent for this item. The standard deviation for the parents was their lowest at 0.61, it was the students' second lowest at 0.79, and it was the administrators' and teachers' seventh lowest at 0.77. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within all of the stakeholder groups when answering this item.

Mackenzie (2010) identified eight demands parents had of international schools. The second demand was their child's happiness. Where this item does not explicitly mention a child's happiness, we could assume that teachers who love their subjects and are efficient in teaching will provide a positive learning environment and therefore happier students. The NEASC specifically highlights the importance of supporting students regardless of their independent learning styles (International

Accreditation, n.d.). Teachers' abilities in responding to different students' learning styles would indicate effective teaching. The international school market has become a very competitive market. Parents pay high tuition fees and all stakeholders expect such schools to be of a very high standard. An important indicator of these standards are how well the students learn what is being taught. This item has appeared in all stakeholders' top ten characteristics, and shows recognition of the perceived importance the teacher plays in delivering education to these students. Teachers should enjoy what they are doing, and ensure that their teaching is making a difference in every student's learning journey.

**School in general item 8: A top international school should have an ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.**

The mean score for this item was highest for administrators and teachers at 6.55, then parents at 6.43 and students at 6.23. The similarity in responses can be seen by 68.0% of administrators and teachers agreeing very strongly with this item and 63.7% of parents and 53.2% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their fourth most important item, students considered it to be their ninth most important item, and parents considered it to be their tenth most important item. All of the stakeholder groups assigning similar levels of importance to this item has resulted in them not being statistically independent. The standard deviation for the administrators and teachers was their fourth lowest at 0.72. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions amongst the administrators and teachers when answering this item.

Administrators and teachers selecting this item in their top ten loosely reinforces Hrycak's (2015) view who found that teachers appreciated parents who were supportive. Students giving this item high status reinforced Zhang and McGrath's (2009) study, which mentioned that students like the creative freedom of western teachers compared to the conformity required by Chinese teachers. However, the result in this research goes beyond both Hrycak's (2015) and Zhang and McGrath's (2009) findings by identifying that all three stakeholder groups recognised the importance of respect for all within an international school. This item is an extension of the international mindedness and acceptance of all, which international schools tend to foster. Where this item recognises respect for people it inadvertently acknowledges the individual contributions people provide to the

school. All of those contributions add value; whether it be decisions made by the most senior officials or the staff keeping the school clean. The recognition of this item by the three stakeholder groups shows a recognition of how important respect is to everyone regardless of the roles they play in the school. This importance might have been skewed by the Superior International School's desire and overt attempts to make all members of their school feel as though they are part of one big family. Thus, it is important to recognise this item might not be as prominent in other international schools with similar demographics. This researcher recommends other research be performed in other international schools regarding this item before it can be accepted as a given beyond the Superior International School.

### **6.3 Administrators' and teachers' as well as parents', but not students', top ten most important characteristics**

An internationally accepted school accreditation appeared in the top ten most important items for the administrator and teacher stakeholder group as well as the parent stakeholder group (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

*Characteristics that appeared in both the administrator and teacher as well as the parent stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

Items	Rankings	
	Administrators & teachers	Parents
Sch14: A top international school should have obtained an internationally accepted accreditation.	7	8

#### **School in general item 14: A top international school should have obtained an internationally accepted accreditation.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.44, then administrators and teachers at 6.37, while students who did not rank it as part of their top ten gave the item a mean score of 6.06. The difference in responses can be seen by 63.3% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 56.7% of administrators and teachers and 44.2% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their seventh most important item and parents considered it to



be their eighth most important item, while students considered it to be their twenty-first most important item. Regardless of students considering this item to be at a much lower level of importance, the three stakeholder groups were not statistically independent.

Parents expect their children to receive a complete international education (MacKenzie, 2010). An internationally accepted accreditation would ensure students receive a complete international education, supporting the findings of MacKenzie. The high ranking that administrators and teachers, as well as parents, afforded this item indicates an understanding, by these groups, of the importance accreditation holds for schools. I speculate that students do not fully understand the importance accreditation has to a school. Nearly every student at this school aspires to receive a tertiary education and most rely on this accreditation to have their graduations and transcripts accepted by tertiary institutions. Universities requiring accredited school transcripts and graduations would suggest this item is important for any school that has the majority of their students attending tertiary institutions for further education.

#### **6.4 Administrators' and teachers' as well as students', but not parents', top ten most important characteristics**

Internationally minded and flexible teachers, as well as excellent classroom facilities for teaching and learning, were the two characteristics that appeared in the top ten most important items for the administrator and teacher stakeholder group, as well as the student stakeholder group. They have been placed in order in Table 6.3 by adding up the rankings for each stakeholder group and selecting the characteristics with the lowest number.

Table 6.3

*Characteristics that appeared in both the administrator and teacher as well as the student stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

Items	Rankings		
	Administrators & teachers	Students	Total
AT6: A top international school should have teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.	5	7	12
Sch13: A top international school should have excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.	9	10	19

**Administrators and teachers item 6: A top international school should have teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.**

The mean score for this item was highest for administrators and teachers at 6.52, then parents at 6.36 and students at 6.35. The similarities in responses can be seen by 64% of administrators and teachers agreeing very strongly with this item, along with 55.7% of parents and 53.2% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their fifth most important item, students considered it to be their seventh most important item, and parents gave it a considerably lower ranking as they considered it their fifteenth most important item. Even though parents gave this item a much lower ranking, the three stakeholder groups were not statistically independent. The standard deviation for the students was their fourth lowest at 0.82, and it was the parents' sixth lowest at 0.81. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within these two stakeholder groups when answering this item.

The importance of internationally minded teachers supports Taylor (2014) who believes teachers need a constant mindset of intercultural sensitivity to effectively educate global citizens. Extending from this, being flexible to new situations also supports the research conducted by Halicioglu (2015). This research explains how important it is that administrators and teachers prepare themselves for the multiple changes they will experience when taking up employment at an

international school. Administrators and teachers who are not adequately prepared for an international teaching assignment are likely to offer a lower quality of education to their students (Halicioglu, 2015; Hirsch, 2016). It is easy to see that administrators and teachers will be directly affected, in terms of their own happiness and satisfaction, if they are not open minded and flexible when joining the Superior International School.

The students have the most contact with teachers through the learning process, and they might be influenced if a teacher is not internationally minded or flexible in relation to the challenges they will face in such a setting. Thus, students are in a strong position to recognise the value of teaching staff that are both internationally minded and flexible. Without the attributes of being internationally minded and flexible, teachers would find it very difficult to function effectively in an international school. This has been recognised in this research by the administrators and teachers, as well as the student stakeholder groups. It could be assumed that this item is important to all international schools, especially those in locations that employ a high percentage of expatriate teachers.

**School in general item 13: A top international school should have excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.34, then administrators and teachers at 6.32, and students at 6.21. The similarities in responses can be seen by 55.7% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item, along with 49.5% of administrators and teachers, and 48.1% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their ninth most important item, students considered it to be their tenth most important item, and parents gave it a considerably lower ranking, as they considered it their seventeenth most important item. Despite parents giving this item a much lower ranking, the three stakeholder groups were not statistically independent. The standard deviation for the administration and teachers was their eighth lowest at 0.77, and it was the students' ninth lowest at 0.92. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within these two stakeholder groups when answering this item.

These two stakeholder groups are the two groups that spend most time in the classroom. They receive the most to benefit if the teaching and learning facilities in the classroom are of a high standard. They also have the most to lose if these

facilities are not of a high standard. Teaching and learning at international schools is remarkably similar in most parts of the world. Therefore, it could be expected that this item would be considered important regardless of where the international school is located.

### **6.5 Parents' and students', but not administrators' and teachers' top ten most important characteristics**

Expert teachers, programmes that develop life skills, and internationally recognised programmes were the three characteristics that appeared in the top ten most important items for the parent and student stakeholder groups. They have been placed in order in Table 6.4 by adding up the rankings for each stakeholder group and selecting the characteristics with the lowest number.

Table 6.4

*Characteristics that appeared in both the parent as well as the student stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Rankings</b>		
	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Total</b>
AT1: A top international school should have highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.	3	1	4
C1: A top international school should have programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.	9	3	12
C2: A top international school should have internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	5	8	13

**Administrators and teachers item 1: A top international school should have highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.66, then students at 6.49, and administrators and teachers at 6.21. The difference in responses can be seen by 73% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item, compared to 64.9% of students and 41% of administrators and teachers. Students considered this to be their most important item, parents considered it to be their third most important item, and administrators and teachers considered it to be their eighteenth most important item. Parents seeing this item as being much more important than administrators and teachers has resulted in the stakeholder groups being statistically independent on this item. The standard deviation for the students was their lowest at 0.77, it was the parents' second lowest at 0.64, and it was the administrators' and teachers' tenth lowest at 0.79. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within all of the stakeholder groups when answering this item.

This result supports research by Martinez, Hetterschijt and Iglesias (2015), who found that parents expected high teaching standards and good practices by the school. The parents expect a very high standard amongst the teaching staff as they are paying a lot of money for an education that could otherwise be received for free. To justify such high tuition fees, it is expected that the teaching staff at the Superior International School are significantly better than teachers in the local schools. Students also place great value on this item as they need to learn from the teachers. They would consider that high quality professional teachers make the learning process easier and more effective for the students themselves. It is not surprising that teachers did not rate this item as highly. This item holds teachers to a higher standard and some might not want to be held to such high standards. The results on this item would likely hold true for most international schools that charge high tuition fees.

