

EMI international schools in Dongguan, China: Why choose an EMI international school?

ZHIFENG LIANG

Department of Education, UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Abstract

This dissertation explores the factors that influence students' choices to attend English medium of instruction (EMI) international schools in Southern China. I investigate the benefits and drawbacks these students face when studying at an EMI school. The research employed a case study approach, collecting data through mixed methods, i.e. a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative semi-structured interview from a range of students from one EMI international school in Dongguan city, China. The findings build on previous studies within the field. In the present study, the findings suggested that students' motivation to study in EMI schools was influenced by their desire to study overseas, the small class sizes, the more active learning environment, greater pastoral care and the increased opportunities to develop their English language proficiency and skills that these schools offer.

Additionally, the findings identified a number of concerns and disadvantages highlighted in a few studies, including prohibitive tuition costs, unqualified teachers and in some cases, poor management within EMI schools. The findings also suggest that a number of students who had attended an EMI school would not recommend others to attend the same type of school due to the high tuition, inferior quality of teaching and poor management. The results question whether students who have graduated from an EMI school regard their school to have a superior status compared to local high schools. Based on the findings, recommendations are that EMI international schools should aim to enhance the quality of teaching and the organization of schools if they wish to attract more students in the future. The growth of EMI schools has been significant within the Guangdong region of China, however the quality assurance and longevity of these new institutions has yet to be proven. If EMI schools are to contribute greatly to the education and if they are going to be successful, then some of the issues raised in the present study need to be addressed.

Keywords: EMI international schools, factors, student's choice of attending EMI schools, students' views about EMI

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Driven by knowledge-based economic development (Colin, 2007), global education has been growing at a fast pace in the last few decades (Edge & Khamsi, 2012). In addition, English as an international language plays a role in spreading Western science and technology as well as Western culture in China, assisting the modernization and internationalization of China in the world (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Thus, the importance of English in China is increasing with the growth of international is supporting the growth in the importance of English in China.

EMI (English as medium instruction) education is a new phenomenon in recent China (Zhang, 2003), especially in Shanghai and Beijing (MacDonald, 2006), and is quickly expanding in all major cities in China (Zhang, 2003). As one of the more developed provinces in China, Guangdong also realizes the crucial demand for cultivating modern talents in light of the new global economy. Thus, Guangzhou city, a capital city in Guangdong, introduced more than 100 bilingual (Chinese and English) international schools in 2001 (Zhang, 2003), in order to encourage citizens to study English or study overseas to learn Western ideas and technology.

Dongguan city, as a developing city in Dongguan province, has seen an increase oin EMI international schools in the last ten years. Dongguan city is influenced by a nearby city called Guangzhou city. However, in spite of the rapid development of EMI international school in China, some researchers are concerned about the new educational immersion (Feng & Adamson, 2015), especially with regards to the number of unqualified teachers and inexperienced managers found in these schools, which has resulted in time-wasted but poor-quality education for students. Therefore, it seems necessary to research the factors that affect the development of EMI schools and identify what factors attracts students to choose these schools. In the following section, the rationale for my dissertation will be explained.

1.2 Purposes of the study

The findings from the present study will identify the reasons that affect students' choice of attending an international school and will help to understand the growth and development of international schools. These findings will help me to propose some suggestions for the school principle, and other international schools' leaders, that may influence the development and growth of their international school.

With the growing importance of English in Dongguan city, cultivating future talents that adapt to the modern society is necessary. Moreover, English teaching in Dongguan is increasing rapidly, however, not expertly. Thus, investigating how to teach English to cater for international needs (e.g. cultivating talents that are familiar with international marketing and widening exports) and expand the EMI schools in Dongguan city, will render this study meaningful.

1.3 Research Context

EMI includes using English as a medium to teach students, to edit textbooks and to design examinations (Chun, et al., 2017). The EMI school investigated in this present study has 90% of its courses in English and some subjects, such as mathematics and physics, are taught in Chinese.

Students who participated in this study were the first-year students since the EMI school have been established. Most of these students had a poor English level but had to take IELTS (The International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and other international tests, for example, ACT (American College Testing) or A-levels (General Certificate of Education Advanced Level) tests. In this case, students not only had to learn IELTS or TOEFL tests but also had to learn international courses. In addition, students need to learn the basic Chinese domestic courses, such as mathematics and history, which are taught in Chinese.

Teachers who were hired in this EMI school had to have a teaching certificate. However, Due to the increasing demand for foreign teachers, the schools accepted foreign teachers without qualifications or relevant experience. The principals and all the teachers from China who taught basic Chinese courses did not have any teaching experiences relevant for EMI international schools either. However, teachers from China are graduates from key universities in China or have studied abroad and thus, most are qualified to teach students.

1.4 Structure of Dissertation

The dissertation will start with a literature review, which will help to understand the background of EMI schools in China and Dongguan city. Then the methodology of this dissertation will be presented, aiming to explain how the present study was conducted. An analysis of findings and discussion in light with hypothesis of research will be provided. After this, the conclusion and recommendations according the findings and discussion will be described.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This dissertation aims to investigate the factors that motivate students to choose to attend an EMI (English as Medium Instruction) international senior high school before they attend universities abroad. This dissertation will also explore the benefits and drawbacks of studying in an EMI international school. The findings from the present study will aid in understanding the growth of EMI international schools in Dongguan city, China, and generate recommendations to widen participation in EMI schools. An analysis of the literature related to EMI international schools will provide a useful and informative background. This analysis will assist in comprehending the development, selection, benefits and drawbacks in the growth of EMI international schools. First, the development of EMI international schools will be discussed in order to critically review the reasons why students choose to study in EMI schools in China. This will clarify the factors that affect students' choice. Then the merits and drawbacks of selecting EMI international schools in China will be evaluated thoroughly. The focus of my

research will be specific within the context of the growth of EMI international schools in Dongguan city and the research questions will be presented.

2.2 Development of international schools

The growth of international schools in Asia has been referred to as a gold rush (Machin, 2017). According to Independent Schools Consultancy (ISC) research (2018), in July 2018, there were 9,332 international schools all around the world. This is an increase of 406 international schools compared to June 2017 when there were 8,296 international schools (Machin, 2017). There are more than 5.07 million international school-students at the time of reporting, 2017 (ISC research, 2018), with a promising progress to reach 8.7 million by 2027 (Machin, 2017). Machin (2017) explained that the growth of international schools is enjoying “buoyant market conditions and benign competitive influences” and the supply is deficient, so that there is “enough gold for everybody” (p. 132).

There are three motivating factors for developing international schools: commercial incentives, economic globalization and neoliberalism (Machin, 2017). Regarding the commercial incentive, Machin (2017) refers to “international” as a symbol of status and prestige in society. There are no state-directed rules to control international schools and for this reason, and the fact that the definition of international is so nebulous, numerous international schools have been established (Machin, 2017). International schools are able to decide their own school tuition, leading to what can be called a “gold rush” trend in the modern market.

There are several reasons international schools are free of the strict control of state-directed regulatory government. Firstly, it is maybe because not only the different students, curriculum and expatriate teachers, but also different administrators host the international schools. A decade ago, students attending these international schools were not native to the country, and the teachers came from abroad (Thompson, 2008). In addition, the administrators came to international schools to charge of organizations. This meant that these international schools escaped the normal regulatory controls that local schools have. However, 10 years later, according to ISC Research (2018), more than 80% of students in international schools are native nationals and the national

curriculum is either almost wholly or partly taught in English. Nevertheless, international schools are still free of state-directed rules because the curriculum that students learn is different from that of the local schools. Economic globalization and neoliberalism will be discussed next to explore other reasons that are affecting the growth of international schools.

Economic globalization has an important effect on the development of international education and vice versa (Machin, 2017). The global world is dominating by English and this includes the delivery of cultures, languages and personalities everywhere (Fishman et al., 1996). As such, English plays a vital role when countries connect to other parts of the world, and governments recognize the importance of English. Moreover, as Machin (2017) claims, international schools are funded by private groups, offering governments to respond to the increasing demand of international education without creating pressure on the country's financial resources. Consequently, international schools not only provide countries with future global talents, but also increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) because of the higher tuition fees than domestic schools. Therefore, the greater the economic development in a city, the more English learners are required, which creates a business circle.

Neoliberalism creates a "privatized quasi-market in educational services" (Machin, 2017: P. 134) and facilitates a benign competition among international schools (Ball, 2013). In this free international education market, providers are pushed to improve teaching quality, learning environment and introduce a competitive curriculum to attract more students. The economic liberalization of the international education business has generated investment opportunities for profitable organizations (Machin, 2017). However, this does not suggest that governments will hand over total responsibility for international education (Machin, 2017). Indeed, governments seek to new modalities, as Ball (2013) points out, a transference, which is a new ideological and political transformation that stimulates international schools raise quickly and healthily. For example, Hong Kong adopts a policy of teaching both Chinese and English in secondary schools to improve Hong Kong's international status,

and the Malaysian government gives a 10% tax to new international schools to encourage the growth of English language learning (Dearden, 2014). Under the governments' incentive policies, an increasing number of investors are targeting international schools, resulting in an increase in the number of international schools.

China is one of the countries where the number of international schools is increasing rapidly. Yamato and Bray (2006) report that the number of international schools in Shanghai, China has greatly increased since 2001, the year when China joined the World Trade Organization. Yamato and Bray (2006) also noticed that international schools in Shanghai differentiate themselves based on different curricula as well as school fees. As English is the dominant medium of instruction in secondary international schools, these schools have adopted external curricula. Examples of curricula are the European International Baccalaureate (IB), A-levels (British Advanced Level) from the UK, and ACT (American College Testing) and SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) from the USA. These international curricula prepare their students for entry exams to foreign universities.

Bilingual language (Chinese and English) teaching or EMI has started to permeate every metropolitan city in China (Zhang, 2003). For example, Beijing, Hangzhou, Sichuan and Guangdong province have all experienced an increase in the number of English teaching schools. Graddol (2013) studied English education in the Pearl River Delta, an area which includes Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Dongguan city. He noticed that the Pearl River Delta, the nearest place to Hong Kong, is being influenced by Hong Kong's social attitudes and international education (Graddol, 2013). As a result, the Pearl River Delta has turned its attention to EMI education in international secondary schools. Furthermore, Graddol (2013) stated that parents in the Pearl River Delta are becoming richer so can afford for their children to study overseas, and around 80% of these children choose English-speaking countries. For example, Zhang (2003) stated that Guangzhou city, the biggest city in the Pearl River Delta, has introduced more than 100 English and Chinese bilingual international schools since 2001, when China entered the

WTO. Dongguan city, one of the biggest cities in the Pearl River Delta, is also experiencing an increasing demand for bilingual or EMI international schools in this increasingly modern society.

As mentioned above, international schools are developing quickly in China, including my research region, Dongguan city. Commercial incentives, economic globalization and neoliberalism are some of the major factors that have influenced the growing market for international schools. In next section, the reasons why students choose to study in EMI international schools will be analyzed.

2.3 Reasons why students select EMI international schools

Various factors could affect students' choice for attending English as a medium instruction (EMI) international schools, of which the five key reasons are listed below:

- smaller class sizes for students (Paris, 2003);
- teachers in the international schools are more caring and spending more time on cultivating students (Paris, 2003);
- gain more chances to attend foreign universities (Paris, 2003);
- the international schools are the upper class (Dearden, 2014);
- prepare themselves before attending foreign universities (Xiong & Feng, 2018).

