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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES OF INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL LEADERS: A CASE STUDY
FROM SAUDI ARABIA

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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Higher Ed and P-12 Education
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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This Dissertation by: Ahlam Abdullah Alhudithi

Entitled: *Experiences and Perspectives of International School Leaders: A Case Study from Saudi Arabia*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in College of Education and Behavioral Science Department of Leadership, Policy, and Development: Higher Ed and P-12 Education Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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ABSTRACT

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International schools have become an important educational sector in the last two decades due to the dramatic growth of these schools. Yet, very few studies have been conducted worldwide regarding international schools' leadership even though the number of these schools is rapidly increasing each year. This study aimed to explore the experiences of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. The research question guided this study was the following: What are the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of those school leaders?

In order to gain an understanding of the experiences of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia, a qualitative embedded single-case study design was selected. The research context of this study was international schools in Saudi Arabia. The case study was international schools in the capital city, Riyadh. There were two embedded units of analysis within the case study, which were two K-12 international schools. The data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase included collecting surveys from 15 international schools in Riyadh. The second phase included collecting observations, interviews, and documents from two K-12 international schools that participated in the first phase. A thematic analysis revealed four themes related to school leaders' experiences and perspectives at international schools in Saudi Arabia. These

themes were categorized under two factors: internal factors that include parental involvement, diversity, and recruitment and retention; external factors that include working with different agencies.

The discussion highlighted the interaction between internal and external factors and how a single theme could impact students' performance in school. Knowing the connections among these themes would help to recognize how issues could affect students learning. To improve the quality of education at international schools and to help school leaders overcome their challenges, recommendations were provided for school leaders and policymakers in Saudi Arabia.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Fatimah,
for her unconditional love and support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

International schools were started to meet the needs of expatriate children around the world (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). The overall goal of international schools has been to provide education that is similar to what was being taught in home countries (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). While international schools today are still serving expatriate children, international schools have also expanded to include local student populations in many countries (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). During the past forty years, international schools “have changed in all but name, becoming a market force that, in many ways, is driving education globally” (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013, p. 25). Today, international schools are in most major cities around the world. According to a statistic from the International School Consultancy Research (ISC), there were around 6,400 international schools worldwide serving 3.2 million students worldwide in 2012.

International schools have experienced significant growth in Saudi Arabia. The number of international schools in Saudi Arabia was 724 serving 90,315 students in 2011-2012 (Ministry of Education, 2016). Three years later, there were 1,666 international schools providing education to 264,231 students in Saudi Arabia. The growth of international schools and student enrolment in the past five years has increased the responsibilities of international school leaders to meet the needs of the students that they now serve. This study examined the experiences of international school leaders in

Saudi Arabia, because limited research has been conducted to examine how these educational leaders have responded to the new diversity in student populations served by these international schools. Since there is a need for scholarly research to investigate the leadership experiences at international schools in Saudi Arabia, this chapter gives an overview of international schools in Saudi Arabia. Then, the statement of the problem follows. After that, an overview of the study design is outlined in this chapter along with the research question. Finally, an overview of the education in Saudi Arabia along with types of schools in the region is explained to help the reader understand the Saudi educational system.

Statement of the Problem

International schools have become an important educational sector in the past 13 years as a result of the dramatic growth of these schools (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). In 2012, there were approximately 6,400 international schools worldwide serving 3.2 million students and employing 300,000 teachers (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Bunnell, 2015). Yet, very few studies have been conducted worldwide regarding the leadership of international schools even though the number of these schools is rapidly increasing each year (Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012a, 2012b; Walker & Cheng, 2009). According to Bunnell (2006), “It is surprisingly true to say that international schools have had little in the way of formal research” (p. 387). That being said, it is very important to conduct more research about international schools in order to have a better understanding of this type of school.

When examining the Saudi context, only one study has been conducted to the best of the researcher’s knowledge about the leadership of international schools although

Saudi Arabia alone had 1,666 international schools educating 264,231 students and employing 18,606 teachers in the academic year of 2014-2015. The situation of international schools in Saudi Arabia is unique as a result of a number of factors, which include recent growth of schools and the population served by these schools as a result of policies established by the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) that oversees this type of school. This increased the responsibilities and pressures of leaders of those international schools in a way that might affect the level of school performance. Thus, it is very important to investigate the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia to ensure that the quality of education meets the needs of the growing population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. This investigation highlighted the common experiences of international school leaders with the hope that the findings may be used to inform educational policy makers, school leaders and owners, and educators in Saudi Arabia regarding the support that such leaders may need to best meet the needs of the students served by international schools in Saudi Arabia. This may result in the improvement of international schools in Saudi Arabia. The study is significant as a result of being one of the earliest studies that examined the experiences of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia.

Research Question

The main research question that guided this study was the following:

- Q1 What are the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of those school leaders?

Study Overview

Since the nature of this study was to understand the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia, an embedded single-case study was the best fit to answer the research question since it allowed having more than one unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). The research context of the study was the international schools in Saudi Arabia. The main unit of analysis was international schools in the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. The embedded units of analysis were two K-12 international schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The method of data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase focused on the main unit of analysis and the second phase focused on embedded units of analysis. The data collection included surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis. To strengthen the validity of the findings, three strategies were used which were triangulation, member checking, and researcher bias.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of terms used in this study are as the following:

International Schools. International schools are defined based on language of instruction and curriculum (Bunnell, 2015). International schools use a different language than the host country's official language as the main medium of instructions (Keller, 2015). International schools provide a different curriculum than the national curriculum in the host country, typically an American, British, or French curriculum (Walker, 2004).

Diversity. Diversity is defined as multiple identities that characterize individuals and make them different from each other such as race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, belief, and age (Garcia et al., 1999).

Overview of Saudi Arabia

The country was established in 1932 and united under the name of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The country is located in southwestern Asia and occupies a large percentage of the Arabian Peninsula with a total area of 2,240,000 square kilometers (Khalil & Karim, 2016). In 2015, the total population in the country was estimated at 31,015,999 (General Authority for Statistics, 2015). Saudi Arabia has been divided into 13 administrative regions (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The main cities in Saudi Arabia include Riyadh, the capital city that is located in the center of the country; Jeddah, the main port on the Red Sea; and Dammam, the main port on the Gulf (Alsari, 2015).

Saudi Arabia has the largest proven petroleum reserves in the world and possesses around 25% of the World's reserves (Alsari, 2015). The discovery of oil was in the late 1930s, but the oil industry did not begin to develop until the 1970s. As soon as the oil industry started to thrive, large numbers of foreign workers entered the country as a result of a workforce shortage. In 2013, the total population of foreign expatriates in Saudi Arabia was estimated at 10,241,093. In other words, expatriates made up 33% of the Kingdom's population (General Authority for Statistics, 2015). Foreign workers represented 56.5% of the employed population and 89% of the private sector workforce in 2013 (De Bel-Air, 2014). According to Migration Policy Institute (2015), Saudi Arabia was ranked as having the fourth largest number of immigrants in the year of 2015, after the United States, Germany, and Russia.

The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). According to Al-Nasser (2015), the English language has become the dominant language

for different disciplines including business in Saudi Arabia. The use of the English language started after the discovery of oil in the 1930s. The demand to have foreign employees working in the oil company named ARAMCO (the Arabian American Oil Company, founded in 1933) created the need for access to the English language in the whole country. As a result, English was introduced in the Saudi educational system as a foreign language in the 1950s. In 2005, Saudi Arabia joined the World Trade Organization which increased the use of the English language in the country (Alkharashi & Nickerson, 2012).

During the past few years, the country has experienced significant changes to meet the Vision 2030 objectives (Vision 2030 is a strategic plan designed to transform the nation's economy and reduce the dependence on oil) (Abbas, 2020). The government has made major decisions such as the role of women in the workforce and society. These decisions included empowering women in the workforce by increasing their participation from 22% to 30% and appointing 30 Saudi women to join the Consultative Council in 2015. Women have been granted more of their rights such as the right to drive cars and travel without male-guardian consent. In addition, economic changes have been made such as opening movie theaters and permitting music concerts, allowing women to attend sports events, and allowing businesses to serve all customers regardless of their gender (Al-Rashed, 2019). These reforms create greater social liberalization among Saudi society and shift the country to a more modern state.

Overview of General Education in Saudi Arabia

History of education. The Directorate of Education was established in 1925 and was the foundation for a centralized national education system in the country (Saudi

Arabian Cultural Mission, 2006). As soon as the Kingdom developed and became a modern state, a formal educational system began in 1953 with the establishment of the Ministry of Education (MOE) on December 24, 1953. The main objectives of establishing the MOE were to provide education to all citizens, increase the quality of education to meet the country's needs, and eradicate illiteracy (Badawood, 2003). Soon after the founding of the MOE, many schools were opened, and public education started to expand throughout the country (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 2006).

Ministry of Education (MOE). The main agency that oversees K-12 education in Saudi Arabia is the MOE (Mathis, 2010). The MOE is the largest centralized educational agency in Saudi Arabia (Badawood, 2003). The Ministry is responsible for establishing the educational policies and the overall standards for the country's educational system and supervising schools all across the country (Alharbi, 2014; Badawood, 2003; Mathis, 2010; Meemar, 2014). The primary goals of the Saudi educational policy are to ensure that the education system is able to meet the learning, economic, and social needs of the country and to eradicate illiteracy among people. According to Meemar (2014), "all the educational policies in Saudi Arabia are subject to government control, despite the country's large number of schools and expansive geographical distance" (p. 14). That being said, the Saudi educational system is a centralized system where the MOE is the highest authority.

General education in Saudi Arabia consists of kindergarten, six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, and three years of high school (Meemar, 2014). During the 2014-2015 academic year, 36,949 schools provided general education to 5,788,972 students around the country. Three types of schools are under the

supervision of MOE: public and private schools, along with international schools that are run and operated by Saudi educators (Alameen, Male, & Palaiologou, 2015). Schools under the supervision of MOE are segregated by gender. Boys' schools are taught and led by male educators, and girls' schools are taught and led by female educators.

Public schools. This type of school provides free education to students all across the country (AL-Liheibi, 2008). The main language for instruction in Saudi public schools is Arabic (Alsari, 2015). Public schools are supervised and governed at three levels: the building level, the district level, and the national level (Badawood, 2003; Deraney & Abdelsalam, 2012). At the building level, public schools are led by Saudi principals who handle the daily operation of the school such as supervising teachers and students (Badawood, 2003). At the district level, district administrators are the link between individual schools and the MOE and are responsible for supervising the schools' operations and programs along with handling the placement of teachers.

At the national level, the MOE is responsible for providing the educational policies, allocating financial resources, planning, setting the curricula, developing the textbooks, providing guidance on teaching, and overall supervision and administration for all schools (Badawood, 2003; Kurdi, 2011; Meemar, 2014). In addition, the MOE responsibilities include hiring teachers and staff and providing professional development and training for teachers and staff (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Badawood, 2003). Other responsibilities of the MOE are developing and managing the institutional requirements for public schools, such as building new schools, constructing supportive infrastructures, and providing teaching materials and supplies for all public schools (Alquraini, 2010; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Badawood, 2003).

Private schools. In Saudi Arabia, private schools are owned by Saudi companies or individuals and led by Saudi principals (Badawood, 2003; Deraney & Abdelsalam, 2012). There are several reasons why private schools have become popular in Saudi Arabia (Badawood, 2003). The middle and higher socioeconomic groups have expanded in the Saudi society after the flourish of the oil industry in the 1970s, and these higher socioeconomic parents often prefer their children to attend private schools in order to receive a high quality education. Private schools tend to have a small classroom size where the teacher-student ratio is lower than in public schools. Also, private schools apply more modern teaching strategies in classrooms compared to public schools (Badawood, 2003; Deraney & Abdelsalam, 2012). According to Deraney and Abdelsalam (2012), “the obvious main reason for sending children to private schools in Saudi Arabia is the flexible school curricula, the enhanced learning environment academically, socially, and technologically, and the earlier introduction of the English language” (p. 2). Although private schools are required to provide the same curricula that are provided in public schools, private schools offer additional curricula and programs, such as foreign languages, arts, and physical education (Badawood, 2003; Deraney & Abdelsalam, 2012). The tuition in private schools varies from one school to another due to the differences in curriculum, location, facility, and services (Deraney & Abdelsalam, 2012).

International schools. There are two types of international schools in Saudi Arabia. The first type is run by foreign embassies to serve children who hold citizenship in the country represented by each embassy (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The purpose of these schools is to provide an education similar to the child’s home country to ensure an

easy transition when expatriate children return to their home countries. The second type of international school must be operated and owned by Saudi educators (Council of Ministers, decision number 26, dated June 11, 1997). This type of international school applies Western standards that are taken from developed countries including the United States and the United Kingdom (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The teachers, staff, and students attending this type of school are from diverse backgrounds and come from various countries and cultures around the world.

The second type of international schools has significantly increased in the last decade in Saudi Arabia (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). That is, the number of international schools in Saudi Arabia was 724 international schools serving 90,315 students in the 2011-2012 academic year (Ministry of Education, 2016). Three years later, there were 1,666 international schools providing education to 264,231 students in Saudi Arabia. This significant growth took place after the MOE allowed local students to be enrolled in this type of school for the first time in 2009. For this reason, international schools in Saudi Arabia today are not only serving expatriate students, but also Saudi students as well. This study explored the leadership experiences of international schools in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

With the recent growth of international schools in Saudi Arabia, there have been limited studies conducted about leadership at this type of schools. International schools in Saudi Arabia have a unique situation as a result of many factors including the recent growth of schools and the recent change in student demographic population. This unique situation of international schools increases the importance of investigating leadership in

this educational sector. For this reason, this study explored the experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review the literature related to international schools. I begin the chapter with distinctions between international schools and international education. I then provide background information about international schools worldwide. Next, I discuss the curriculum in international schools and explain why parents prefer sending their children to international schools. I also discuss the literature regarding challenges faced by international schools and the leaders of those schools. After that, I review the current status of international schools in Saudi Arabian context.

Distinctions between International Schools and International Education

Defining the terms “international education” and “international school” is considered to be complex (Hayden, 2006). Although international education emerged with international schools, the differences have remained ambiguous regarding what constitutes an international education (Baker & Kanan, 2005). Several attempts were made to define these two terms to pinpoint the differences between an international education and international schools (McConeghy, 1990).

The International School Consultancy Research (ISC) has defined international schools based on two aspects: language of instruction and curriculum (Bunnell, 2015). A language different from the host country’s official language is used as the medium of instruction at international schools (Keller, 2015). International schools provide

curriculum that is different from the national curriculum in the host country; often they provide an American, British, or French curriculum (Walker, 2004). International education, on the other hand, has been defined as the following:

a type of learning that helps us understand our condition in the local community and the world and improves our ability to make effective judgments about how they interact. It includes the study of nations, cultures, and civilizations, their language and history, and the way that language and events reflect their different values and beliefs.
(McConeghy, 1990, p. 6)

These two definitions highlight a number of differences between the concepts of international schools and international education. To begin, an international education provides universal values and opportunities to develop attitudes toward major world issues (Baker & Kanan, 2005; Slough-Kuss, 2014). That is, international education encourages awareness and empathy, culture understanding and respect, open-mindedness, and flexibility of thinking (Baker & Kanan, 2005). Even though the majority of international schools aim to develop international-minded individuals, not all international schools provide international perspectives to the students who attend those schools (Dunne & Edwards, 2010; Walker, 2004). International schools are rarely required to meet certain conditions in order to use the term ‘international’ in their title (Keller, 2015; MacDonald, 2006). International schools vary in terms of size and location, students and staff demographics, curriculum and language of instruction, admission criteria, commitment to specific learning needs, and more (Keller, 2015).

International Schools

The increasing global mobility among professionals and their families in the second half of the 20th century created the need to have international schools worldwide (Hayden, Rancic, & Thompson, 2000; Walker, 2004). The early international schools

were originally founded to serve the children of expatriate families and to provide high-quality education to prepare students to enter post-secondary educational institutions anywhere around the world (Baker & Kanan, 2005; Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Hallinger, Lee, & Walker, 2011). The overall goal of international schools is to enable expatriate children to receive an education that is similar to what is being taught in their home countries (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). A significant change of the international schools' demographic has occurred in the past two decades (Bunnell, 2015). During the past two decades, the international schools are no longer serving only the foreign residents but the local community as well (Baker & Kanan, 2005; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010; Song, 2013). Twenty years ago, 80% of the total populations at international schools were expatriate students; now, 80% of the total populations of international schools are local students who come from wealthy families (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Bunnell, 2015). What influences local parents' decision to choose international schools over national schools is the high quality education they provide along with better opportunities for acquiring foreign languages, including the English language (Lee et al., 2012a).

Recently, the number of international schools has rapidly grown worldwide (Baker & Kanan, 2005). In 2000, there were around one million students in 2,584 international schools according to the ISC research (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Bunnell, 2015). A decade later, international schools reached three times that number. There were around 6,400 international schools serving 3.2 million students, an increase of two million students in 2012 compared to the student population in 2000.

The majority of international schools worldwide are located in Asia (Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). The top leading countries for international schools today are the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, China, India, and Japan (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). The majority of international schools focus on Western standards, such as the British curricula, the American curricula, or the International Baccalaureate (Alsari, 2015; Baker & Kanan, 2005). The ISC research predicted there would be 11,331 international schools worldwide educating 6.3 million students, and employing 529,000 staff by the year of 2022 (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013).

Curriculum in International Schools

In international schools, curriculum provides the message to the surrounding community regarding a school's market, stance, and strengths (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). Curriculum in international schools must reflect the interests of stakeholders and respond to the needs of each individual in the diverse population. For this reason, international schools constantly reconsider, monitor, review, and modify the curriculum that they offer. For instance, if the international school serves a particular group of students, such as British or American students, who plan to pursue higher education in their home country, the school usually provides the home country curriculum for its population. If the population of the school has changed to include the local students, a decision would be made to address the local needs as well as the expatriate students.

Some international schools might develop their own curriculum to meet the needs of their diverse population, including the local and expatriate students (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). The common set of curriculum subjects around the world is home language, mathematics, science, technology, social studies, art, and physical education. However,

the content of each subject differs from one region to another. For instance, mathematics in one region might focus on number skills while in another region might include geometry, measurement, and statistics. Thus, history and geography might focus intensively on a particular region and exclude the rest of the world. As for science education, what is considered acceptable to be taught in one region might not be acceptable in another place. In international schools, curriculum might be taken from more than one country in order to meet the needs of the diverse population.

Another important aspect of choosing a suitable curriculum in international schools is the requirements for school graduation (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). Curriculum provided in an international school must ensure that students are given the opportunity to take the required school leaving accreditation. Examples of the requirement school leaving accreditation in international schools are as follows: (a) the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) in the United States; (b) the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) in the United Kingdom; (c) the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE); (d) the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE); (e) the International Baccalaureate (IB) including each of the four IB programs (Primary Years Programme; Middle Years Programme; Diploma Programme; and Career-related Programme).

