Chapter Eleven: International School Principals in Malaysia: Local and global factors impacting on leadership

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Abstract

This chapter examines the ways in which global considerations and local pressures intersect in the construction of the role of the principal by leaders of international schools in Malaysia. Charting the rapid expansion of international schools in Malaysia, it is argued that this growing sector merits more research attention, in particular research that acknowledges the ways in which international school headship here may differ from other cultural and political contexts.

Drawing on a qualitative study of 12 international school principals, the chapter considers ways in which global factors influence Malaysian international school headship, including transience within the international school sector; the marketisation of education; the expectations attendant with international accreditation and assessments; and the loneliness of the principal's role. Alongside this, the chapter examines the ways in which the principals discussed factors impacting on their role that are specific to international headship in Malaysia, in particular issues related to the national culture and the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian society. It also highlights the impact on these principals of governance models that predominate in Malaysian international schools, specifically the rapid growth of for-profit and chain-ownership schools. A framework of organisational, cultural and contextual factors is proposed for conceptualising how international leadership is influenced by national setting. The chapter suggests that there are aspects of international school headship that are particular to Malaysia, but that these are enacted with a global backdrop.

Introduction

Over recent years, there has been a rapid expansion of international schooling – both globally and in Malaysia. Bunnell (2020) presents data suggesting that in 2007 there were just over 2

million children attending international schools worldwide, rising to 5.7 million by the end of 2019. One of the key features of this increase has been a growth in attendance by a 'local' base of middle-class students, rather than the globally mobile expatriate for whom the sector originally developed. Globally there has been a dramatic demographic shift; in a space of 30 years international school places have gone from 80% filled by expatriate children to 80% host national local children (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). In the year 2000, there were only 26 international schools in Malaysia (Bailey, 2015a), mainly attended by the children of expatriates, as Malaysians could only attend international schools with permission from the MoE, granted under strict conditions. In 2006, these rules were relaxed so that Malaysian students could form up to 40% of an international school's student body. In 2012, this restriction was removed and the Malaysian government also gave a tax incentive to capital investment in the building of new international schools (Machin, 2017). Since this restriction was over-turned, the proportion of Malaysian students at many schools has climbed steeply. According to ISC Research, the number of international schools in Malaysia increased by 44% over the period 2014-19 (ISC Research, 2019); by 2019, Malaysia hosted nearly 20% of all international schools in South-East Asia, despite only constituting 5% of the population. In 2019, the Education Ministry informed journalists that there were 44,575 Malaysian students in international schools compared to 25,220 foreign students (*Malay Mail*, 2019). Continued growth in the international sector globally is predicted (Bunnell, 2020), although the Covid-19 pandemic may dampen such growth (*South China Morning Post*, 2020; Nikkei Asian Review, 2020). It is evident, then, that no analysis of Malaysian education at this juncture is complete without an examination of international schooling.

Despite the rapid growth of this sector, there is a scarcity of empirical studies examining school leadership in international school contexts (Calnin et al, 2018), and Bryant (2018) has called for sustained research examining leadership practices in international schools across Asia. We may expect leadership of international schools to involve different skills and challenges to leading national schools; whereas the government system of education in Malaysia is centralised, international schools have more autonomy. Moreover, although culturally diversity within schools is one of the distinctive features of Malaysia (Adams & Velarde, 2020), international schools here typically bring together Western and Asian approaches to schooling and school leadership, and therefore the cultural dissonances differ

to those in national schools. Globally, the concept of an international school is contested (Bailey & Gibson, 2019), variously used to refer to schools with nationally- and culturally-diverse staffing bodies, student bodies, an international ethos, an overseas curriculum, or the use of a language for instruction other than the national mother tongue. In Malaysia, the term is used to refer to schools following a foreign curriculum; these schools are usually fee-paying and employ English as the medium of instruction. Being multi-cultural is not considered to be a distinctive feature of these schools in multi-cultural Malaysia.

In the study below, we draw on data collected for a study of leadership of international schools in Malaysia to examine how both the national and the global context are interwoven into the fabric of these institutions. The context of Malaysia – a multi-cultural, predominantly Islamic society with a colonial past that is developing economically – means that debates around schooling are enacted differently here from other contexts for international schooling.