**Curriculum item 1: A top international school should have programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.**

The mean score for this item was highest for students at 6.45, then parents at 6.43, and administrators and teachers at 6.1. The difference in responses can be seen by 62% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item, compared to 61% of

students, and 40.2% of administrators and teachers. Students considered this to be their third most important item, parents considered it to be their ninth most important item, and administrators and teachers considered it to be their twenty-seventh most important item. Regardless of administrators and teachers considering this item to be at a much lower level of importance, the three stakeholder groups were not statistically independent. The standard deviation for the students was their third lowest at 0.80. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions amongst the students when answering this item.

Possibly, the most important life skill in the modern world is a strong acquisition of English, and perhaps a second language. The language factor was highly regarded and very important to parents when deciding the school their children would attend (Fryer, 2009; Hallinger & Walker, 2012; Lee, Mackenzie, 2010; Wettewa, 2016). Students also recognised there was an advantage for their future careers when studying through English instruction (Bailey, 2015). This research reinforces previous research emphasising the need for schools to develop life skills in their students, one of the most important life skills being language acquisition. Students stand to benefit most from these life skills and therefore it is not a surprise that they value them highly. They have not needed to fend for themselves in the outside world but they do see it as a very competitive environment where the most capable people flourish. At the Superior International School, students tend to have high ambitions and they aspire to achieving much success. Parents ranking this item as their ninth most important item reflects the findings of Mackenzie (2010). Mackenzie's research listed access to high ranking universities as the eighth most important item. Parents send their children to international schools hoping to give them an advantage over students in regular schools. They would expect their children to come out of such schools with greater life skills. As life skills is such a broad item, this research could be improved by separating language acquisition from the life skills item.

**Curriculum item 2: A top international school should have internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.**

The mean score for this item was the highest for parents at 6.50, then students at 6.34, and administrators and teachers at 6.09. The difference in responses can be seen by 67.1% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item, compared to 57.1%

of students, and 46.4% of administrators and teachers. Parents considered this to be their fifth most important item, students considered it to be their eighth most important item, and administrators and teachers considered it to be their twenty-ninth most important item. In particular, the students and the parents gave similar levels of importance to this item. Even though the administrators and teachers gave this item much less importance, the stakeholder groups were not considered to be statistically independent. The standard deviation for the parents was their ninth lowest at 0.84. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions amongst the parents when answering this item.

The curriculum is very important when considering the legitimacy of an international school (Education Development Trust, n.d.; NEASC Commission on International Education, 2014; WASC, 2017). The curriculum being implemented by the school and high stakes internationally recognised examinations are of great importance to parents (Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012; Mackenzie, 2010; Wettewa, 2016). Academic staff believe an English curriculum is critical for students wanting to attend the best universities in English speaking countries (Fryer, 2009). This item being listed in fifth place amongst parents suggests these findings are consistent with previous research. Corlu (2014) found that educational systems with external examinations are held in high regard by academic staff and students. Students ranking this as their eight most important characteristic further supports previous research (Bailey, 2015; Corlu, 2014; Deveney, 2005). These internationally recognised programmes are often considered by universities when deciding who is admitted and who is not. International schools that do not offer such academic programmes disadvantage their own students when they need to compete for university placements against students from international schools that do offer such programmes. Often, parents use results from such programmes as an indicator of the school's value. It is not a surprise that teachers do not place as much weight on external examinations as an indicator of quality, as they work in schools and have many more indicators they can access than the parents and students. With standardised international programmes being so important in university acceptances, this item would be highly regarded in all international schools that see themselves as a preparatory school for universities.

## 6.6 Administrators' and teachers' top ten most important characteristics

Administrators who support and trust their teachers, an excellent remuneration package, and open-minded students were the three characteristics that appeared in the top ten most important items for administrators and teachers, but not the parents' or students' stakeholder groups.

Table 6.5

*Characteristics that appeared in the administrator and teacher stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

Items	Rankings
	Administrators & Teachers
AT5: A top international school should have administrators who support and trust their teachers.	2
AT3: A top international school should have an excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.	6
S7: A top international school should have open minded students.	10

### **Administrators and teachers item 5: A top international school should have administrators who support and trust their teachers.**

The mean score for this item was highest for administrators and teachers at 6.61, then parents at 5.97 and students at 5.88. The difference in responses can be seen by 68% of administrators and teachers agreeing very strongly with this item, compared to 35.9% of parents, and 32.5% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their second most important item, students considered it to be their 30th most important item, and parents considered it to be their 43rd most important item. Administrators and teachers seeing this item as being much more important than either the parents or students resulted in the administrators and teachers being statistically independent from both the parents and students on this item. The standard deviation for the administrators and teachers was their lowest at 0.62. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within the administrator and teacher stakeholder group when answering this item.



In Martinez, Hetterschijt and Iglesias (2015) parents listed top down management as a major weakness. In contrast, the parents in this research did not hold the same concern toward autocratic leadership styles. The school has many more teachers than administrators and it would be safe to assume this would skew the results of an item like this in their favour. This finding supports Odland and Ruzicka (2009) who reported one of the main reasons for teachers leaving an international school, after completing only one contract, was the administrative leadership. Subsequently, Mancuso, Roberts, and White (2010) had similar results that related to the school head's managerial practices. Their research also found there was a greater likelihood that teachers would stay at their school if they felt they were being listened to and therefore had an impact on decision making at the school. Lujan Martinez (2011) also supported the notion of managerial styles being an important consideration in teacher retention. Teachers are well educated professionals and it is understandable that they feel they deserve the support and trust of the administrators. This is a result that would likely hold for all international schools the world over. It is also understandable that neither the parents nor the students afforded this as much importance as the teachers. Parents and students are not nearly as impacted by such an item and the questionnaire results show that they are not as sensitive toward this item when compared to other items on the questionnaire.

**Administrators and teachers item 3: A top international school should have an excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.**

The mean score for this item was highest for administrators and teachers at 6.40, then parents at 5.91, and students at 5.78. The difference in response can be seen by 52.6% of administrators and teachers agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 32.9% of parents and 26.0% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their sixth most important item, students considered it to be their 38th most important item, and parents considered it their 47th most important item. Administrators and teachers seeing this item as being much more important than either the parents and students has resulted in the administrators and teachers being statistically independent from both the parents and students on this item. The standard deviation for the administrators and teachers was their third lowest at 0.70.

This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within the administrators and teachers stakeholder group when answering this item.

This research supports the notion that salaries and benefits are an extremely important criterion that teachers consider when deciding to teach in an international school, as well as whether or not to remain in their current international school (Hrycak, 2015; Mancuso, Roberts, & White, 2010; Odland & Ruzicka, 2009; Savva, 2015). This research also recognises that it is important for the school to continually educate its teachers through quality professional development (Lujan Martinez, 2011). The importance administrators and teachers place on their remuneration and benefits is understandable. The administrators and teachers will benefit the most, or lose the most, depending on the remuneration package and the benefits. They value excellent remuneration packages as it makes their lives much easier and they value personal development opportunities as it is an investment in their own human capital. The fact that the average for both the parents and the students was above the neutral level of four means they must have made a connection between this item and good teaching. However, this item has a secondary effect on them in that their tuition fees are needed to pay the teachers' salaries and benefits. Therefore, the impact and resulting importance given to the item was not as high as the importance given by the administrators and teachers. This is a result I would expect if this research were conducted in any international school throughout the world.

**Student item 7: A top international school should have open minded students.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.4, then administrators and teachers at 6.31, and students at 6.13. The similarity in response can be seen by 59.9% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 52.6% of administrators and teachers and 49.4% of students. Administrators and teachers considered this to be their tenth most important item, parents considered it to be their twelfth most important item, and students considered it their 17th most important item. Even though the students gave this item a lower ranking, all three stakeholder groups were not statistically independent. The standard deviation for the parents was their tenth lowest at 0.84. This gives an indication of the narrow spread in opinions amongst the parents when answering this item.

Open minded students were seen as being of high importance for all groups, but only the administrators and teachers placed this item in their top ten. Educating

students to be internationally minded or open minded is a common objective for international schools. It is encouraging for the Superior International School to see that each stakeholder group has afforded relatively high importance to this theme. It is also encouraging that the stakeholder groups were not statistically independent, indicating they were all on the same page in response to the item. This item will likely vary from international school to international school. It would vary depending on the level of importance administrators placed on this item and therefore the amount of resources invested in the item.

### 6.7 Parents' top ten most important characteristics

Teachers who inspire students to think outside of the box and ask questions, and teachers who keep themselves up to date with professional development and pedagogy, were the two characteristics that appeared in the top ten most important items for parents, but not for the administrator and teacher, or the student stakeholder groups.