Parental Choice

Parents of students attending international schools play an important role as consumers of international schools (Hayden, 2006). Despite the differences in ethnicities and cultural background, parents of students in international schools share a set of characteristics. Parents who seek international schools tend to be well-educated parents

who highly value education. Thus, parents are likely to share similar socio-economic status in international schools. According to recent studies, 80% of students who attend international schools come from the top wealthiest 5% of the local populations (Hayden et al., 2000; Walker & Cheng, 2009).

Many factors guide parental choice toward the international schools (Lee et al., 2012a). Parents are seeking high-quality education that offers foreign language as the medium of instruction which is unavailable in national schools. Parents are seeking international curricula that are capable of preparing their children for wider options, for overseas university entrance, and future career choices in a global society (Doherty, 2009; Lee et al., 2012a). According to Hallinger et al. (2011), the recent growth of international schools worldwide has reflected the need among parents to have schools that are capable of delivering high-quality education, use foreign language as the medium of instruction, and prepare students for entering post-secondary educational institutions anywhere around the world.

Challenges Facing International Schools

Challenges Related to Teachers and Administrators

International schools are known for having a high turnover rate among both teachers and administrators as a result of the uniqueness of this type of school (Bunnell, 2008; Lee et al., 2012a). Less than half of school leaders stay longer than three years in international schools (Hawley, 1995; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). According to Bunnell (2015), it was quite rare for school leaders to stay more than five years in one international school. As research has shown, the average rate of school leader service at an international school is 2.8 years (Bunnell, 2008; Hawley, 1994). It is very common for

educators in international schools to have working experiences in two or more international schools (Bunnell, 2008; Hardman, 2001). Indeed, 40% of educators in international schools have worked in five or more such schools (Bunnell, 2008; Hayden & Thompson, 1998). The high mobility among educators and school leaders has greatly challenged the stability of the international schools (Bunnell, 2008).

The reason for having the high rate of staff turnover in international schools has not been clear (Bunnell, 2008). Some researchers have indicated the high turnover rate might be a result of the high stress among staff and administrators. Educators at international schools fill multiple positions at the same time (Lee et al., 2012a). In some cases, the school leader or the program coordinator might be involved in other administrative positions or serve as a teacher at the same time. Teachers also might be involved in across-program teaching positions which is a typical example of multiple positions. Working in multiple positions requires extra work in order to manage the multiple tasks which could create stress among educators. Furthermore, because of the international school system, school administrators have no central offices to turn to for advice or mentoring (Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). They work in distant places around the world which causes them to be isolated from any possible mentors.

Another challenge that international schools face is school staffing (Blandford & Shaw, 2001; Hammad & Shah, 2018; Lee et al., 2012a). Because of the desire to provide a high quality education in international schools, leaders are concerned about hiring the right person in the right position (Lee et al., 2012a). Leaders at international schools prefer to hire teachers who have experience and already know the system in international

schools. Finding a qualified teacher can be a challenge in international schools which might cause the hired staff to be working in multiple positions.

Challenges Related to Students and Parents

International schools are known for their multicultural and multilingual population which challenges educators in international schools to meet a diversity of needs and parent expectations (Lee et al., 2012a). The nature of the competitive market among international schools requires school administrators to work hard to satisfy their diverse populations. The different expectations between expatriate and local parents may create a challenge for school administrators (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Hayden, 2006). For instance, different expectations about the nature of the curriculum and the amount of homework could differ from one culture to another (Hayden, 2006). English native-speaking parents who live abroad tend to believe that international schools are similar to the schools in their home countries where they received their education. This is not completely accurate because international schools have mixed populations and multilingual backgrounds.

Parents from the Asia Pacific region, for example, expect their children to learn additional languages that relate to their ethnicities even though the international schools there have a range from 35 to 54 different ethnicities (Lee et al., 2012a). Parents from the Asia Pacific region hold high and different expectations for educational success of their students which add pressures for school leaders to meet those expectations. Failure to meet the parental expectations might result in the loss of a student and the revenue that the student brings as well.

Since student populations at international schools include expatriate students who come from different parts of the world and stay for a period of time, international schools are known for having high rates of student mobility (Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). The student mobility rate at international schools can reach 35% every year. The high rate of student mobility creates more challenges facing school leaders at international schools.

International Schools in Saudi Arabia

International schools began as a necessity in Saudi Arabia after the expansion of the oil industry (Badawood, 2003). This led Saudi Arabia to accommodate people from a variety of nations around the world. At first, this type of schools only provided education for expatriate students. Saudi students were not allowed to be enrolled in this type of schools until 2009. This took place after the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) changed their policies and allowed this type of school to enroll Saudi students in 2009 (MOE decision number 1/30354511, dated July 27, 2009). This resulted in increasing the number of international schools in the country rapidly. The following table shows the rapid growth of the number of international schools along with teachers and students attending these schools.

Table 1

Number of International Schools, Students, and Teachers in Saudi Arabia

Academic year	Schools	Students	Teachers
2011-2012	724	90,315	5,183
2012-2013	1,476	93,438	5,364
2013-2014	1,309	171,911	11,980
2014-2015	1,666	264,231	18,606

As shown in Table 1, international schools witnessed a great deal of growth over only four years. In 2011-2012, there were 724 international schools providing education to 90,315 students and employing 5,183 teachers. Three years later, there were 1,666 international schools serving 264,231 students and employing 18,606 teachers. According to the recent statistic from the MOE (2016), Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, has the largest number of international schools. Table 2 illustrates the growth of international schools in the Riyadh educational zone.

Table 2

Number of International Schools, Students, and Teachers in Riyadh

Academic year	Schools	Students	Teachers
2011-2012	103	15,930	1,106
2012-2013	438	16,737	1,104
2013-2014	364	62,158	4,139
2014-2015	569	115,619	7,051
2015-2016	668	140,381	8,381

As shown in Table 2, international schools in Riyadh have rapidly grown in the last five years. During the academic year of 2011-2012, there were 103 international schools educating 15,930 students and employing 1,106 teachers. Four years later, the number of international schools in Riyadh has dramatically increased. There were 668 international schools that provided education for 140,381 students and employed 8,381 teachers during the academic year of 2015-2016.

Since the MOE oversees international schools that are owned and operated by Saudi educators, a number of policies have been established for leading those schools. This type of international school needs to be licensed by the MOE in order to accept Saudi students (MOE decision number 1/30354511, dated July 27, 2009). During the academic year of 2015-2016, the number of Saudi students enrolled at international schools in Riyadh was 26,295, and the number of non-Saudi students enrolled in international schools in Riyadh was 114,086. In other words, Saudi students made up 19% of the student population at international schools in Riyadh during 2015-2016. These schools need to achieve a grade A on their annual school performance in order to be licensed to accommodate Saudi students (MOE decision number 1/30354511, dated July 27, 2009).

It should be mentioned that these international schools are gender-segregated. In other words, schools are either single-gender (boys' or girls' schools) or have separate sections for each gender within the same school. Those schools are taught and led by educators of the same gender. Only the school director can be from the opposite gender as long as she/he works in a different building. In Saudi schools, there are restrictions for men to enter girls' schools, and for women to enter boys' schools.

The host country government might also require additional curriculum to meet its own educational agenda through the requirement of specific content and time for the local students who attend international schools (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). The government may require specific subjects such as religious education or national language. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, the government requires international schools to provide classes for the following subjects: Arabic language, religious education, and the history and geography of Saudi Arabia (Council of Ministers, decision number 26, dated June 11, 1997).

Parental Choice

After the MOE announced their decision regarding allowing international schools to accept local students, this led the parents of Saudi students to have more options and choices about types of school that they would like their children to be enrolled in. One of the most important reasons that have been leading the Saudi parents to choose international schools as a place for their children to receive education from is due to the use of English language as the medium of instruction (Al-Qahtani & Al Zumor, 2016). Accordingly, Saudi parents recognize the status of English as an international language which leads them to prefer sending their children to international schools. In details, Saudi parents believe that English provides opportunities for their children to join universities and get better jobs in the future.

According to Al-Jarf (2004), 70% of Saudi parents believe early access to the English language could positively affect the academic achievement of their children in later years. Similarly, Al-Qahtani and Al Zumor (2016) stated that Saudi parents prefer international schools as a result of providing early access to English language for their

children, unlike national schools. Due to the importance of English language, Saudi parents believe that international schools provide better quality of education compared to national schools. Since Saudi parents value the teaching of English language mostly, the following section shows the weaknesses of English language teaching in Saudi national schools, public and private, to better understand the reasons that influence Saudi parents to prefer sending their children to international schools.

Shortcoming of Foreign Language Teaching in Saudi National Schools

Researchers have shown the weaknesses of foreign language education in Saudi public schools by documenting that most students who graduated from those schools failed to reach a satisfactory level of foreign language competence, including the English language (Al-Nasser, 2015; Alsaif & Milton, 2012). A recent concern has been raised by the Saudi government about the low proficiency level of English, which is considered the dominant foreign language in the country, among students in Saudi national schools (Al-Nasser, 2015). Even though these students spend nine years learning English in national schools, they leave high school with low English proficiencies (Alhawsawi, 2013; Al-Johani, 2009; Al-Nasser, 2015; Alshumaimeri, 2003; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013; Rajab, 2013).

Several studies about teaching English in Saudi national schools indicated that teachers use traditional methods to teach the English language in classrooms (Ahmad, 2014; Alkubaidi, 2014; Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrabai, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013; Rajab, 2013). Teachers are the center of the classrooms where they dominate the learning process and they are the main source of knowledge for students

(Alkubaidi, 2014; Al-Nasser, 2015; Alrabai, 2014). As a result, English teachers spend most of the time talking and explaining the lessons to students, and students take a passive role in the learning process (Al-Johani, 2009; Al-Nasser, 2015; Fareh, 2010). Students are rarely allowed to speak or involved in group activities, and their roles are limited to listening to what is presented by teachers.

Some English teachers use the grammar-translation method to teach English where they use the Arabic language to teach English (Alhawsawi, 2013; Almutairi, 2008; Al-Nasser, 2015; Fareh, 2010). Using the first language to teach the foreign language leads to limiting the exposure of Saudi students to the English language. Translating from Arabic to English creates a barrier to developing students' skills in English (Alfahadi, 2014; Al-Nasser, 2015). As a result of traditional teaching methods, students rely on ineffective strategies for learning English such as memorization (Alkubaidi, 2014; Al-Nasser, 2015; Rajab, 2013). Memorizing textbooks to study for the exam without understanding the content results in not learning the language itself. Memorization has been seen as an ineffective strategy for learning a language since students are not actively involved in the learning process.

Research suggests that a lack of motivation to learn the English language in classes could lead students to not master the needed skills. Teachers of English in Saudi national schools do not encourage their students to participate in classrooms and to be active in their learning (Al-Johani, 2009; Al-Nasser, 2015). Teachers tend to provide constant criticism to students' learning attempts and, whenever students make a mistake, they immediately correct the mistake for them. The lack of motivation among students to

learn English might be in most cases due to the teacher's behavior and the method used to teach the language.

As a result of the shortcomings of English language teaching in Saudi national schools, Saudi parents prefer to send their children to international schools to enable their children to master the acquisition of the English language and receive a high-quality education. However, a number of international schools still have obstacles and challenges that draw the attention of educators and researchers to investigate them. These challenges are discussed in the next section.

Related Studies about Leadership in International Schools

Since the system of international schools is different from the national educational systems, several studies have been conducted about educational leadership at international schools (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Lee et al., 2012a; Lee et al., 2012b; Walker & Cheng, 2009). Walker and Cheng (2009) explored the understanding of school leadership among principals in primary international schools in Hong Kong. Findings of the study revealed the need for leaders to not only be aware of the culture differences that students bring to school but also to know the influence of the cultural differences on student learning. The findings emphasized the need to support teachers to develop a variety of culturally appropriate teaching methods to meet their students' diverse values and norms. The study highlighted the importance of understanding the cultural differences among teachers as well. Providing the care and support to all teachers and understanding their diverse backgrounds were seen as a very important factor to leading an international school and reducing the high staff turnover.

Lee et al. (2012a) investigated the challenges faced by international school leaders in East Asia countries which are Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and China. The findings of this study highlighted some challenges facing leaders at this type of school. The study revealed challenges related to managing parental expectations. Challenges related to communicating with external groups, such as parents, community, and the MOE, was also highlighted in the study. In addition, meeting the needs of the diverse population among students was challenging for leaders at international schools. Leading and managing large international schools were complex tasks for school leaders as a result of the unique features of this type of school. Moreover, challenges related to hiring staff/ teachers and providing continued professional development for them appeared in the findings. Finally, challenges related to achieving the coherence and consistency across IB programs were revealed. Researchers suggested to further investigate the leadership of international schools since scholarly studies serve several useful purposes that contribute to the improvement of this type of schools.

Lee et al. (2012b) explored the instructional leadership strategies associated with implementing IB programs in four countries which are Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and China. The findings of this study provided some leadership strategies to overcome the difficulties of implementing multiple IB programs in international schools. Strategies included creating collaboration among school leaders, IB coordinators, and subject heads to smooth transition between programs. Allowing teachers to collaborate with other teachers in different programs created bridges between programs. Challenges appeared in terms of communication, parental involvement, curriculum and instructional organization, and teamwork as a result of the cultural diversity among students and

teachers. Also, parents shared different expectations which appeared as a challenge facing those international schools.

Hammad and Shah (2018) investigated the leadership challenges at international schools in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia. The study found that school leaders were facing difficulties as a result of the multicultural nature of international schools. A number of challenges were reported such as the gender segregation in schools, the difficulty to hire Saudi nationals, and managing parental expectations. The authors identified two main strategies that these leaders use in order to overcome the faced challenges which were compliance and circumvention. The study highlighted the need for further research to gain a deeper understanding about international schools in Saudi Arabia.

Principals who work at international schools worldwide have similar experiences in terms of challenges that they face when leading international schools. Studies reported that principals face difficulties to manage parental expectations, communicate effectively with a diverse population, and find qualified teachers and staff. Principals at this type of schools need to develop cultural awareness among their stakeholders and understand the influence of cultures on students learning. Due to the lack of research about international schools in Saudi context, further investigation is needed in order to understand the leadership experiences of school leaders.

Conclusion

With the increased number of international schools around the world, limited research has investigated the leadership of this type of school (Bunnell 2006; Lee et al., 2012a, 2012b; Walker & Cheng, 2009). In Saudi Arabia, the number of international

schools has increased dramatically in the last few years as a result of policies established by the MOE such as allowing local students to join international schools. This decision increased the responsibilities and pressures on leaders at international schools since they need to address the educational needs of local and expatriate students. Yet only one study has been conducted to the best of the researcher's knowledge about school leadership at Saudi international schools.

It is crucial to investigate the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia in order to ensure that schools are able to meet the needs of their diverse population. The findings of this research could be used to inform educational policy makers, school leaders and owners, and educators in Saudi Arabia in order to help them provide the needed support for those school leaders. Thus, the findings could help to improve the international school services in Saudi Arabia to best meet the needs of the growing population.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In the last 13 years, international schools have become increasingly important worldwide as a result of their rapid growth (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). In 2014-2015, there were 1,666 international schools in Saudi Arabia that served 264,231 students. The capital city of Saudi Arabia alone, Riyadh, had 668 international schools that provided education to 140,381 students and employed 8,381 teachers in the academic year of 2015-2016 (General Directorate of Education in Riyadh, 2016). Despite the large number of international schools in Saudi Arabia, research focusing on the leadership of such schools is limited (Bunnell, 2006; Lee et al., 2012a). As a result, this study examined the experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia.

Research Question

The main research question that guided this study was the following:

- Q1 What are the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of school leaders?

Research Design

This research aimed to explore the experiences and perspectives of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. A qualitative approach was chosen in order to understand the experiences and challenges of leaders when leading Saudi international schools. A qualitative approach helped to explore the lived experiences and develop a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2015). “Qualitative

researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Since each school leader’s experience was unique, a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to collect in-depth data to better understand the experiences and challenges.

Theoretical Framework

The epistemology of this study was guided by constructionism. Constructionism was defined by Crotty (1998) as the belief that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). In this study, I sought to understand the experiences of school leaders in international schools and what challenges they faced in their daily life. Each school leader constructed his/her reality and knowledge in a different way from others, which made each experience unique to the social context.

As for the theoretical perspective, interpretivism was chosen for this study. Crotty (1998) cited Max Weber who suggested that researchers in human sciences are concerned with understanding. Max Weber (as cited in Crotty, 1998) expressed the need to focus on the meanings and values of individuals and therefore on their interactions with society. Crotty (1998) stated, “The interpretivist approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (p. 67). In this study, I am interested to gain in-depth insight about the lives of school leaders in Saudi international schools in order to understand what they face in their daily life in schools.

Methodology

In order to gain an understanding of the experiences of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia, an embedded single-case study design was selected. An embedded single-case study was the best fit for this research since it allowed for more than one unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). The research context of this study was international schools in Saudi Arabia. The case study was international schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The reason for choosing international schools in Riyadh, in particular, was because the capital city has the largest number of international schools in the country. Within the case study, there were two embedded units of analysis which were two K-12 international schools (Figure 1).

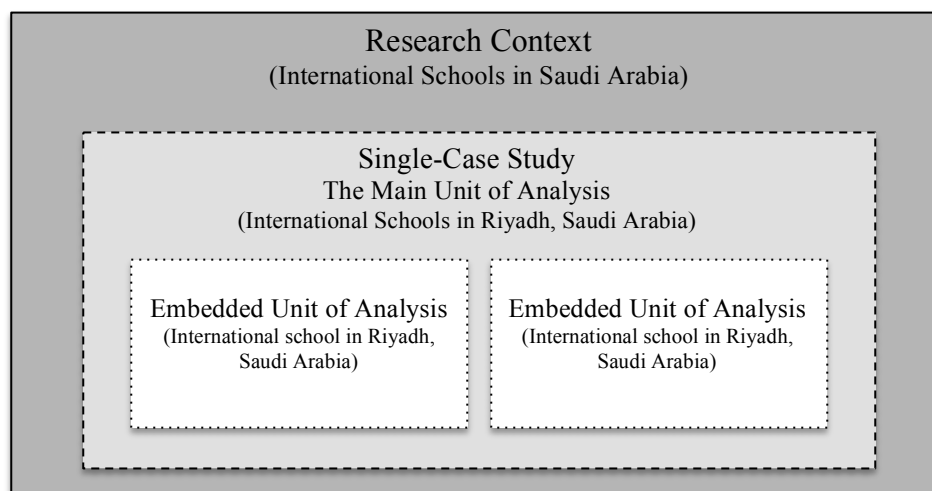


Figure 1. The Embedded Single-Case Study Design (Yin, 2012).