Literature Review

The emerging body of scholarship on leadership of international schools has demonstrated that there are a number of leadership challenges that may be specific to these institutions. James & Sheppard (2014) demonstrate the wide range of governance arrangements in international schools; schools can be privately owned or community owned, and either operate for profit or not for profit. Gardner-McTaggart (2018) has reviewed the literature on leadership of international schools, arguing that one of the notable characteristics of these schools is constant change and transition, which creates an ongoing challenge for leadership. This includes teacher turnover, as well as the short longevity of principals themselves, often because of fraught relationships with school boards. The transience of international school leaders is also emphasised by Benson (2011), who finds that the average tenure of the chief administrator is 3.7 years, with a strained relationship with the school board reported as the most common reason for departure. Bunnell (2018) studies social media comments about international school leaders, arguing that the negative postings are a result of the isolated nature of international schools, which offers disgruntled teachers no alternative way of

expressing their discontent with leadership decisions. Focusing on schools in the Asia-Pacific region, Lee, Hallinger & Walker (2012) argue that international school leaders face several challenges additional to those faced by leaders of national schools, including managing high but diverse parental expectations, recruitment of appropriate staff in the face of turnover, and the need to meet both national and international frameworks. However, much of the research into leadership in international schools has been conducted in institutions dominated by expatriate students; as we have seen above, Malaysian international schools are now predominantly attended by host country nationals, so we may predict that the leadership challenges will differ.

Turning to the specific context of Malaysia, over the past 20 years, it has been established that Malaysian views of effective leadership practices may differ from Western ones. As Malaysia is multi-cultural, there are values and beliefs that do not apply across all of its sub-cultures, but others – such as deference to authority and an emphasis on maintaining 'face' – do seem to be held in common by each of its main ethnic groups (Kennedy & Mansor, 2000). Kennedy & Mansor (2000) identify elements of leadership that are traditionally important to the majority Malay culture – leaders are expected to be collectivist in outlook, to eschew direct communication if it threatens harmony, protocol must be followed and rank acknowledged, group cohesion is valued more highly than organisational efficiency so that an individual's poor performance may be overlooked. However, their data suggest there is a decreasing emphasis on status and authority in modern Malaysian organisations, as they seek to strike a balance between the traditional approaches to leadership and those that are required to function in a global economy. More recently, Jogulu & Ferkins' (2012) review of the literature identifies a number of themes that have emerged from Malaysian studies of organisational leadership: views of leadership in Malaysia emphasise a collectivist approach; employees' views of leaders place more emphasis on relationships than on tasks; there is a general acceptance of authority and respect for elders and seniority.

However, there is little empirical research examining how these Malaysian views of leadership are played out in the culturally diverse environment of a Malaysian international school. Indeed, little is known about the leadership of Malaysian international schools and the challenges that leaders face. Research into student perspectives suggest that, although

host-country students in Malaysia welcome global aspects of their education, they attend international school primarily for instrumental reasons – to be able to pursue higher education overseas – rather than in order to develop their global competence, whereas teachers feel more concern over celebrating students' cultural identity (Bailey, 2015a). Studies into teacher perspectives suggest that they try to celebrate cultural diversity, but that local teachers resent pay differentials between Asian and Western teachers (Velarde & Ghai, 2019); staffrooms can be highly stratified between Western and local teachers, with Western teachers feeling that they are more highly skilled than their local counterparts (Bailey, 2015b). Drawing on a range of data, including from Malaysia, Bailey (2018) identifies three tensions concerning the nature and purpose of international education facing international schools in Asia – conflicting regulatory frameworks, conflicting educational values, and conflicting social values. She argues that, while these tensions have always been inherent in international schooling, they have been given greater prominence as the proportion of host-country students attending international schools increases.

There is, as yet, insufficient research into leadership perspectives on Malaysian international schools. The existent studies focus mainly on leadership styles, suggesting that instructional leadership is the dominant leadership style employed by both middle leaders (Javadi, Bush & Ng, 2017) and senior leadership (Velarde, 2017). Adams & Velarde (2020) examine the perspectives of international school leaders in Malaysia on leading a culturally diverse school community. They found that the leaders in all three of their case-study schools emphasised the importance of learning about other cultures, modelling values of respect and acceptance of other cultures, and encouraging international-mindedness through the curriculum. Adams & Velarde (2020) argue that this is a key feature of leading all schools in culturally diverse Malaysia. In other settings where international schools predominantly serve host-country nationals, their student body may be much less diverse.