Table 6.6

*Characteristics that appeared in the parent stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

Items	Rankings
	Parents
AT18: A top international school should have teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.	4
AT9: A top international school should have teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.	7

**Administrators and teachers item 18: A top international school should have teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.51, then administrators and teachers at 6.18, and students at 6.14. The difference in response can be seen by 65% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 46.8% of students and 41.2% of administrators and teachers. Parents considered this

to be their fourth most important item, students considered it to be their fourteenth most important item, and administrators and teachers considered it to be their 21st most important item. Parents seeing this item as being much more important than administrators and teachers has resulted in them being statistically independent on this item. The standard deviation for the parents was their fifth lowest at 0.76. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions within the parents stakeholder group when answering this item.

In research conducted by Zhang and McGrath (2009) it was found that teachers valued students who were independent, resourceful and able to make their own decisions. The administrators and teachers in this research recognised these as positive attributes but did not seem to attach the same level of importance to them. It was also found that students were not comfortable sharing their opinions or questioning teachers (Bailey, 2015; Deveney, 2005). However, parents in this research recognised the importance of their children learning to think outside of the box, as well as questioning the teacher. Parents have the responsibility to raise their children to be independent adults who can function and be successful in a complicated world. For this to happen, their children need to develop skills associated with independence. This item reflects this by mentioning thinking and questioning skills. It is understandable that parents place much more emphasis on this item than administrators and teachers do. If these skills of independence are not obtained by the time the student leaves school, the administrators and teachers are no longer responsible for the student. However, the parents have a lifelong commitment to their children and they might be negatively influenced if these skills have not been developed. This result would likely hold if research was conducted in any international school.

**Administrators and teachers item 9: A top international school should have teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.**

The mean score for this item was highest for parents at 6.45, then administrators and teachers at 6.18, and students at 5.82. The difference in response can be seen by 59.5% of parents agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 43.3% of administrators and teachers and 24.7% of students. Parents considered this to be their seventh most important item, administrators and teachers considered it to

be their 20th most important item, and students considered it their 36th most important item. The large gap between parents and students in regards to the importance of this, has resulted in these two stakeholder groups being statistically independent on this item. The standard deviation for the parents was the fourth lowest at 0.74. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions amongst the parents.

When parents make the decision to send their child or children to an international school, they have already decided that an international education is of very high value to their child or children. In Thailand, international education is the most expensive education children can be enrolled in. Thus, parents who pay high tuition fees for education will likely expect the highest quality in education for their child or children. To be considered the highest quality, teachers should be continually improving their training in their specific field, as well as understand the latest research on pedagogy. The students did not consider this to be as important as their parents. I can only speculate that students saw their teachers as being intelligent and they felt professional development did not need to be continuously updated throughout a person's life.

### 6.8 Students' top ten most important characteristics

A wide variety of classes to choose from was a characteristic that appeared in the top ten most important items for students, but not in those of the administrator and teacher or parent stakeholder groups.

Table 6.7

*Characteristics that appeared in the student stakeholder group's top ten most important characteristics*

Items	Rankings
	Students
C5: A top international school should have a wide variety of classes that students can choose from.	2

**Curriculum item 5: A top international school should have a wide variety of classes that students can choose from.**

The mean score for this item was highest for students at 6.48, then for parents at 6.32, and for administrators and teachers at 6.00. A difference in response can be seen by 66.2% of students agreeing very strongly with this item compared to 55.7% of parents and 41.2% of administrators and teachers. Students considered this to be their second most important item, parents considered it to be their nineteenth most important item, and administrators and teachers considered it their 33rd most important item. Even though students gave this item a much higher rating than the other two stakeholder groups, they were not statistically independent. The standard deviation for the students was their sixth lowest at 0.87. This gives an indication of a narrow spread in opinions amongst the students when answering this item.

It is important to remember that the student participants in this questionnaire all came from grades 10, 11 and 12. At this level of education students have the right to select the subjects they wish to study. Students have a wide variety of strengths and interests, which drive their desire to select the subjects they eventually select. No two students are exactly the same. Thus, with a wide variety of subjects, the students themselves will benefit most. With this consideration, it is not surprising that students value the selection of different subjects more than do the other two stakeholder groups. If this research were used to assess stakeholders from other international schools in different continents, I would still expect students in grades 10, 11 and 12 to value a wide variety of class selections.

**6.9 Research limitations and recommendations for further research**

This study was conducted as a case study involving an international school in the capital city of Thailand. The students attending this international school overwhelmingly come from very affluent families. Therefore, it is not appropriate to assume research findings from this study will apply to non-international schools as most students attending non-international schools do not come from the same privileged backgrounds. Also, the student population in this school are predominantly Thai. Even though these students attend an international school, it is reasonable to expect them to maintain many Thai values and beliefs. Again, it would not be appropriate to assume research findings from this study will apply to international schools with significantly different demographic structures, or

international schools outside of Thailand. The researcher recommends that the research tool developed in this research be adapted or utilised in its entirety to conduct further research in other countries and other school systems to establish similarities and differences with this research.

This research grouped together three significant stakeholder groups without considering possible differences within these groups. It might not be correct to think of these groups as being homogeneous (Wolfe & Putler, 2002). To better understand subordinate groups that make up the stakeholder group populations, it would be beneficial to further break down the stakeholder groups with similar characteristics. The researcher recommends that the administrator and teacher group, as well as the parent group, can be divided into preschool/elementary school, middle school and high school. Analysis could then be conducted to determine how homogeneous these groups truly are in their opinions of the most important characteristics of top international schools.

## **6.10 Summary**

This chapter has discussed each item that was listed in the top ten most important characteristics for any one of the three stakeholder groups. This is central to the research and it is important as it broadens the understanding of what characteristics are most important to the three most significant stakeholder groups. The items were then cross-referenced using all three stakeholder groups. The importance of this is that it broadens current knowledge regarding how homogeneous the three stakeholder groups are in their opinions of what the most important characteristics of top international schools are. The current literature was then reviewed in relation to the items discussed by this chapter to ascertain if this research reinforced or contradicted past research. Reasons why the items were regarded with such importance to the particular stakeholder groups have been given. In addition, relevance to other international schools and suggestions for improvements for future research on some items have been discussed.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

As has been described throughout this research, there is a gap in the current research when considering international schools. This research helps to bridge part of that gap by extrapolating the items that different stakeholders believed are most important when deciding which international schools can be identified as being the top international schools in the education sector. In this chapter the researcher focuses on the main findings with relation to the research question as well as answering the four subordinate questions. These findings enable the research to consider how the different stakeholder groups are similar and how they might be seen as independent of each other. With this understanding the school will know which issues will unite the school community and which issues could lead to a polarised community creating possible conflict. The researcher in this section also considers the applications of this research as well as limitations and recommendations for further research.

#### **7.2 Findings**

During the literature review and interview stages of this research, the researcher identified 68 items that were all considered important in schools being recognised as top international school. The researcher put these items to the test to measure how important each one was by having three different stakeholder groups complete questionnaires, and they effectively ranked the items from 1 (most important), to 68 (least important). Of these 68 items, all received a score above four which indicates that all items contribute positively toward a school being recognised as a top international school. This indicates that all international schools should have some consideration toward each of these 68 items. However, from the research it is evident that these 68 items each have different levels of importance. International schools should realise the importance of each individual item, and to which stakeholder groups, so they can effectively budget their resources and receive the most value from their resource allocation.

When individual participants representing the stakeholder groups completed the questionnaire, it was assumed they would answer the questions in a way that reflected the best results for them as a stakeholder and their group as a whole. The



results of the questionnaire indicated there were both shared or common levels of importance as well as stakeholder-specific independent levels of importance among the different stakeholder groups. This can be seen by looking at both the statistical significance between stakeholder groups on individual items and the top ten most important results for the three stakeholder groups.

The shared or common levels of importance can be seen from the data analysis that indicated there was no significant difference between the three stakeholder groups on 46 of the 68 items. This indicates that the three stakeholder groups could not be considered statistically independent and therefore had a high level of consistency in their replies to these items. Further evidence of consistency between stakeholder groups was seen when the researcher considered the top ten items for each stakeholder group. There were four items that were in the top ten for each of the three stakeholder groups. Giving further weight to this concept, there were a further six items that appeared in two stakeholder groups' top ten items. These results show that the three stakeholder groups did have a shared or common perception regarding the importance of many of the items.

This indicates many shared objectives and stakeholder groups that are aligned in their opinion of what items are important and the level of their importance. This is encouraging for all stakeholder groups as this alignment will create both harmony and focus. Harmony, when upholding school regulations and procedures, or enacting decisions for the school betterment, or implementing change within the school. Focus, as the different stakeholder groups give similar value to what is important and thus they are all willing to assist to obtain the final objectives. This will result in the school receiving much positive assistance from its community and little to no resistance while carrying out the difficult process of educating children.

There were also independent items where the members of the different stakeholder groups placed significantly different values on these items. These items would likely have a more direct effect or benefit to one stakeholder group rather than the three stakeholder groups as a whole. The concepts of independent items can be seen by the fact that 22 of the 68 items were considered to have one or more stakeholder group pairs that were statistically independent. This is further supported by the fact that six items appeared in only one stakeholder group's top ten and a further six items appeared in two stakeholder groups' top ten but not the third stakeholder group's top ten. These results show that the three stakeholder groups also

had independent perceptions regarding the importance of many of the items that were not shared equally by all stakeholder groups.