Case study design was selected for this research since it allowed investigating a specific phenomenon in a bounded time and place. Case study design is a qualitative approach where the researcher explores a bounded system, collects data in depth, and reports the results using descriptive themes (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (1998) has stated,

“Case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19). The specific phenomenon of this research was the experiences of leaders at international schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Case study as defined by Merriam (1998) and Creswell (2007) is a design that allows studying a phenomenon that is bounded by time and place. The bounded time was the academic year of 2016-2017 and the bounded place was the international schools at the capital city of Saudi Arabia. The case was the main unit of analysis in the embedded single-case study design (Yin, 2012). Within the main unit of analysis, there were embedded units of analysis. “These embedded units can be selected by thorough sampling or cluster techniques” (Yin, 2003, p. 42). In this research, there were two subunits of analysis which were two K-12 international schools. These two subunits helped to explore the leadership experiences and provided a better understanding regarding the perspective of leaders at this type of school in Saudi Arabia.

Setting

This research took place at international schools in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh was selected since it had the largest number of international schools in the country. In 2015-2016, there were 668 international schools that serve 140,381 students and employed 8,381 teachers in Riyadh (General Directorate of Education in Riyadh, 2016). All the international schools were under the supervision of the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE). These international schools used English as the main medium of instruction. Additionally, these international schools had unique populations that include local and expatriate students. These schools were selected because they provided education not only for expatriate students but also for Saudi

students. In order to be able to accommodate the local students, these international schools had achieved high school performance during the previous years. Finally, these international schools varied in terms of the school size, grade level, and curriculum provided.

Participants

To explore the experiences of leaders at international schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, two groups of school leaders were selected. A sampling method and selection criteria were developed to identify participants for the study who could provide data to answer the research question. The sampling method and selection criteria are outlined in the following sections.

Sampling method. Purposeful sampling was used to select international schools and participants based on the selection criteria. According to Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005), purposive sampling is one of the most common strategies where participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to a particular research question. I obtained an approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) (Appendix E). After I received the IRB approval, I contacted the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Saudi Arabia to receive permission to collect the data (Appendix F). When the permission from the MOE was received, I physically visited thirty-five international schools in Riyadh to explain the study and give the written survey. I made a second visit to these international schools to collect the completed survey. Only fifteen surveys were completed. The survey included a question at the end asking participants if they wanted to participate in the next phase of the research. In the second phase, I visited the two K-12 international schools to conduct

the observations, interviews, and collect relevant documents related to the focus of the study.

Selection criteria. Specific criteria had been developed to select the international school leaders in Riyadh: (a) the international school must be overseen by the local government, which is the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE); (b) the international school must accept Saudi students; and (c) the international school must use the English language as the main medium of instruction. According to the General Directorate of Education in Riyadh (2016), the total number of international schools that are under the supervision of the MOE, accept Saudi students, and use the English language as the main medium of instruction are 70 international schools in 2016-2017. International schools that meet the above criteria were unique for many reasons. Those international schools were led by Saudi national principals as required by the MOE. Those international schools were licensed by the MOE to accommodate the local students along with the expatriate students. This caused international schools to have unique populations since they accepted both local and expatriate students. In addition, these schools had received grade A on their yearly school performance which is a condition created by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for these schools to accept local students.

For the purpose of this study, participants were divided into two groups for the two phases of data collection. The first group of participants was chosen for the main unit of analysis which is international schools in Riyadh. The second group of participants was chosen for the subunits of analysis which were two K-12 international schools.

First phase. Participants for the main unit of analysis included international school leaders in Riyadh. The sample included school leaders from four school divisions:

kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school. Participants were given a written survey to complete. Only one school leader in each international school completed the written survey who was the school principal. All participants who completed this survey were Saudi nationals. Demographic information were collected including years of experience for the principal, number of Saudi and non-Saudi students attending the school, number of ethnicities in the school, student gender distribution in the school, grade levels served by the school, and type of curriculum used by the school in order to develop a better understanding of participants' background (Appendix A). The demographic information assisted to select the subunits of analysis which were the two K-12 international schools. The survey included 15 open-ended questions that were given to participants (Appendix A). Questions on the survey included areas related to curriculum and language, teachers, parents, students, and administration.

I visited thirty-five international schools to explain my study and seek voluntary participation. Those schools included boys and girls' international schools. I made a second visit to schools and I collected fifteen completed surveys. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they were willing to participate in the second phase. Five participants indicated that they were willing to participate in the second phase. I excluded one school leader because her school did not meet the selection criteria (it was a kindergarten school). Two school leaders decided to withdraw after they were informed about the process of the second phase which led me to contact the last two schools that agreed to be part of the second phase.

Second phase. For the subunits of analysis, two K-12 international schools were chosen from the first phase. The selected school principals needed to have at least two

years of experience at international schools in order to be able to respond to the interview questions. I contacted two school leaders who indicated in the survey that they agreed to participate in the second phase. The selected school principals were shadowed for a total of two full school days per school. After collecting the observations, I conducted semi-structured interviews from four school leaders in each international school. The targeted school leaders for the interview method included the school principal, assistant principal, academic coordinator, and school director. I asked school leaders at each school to provide documentation that they believed would help me to understand the lived experiences.

Methods and Data Collection

To explore the experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools in Riyadh, the data were collected in two phases. The first phase was focused on the main unit of analysis which was international schools in the capital city. The second phase was focused on embedded units of analysis which were two K-12 international schools (Figure 2).

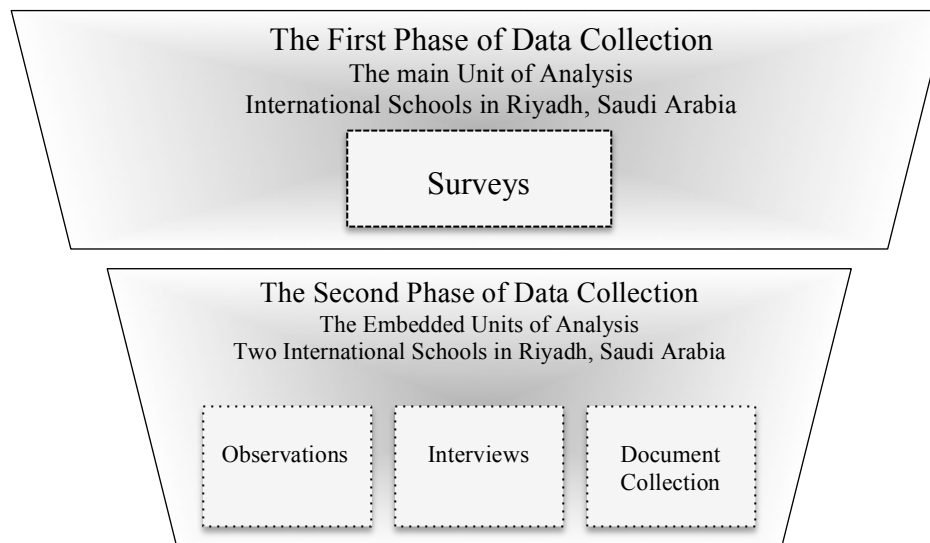


Figure 2. The Methods of Data Collection.

First phase. To collect data from the main unit of analysis, survey method was selected. Surveys are popular in the educational field because of the versatility and efficiency, (Check & Schutt, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Surveys are versatile because researchers are able to investigate almost any problem or question in education (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Although surveys are not the best method to investigate every educational process, a well-designed survey can improve our understanding about any educational issue (Check & Schutt, 2012). Surveys can help to develop a representative picture of the attitudes, beliefs, and other characteristics of a large population.

The open-ended survey was chosen to obtain information from a large number of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Open-ended surveys helped to collect information from a sample of a large population through their responses to the survey questions (Check & Schutt, 2012). The survey was developed using open-ended

questions to allow participants to provide their own answers in their own words. Researchers use this type of survey when they have little knowledge about a particular topic, and they want to learn about it without limiting the participants' responses. The survey questions were mainly developed from the literature review. Although open-ended question surveys can provide a wealth of information to the researcher, this method requires careful considerations. Open-ended surveys require time for managing, summarizing, and analyzing the written responses which can be time consuming and difficult. The written responses may differ from one participant to another; some participants do not like to write much information while others provide extensive relevant and irrelevant information.

To gather a representative picture of the experiences of school leaders at K-12 international schools, a survey was given to 35 school leaders at international schools in the capital city of Saudi Arabia (Appendix A). As mentioned in an earlier section, I visited the selected international schools twice, once to explain and give the survey and another to collect the completed survey. I collected fifteen completed surveys. The survey included a question, at the end, asking participants if they were willing to participate in the next phase of the research. After I completed the survey phase, I contacted school leaders who agreed to participate in the second phase who met the selection criteria of this study.

As for the language of the survey, each participant was given two versions of the survey, an English language version and an Arabic language version. In this way, participants had the freedom to choose the language that they preferred to use for answering the survey questions. I translated the survey questions into Arabic since Arabic

is my native language. To maintain the consistency of the concept in the original form, I asked a specialist in the Arabic language to review the Arabic version. Twelve responses were collected in the Arabic language and three responses were collected in the English language.

Second phase. The second phase was focused on embedded units of analysis which were two K-12 international schools in Riyadh. The methods of data collection in this phase included the following: observations, interviews, and document analysis. Collecting data from multiple sources helps to gain rich data to develop an understanding about the leadership at international schools.

Observation. Observations were collected while school leaders practiced their daily duties. Merriam (1998) described the benefits of observations as the follows: “observer sees things firsthand and uses his or her own knowledge and experience in interpreting what is observed rather than relying upon once removed accounts from interviews” (p. 96). Information gathered from the observations can provide specific incidents for challenges faced by school leaders or be used as reference points for the interviews. Merriam (1998) stated that observation is a helpful strategy to understand ill-defined phenomena.

I shadowed each school leader for two full school days to collect data while leaders were practicing their daily duties. Each school leader chose two suitable days to collect the observations. I spent a total of 32 hours observing school principals and collecting data about their daily lives at international schools. The observation helped to gain a deep understanding of the daily experiences of leaders when leading international schools in Saudi Arabia.

According to Merriam (1998), four types of roles are played by the observer: a complete participant, participant as an observer, observer as a participant, and a complete observer. In this study, I played the role of a complete observer where I was not participating but simply recording information (Merriam, 1998). This role allowed to observe and gather the needed information from the school (Merriam, 1998). Using this method, I had the chance to observe the daily activities of school leaders in order to gain deep understanding about their experiences.

The observations were recorded through the use of field notes. I took notes throughout the observations, including the physical setting and the people involved in each event, situation, and activity. Stake (1995) stated, “During observation, the qualitative case study researcher keeps a good record of events to provide a relatively incontestable description for further analysis and ultimate reporting” (p. 62). I developed a protocol to guide the collection of data during observations (Appendix B). As soon as each observation was completed, full written notes were developed in response to the observation protocol in order to record in detail what was observed during the school day.

Interview. The most common form of interview is the person-to-person interview (Merriam, 1998). Interviews in this study were guided by open-ended questions to allow participants to best voice their experiences and perspectives unconstrained by any external perspective (Creswell, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were used to support the structured questions of the survey by enabling the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and gain rich data from each structured question.

According to Bloom and Crabtree (2006), interviews are the most popular strategy for collecting qualitative data. Interviews become a necessity when the

researcher is interested in past events that are impossible to replicate or are interested to know how people interpret the world around them (Merriam, 1998). Individual interviews were conducted because it allowed to ask questions and record answers from only one participant at a time (Creswell, 2015). Individual interview is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies with a few selected individuals according to Merriam (1998).

The interview guide (Appendix C) was used to ensure basic lines of inquiry that were pursued with each interviewee (Patton, 2002): “The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (p. 343). Since there was a lack of previous studies that focused on the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia, the interview questions were comprehensive in order to explore all possible areas that might be a challenge for school leaders. The interview guide included questions that addressed the following topics: experiences related to the diverse backgrounds among stakeholders including language and culture, experiences related to parents including parents’ expectations, involvement, and communication, experiences related to meeting the requirements of the local educational agency, experiences related to curriculum and teacher preparation, and experiences related to recruitment (Appendix C). After the completion of the survey, questions regarding topics brought up in the written surveys were added to the interview questions in order to investigate these areas.

Prior to the interviews, I piloted the interview guide to ensure that the questions were obvious and clear. I interviewed a Saudi educator who worked in general education

in Saudi Arabia for many years. This step helped me to make the needed changes to the interview questions before conducting the research interviews.

Interviews were conducted after the completion of the observation. I interviewed a total of eight leaders, four leaders at each international school, who were the following: the school principals, the assistant principals, and the academic coordinators, and the school directors. All were females except the directors were males (they directed both boys and girls' sections). The sample of participants was diverse in term of ethnicity and cultural background; four of the participants were from the Middle Eastern countries (three of whom were from Saudi Arabia), two were from the Indian subcontinent, and two were from North America. All interviews were held in the participant's office at a convenient time and day for each participant. Prior to each interview, a consent form was signed (Appendix D) and permission for a digital recording was obtained. Each participant was interviewed only one time. The length of the interviews ranged between 26 minutes to one hour and 40 minutes as shown in Table 3. I took notes for each interview including the physical setting and other details. I spent a total of seven hours interviewing eight participants and collecting data about their perspectives and lived experiences at international schools. After the completion of each interview, transcription for the recorded interviews were completed and sent to participants for review.

Table 3

The Length of Individual Interviews

School	Position	Gender	Time
Al Najma	Principal	Female	0:36
International	Director	Male	1:30
School	Assistant principal	Female	0:27
	Academic coordinator	Female	0:26
Al Kamal	Principal	Female	1:40
International	Director	Male	0:37
School	Assistant principal	Female	1:05
	Academic coordinator	Female	0:42
Total	8 participants	6 Females 2 Males	7:03

Since I am fluent in Arabic and English, I asked participants at the beginning of each interview to choose his/her preferred language. For this purpose, interview questions were translated into Arabic for school leaders who preferred to speak Arabic during the interview. I translated questions by myself since Arabic is my native language, however, I asked a specialist in the Arabic language to review the Arabic version in order to maintain the consistency of the concept in the original form.

Document analysis. Existing documents are a source of data that often provide insights to the phenomenon under study and enable the researcher to examine things that cannot be observed or noted in another way (Merriam, 1998; Lichtman, 2014).

Documents are a source of data that is available to the qualitative researcher for analysis (Merriam, 1998). Three types of documents are available to researchers: public records, personal records, and physical records or artifacts. Public records include government documents and program documents while private documents include personal letters, diaries, websites and emails. Physical records include objects and instruments that have been found within the study setting.

Documents often contain information or insights to the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). When participants presented valuable documents that were related to the research question, I asked for access to these materials in order to analyze them. I also asked school principals to share any documents they believed were relevant to this study. Participants shared official documents to support what they said during the interviews. These documents were about the Ministry of Education (MOE) policies and requirements and documents that were developed by the school personnel. In addition, I examined virtual documents that were found at the schools' website.

Confidentiality. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities during all phases of the study including data collection, data analysis, and writing the findings. Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants in the survey method had not been asked about any identifying information such as their name or their school's name. Only participants who had the willingness to participate in the second phase of the study provided their name and their school's name in order to be contacted by the researcher. When participants completed this section of the survey, it signified their consent of participation. The completed surveys were returned to the

University of Northern Colorado (UNC) to be kept in the research advisor's office at UNC for three years then destroyed.

Participants in the interview method were given two copies of the consent form before starting the interview (Appendix D). The first copy was signed and kept by the participants. The second copy was signed and returned to the researcher to bring back to UNC. The consent forms will be stored in the advisor's office at UNC in a locked file cabinet for three years and then destroyed. Interview responses were digitally recorded after receiving the participant's consent to record the interview. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed within three years after the study is completed. Participants were notified at the beginning of the interview to not respond to any questions that makes them feel uncomfortable and that they were able to end the interview at any time they wanted.

Data Analysis

After the completion of the data collection including surveys, observations, interviews, and document analysis, the data analysis stage was started. A thematic analysis was utilized in this research. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as follows: "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. It organizes and describes your data set in detail" (p. 6).

To apply thematic analysis, I followed six phases identified by Braun & Clarke (2006). In the first phase, I read the surveys, observations, interviews, and document transcriptions to familiarize myself with the content. The main goal in this phase was to search for meaning and identify possible patterns. In the second phase, after reading the content, I started to initiate codes from data that appeared relevant for analysis. Creating

codes helped to organize the data into meaningful groups of data. According to Creswell (2015), “Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions” (p. 242). In the third phase, after creating the codes, I started to create broader themes for the codes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), “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” (p. 10).

In the fourth phase, after creating the themes, I reviewed the themes to ensure they were accurate and logical. In the fifth phase, I defined and name the selected themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated, “By ‘define’ and ‘refine’ we mean identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about, and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (p. 22). In the sixth and last phase, I started to write the findings of this study. By writing the findings, the story of the data was told in a way that informs the reader. The emergent themes gave a comprehensive picture of the experiences and challenges of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia.

Trustworthiness

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings of this research, several strategies were selected to improve the internal validity. “Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). Six basic strategies are used in qualitative research to enhance internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participation, and researcher bias (Merriam, 1998). In this research, three strategies were used to increase the internal validity: triangulation, member checking, and researcher bias (Figure 3).

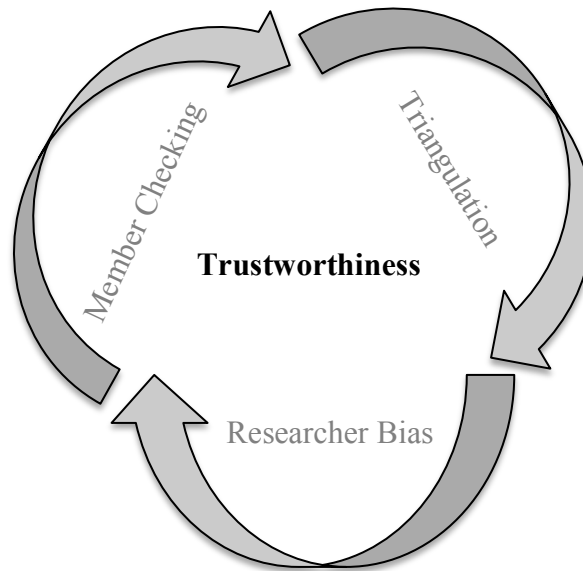


Figure 3. Trustworthiness Strategies.

Triangulation helps to achieve the trustworthiness by gathering data from multiple sources. “The logic of triangulation is based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanations” (Patton, 2002, p. 555). This research used multiple methods of data collection to understand the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. Through the collection of more than one type of data, I was able to check the consistency of the findings and develop an understanding of the phenomenon. I compared data from the surveys, observations, interviews, and document analysis to ensure the consistency of the findings.