Paris (2003) conducted a case study in a South Australia senior high school and found that students preferred the international Baccalaureate (IB) course to the local course education because of the smaller class sizes and more attention from teachers. For my present study of international schools, my chosen context where I will conduct my research has 15-20 students in the classroom. Each group of students or class has seven teachers teaching them different courses including IELTS (The International English Language Testing System); TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language); and the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as subjects such science, mathematics and English grammar. Due to the small class size and the high ratio of teachers to

students in one class, teachers can dedicate more time and attention to each student to help develop their language proficiency and skills time. Thus, to test this claim, I designed questions for students asking them whether their motive for selecting to study in an international school was due to the small class size and more caring teachers.

Pairs (2003) found that students who attended international schools benefitted from more opportunities to attend foreign universities than those who studied in the local schools. Indeed, the IB course is accepted by over 3,300 higher institutions in more than 90 countries all over the world (IBO, 2018). There are other international curriculums in international schools in China, as previously mentioned, including the A-levels, ACT and SAT. All these international courses are taught in English and approved by foreign universities. these tests could help students enhance possibility to attend universities all around the world. However, Pairs (2003) only investigated schools in South Australia. To examine whether students in Dongguan city chose EMI international schools because of the greater chance of being admitted to foreign universities, I designed questions to collect responds from participants. The questions, were about how much they value various tests before they came to this EMI school. As Paris conducted his studies in Australia, he (2003), did not focus on students' language proficiency. However, students in Dongguan city, where the mother language is Chinese, had to reach a high score in English tests, such as IELTS or TOEFL, to travel abroad for further study at foreign universities. Therefore, I planned questions to check whether students chose an EMI school to improve their English level to be able to foreign universities.

Another reason for choosing to go to an international school mentioned above, was the high-class status associated with studying in such schools (Dearden, 2014). Both parents and students regard studying in EMI school as a way to join the upper classes. A case study in China shows that EMI schools are considered as a place where students can become considered as social elite (Dearden, 2014; Lueg & Lueg, 2015), so parents are willing to invest a large amount of money to offer their children EMI education. Dearden (2014) conducted a case study

in Hong Kong, a city colonized by the UK for more than 100 years. He described that Hong Kong has been influenced by British culture and more than 90% of secondary schools prefer to adopt EMI (Dearden, 2014). The reason that Dearden claim is that parents not only regard the English as a high social status but also regard that attending into EMI international schools could enhance the prestige. Similarly, Lueg and Lueg (2015) found that in Denmark, students in low-social status groups would not choose EMI schools even though they realize that studying in EMI schools would offer more career opportunities in the future.

In Dongguan city, students who study in EMI schools are likely to come from a rich family as school fees are three times that of local private schools. Therefore, to identify whether social status is a contributing factor to selecting to study in an EMI school, I asked the students whether they considered their EMI international school as a high-social status school before they chose this school.

The final reason I mentioned above is that EMI international schools can better prepare students before they attend foreign universities (Xiong & Feng, 2018). Xiong and Feng (2018) illustrated that the programs in EMI international schools in China could facilitate students to master English quickly in an English language environment, and help them familiarize with foreign programs earlier than students in local schools. Yamato and Bray (2006, p. 60) also point out that international curricula resemble “departure lounges”: students in these schools are better equipped with the necessary language and skills to apply for foreign universities than students who do not take foreign programs. In Dongguan city, most students who study in EMI international schools plan to study overseas. To test this statement, I asked students questions about their goals for studying in EMI schools. I asked them whether they believed that EMI schools would better prepare them with the necessary skills for their future studies abroad.

However, one factor not mentioned in the research studies by Paris (2003), Dearden (2014) and Xiong and Feng, is that students need to attain sufficiently high scores from their secondary school (2018) to be able to attend local senior schools. In Dongguan, students are not able to attend domestic senior high schools if they fail to reach high enough scores. In this case, these low-score-students had to attend technical secondary schools or they had to leave their school. However, if parents are rich and they can afford for their children to attend EMI international schools, they might prefer to send their children to international schools rather than technical secondary schools, as international schools accept students who fail to reach the high scores needed to attend local senior high schools. Moreover, students who attend technical secondary schools are mostly from low-salary groups due to the low school fee. Parents who are rich would rather persuade children to attend international schools studying with children from the same high-income background as them. Thus, I prepared question to test the proportion of students who chose EMI schools because of their low-score from secondary school and failed to qualify for their local senior high schools.

To classify the factors that influence students to select EMI schools, I will proceed to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of these schools to understand how these factors affect students' choice.

2.4 Benefits and drawbacks of EMI international schools in China

In this part, benefits and drawbacks of choosing EMI (English as a medium instruction) schools will be discussed separately.

2.4.1 Benefits of EMI international schools

There are three main advantages of studying in EMI international school. These are:

- students seem to have more test choice than local schools to attend universities;
- students can learn English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and other useful and relevant skills before attending foreign universities (Li & Ruan, 2015);

- students are developed as a whole-person as well as becoming emotionally mature (Xiong & Feng, 2018);

One of the main reasons for studying in EMI international schools is that students have a greater of choice of tests and therefore more opportunities to attend foreign universities. Pan and Block (2011) claimed that even though Chinese modern citizens value English as a global language and that it is highly valued in the competitive job market, students still need to take the deep-rooted examinations at school to test their English level. The Gao Kao (college entrance examination) is the only pathway to entering Chinese universities and students who fail to obtain a high enough score to apply to university should have to study another one year in Grade 12 in a senior high school. On the other hand, those students who study in the EMI schools are given many more chances at doing the tests and thereby achieving sufficient scores to enter the university. For example, students can take the IB (International Baccalaureate) A-levels, ACT or SAT in their senior high school. As English is not the mother tongue for Chinese students, they need to take IELTS or TOEFL to prove their English level to be offered a place in foreign universities. On this occasion, students who study in international schools have more opportunities to take the English test, which they do until they obtain a sufficiently high score to be offered a place at university. To justify whether students choose the EMI international schools is to avoid the Gao Kao, I posed relevant questions to verify my hypothesis.

Students who chose to take the IB course and gain the IB diploma or A-levels test can increase their chance of attending the top-ranking universities in the world. Dearden (2014) studied 55 countries in the world and found that universities in 40 countries accept international school students. Thus, the percentage these universities that accept international students is about 73%, which means most countries in the world accept qualifications from international education. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (2016) conducted a study in 2016, and found that students who had completed the IB diploma program had a 57% chance of attending the top 20 universities in

the UK. To test whether students who graduated from the EMI school had attended their preferred or chosen university in the world, I created a question to collect answers of their views. The reason why I set the term “satisfactory university” is because the students that I planned to research was the first group students who graduated and none of them applied successfully for the 20 top rank universities in the world. Thus, the term “satisfactory” would be suitable for this question.

Students are also motivated to attend EMI schools because of the opportunity to improve their English for Academic Purposes (EAP) ability (Li & Ruan, 2015). In a study conducted by Li and Ruan (2015), students reportedly perceived that studying in the EMI environment would better prepare them for developing their EAP and independent study skills. They also believed that the EMI environment would help them learn English autonomously and provide more focus on developing EAP reading and writing skills. However, the study in Li and Ruan was conducted in Chinese universities rather than secondary schools. Students’ experience in secondary schools may differ from that of university students. Therefore, I devised a question to determine whether students aimed to improve their academic writing ability when studying at an EMI school, and how they viewed their academic writing ability when they graduated.

Furthermore, Li and Ruan (2015) argued that at EMI schools, students could improve skills such as critical thinking, communication, organization and research skills better than at non-EMI schools. Li et al (2001) also found that, during the process of studying in EMI courses, students made improvements in their speaking and listening skills, as well as their research and organizational skills. However, EMI schools are new in Dongguan city, and whether these schools can help develop students’ critical thinking, organizational, research or communicative skills is questionable. Thus, I intended to design questions which referred to critical thinking, communicative, organizational and research skills to test how much students valued these learning skills after graduation.

Another main advantage that motivates students to choose EMI international schools might be that students can develop as a whole-person and become more emotionally mature in EMI schools (Xiong & Feng, 2018). Xiong and Feng conducted their research in Guangdong Province, where the Dongguan city is located, and found that students who study in English and Chinese bilingual schools could be wholly developed due to various extracurricular activities. In my research school, students can partake in a variety of activities, such as English oral competition, English handwriting competition, yoga and volunteer jobs. All these extracurricular activities might help students form their character. To test how much students value the extra-activities and how much they influenced their choice for EMI schools, I designed questions for students asking them about whether they considered the activities as a reason to choose that school.

2.4.2 Drawbacks of EMI international schools

There are three main disadvantages of studying in EMI international schools. These are:

- High tuition costs (MacDonald, 2006);
- Teachers' lack of relevant qualifications and skills (Dearden, 2014; Feng and Adamson, 2015);
- Anxiety amongst students when communication with teachers or difficulties in comprehension in English speaking classes (Yeh, 2014);

One of the main disadvantages of studying in EMI schools could be the high school tuition fees (MacDonald, 2006). He found the income from Chinese students attending international schools was more than 273 million dollars per year for the government. Students in Beijing city and Shanghai city pay about 30,000 dollars each year for international school tuition (MacDonald, 2006). In Dongguan city, a new city popular with international schools, students pay around 15,000 dollars per year. EMI international schools' fee is 50 times as high as local schools' fee, which is 300 dollars per year. However, many students who are from other cities without Hukou (an

identity for citizens) in Dongguan city are not able to attend local schools, so they had to attend private schools, which have the same curriculum local schools (Graddol, 2013). In this occasion, the fee of international schools is eight times as high as the fee of private schools. The cost of attending a private school is approximately 2,000 dollars per year per student. The high school tuition cost maybe a vital factor that influences students to choose EMI school. Thus, I designed question to obtain the opinion of students on their school fees.

The teachers' qualification to teach in EMI schools is also a major factor that affect students' choice. Dearden (2014) studied 55 countries, and 83% of participants responded that there are not enough qualified teachers in EMI international schools. Even though EMI schools hire English-native speakers, they may have no teaching qualification or no relevant teaching experience. Feng and Adamson (2015) are concerned that bilingual or EMI international schools are deficient in qualified teachers and teaching materials as well. Because of the rapid growth of international schools, the supply in the number of EMI teachers has not yet caught up with the demand for qualified teachers, which means schools need to employ unqualified and /or inexperienced teachers. Therefore, this issue could influence students' choice to study in EMI international schools and could become an obstacle for the management of the schools. Thus, questions were designed in my research to examine what students' their views are of their EMI teachers and the organization of school.