It is understandable that some items might leave the personal objective of two stakeholder groups in conflict. It was expected that all stakeholder groups would answer the questionnaire in a way that best reflected their own objectives within the school. Some stakeholder groups attributed a higher value to some items when compared to other stakeholder groups. This resulted in a conflict between the two stakeholder groups regarding the value of that particular item. This is clearly a more difficult situation for a school to deal with than when the stakeholder groups are in agreement with the level of importance attributed to the item. When a school is dealing with such items care needs to be exercised to find a balance or compromise. This balance or compromise will reduce stakeholder friction and go a long way toward keeping the community aligned.

### **7.3 The importance of this research**

It is important for all of the major stakeholders to take an interest in this research. This research gives stakeholders a guide as to what is important to their stakeholder group, as well as what is important to the other two stakeholder groups. Now they can assess international schools with a meaningful idea of what items they should be focusing on and benchmarking against other international schools. This can empower interested parties to understand and measure the value of competing international schools. It further helps professionals decide which schools they would like to work for, and it permits parents to decide which schools they would like to send their children to and would themselves like to be associated with.

Administrators in international schools that boast similar characteristics to the Superior International School should pay particular attention to these findings. The international school market continues to grow and with that comes much competition between schools. This competition can be in the way of schools attempting to increase student numbers as well as trying to attract the highest quality teachers. If a school administration team is not paying attention to the details of this research, they might focus on and budget for items that are not considered to be as important to the individual stakeholder groups. Schools may lose enrolments as it is relatively easy for parents to find other international schools that they perceive to be of greater value or higher standing. These schools will also receive a smaller selection of high-quality

teachers if they do not recognise the important items, as identified in section 4.3, for administrators and teachers. All teachers will naturally gravitate toward the schools which they consider as being the top international schools. The schools that are not paying attention to these findings will naturally get a lower quality pool of teachers to choose from. Also, if these perceived lower quality schools do have high quality teachers, they are more likely to lose them as the teachers have many opportunities to join other schools. They are more likely to keep the teachers who are not seen as being as attractive on paper and therefore are not as mobile. When these schools lose their highest quality teachers, it takes both time and money to replace them.

The findings of this research may assist school administrations with how to both attract and maintain quality teachers in order to provide students with the best possible experiences. They might also have more satisfied parents making the school's marketing process significantly easier. This might contribute to having more satisfied students making their final years of high school more productive and more rewarding, resulting in higher grades and better university opportunities.

#### **7.4 Summary**

This chapter has reported much overlap in the items that the different stakeholder groups value in an international school. Specifically, it was found that there were no statistical differences between the stakeholders in their opinions regarding the importance of 46 out of the 68 items. Furthermore, there were four items that appeared in all three stakeholder groups' top ten items and six that appeared in two stakeholder groups' top ten. Contrastingly, the chapter also points out that the stakeholder groups were not perfectly homogeneous as there were statistical differences in 22 items and there were six items that only appeared in one stakeholder group's top ten. The chapter finished by highlighting the fact that international schools must focus on what it is that each particular stakeholder group values. Only then will the international school be viewed by all of the stakeholder groups as being a top international school.

## References

- Administration*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 10th, 2017, from <http://www.yourdictionary.com/administration>
- Bailey, L. (2015). The experiences of host country nationals in international schools: A case-study from Malaysia. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(2), 85-97. doi:10.1177/1475240915590557
- Blaikie, N. (2003). *Analyzing quantitative data: From description to explanation*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Bunnell, T., Fertig, M., & James, C. (2016). What is international about international schools? An institutional legitimacy perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 42(4), 408-423. doi:10.1080/03054985.2016.1195735
- Carber, S. (2011). Themes in international education. In S. Carber (Ed.), *Internationalizing schools* [DX Reader Version]. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/Internationalizing-Schools-Steven-Carber-ebook/dp/B005LDBL22/ref=sr\\_1\\_sc\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514983663&sr=8-1-spell&keywords=internationalising+schools](https://www.amazon.com/Internationalizing-Schools-Steven-Carber-ebook/dp/B005LDBL22/ref=sr_1_sc_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514983663&sr=8-1-spell&keywords=internationalising+schools)
- Chan, E., & Ross, V. (2014). Narrative understandings of a school policy: Intersecting student, teacher, parent and administrator perspectives. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46(5), 656-675. doi:10.1080/00220272.2014.911352
- Chandler, J. (2010). The role of location in the recruitment and retention of teachers in international schools. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 9(3), 214-226. doi:10.1177/1475240910383917
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge.
- Corlu, M. S. (2014). Which preparatory curriculum for the international baccalaureate diploma programme is best? The challenge for international schools with regard to mathematics and science. *International Review of Education*, 60(6), 793-801. doi:10.1007/s11159-014-9446-9
- Council of International Schools. (n.d.). *Membership directory*. Retrieved July 01, 2017, from <https://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=1884>

- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Fourth, International Student ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Decuir-Gunby, J. T., Marshall, P. L., & McCulloch, A. W. (2010). Developing and using a codebook for the analysis of interview data: An example from a professional development research project. *Field Methods*, 23(2), 136-155. doi:10.1177/1525822x10388468
- Deveney, B. (2005). An investigation into aspects of Thai culture and its impact on Thai students in an international school in Thailand. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 4(2), 153-171. doi:10.1177/1475240905054388
- Dey, I. (2003). *Qualitative data analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. London: Routledge.
- Ding, X. (2016). Exploring the experiences of international students in China. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(4), 319-338. doi:10.1177/1028315316647164
- Dolby, N., & Rahman, A. (2008). Research in international education. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 676–726.
- Donohoe, H.M., & Needham, R. D. (2009). Moving best practices forward: Delphi characteristics, advantages, potential problems, and solutions. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 11(5), 415-437
- Dugonjic, L. (2014). "A miniature league of nations": Inquiry into the social origins of the international school, 1924-1930. *Paedagogica Historica*, 50(1-2), 138-150.
- Edge, K., & Khamsi, K. (2012). International school partnerships as a vehicle for global education: Student perspectives. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 32(4), 455-472. doi:10.1080/02188791.2012.739964
- Education development trust (n.d.). Retrieved February 18, 2018, from <https://www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/en-GB/our-programmes/school-inspection-and-evaluation/international-schools-quality-mark>
- Elliott, A. C., & Hynan, L. S. (2011). A SAS® macro implementation of a multiple comparison post hoc test for a Kruskal–Wallis analysis. *Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine*, 102(1), 75-80. doi:10.1016/j.cmpb.2010.11.002

- Favero, N., & Meier, K. J. (2013). Evaluating urban public schools: Parents, teachers, and state assessments. *Public Administration Review*, 73(3), 401-412. doi:10.1111/puar.12022
- Field, A. (2014). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* [Kindle for Mac]. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Fielding, N. G. (2010). Mixed methods research in the real world. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 13(2), 127-138. doi:10.1080/13645570902996186
- Finstad, K. (2010). Response interpolation and scale sensitivity: Evidence against 5-point scales. *Journal of Usability Studies*, 5(3), 104-110. Retrieved February 5, 2019, from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f8b2/7873043cf56f158d013c6175996475a6509d.pdf>.
- Fryer, T. (2009). Stakeholder experiences of a dual-language international school: A qualitative case study of a private international school in Hong Kong. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(2), 210-222. doi:10.1177/1475240909105205
- Gaskell, R. (2016). *Overview of international school markets*. Presentation at EARCOS Leadership Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Halicioglu, M. L. (2015). Challenges facing teachers new to working in schools overseas. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(3), 242-257. doi:10.1177/1475240915611508
- Hasson, F., Keeney, S., & McKenna, H. (2000). Research guidelines for the Delphi survey technique. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 32(4), 1008. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.2000.01567.x
- Haughey, D. (n.d.). Delphi technique a step-by-step guide. Retrieved June 24, 2017, from <https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/delphi-technique-a-step-by-step-guide.php>
- Hayden, M., & Thompson, J. J. (2008). *International schools: Growth and influence*. Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Education Planning. Retrieved April 7, 2017, from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001803/180396e.pdf>
- Hill, I. (2016). What is an international school? *International Schools Journal*, 35(2), 9-21.