Member checking was used in the interviews to enhance internal validity. According to Flick (2006), member checking refers to “communicative validation of data and interpretations with members of the field under study” (p. 376). After each interview, I sent the interview transcript back to the participant to verify its accuracy (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Participants’ feedback is worthy and valuable since it helps to

improve the validity of the findings. It should be mentioned that no changes were received from participants regarding the interview transcript.

Another way to enhance internal validity is to clarify the researcher's bias. According to Merriam (1998), it is important for the qualitative researchers to clarify their assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation before conducting the study. For this reason, I clarify my personal stance in the following section.

One of the limitations associated with qualitative research is external validity. In other words, to what extent the result of this study can be transferred or generalized to other situations (Merriam, 1998). To enhance the external validity, I used rich and thick descriptions to enable educators to determine how findings of this study are similar to other contexts (Patton, 2002). While the main goal of this qualitative research is not to generalize the experiences of all leaders at Saudi international schools, the findings and implications of this study might resonate with educators who are interested in international schools in the region.

Personal Stance

Due to the dramatic growth of international schools in Saudi Arabia in the past few years, I have been very interested in carrying out an investigation to know about the experiences and challenges that affect the leadership performance of international schools in Saudi Arabia. A decade ago, people preferred to send their children to either public or private schools. The expectations that parents hoped for their children were achieved at the local schools. What the country has witnessed during the past decade, including the growth of Saudi business and private sector as well as scholarship programs to developed countries, has made Saudi parents demand other educational outcomes for their children

that local schools cannot provide. Although international schools emerged during the past few decades, international schools only started to flourish in 2010 to meet the Saudi families' educational expectations by providing international standards of education along with better foreign language acquisition programs to their students. At that time, I was working as an administrator at a private national school in Riyadh when international schools started to increase. As a Saudi educator, I have been an optimist about this new educational sector that is available for Saudi nationals and interested in improving the educational experiences for leaders at this type of schooling.

Due to the dramatic growth of international schools, I have been filled with enthusiasm to carry out this investigation in order to address the obstacles and barriers that affect Saudi international school leaders' performance. I believe this study is significant, not only as a result of being one of the earliest studies that examined the experiences of international school leaders in the region, but also as a result of creating a bridge between scholarly researchers, school leaders of international schools, and the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Saudi Arabia. As an international doctorate candidate in educational leadership and policy studies, I am pleased to be a part of this mission.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a detailed description of the research design including the theoretical perspective and selected methodology. I explained the setting, as well as the participant selection criteria and process for the qualitative survey and interview, observation, and document collection for this study. I also discussed the process of receiving permission from the Saudi Ministry of education (MOE) and the University of Northern Colorado's IRB board, as well as how confidentiality was maintained while

collecting, analyzing, and writing the findings of the study. I described the data analysis procedures, measures to ensure trustworthiness, and concluded the chapter with my personal stance.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter provides detailed information and descriptions of the findings of this study. It is divided into two main parts: an overview of the sample and themes that emerged from the data analysis. The emerging themes presented in this chapter help to answer the following question: What are the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of school leaders? To examine the leadership of international schools in Saudi context, the focus of the investigation was to learn about the experiences and perspectives of leaders by working closely with 15 international schools. The data were collected during two phases and with two groups. In other words, participants in this study consisted of one group for the first phase and another group for the second phase. Participants in the first phase included fifteen international school principals who led international schools during the academic year of 2016-2017. The gender of participants in this phase was a mix of females and males. All of these schools used English as the medium for instruction, accepted both Saudi and non-Saudi students, and were supervised by the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE). From the 15 schools that were involved in the first phase of the data collection, two were selected for further data collection and analysis. More specifically, a total of eight school leaders who worked at these two schools participated in the second phase: two principals, two assistant principals, two academic coordinators, and two directors. Principals,

assistant principals, and academic coordinators were female leaders who worked at the girls' section within schools. Directors were male leaders who supervised both boys and girls' sections within the same school. In addition to their role as directors, the male leaders were principals and acting principals at the boys' sections. To protect confidentiality, the two schools included in the second phase were given pseudonym names; Al Najma International School and Al Kamal International School. The following section presents information regarding the sample chosen for the study.

Overview of the Sample

Before discussing the findings of the present study, it is important to provide background information regarding school leaders who participated in the study. The sample included 15 international school leaders who worked in the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. In regard to their experience in working at schools, five participants indicated that they had five years or less experience at K-12 schools, another five participants had experiences that ranged between five to ten years in education, while the last five participants had more than ten years of experience in schools (two of these participants had over 20 years of experience).

Their experience as school leaders at international schools ranged from a year to nine years of serving as international school principals. Eight of the 15 participants indicated that they had been leading international schools for less than five years, while seven reported that they had been in the profession from five to nine years.

When looking at school grade configuration that they led, nearly half of the participants provided leadership for all school levels from K-12. For the remaining

participants, four of them led K-6 grade levels, three participants were responsible for leading K-9 schools, and one participant led a kindergarten.

The size of schools varied in this sample from the largest school, which had 6,800 students, to the smallest school, which had about 100 students. Seven schools reported that they served fewer than 1,000 students, while six schools served more than 1,000 students. The remaining two schools did not provide any number concerning the student population that they served.

The percentage of the Saudi to non-Saudi students was also collected. Seven schools reported that more than 50% of the student population were Saudis, while three schools indicated that less than 50% of their student populations were Saudi students. However, it is important to note that the remaining five schools did not share any percentage regarding the number of Saudi and non-Saudi students enrolled in their schools. Table 4 illustrates the number of Saudi and non-Saudi students who attended the selected international schools.

Table 4

Percentage of Saudi and non-Saudi students in participating schools

School Name	Saudi Students		Non-Saudi Students	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
School One	Insufficient Data	-	-	-
School Two	2,520	60	1,680	40
School Three	Insufficient Data	-	-	-
School Four	21	7	298	93
School Five	285	70	123	30
School Six	Insufficient Data	-	-	-
School Seven	380	60	250	40
School Eight	879	51	845	49
School Nine	70	70	30	30
School Ten	2,093	47	2,376	53
School Eleven	1,046	60	698	40
School Twelve	Insufficient Data	-	-	-
School Thirteen	Insufficient Data	-	-	-
School Fourteen	1,350	90	150	10
School Fifteen	14	2	747	98

In addition to the percentage of Saudis and non-Saudis enrolled in these schools, information was also obtained about all nationalities and countries that participating non-Saudi students came from. All of the selected 15 international schools had diverse student

populations, but some of them were more diverse than others. When examining the most diverse international school, the findings indicated that their students came from nearly 60 different countries around the world. On the other hand, the least diverse school had six nationalities represented among their student population. For the rest of these 15 schools, six of them had ten or more nationalities, and five had fewer than ten nationalities attending their schools. For the remaining four schools, no information was provided regarding the number of nationalities represented in their schools.

When examining the type of curriculum provided for students at these 15 international schools, the surveys indicated that eleven schools provided an American curriculum and one international school offered a British curriculum. The remaining three schools offered both an American and British curriculum.

Themes

Data analysis revealed four themes related to the experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. These themes are categorized under two factors: (a) internal factors that include (1) parental involvement, (2) diversity, and (3) recruitment and retention; (b) external factors that include (4) working with different agencies. To increase the trustworthiness of the findings, I collected data from multiple sources in different stages. The following table shows a summary where data for each theme was found.

Table 5

Data Source Triangulation

Theme	Survey	Interview	Observation	Document Collection
Internal Factors:				
Parental Involvement	X	X	X	
Diversity	X	X	X	
Recruitment and Retention	X	X		X
External Factors:				
Working with Different Agencies	X	X	X	X

Internal Factors**Theme one: Parental involvement.**

Parent entitlement. Parents at international schools are well educated and knowledgeable about their rights. They select a school carefully for their child after studying other options to assure that their child receives good education. In this study, participants indicated that parents hold high expectations about the services provided and expect nothing less than high-quality education. Participants expressed that parents expect the program to be intensive and rich so that their child can compete for a university entrance and can adjust well in schools when the expatriate families return home. A participant in Al Kamal stated that “the program should be very rich in content. They want the maximum so their child can adjust well when they return home.”

Participants also mentioned that parents have backgrounds involving other educational systems as a result of living abroad, so they expect certain services to be provided and if

these services are not available, they request it. There were several participants who expressed that parents hold high expectations compared to the services provided and oftentimes their expectations are “unrealistic” or “not acceptable” as commented on the survey. The data from the survey further explained that parents expect the school “to do whatever they order, and they also expect teachers and school admin to respond to phone calls and emails 24/7” (participant in School Eleven). Participants reported that they provide orientation sessions for parents at the beginning of the school year to help them “know exactly what we [the school] deliver.”

International schools are a private sector so parents pay fees for schooling. In return, parents expect the school to provide customized services and they expect all their requests and demands to be accommodated. Sometimes it is challenging to accommodate parents’ requests. “Parents say that, okay, once we’re paying the fee then why are the services not customized. On the other side, of course we don’t want to compromise on the level of education,” (a participant in Al Kamal). Participants provided some examples of those demands such as switching classrooms to be with friends, taking tests and exams early so the family can go on a vacation, and placing a student in a lower subject language class because it is easier for the student. Participants revealed that parents want exceptions whenever they do not like a rule or a requirement in order to benefit them. A participant in Al Kamal mentioned that she doesn't like to make exceptions because that will open the door for other parents to expect the same treatment. In a similar way, a participant gave an example on how she deals with parents’ requests. She explained that her school investigates any request or complaint before they respond in order to be fair to everyone. She said:

A parent might request, "I want my child to sit at the front." Because we do have rotations within the class, this request usually is not accepted, unless the child has a medical report in which there is a problem with the vision... Parents sometimes ask for individual cases but we need to investigate and look at the whole class before we accept that issue. (a participant in Al Najma)

Parents at international schools view themselves as customers and they expect the services requested to be accommodated while school leaders do not view education as something to be customized.

There are requests that school leaders accommodate as the survey data revealed, such as excused absences to travel during religious holidays and national independence days in order to visit family and relatives. Participants reported that they work with those families as individual cases so students can make up what they have missed in school. As for demands and requests related to the school regulations, participants said that they use the Ministry of Education (MOE) rules to convince demanding parents that they are not able to accommodate such requests.

The data identified another expectation that some parents hold, which is that their child should receive full grades despite the student's performance. Parents expect their children to get high scores since they paid for their education. They expect teachers to be less strict when it comes to grading so their children can graduate with a high GPA and can receive high scores on standardized college admission tests so they can compete for a university entrance. However, this expectation is unaccepted by school leaders. They want students to spend more effort and study hard in order to earn full grades. They are not willing to compromise on the standards and expectations for the education provided. A participant commented that it is hard for her to convince parents that it takes time and effort for a student to earn high scores. Participants indicated that parents concentrate on

grades more than the actual learning. Participants receive complaints about grading and they investigate each case to assure that a student received what he/she deserved. Parents ask if their children can make up the missing grades by doing a project or something else, but it is hard for school leaders to allow that. They want students to “get what they deserve” (a participant in Al Najma). Another participant in the same school expressed her frustration when it comes to dealing with parents’ expectation regarding grades as follows:

Parents consider their child a failure if the child received 99.5%; it must be 100%. I always have tried to tell parents it’s not about the mark [grade]; it’s about the process of learning happening. So it is quite difficult because parents concentrate more on the marks than on the actuality of the student learning. This is the most difficult thing for unrealistic expectation.

The concentration on grades frustrated participants because they want students to have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the future.

Parent engagement. The data on the survey revealed the ways that schools communicate with parents. Schools communicate through different channels such as online learning platforms, emails, text messages, phone calls, social media applications, and face-to-face meetings whenever necessary. Some school leaders shared positive communication experiences with parents. Six participants expressed that parents communicate well with the school and they follow-up with students' progress through the online platform. However, eight participants expressed some challenges when communicating with parents. Participants felt that some parents are very defensive about their children and they do not listen to the school or the teacher’s perspective whenever there is a conflict. They take the student’s side of the story and they do not admit the mistakes of their children. Consistent to what has been reported by participants, the data

gathered from the observation indicated such conflict. I observed several parental meetings with the principals and I noticed that some parents were somehow defensive and one of them expected an apology from the school even though her child was guilty of violating a school rule. In addition, the survey data reported that parents believe in rumors that are spread in social media applications such as WhatsApp and commented that “it takes time and effort for school leaders to convince parents that these rumors are untrue.” Participants shared their struggles in regard to communication with difficult parents and how this experience helped them to become better leaders. A participant in Al Najma shared:

Parents may be aggressive at times. They may be difficult to deal with at times, but they're a parent, and so we're on the same journey together. I think I've learned to be diplomatic. I think I've learned to be compassionate. I've learned to be non-judgemental, and I learned to let go. At the end of the day, it is a process that is one of the most serious responsibilities a parent will ever carry. You're not given a 101 on how to be a parent. It's a process. If the school isn't able to be receptive to all kinds of parents, then we have failed as educators.

Parents want the best for their children and sometimes that leads to conflict with school personnel when their needs and expectations are not accommodated.

Participants realized the importance of parental involvement at international schools. They indicated that parental involvement is an essential element at this type of school and they believe that without having three hands, “the school, the student, and the parents,” they cannot ensure the success of the student. Volunteer parents are members in the “parent committee” where they share decisions with the school administrators about varied topics such as graduation ceremonies, school trips, changes in curriculum, teacher recruitment, career planning, and charity work. The interview data showed some differences between male and female participants’ responses. While male directors

shared positive experiences, the female leaders, namely principals, assistant principals, and academic coordinators, in the same school did not. This could be a result of males leading two different gender sections within the school. Since schools in Saudi Arabia are segregated by gender, male directors supervised girls' section and led boys' section and interacted with mainly fathers. Female leaders whom I interviewed led girls' sections and interacted with mainly mothers.

The male directors whom I interviewed shared that parents are involved at their schools. They stated that they have an active parental committee that meets regularly to discuss and share opinions. One of the directors who worked as an administrator at both national and international schools reported that parents at international schools are more active and involved in their child's education. He mentioned that parents volunteer to help whenever they have extracurricular activities. In a similar way, the other director revealed similar practices at his school where parents are not only active members in the school committee, but also lead some charity work with students. In contrast, female participants in every leadership role whom I interviewed shared observations of low parental involvement. These female participants thought that parents do not want to be involved in their child's education and that the parents expect the school to educate the child without parental support. A female participant in Al Najma said: "parents have put the school as a complete babysitter rather than an educational institution and that's a major challenge." Participants at Al Kamal shared a similar perspective. They expressed that they created a parent council program and it was successful for one year; however, volunteer parents stopped coming for the following years. The principal expressed that only 10% of parents usually show up at parent-teacher conferences. In an attempt to

increase the level of parental involvement at this school, leaders tried to organize a parent-teacher conference in the evening to replace the morning meeting and to encourage working mothers to attend it; however, regardless of the effort, the number of parents who showed up was low.

Theme two: Diversity. International schools are known for their diverse stakeholders whether among administrators, teachers, or students and their families. In this study, participants shared their experiences in terms of leading a diverse school along with the challenges they faced. To better understand the experiences, this theme is divided into three sub-themes which are: celebrating cultural diversity, Western vs. Eastern cultural expectations, and cultural and religious differences.

Celebrating cultural diversity. School leaders shared their pride in leading diverse stakeholders. Participants expressed their belief that working with people from different parts of the world makes the workplace more “enjoyable” and the administrative experiences to be “wonderful” and “rich.” A participant commented that working at an international school widens her horizon since each member of the school community brings a different perspective. Working in a diverse place provides many opportunities for stakeholders to learn about each other’s cultures and traditions which, in return, strengthen their school community. Participants whom I interviewed reported that they host different activities throughout the year such as cultural programs, carnivals, and food festivals in order to celebrate their diversity. Both teachers and students share their traditional food and customs during those events, which makes it a learning experience for the school community. A participant in Al Kamal commented that each person is like an “ambassador” for his or her country because they are representing their country in this

international forum. Another participant mentioned that Saudi National Day becomes an international day at her school because everyone is dressed up in his or her own traditional clothes.

The importance of learning about students and their families' cultures was obvious in participants' responses. Participants indicated that learning about the traditions, cultures, and local dialects helped them to effectively communicate with parents. A participant shared that she tends to find similarities between her own culture and parents' cultures whenever is possible in order to connect with parents. Similarly, another participant stated that he learned different languages and dialects in order to communicate with parents using their own language. He stated that even if he spoke a few words in their language or dialect, "it brings the hearts closer."

Understanding the background of students is important because it helps to support their learning. Participants expressed that what really matters for them is what they have prepared for students to enable them to succeed in life. The success of their students is the success of the whole school and that is the common core belief among teachers and administrators as a participant noted. Participants highlighted the need to destroy stereotypes when working in a diverse place and to look at students as unique individuals.

A participant in Al Najma shared her perspective in this matter. She said:

It's made me a much richer person as the result of having the ability to think out of the box. I've learned that stereotyping should be placed in the box and buried. I believe we have to look at the individual as diversity in itself. I believe that it's a sea, and it still needs to be traveled and that at the end of the day, regardless of the community in which that child comes from or the ethnicity of that child, at the end of the day, they're all children.

Knowing the background of the student population can enable school leaders to support teachers to meet the needs of their diverse learners.

Western vs. Eastern cultural expectations. Participants stated that practices of international schools in Saudi Arabia are different from those in other contexts. Therefore, when a student joins international schools, they have different expectations for classroom operations. For example, in some cultures, a classroom belongs to students and teachers rotate between periods in order to allow students to have a sense of belonging. In other cultures, a classroom belongs to the teacher and students rotate between classes. Rules inside classrooms differ as well from one culture to another. For instance, in Al Najma, students request to bring their personal laptops to the classroom, but the school does not allow that because they have a fully equipped lab for students to use. Significantly, the role of teachers in a classroom and what kinds of behaviors are allowed along with the amount of respect is also different from one place to another. Coming from a different culture and having a different schooling experience create some challenges for new students and teachers and it takes time for them to adjust to the new educational environment.

Another difference between Western and Eastern cultures is what they understand education to be generally. Participants explained that parents who came from Eastern cultures, namely India, Egypt, Pakistan, and Jordan, want children to have a lot of homework, assignments, and rigorous curriculum because they believe this is the best way to learn. They want to see their children studying and working on their homework “all day long.” On the other hand, parents from Western cultures, namely the United States, Canada, and Australia, want their children to be less stressed with homework,

quizzes, and tests. Those parents think the program is very challenging for students. Two participants mentioned that Western cultures put a lot of emphasis on self-skills and confidence more than the content of knowledge itself unlike parents from Eastern cultures. The differences among Eastern parents and Western parents in terms of their impression of education creates a complex situation facing leaders at international schools, since it is exceedingly difficult to meet opposite expectations.