Another prime disadvantages of learning in EMI schools is the students' language proficiency. Ma (2012) noticed that students may suffer discomfort and a lack of confidence when communicating with native-English teacher. This is because students feel anxious when speaking in front of native-English teachers because of their low language level. Even worse, Yeh (2014) argued that students' poor English proficiency could affect their comprehension of the teachers' lectures on EMI courses. As such, students could not embrace the benefits of EMI teaching due to their low-level language ability. However, Yeh (2014) indicates that even though students might feel anxious or unconfident when communicating with foreign teachers and fail to follow what English

teachers' are saying, they can still catch up on class work by talking to their peers. On the other hand, during the process of dealing with the challenges of understanding lectures and communicating with foreign teachers, students can still develop their speaking and listening skills. In Dongguan, most courses in EMI schools are taught by foreign teachers or local English teachers in English. To test students whether students could follow these courses; whether they experienced improvements in their communicational and organizational skills; and whether they were able to overcome their anxiety to talk to foreign teachers, I planned questions to explore these issues. To conclude, this section discussed the benefits of studying in EMI schools which included more chances to study abroad; improve study skills and academic English skills; and develop their inter-personal skills. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks of studying in EMI schools, such as the high school tuition, lack of qualified and experienced, and insufficient English proficiency level to follow the classes taught in English. To identify whether my research school also experiences these advantages and disadvantages for students in EMI international schools, I will discuss about my specific case study in the next section.

2.5 An EMI international school in Dongguan city — a case study

Dongguan, a city that lies in the southern part of Guangdong province, has witnessed a rapid growth in international schools during these years. This phenomenon is a result of economic incentives and globalization in China, which in turn stimulate the development of international schools in Dongguan.

Xiong and Feng (2018) describe Guangdong province as the most developed province in China. Benefitting from the location in Guangdong province, Dongguan city is developing quickly, and became a new first-tier city in 2017 (Slater, 2018). In China, there are only four such cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Dongguan was the first to become a new first-tier city in 2017, highlighting how the speed of economic development in China. As Machin (2017) claims, the economic environment plays a vital role in international education in Asia. Thus, international schools are expanding as the economic develops in Dongguan city.

The national economy affects the demand of English (Machin, 2017). As English is a world language linking every country (Fishman et al., 1996), and as Guangdong province is rapidly developing, numerous English programs (e.g. ACT, A-levels, SAT) have been introduced since 1990 in order to promote English as an international language of communication or to prepare students to study overseas (Xiong & Feng, 2018). Graddol (2013) explains that governments in the Pearl River Delta, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Dongguan, are planning to change the export mode from low-products to top-products. This means that a greater number of high-tech exports will be required. Hence, to cultivate these 21st Century talents, governments are encouraging citizens to focus on a good education, and are thereby supporting the rapid growth of international schools. In addition, Guangdong province is a developed province which means that parents are becoming richer and are consequently able to invest in their children's foreign education (such as foreign Universities in for example the UK). For another reason, different from former foreign language schools where students focus on English learning and non-profitable, EMI international schools are allowed to create profits (Xiong & Feng, 2018). In this profitable competitive market which is free from governmental control (Machin, 2017), EMI international schools are able to independently decide their school tuition and which programs to teach in schools. Thus, the high school tuition attracts investors to build an increasing number of EMI international schools in Dongguan city.

Thirty EMI international schools have been built in Dongguan city in the last decade. There are no official statistics available for the number of EMI schools right now, so after conducting a search on the internet, I found that since 2010, 30 international schools have opened. and this online search way can underestimate the growth and current study of EMI international schools. The school I am focusing my research on was built in 2013, and is therefore very new. The participants of my research were the first group of students to graduate from this school. When the school was first established, it was difficult to recruit new students, so to promote recruitment, potential students did not need to take an English entrance test. Hence, approximately half of the students have a

low English language proficiency when they started their senior first year. Students who chose the EMI school in my research possibly wanted to improve their English level then obtain a foreign universities' degree, or equip themselves with a high-level language proficiency. Therefore, the fact that some of the students' language level was low and the organization of school was inefficient could have affected students' choice for EMI schools.

In conclusion, the development of Guangdong province and the developing Dongguan city, which followed the development of bigger cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, promoted the introduction of EMI international schools. In this large profitable market, private international schools compete with each other, trying to enhance their teaching quality to attract more students. Since EMI international schools are new and incredibly profitable, there will be a promising potential market for every citizen. Living and working in Dongguan city EMI schools, I intend to study students' choice of EMI schools, and the findings could help me understand what factors attract students to attend international schools in the future and thereby, inspire some useful suggestions for EMI international schools in Dongguan.

2.6 Summary of literature review and research questions

This chapter has discussed the development of EMI international schools in China as a background to understanding students' decisions behind choosing to attend EMI schools. Machin (2017) concluded three major reasons: commercial incentives, economic globalization and neoliberalism which enhances the growth of international schools. The profitable market and free stated-direct govern attract investors to international schools. Additionally, English is a language that links the global economy, industry, science technology and banking (Fishman et al., 1996). There are six key reasons for selecting EMI schools: small class size, pastoral care from teachers, range of activities, foreign study opportunities, the high status associated with attending international schools, and the effective preparation for studying overseas.

In addition, advantages and disadvantages of choosing EMI international schools were also evaluated critically, which is conducive to acknowledge factors that affect students' choice. Then I specified my study region to Dongguan city, due to the new and promising international market for Dongguan citizens and the purpose of widening participants choice to attend EMI international schools in the future.

According to the literature review, I address three research questions:

1. What are the factors that motivate students to choose an EMI international school?
2. What are the disadvantages of studying in an EMI international school?
3. Do graduates of EMI schools value their studies and would they recommend EMI schools to others?

When exploring research question 1, and in order to conduct this research in depth, I hypothesize four factors, which are also considered as advantages that attract students to study in the EMI international school. These factors are:

- The learning environment has a positive impact on studying due to the small class size and active learning environment, as it allows teachers to spend more time caring for students;
- To improve their English level and other useful skills to prepare for studying abroad;
- Perceiving more easily to attend foreign universities because of the greater number of test opportunities;
- Perceiving an EMI international school as an upper-class status to study.

Exploring research question 2 which aims to evaluate whether it is worthwhile to study in an EMI international school before attending foreign universities, I hypothesized two disadvantages to study in an EMI international school. These disadvantages are:

- The high school fees
- The lack of suitably qualified teachers and the ineffective management of EMI schools.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will present and justify the methodology chosen to answer the research questions. The research design, which is a case study, will be discussed first. The merits and drawbacks of conducting case studies will be included, then the reasons for selecting a case study as my research method will be presented. After that, my research strategy, a combination of qualitative and quantitative paradigms, will be analyzed. Finally, this section will include some discussion on the validity and reliability of my research as well as the ethics of my methodology.

3.1 Research Design

Case studies are regarded as the most pervasive approach used in the educational qualitative research (Duff, 2007).

Duff refers to case studies as a research strategy which involves an in-depth perspective of a context and a holistic analysis of a phenomenon or a particular unit. Yin (2009) provides two descriptions of a case study, which are:

An investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

A consideration of a technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2009, p. 18)

In accordance with the first description from Yin (2009), my participants of the dissertation are in a real-life context, studying in the EMI international school. In accordance with the second description by Yin (2009), my aim of the dissertation is to research a particular unit, which is an EMI international school, and includes various factors that may affect my research outcome in a specific situation. For these reasons, I consider a case study in my research as an appropriate design. In addition, understanding the strengths and limitations of a case study is necessary (Yin, 2009).

A common criticism of a case study is that generalizations can be made of certain research areas based on a unique case (Cohen et al., 2007). It seems that this argument may become my drawback in the case study. However,

considering my plan of the research is to understand the EMI international school in my city, and it is not to make a generalized comparison with other schools, the case study will be appropriate. Another criticism of a case study is that bias may exist when a researcher is involved in the study (Cohen et al., 2007). Yin (2009) argues that this issue does not only occur in a case study and furthermore, a method will be utilized to reduce the bias which will be explained in next section.

3.2 Research Methods

The quantitative approach is used to describe and prove the hypothesis of why groups are different and of the relationships among various phenomena (Shadish et al. 2002). Richards et al. (2012. P. 22) add that a quantitative approach addresses the macro-level questions such as “what, that, why”, which rely on the assumptions about the exist objects of research. In this research, the hypothesis that students might want to improve their English level and prepare themselves for further study abroad was put forward. Thus, a quantitative approach aims to test whether my assumption is right and to discover the reasons students choose to study in EMI schools. In this case, a quantitative method is likely to take a “probabilistic and post-positivist” approach, seeking to test claims and possible causes for students’ choice (Richards et al., 2012. P.23)

However, this study not only aims to analyze the macro-level questions of why students choose a certain EMI school, but also is aimed to explore students’ individual beliefs and values of their choice, which involves the micro-level question of “how” (Richards et al., 2012). For this reason, a qualitative method will also be adopted in this research to enable the investigating of students’ value beliefs when choosing EMI schools. Therefore, the goal is to “understand the behavior, beliefs, understandings, and values of a particular group or individual, to explore aspects of a world in its context” (Richards et al., 2012: 20).

Combining a qualitative and quantitative method is regarded as a Mixed-Methods approach to research. Richards et al. (2012) suggest that the most important consideration when choosing the mixed-methods approach is to understand the basic concept of the mixed-rules. The character of the mix-methods as Johnson et al. (2007) defines, is “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. the use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”. According to this definition, mix-methods research is suitable for my purpose of designing a broad and in-depth method to understand factors that influence the choice of EMI schools. Moreover, the mixed-method approach could fix the weakness of both qualitative and quantitative methods and achieve ampler and more compelling results than a single approach (Ying, 2009). A quantitative method can provide this study with answers to macro-question about students’ choice of EMI schools; a qualitative method can help to explore the deeply-rooted beliefs and values of students’ choice. The mix-methods approach can therefore facilitate a broader exploration in this research. How to fulfill a mix-methods research will be presented in next section.

3. 3 Data collection

One quantitative method used in the present research is a questionnaire. Questionnaires can be conducted in a short time without a researcher being present, and the data can be generated immediately to analyze (Cohen et al., 2007). Seliger and Shohamy (1990) state that the most common way to analyze data from questionnaires is by using the Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The Likert scale uses different points to test respondents’ answers.

In the questionnaire, a 5-point scale is used to identify how much students value the statements when choosing an EMI school and after they have left that school (see Appendix 1). The Likert scales ranks from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree and this 5-point scale is the most popular step numbers (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) explained that the neutral value could be the best choice for

respondents who would prefer to give non-committal (or neutral) answers, for example, when participants feel uncomfortable answering a question. Moreover, since the questionnaire is designed to explore what students' beliefs are before they chose and after they left an EMI international school, only participants who had graduated from the school will be selected, to ensure these students could provide their feedback after they left.

As the questionnaire was conducted using a Likert Scale that provided ordinal data, a Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon (MWW) test is a suitable method for non-parametric tests (Winter & Dodou, 2012) and will be applied in the present study. In addition, a median value was calculated for the 65 responses from students and analyzed by using a significance level ($p < 0.05$, two-tailed) to test each figure. Each Likert scale response is equal to a certain value (e.g. Strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly disagree=1) and thus, all the data will be analyzed using these values.

Time should be controlled when conducting a questionnaire to ensure participants are able to respond effectively (Yin, 2009). Therefore, to ensure the questionnaire did not take up too much of the students' time, 30 questions were posed. The questions were divided into two parts: 17 questions targeting opinions in the time before the students attended the EMI international school, and 12 questions for when they had left that EMI international school. All these questions had to be completed within 5-10 minutes. The former 17 questions are aimed to test students' perception and their expectations for of the EMI school and the latter 12 questions aimed at identifying whether the school had met the students' expectations. Every section has an open-ended question to allow students to express any comments they wanted to add.