- Hirsch, S. E. (2016). Understanding the relationship between teacher and organizational intercultural competency in international schools: A mixed methods study. *Doctoral Dissertations*. 302.  
<http://repository.usfca.edu/diss/302>
- Hrycak, J. (2015). Home and away: An inquiry into home-based and overseas teacher perceptions regarding international schools. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(1), 29-43. doi:10.1177/1475240915573136
- Hsu, C., & Sandford, B. A. (2007). The Delphi technique: Making sense of consensus. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 12(10), 1-8.  
Retrieved June 23, 2017 from <http://pareonline.net/getvu.asp?v=12&n=10>
- Hu, G., & McKay, S. L. (2012). English language education in East Asia: Some recent developments. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33(4), 345-362. doi:10.1080/01434632.2012.661434
- International accreditation*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 18, 2018, from <https://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=1906>
- International Baccalaureate (n.d.). *Mission*. Retrieved August 25, 2017, from <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/>
- International schools*. (2003, May 8). Retrieved February 18, 2018, from [http://www.moe.go.th/inter\\_school/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.moe.go.th/inter_school/index_eng.htm)
- Jackson, A. (2004). Preparing urban youths to succeed in the interconnected world of the 21st century. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(3), 210-213.
- Kaynak, E., & Macaulay, J. A. (1984). The Delphi technique in the measurement of tourism market potential. *Tourism Management*, 5(2), 87-101.  
doi:10.1016/0261-5177(84)90056-6
- Kazadi, K., Lievens, A., & Mahr, F. D. (2016). Stakeholder co-creation during the innovation process: Identifying capabilities for knowledge creation among multiple stakeholders. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(2), 525-540.  
doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.05.009
- Ledger, S. (2016). Breaking through the cultural bubble: International schools engaging at the local level. *International Schools Journal*, 36(1), 27-39.
- Lee, M., Hallinger, P., & Walker, A. (2012). Leadership challenges in international schools in the Asia pacific region: Evidence from programme implementation of the international baccalaureate. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 15(3), 289-310. doi:10.1080/13603124.2011.605475

- Lominé, L., Muchena, M. M., & Pierce, R. A. (2014). *Business management: Course companion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Lowe, J. (2000). Assessment and educational quality: Implications for international schools. In M. Hayden & J. J. Thompson (Eds.), *International schools & international education: Improving teaching, management & quality* (pp. 15-28). London: Kogan Page.
- Lujan Martinez, J. (2011). The role of leadership in achieving a genuine international education. In S. Carber (Ed.), *Internationalizing schools* [DX Reader Version]. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/Internationalizing-Schools-Steven-Carber-ebook/dp/B005LDBL22/ref=sr\\_1\\_sc\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514983663&sr=8-1-spell&keywords=internationalising+schools](https://www.amazon.com/Internationalizing-Schools-Steven-Carber-ebook/dp/B005LDBL22/ref=sr_1_sc_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514983663&sr=8-1-spell&keywords=internationalising+schools)
- Machin, D. (2017). The great Asian international school gold rush: An economic analysis. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 16(2), 131-146. doi:10.1177/1475240917722276
- MacDonald, J. (2009). Balancing priorities and measuring success: A triple bottom line framework for international school leaders. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(1), 81-98. doi:10.1177/1475240908100682
- MacKenzie, P. (2010). School choice in an international context. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 9(2), 107-123. doi:10.1177/1475240910370813
- Mancuso, S. V., Roberts, L., & White, G. P. (2010). Teacher retention in international schools: The key role of school leadership. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 9(3), 306-323. doi:10.1177/1475240910388928
- Martinez, M. A., Hetterschijt, C., & Iglesias, M. J. (2015). The European schools: Perspectives of parents as participants in a learning community. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 14(1), 44-60. doi:10.1177/1475240915573377
- Marvin, D. (2016). Effective instructional leadership strategies: The value of disconnecting from work. *The International Schools Journal*, 36(1), 91.
- Morrison, K. (1998). *Management theories for educational change*. London: P. Chapman.
- Nagrath, C. (2011, August 26). *What makes a school international?* Retrieved July 08, 2017, from [https://www.tieonline.com/view\\_article.cfm?ArticleID=87](https://www.tieonline.com/view_article.cfm?ArticleID=87)



- NEASC Commission on International Education. (2014). *The handbook for evaluators* (Version 8.2). Burlington, MA: New England Association of Schools & Colleges, Inc.
- Ng, V. (2012). The decision to send local children to international schools in Hong Kong: Local parents' perspectives. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 13*(1), 121-136. doi:10.1007/s12564-011-9178-5
- Odland, G., & Ruzicka, M. (2009). An investigation into teacher turnover in international schools. *Journal of Research in International Education, 8*(1), 5-29. doi:10.1177/1475240908100679
- O'Dwyer, L. M., & Bernauer, J. A. (2014). *Quantitative research for the qualitative researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- O'Neill, S., Scott, M., & Conboy, K. (2011). A Delphi study on collaborative learning in distance education: The faculty perspective. *British Journal of Education Technology, 42*(6), 939-949. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2010.01132.x>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bustamante, R. M., & Nelson, J. A. (2009). Mixed research as a tool for developing quantitative instruments. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 4*(1), 56-78. doi:10.1177/1558689809355805
- Rader, D. (2015). Valuing languages and cultures: The first step towards developing intercultural understanding. *The International Schools Journal, 34*(2), 17-22.
- Roy, M. (2009). Back translation. In C. Wankel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of business in today's world* (pp. 101-121). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781412964289.n56
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods, 15*(1), 85-109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X02239569>
- Savva, M. (2015). Characteristics of the international educator and the strategic role of critical incidents. *Journal of Research in International Education, 14*(1), 16-28. doi:10.1177/1475240915570548
- Snider, H. M., Nickels, S., Gleason, M., McFarlane, A., Szeffler, S. J., & Allison, M. A. (2017). Stakeholder perspectives on optimizing communication in a school-centered asthma program. *Journal of School Health, 87*(12), 941-948. Retrieved February 5, 2019, from <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/doi/epdf/10.1111/josh.12565>.

- Taylor, S. (2014). Globally-minded students: Defining, measuring and developing intercultural sensitivity: Part 2. *The International Schools Journal*, 33(2), 26-34.
- Thompson, M. J. (2018). *A guide to establishing and maintaining quality international schools*. Leicestershire, UK: The Book Guild Ltd.
- Tondeur, J., Aesaert, K., Pynoo, B., Braak, J.V., Fraeyman, N., & Erstad, O. (2015). Developing a validated instrument to measure preservice teachers' ICT competences: Meeting the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *British Journal of Education Technology*, 48(2), 462-472. Doi:10.1111/bjet.12380
- Twin, A. (2019, June 25). How the Depphi Method Works. Retrieved from <https://www.investopedia.com/d/delphi-method.asp>
- van Teijlingen, E. & Hundley, V. (2001). The importance of pilot studies. *Social Research Update* (35), pp. 1-4.
- Vargha, A., & Delaney, H. (1998). The Kruskal-Wallis test and stochastic homogeneity. *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics*, 23(2), 170-192. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/stable/1165320>
- Vogel, S., Mars, T., & Barton, T. (2016). It's hard gaining consent – A qualitative interview study with osteopaths. *Manual Therapy*, 25. doi:10.1016/j.math.2016.05.029
- Walker, A., & Shuangye, C. (2007). Leader authenticity in intercultural school contexts. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 35(2), 185-204. doi:10.1177/1741143207075388
- WASC. (2017). *Focus on learning* (International Edition). Retrieved from <https://www.acswasc.org/vc/visiting-committee-materials/international-schools-visiting-committee-materials/acs-wasc-focus-on-learning-2017-international-edition-self-study-visiting-committee-materials/>
- Wettewa, V. (2016). Postcolonial emotionalism in shaping education: An analysis of international school choice in Sri Lanka. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 15(1), 66-83.
- Whiting, L. S. (2008). Semi-structured interviews: guidance for novice researchers. *Nursing Standard*, 22(23), 35-40.
- Wolfe, R. A., & Putler, D. S. (2002). How tight are the ties that bind stakeholder groups? *Organization Science*, 13(1), 64-80. doi:10.1287/orsc.13.1.64.544

Zhang, Y., & McGrath, I. (2009). Teacher—student relationships in an international baccalaureate school in China. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 8(2), 164-190. doi:10.1177/1475240909105203

## Appendix A

**OFFICE OF RESEARCH**  
Human Research Ethics Committee  
PHONE +61 7 4631 2690| FAX +61 7 4631 5555  
EMAIL [human.ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@usq.edu.au)



7 November 2017

Mr Matthew Fahey

Dear Matthew

The USQ Human Research Ethics Committee has recently reviewed your responses to the conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the project outlined below. Your proposal is now deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and full ethical approval has been granted.

Approval No.	H17REA227
Project Title	Characteristics that define a top international school, according to stakeholder perspectives. A Thai case study.
Approval date	7 November 2017
Expiry date	7 November 2020
HREC Decision	<b>Approved</b>

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- (a) Conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC
- (b) Advise (email: [human.ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@usq.edu.au)) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project
- (c) Make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes
- (d) Provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval
- (e) Provide a 'final report' when the project is complete
- (f) Advise in writing if the project has been discontinued, using a 'final report'

For (c) to (f) forms are available on the USQ ethics website:

<http://www.usq.edu.au/research/support-development/research-services/research-integrity-ethics/human/forms>

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Mark Emmerson**  
Ethics Officer



University of Southern Queensland

### Participant Information for USQ Research Project Interview

#### Project Details

Title of Project: Characteristics that define a top international school, according to stakeholder perspectives. A Thai case study.  
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H17REA227

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Matthew Fahey  
Email: u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au  
Mobile: 083 3025270

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Henriette van Rensburg  
Email: henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au

#### Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Education.  
The purpose of this project is to establish what characteristics are required for an international school to be considered as a top international school in the Thai market.

The research team requests your assistance because you are either a stakeholder or an expert in the field of international schools. In this stage of the research there will be thirty people recruited.

#### Participation

Your participation will involve participation in an interview that will not exceed 20 minutes of your time. You will be provided with a summary statement of all interviews and an initial questionnaire that has been generated as a result of the interviews. It is requested that you provide feedback on these documents and the feedback should not take longer than 10 minutes of your time.

The interview will take place on a date, time and venue that is convenient for you. Or the interview will be undertaken by Skype or via a telephone call at a date and time that is convenient for you.