Cultural and religious differences. Participants experienced some cultural difficulties when working with people from different backgrounds. They expressed that diversity among teachers, students, and parents create some barriers to creating unified schools. International schools have individuals who are from Western and Eastern cultures; however, participants illuminated some differences among these cultures. To be specific, participants revealed that even among the Arab population, each country has its unique culture that makes it different from other Arab cultures. The same can apply to Western cultures as well, which means, for example, the culture in the U.S. is different than the culture in the U.K. When having a conflict between a parent and a teacher, it is difficult for school leaders to bring people together or help them to reach an agreement.

This can be seen in this response:

We have over 300 staff members in the school itself and everyone comes from a different background. We have Arab staff from various Arab countries: Egyptians, Jordanians, Yemenis, Syrians, and Saudis. Just for Arab countries alone, each one has their own culture. Besides dealing with different Arab cultures and backgrounds, there are also western nationalities, from the UK and the US. Even though they're all western, their cultures also differ. Then, we have some Asian nationalities, whether they're from Pakistan or India; their culture is distinct for each nationality. Besides having to deal with diverse staff, teachers, and student populations, I also need to communicate with parents and families who also all have different cultures. We have over 35 nationalities in our school. So, to deal with parents is also, once again, dealing with different

cultures. If there's a problem, if there's a conflict between a teacher and a parent, having to come between them and solve the situation is a challenge in itself. (a participant in Al Kamal)

Participants were aware of the cultural influence on the individuals in the community and they recognized the importance of that element when communicating with stakeholders.

When leading a multicultural school, it is possible to have issues related to misunderstanding and misinterpreting behavior. For this reason, school leaders recommend asking individuals for clarification and to look at someone's intention whenever there is a conflict. A participant in Al Kamal gave an explanation of how a behavior or a word might be interpreted differently as a result of coming from different cultures when she explained, "If you did something to show respect, it might be understood differently depending on the culture. What might be considered for me respectable might not be the case in Japanese culture." For this reason, participants highlighted the importance of clarifying someone's intentions and asking people from other cultures about what they say and how they behave in certain situations. Another participant shared, "getting to know people's culture is important and can sometimes be seen as a challenge but looking deeper into someone's intention helps cut down the barriers," (participant in School Eight). It can take some time for new principals to understand the cultures of the community at their school, but once they know their people, they will be able to communicate effectively with them.

School leaders mentioned a common behavior that they observed while working in a multicultural environment. They noticed that teachers and students from the same nationality or ethnicity group together. This does not disturb the harmony among staff

and teachers in the workplace, but it does for students. One of the issues reported is that when students from the same ethnicity group together, they speak their language. School leaders want students to speak English while they are in school in order to improve their communication skills. Another issue expressed is related to bullying. Sometimes students from the same ethnicity or culture group together and bully a student from a different ethnicity or culture. One of the incidents observed in Al Kamal was a bullying problem. Five students from the same nationality used WhatsApp to bully a classmate who was from a different nationality. This caused the principal to spend the whole day addressing this issue. In order to minimize such issues, participants try to mix classrooms so one nationality does not dominate the class.

The survey data identified a language barrier when communicating with parents. Specifically, participants indicated that they face challenges communicating with parents who do not speak English. The problem becomes greater if parents speak neither English nor Arabic. As established, parents at international schools came from different nationalities and they speak different languages. That being said, international schools might have parents, for instance, who speak Urdu fluently but have either limited or no English or Arabic language skills. One participant mentioned that she relies on the student or another staff or teacher in the school to translate for those parents whenever they visit the school. She continued to note that they have a multilingual community and she can find someone in the school who can speak that language. Furthermore, the language barrier was mentioned on the survey as a way preventing parents from supporting their children at home since they are not able to understand English. It should

be mentioned that the language barrier among parents was not reported by participants in the second phase.

In terms of religious differences, participants shared that most people in their community came from either Arab or Muslim countries where they share similar religious values. As a result, they did not report any conflict in regard to providing Islamic studies classes to students since the majority of their community is Muslim. When I asked participants about students who share different religious beliefs, they said they offer alternative classes upon request, but students consider religious education as part of cultural education. Participants indicated that families are aware that this type of school provides religious education prior to joining a school. It should be mentioned that the two schools included in the second phase have committed to teach Islamic values in their vision and mission.

Theme three: Recruitment and retention. The last internal factor is recruitment and retention of teachers, administrators, and students. Participants shared their experiences and perspectives in terms of hiring administrators and teachers along with the training needed for them. They also shared their experiences with teacher and student retention. For more information about the experiences, the theme is divided into three sub-themes: difficulties recruiting teachers and administrators; retention for stakeholders; and preparing national leaders.

Difficulties recruiting teachers and administrators. The desire to provide a high quality education at international schools creates a challenge in terms of finding qualified staff and teachers (Lee et al., 2012a). All participants whether in phase one or phase two of data collection indicated that they face difficulties in terms of finding qualified

teachers. To further illustrate this point, participants explained that they look for specific qualities when hiring new teachers, which includes fluency in English and holding a bachelor's degree in a specific content subject they will be teaching. Moreover, participants want to hire experienced teachers who are superior in their profession. School leaders stated that teachers must be fluent in English and have clear pronunciation since English is the medium of instruction. If a teacher's language skills are not adequately advanced, students do not pay attention and, in return, are not able to learn, a participant in Al Najma added. Participants informed me that the requirement for potential teachers to hold a bachelor's degree in a specific subject that they will be teaching in is a recent requirement from the MOE. A few years ago, participants were allowed to hire an engineer, for example, to teach math or a pharmacist to teach chemistry. Now, schools are only allowed to hire a degree holder in the specific subject area, which makes it especially difficult to fill positions. The challenge becomes greater when searching for upper grade level teachers.

In terms of Saudi national recruitment, it is mandatory for the private sector to hire Saudi nationals in an effort to reduce the unemployment rate in the country. When examining the documents regarding criteria for hiring teachers, I found a requirement that says "identity classes" must be filled by Saudi nationals only. As for the other subjects, the position can be filled by non-nationals if there is a teacher shortage in that subject. That being said, participants highlighted some difficulties in terms of finding qualified Saudi candidates. They stated that Saudi teachers lack the experience of teaching their curriculum. They reported that they could easily find non-Saudi teachers who have taught at international schools in Emirates, Lebanon, or Egypt and are experienced in teaching

international curriculum. As for Saudis, those who apply are new graduates who lack experience so they require training before having classes assigned to them. It should be mentioned that student teachers are required to do their practicum at public schools, but not private or international schools. A participant in Al Najma shared his concerns about the lack of experience among Saudi teachers:

It's hard to find a qualified Saudi applicant because they lack the experience of learning at international schools. It's hard to find a Saudi who studied science in this way, had exams and tests in this way, and graduated from international schools. Saudi teachers would see the type of textbooks we use for their first time during our job interview. How can they create tests that are based on international standards or create lesson plans? They have a university degree, but they lack the experience of working at international schools.

The pressure to hire national teachers led school leaders to hire less qualified individuals in order to fill positions. A participant noted that school owners are not interested in investing in training, which leads new teachers to “learn as they go.” Participants shared that school leaders should have the ability to hire qualified candidates regardless of their nationality in order to provide a quality education. Participants indicated that international schools should have educators who have a broad experience in order to contribute to the missions of international schools.

If it is hard to find a Saudi teacher who has experience at international schools, it is almost impossible to find a Saudi principal who has worked at international schools. Participants stated that qualified educators prefer to work at the ministry or higher educational institutions that offer better salaries. Since the international schools that I visited were located in the capital city, there are many educational institutions in the area that are looking for qualified and experienced educators and pay higher than international schools. As noted, Riyadh is “a very competitive market.” A participant further noted that

“skilled teachers prefer to work at other places as a result of the workload and long school hours.” International schools have an extended school schedule compared to national schools, and oftentimes, teachers are required to work during evenings and on Saturdays. In addition, international schools provide an intensive learning environment that includes many tests, quizzes, and homework, unlike national schools. These factors could lead qualified and experienced educators to look for opportunities outside of international school venues. One of the two schools I visited had been looking for a male Saudi principal for a period of two months. Regardless of the advertisement, it was not an easy task to find a qualified Saudi candidate to fill this position.

Retention for stakeholders. Teachers. Although it can be difficult to find qualified teachers, participants stated that teachers stay in good schools for a number of years. A participant in Al Najma expressed that he has teachers who have been working for more than 10 and 20 years at his school. Similarly, another participant confirmed that teachers stay for years unless it is time to leave the country. Participants indicated that expatriate female teachers generally depend on their husbands, so whenever a husband finds a work opportunity in another country or city, they have to accompany their families. Another reason for the possibility of losing expatriate teachers that participants highlighted in the interview was related to a recent recession of the Saudi economy. A couple months prior to the data collection, the Ministry of Labor had announced a new law for hiring foreign employees that would be implemented in the coming years. The law indicates that Saudi employers must pay a monthly fee for every non-Saudi employee under their sponsorship. This new law raises some concerns

among school leaders and non-Saudi employees in terms of the implementation of this law and the consequences on school recruitment.

Students. Students at international schools tend to stay from kindergarten to high school unless the family moves to a different place or returns to their home country. Participants indicated stability among the student body and some participants added that they have waiting lists for students who want to join the school. However, the interview data showed a recent change in mobility among students as a result of the economic recession in the region. That being said, some companies in Saudi Arabia started to cut on employee salaries after the Saudi government announced a deficit in the country's budget in 2016. This results in some families deciding to move their children to affordable schools. A participant in Al Najma shared that she noticed a higher mobility rate recently especially in lower grades, she said;

The mobility this year was much greater due to the fact of new government policies in which we had a financial crisis throughout the world and that has caused more mobility in regard to people moving more rapidly. Some organizations no longer offer education allowances. So we did have a greater decrease particularly in the kindergarten and primary grades, where we had an increase or stabilization in the upper grades from four to 12.

Another participant in Al Kamal stated that it is hard for some families to afford four children in an international school of this level after the recent cut in salaries.

Preparing national leaders. School leaders shared their experiences prior to becoming principals at international schools. All participants had worked as either teachers and/or administrators at national and/or international schools. Only one participant reported that she had been a principal at a public national school before starting her current position. None of the principals reported that they had experiences as

leaders at different international schools. Additionally, none of the participants indicated that they were prepared to lead international schools. Instead, they reported difficulties as a result of lacking the needed experience and preparation to lead diverse stakeholders. It should be mentioned that the document analysis indicated that international schools are required to hire only Saudi nationals to be principals of these types of schools in order to preserve and promote Saudi culture and values. As established, Saudi educators lack the experience of studying at international schools since there was a ban for Saudi nationals to join international schools prior to 2009. Around the same time of allowing Saudi students to join international schools, Saudi educators were appointed as principals at international schools. Even after ten years of requiring Saudis to lead such schools, there are no programs to prepare them for their mission.

That being said, a participant in Al Najma identified her lack of experience in international school leadership as her biggest challenge when she started her recent position. She explained that it took her a year or two to learn about the environment at international schools since the school system is different from what she used to have at national schools. Similarly, another participant pointed out that the lack of preparation is the biggest challenge facing leaders at international schools. He explained that he joined his current school as a leader without any preparation in international school leadership. His previous work experience was teaching and supervision at national schools, which does not relate to his current role. A participant in School Four who had experience as a principal in a public national school expressed differences between the leadership in the two sectors. She indicated some similarities in school leadership between the two schools and also some differences. She highlighted that the process of teacher hiring, the

selection of textbooks, and working with students at international schools was new to her since public national schools have different procedures and environments. In the same way, a participant in Al Kamal added that she shares decisions, especially the ones related to the academic aspects, with administrators at her school who have longer and broader experience at international schools. She expressed, “I learn from people around me and I participate in discussions related to curriculum and instructions, but I don’t make a final decision because I don’t have a lot of experience in international schools.” The data indicated that leading international schools without preparation could be a challenge facing Saudi educators.

External Factors

Theme four: Working with different agencies. International schools are a private educational sector and they need to follow the requirements of multiple agencies in order to operate. In Saudi Arabia, international schools must meet the requirements of the accrediting organization, such as AdvancED, in order to be considered as international schools. They also need to meet the requirements of the local agencies such as the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education (MOE) in order to get the needed authority for operation. Additionally, international schools are private businesses that are run individually by a school board which has their own rules and regulations. In this study, participants shared their experiences in regard to working with different agencies along with challenges faced by those leaders.

National education law. The host country’s educational agency requires international schools to follow certain regulations in order to meet the national educational agenda (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). School leaders who participated in this

study felt that the MOE regulations are designed to fit the needs of national schools but not international schools. This led participants to face some challenges when implementing these regulations. “I find their [the MOE] plans to be different from international schools,” a participant commented. Examples were provided of how the MOE regulations are not specifically designed for international schools. First example, participants explained that the calendar under the MOE is shorter than the calendar they require in order to cover the content they need in a school year. Participants indicated that the content of their textbooks is intense and students need to accomplish specific learning standards before moving to the next level; however, the school calendar is short, which leads students to be pressured to learn many things in a compressed period of time. Participants also indicated that the final week for examinations in the school calendar does not match with the number of subjects at international schools. A participant explained this issue by stating the following:

We have two streams, British stream and American stream, when the ministry makes an exam schedule. Start on this day and end on this day. They don't consider the number of subjects that international schools have in addition to the ministry subjects. At times that becomes a problem. It's a learning process for them. They need to understand the British stream is different from the American. At times we have conflicts but we're able to overcome them.

Similarly, another participant mentioned that his school has a continuous evaluation program so having specific days for final exams does not fit their program.

Another example was provided related to hiring individuals. As established in the recruitment section, international schools are required to hire Saudi nationals, similarly to practices implemented at national schools; however, the nature of international schools is quite different. “It is impossible to implement 100% of Saudization at international schools,” a participant in School Seven noted. Participants expressed that requirements

regarding Saudization¹ program cannot be implemented at international schools as a result of the difficulties finding qualified Saudi nationals who are experienced in international school curriculum. They also illustrated problems related to hiring non-Saudi individuals such as the long process to get a work permit and visas for expatriate teachers overseas. In addition, participants expressed that they need to hire non-Saudi teachers who have no less than two years teaching experience. However, the experience restriction prevents them from hiring non-Saudi new graduates.

Male directors revealed another requirement that they believe does not align with the nature of international schools, which is gender segregation. The two leaders expressed some difficulties in regard to working with mothers who come to school to talk about the progress of their sons. The MOE regulations do not allow mothers to enter the boys' section. However, "the culture of international schools is women can come," as the director in Al Kamal commented. This creates some conflicts whenever mothers come to the school to ask about their sons or to talk to teachers. For this reason, the director in Al Najma created a meeting room for mothers in order to avoid any conflict with the host country requirements.

Another finding was revealed by the survey participants related to the MOE regulations. Participants expressed that the MOE rules and orders are subject to change at any time and oftentimes orders are not clear. This led participants to feel stressed and frustrated. A participant explained that the "ministry rules can change at any time, which takes my time and effort to follow them. They are not being flexible with us when they change their rules." Similarly, participants indicated that rules are subject to change even

¹ A policy created by the Ministry of Labor to hire Saudi nationals in private sector.

in the middle of the semester and they need to implement these changes immediately. An example was provided by this participant who stated that, “the design of student certificates were changed three time last year as a result of different requirements.” An example of unclear directions was observed when I visited schools to collect surveys. Along these lines, principals misinterpreted the school calendar that was designed by the MOE. They made their plans to end the semester on a specific date so they thought they had three weeks for classes followed by two weeks for the finals. However, they received a letter from the MOE, on the same week I started collecting surveys, which was the second week of December, clarifying that they needed to finish classes the following week and the last two weeks would be for the finals. In other words, they found out that they had three weeks left to finish the semester instead of five weeks. This caused huge confusion among school leaders whom I visited. They were concerned about the missing 80 hours of learning and how teachers and students were going to overcome the deficit. The principals’ reactions to this incident were varied: while some principals whom I visited obeyed this order, others did not. Some principals shared that they were planning to use the “remedial period weeks”--an extra two weeks after the semester ends--to overcome the missing 80 hours of schooling. This means they would require all students to attend school for a period of two weeks after the last day of schooling to overcome the missing learning. “Remedial period weeks” are created by the MOE to help students with weak performance to have an intensive education period to help them follow their peers. For that semester, some principals used these two extra weeks to cover the missed learning for all students, not only students who need intensive attention, in order to not be affected by the misunderstanding that had occurred.

Furthermore, the data revealed difficulty regarding accepting students who came from abroad. Specifically, participants stated that they are required to complete paperwork when accepting students who recently moved to Saudi Arabia. Participants explained that students who came from abroad need to provide original certificates/transcripts for the past grade levels. Those certificates must be stamped by the Saudi embassy of the country they moved from. That is, if a student came from abroad in grade ten, they must provide stamped certificates for the past nine grades. Students who fail to provide these documents are not accepted to the school. This becomes an issue especially for parents who are not aware of this requirement, because they have to travel back and visit each school that their children attended to collect certificates. This can lead to “a loss of valuable teaching and learning time of the students,” as a participant commented. A participant in Al Najma suggested that students should be placed according to their age and proficiency level instead of requiring proof of passing grade levels.

The data indicated a missing procedure related to allowing gifted and talented students to skip grade levels. Participants explained that students at national schools are allowed to skip grade levels if they pass certain tests but students at international schools cannot skip grade levels. Participants expressed some frustration in regard to not being able to appreciate the talents in their students and they highlighted the need to create a procedure that supports gifted and talented students.

Challenges related to curriculum. International schools select the curriculum that meets the need of its diverse population (Blandford & Shaw, 2001). In addition, they are required to provide specific subjects such as the host country’s language and religious

education since they accommodate national students. Participants shared their experiences in regards to addressing the learning needs of their students and, at the same time, following the rules and regulations of the accrediting organization (namely AdvancED), and providing the “identity classes” that are required by the host country. Schools that were included in this study reported that they were accredited by AdvancED, a non-profit organization that accredits primary and secondary schools in the United States and K-12 schools across the world.