In an earlier analysis of the data drawn on below (Bailey & Gibson, 2019), we pointed to six challenges of being the leader of an international school in Malaysia: loneliness, transience, cultural differences, governance, business elements and managing school composition. In our further analysis here, we explore the extent to which the leadership challenges were primarily universal elements of leading an international school in any context, or whether Malaysia-

specific challenges predominated. In summary, the paper will explore the ways in which both national setting and global background impacted upon the leaders of our case-study schools.

Research Methods

The analysis below is based on a study of leadership at 12 case-study international schools in Malaysia, conducted in 2018. For the purposes of this article, we will only draw on the interview conducted with the chief administrator/ most senior leader in each school – the title given to such a position varies, but here we shall refer to each as the 'principal'. All of the principals were non-Malaysian; this was not an intentional feature of our sample but reflects the reality of leadership of Malaysian international schools. We are looking at principals' perceptions of their role; this is, it should be stressed, untriangulated self-reported data, and therefore is not an account of actual tasks performed. Table 1 provides information about the schools, along with each principal's pseudonym.

We selected our case-study institutions through a mixture of purposeful and opportunistic sampling, seeking to include both schools that predominantly serve expatriate communities in the capital Kuala Lumpur, and schools that mainly serve host-country nationals in the surrounding towns and cities. Our sample included schools with a range of ownership models – for-profit and not-for-profit, as well as both chain and independent institutions. We sought to include schools with a range of fee levels. Each school in the sample used English as the medium of instruction, and every interview was conducted in English. In the analysis below, pseudonyms are employed for the school leaders, and any identifying features of schools excluded. The interviews were audio-recorded; transcriptions of these recordings were coded using a constant comparison method to generate codes and develop emergent themes (Miles et al, 2014).

We begin by considering the ways in which the concerns of these leaders reflect the challenges faced by international school leaders globally. In the succeeding section, we explore how factors that are specific to Malaysia also impacted on the accounts of international school leadership given in these interviews.

Global Factors

In this section, we describe the degree to which the themes that have dominated the international literature on leadership of international schools resonated with our participants' responses.

The transience of parent and student populations that is mentioned in the literature (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018) also featured in many of the interviews. However, there are ways in which this differed from some international studies. For example, Keith reported less student turnover in Malaysia than in other countries where he has worked because employment for parents is more stable. In addition, the degree of transience differed between schools, with institutions serving mainly host-country nationals and with large numbers of Malaysian teachers not experiencing as much as others.

The international literature has suggested a high degree of job insecurity amongst international school principals, with relationships with boards/ owners one of the main reasons for administrator turnover (Benson, 2011). Governance arrangements were highly variable across our case-study schools (James & Sheppard, 2014), but we note a preponderance of chain ownership and for-profit schools in Malaysia, with the consequence that market pressures and the discourse of business infused the operations of many schools. None of the principals admitted to feeling any degree of insecurity about their employment; this is perhaps explained by the continued expansion of international schooling in Malaysia. Claire's contract as principal had not been renewed, but she had been asked to lead a project in China instead. Keith confirmed that student numbers were the only thing currently of interest to his owners:

> 'I would think that my only KPI from this current round was based on numbers. So once I reach 160 for the year, then I will get like a financial extra payment, I think. But, as I already hit that in two months of being here, then now we have to be able to go back to the KPI.'

The isolation of international school leaders (Bunnell, 2018) was another theme from the literature that resonated with our sample. In Malaysia, however, there were several networks that international heads could join, and established principals reached out and supported newcomers. The leaders explained that there had not always been such a collegial approach in previous places where they had worked. Andrea explained:

> 'We are a very supportive group of heads, which is fantastic. And talking to heads in other regions, that's not common. I think I've been lucky.'