The interview will be a conversation, and you will be given the following prompt 'I want you to focus on international schools. Can you tell me your definition of an excellent international school? What do you look for in a top international school?'.

Subject to your agreement, the interview will be audio recorded and you will receive a transcript of the interview for your approval.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any data collected about you be destroyed. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland, the researcher Matthew Fahey or any school you are associated with.

#### **Expected Benefits**

It is expected that this project will directly benefit you if you have any sort of association with international schools in Thailand. It will also benefit people other than you that have an association with international schools in Thailand.

A summary of the results of the study will be provided at the conclusion of the study upon request.

#### **Risks**

There are no anticipated risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

#### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

- You will have a two-week opportunity to verify your comments and responses prior to the final inclusion of your interview information. The two weeks starts from the date your transcript is emailed to you.
- The audio recording will be kept for the required timeframes.
- Your recorded interview will not be used for any other purpose.
- The only people who will have access to your recorded interview are the principal investigator and the transcriber.
- If you do not want your interview to be recorded you can still participate in this research. The interviewer will take short notes during the interview to catch the main interview points.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely in de-identified formats as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Your data will be used for the sole purpose of producing a questionnaire. At no stage will you be identified in any publications.

#### **Consent to Participate**

I would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to Matthew Fahey or email an electronic copy to [u1086924@uimail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@uimail.usq.edu.au) prior to participating in your interview.

#### **Questions or Further Information about the Project**

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

#### **Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au). The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

This project will be carried out in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

**Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.**

## Appendix C



University of Southern Queensland

### Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview (Under 18 years)

#### Project Details

Title of Project: Characteristics that define a top international school, according to stakeholder perspectives. A Thai case study.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H17REA227

#### Research Team Contact Details



##### Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Matthew Fahey  
Email: [u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au)  
Mobile: 083 3025270

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Henriette van Rensburg  
Email: [henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au](mailto:henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au)



#### Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding your child's participation in this project.
- You and your child have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you or your child have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Understand that you will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview for your perusal and endorsement prior to inclusion of your child's data in the project.
- Understand that you, or your child, are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you and your child will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au) if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are the legal guardian of the child that will participate in this project.
- Agree for your child to participate in the project.

#### Child or Young Person's (under 18 years) Agreement to Participate

Name

Signature

Date

#### Parent's (or Legal Guardian's) Consent for a Child or Young Person to Participate

Name

Signature

Date

**Please return this sheet to Matthew Fahey or send it as an electronic copy to [u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au) prior to your child participating in the Interview.**

## Appendix D



University of Southern Queensland

### Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

#### Project Details

Title of Project: Characteristics that define a top international school, according to stakeholder perspectives. A Thai case study.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H17REA227

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Matthew Fahey  
Email: [u1086924@usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@usq.edu.au)  
Mobile: 083 3025270

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Henriette van Rensburg  
Email: [henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au](mailto:henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au)

#### Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the interview will be audio / video recorded.
- Understand that you will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview for your perusal and endorsement prior to inclusion of this data in the project.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au) if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

**Please return this sheet to Matthew Fahey or send it as an electronic copy to [u1086924@usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@usq.edu.au) prior to undertaking the interview.**



## Appendix E



University of Southern Queensland

### Consent Form for USQ Research Project Questionnaire

#### Project Details

Title of Project: Characteristics that define a top international school, according to stakeholder perspectives. A Thai case study.

Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H17REA227

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Matthew Fahey  
Email: [u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au)  
Mobile: 083 3025270

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Henriette van Rensburg  
Email: [henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au](mailto:henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au)

#### Statement of Consent

##### By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding your child's participation in this project.
- You and your child have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that you or your child are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you and your child will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au) if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are the legal guardian of the child that will participate in this project.
- Agree for your child to participate in the project.

#### Child or Young Person's Agreement to Participate

Name & homeroom

Signature

Date

#### Parent's (or Legal Guardian's) Consent for a Child or Young Person to Participate

Name

Signature

Date

**Please return this sheet to your homeroom teacher, Matthew Fahey (RIST408) or send it as an electronic copy to [u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au](mailto:u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au).**

## Appendix F



University of Southern Queensland

### Participant Information for USQ Research Project Questionnaire

#### Project Details

Title of Project: Characteristics that define a top international school, according to stakeholder perspectives. A Thai case study.  
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H17REA227

#### Research Team Contact Details

##### Principal Investigator Details

Mr. Matthew Fahey  
Email: u1086924@uqmail.usq.edu.au  
Mobile: 083 3025270

##### Supervisor Details

Associate Professor Henriette van Rensburg  
Email: henriette.vanrensburg@usq.edu.au

#### Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Education.  
The purpose of this project is to establish what characteristics are required for an international school to be considered as a top international school in the Thai market.

The research team requests your assistance because you are a stakeholder of international schools. At this stage of the research there will be thirty people recruited.

#### Participation

Your participation will involve completion of a questionnaire that will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Questions will include questions like. Rate the importance of proficiency in the English language or rate the importance of the academic results of an international school.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Please note, that if you wish to withdraw from the project after you have submitted your responses, the Research Team are unable to remove your data from the project as your responses will be totally anonymous. If you do wish to withdraw from this project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland, the researcher Matthew Fahey or any school you are associated with.

#### **Expected Benefits**

It is expected that this project will directly benefit you if you have any sort of association with international schools in Thailand. It may benefit people other than you that have an association with international schools in Thailand.

A summary of the results of the study will be provided at the conclusion of the study upon request.

#### **Risks**

There are no anticipated risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

#### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

This is an anonymous questionnaire. Therefore, names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Your data will be used for the sole purpose of producing a questionnaire.

#### **Consent to Participate**

Clicking on the 'Submit' button at the conclusion of the questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

#### **Questions or Further Information about the Project**

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

#### **Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email [ethics@usq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@usq.edu.au). The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

This project will be carried out in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

**Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.**

## Appendix G

*Mean values and standard deviation for administrators and teachers on each item in the questionnaire*

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Administrator and teacher-related items</b>		
AT1: Highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.	6.21	0.79
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	6.36	0.77
AT3: An excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.	6.4	0.70
AT4: A blend of teachers from many different countries.	5.77	1.12
AT5: Administrators who support and trust their teachers.	6.61	0.62
AT6: Teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.	6.52	0.83
AT7: Teachers who use enquiry based or student-centred activities to educate their students.	5.9	0.98
AT8: Teachers who can develop strong relationships with students and parents.	6.06	0.90
AT9: Teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.	6.18	0.87
AT10: Low levels of teacher turnover.	5.08	1.11
AT11: Low levels of administration turnover.	5.31	1.06
AT12: Clear communication with teachers so that they know what is expected of them before they sign a contract.	6.23	0.84
AT13: Teachers who support each other and can work together in teams.	6.23	0.73
AT14: Teachers who can fill more than one role and have both social and academic skills.	5.48	1.05
AT15: Teachers who can cater to students with special needs.	5.65	1.12
AT16: Teachers who are bilingual.	4.33	1.27

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
AT17: Stakeholders in and around the school who value the teachers.	5.81	1.07
AT18: Teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.	6.18	0.80
AT19: Administrators that listen to and incorporate teachers' opinions when making decisions.	6.28	0.79
AT20: Teachers that make themselves available to students outside of class time.	5.57	1.11
<b>Parent-related items</b>		
P1: Parents who are willing to offer both their suggestions and help to improve the school.	5.28	0.92
P2: Parents who do not get too involved in the running of the school, but rather let the school go about educating their children.	5.04	1.17
P3: Parents who support the school's goals and teachers in educating their children.	5.89	0.91
P4: Parents who support their children in the learning process.	6.05	0.89
P5: Parents who apply basic pressure to the school so the school better understands what the parents want from the school.	4.44	1.23
P6: A role in educating parents so they can better assist the school.	5.53	1.00
P7: Parents who embrace the concept of their children becoming international minded citizens.	6.09	0.95
<b>Student-related items</b>		
S1: A high percentage of students representing many different nationalities.	5.32	1.39
S2: Motivated students who work at a very high academic standard.	5.76	1.09
S3: Excellent results on external exams like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	5.61	1.10

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
S4: Graduates being admitted to the very best universities around the world.	5.36	1.17
S5: Graduates who go on to become outstanding members of society and very successful in their chosen fields.	5.89	1.02
S6: Students who are well behaved.	5.58	0.99
S7: Open minded students.	6.31	0.86
S8: Students who contribute suggestions that help improving the school.	5.95	0.92
Curriculum-related items		
C1: Programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.	6.1	0.90
C2: Internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	6.09	1.09
C3: A curriculum and a school ethos that encourages global or international mindedness.	6.26	0.88
C4: Curriculums that are of high standard, up to date with the latest research, and are challenging for their students.	6.16	0.90
C5: A wide variety of classes that students can choose from.	6	1.02
C6: Programs that develop students with strong academic English such that they can successfully study in overseas universities.	6.21	0.95
C7: A smooth transition or connection from one grade level to the next.	6.13	0.91
School in general-related items		
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	6.6	0.67
Sch2: A balanced programme that gives equal opportunities for students to participate in the arts, multiple sports, culture and academics.	6.3	0.96