English as a medium of instruction. International schools use the Common Core standards in order to guide them to select the appropriate textbooks for each grade level. Textbooks are designed by Western publishers from the U.K. and the U.S. to meet the need of learners for whom English is their first language. That being said, participants stated that the language used in these textbooks is an advanced language and their students are a mix of native speakers, second language speakers, and second language learners who transferred from national schools. Participants expressed that the majority of students in their schools belong to the second and third group and they face difficulties with English language. In a reading class, for instance, “native speakers would read 200 words in a minute while second language students would read 40 words in a minute. Native speakers would understand a lesson in physics in four minutes while the rest would stop processing information due to the use of high-level academic English vocabulary words,” a participant in Al Najma explained. In a similar way, another participant shared his thoughts regarding language used in textbooks:

We use a common core curriculum that is implemented in most schools in the United States. It's proven to be successful in the states and other countries that have implemented it as well, but the problem is it's not custom made for Saudi Arabia or other Middle Eastern countries. So, this

common core teaches English as a first language. Whereas most of the students we have in schools speak it as a second language. So, we find that many of our students are somewhat falling behind. (a participant in Al Kamal)

This participant suggested that school leaders and policy makers of international schools should contact publishers to create textbooks that are customized for the needs of learners in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, in specific. In addition, the data from the survey revealed that principals check the content in textbooks themselves to assure it is appropriate to the cultural and religious values in the host country. Textbooks were designed by Western publishers and it is not custom made for learners of whom the majority are Muslims. For this reason, participants indicated that they review the content and make any needed adjustment such as modifying topics related to the evolution theory.

Furthermore, participants illustrated that the spoken language in hallways has changed throughout the years. They used to hear English as the dominant language, but now they found that Arabic is the dominant language during breaks. A participant stated that "this is not acceptable because we are an international school and not all students understand the Arabic language." She continued that this happened because of a lack of English language skills among young Arab students. Another participant explained that this occurs because of the lack of exposure to the English language outside schools; it became a challenging task for these Arabic students. She further indicated that these students put a great effort into learning the materials but despite their hard work, they are unable to receive full grades that they deserve. She believed that the main reason for not achieving what they deserve is language ability. Another leader provided another explanation for why students speak Arabic in school. She stated that some Arab parents

prefer to let their children study at national schools until grade three because they want them to acquire Arabic language skills first. After completing third grade, they prefer to enroll their children at international schools to give them the opportunity to learn and master the English language. The two schools I visited reported that they offer remedial classes for students on Saturdays and after school programs to help second language speakers and learners improve their English.

Teaching identity classes. International schools are required to provide three specific subjects called the “identity classes,” which are Arabic language, religious education, and social studies. While English is the medium of instruction for other subjects, “identity classes” are taught in Arabic. Religious and social studies classes are provided in both languages: Arabic for Arab speakers and English for non-Arab speakers.

Participants reported that they are required to teach 50% of the ministry textbooks for these three subjects. Yet, no guidelines were provided regarding how these specific subjects should be taught nor how to define 50%. One of the participants wondered if that means teaching half of the pages in textbooks or half of the lessons and questioned how school leaders divide lessons with odd numbers. Another participant made a comment about the amount of required Arabic classes. Specifically, she thought that the required number of classes in Arabic is too much given the fact that this is an international school. She explained that the accrediting organization for her school, *advancED*, requires schools to provide 60% of classes in English in order to be considered international. However, providing identity classes in Arabic along with providing French classes makes it hard to reach the 60%. In accordance with what was revealed about the amount of

Arabic classes, the document analysis showed that students, depending on their grade level, take between eight to eleven classes per week in Arabic. A Participant suggested that the ministry should consider allowing schools to teach religious and social studies in English for all students, not only for non-Arab, in order to help schools meet the accrediting organization requirements.

In addition, the two schools I visited indicated that they provide Arabic as a second language (ASL) classes for Arab students who used to live abroad. In recent years, many Saudis and Arabs traveled abroad with their families in order to pursue higher education in Western countries. As a result of living abroad for a number of years, their children developed a limited Arabic proficiency. For those students, international schools created Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) classes to help them learn Arabic. After a period of time, students must join the regular Arabic classes. Participants reported that those students struggle in Arabic classes even after completing the ASL program. This happened because the language being used in the ministry books are intended to be for native speakers, not for second language speakers. Participants suggested creating Arabic textbooks that are specifically designed for their students.

Summary

This chapter presented the experiences and perspectives of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed four themes categorized under two factors, the internal factors and the external factors. The first internal factor was the parental involvement. This theme revealed that parents hold high expectations about school services and outcomes and expect the school to provide customized services for their children; however, leaders think that their educational standards cannot be

compromised. The theme also explored parental communication and involvement which varied from one school to another. The next factor, diversity, explored school leaders' experiences and perspectives in regard to working with diverse stakeholders. The theme revealed that school leaders recognized the importance of cultural influence on students' learning and how knowing where members of the community came from helps to build bridges for communication. The third factor was recruitment and retention. This theme examined the difficulties to find qualified teachers and staff in an urban city where many places are searching for good educators. The themes also highlighted some difficulties to meet the host country's requirements when it comes to Saudization. In addition, the theme illustrated a need for preparing school leaders at international schools.

International school leaders' experiences and perspectives were affected by external factors as a result of working with different agencies. The first sub-theme explored how school leaders meet the regulations of the host country's Ministry of Education (MOE) along with the faced barriers. The theme revealed that some regulations need modification to suit the nature of international schools such as school calendar and gender segregation. The finding of the theme highlighted a need to open channels between international schools and the MOE in order to improve the educational practices in this sector. The next sub-theme examined the curriculum and the difficulties that students deal with whether in classes that used English as the medium of instruction or with classes that used the host country's language as a medium of instruction. The next chapter is a discussion about the implications of the findings on school leadership in Saudi Arabia and recommendations to improve the practices at this educational sector.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Although international schools have experienced a rapid growth in recent years worldwide, limited research has been conducted to understand the experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools. A qualitative embedded single-case study design was used to explore the common lived experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools in the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. This study sought to answer the following question: What are the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia from the perspective of school leaders? To gain a deeper understanding, the data were collected in two phases: a qualitative survey of 15 international school leaders, followed by semi-structured interviews, observations, and document collection for two international schools that participated in the survey. Four major themes were identified under two factors: (a) internal factors that include (1) parental involvement, (2) diversity, and (3) recruitment and retention; (b) an external factor that includes (4) working with different agencies.

In this chapter, first the experiences and perspectives of international schools leaders in Saudi Arabia are discussed in comparison with existing literature and relevant educational contexts. Then recommendations for educational leaders and policy makers are presented in the second part of the chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Internal Factors

Parental Involvement

Parents at international schools hold high expectations for school services and student outcomes. These parents prefer to send their children to international schools over national schools, whether public or private, for many reasons. The first reason is that they want a school that provides high-quality education where international learning standards are implemented in order to prepare students to achieve high scores on college admission tests that are required by many universities worldwide. The second reason is the English language education that international schools provide. Parents, who are mostly not native English speakers, recognize the advantages of mastering the English language skills at an early age for their children's futures. Once international learning outcomes are met and English language abilities are improved, these parents believe that their children will be presented with wider options for higher education and jobs either nationally or overseas. Among others, these two factors, high quality education and English language education, are the most predominant factors that drive parents to favor international schools over other school types.

Since international schools offer education to students who are mostly coming from highly educated and wealthy families, their parents make many requests concerning services that schools provide and how their children should be educated as highlighted in the findings. School leaders indicated difficulties when working with parents. These parents expect the school to provide customized services such as allowing a student to be tested before the actual final exam weeks so the family can go on summer vacation early. Parents also expect the school to accommodate any requests such as allowing students to

switch between grade level sections for social reasons. Parents expect the school to provide exceptions from certain requirements to make it easier for their children, such as not moving a student who has completed the Arabic Second Language (ASL) program to the next level, the regular Arabic classes. Parents want their children to earn full grades regardless of the effort spent to learn. With that being the case, it is difficult for school leaders to accommodate such requests because they conflict with the schools' established missions and educational goals. The parental expectations were not acceptable to school leaders. The participants showed signs of frustration resulting from parents exerting pressure on school leaders as if they are paid fees for services rather than for an excellent education for their children.

When examining the literature, the research has shown that parents at international schools hold high expectations for schools outcomes (Doherty, 2009; Hallinger et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2012a; Seth, 2002). They hold certain expectations for their children's achievement as measured in grades and might challenge teachers over a grade given to a student (Solomon, 2013). In some cases, several parents went to the extreme, threatening to transfer their children to other schools if their demands were not met. As Gross (2002) stated, when parents finance their children's education, they are "paying a bundle [and] demand a bundle in return" (p. 3). Aside from the cost, Pollock (1998) explained that parents who moved overseas might make demands as a result of feeling a sense of guilt from moving far away from family and friends and worrying about how this decision might negatively impact their children's lives. This could be their way to seek special attention for their children in school. No matter what the reason for these demands, the participants in this study still wanted parents to be satisfied with the

quality of learning opportunities offered at their schools. Since international schools are private sector, not funded by governments, they depend on the revenue from school enrollment. However, leaders are unable to accommodate every single request, especially requests that conflict with their academic standards. Despite these conflicts, it might be possible to reach agreements and shared views between parents and school leaders. One way of achieving this could be through hosting open discussions with parents in regard to what to expect from the school or what is expected from students by the school in order to reduce the tension. Since international schools have unique populations, being more considerate and flexible when working with parents could assist in building trust and developing shared expectations.

Although not surprising, numerous studies have found positive links between students' achievement and parental involvement. That is, if a school has a greater number of parents who are involved in school activities, students are more likely to achieve well academically (Park, Stone, & Holloway, 2017; Flessa, 2008; Walsh, 2008). Some school leaders reported high parental involvement where parents have effective "parental committees" and participate in extracurricular activities, while others reported low parental involvement; for example, a school reported that only 10% of parents show up to teacher-parent conferences. The data indicated that fathers are more involved in boys' schools than mothers are involved in girls' schools. School leaders are aware of the importance of parental communication and involvement and how this could affect students' learning. For this reason, participants in this study were disappointed by some parents who were not communicating well with the school and were not involved in their child's education regardless of the effort spent to try to engage them with school.

There are many reasons that might prevent parents from communicating with school personnel and/or being involved in their children's education. The first reason could be related to language barriers as indicated by the participants in this study who expressed the difficulty of communicating with parents who do not speak English and/or Arabic. Most parents who send their children to international schools have different linguistic backgrounds and might encounter difficulties in terms of communicating with schools and helping their children perform school activities. However, it is possible to solve this language barrier by providing translation and interpreting services to these parents. An example of this service could be providing translated materials. Additionally, schools should provide interpreters in all languages in their community whenever they have teacher-parent meetings. Offering guides and instructions in English as well as in students' first languages could assist parents in supporting students completing their homework and study along with providing the best strategies to communicate with the school and teachers. Indeed, creating other channels that invite parents, especially mothers, to come to school and participate in activities is needed. Providing such opportunities would foster a positive learning environment and enrich students' learning experience.

Diversity

Leading a diverse workplace that includes staff, teachers, students, and parents who come from different parts of the world is not an easy task. Not all expatriate teachers, students, and families are familiar with the school practices in Saudi Arabia. School members hold different understandings of education and the best ways to educate young children depending on where they come from. To be specific, the data collected in

this study revealed that Eastern parents expected the school to provide rigorous curriculum, because they believed it was the best way for children to learn. Western parents, in contrast, expected the school to focus on personal and interpersonal skills and believed the amount of homework and tests was too much and caused stress among students. Differences in terms of what parents expect the nature of curriculum to be and the amount of homework and tests were reported in previous studies (Hayden, 2006; Lee et al., 2012a). There are two groups of stakeholders at international schools, local nationals and expatriates. Among the expatriate community, there are native English speakers who think that international schools are the same as schools in their home country. There are also non-English speakers who have experienced international schools in a different country and assume that all international schools elsewhere are the same (Hayden, 2006). Each group holds different expectations because of different prior educational experiences. Consistent with the findings of this study, Hammad and Shah (2018) found that school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia are facing challenges related to meeting parents' expectations in regard to what behavior is accepted in classrooms and issues regarding the content being taught. These authors found that school leaders are having difficulties with parents who came from overseas and expect international schools to be the same regardless of the context of Saudi Arabia. Lee et al. (2012a) highlighted the need for school leaders to find a balance between parents' expectations and maintaining the program mission.

A possible approach that school leaders might adopt to manage parental expectations is sharing the rationales of their teaching philosophies and how their methods will benefit students and prepare them for the future. It would be beneficial if

school leaders held open discussions with teachers, students, and parents about classroom expectations and the responsibilities of members to help students succeed. Another way of managing expectations would be to train teachers about the cultures present in classrooms and how to prepare culturally sensitive materials to accommodate the needs of all students. Most importantly, schools need to train new teachers about the cultures of the students they serve and appropriate classroom strategies.

Issues of misunderstanding and difficulties to unify stakeholders were presented as a result of having a multicultural community by the school leaders in this study. These issues might be greater if there is a conflict between a parent and a teacher from different cultures. Issues of communication were reported in Blandford and Shaw (2001).

According to these authors, misunderstanding in international schools is a complex situation that cannot be linked to a single cause. Instead, misunderstandings occur as a result of individuals who are looking at a situation from their own cultures and having their own opinions about what should be done in certain circumstances. These issues could influence the school environment and effectiveness negatively if they are not solved. To minimize conflict, practices such as asking for clarification and looking at someone's intention when solving such a conflict were reported by the school leaders in this study. Schools included in this study hosted events to promote cultural awareness among stakeholders such as cultural programs, carnivals, and food festivals. These events were a place where everyone could celebrate, learn to accept, and respect cultural differences (Walker & Cheng, 2009). To avoid communication barriers, schools could train staff and teachers on why conflicts might occur and what can be done to resolve them.

Recruitment and Retention

Findings of the present study indicated a common challenge facing leaders at international schools concerning employing teachers and staff. There seems to be a strong desire to hire candidates with the following qualifications: speak the English language fluently, hold at least a bachelor degree in the subject they are hired to teach, and having teaching experience in international curriculum (e.g., the British Curriculum). Given the fact that the host country's official language is Arabic, the task to find candidates who are native or near native English speakers is challenging. Even when such candidates with desired language proficiency level submit their applications, not all of them have teaching experience in international curriculum or hold a university degree in the desired subject. Besides these issues, schools are required to hire Saudi nationals in order to promote the Saudi culture and values and reduce the unemployment rate of Saudis. The problem with the local hires is that candidates lack the experiences of teaching international curriculum which results in their needing intensive training before they can be assigned classes. However, school leaders seemed to not be interested in investing money and time to train new teachers. Consequently, school leaders in this study have been left with the choice of hiring Saudi nationals regardless of their experience just to fill the positions. Participants in this study felt that the restriction to hire only Saudi nationals prevented them from hiring more qualified teachers.

The data also revealed another dimension that adds to the difficulty of finding qualified staff and teachers which is the competitive market. Participants indicated that Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, has many educational institutions that are looking for highly qualified applicants, such as universities, ministries, and national and

international schools. Most of these places are offering better salaries and benefits and/or flexible working hours which motivates qualified candidates to look for income outside of international schools. Teacher and staff shortages have been mentioned in previous studies such as Blandford and Shaw (2001), Lee et al. (2012a), and Hammad and Shah (2018). Hayden (2006) identified salary as one of the major reasons that made qualified expatriate and local candidates uninterested in working at international schools. Being located in the capital city of Saudi Arabia and competing with numerous educational institutions, it is not surprising to find international schools struggle to find qualified teachers. The competitive market in Riyadh raises the need to adjust salary scales and promotion schedules. Indeed, offering long-term contracts and greater financial benefits could assist in finding and retaining teachers and staff. In addition, schools should design training programs that run annually for all new employees.

The data collected in this study revealed a finding related to teachers' retention. The data in this study indicated a low rate of teacher turnover at Saudi international schools. Teachers stay in Saudi international schools for years unless it is their final departure from the country. The situation of teacher stability in Saudi Arabia is different from what has been reported in previous research. Studies that investigated international schools in other contexts reported a high turnover rate among teachers and administrators at international schools (Bunnell, 2008; Lee et al., 2012a). Researches have tried to understand the reasons that lead teachers at international schools to leave their schools, but no clear factor has been identified (Bunnell, 2008). It would be beneficial to study the situation of Saudi international schools in order to learn about what motivates teachers to have stability and to provide suggestions for international schools in other contexts.

In terms of student retention at Saudi international schools, the data in this study indicated that students stay from kindergarten to high school in one international school unless the family moves to a different place or returns to the home country. However, the data in the present study revealed a decrease in student enrollment in the past few years after the Saudi economy experienced a recession. This could be an indication of a strong connection between the host country's economy and the stability of students at international schools. A further investigation about the impact of the economic recession on school enrollment at international schools is highly recommended.

The data emerging from this research revealed the difficulty of employing school leaders who have experience working at international schools as principals. Prior to being assigned to their current leadership roles at international schools, almost all principals in this study had only worked at national Saudi schools and/or international schools as teachers, assistant principals, and supervisors. Only one principal was found to have previous experience as a principal, and this experience not at an international school but at a national school. It is, therefore, understandable that the international school leaders in this study described how they struggled to familiarize themselves with the new job requirements and the new educational contexts. Interestingly, even though it was known that they did not have previous experience as principals at international schools, none of them described receiving any training or direction before being appointed to their current positions.

As attested by Hayden (2006), leaders of international schools need two types of training: one focused on how to lead any type of school and another on how to lead an international school. The author further stressed the need to provide training sessions to

leaders being appointed, even if they hold the experience of leading other international schools. In arguing for this, the author pointed out that each international school is unique in terms of populations being served, curricula being taught, standards being followed, employees being hired, and communities surrounding the schools. Therefore, it has been suggested that each leader needs to be trained to acquire a new set of skills suitable for leading a new school population and culture. Building on recommendations obtained from the literature and the findings of this research, there is a need to offer all leaders at international schools training opportunities to enable them to transfer their experience to the new context by knowing what is relevant and what knowledge or skills need to be acquired. With respect to international school leaders who have never served as principals, the challenge could be even greater, raising the need for having the two training types addressed by Hayden (2006). As the findings in this study uncovered, there is perhaps a need for collaboration between the MOE and educational leadership organizations to provide leaders at international schools with professional development opportunities. Outcomes of such opportunities might assist international school leaders to best serve their current populations and lead their schools to achieve their visions and missions. Indeed, this would ensure that international school leaders are well-equipped to lead diverse stakeholders towards growth and success.

External Factors

Working with Different Agencies

International schools are private and self-funded schools, however, they need to meet certain conditions in order to operate. They need to be accredited in order to be considered international, and they need to meet certain conditions that the host country

requires in order to align with their educational agenda. The next section presents the implications of such conditions on international schools.