Another research method used to collect data is qualitative semi-structured interviews. Denscombe (2007) describes interviews as a useful tool to collect more in-depth insights and viewpoints from the participants, and as a way to further explore any relevant issues made by participants. In this research, the semi-structured interview is utilized, and the questions were prepared prior to the interviews. This qualitative approach represents a more in-

depth survey, allowing elaboration during the interview procedure (Seliger and Shohamy, 1990). There are six pre-prepared questions for five graduated-students (See Appendix 2). To decrease the impact on students' personal time, the interview time for each student in the interview is controlled to be no more than 15 minutes and all students volunteer to take part in this interview.

The semi-structured interview can avoid potential issues (Denscombe, 2007). He points out that in the interview, an interviewer or interviewee may unintentionally stray away from the research focus and thus, the prepared-questions would help researchers keep to the list of questions and finish the interviews within the allocated time. In addition, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to better compare students' beliefs. In addition, the set questions can reduce my concern if I forget what the questions are. The procedure of the interview is in the Appendix 2.

3.4 Validity and reliability of the study

When evaluating the quality of the method in a research, the validity and reliability should be considered (Mackey & Gass, 2012) and these two factors of research are regarded as a way to find a logical and rational explanation when designing the method (Gray, 2013). Therefore, methods of data collection, i.e. a questionnaire and an interview will be utilized respectively.

The validity and reliability of a qualitative questionnaire can be affected by the sample size, the response rate, how the questions in the questionnaire were interpreted by the participants, and the honesty of their responses (Cohen et al., 2007). To limit the influence of the sample size and response rate, electronic questionnaires were sent to all students who had graduated from the school. The participants could complete the questionnaire online and as Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) claim, electronic questionnaires can help researchers collect data in an efficiently way. There are only 72 students who have graduated from my selected-school and they are now studying in foreign universities. The reason for the limited number of students that could participate in the survey is that the chosen

EMI school is still young, and consequently has a relatively small student population. Another reason is that some students left the school before graduation for a number of personal reasons, such as their families could no longer afford the high school tuition, or they failed to achieve a sufficiently high score to attend universities.

After the survey, 65 students' answers were collected online, which is a 90 % response rate as the survey was sent to a total of 72 graduated EMI students. This number could be considered as a high proportion. In addition, Mackey and Gass (2012) stress that diverse sampling could enhance the validity and reliability of questionnaire. Hence, the large response rate of my questionnaire included responses from participants who have not only graduated but who are also now studying in foreign universities. This variety increases the reliability and validity of my data.

Furthermore, to improve the correct interpretation of the questions in the questionnaire by students, and encourage honest answers, a general summary of this research was sent to help participants understand the research questions. Additionally, I received the support of the head teacher from the EMI school, who encouraged students to complete my questionnaire effectively and patience to ensure reliability. Considering students may not be willing to spend much time completing the questionnaire and would choose the answers randomly, all questions were translated into Chinese, their native language. Mackey and Gass (2012) stated that using the native language in questionnaires would help ensure participants complete questions in a more truthfully way than if the questions were in their second language. Thus, questions in Chinese could reduce misunderstanding and enhance reliability. At the end of the questionnaire, an open-ended question was also posed, which would encourage students to provide productive answers.

Another research method, interviews, was designed as a qualitative approach. Richards et al. (2012, p.133) found that during interviews, the role of the researcher may influence the results, so they advised that the “active listenership” is more efficient than the role of “interviewer-as-questioner”. To gain the trust and ensure an

unambiguously in participants' beliefs and their answers, a guide document (see Appendix 4) was sent to them. Furthermore, the research aims will be analyzed and participants had the right to stop the interview if they felt any discomfort with my questions at the beginning of the interview. In this case, the validity and reliability of this interview could be increased.

In addition, Richards et al. (2012) suggest that the interviewees might answer the questions in a way that would suit the interviewers' desired responses. They suggest a useful way to reduce bias is to adopt a mixed-method approach. In this research, a questionnaire was chosen to examine the answers of the interviewees and in return, the interview can also compensate for any bias from the questionnaires.

Yin (2009) highlights the importance of the internal validity of studies. Internal validity seeks to build a causal relationship between different items to narrow down the bias. For example, in the questionnaire, the question 1 "I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to improve my English ability" and question 7 "I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my communication skills" could increase the internal validity. These two questions are designed to assess whether communication skills are related to English ability, so that the result from students' responses can be judged. In the interview, semi-structured questions also have internal validity. For example, question 5 from the interview "Do you think it is worth to attend this EMI international school before studying overseas?" If a student responds by saying that they think it is worth studying in this school, then they would be asked about their reasons. In their reasons, factors that influenced their choice before they came into this school could also provide validity.

3.5 Ethics

Denscombe (2007) outlines the three principles for researchers when considering the ethics in the process of data collection:

respect the rights and dignity of those who are participating in the research project;

avoid any harm to the participants arising from their involvement in the research;

operate with honesty and integrity. (Denscombe, 2007, p.141)

At the beginning of the investigation, an e-mail providing the summary of the research goal and the process of conducting the research was sent to the principal of the EMI school to receive her approval. Then, two teachers, the former head teachers of two classes, also received the brief summary and purpose of the research. The two classes of these two teachers have graduated from the EMI school and the students are currently studying in foreign universities. Since these two classes of students are over the age of 18, it is not necessary to obtain approval from their parents. However, a letter, which included the guide script and their right to withdraw from the interview, was sent to the participants.

To avoid any possible harm to the participants, anonymity for them is important. In this case, a questionnaire was created which could be used in the WeChat App, a popular software for Chinese students. Using this medium meant that I could collect the answers without knowing their real name. Moreover, I did not know the five interviewees' name in the interviews, and they would not be recorded by the name to protect their privacy. As for the anonymity of the EMI school, the principal agreed that the name of the school should not be mentioned, so every single participant and the school is anonymous. After the interview, every student was sent the transcript of the interview. They were asked to check the accuracy of the content and were able to change any details which they did not agree with. During the whole data collection process, all the data will be stored in my password-protected document and the name of the file will not name students' real identity.

With all the above considerations made, this research is in the high ethic principle category from Denscombe (2007). In addition, the research ethic form was approved by my personal tutor so the research could be conducted.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research design was analyzed, and the rationale for choosing a case study was explained. Then the research strategy, which includes quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews, was presented. The data collection method was also explained, and then methods to ensure the validity and reliability were provided. Finally, actions taken to guarantee the ethics of the participating school and students were provided.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter will provide an interpretation and discussion of the research findings according to the three research questions:

- what are the factors that motivate students to choose this EMI international school?
- what are the disadvantages of studying in an EMI international school?
- Do graduates of EMI schools value their studies and would they recommend EMI schools to others?

The research utilized a mixed approach (i.e. a quantitative and a qualitative methods), including a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview for students who have graduated from the EMI international school. Data was gathered to be analyzed in order to evaluate my research questions in light with my hypothesis. As outlined in Chapter 3.3 Data collection, a Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test and a 5-point Likert scale were adopted. Results from the questionnaire findings could assess whether each figure had a significant difference from the median values. During the analysis, new views from students would be added to ensure the data was evaluated critically.

In this chapter, three research questions will be discussed separately, according to the hypothesis based on research questions. Due to the limitation of length, this chapter will not analyze any of the interview content which is not strictly related to the research aims.

4.1 What are the factors that motivate students to choose an EMI international school?

In this section, four factors that are linked to research question 1 will be analyzed separately. The four factors analyzed include: whether the learning environment has a positive impact on studying due to the small class size and active learning environment, as it allows teachers to spend more time caring for students; whether students intend to improve their English level and other useful skills to prepare for studying abroad; whether the students perceive attending EMI schools helps them attend foreign universities because of the greater number of test opportunities; and whether they perceive studying in an international school gives them an upper class status. These factors, or they can be referred to as benefits, may motivate students to select the EMI international school in Dongguan city.

4.1.1 The learning environment has a positive impact on studying due to the small class size and active learning environment, as it allows teachers to spend more time caring for students.

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|--|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 1) I chose this EMI international school because I thought this EMI international school has a smaller class size to study. (e. g. student / teacher ratio 20:1) | 18.46% | 40.00 % | 36.92% | 3.08% | 1.54% | 3.7 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| 2) I chose this international school because I thought an EMI school would provide me with an active learning environment. (e. g. group work, research, presentations). | 30.77% | 26.15 % | 33.85% | 7.69% | 1.54% | 3.8 |
| 3) I chose this EMI international school because there are many extracurricular activities (e.g. yoga, voluntary work, visit companies). | 24.62% | 36.92 % | 33.84% | 1.54% | 3.08% | 3.8 |
| 4) I chose this EMI international school because I thought teachers could spend more time on caring and cultivating students. | 27.69% | 35.38 % | 32.31% | 3.08% | 1.54% | 3.8 |

Table 4.1.1: Students choose this EMI international school due to the learning environment

(n=65).

To address the above hypothesis, a questionnaire was designed to ask students four questions to respond using a five-point scale: strongly agree=5, agree=4, neutral=3, disagree=2 and strongly disagree=1. The results are in Table 4.1.1:

As shown in Table 1, students chose to study in this EMI international school because of the learning environment. From the median values (i.e. Question 1=3.7; Question 2=3.8; Question 3=3.8; Question 4=3.8), students mostly agreed with these four questions above, illustrating that the majority of participants held the belief that studying in this EMI international school provided them with an active learning environment. This active learning environment included a small class and teachers' concern and cultivation for students.

In addition, the interviewed students agreed that it was the attractive learning environment that affected their choices for studying in this EMI international school. For example, participant B (2018) compared her feeling with domestic schools:

Some of my friends who studied in the domestic schools told me that their teachers only knew how to teach students to high scores and their teachers wouldn't care too much about their daily life. But in the international school, we not only learned English, we also learned how to care for others and more importantly, teachers here care us a lot both in studies and daily life than their domestic school teachers. Maybe it's because we are studying in a small class. (Participant B: July, 2018)

Participant B explained that domestic students felt little cared for by their teachers in their living. This could be because in domestic schools, there are about 60 students in one big classroom and students are taught to adopt an exam-oriented model of learning. Therefore, teachers working in this teaching environment prefer to teach students from text books rather than be concerned about students' daily life. In this case, the small class size and the teachers' care and attention influenced the students' decisions in this EMI international school. Moreover, participant C (2018) stated that teachers taught students in a friendly way so that students could feel teachers' real heart for them:

.....the most impressive and useful experience is the way how teachers taught us during classes. They are more like friends when teaching students and always told us something not only from the textbooks but from society. (Participant C: July, 2018)

Participant C believed the teachers in the EMI school taught in a student friendly manner, and conveyed students with knowledge from materials outside schools. It is possible that teachers who teach small classes have more energy and time to spend with students and in lesson preparation (Pairs, 2003). Therefore, teachers prefer to spend time devoting themselves to cultivating students so that they develop as a whole person rather than merely teach students knowledge from textbooks. This advantage relates to the belief of Xiong and Feng (2018), who claim that studying in EMI school is more conducive to the development of students' whole-person. Referring to the advantages of classroom activities, participant D (2018) found the active learning environment to be an intrinsic motivation to study English:

I love varieties of activities when learning English, it provided me a relax and active learning environment so that I am fond of English so much. (Participant D: July, 2018)

Ellis (2008) claims that intrinsic motivation for second language learning can arouse from stimulation. This suggests that Participant D enjoyed studying English because of the various class activities. Consequently, integrating various activities in lessons when learning English is one of the reasons that can influence students to choose this EMI school.