The literature review suggested that leaders of international schools face high, but diverse, parental expectations (Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012). For Philip, this was one of the major challenges he faced leading an international school in Malaysia:

> 'Lots of different nationalities of parents, and we've all got a different view of whether they should have an input in schools or whether they shouldn't and there are some nationalities that you shouldn't question the leader and some who very much want to.'

Although the previous literature on international school leadership has suggested that in some contexts leaders face contradictory pressures from competing regulatory frameworks (Bailey, 2018; Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012), this did not emerge as a challenge for the principals we studied. Malaysian education is highly centralised so it was surprising that there was little mention of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, although some principals mentioned attending meetings at which matters that were irrelevant to their roles were discussed. Max referred to unclear advice sometimes coming from the government concerning whether measures taken in government schools (such as closure during the haze, a recurrent air pollution issue) applied to international schools. More attention was paid in the interviews to international accreditation and assessments than to national regulations.

Two additional challenges were mentioned by participants as impacting on international school leaders everywhere that did not feature in the literature we reviewed above. Firstly, safeguarding was mentioned as an important element of their role by a number of participants. For Claire, safeguarding children from issues in their homes has been a major

challenge; she talked about feeling that there was not always sufficient legal and social services support for this in international contexts. For Martin, safeguarding children from staff is hard for all international schools, since when teachers have changed country it is not easy to check on their criminal record. He described having established a procedure for checking staff backgrounds during recruitment that had been lacking when he first arrived at the school.

Finally, Andrea was concerned about an achievement culture that she felt permeated international schools across diverse contexts, and its consequent effects on student well-being:

> 'The challenges now, for this school especially and I think it probably is for all international schools if heads were really honest, is I feel now that a student who would be a successful student in a school in England is made to feel inadequate in an international school.'

National Factors

There were three different types of factors pertaining to operating in Malaysia that were mentioned by the principals: organisational factors, concerning how the school was owned, composed and organised; cultural factors, concerning the norms of parenting, working, and holding authority in Malaysia; and contextual factors, concerning matters such as the economy and the environment of Malaysia, which directly impacted upon the principals and how they led their schools. We shall discuss each of these in turn.

1. Organisational factors

There were a number of issues related to the organisation of international schools in Malaysia that were discussed extensively by the principals. The most salient challenges related to school governance and school composition, although some other organisational issues were also mentioned.

School governance was discussed extensively in all of the interviews. Principals who worked in not-for-profit schools, whatever the model of ownership employed, reported little conflict with their boards, although they reported discussion about respective roles and responsibilities. By contrast, principals leading for-profit schools discussed more troubled relationships, particularly in instances where a single owner, rather than a corporation, ran the school. While strained relationships between international school principals and school boards have featured in the international literature (Benson, 2011), familial aspects of this have not previously been noted. For example, Keith's owner was also a parent at the school, and initially came into school on a daily basis; he reported some initial conflict as he tried to demarcate her responsibilities and prevent micro-management. Ryan described how his owner appointed an untrained family member in charge of accounts; he had to accept chaotic finances as a fact of life, with the school's balance hand-written on a slip of paper with a shoe-print on it. Principals leading schools operated by a chain reported less conflict, and often welcomed the professional support they received from other principals within the chain, but there was evidence of affective dissonance as they described having to make decisions for economic reasons that didn't always sit easily with their educational philosophies; for-profit education sat uncomfortably with them. With for-profit governance common amongst international schools in Malaysia, this is an aspect of their leadership that merits further exploration.

The second organisational factor that was salient in the interviews was the ethnic/ national composition of the school; this echoes the emphasis in the literature on the prominence of diversity within Malaysian international schools (Adams & Velarde, 2020). All of the leaders reported actively managing the composition of the student and staffing bodies, so that no one ethnicity or nationality came to dominate. Every principal was able to offer a breakdown of both, not only by expatriates versus Malaysians, but also in terms of the breakdown by ethnicity of their Malaysia student and staff bodies.

The stratification of the international school staffroom in Malaysia has been noted in previous studies (Bailey, 2015b; Velarde & Ghai, 2019). Many principals were reluctant to appoint Malaysians to teaching positions other than as language or Islamic Studies teachers, although exceptionally Max said that his school board required him to appoint a minimum

of 40% Malaysian teaching staff. Max believed that cultural diversity in teaching approaches made professional development important; he observed that it could not be assumed that Malaysian teachers would be familiar with the teaching approaches commonly used in English schools. Two other principals mentioned appointing qualified Malaysian teachers to be classroom assistants and then training them to be ready to teach in their schools, feeling that Malaysian teaching qualifications were insufficient.