National education law. Findings from this study revealed some difficulties regarding addressing the national educational agency's requirements. The Saudi Ministry of Education's (MOE) regulations are not specifically designed for international schools. This can be noticed in the design of the school calendar, the restrictions regarding hiring teachers and staff, and the gender segregation in schools. The curriculum being taught at international schools requires longer school days and teachers who have international perspectives to deliver it. The regulation regarding gender segregation does not fit with the nature of international schools since these schools accommodate expatriate communities who are not familiar with single gender schools. This issue was presented in the Hammad and Shah (2018) study where leaders experienced a similar difficulty. The authors indicated that international schools had to overcome challenges related to mixed gender staff meetings and parents who could not attend school events because of gender restriction. The data suggests establishing regulations that support leaders at this school sector. In order to accomplish that, it is highly recommended to include school leaders in the decision making to assure that these new regulations are aligned with the nature of international schools and supportive to leaders. The reason for allowing international schools to operate in the country is the belief in the value of offering alternative education for children (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Improving the MOE regulations to support international schools would enable leaders of this sector to provide quality education for local and expatriate communities.

Miscommunication between international schools and the MOE were highlighted in the findings of this study. Directives were subject to change at any time and rules were not clear. This created difficulties in following the MOE orders. An example of the miscommunication was obvious in the incident of misinterpreting the school calendar. Participants thought the semester would end at a specific date so they designed their plans upon that. However, they received a clarification letter about the exact date of when the semester would end only a few weeks before the actual date. This indicated a lack of communication between leaders and the ministry employees. Improving the communication between the two parties could be accomplished by opening multiple channels for leaders to communicate with the MOE and providing opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback. This could be done by hosting regular meetings for international school leaders at the ministry to discuss updates and problems. Having these meetings could enable principals to meet other international school leaders and create a supportive community for them.

Following strict procedures for accepting students who came from abroad was highlighted as a barrier, including asking for proofs for passing each grade level, which is stressful for students and their families. Instead of following this procedure, leaders could have the ability to place new students at an appropriate grade level based on their age and proficiency level. This would create a smooth and easy transition for students who moved to Saudi Arabia and were not aware of the requirements. Moreover, there is no procedure to allow gifted and talented students to skip a grade level. The data indicated the need to create a system for gifted and talented students to be able to pass their designated grade

level if they are qualified. It would be beneficial to train school staff and teachers to identify gifted and talented students to place them in the appropriate grade levels.

Curriculum. Participants raised some concerns regarding English being the medium of instruction. Specifically, the majority of students who attend Saudi international schools are non-native English speakers. Students who are non-native English speakers struggled with the English language resulting in their being not on track with peers who are native English speakers. The language issue echoed the findings from the previous research about international schools (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013; Hayden, 2006; Kusuma-Powell, 2004; Murphy, 2003). Hayden (2006) reported a growing number of bilingual students who attend international schools, making second language speakers the norm at this type of school. Clearly, school leaders need to strengthen the English language program at international schools. Providing remedial classes on Saturdays is a good practice to support students, but it is recommended that school leaders provide further support. Students for whom English is not their first language need further support to help them acquire academic language proficiency. Hayden (2006) suggested that the responsibility to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) should not only be placed on the ESL program, but also on all subject teachers at international schools. Since the majority of students in school are second or other language speakers, all teachers should be trained in language development to support their students. One of the recommended strategies that subject teachers can implement is dividing students according to their language proficiency level (beginners, intermediate, and advanced) to provide the necessary help to each group. Another strategy is reducing student teacher ratios so students can get more individual support in regular classes. Students at international

schools should not be left to sink or swim. It is recommended that school leaders take serious steps to help second or other language speakers to improve their English since it is the medium of instruction. Improved ESL instruction will enable students to take full advantage of the curriculum.

It is mandatory for all international schools in Saudi Arabia to teach the host country's identity classes; these are the Arabic language, Islamic education, and the social studies of Saudi Arabia. Since Arabic is not the first language for all students, students struggled to understand the content in the MOE Arabic textbooks because of the language barrier. The ministry's textbooks are designed for native Arabic speakers, so the language used in these textbooks is advanced. Studies have shown that learning the host country's language and culture can support students to build positive relationships with the local community which in return helps to have a positive attitude about the host country (Hayden, 2006). It is recommended that leaders at international schools have the flexibility to provide teaching materials that are suitable for second or foreign language learners to enable students to learn the local language. Since the content in religious and social studies classes is what matters, the classes should be taught in English in order to avoid the language barriers that some Arab students experience.

Interaction between Internal and External Factors

When analyzing the internal and external factors, it is noticeable among the four themes explored that are parental involvement, diversity, recruitment and retention, and working with different agencies that the issues are interconnected. Oftentimes an issue in one theme might cause issues in another theme. To begin with, when looking at the parental involvement theme, it is noticeable that parents' expectations were mainly

around students' achievement as measured in scores. They wanted students to receive a good education to have wider options for post-secondary education and careers.

However, students' grades were not up to the level that their parents expected because of their struggles with the English language that prevented them from learning the content and receiving full grades. This might be the cause of some disappointments among parents and school leaders. Furthermore, parents might contribute to the issue by not being supportive of student learning at home due to several reasons, such as the parents' language barriers or their work schedules (Figure 4).

When looking at the diversity theme, having multicultural stakeholders can create advantages in the workplace and, at the same time, it can create challenges. One of the advantages is promoting cultural awareness among the school community where members have opportunities to learn about other cultures and respect differences. On the other hand, having diverse stakeholders means having different educational experiences and holding different views about how to best educate children. This might create conflicts about the best teaching practices. Similar conflicts could exist when school members communicate and cultural differences lead to misunderstandings. The issues of communication between school and home could be a reason why students were not receiving high scores.

Regarding the matter of recruitment and retention, looking for specific qualities when hiring teachers and staff might limit the choices to select applicants. The hiring restrictions from the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education (MOE) might create additional challenges to recruit staff and teachers. For instance, the requirement to hire Saudi nationals might lead principals to hire individuals who may lack the

experience of teaching international curriculum in order to fill the position. Searching for specific qualities could lead to hiring less qualified teachers which might affect the quality of education in classrooms. Moreover, assigning principals who lack the experience of leading an international school and not providing the needed training for them might create issues in the work environment as a result of lacking the needed leadership knowledge.

The selection of curriculum and textbooks along with the number of classes required is restricted according to several conditions. Schools must meet the educational goals of the accrediting organization along with the host country's Ministry of Education (MOE). Some of these requirements might restrict school leaders' abilities to improve the learning environment and/or solve educational issues. An example of that is the limited ability to provide textbooks that are suitable to students' proficiency levels. School leaders have limited choices when it comes to selecting textbooks for grade levels. Therefore, some students might struggle to understand the content which could prevent them from receiving high scores.

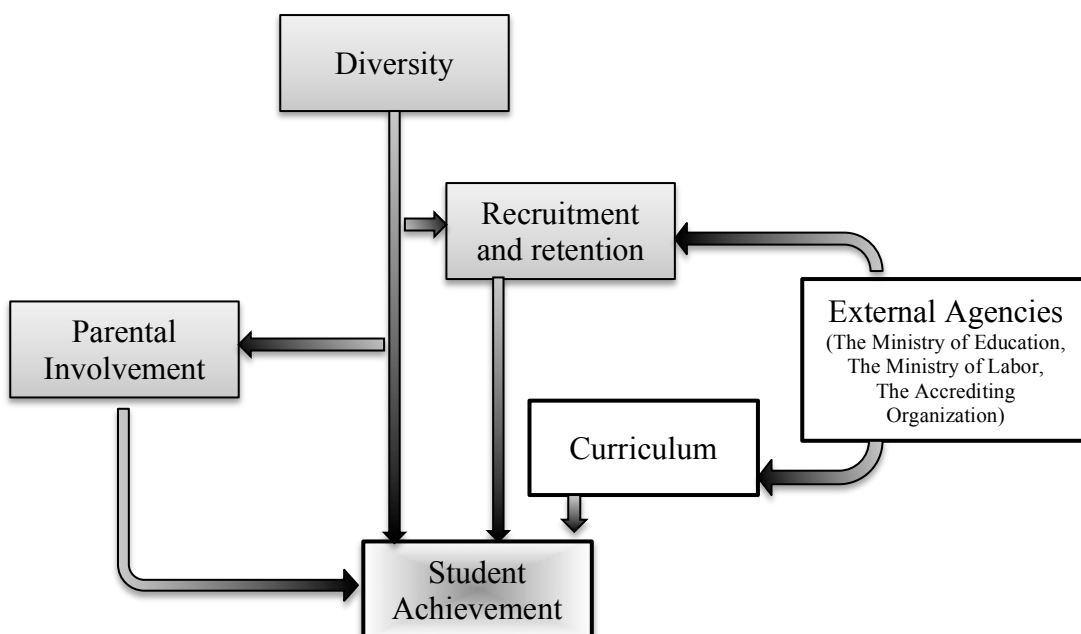


Figure 4. Interaction between Internal and External Factors.

When looking at figure 3, it is noticeable that every single theme, whether under internal or external factors, is impacting students' performance in school. Knowing the connections among these themes would assist in recognizing how issues could affect students' achievement. To improve the quality of education at international schools and to help school leaders overcome their challenges, the next section provides further recommendations for school leaders and policy makers in Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations for School Leaders

School leaders are encouraged to take several steps in order to improve the overall experience at international schools. Since parental involvement in schools is one of the most important indicators for students' success, leaders could provide opportunities for parents to increase their connection and involvement. School leaders could be innovative and benefit from the technology being used in schools to connect with parents who have busy schedules and are not able to come physically to schools. Instead of only hosting

teacher-parent conferences a couple of times a year, teachers can talk regularly to parents via video calls through the school website in order to discuss students' progress. Teachers could share strategies for helping students at home with their assignment and projects. Parents, on the other hand, could share their feedback and concerns with teachers. Schools could call parents and share their children's positive achievements instead of only calling parents to share negative incidents. In addition, schools could connect with parents through social media applications to help parents be updated about the school activities and events. Schools could invite parents, especially mothers, to participate in school activities whenever is possible to increase their engagement with school personnel. Since international schools serve a diverse community, they could communicate with parents using languages other than the medium of instruction which would help schools to strengthen their relationships with all parents regardless of their backgrounds. Schools could also provide interpreters for communicating with parents who do not speak English.

To help increase parental involvement in schools, opportunities for volunteering in classrooms and in schools' events could be provided. Inviting parents to attend classrooms and assist teachers would help them to understand the challenges that their children are facing so they could know how to support students at home. Attending a whole day of schooling would help parents to understand the daily life and practices in schools which, in return, would help them to develop realistic expectations about school services and outcomes. Parents at international schools could be empowered by sharing the decision making with school leaders through a parent/teacher association. Parents could be also empowered by having opportunities to lead extracurricular activities. For

parents who are unable to attend schools in the morning, leaders could host informal events in the evening and on the weekends when students can attend with their families in order to strengthen their relationships with teachers away from the formal meetings. Increasing the connection between teachers and parents may positively impact student outcomes.

Enhancing cultural awareness at international schools is critical because it helps community members to build communication bridges; strong parent, student, and school relationships; and effective curriculum delivery. School leaders may provide professional development to staff and teachers about student cultures present in classrooms to demonstrate understanding. It would also be beneficial to train teachers about culturally relevant pedagogy to encourage students to relate learning to their own cultural context. It is crucial for teachers to know about the cultures and backgrounds of students in their classrooms so they can develop teaching materials that are appropriate for their students' needs and sensitive to their cultures. Teachers are encouraged to build inclusive environments in their classrooms to help all students feel comfortable. This could be accomplished by studying cultures and inviting speakers, who could be parents, to talk about their traditions whenever relevant to student learning. Schools can be encouraged to organize many diverse cultural activities throughout the year for their stakeholders to promote cultural awareness in fun and interactive ways. These practices may assist international schools to strengthen the relationships with their community because of promoting understanding and respect for differences. To reduce the issues of misunderstanding, school leaders are encouraged to ask individuals for clarifications

whenever is needed and to look at the intentions when solving a dilemma in order to reach an agreement.

To reduce issues in recruitment and retention, school leaders are encouraged to implement several improvements. They should improve their salary scales and increase financial benefits to attract skilled teachers. Schools may offer long-term contracts to increase teachers' retention in schools. In addition, it is recommended that schools provide professional development for teachers to enable them to improve their teaching practices and address the needs of their diverse students. Since the majority of students at international schools are second language speakers and/or learners, schools can train all teachers to meet the needs of their non-native English language students by providing training sessions about language development and how best to support language learners in classrooms. It is recommended that school leaders create opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other and exchange best practices in classrooms to support students. This could be done by observing each other's classes and providing feedback on how to work with difficult students. Creating opportunities to connect with educators at other international schools and training organizations would help teachers to improve their teaching practices and increase their knowledge about teaching diverse students.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

The Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) plays an important role in terms of supervising educational practices at international schools in Saudi Arabia. It is recommended that policy makers at the ministry level revise international schools regulations to make the significant changes that would improve the educational practices at international schools. It would be beneficial to develop regulations that are appropriate

to the nature of international schools in order to enable this educational sector to flourish in the country. Examples of the regulations to be revised that were identified through the data collected in this study include requirements to hire teachers at international schools, regulations related to teaching identity classes, and the process for accepting students who come from abroad. To ensure effectiveness of such regulations, school leaders should be part of the decision making since they are knowledgeable about the nature of their schools.

It is recommended that channels of communication be opened between school leaders and the policy makers at the MOE to exchange feedback and receive updates about the changes. This could be accomplished by having regular meetings for international school leaders at the MOE to strengthen the relationships between the two parties and to allow school leaders to build supportive community with other school leaders. It is recommended that annual professional development for school leaders be established by the MOE to encourage principals to expand their knowledge and skills about the leadership at international schools. This could be accomplished by collaboration between the MOE and international training organizations to offer professional development that keep principals updated about the recent practices at international schools. Novice principals could benefit from attending preparation programs that are designed specifically for new leaders at international schools to help them be prepared for their new mission to lead diverse schools.

To improve the quality of learning in classrooms, it is recommended that the MOE offer professional development to teachers to train them on how to best meet the need of their population. Since the majority of students are non-English speakers, it is

suggested to provide English Second Language (ESL) training for all teachers to increase their knowledge and skills about language development to support students in classrooms. Students at international schools are a mix of Arab and non-Arab students; therefore, it is recommended to enable teachers to use the appropriate teaching materials including textbooks that suit the proficiency level of each student in their classes. To help international schools finding qualified Saudi candidates to work for them, it is suggested that the MOE allow student teachers to complete their practicum at international schools. This could build a bridge between Saudi new graduates and international school leaders which could result in increasing the hiring of national educators in this school sector.

Limitations of Study

The primary limitations were related to the design of the study. The sample of the international schools and leaders were limited to one urban area. Since Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, has the largest number of international schools in the country, only international schools located in the capital city were included in this single case study. Additionally, since the Ministry of Education (MOE) allowed Saudi students to study at international schools for the first time without restrictions in 2009, the numbers of international schools that accept not only expatriate students but also Saudis were limited. Furthermore, only a limited number of school leaders who worked at Saudi international schools participated in this study.

The last limitation is associated with the methods of data collection. The first phase included collecting qualitative surveys from fifteen principals. Since the topic of the study is about experiences of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia, participants informed me that they faced difficulties related to expressing their

experiences and feelings in a written format. Aside from that, the survey method lacked face-to-face communication which may have created some misunderstandings.

Participants might misunderstand a question resulting in their providing irrelevant information or writing short and ambiguous responses that were difficult for me to understand. I did not have the ability to ask follow-up questions. Another limitation of the data collection was related to the limited interviews and observations in the second phase of data collection. I interviewed a total of eight educators in two international schools and observed the principals who operated these two schools for a total of four days. Because the selected international schools were K-12 international schools in the capital city, the lived experiences of school leaders might differ from the experiences of leaders at schools of different grade configuration or at schools in other cities.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this study indicate the need for further investigation on the following topics:

1. Based on the perspectives of school leaders, not all parents are engaged in their children's education or have good relationships with schools. A future study may investigate parental engagement at international schools in Saudi Arabia and provide recommendations for school leaders on how to strengthen their connection with parents.
2. The findings revealed multicultural issues facing school leaders at international schools as a result of having students, teachers, and staff who come from different backgrounds. A future study may investigate successful practices to be implemented at international schools in order to reduce issues of misunderstanding and misinterpreting whenever it occurs.

3. Searching for qualified teachers and staff was highlighted as a challenge by school leaders. A future study may explore the teacher shortage at international schools along with the factors influencing recruitment and retention.

4. School leaders shared concerns about new restrictions regarding hiring non-Saudi teachers after the recent economic recession. It would be beneficial to study the impact of these restrictions on teacher recruitment along with providing recommendations on how to attract and keep expatriate teachers in schools.

5. Since the MOE supervises the educational practices at international schools, it would be useful to investigate how the MOE can be supportive to leaders at international schools. A future study may investigate how the MOE could improve communication between international schools and the policy makers to assure that regulations are supportive to international school leaders. Another future study may identify the needs among new international school leaders in order to enable the MOE to provide the needed professional development for them.

6. The findings of this study indicated that the majority of students at international schools in Saudi Arabia are non-English language speakers and learners. Future inquiries may investigate the English language issues among students and identify the needed programs in order to encourage international schools to provide the support for students who struggle with English.

7. International schools have witnessed a rapid growth in recent years in Saudi Arabia after allowing Saudi students to join this sector in 2009. Yet limited research about international schools in the region has been conducted. Future research may explore the leadership experience at international schools in other cities in Saudi Arabia

in order to know if the experiences are similar to participants in this study or not.

Understanding the experiences of international school leaders would allow policy makers and educators to provide the needed support to those leaders.

Conclusion

International schools have experienced rapid growth worldwide, with the majority of these schools located in Asia (Baker & Kanan, 2005; Murakami-Ramalho & Benham, 2010). Yet few studies have investigated the leadership at international schools. This study examined the experiences and perspectives of school leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. The present study revealed four issues related to four themes in common among those participants which were parental involvement, diversity, recruitment and retention, and working with external agencies. These four themes are connected and overlap with each other; an issue identified in one theme often was linked to issues in other themes. It has been noted that all four themes can affect students' achievement whether directly or indirectly.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that school leaders increase parental engagement in schools. School leaders are encouraged to provide professional development for teachers to encourage them to expand their cultural awareness and sensitivity to meet the needs of their diverse students. To attract qualified teachers, the study suggested making changes in recruitment strategies to motivate skilled teachers to work at international schools and to increase teachers' retention within this school sector. The findings of the current study also suggested that the MOE revise its regulations to align with the nature of international schools and to assure that rules are supportive of school leaders. The MOE may improve the communication with school leaders by having

regular meetings and providing opportunities for feedback. Last but not least, it would be beneficial to continue conducting research about international schools in Saudi Arabia in order to help this educational sector to meet the needs of their diverse populations and provide quality education for both local and expatriate communities.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY



Open-ended Questionnaire Survey

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You will not be asked for your name or any personally identifying information and your response will be assigned an alphanumeric identifier that will not reveal your identity. Only pseudonyms will be used in this study. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting process. I will return to collect the completed survey in a convenient day and time for you.