Thus, the data from combining a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview shows that students were in the opinion that the small class size in this EMI school could enhance teachers' care and cultivation for students in this active learning environment. The extra various class activities can also be considered to be a positive factor that promote students to select this EMI international school.

4.1.2 To improve English level and other useful skills to prepare themselves before studying abroad.

To assess whether students attend this EMI international school to improve their English proficiency and other productive skills to prepare themselves for foreign universities, six questions were created for students to answer.

The results are in Table 4.1.2:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 1) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to improve my English ability. | 41.54% | 36.92 % | 18.46% | 1.538% | 1.538% | 4.2 |
| 2) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my communication skills. | 38.46% | 38.46 % | 20.00% | 3.08% | 0.00% | 4.1 |
| 3) I chose this EMI international school because I want to improve | 40.00% | 36.92 % | 20.00% | 0.00% | 3.08% | 4.1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| my academic writing skill. | | | | | | |
| 4) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my critical thinking skills. | 32.31% | 30.77 % | 33.85% | 3.08% | 0.00% | 3.9 |
| 5) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my organizational skills. | 29.23% | 33.85 % | 36.92% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 3.9 |
| 6) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my research skills. | 33.85% | 23.08 % | 36.92% | 3.08% | 3.08% | 3.8 |

Table 4.1.2: Students aim to improve English level and other useful skills to prepare themselves before studying abroad (n=65).

The median values from the first three questions above (Question 1= 4.2; Question 2=4.1; Question 3=4.1) strongly suggest that most students selected this EMI school in order to improve their English language proficiency, and their communicative and academic writing skills. The last three questions (Question 4= 3.9; Question 5=3.9; Question 6=3.8) imply that the majority of students chose this school hoping to improve their critical thinking, organizational and research skills. However, there were still about one third of students (Question 4=33.85%; Question 5=36.92%; Question 6=36.92%) who were neutral when choosing whether they aimed to improve these three skills. The reasons for these responses could be because this EMI school did not focus on critical thinking, organizational and research skills, or because a number of students were vague on these skills so they preferred to choose a satisfied choice: neutral (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). As I stated in the Literature review, EMI international schools are new in Dongguan city, and as a result, these schools may fail to make explicit the teaching of critical thinking, organizational and research skills for students.

A key concern in a case study is often internal validity (Yin, 2009). The hypothesis 4.1.1 (improving English ability, communicative skills, academic writing skills and other useful foreign university preparation skills) is an interaction from the hypothesis 4.1.2 (a small class to study and gain more care and cultivation from teachers). Results from these two hypotheses illustrate an internal relationship between each other. Evidence can be found in the interview with participant A, who stated that:

In this small class learning environment, I found that I have improved my spoken English because I have many chances to practice speaking English and using English to do my projects or presentation. (Participant A: July, 2018)

The above statement shows that small class size for students in this EMI school is one of the advantages for students, as it gives students more opportunities to practice their spoken English and other skills useful for future university study abroad. Therefore, compared to a class size of 60 students in domestic schools, the small class can be a leading factor that provides students with more chances to improve different skills, so that they prefer to choose this EMI international school.

4.1.3 Perceiving more easily to attend foreign universities due to various tests to take.

To testify whether students consider the extra test taking opportunities in this EMI school would increase their chances of studying overseas, four questions for participants were created addressing this point. The results are in Table 4.1.3:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|
| 1) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to attend a foreign university. | 44.62% | 35.38% | 15.38% | 0.00% | 4.62% | 4.2 |
| 2) I chose this EMI international school because I didn't have a high enough score to attend my chosen local school. | 27.69% | 23.08% | 18.46% | 10.77% | 20.00% | 3.3 |
| 3) I chose this EMI international school because the school can help me to attend foreign universities more easily than studying in a local school. | 27.69% | 32.31% | 29.23% | 7.69% | 3.08% | 3.8 |
| 4) I chose this EMI international school because there are various tests (e.g. ACT, A-levels, SAT) I can choose to take, so that it's easier to study abroad. | 21.54% | 30.77% | 35.38% | 9.23% | 3.08% | 3.6 |

Table 4.1.3: Students regard that more chance to study abroad if study in this EMI school (n=65).

The median value from the first question (Question 1=4.2) means that most of students confirmed that they wanted to attend foreign universities before they chose this school. Answers to questions two and three (Question 2=3.3; Question 3=3.8) seem to reveal that students admitted that they did not attain a sufficiently high score to attend domestic high schools, and therefore believed that this EMI international school could help them apply for foreign universities more easily. This seems to be the reason given for choosing to study in this EMI school. More, evidence of this can be found in the interview. For example, participant B and participant E stated that:

I failed to get enough score to attend the domestic high schools and I also wanted to go abroad to study in universities. (Participant B, July, 2018)

I think it's because of my secondary school scores. I couldn't get enough scores to attend any other domestic schools, so attending international schools is a good choice. (Participant E, July, 2018)

Dearden (2014) claimed that 73% of universities in the world accept the IB diploma. Thus, compared to the Gao Kao (College Entrance Examination) in China, studying in EMI schools, where the IB course is taught, can increase the chances of being offered a place in foreign universities. However, as the present investigated EMI school was established several years ago, most of the students failed to attain a high enough score to attend domestic schools. This which means that a considerably large number of students were poor in English language proficiency, and hence, it this may have affected students' understanding of lectures in classes.

From the fourth question, the median value was 3.6. This implies that most of the students believe that the higher number of test-taking opportunities in this EMI school can increase the chances of studying overseas. Additionally, in the interviews, two students expressed that they did not want to take the Gao Kao so, instead, they chose the EMI school to be able to take different tests to attend universities. For example, participant A and D stated:

I am afraid that I can't apply to a key university in China by taking the college entrance exams. Comparing with high-competitive examination in China, attending to foreign universities which are better (the higher ranking and reputation in the world) than Chinese universities. (Participant A, July, 2018)

I think the most important factor is that I don't want to study in the domestic schools because I don't like the Chinese camming study to take the Gao Kao. (Participant D, July, 2018)

However, 35.38% students chose "neutral" in question 4. This shows that still more than one third of the students did not agree nor disagree that the test taking opportunities in EMI schools would help them enter foreign universities. Perhaps this EMI school did not provide a variety of tests for students to take as it is a new

school. Therefore due to the limitation of teaching quality or investment, this EMI school only provide students with one or two tests to learn. Another reason could be that students were poor in English. As discussed above, most of the students failed to enter the domestic high schools and therefore chose this EMI school. This illustrates that their language proficiency is not at a high level. In this case, even though this EMI school provides different kinds of tests or more opportunities to take the test for students, they still found it difficult to attain a high enough score to attend universities.

In conclusion, students chose this EMI international school because a large number of students wanted to attend foreign universities. In addition, most students did not attain a sufficiently high score to enter domestic high schools, so the only alternative option was to attend EMI international schools. A number of students believed this school could help them gain a place at a university more easily than domestic high schools. However, more than one third of the students did not believe that various tests from EMI school was a factor that motivated them to choose this EMI school. Students' poor language proficiency and the fact that it was a newly established school, meant that this EMI school did not provide various tests for students. Therefore, students did not regard different tests as an attractive reason to choose this school.

4.1.4 Perceiving the EMI international school as an upper status to study.

Students may have chosen this EMI school because of the superior status, regarding the international school as an upper-class place to study. To identify whether this hypothesis is true or not, one question was designed for students to respond. The result is in Table 4.1.4:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
|----------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-----|
| I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to attend an upper-class private school. | 16.92% | 12.31 % | 18.46% | 27.69% | 24.62% | 2.7 |
|---|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-----|

Table 4.1.4: Students consider this EMI school as an upper status (n=65).

The median value (2.7) suggests that the majority of students disagreed that attending this EMI international school represents an upper-class status. Evidence of this can also be found in the interviews with students. Five participants answered that there is no superiority feeling when studying in this EMI international school, and some provided explanations for this view. For example, participant C stated that:

.....there is no superiority feeling than other schools. I don't think here (EMI school) is an upper-class school. Maybe other students think we are super because....and we are taught by foreign teachers and the school rules are not as strict as domestic schools. For example, we could begin our morning class half hour later than theirs and we have many extra activities. (Participant C, July, 2018)

This participant C thought that this EMI school did not represent an upper-class status among schools and she explained that the misunderstanding from other domestic students might come from the EMI school's management, which was not as strict as that of domestic schools. EMI students go to school later and there are more extra activities than in domestic schools. According to Dearden (2014), parents and students in Hong Kong city consider studying in the English teaching school as a way to jump into an upper-class society. On the contrary, as most of the students failed to attain the necessary scores to attend domestic schools (see Table 4.1.3), they have more a feeling of inferiority rather than superiority. Consequently, the assumption that generally these students attend the EMI school to give them a sense of superiority can be considered false.

4.2 What are the disadvantages of studying in an EMI international school?

In this section, the two hypotheses disadvantages (i.e. the high school fees; the lack of suitably qualified teachers and the ineffective management of EMI schools) linked to research question two will be analyzed and discussed separately. These two drawbacks may deter students from choosing this EMI school that I investigating for this study.

4.2.1 The school fee is high.

To identify whether the school tuition is what students would consider before attending this EMI school, one question was designed for participants to respond. This result is in Table 4.2.1:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|
| The school fee was a considered factor when I chose to attend this EMI international school. | 20.00% | 27.69% | 23.08% | 20.00% | 9.23% | 3.3 |

Table 4.2.1: Students consider the high school fee is an advantage (n=65).

The median value (3.3) implies that the majority of students agreed that the school fee would be a factor to consider before choosing this EMI school. As I mentioned in the literature review, students in the EMI school often pay three times the amount than students in private schools. The high school fee could represent one of the key disadvantages of studying in EMI schools. This fact also was reflected in the interview, for example, participant C, D and E stated that the tuition was very high.

Maybe other students think we are superiority because the high school fee..... (Participant C, July, 2018)

For one reason is that we need to pay a lot of money to study in the EMI international school..... (Participant D, July, 2018)

the school fee was so high..... (Participant E, July, 2018)

In this interview, participant C speculated that other students in the domestic high school would regard them to be of a superior status because of the expensive school fee. Even students in Dongguan city paid less than Beijing and Shanghai. The fact that school tuition fees are three times that of private school fees is quite stressful for parents in Dongguan (MacDonald, 2006). To conclude, from the questionnaire and interviews, students expressed that they considered the school fee to be one of the disadvantages of studying in EMI schools, and may therefore deter them from choosing these schools.