A further aspect of school composition that was discussed in many interviews was the admission of students with special educational needs. Several principals mentioned that although they would like to admit such students, they could not risk being labelled as an 'SEN school', as it would impact on demand for school places. It was felt that this would be viewed negatively in Malaysia. Other principals reported working hard to make their schools more inclusive since their appointment. Keith commented on exclusion of students with SEN:

> 'I see that as a really, really big concern in Malaysia, especially with the international school market.'

There were some other organisational issues that were mentioned by small numbers of principals. For Ryan, who came from the US, one of the big differences about being a principal in Malaysia was the lack of trade unions. For some other principals, an additional element of their job in Malaysia was hosting boarding students from other parts of Asia, especially the Middle East, China and South Korea.

2. Cultural factors

All of the principals discussed ways in which Malaysian cultural norms meant that they needed to behave differently as leaders than they would in their country of origin. The cultural differences mentioned included: styles of parenting; attitudes to authority and work relationships; and the importance of face.

Several of the principals mentioned that parenting practices in Malaysia differed to those in their passport country – reinforcing the extensive literature suggesting that in the collectivist culture of Malaysia, authoritarian parenting is not viewed unfavourably (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009). For example, Ryan argued that parents in his school had a very high respect for education. Claire referenced the famous book about Chinese parenting practices (Chua, 2011) when she commented: 'I've got real tiger mothers.' The principals felt that these differences had to be consciously taken into account as they tried to develop a home-school partnership. For example, John explained:

> 'dealing with the Malaysian population, dealing with the Asian population, is different because they are different…I'm sure you will understand the Chinese have been brought up in an education system that is very traditional, very demanding and very focused, and that's not the way we do things in teaching and learning anymore. There are other ways to skin the cat where the kids can actually enjoy the process of learning. And so it's being proactive in getting the parents in and explaining the sorts of strategies that schools employ nowadays, and how important is the partnership of the parents with the school and their child in arriving at the best outcomes.'

Cultural differences impacted not only on principal-parent relationships, but also on professional relationships within the school, with different attitudes to authority and leadership, and to the relative importance of relationships versus tasks (Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012). Ryan felt that such differences meant that he had to manage support staff differently than he would in his home country. Local support staff would deferentially wait for his instructions, and also be keen to stress possibilities with him, but Ryan felt frustrated by this approach, which he characterised as reactive, not proactive, and not enabling him to accomplish his tasks when they did not directly tell him what could not be managed:

> 'I've run into few people here that are proactive and not just reactive. Facility managers, contractors, people showing up on time, it's not laid-back, it's not a laid-back Hawaii vibe, it's 'I don't give a s***'. You know, something's gotta get done. 'Can you as a contractor get it done by this date?' 'Yes, yes boss.' But nothing, people don't show up, people just disappear. They're running out of people. Nothing happens on time.'

Claire also described cultural differences over the content of professional communications, as she recounted a difference between how she and the owners of her school viewed the dissemination of financial information:

> 'They are Chinese *[Malaysians].* They've got some very funny ideas about finance, the school budgets, and not disclosing information about numbers.'

Other principals welcomed Malaysian attitudes to professional relationships, and to their respect for seniority (Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012). For instance, Sandra valued the relationships she had established with her Malaysian staff:

> 'Malaysians are extremely respectful and I think that's part of the reason as why that we get along very well. I believe they understand that it's a part of respect….like I'm a doctor [has a doctorate]. You're a doctor. Even when I go to a restaurant and someone who knows me says, 'doctor, how are you'.'