I do not foresee any risks or discomforts to you of participating in this study, but if you have any questions about participating, please let me know. You can contact me by email at ahlam.alhudithi@unco.edu or by phone at (+966) 0538206828. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may decide not to answer specific survey questions, if you wish.

Some benefits of participating may be the opportunity for you to share your experience in leading an international school in Saudi Arabia with other educators who are interested.

The completion of the survey will determine your consent to participate in this survey. The research advisor for this study is Dr. Linda Vogel who can be reached at linda.vogel@unco.edu or (+1) 970-351-2119. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Ahlam Alhudithi
Email: ahlam.alhudithi@unco.edu
Phone: 0538206828

Demographic information

Years of experience in education: _____

Years of experience in school leadership: _____

Level of your school: kindergarten elementary middle high other

How many students in each gender attending your current school:

Boys students _____

Girls students _____

Number of the student population:

Number of Saudi students _____

Number of non-Saudi students _____

What is the number of nationalities at the school: _____

Type of curriculum provided (e.g., American, British curriculum): _____

Survey Questions

1. Describe your overall experience as a school leader in an international school?
2. Describe the common challenges that you face in you school?
3. How do you overcome these challenges?
4. Describe your experience with the curriculum and preparation of teachers in your school?
5. Describe the challenges associated with the curriculum and teacher preparation?
6. Describe your experience in hiring teachers/staff and accepting students in your school?
7. Describe the challenges that you face in hiring teachers/ staff and accepting students in your school?

8. Describe your experience in working with parents? (e.g., communication, involvement, and expectation)
9. Describe the challenges that you face in working with parents?
10. Describe your experience in working with diverse stakeholders? (e.g., different languages, cultures, and countries)
11. Describe the challenges associated with diversity in your school? (e.g., teachers, students, parents)
12. Describe your experience in dealing with the Ministry of Education (MOE)?
13. Describe any challenges you face in working with the MOE?
14. Is there anything that you would like to share?

If you would like to participate in the next phase of the study, please fill out the information below. The next phase will include individual interviews with schools leaders and observations.

School name:

Principal name:

Contact information:

Phone number:

Address:

Email:

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استبيان

أنا أحلام الحديثي، طالبة دكتوراه في قسم القيادة التربوية في جامعة شمال كولورادو، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. أقوم حالياً بإجراء دراسة لفهم خبرات قاندي المدارس العالمية في المملكة العربية السعودية تجاه عدة جوانب. تحتوي الدراسة على استبيان مكون من أسئلة مفتوحة علمياً بأن الوقت المستغرق للإجابة على هذه الأسئلة هو ٣٠ دقيقة. سوف يتم جمع هذا الاستبيان في وقت ويوم مفضل لديكم.

في حال رغبتك عزيزي القائد التربوي/عزيزتي القاندة التربوية في التطوع والمشاركة في هذه الدراسة السرية التامة ستكون مضمونة من خلال استخدام رموز للتعريف عن هوية القائد التربوي/القاندة التربوية عوضاً عن استخدام الاسم الحقيقي. أما نتائج هذه الدراسة سنتم عبر استخدام أسماء مستعارة أيضاً للحفاظ على سرية هويتك في جميع المراحل سواء كانت عن طريق جمع وتحليل البيانات، كتابة التقارير، تقديم العروض و النشر.

مشاركتم في هذه الدراسة هي تطوعية. تستطيع عزيزي القائد التربوي/عزيزتي القاندة التربوية عدم الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة أو إنهاء الاستبيان في أي وقت تريد. نظراً لاعتماد السرية التامة في عمل هذه الدراسة، أنا لا أتوقع حدوث أي مخاطر من جراء مشاركتكم. إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات عن مشاركتكم في هذه الدراسة الرجاء التواصل معي عن طريق الإيميل ahlam.alhudithi@unco.edu أو عن طريق الهاتف رقم 0538206828. بعد قرائتكم لمحتوى هذا المستند، تستطيعون طباعته في حال رغبتكم في ذلك.

نتيح لك هذه الدراسة مشاركة خبراتك التربوية ووجهة نظرك في قيادة المدارس العالمية في المملكة العربية السعودية مع أشخاص آخرين مهتمين في نفس المجال من أجل تحسين وتطوير التعليم الأجنبي.

إجابتك لأسئلة الاستبيان تعني موافقتك للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. المشرفة الدراسية لهذا البحث هي البروفيسوره ليندا فوجل، تستطيع التواصل معها على إيميل linda.vogel@unco.edu ورقم هاتف 970-351-2119 (+1). في حال كان لديكم أي تساؤلات تجاه معاملتكم أو اختياركم كمتطوعين للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، الرجاء التواصل مع شيري ماي، عضو إداري في المجلس الرئيسي للتنسيق، المكتب الخاص لرعاية البرامج، مبنى كابنر رقم 25، جامعة شمال كولورادو، مدينة قريلي، ولاية كولورادو، الرمز البريدي 80639. هاتف رقم 970-351-1910 (+1).

نقدر لكم حسن تعاونكم ومساهمتم في عمل هذه الدراسة..

أحلام الحديثي
قسم القيادة التربوية في جامعة شمال كولورادو
ahlam.alhudithi@unco.edu
جوال 0538206828

معلومات ديموغرافية:

- سنوات خبرتك في مجال التعليم
- سنوات خبرتك في القيادة المدرسية
- المرحلة: رياض اطفال ابتدائي متوسط ثانوي اخرى
- عدد الطلاب الذين ينتسبون الى المدرسة:
- طلاب بنين
 - طلاب بنات
- أعداد الطلاب والطالبات:
- عدد الطلاب/الطالبات السعوديين
 - عدد الطلاب/الطالبات غير السعوديين
- كم عدد جنسيات الطلاب/الطالبات الملتحقين في المدرسة
- نوع المناهج المقدمة {مثال:منهج امريكي, منهج بريطاني}

اسئلة الاستبان:

1. من فضلك, اشرح خبراتك كقائدة/مدرسة عالمية بشكل عام؟
2. من فضلك, اشرح الصعوبات الشائعة التي تواجهك في مدرستك؟
3. كيف تتغلب على هذه الصعوبات؟
4. من فضلك, اشرح خبرتك مع المناهج المقدمة من قبل المدرسة وكيفية تهيئة المعلمين/المعلمات لتدريس المناهج؟
5. من فضلك, اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها مع المناهج المقدمة وعن تهيئة المعلمين/المعلمات لتدريس هذه المناهج؟
6. من فضلك, اشرح تجربتك في توظيف المعلمين/المعلمات وقبول الطلاب/الطالبات في المدرسة؟
7. من فضلك, قم بشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها في توظيف المعلمين/المعلمات وقبول الطلاب/الطالبات في المدرسة؟
8. من فضلك, قم بشرح خبراتك في التعامل مع الآباء/أمهات {مثال: التواصل بين الآباء/أمهات والمدرسة, المشاركة والتعاون بين الآباء/أمهات والمدرسة, توقعات ورغبات الآباء/أمهات}؟
9. من فضلك, اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها في التعامل مع الآباء/أمهات؟
10. من فضلك, اشرح تجربتك في التعامل مع أشخاص من جنسيات, لغات, ثقافات, وبلدان مختلفة؟

11. من فضلك، اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها أثناء التعامل مع أشخاص من جنسيات، لغات، ثقافات، وبلدان مختلفة في المدرسة سواء كانوا طلاب/طالبات، معلمين/معلمات، آباء/أمهات؟
12. من فضلك، اشرح تجربتك في التعامل مع وزارة التعليم؟
13. من فضلك، اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها في التعامل مع وزارة التعليم؟
14. هل لديك أي إضافات أخرى ترغب في مشاركتها معي؟

يتضمن البحث مرحلتين من جمع البيانات. في حل رغبتك عزيزي القائد التربوي/عزيزتي القائدة التربوية في المشاركة في المرحلة الثانية من البحث، الرجاء قم بملء المعلومات أدناه. المرحلة الثانية من جمع البيانات تتضمن حضور لمدة يومين للمدرسة وإجراء مقابلات شخصية مع قاندي المدارس العالمية.

- اسم المدرسة:
- اسم قائد/قائدة المدرسة:
- معلومات الاتصال:
- رقم الهاتف:
- العنوان:
- الايميل:

APPENDIX B
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

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Observation Protocol

Date:
Time:
School:

- Brief description of the school.

- Duties of the school leader at the observation day *(include time)*.

- What activities/situations have been observed today?

- Describe the activities/situations that were observed today.

- Who was involved in the situation?

- How did the school leader deal with the situations and/or school personnel?

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البروتوكول المتبع لإجراء الملاحظة اليومية

التاريخ:
الوقت:
المدرسة:

- معلومات عامه عن المدرسة.
- الواجبات والمهام التي قام بها قائد/ قائدة المدرسة في يوم الملاحظة {مع الوقت}
- ماهي النشاطات/ الأحداث التي تمت ملاحظتها في يوم الملاحظة؟
- قم بشرح الأنشطة أو الأحداث التي تمت ملاحظتها.
- من هم الأشخاص المشاركين في النشاط أو الحدث؟
- كيف تعامل قائد/قائدة المدرسة مع الحدث و/ أو الأشخاص؟

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

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Interview Guide

1. Describe your overall experience as a school leader in an international school?
2. Describe the common challenges that you face in you school?
3. Describe your experience with the curriculum and teacher preparation at this school?
4. Describe the challenges associated with the curriculum and teacher preparation?
5. Describe the challenges that you face in hiring teachers and accepting students in your school?
6. Describe how the student mobility and teacher turnover impact at your school?
7. Describe the reasons that usually lead stakeholders (teachers and students) to leave the school?
8. Describe any challenges you face in using English as the medium of instruction?
9. Describe any challenges you face in preparing your teachers to teach the curriculum?
10. How do you balance teaching the curriculum to meet your diverse population needs?
11. Describe your experience in working with parents? (e.g., communication, involvement, and expectation)
12. How do you respond to the parents' expectations?
13. Describe your experience in working with diverse stakeholders? (e.g., different languages, cultures, and countries)

14. Describe some of the challenges associated with diversity in your school? (e.g., teachers, students, parents)
15. Describe your experience in working with the Ministry of Education (MOE)?
16. Describe some of the challenges associated with meeting the requirements of the MOE?
17. Please describe the challenges that you face to meet the MOE requirements in terms of hiring school teacher and staff?
18. Describe the consequences if you could not meet one of the MOE's requirements?
19. What else, if anything, would you like to tell me?

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أسئلة المقابلة

1. من فضلك، اشرح خبراتك كقائدة مدرسة عالمية بشكل عام؟
2. من فضلك، اشرح الصعوبات الشائعة التي تواجهك في مدرستك؟
3. من فضلك، اشرح خبرتك مع المناهج المقدمة من قبل المدرسة وكيفية تهيئة المعلمين/المعلمات لتدريس المناهج؟
4. من فضلك، اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها مع المناهج المقدمة وعن تهيئة المعلمين/المعلمات لتدريس المناهج؟
5. من فضلك، قم بشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها في توظيف المعلمين/المعلمات وقبول الطلاب/الطالبات في المدرسة؟
6. من فضلك، اشرح تأثير حركة تنقل الطلاب/الطالبات والمعلمين/المعلمات على المدرسة؟
7. من فضلك، اشرح الأسباب التي تدعو الطلاب/الطالبات والمعلمين/المعلمات في الغالب لترك المدرسة؟
8. من فضلك، اشرح أي صعوبات تواجهها في استخدام اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أساسية للتعلم داخل الفصول الدراسية؟
9. من فضلك، اشرح أي صعوبات تواجهها في تهيئة المعلمين/المعلمات لتدريس المناهج؟
10. كيف توازن بين تدريس المناهج لكي تلبية الرغبات والاحتياجات المختلفة للطلاب/الطالبات؟
11. من فضلك، قم بشرح خبراتك في التعامل مع الآباء/أمهات {مثال: التواصل بين والآباء/أمهات والمدرسة، المشاركة والتعاون بين والآباء/أمهات والمدرسة، توقعات ورغبات الآباء/أمهات}؟
12. كيف تستجيب لرغبات وتطلعات الآباء/الأمهات؟
13. من فضلك، قم بشرح خبراتك في التعامل مع أشخاص من جنسيات، لغات، ثقافات، وبلدان مختلفة؟
14. من فضلك، اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها أثناء التعامل مع أشخاص من جنسيات، لغات، ثقافات، وبلدان مختلفة في المدرسة سواء كانوا طلاب/طالبات، معلمين/معلمات، آباء/أمهات؟
15. من فضلك، اشرح تجربتك في التعامل مع وزارة التعليم؟
16. من فضلك، اشرح أي صعوبات تواجهها أثناء تطبيق شروط ولوائح وزارة التعليم؟

17. من فضلك، اشرح الصعوبات التي تواجهها في تطبيق شروط وزارة التعليم لتوظيف المعلمين/المعلمات أو الموظفين/الموظفات في المدرسة؟
18. من فضلك، اشرح الآثار المترتبة لعدم تطبيق شروط وزارة التعليم؟
19. هل لديك أي إضافات أخرى ترغب في مشاركتها معي؟

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Experiences of School Leaders at K-12 International Schools in Saudi Arabia
 Researcher: Ahlam Alhudithi Research Advisor: Linda Vogel, Ph.D.
 Phone: (+966) 0538206828 Phone: (+1) 970-351-2119
 Email: ahlam.alhudithi@unco.edu Email: linda.vogel@unco.edu

Purpose and Description: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of leaders at international schools in Saudi Arabia.

During this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher at a time and location of your choice. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview guide will consist of questions regarding your experience in leading an international school in Saudi Arabia. During the course of the study, your name will not be associated with your responses. You will be given a pseudonym by the researcher and this pseudonym will be used in place of your real name throughout the study, so you cannot be identified. The key with all pseudonyms, as well the interview recording, will be kept on a password protected computer accessible only by the researcher, and all identifiable data collected from this study will be destroyed within three years of the completion of the study.

Potential risks in this project are no more than those that might occur in an educational setting. During the interview, you may feel anxious as you attempt to formulate answers. You may also feel a sense of nervousness if you are not accustomed to being recorded.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. The research advisor for this project is Dr. Linda Vogel who can be reached at linda.vogel@unco.edu or (+1) 970-351-2119.

If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, 25 Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; (+1) 970-351-1910.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

نموذج موافقة المشارك في البحوث والدراسات التابعة لجامعة شمال كولورادو

عنوان البحث: خبرات قائدي المدارس العالمية في المملكة العربية السعودية.
اسم الباحثة: أحلام الحديثي
جوال: 0538206828
هاتف: (+1) 970-351-2119
ايميل: ahlam.alhudithi@unco.edu
المشرفة الأكاديمية: البروفيسورة / ليندا فوجل
هاتف: (+1) 970-351-2119
ايميل: linda.vogel@unco.edu

أنا أحلام الحديثي، طالبة دكتوراه في قسم القيادة التربوية في جامعة شمال كولورادو، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. أقوم حالياً بإجراء دراسة من أجل فهم خبرات قائدي المدارس العالمية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

أتمنى من سعادتك التفضل بالمشاركة في مقابلة مسجلة صوتياً قد تدوم نحو 60 دقيقة في مكان عملك أو مكان وقت آخر تفضله. فالمقابلة تتضمن أسئلة تدور عن خبراتك التربوية تجاه عدة جوانب. سوف تجدون أسئلة المقابلة مكتوبة بشكل مفصل في آخر هذا المستند في حال رغبتكم بالإطلاع عليها. أما من ناحية تسجيل المقابلة، فهي سنتم عبر استخدام رموز للتعريف عن هوية القائد التربوي/القائدة التربوية عوضاً عن استخدام الاسم الحقيقي لضمان السرية التامة في حال تفضلتم بالمشاركة. علاوة على ذلك، سيتم تحليل بيانات المقابلة عن طريق استخدام حاسب آلي مزود برمز سري لضمان السرية التامة. بعد الانتهاء من هذه الدراسة، سوف تزال جميع البيانات التعريفية بشكل تام. أما نتائج هذه الدراسة سنتم عبر استخدام أسماء مستعارة أيضاً للحفاظ على سرية هويتك في جميع المراحل سواء كانت عن طريق جمع وتحليل البيانات، كتابة التقارير، تقديم العروض و النشر.

في حال رغبتك عزيزي القائد التربوي/عزيزتي القائدة التربوية في التطوع والمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، تستطيع عدم الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة أو إنهاء المقابلة في أي وقت تريد. نظراً لاعتماد السرية التامة في عمل هذه الدراسة، أنا لا أتوقع حدوث أي مخاطر من جراء مشاركتكم. لكن في حال كنت قلق من تعرضك للمخاطر فالرجاء التواصل معي وأبلاغني بذلك. أيضاً إذا كان لديكم أي أسئلة أو استفسارات عن مشاركتكم في هذه الدراسة الرجاء إعلامي بذلك للرد على جميع أسئلتكم.

نتيح لك هذه الدراسة مشاركة خبراتك التربوية ووجهة نظرك في قيادة المدارس العالمية في المملكة العربية السعودية مع أشخاص آخرين مهتمين في نفس المجال من أجل تحسين وتطوير التعليم الأجنبي.

مشاركتكم في هذه الدراسة هي تطوعية. في حال رغبتكم في الانسحاب في أي وقت قراركم سيكون موضع إحترام. نتيح لك هذه الدراسة الفرصة لطرح أي أسئلة إضافية ترغبون في الحصول على إجابة لها. بعد قرأنتكم لمحتوى هذا المستند، نرجو من سعادتك التوقيع أدناه وكتابة التاريخ من أجل تسليم نسخة للباحث الأكاديمي والاحتفاظ بنسخة أخرى من هذا المستند. المشرفة الأكاديمية لهذه الدراسة هي البروفيسورة ليندا فوجل، تستطيع التواصل معها على ايميل linda.vogel@unco.edu ورقم هاتف 970-351-2119 (+1).

في حال كان لديكم أي تساؤلات تجاه معاملتكم أو اختياركم كمتطوعين للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة، الرجاء التواصل مع شيري ماي، عضو إداري في المجلس الرئيسي للتدقيق، المكتب الخاص لرعاية البرامج، مبنى كابلر رقم 25، جامعة شمال كولورادو، مدينة قريلي، ولاية كولورادو، الرمز البريدي 80639. هاتف رقم 970-351-1910 (+1).

نقدر لكم حسن تعاونكم ومساهمتم في عمل هذه الدراسة..

توقيع المشارك التاريخ

توقيع الباحثة الأكاديمية التاريخ

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board

DATE: December 6, 2016

TO: Ahlam Alhudithi
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [986209-3] Experiences of School Leaders at K-12 International Schools in Saudi Arabia

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: December 6, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: December 6, 2020

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX F

SAUDI MINISTRY OF EDUCATION APPROVAL