4.2.2 Teachers in this EMI school are not qualified enough and the organization of this school is not well-managed.

Since this EMI international school was established about 5 years ago (as there is no statistic available, a quick internet search revealed this school), teachers maybe not be qualified to teach students and the school management maybe not be complete. To assess whether this is true or not, two questions were addressed for students to answer. The results are in Table 4.2.2:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 1) I think the teachers there at my EMI school were qualified to teach EMI courses. | 26.15% | 24.62% | 36.92% | 12.31% | 0.00% | 3.6 |
| 2) I think that EMI school is well-organized and has a high quality of education. | 16.92% | 18.46% | 49.23% | 6.15% | 9.23% | 3.3 |

Table 4.2.2: Students may view teacher were not qualified and the organization was not good in this EMI school (n=65).

As shown in the Table 4.2.2, many students believed that teachers in the EMI school were qualified to teach them and the management was well-organized as the median value is 3.6 and 3.3. However, more than one third of the

students (36.92%) and nearly half of the students (49.23%) did not agree nor disagree with the proposition that teachers were qualified or this EMI school was well-organized. Maybe it was difficult to define whether teachers and the school's management was qualified or not, or maybe when asked to provide an evaluation of their teachers and school, students preferred to choose a neutral response (Zhang, 2017). Nevertheless, the students' opinions expressed in the interviews strengthened the view that students were not satisfied with this EMI schools' teachers or management, for example:

I mean the school management was poor, even some leaders were not familiar with the procedures to apply foreign universities and mislead some students to choose unqualified schools to study. (Participant C, July, 2018)

It seems that the leader in this EMI international school was not familiar with how students should for foreign universities and this may have enhanced students' disappointment for this school. Other participants also stated that:

I suggest that this EMI school should hire some high-quality teachers, especially the foreign teachers. (Participant D, July, 2018)

I suggest that international schools should strengthen the management.....If teachers could not manage students as a self-disciplined group, we can't learn English well in the international schools. (Participant D, July, 2018)

The views of student D and E of this EMI school was that the management was poor and teachers were not strict with students. In this case, students failed to control their time to study alone and did not work hard enough to attain high scores in English or other subjects. As mentioned above (see Table 4.1.3), students with low scores would need more authority from teachers so that they can learn self-discipline. Otherwise, the class would be too noisy for students to study well. As such, poor management and low-scoring students can lead to a vicious circles, even poorer management and lower scoring students. In sum, a number of students thought that the teachers,

especially the foreign teachers, did not teach students well and the management was not understanding and this affected whether they would choose this EMI school.

4.3 Do graduates of EMI schools value their studies and would they recommend EMI schools to others?

In this section, whether students have acquired what they expected after they left this school will be discussed since there are several advantages and disadvantages of studying in this EMI school. To attain a before and after study comparison of students in this EMI school, students were expected to answer 9 questions in order to test what their beliefs were after graduation and then compare them to the former data above. Tables 4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 are compared with former data separately. The results in Table 4.3.1 are from students who had left the EMI school:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|
| 1) I think I have improved my academic writing skill. | 18.46% | 36.92% | 35.38% | 4.62% | 4.62% | 3.6 |
| 2) I think I have improved my communication skills. | 27.69% | 43.08% | 24.62% | 1.54% | 3.08% | 3.9 |
| 3) I think I have improved my critical thinking skill. | 18.46% | 35.38% | 38.46% | 4.62% | 3.08% | 3.6 |
| 4) I think I have improved my organizational skills. | 21.54% | 30.77% | 44.62% | 3.08% | 0.00% | 3.7 |
| 5) I think I have improved my research skills. | 21.54% | 32.31% | 35.39% | 6.15% | 4.62% | 3.6 |
| 6) I feel anxious to communicate with foreign teachers now. | 0.00% | 4.62% | 32.31% | 35.38% | 27.69% | 2.1 |

Table 4.3.1: How students view their EMI school after graduation (n=65).

As the median values (i.e. Questions 1= 3.6; Questions 2= 3.9; Questions 3= 3.6; Questions 4= 3.7; Questions 1= 3.6) show, most students agreed that they have improved their academic writing, communication, critical thinking, organizational and research skills after graduation, which was what they expected before they came into this school (see Table 4.1.2).

Question 6 asked students whether they still felt nervous speaking to foreign teachers. A great number of students expressed that they no longer feel anxious. This statistic suggests that students have improved their communicative skills, as it implies that they are confident talking to foreigners. In her research, Ma (2012) found that students may feel unconfident speaking to foreign teachers due to their poor English level. The figure from question 6 shows that students are confident to express themselves with foreign teachers, suggesting that their English has improved. Evidence could also be found in an interview, for example:

something that impressed me most after my graduation is that I could communicate with foreign teachers every day. In this small class learning environment, I found that I have improved my spoken English because I have many chances to practice speaking English. (Participant A, July, 2018)

In this interview, Participant A attributed the improvement of the communicative skills to the small class. This suggests that the small class size is one of the biggest factors that attracted students to choose this EMI school, as they had more opportunities to communicate with foreign teachers. However, there was still more than one third of students who chose the neutral option when answering question 1, academic writing skill; question 3, critical thinking skill; question 4, organizational skill and question 5, research skill (Question 1=35.38%; Question 3=38.46%; Question 4=44.62%; Question 5=35.39%). In this case, compared to Table 4.1.2, students still preferred to choose the neutral before and after studying this EMI school. It seems that during their studies in this school, they might not have improved these skills or this EMI school did not help a number of students focus on these skills. As I discussed in the literature review, EMI international schools are new in Dongguan city, so these

schools need more time to explore how to teach academic writing and other skills to help students learn more effectively in foreign universities.

Students also expected to attend foreign universities before they came into this EMI international school and

Table 4.3.2 shows whether students achieved their goals. The results are:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 7) I think that EMI international school offered good advice for preparing students to attend a foreign university. | 24.62% | 41.54% | 30.77% | 0.00% | 3.08% | 3.8 |
| 8) That EMI international school successfully helped me to apply for a satisfactory university. | 20.00% | 35.38% | 33.85% | 4.62% | 6.15% | 3.6 |

Table 4.3.2: How students view their EMI school after graduation (n=65).

After graduation, the results of question 7=3.8 and 8=3.6 imply that most students believed that this school offered them useful advice when choosing universities and they were helped by this school to apply for their preferred universities. It seems that a great number of students achieved their aims after they graduated.

Also, in the former Table 4.1.3, question 2 asked students about the necessary scores to attend high schools. The data shows that the majority of students strongly agreed that they did not attain high enough scores to attend domestic schools. After graduation, the Table 4.3.3 was tested whether students could understand EMI courses.

The result is:

| Question | Strongly agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly disagree (1) | Median |
|--|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------|
| 9) I think I could understand most of EMI courses. | 30.77% | 41.54 % | 23.08% | 4.62% | 0.00% | 4.0 |

Table 4.3.3: How students view their EMI school after graduation (n=65).

This statistic, the median value (4.0), suggests that most students strongly supported the view that they could comprehend quite a large number of courses in this EMI international school. Thus, it also suggests that students improved their English proficiency because their scores in the secondary schools were not high before they attended this school. In addition, this figure also proves that students could follow the EMI courses which means that they attained high enough scores to apply for their preferred universities in other countries.

In conclusion, answers from question 1 to 9 indicate that students developed their English ability and are able to master most of the EMI courses. More importantly, students achieved their original goals, which is to attend their chosen universities overseas after they graduated from this EMI international school.

However, even though most students found that attending this EMI school helped them to improve their English level, and that teachers help them to apply for their chosen universities, a large number of students (four in five participants) stated that they thought it was unnecessary to attend an EMI international schools before studying oversea in the interview.

One important reason for this is the high school fee in this EMI international school. For example, participant B stated that:

I think it's not necessary to study in the EMI international school before attending abroad to study in the universities due to high school fee. (Participant B, July, 2018)

Another reason is that the unqualified foreign teaches and school management are regarded as unsatisfactory and this may cause students to feel disappointed in this EMI school. For example:

I suggest that EMI schools should hire more qualified foreign teachers. Because some of them are not good at teaching and they didn't care about our English scores. I think this school should enhance the management and the leaders should be learn more about management systems of international schools to provide students a better learning environment. (Participant C, July, 2018)

According to the qualitative interview, students considered the expensive school fee, the unqualified foreign teachers and the poor management from leaders as serious disadvantages. These disadvantages influenced their recommendations for new students. One recommendation was that it was unnecessary for students to attend EMI schools before attending foreign universities.

To conclude, most of the students valued their studies and agreed that they have improved skills (e.g. academic writing, communication skills) before studying abroad. However, the disadvantages of this EMI school (e.g. expensive school fee and low-qualified management in school) deterred them from recommending this school to other students.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has analyzed the findings to assess my hypothesis of factors that motivated students to choose this EMI international school and of disadvantages of studying in this EMI school. Then the findings of whether students valued their studies and recommended this school to others after they left this school has been evaluated by comparing to former figures. Even though students chose this EMI school because of the small class size which helped them to study better and receive more help from teachers; to improve their English proficiency; and because they were successful in applying for their preferred universities after graduation, quite a large number of students also felt studying in this EMI school would not bring them any considerable benefits or advantages. The reasons were because of the expensive school tuition, the number of unqualified foreign teachers and the poor school management.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, a conclusion for the whole dissertation and recommendations will be presented.

5.1 Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to explore the factors that influence students to choose to study in EMI international schools in Dongguan city as well as the advantages and disadvantages of studying in EMI schools. This study was conducted by using a case study, a mixed-method approach, including a quantitative questionnaire, and qualitative semi-structured interviews to collect data.

Findings reveal that students mainly choose EMI international schools because of their desire to attend foreign universities, to study in a small and active learning environment, and to improve their English language proficiency. Additionally, a number of students did not regard themselves to have a superiority status compared to other high schools because of their low-scores in secondary schools. Even though most of students agreed that EMI schools provided different tests for them to choose, there was still more than one third of students who disagreed that the various tests in EMI schools helped increase the chances of attending foreign universities. The majority of students were not attracted by the critical thinking, organizational and research skills they learnt before and after their graduation from EMI schools. This may be because EMI schools did not focus on teaching these skills. Meanwhile, drawbacks such as high school tuition and poor management in EMI schools have been found to deter students from recommending the school to other students.

The factors that motivate students to select EMI international schools in Dongguan city can be listed as follows:

A small class size and active learning environment, as it allows teachers to spend more time caring for students;

To improve English level and other useful skills to prepare themselves before studying abroad;

Various tests to take.

Disadvantages for studying EMI schools are as follows:

High school tuition

Poor management and inferior teaching quality

5.2 Recommendations

As the results of this study indicate that leaders of the present EMI international school should re-consider the school tuition again, because the high school fee is one of the major factors that influence students to choose to study in EMI schools or not. Furthermore, the principal should employ qualified teachers to teach students to meet parents and students' expectations of the EMI schools, especially considering the high school fees.

As the EMI schools in Dongguan city have only recently been established, students were initially accepted into the schools without high scores from secondary schools. In the future, EMI schools should control students' English level to select students who have the equal ability to attend EMI courses. In addition, EMI schools can train all the teachers who are teaching and will teach in EMI courses every semester to ensure the quality of teachers.

To conclude, a positive EMI educational environment depends on highly qualified teachers, good school-management and the high English ability of students, so that EMI international schools can keep a sustainability in Dongguan city.