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch3: An excellent reputation of producing high achieving students.	5.86	0.95
Sch4: Quality professional development opportunities that supports the school's mission and helps their teachers grow and get better.	6.25	0.79
Sch5: Excellent sporting facilities.	5.64	1.06
Sch6: Excellent programs that provide parents great value for money.	5.8	0.96
Sch7: Excellent facilities for the arts.	5.92	0.92
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	6.55	0.72
Sch9: An effective discipline program for students.	6.11	0.86
Sch10: Transparency when spending money so the different stakeholders can see where the school spends its money, giving an indication of what the school values the most.	6.18	0.88
Sch11: A waiting list, and the school should be very selective when deciding who they admit from that waiting list.	5.09	1.37
Sch12: Strong, successful sporting teams.	4.99	1.08
Sch13: Excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.	6.32	0.77
Sch14: An internationally accepted accreditation.	6.37	0.82
Sch15: Standards and expectations equivalent to other top international schools around the world.	6.15	0.86
Sch16: Many clubs that students can join, from football to creativity activities to computers.	5.96	0.84
Sch17: A culture of constant upgrading, improvement and getting better.	6.29	0.83
Sch18: Safe environment.	6.62	0.74

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch19: School leaders who have been given full authority to implement school policy that has been passed by the governing body.	5.9	1.05
Sch20: High quality sports coaches.	5.46	0.96
Sch21: Strong local and global community service projects.	5.99	0.87
Sch22: An accessible and nice location.	5.54	0.98
Sch23: Small classes.	5.82	1.01
Sch24: A strong pupil services department for students who are having problems.	6.01	0.93
Sch25: One common language of inclusion that all students understand and that single language is promoted throughout the school.	5.85	1.12
Sch26: Members of the governing body who come from different nationalities.	5.28	1.11

*Number of participants = 97*



## Appendix H

*Mean values and standard deviation for parents on each item in the questionnaire*

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Administrator and teacher-related items</b>		
AT1: Highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.	6.66	0.64
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	6.7	0.61
AT3: An excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.	5.91	1.00
AT4: A blend of teachers from many different countries.	5.12	1.26
AT5: Administrators who support and trust their teachers.	5.97	0.97
AT6: Teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.	6.36	0.81
AT7: Teachers who use enquiry based or student-centred activities to educate their students.	6.18	0.90
AT8: Teachers who can develop strong relationships with students and parents.	6.06	0.90
AT9: Teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.	6.45	0.74
AT10: Low levels of teacher turnover.	5.89	1.01
AT11: Low levels of administration turnover.	5.53	1.08
AT12: Clear communication with teachers so that they know what is expected of them before they sign a contract.	5.98	0.98
AT13: Teachers who support each other and can work together in teams.	6.26	0.82
AT14: Teachers who can fill more than one role and have both social and academic skills.	5.46	1.17
AT15: Teachers who can cater to students with special needs.	5.77	1.15
AT16: Teachers who are bilingual.	4.74	1.30

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
AT17: Stakeholders in and around the school who value the teachers.	5.4	1.17
AT18: Teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.	6.51	0.76
AT19: Administrators that listen to and incorporate teachers' opinions when making decisions.	6.08	0.95
AT20: Teachers that make themselves available to students outside of class time.	6	1.05
<b>Parent-related items</b>		
P1: Parents who are willing to offer both their suggestions and help to improve the school.	5.6	1.01
P2: Parents who do not get too involved in the running of the school, but rather let the school go about educating their children.	5.09	1.37
P3: Parents who support the school's goals and teachers in educating their children.	5.81	0.98
P4: Parents who support their children in the learning process.	6.11	0.88
P5: Parents who apply basic pressure to the school so the school better understands what the parents want from the school.	5.53	1.22
P6: A role in educating parents so they can better assist the school.	5.36	1.24
P7: Parents who embrace the concept of their children becoming international minded citizens.	6.05	1.05
<b>Student-related items</b>		
S1: A high percentage of students representing many different nationalities.	5.22	1.16
S2: Motivated students who work at a very high academic standard.	5.72	1.00
S3: Excellent results on external exams like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	5.8	1.00

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
S4: Graduates being admitted to the very best universities around the world.	5.91	1.05
S5: Graduates who go on to become outstanding members of society and very successful in their chosen fields.	6.14	0.96
S6: Students who are well behaved.	6.17	0.92
S7: Open minded students.	6.4	0.84
S8: Students who contribute suggestions that help improving the school.	6.15	0.98
Curriculum-related items		
C1: Programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.	6.43	0.85
C2: Internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	6.5	0.84
C3: A curriculum and a school ethos that encourages global or international mindedness.	6.39	0.90
C4: Curriculums that are of high standard, up to date with the latest research, and are challenging for their students.	6.37	0.88
C5: A wide variety of classes that students can choose from.	6.32	0.94
C6: Programs that develop students with strong academic English such that they can successfully study in overseas universities.	6.33	0.89
C7: A smooth transition or connection from one grade level to the next.	6.35	0.93
School in general-related items		
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	6.48	0.81
Sch2: A balanced programme that gives equal opportunities for students to participate in the arts, multiple sports, culture and academic work.	6.31	0.92

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch3: An excellent reputation of producing high achieving students.	6.06	0.93
Sch4: Quality professional development opportunities that supports the school's mission and helps their teachers grow and get better.	6.15	0.93
Sch5: Excellent sporting facilities.	6.14	1.00
Sch6: Excellent programs that provide parents great value for money.	6.22	0.95
Sch7: Excellent facilities for the arts.	5.97	1.05
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	6.43	0.87
Sch9: An effective discipline program for students.	6.25	0.89
Sch10: Transparency when spending money so the different stakeholders can see where the school spends its money, giving an indication of what the school values the most.	6.29	1.04
Sch11: A waiting list, and the school should be very selective when deciding who they admit from that waiting list.	5.44	1.38
Sch12: Strong, successful sporting teams.	5.46	1.29
Sch13: Excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.	6.34	0.88
Sch14: An internationally accepted accreditation.	6.44	0.85
Sch15: Standards and expectations equivalent to other top international schools around the world.	6.42	0.86
Sch16: Many clubs that students can join, from football to creativity activities to computers.	6.26	0.91
Sch17: A culture of constant upgrading, improvement and getting better.	6.26	0.91
Sch18: Safe environment.	6.68	0.69

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch19: School leaders who have been given full authority to implement school policy that has been passed by the governing body.	5.86	1.14
Sch20: High quality sports coaches.	5.93	1.14
Sch21: Strong local and global community service projects.	5.98	1.05
Sch22: An accessible and nice location.	5.48	1.17
Sch23: Small classes.	5.83	1.09
Sch24: A strong pupil services department for students who are having problems.	6.3	0.92
Sch25: One common language of inclusion that all students understand and that single language is promoted throughout the school.	6.27	1.02
Sch26: Members of the governing body who come from different nationalities.	5.2	1.30

*Number of participants = 237*

## Appendix I

*Mean values and standard deviation for students on each item in the questionnaire*

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Administrator and teacher-related items</b>		
AT1: Highly trained, qualified staff who are experts in their disciplines, and have ample teaching experience.	6.49	0.77
AT2: Teachers who truly love their subject and are effective in teaching it to their students.	6.44	0.79
AT3: An excellent remuneration package with many benefits and professional development opportunities.	5.78	0.98
AT4: A blend of teachers from many different countries.	5.36	1.27
AT5: Administrators who support and trust their teachers.	5.88	0.96
AT6: Teaching staff who are internationally minded and flexible to new situations and cultures.	6.35	0.82
AT7: Teachers who use enquiry based or student-centred activities to educate their students.	5.66	1.10
AT8: Teachers who can develop strong relationships with students and parents.	5.58	1.10
AT9: Teachers who keep themselves up to date on professional development and pedagogy.	5.82	0.96
AT10: Low levels of teacher turnover.	4.88	1.37
AT11: Low levels of administration turnover.	4.53	1.27
AT12: Clear communication with teachers so that they know what is expected of them before they sign a contract.	5.95	1.02
AT13: Teachers who support each other and can work together in teams.	6	0.84
AT14: Teachers who can fill more than one role and have both social and academic skills.	5.47	1.15
AT15: Teachers who can cater to students with special needs.	5.88	1.04
AT16: Teachers who are bilingual.	4.52	1.17

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
AT17: Stakeholders in and around the school who value the teachers.	5.06	0.99
AT18: Teachers who can inspire students to think outside the box and question the teacher.	6.14	0.98
AT19: Administrators that listen to and incorporate teachers' opinions when making decisions.	5.94	0.92
AT20: Teachers that make themselves available to students outside of class time.	6	1.00
<b>Parent-related items</b>		
P1: Parents who are willing to offer both their suggestions and help to improve the school.	5.17	1.17
P2: Parents who do not get too involved in the running of the school, but rather let the school go about educating their children.	4.99	1.46
P3: Parents who support the school's goals and teachers in educating their children.	5.21	1.14
P4: Parents who support their children in the learning process.	5.66	1.02
P5: Parents who apply basic pressure to the school so the school better understands what the parents want from the school.	5	1.16
P6: A role in educating parents so they can better assist the school.	5.06	1.23
P7: Parents who embrace the concept of their children becoming international minded citizens.	5.83	1.15
<b>Student-related items</b>		
S1: A high percentage of students representing many different nationalities.	5.66	1.19
S2: Motivated students who work at a very high academic standard.	5.62	0.95
S3: Excellent results on external exams like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	5.52	1.10