There was a range of behavioural norms that principals mentioned having quickly needed to learn upon arrival in Malaysia; most frequently mentioned was the notion of 'face'; this is the idea that in Malaysian society it is important to avoid any situation that may cause shame or embarrassment, and that a person will seek to protect their reputation and credibility (Kennedy & Mansor, 2000). Fear of losing face may explain why the contractors Ryan mentioned above responded in the way he reports and found frustrating. Several principals reported that they had needed to learn quickly what might be seen as a loss of face. Keith had inadvertently upset the owner of his school by publicly contradicting them:

> 'One thing I learned was she like she doesn't like to lose face. So I learned very quickly the fact that like if I'm going to disagree with anything, I tell her before the meeting and then we'll sort whether we're on the same plane.'

Max said that getting to understand the cultural norms of Malaysia should be the first priority of any principal arriving in the country:

'Just to get to know the people and the culture as quickly as possible. And understand that it's going to be different than other country that you have been in because losing face is important and not losing face is important.'

3. Contextual factors

Alongside these organisational and cultural differences between leading an international school in Malaysia and leading it in another country, a number of other aspects of the Malaysian context were also reported by these principals as impacting on their work. These included the educational context, the physical environment, and the market for schools.

The Malaysian educational context was generally viewed negatively by participants. Keith reported this as one of the main challenges of leading an international school in Malaysia. Students arrived at his school with a poor educational foundation in general, and with low levels of fluency in English, as a result of the government's emphasis on learning Malay in government schools. For Claire, her perception of the poor level of teacher training in Malaysia meant that all Malaysian recruits were given in-school training while working as classroom assistants before they were allowed their own class. Max's school offered A levels post-16 rather than the IB Diploma because he did not feel that the Malaysian educational system sufficiently prepared students to become the academic all-rounders that the IB requires.

The tropical environment in Malaysia was another challenge for principals coming from other climates. Max explained that infrastructure wears quickly in the Malaysian climate, which means that he had to pay considerable attention to maintenance. He also mentioned the challenges of protecting students from the haze from Indonesia. Ryan also referred to the work he did in ensuring that the facilities were maintained to a high standard, and explained that this required more oversight here than at his previous schools.

The economic context of the school was another factor impacting on school leaders. Malaysia, like many other Asian countries, has seen rapid growth in household income over the past 15 years (Machin, 2017). Nevertheless, several of the principals talked about the rapidly increasing number of international schools in Malaysia, and expressed concern about over-supply in the market. The Malaysian economy has hitherto been dependant on fossil fuels, and there was some uncertainty regarding the decline in this sector. Ryan explained that most of the families choosing his school had some association with the oil and gas sector. Gordon explained how the national economy impacted on the school:

> 'The economy is also something that sits behind all this because of our marketplace, even from an expat marketplace if you look at the impact of the oil industry had on international schools, so it's not just people in Malaysia, so the economy has impact on all the international schools, if the economy wobbles, we see it.'

Gordon anticipated schools going bankrupt in Malaysia in the new economic climate, which suggests that the situation has evolved from what Machin (2017) earlier described as the 'great Asian international schools gold rush', with an insatiable demand outstripping the growth in supply.

By contrast, Keith remained more optimistic about the Malaysian economy, saying:

> 'there's a massive market here even though the oil and gas left, there's huge opportunities to make.'

These school leaders made it clear that demand and supply in the market for international schools in Malaysia directly impact on their decisions, including choices that are primarily educational. For example, several principals mentioned that British qualifications and the English curriculum are seen very positively in Malaysia, and that this had impacted on their curriculum decisions; Philip explained his curriculum choice by saying:

> 'our research shows that it's the right fit.'

From this analysis, we propose the following framework for understanding the factors influencing leadership of international schools in Malaysia as summarised in Figure 1. Here, we see the relationship between global and national factors clearly; while each directly influences the leadership context, the national factors – especially the organisational factors – may feel more immediate. We suggest that the applicability of this framework to understanding international school leadership in other national contexts merits further research.