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Appendix 1: Student Questionnaire

I: Before attending the international school

1) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to improve my English ability.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

2) I chose an EMI international school because my parents wanted me to attend an upper class private school.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

3) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to attend a foreign university.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

4) I chose this international school because I thought an EMI school would provide me with an active learning environment. (e. g. group work, research, presentations)

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

5) I chose this EMI international school because I want to improve my academic writing skill

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

6) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my critical thinking skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

7) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my communication skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

8) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my organizational skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

9) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my research skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

10) The school fee was a considered factor when I chose to attend this EMI international school.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

11) I chose this EMI international school because there are various tests (e.g. ACT, A-levels, SAT) I can choose to take.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

12) I chose this EMI international school because there are many extracurricular activities (e.g. yoga, voluntary work, visit companies).

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

13) I chose this EMI international school because the school can help me to attend foreign universities more easily than studying in a local school.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

14) I chose this EMI international school because I didn't have a high enough score to attend my chosen local school.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

15) I chose this EMI international school because I thought this EMI international school has a smaller class size to study. (e. g. student/teacher ratio 20:1)

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

16) I chose this EMI international school because I thought the small size class teachers could spend more time to care and cultivate students.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

17) Other reasons that I chose this EMI international school: Please use the space below to list.

II: After leaving the international school

18) I think I have improved my academic writing skill.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

19) I think I have improved my critical thinking skill

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

20) I think I have improved my communication skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

21) I think I have improved my organizational skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

22) I think I have improved my research skills

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

23) I think the teachers there at my EMI school were qualified to teach EMI courses

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

24) I think that EMI school is well-organized and has a high quality of education.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

25) I feel anxious to communicate with foreign teachers now.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

26) I think that EMI international school offered good advice for preparing students to attend a foreign university

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

27) That EMI international school successfully helped me to apply for a satisfactory university.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

28) I think I could understand most of EMI courses.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

29) I think the international school would be better if it could: please use the space below to suggest recommendation how the school could improve.

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview for students:

Dear participant, this is a narrative interview on the topic. You have read and understood the consent form and voluntarily to participate in this study. Please note that the interview will be recorded and all your information are confidential.

Do you have any questions before the interview?

Do I have your consent to start the interview?

Do you prefer to do the interview in Chinese or English?

Semi-structured interview questions

1, What impressed you most after you studied this EMI international courses? Or you can say what are the most useful aspects do you think you have learned in this EMI international school?

2. what was the most important factor that motivated you when you chose this EMI international school?
3. why do you study the EMI international school, is there any other reason?
4. Do you think attending EMI international schools could give you a superiority feeling than domestic schools? If yes, where is this feeling coming from?
5. The fifth question is that do you think it's worth to attend this EMI international school before studying oversea? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
6. After graduation, what aspects do you think this EMI international school can improve in the future? Do you have any suggestions?

Conclusion:

Concluding statement to again clarify the purpose of the investigation and to reaffirm students' right to withdraw and their guarantee of confidentiality.

Ask if the student has any questions regarding the interview or investigation.

Thank the student for their participation and time.

Appendix 3: Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 with participant A

Date: 13th, July, 2018. **Time:** 07: 10

Interviewer: The topic of my research is to investigate what factors motivate students to choose EMI international schools. It's my master's dissertation. I am glad that you have read and understood the consent form and voluntarily to participate in this study. Please note that this interview will be recorded and all your information are confidential. I wouldn't talk to anyone else about this interview and you are anonymous in my research. In addition, what you said will be protected by my password computer and if you feel any uncomfortable, you could stop the interview at any time. Are you ready and happy to do the interview?

Participant A: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions about the interview?

Participant A: No. Let's begin.

Interviewer: Ok. Now the first question is, what impressed you most after you studied this EMI international courses? Or you can say what are the most useful aspects do you think you have learned in this EMI international school?

Participant A: Well, I think, erm.... something that impressed me most after my graduation is that I could communicate with foreign teachers every day. In this small class learning environment, I found that I have improved my spoken English because I have many chances to practice speaking English and using English to do my projects or presentation.

Interviewer: Thank you. The next question is what was the most important factor that motivated you when you chose this EMI international school?

Participant A: I think I really wanted to go abroad for further study in universities. I imagine that if I could study overseas, I could learn other countries' culture, enjoy their food, music, and meet a lot of foreign friends there. Then I think going abroad to study is my major motivation.

Interviewer: Thanks, the third question is why do you study the EMI international school, is there any other reason?

Participant A: I think I don't want to study the course of domestic schools. They (domestic schools) have a lot of homework, I think it's so stressful. I am afraid that I can't apply to a key university in China by taking the college entrance exams. Comparing with high competitive examination in China, attending to foreign universities which are better (the higher ranking and reputation in the world) than Chinese universities.

Interviewer: Thank you. The fourth question is that do you think attending EMI international schools could give you a superiority feeling than domestic schools? If yes, where is this feeling coming from?

Participant A: No, I don't think so. Absolutely not. Maybe some other students from domestic schools would think we are superior than them because we can have more activities and free time than them. Besides, we could go abroad for further study, but I never think that it is a superiority.

Interviewer: The fifth question is that do you think it's worth to attend this EMI international school before studying oversea? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Participant A: I think it's really worthwhile to attend the international schools before going abroad. Because we can learn how to adapt ourselves in foreign countries and learn the cultures there. Especially I can learn how to write academic writing, it's very important in foreign universities. And I think I also learn how to organize my study time and I find that I am more self-regulated in study than my classmates who have not attended international schools. More importantly is that I could speak English well and I am willing to answer the foreign teachers' questions in the class. If I haven't attended the international school I think I can't be familiar with the foreign courses so quickly.

Interviewer: After graduation, what aspects do you think this EMI international school can improve in the future? Do you have any suggestions?

Participant A: I suggest that teachers should encourage students to take more extra-activities in EMI international schools. Because I found that many students are unwilling to take all kinds of activities and most of them prefer to learn the book material rather than learn interesting activities which I think these activities could enhance our abilities, such as communicative and organizational skills.

Additionally, I think all the subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, history, physics, PE class.

Because if we could learn every class in English, we could improve our English quicker than before.

When I come to foreign university, I find that many subjects that are in English, I can't understand most of these courses. If I can learn the basic course in English in the international schools, when I go abroad, I could be accustomed to these courses in English quickly.

Interviewer: Ok, that is all of my questions and do you have any other questions for me or for this interview?

Participant A: No.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interview 2 with participant B

Date: 13th, July, 2018. **Time:** 07: 38

Interviewer: The topic of my research is to investigate what factors motivate students to choose EMI international schools. It's my master's dissertation. I am glad that you have read and understood the consent form and voluntarily to participate in this study. Please note that this interview will be recorded and all your information are confidential. I wouldn't talk to anyone else about this interview and you are anonymous in my research. In addition, what you said will be protected by my password computer and if you feel any uncomfortable, you could stop the interview at any time. Are you ready and happy to do the interview?

Participant B: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions about the interview?

Participant B: No.

Interviewer: Ok. Now the first question is, what impressed you most after you studied this EMI international courses? Or you can say what are the most useful aspects do you think you have learned in this EMI international school?

Participant B: Well, the thing that impressed me most was the friendship with my classmates. I think I have learned how to make new friends with others and care with each other. The most useful thing was not English, but it was the feeling that I learned to think about others, not to be so selfish. Because some of my friends who were studied in the domestic schools told me that their teachers only knew how to teach students to high scores and their teachers wouldn't care too much about their daily life. But in the international school, we not only learned English, we also learned how to care for others and more importantly, teachers here care us a lot in studies and daily life than teachers in domestic schools. Maybe it's because we are studying in a small class.

Interviewer: Thank you. The next question is what was the most important factor that motivated you when you chose this EMI international school?

Participant B: I think most important factor that affected my choice was my secondary score. I failed to get enough score to attend the domestic high schools and I also wanted to go abroad to study in universities, so my parents persuaded me to attend this EMI international school. I didn't have many other thoughts, I just listened to my parents' words. But I didn't regret it.

Interviewer: Thanks, the third question is why do you study the EMI international school, is there any other reason?

Participant B: I forget why I chose this EMI school, maybe just because I didn't get high score to attend domestic schools and my parents wanted me to attend this schools, so I came here to learn.

Interviewer: Thank you. The fourth question is that do you think attending EMI international schools could give you a superiority feeling than domestic schools? If yes, where is this feeling coming from?

Participant B: Well, I never thought it was a superiority feeling than any other schools. I don't think study in the EMI international school is a kind of high-ranking status in the society.

Interviewer: The fifth question is that do you think it's worth to attend this EMI international school before studying oversea? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Participant B: I think it's not necessary to study in the EMI international school before attending abroad to study in the universities due to high school fee. Because I think everyone can survive in other countries and many countries have a lot of Chinese students and classmates. In this case, we Chinese students could help each other and we can learn quickly. Even though there is some cultural difference, but if we study in other countries, we could learn very fast surrounding by different countries and besides, the school fee is very high.

Interviewer: After graduation, what aspects do you think this EMI international school can improve in the future? Do you have any suggestions?

Participant B: I suggest that the EMI school should model after the foreign school style to be look like the foreign high school. For example, the school could provide students with activities which are similar to foreign countries' cultural festival.

Interviewer: Ok, that is all of my questions and do you have any other questions for me or for this interview?

Participant B: No.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interview 3 with participant C

Date: 13th, July, 2018. **Time:** 06: 18

Interviewer: The topic of my research is to investigate what factors motivate students to choose EMI international schools. It's my master's dissertation. I am glad that you have read and understood the consent form and voluntarily to participate in this study. Please note that this interview will be recorded and all your information are confidential. I wouldn't talk to anyone else about this interview and you are anonymous in my research. In addition, what you said will be protected by my password computer and if you feel any uncomfortable, you could stop the interview at any time. Are you ready and happy to do the interview?

Participant C: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you for you participance. Do you have any questions about the interview?

Participant C: No.

Interviewer: Ok. Now the first question is, what impressed you most after you studied this EMI international courses? Or you can say what are the most useful aspects do you think you have learned in this EMI international school?

Participant C: Well, the most impressive and useful experience is the way how teachers taught us during classes. They are more like friends when teaching students and always told us something not only from the textbooks but from society.

Interviewer: Thank you. The next question is what was the most important factor that motivated you when you chose this EMI international school?

Participant C: Actually, I didn't have any other choice at that time because I couldn't get higher marks to choose any domestic high schools. And my mom also persuaded me to study abroad.

Interviewer: Thanks, the third question is why do you study the EMI international school, is there any other reason?

Participant C: My sister was studying in America when I made the decision to get into international school. And I found she changed a lot after she studied in America. She understands a wide range of knowledge that I had never heard, and she is more independent than before. Then I think studying in other countries could change someone's mind, experience and their beliefs. I want to learn more in foreign countries.

Interviewer: Thank you. The fourth question is that do you think attending EMI international schools could give you a superiority feeling than domestic schools? If yes, where is this feeling coming from?

Participant C: Well, there is no superiority feeling than other schools. I don't think here (EMI school) is an upper-class school. Maybe other students think we are superiority because the high school fee and we are taught by foreign teachers and the school rules are not as strict as domestic schools. For example, we could begin our morning class half later than theirs and we have many extra activities.