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
S4: Graduates being admitted to the very best universities around the world.	5.26	1.25
S5: Graduates who go on to become outstanding members of society and very successful in their chosen fields.	5.36	1.16
S6: Students who are well behaved.	5.42	1.24
S7: Open minded students.	6.13	1.06
S8: Students who contribute suggestions that help improving the school.	5.71	1.19
Curriculum-related items		
C1: Programs that develop life skills that will help students be successful in both university and their chosen careers.	6.45	0.80
C2: Internationally recognised academic programs like IB, AP, A-levels or IGCSE.	6.34	0.99
C3: A curriculum and a school ethos that encourages global or international mindedness.	6.03	1.16
C4: Curriculums that are of high standard, up to date with the latest research, and are challenging for their students.	6.14	0.97
C5: A wide variety of classes that students can choose from.	6.48	0.87
C6: Programs that develop students with strong academic English such that they can successfully study in overseas universities.	6.19	1.03
C7: A smooth transition or connection from one grade level to the next.	6.13	0.98
School in general-related items		
Sch1: A friendly, inclusive and positive environment for all students regardless of their nationality or culture.	6.45	0.88
Sch2: A balanced programme that gives equal opportunities for students to participate in the arts, multiple sports, culture and academic work.	6.17	1.09



Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch3: An excellent reputation of producing high achieving students.	5.52	1.33
Sch4: Quality professional development opportunities that supports the school's mission and helps their teachers grow and get better.	5.94	1.00
Sch5: Excellent sporting facilities.	5.83	0.98
Sch6: Excellent programs that provide parents great value for money.	5.77	1.13
Sch7: Excellent facilities for the arts.	5.84	0.97
Sch8: An ethos where everyone in the school feels as though they are respected.	6.23	0.97
Sch9: An effective discipline program for students.	5.68	1.02
Sch10: Transparency when spending money so the different stakeholders can see where the school spends its money, giving an indication of what the school values the most.	6.14	1.10
Sch11: A waiting list, and the school should be very selective when deciding who they admit from that waiting list.	5.17	1.36
Sch12: Strong, successful sporting teams.	5.3	1.30
Sch13: Excellent facilities in the classroom for teaching and learning.	6.21	0.92
Sch14: An internationally accepted accreditation.	6.06	1.03
Sch15: Standards and expectations equivalent to other top international schools around the world.	6.18	0.96
Sch16: Many clubs that students can join, from football to creativity activities to computers.	6.12	1.09
Sch17: A culture of constant upgrading, improvement and getting better.	6.1	1.02
Sch18: Safe environment.	6.36	0.99

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sch19: School leaders who have been given full authority to implement school policy that has been passed by the governing body.	5.08	1.36
Sch20: High quality sports coaches.	5.84	1.11
Sch21: Strong local and global community service projects.	5.92	1.12
Sch22: An accessible and nice location.	5.52	1.36
Sch23: Small classes.	5.38	1.39
Sch24: A strong pupil services department for students who are having problems.	5.92	1.09
Sch25: One common language of inclusion that all students understand and that single language is promoted throughout the school.	5.79	1.43
Sch26: Members of the governing body who come from different nationalities.	5.26	1.42

*Number of participants = 77*

## **Appendix J**

### **Feedback from administrators and teachers**

- 1) A top international school should allow the use of mobile devices and laptops during lessons at middle and high school level.
- 2) A top international school should block social media sites while in classrooms.
- 3) International schools are becoming less diverse and have a larger percentage of local students. Local languages should be valued and allowed to be spoken outside of class.

### **Feedback from parents**

- 1) I think self-study is ok at certain levels, there are classes in the school where the teacher is asking the students to do self-study in almost 80% of all classes. This may need to be examined and find out if that teacher is actually lazy to teach or not.
- 2) Disciplinary action that school take should be considerate. Kids are kids and they learn from their mistakes especially when the wrong doing is done for the first time.
- 3) As a non-Thai family, we strongly think it should be much more “international” than it is now at the Superior International School. In that case, being selective and limiting the percentage of Thai students can be an option.
- 4) Superior International School is not an international school, it is a 100% Thai school, not giving any focus to IB.
- 5) A top international school should realise that the U.S. government passed the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, which made the metric system "the preferred system of weights and measures for U.S. trade and commerce"; that in the US, metric units are standard in science, medicine, as well as many sectors of industry and government, including the military; that teaching students the outdated United States customary units is only beneficial if they intend to live and work in Liberia or Myanmar, since every other country in the world has adopted the metric system.
- 6) Promoting sport, art, or music doesn't mean selecting only high qualify student to join, but rather their interest based.
- 7) Schools should encourage students to participate in international exams like Olympiads of maths and science for all grades.
- 8) When the school decides to change the curriculum, senior student could be ask for their advice as they had experience before. Parents should be asked as well. Not just sent a questionnaire to fill in. Sometimes, parents do not know it is an important

questionnaire to fill in. Sometimes, parents think it is a normal questionnaire. But to change the curriculum is very important and effects student success.

9) I am supporting the Superior International School for constant improvement and changes. It is also important to work on your communication strategies to parents.

There are many of them who analyse and try to provide wrong information to others. School has to be more proactive to communicate otherwise you are playing defence.

10) Elementary and middle school seasonal sports should be taken more seriously as the children will feel proud of themselves when they represent the school and have some good news to bring back and share with all school members.

11) Leadership and school spirit/culture are important factors in being a great international school.

12) Teachers should have empathy for children who struggle with some subjects that are not for them. Understanding and willing to help them strive to betterment other than making children feel stressed and sad. Some children are good in some subjects but not another, that doesn't mean they are bad students. It's just they need more help to better understand the subject that they are having difficulty in. EMPATHY and SUPPORT.

13) A Top international school should ensure that all students speak English at all times in school.

14) The students will come from two groups. One group being more academic in their approach to studies and the other group being less academic. All programmes should be open so that students can use their own styles to learn regardless of the group they come from. This will help students develop their own skills and abilities. When management listen to the opinions of the parents they should think and be fair so that both types of students can benefit. If they do not pay attention, or ignore the parents the school will lose its value.

15) Good schools can teach their students and make it enjoyable, making parents satisfied. It does not matter where the school is located as parents and students will tell other people and they will want to join the school.

16) The teacher should teach the students because they love teaching rather than teaching students like they are a customer.

17) Education should be conducted over two semesters not divided into four quarters.

- 18) When you change the teaching programme all stakeholders should think about the benefits for the students and make sure the changes are an improvement.
- 19) The school should have a high standard when selecting new students. Then they will not have a problem when the new students join their classes with existing students who are already advanced. This problem creates more work for the teachers.
- 20) The school must have a standard when selecting the teachers. The teacher must have knowledge and understanding of the subjects they need to teach. This will give the students the highest value when learning that subject. In some subjects, students have given feedback that they do not understand what the teachers are teaching.
- 21) The school should listen to comments from the parents and the reasons they give.
- 22) Parents, teachers and management should give the students a chance to share their opinions in each subject. In each subject they should seriously listen to the students and be willing to change.
- 23) Most importantly, the school should give the activity that gives students the opportunity to work together for the benefit of the public. Examples would include cleaning the environment, recycling, growing organic vegetables etc. This should include the young students all the way to the oldest students helping each other.

#### **Feedback from students**

- 1) A top international school should also listen to student's comments/requests.
- 2) A top international school should have decently priced food, because some foods are way overpriced for what they are.
- 3) Teachers should look at the students individually, and bond individually. Get the students comfortable in class and let them learn with their own styles.
- 4) International schools should implement study technique skills, research skills etc., for students who need them.
- 5) A top international school should promote the study of another language that is not the student's mother tongue or English and provide a variety of classes for those languages (particularly useful languages like the 6 or 7 official UN languages).
- 6) A top international school should take into account that each student's strengths and passions are different and help the students grow in their respective fields instead of focusing for "balanced" education (basically stop making the students who do not wish to be artists or pro athletes take up art and PE respectively).

- 7) If the school administrators are worried the students are not getting enough exercise, a health class might be beneficial since the health decisions will fall onto the students.
- 8) Most importantly, a top international school has to know how to efficiently utilise its resources, effectively solve problems, and actually listen to opinions being given.
- 9) More fried food.
- 10) Top international schools should place a high priority on hygiene, for example, renovating old toilets instead of painting the school in a different colour every year.
- 11) The school should promote the students learning multiple languages, not closing down other languages other than English and the language the school is in.
- 12) The school should give high enough salary as an incentive for recruiting specialized teachers, not being swayed by any staff to recruit their own friends or relatives.
- 13) The key quality that a top international school should have is the ability to develop students' interests (career-wise) through practical applications of what they'd learned within the classroom.
- 14) The school should assure that students are given equal opportunities to succeed at a college level e.g., hiring caring and efficient counsellors, respecting students, and addressing issues in a democratic manner.
- 15) The school's main concern should be to maximize the quality of its resources/facilities and be transparent of how it appropriates its funds.
- 16) Regarding the parents, I felt like some parents do not think the same as others and could possibly want to take things the way that is different and is not accepted by the other group of parents (Eg. ROTC drama)