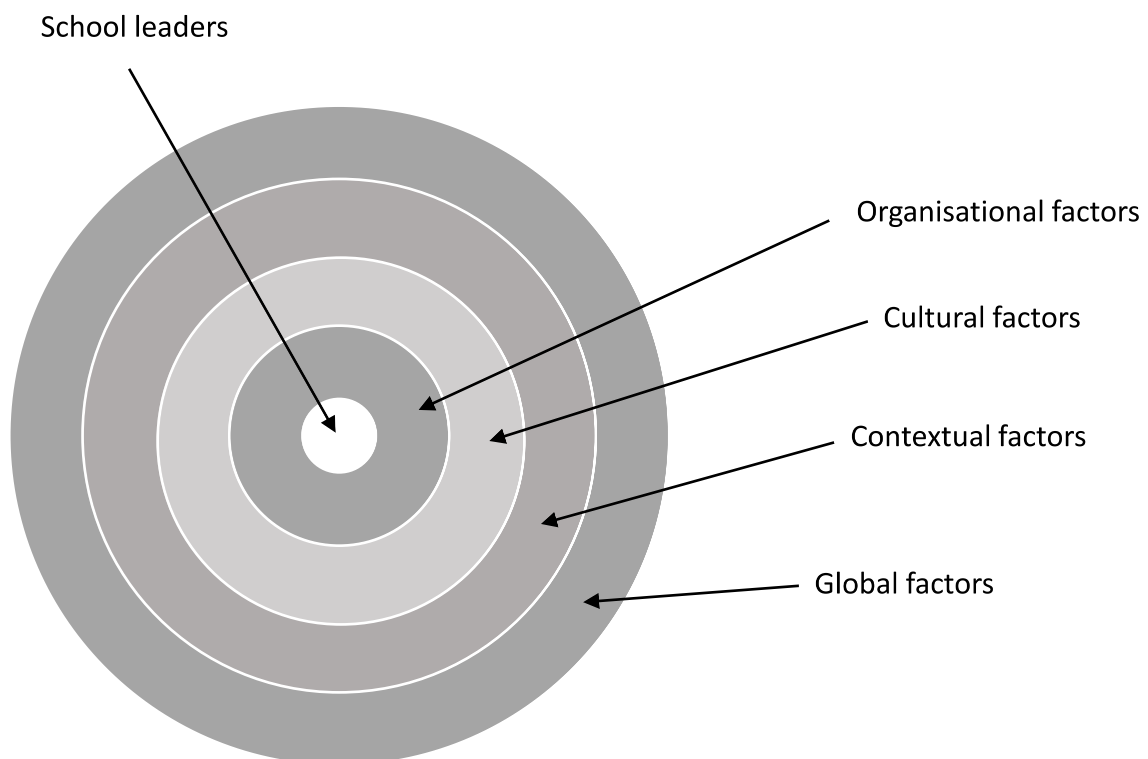

Figure 1: National setting and global background: Factors impinging on leadership of international schools

Conclusion

We have seen that there are commonalities to leading an international school across diverse contexts (Bailey & Gibson, 2019; Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009), but that national contexts also have a significant impact upon the nature of the role. We have identified three sets of factors that seem to be specific to leading an international

school in Malaysia – organisational, cultural and contextual. Drawing on studies of Malaysian culture (Kennedy & Mansor, 2000; Jogulu & Ferkins', 2012) and of other research into international schools in Malaysia (Bailey, 2015a; Bailey, 2015b; Adams & Velarde, 2020), we have explored how each of these areas are enacted in the Malaysian context.

John captured the importance of paying attention to nation-specific aspects of leading an international school when he advised that any new principal joining a school in Malaysia should 'keep an open mind and to maintain a sense of humour.' He explained:

> 'I think you just have to have the preparedness to roll with things because not everything rolls out the way you would normally expect it to roll out. Because each country is uniquely different in the way they do things.'

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Table 1: School and Participant Details

Principal pseudonym	**School Information**
Alistair	Not-for-profit, with community board
Max	Not-for-profit, with family owners and others on board
Sandra	Not-for-profit, parent governed
Ryan	For -profit, single owner, board controlled by family
Philip	For-profit, owned by property development company
Andrea	For-profit, part of international group of schools based in Europe
Keith	For-profit, single owner (no board), part of franchise based in South-East Asia
Martin	For-profit, part of group of schools mostly in Malaysia, company own other private educational establishments
Trisha	For-profit, part of group of schools in Malaysia, single owner with board controlled by family
John	For -profit, part of group of schools mostly in Malaysia, company own other private educational establishments
Claire	For-profit, part of group of schools in Malaysia, company own other private educational establishments
Gordon	For -profit, part of group of schools mostly in Malaysia, company own other private educational establishments