Interviewer: The fifth question is that do you think it's worth to attend this EMI international school before studying oversea? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Participant C: I think it's not necessary to study in the EMI schools before universities. Because I think that when I go abroad to study, I don't see any big difference between me and my classmates who haven't studied in the EMI international schools. It's because when we are studying in the universities, English is very important. My friends' English is better than me even though they studied in the domestic high schools. As such, no matter where you study, your English could be your most vital factor that influence your study in the universities. But there are also advantages studying in the EMI schools. For example, I could learn some foreign culture before I came to Australia and improve my oral English. The disadvantages are I found that I didn't learn well in mathematics, physics and chemistry in that EMI school because that school haven't required us a high score to before our graduation. I mean the school management was poor, even some leaders were not familiar with the procedures to apply foreign universities and mislead some students to choose the wrong schools. Moreover, they didn't value other subjects so much and we just study English every day I felt.

Interviewer: After graduation, what aspects do you think this EMI international school can improve in the future? Do you have any suggestions?

Participant C: I suggest that EMI schools should hire more qualified foreign teachers. Because some of them are not good at teaching and they didn't care about our English scores. I think this school should enhance the management and the leaders should be learn more about management systems of international schools to provide students a better learning environment.

Interviewer: Ok, that is all of my questions and do you have any other questions for me or for this interview?

Participant C: No.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interview 4 with participant D

Date: 13th, July, 2018. **Time:** 06: 53

Interviewer: The topic of my research is to investigate what factors motivate students to choose EMI international schools. It's my master's dissertation. I am glad that you have read and understood the consent form and voluntarily to participate in this study. Please note that this interview will be recorded and all your information are confidential. I wouldn't talk to anyone else about this interview and you are anonymous in my research. In addition, what you said will be protected by my password computer and if you feel any uncomfortable, you could stop the interview at any time. Are you ready and happy to do the interview?

Participant D: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions about the interview?

Participant D: No.

Interviewer: Ok. Now the first question is, what impressed you most after you studied this EMI international courses? Or you can say what are the most useful aspects do you think you have learned in this EMI international school?

Participant D: Well, I just think it's very interesting in studying in EMI international schools. I can learn foreign culture and prepare my spoken English in the small class with no more than 20 students before I go abroad.

Interviewer: Thank you. The next question is what was the most important factor that motivated you when you chose this EMI international school?

Participant D: I think the most important factor is that I don't want to study in the domestic schools because I don't like the Chinese cramming study to take the Gao Kao. I love varieties of activities when learning English, it provided me a relax and active learning environment so that I found I like English so much. Besides, I'd want to go to America to study in the future.

Interviewer: Thanks, the third question is why do you study the EMI international school, is there any other reason?

Participant D: I just want to go to America to study my university courses.

Interviewer: Thank you. The fourth question is that do you think attending EMI international schools could give you a superiority feeling than domestic schools? If yes, where is this feeling coming from?

Participant D: Well, I never think it is any superior feeling when studying in EMI schools. Maybe it's just more fun than studying in domestic schools. Because there a lot of activities in the international schools.

Interviewer: The fifth question is that do you think it's worth to attend this EMI international school before studying oversea? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Participant D: I think it's not worth to go to the EMI schools before going abroad. For one reason is that we need to pay a lot of money to study in the EMI international school, for another reason is that if we really want to practice English, we could go outside to learn speaking English and it's much cheaper than studying in the international schools. But the advantages are we could meet many friends who have the same goals, go to study in America and we could have a firm friendship during the high school years.

Interviewer: After graduation, what aspects do you think this EMI international school can improve in the future? Do you have any suggestions?

Participant D: I suggest that this EMI school should hire some high-quality teachers, especially the foreign teachers. And I suggest that all the subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology should be taught in English rather than Chinese. Because when I study in America now, I found I have difficulty to listen these subjects which I never learn them in English before.

Interviewer: Ok, that is all of my questions and do you have any other questions for me or for this interview?

Participant D: No.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interview 5 with participant E

Date: 13th, July, 2018. Time: 08: 12

Interviewer: The topic of my research is to investigate what factors motivate students to choose EMI international schools. It's my master's dissertation. I am glad that you have read and understood the consent form and voluntarily to participate in this study. Please note that this interview will be recorded and all your information are confidential. I wouldn't talk to anyone else about this interview and you are anonymous in my research. In addition, what you said will be protected by my password computer and if you feel any uncomfortable, you could stop the interview at any time. Are you ready and happy to do the interview?

Participant E: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions about the interview?

Participant E: No.

Interviewer: Ok. Now the first question is, what impressed you most after you studied this EMI international courses? Or you can say what are the most useful aspects do you think you have learned in this EMI international school?

Participant E: I regard that studying in an international school could improve our academic English which is useful for my university courses. And I found that the learning environment is similar to foreign schools.

Interviewer: Thank you. The next question is what was the most important factor that motivated you when you chose this EMI international school?

Participant E: I think it's because of my secondary school scores. I couldn't get enough scores to attend any other domestic schools, so attending international schools is a good choice. Besides, my

parents wanted me to go abroad for further study and studying in the EMI school could help me attend foreign universities more easily.

Interviewer: Thanks, the third question is why do you study the EMI international school, is there any other reason?

Participant E: I think studying in the EMI international school could learn spoken English, which will improve my communicative language.

Interviewer: Thank you. The fourth question is that do you think attending EMI international schools could give you a superiority feeling than domestic schools? If yes, where is this feeling coming from?

Participant E: Well, I don't think so. I think it's no difference

Interviewer: The fifth question is that do you think it's worth to attend this EMI international school before studying oversea? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Participant E: I think it's no need to attend international schools before go abroad. Because the school fee was so high and if we really want to improve our English to take IELTS or TOEFL, we could go to the English training centers. The management in the international school is not as strict as domestic schools, so we always fail to control ourselves, then we could not focus on our study.

Interviewer: After graduation, what aspects do you think this EMI international school can improve in the future? Do you have any suggestions?

Participant E: I suggest that international schools should strengthen the management, because most of us are from the rich family, so many students didn't have a benign study habit and very naughty, such as controlling themselves to study alone and reviewing what they learned in classes. If teachers

could not manage students as a self-disciplined group, we can't learn English well in the international schools.

Interviewer: Ok, that is all of my questions and do you have any other questions for me or for this interview?

Participant E: No.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Appendix 4: Original questionnaire data

| Questions: Before attending this EMI international school | Number | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|---|--------|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| 1) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to improve my English ability. | 65 | 41.54% | 36.92% | 18.46% | 1.538% | 1.538% | 100% |
| 2) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to attend an upper class private school. | 65 | 16.92% | 12.31% | 18.46% | 27.69% | 24.62% | 100% |
| 3) I chose this EMI international school because I wanted to attend a foreign university. | 65 | 44.62% | 35.38% | 15.38% | 0.00% | 4.62% | 100% |
| 4) I chose this international school because I thought an EMI school would provide me with an active learning environment. (e. g. group work, research, presentations). | 65 | 30.77% | 26.15% | 33.85% | 7.69% | 1.54% | 100% |
| 5) I chose this EMI international school because I want to improve my academic writing skill. | 65 | 40.00% | 36.92% | 20.00% | 0.00% | 3.08% | 100% |
| 6) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my critical thinking skills. | 65 | 32.31% | 30.77% | 33.85% | 3.08% | 0.00% | 100% |
| 7) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my communication skills. | 65 | 38.46% | 38.46% | 20.00% | 3.08% | 0.00% | 100% |
| 8) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my organizational skills. | 65 | 29.23% | 33.85% | 36.92% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 100% |
| 9) I chose this EMI international school because I believe it will allow me to improve my research skills. | 65 | 33.85% | 23.08% | 36.92% | 3.08% | 3.08% | 100% |
| Question | Number | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
| 10) The school fee was a considered factor when I chose to attend this EMI international school. | 65 | 20.00% | 27.69% | 23.08% | 20.00% | 9.23% | 100% |
| 11) I chose this EMI international school because there are various tests (e.g. ACT, A-levels, SAT) I can choose to take, so that it's | 65 | 21.54% | 30.77% | 35.38% | 9.23% | 3.08% | 100% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| easier to study abroad. | | | | | | | |
| 12) I chose this EMI international school because there are many extracurricular activities (e.g. yoga, voluntary work, visit companies). | 65 | 24.62% | 36.92% | 33.84% | 1.54% | 3.08% | 100% |
| 13) I chose this EMI international school because the school can help me to attend foreign universities more easily than studying in a local school. | 65 | 27.69% | 32.31% | 29.23% | 7.69% | 3.08% | 100% |
| 14) I chose this EMI international school because I didn't have a high enough score to attend my chosen local school. | 65 | 27.69% | 23.08% | 18.46% | 10.77% | 20.00% | 100% |
| 15) I chose this EMI international school because I thought this EMI international school has a smaller class size to study. (e. g. student/teacher ratio 20:1) | 65 | 18.46% | 40.00% | 36.92% | 3.08% | 1.54% | 100% |
| 16) I chose this EMI international school because I thought teachers could spend more time to care and cultivate students. | 65 | 27.69% | 35.38% | 32.31% | 3.08% | 1.54% | 100% |
| 17) Other reasons that I chose this EMI international school: Please use the space below to list: | 1, It has more freedom than domestic schools; 2, I don't like domestic education; | | | | | | |
| Questions: After leaving that EMI international school | Number | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
| 18) I think I have improved my academic writing skill. | 65 | 18.46% | 36.92% | 35.38% | 4.62% | 4.62% | 100% |
| 19) I think I have improved my critical thinking skill. | 65 | 18.46% | 35.38% | 38.46% | 4.62% | 3.08% | 100% |
| 20) I think I have improved my communication skills. | 65 | 27.69% | 43.08% | 24.62% | 1.54% | 3.08% | 100% |
| 21) I think I have improved my organizational skills. | 65 | 21.54% | 30.77% | 44.62% | 3.08% | 0.00% | 100% |
| 22) I think I have improved my research skills. | 65 | 21.54% | 35.39% | 32.31% | 6.15% | 4.62% | 100% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| 23) I think the teachers there at my EMI school were qualified to teach EMI courses. | 65 | 26.15% | 24.62% | 36.92% | 12.31% | 0.00% | 100% |
| 24) I think that EMI school is well-organized and has a high quality of education. | 65 | 16.92% | 18.46% | 49.23% | 6.15% | 9.23% | 100% |
| 25) I feel anxious to communicate with foreign teachers now. | 65 | 0.00% | 4.62% | 35.38% | 32.31% | 27.69% | 100% |
| 26) I think that EMI international school offered good advice for preparing students to attend a foreign university. | 65 | 24.62% | 41.54% | 30.77% | 0.00% | 3.08% | 100% |
| 27) That EMI international school successfully helped me to apply for a satisfactory university. | 65 | 20.00% | 35.38% | 33.85% | 4.62% | 6.15% | 100% |
| 28) I think I could understand most of EMI courses. | 65 | 30.77% | 41.54% | 23.08% | 4.62% | 0.00% | 100% |
| 29) I think the international school would be better if it could: please use the space below to suggest recommendation how the school could improve: | 1. School should be stricter with student; 2. School should teach every subject in English. | | | | | | |

