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School Choice: The case of Sri Lankan International Schools

by

Virandi Wettewa

A Thesis Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education and Social Work
University of Sydney
January 2015
Author’s Declaration

This is to certify that:

I. This thesis comprises only of my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy in Education Degree
II. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used
III. This thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree
IV. No part of this work has been used for the award of another degree
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Acknowledgments

*Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.*

-Henry Ford

This thesis would not have been possible if not for the guidance and help I received from a number of wonderful individuals I met along the way. From the very first instance that I emailed Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall, inquiring if he is interested in supervising my thesis, his support has been unparalleled. Your encouragement, dedication, wisdom and kindness helped me to grow intellectually. Nigel, it has indeed been my pleasure working with you. I take this moment to not only thank you for your academic guidance but for your moral support. It’s not often that you come across a supervisor who shares the same love for cricket as yourself!

To my auxiliary supervisor, Associate Professor Tim Allender, I owe you much gratitude for the time and effort you spent in getting my thesis proposal through whilst Nigel was away and the constant constructive feedback you provided that helped develop my arguments. Thank you for reading my numerous drafts!

Thank you Dr. Rachel Wilson for setting the stage for the initial phase of this PhD through your DARP course. Thank You Dr. Arathi Sriprakash for your support at both the academic and professional front. To Alex McCormick, I want to pay special thanks for encouraging me and providing the opportunity to pursue my passion for teaching. Thank you for being my tutor, colleague and friend.

Next, I wish to thank the participants of this research who shared their time and stories with me. I thank them for being honest, welcoming me to their schools and displaying true Sri Lankan hospitality. To the board of directors, staff, pupils and parents of the four international schools, your valuable input is the core of this research. Likewise, to the Secretary to the Ministry of Education, your views represent that of the state and I am grateful for the time and sincerity you devoted to my research. I am unable to mention names due to the anonymity guarantee but to each and every one of you: Thank You!

Many thanks to Dr. S.B. Ekanayake for the robust discussions and insightful comments on Sri Lankan education. I am also grateful to Mrs. Devika Rajaratne for her efficient and timely aid in transcribing the interviews. To Patricia, muchas gracias for being my PhD buddy; discussing research regardless of time and space! All my friends in Sydney deserve a special mention. If not for your friendship, love and support, I would not have been able to build a home away from home for the last four years. You know who you are!

Last but certainly not least, I am most grateful to my parents and brother. Your love, generosity and support no matter what means the world to me. And kuku, you manage to bring a smile to my face with your ‘kwak kothok’ in the darkest of hours. Without you three, this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you for being my strength!!
Dedication

To Apuchchi and Ammi, I thank you both for your unconditional love.
Abstract

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural state comprising of four major ethnic groups speaking three languages. The ‘Swabasha’ policy requires all students to be educated in their mother tongue perpetuating ethnic segregation along linguistic divides. State owned, semi-governmental and private schools follow the National Curriculum under the Ministry for Education. In 1961, Sri Lanka banned the establishment of any new private schools in the country. Private schools as well as English medium education started by Christian missionaries during British rule were seen to evoke colonial pro-elitist sentiments and symbolize a driving force for social stratification. Since then, there has been a profusion of institutions claiming to be ‘International Schools’. These schools exist within a loophole in the legal framework, established under the ‘Company’s Act’ and welcome students from all linguistic backgrounds to study in the English medium. However, by imposing high fees, these schools accentuate class-based discrimination.

Since the majority of students attending these international schools are locals, this study looks at the government concerns as well as the various stakeholder consternations via a mixed method study conducted in four contrasting case studies. It was found that opting for an international education was a privileged option open to a minority of Sri Lankans, which ascertained their competitiveness in a global society. However, although English proficiency and foreign credentials allow for a competitive edge in neo-liberal times, grounding oneself in the local culture was of paramount importance. These international schools were giving rise to a generation of Sri Lankans that had more in common with those from the countries where their pedagogical system originated rather than their local counterparts from their immediate vicinity. International schools hence need to incorporate both the local and the global if they are to truly achieve the internationalism that they take pride in.
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**Glossary of Terms**

BURGHERS – a Eurasian ethnic group in Sri Lanka descending from European colonists.

GCE A’LEVELS – General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels, is a school leaving qualification offered to students completing secondary education.

GCE O’LEVELS - General Certificate of Education Ordinary Levels, is a subject-based qualification offered in Years 10 and 11 prior to the Advanced Levels.

GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education

IB – International Baccalaureate

IGCSE – International General Certificate of Secondary Education

LKR – Sri Lankan Rupee

LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elaam

SINHALESE/SINHALA – refers to both the majority ethnic group of Sri Lanka as well as the language spoken predominantly by the Sinhalese Ethnic group

TAMIL – refers to both the largest minority ethnic group of Sri Lanka as well as the language spoken predominantly by the Tamil population

USD – United States Dollar
Chapter One: Introduction

Research Title

School Choice: The Case of Sri Lankan International Schools.

Research Summary

This research furnishes an in-depth insight into factors driving international school choice and the concerns of parents, students, teachers and administrators with regard to international school education in four distinct Sri Lankan International Schools. It investigates the parental priorities when selecting a school, inter-generational variations as students discuss their expectations from receiving an international education, administrative concerns when setting up international educational institutions and stakeholder sentiments towards international education within a traditional Sri Lankan setting. By selecting four contrasting international schools as case studies from the capital Colombo, the second largest city of Kandy and two other peripheral towns in the island, this research provides an overall picture of international school education in Sri Lanka.

The data collection was conducted in six phases. Phase one involved sending out an email to all registered international schools in the island requesting their permission for further study in January 2013. Stage One also involved requesting permission from the Ministry of Education to obtain secondary data and an interview with the Minister of Education. Next, four contrasting international schools were selected as case studies from those schools that agreed to be further investigated. Administrators as well as the Minister of Education were then interviewed in phase three during the months of March- August 2013 and necessary primary and secondary data collected. Phases five and six then comprised of carrying out quantitative and qualitative surveys, interviews and focus groups of students, parents and teachers respectively. This was done primarily from March – July 2013 while some interviews extended until December 2013. This mixed-methods research was then analysed using descriptive statistics where the data collected was initially described and summarised before grounded theory as well as content analysis was used in order to present findings and conclusions. The
analysis and write up stage spanned a little over one and a half years from July 2013 to January 2015.

Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the context of the study, briefly addresses its significance, the research questions and provides the theoretical framework that shapes this thesis. The theoretical section, in particular, looks at school choice, Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital and globalization theories. Chapter 2 then attempts to define international schools by delving into prior research conducted elsewhere on international schools and literature related to the study in order to lay a foundation for the context through which the research questions are examined. Next, Chapter 3 consists of a more detailed account of the historical legacies that have shaped contemporary education in Sri Lanka. This chapter explores the impact of post-colonial emotionalism in shaping present day education in Sri Lanka, particularly with regard to private and English education.

Next, the design and methodology of this study are outlined in Chapter 4. The chapter provides a rationale for the use of a mixed method research design and expands on the analytical approach of this research. Moreover, the methodology chapter discusses the possible pitfalls of this mixed methods approach and outlines the strategies that were used to ensure the reliability and validity of this work. Chapter 5 then provides a detailed account of the four case study schools, outlining their backgrounds and the nature of the research conducted at each school in order to set the stage for presenting the results and analysis.

Chapter 6 contains the findings from the survey, interviews and focus groups. The responses from the surveys are presented using descriptive statistics while the qualitative results are organized into three broad sections that answer the three primary research questions of this thesis. Hence, this chapter is divided into the following three sections:
1. Why opt for an international education?
2. The socio-cultural impacts of receiving an international school education.
3. Government concerns with regard to Sri Lankan international schools.

These three broad sections are subdivided into several smaller significant sections, each explored independently, and interwoven with supporting quotes from the in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 7, presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the concepts presented in Chapters 2 and 3, and considers additional literature suggested by the findings of the research. Observations and conclusions are drawn, the implications of the findings explored, and directions for future research suggested.

Context of the Study

School Choice

School choice is often limited to mere commodification of education (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1996; L. Bulman & Jenkins, 1988; Robenstine, 2001). In a market driven system, schools strive to gain as many fee-paying customers as possible while parents try to find the best value for money system of education. This choice however is restricted according to a person’s class, socio-cultural and economic status (P. F. Kelly, 2002). For example, different ethnic and religious groups might opt to send their children to schools that represent similar ideologies while school fees may restrict the entry of some groups to certain schools. As Levine-Rasky (2007) observes, school choice is also constricted along lines of power where the empowered emerge victorious from the best schools.

International schools are one such privileged system that caters for a minority that can afford the high school fees. The definition of what comprises an international school is highly debatable. One key feature that MacDonald (2006) establishes is that International Schools are multi-billion dollar industries with a 'double bottom line' of education and business. However, there are multifaceted ideologies when it
comes to the topic of international school choice. The state, parents, teachers, students as well as international school administrators view their role of international schools in different lights. While certain international school stakeholders view international schools as paving the way forward for a more pluralistic society, other see a global education as an impediment to tradition and a detriment to local culture.

**Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural island state comprising of four major ethnic groups (Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers) belonging to four major religious groups (Buddhists, Hindus, Followers of Islam and Christianity) and speaking three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English). The ‘Swabasha’ policy requires all students to be educated in their mother tongue perpetuating ethnic segregation along linguistic divides. Sri Lankan schools are further categorized by whether they belong to the State (government schools), are semi-governmental (previously private) or private. Both state and semi-state schools endorse free education while the private schools usually extract a sum much less than the ‘International Schools’ of the island charge. Yet a key feature of all these schools is that they follow the National Curriculum of Sri Lankan Ordinary and Advanced Levels that allows them entry to the national universities. Furthermore, the majority of state, semi-state and private Sri Lankan schools are single-sex institutions.

The first International School in Sri Lanka was established in 1957 as a non-profit organisation under Sri Lankan law. The Overseas School Colombo, then named ‘The Colombo School for Overseas Children’ had founders from diplomatic missions (British High Commission, Burmese High Commission and Dutch Embassy) and the business community (OSC, 2012). In 1961, the government of Ceylon banned the establishment of any new private schools in the country. However since then, there has been a profusion of institutions in Sri Lanka that claim to be ‘International Schools’. International Schools do not fall under the Ministry of Education but exist within a loophole in the legal framework, established under the ‘Company’s Act’. A few distinguished international schools mainly located within two major cities stand out (ISC, 2011). As Macdonald (2007)
notes, the definition of an International School is highly complex, varying from those that teach a specific curriculum or in a certain language to ones that simply ‘dare to be different’. Lately, hundreds of international schools have emerged in Sri Lanka with the International Schools Research Centre (ISC, 2011) recognizing 39 international schools in Sri Lanka while Aturupane (2009) anticipates the number to be close to 200. The student population of these schools vary from several thousand to less than a hundred in some cases.

One of the functions of these international schools is to downplay ethnic differences by welcoming students from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. However, by imposing very high school fees, these schools accentuate class-based discrimination. Class, in this instance, can be purchased if one possesses enough money (Jayawardena, 2000). Thus international schools cut across the traditional schooling system by producing socially constructed knowledge of what it means to possess social status, possess global knowledge in English and what it means to be part of co-educational institutions. For this research, hence, International Schools are defined as co-educational, fee-levying institutions that offer foreign curriculums in the English language.

A key problem for those that graduate from high school with international qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate or London Advanced Levels is that they are denied entry into the state universities. To enter Sri Lankan universities, students from Sri Lankan International Schools, hence have to sit for the Sri Lankan Advanced Levels privately and obtain very high scores as competition for university entry is highly competitive. Alternatively, they have the option of attending the limited number of private tertiary colleges and institutions. Private universities are also non-existent in Sri Lanka with attempts to establish new private universities being met with violent protests by socialist political groups. Most students however opt to go abroad for their studies. A growing concern in Sri Lanka has been the non-return of these intellectuals that has been a contributing factor to ‘brain drain’ in the island (Nisansala, 2010).
Purpose of the Study

By filling the gap about research on international school education in Sri Lanka, this study examines the multifaceted ideologies that exist on international school education in Sri Lanka. The study looks at the ramifications that this distinct form of education has for the state as well as the parents, students, teachers and administrators of these schools.

Hence, these are the primary research goals of this study:

1. To find out why parents choose to send their children to International Schools and what the perceived benefits and drawbacks of this system of education are.

2. To comprehend the viewpoints of the students who attend international schools in Sri Lanka in terms of why they have chosen this particular path of education and how receiving an international education impacts their future.

3. To better understand the state’s role concerning international schools. To investigate how the state mediates the growth of International Schools or what the key concerns of the government are in regard to Sri Lankan International Schools.

4. To understand the kind of imagined communities that the teachers and international school administrators envision for their students and to find out what knowledge is being privileged by each level of stakeholders within this industry.

The following diagram outlines the various stakeholder strategies that the research explores. Firstly, an analysis of the historical legacies since colonial rule in shaping contemporary education is explored. Next, the perspectives of various stakeholders
within the Sri Lankan international school industry are taken into consideration. This involves parents, teachers, students, international school administrators and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education. Here, the diagram indicates some of the questions that the researcher will explore throughout the thesis in order to answer the research questions.
**FIGURE 1: STAKEHOLDER STRATEGIES THAT THE RESEARCH EXPLORES**

- **HISTORICAL LEGACIES SHAPING EDUCATION**
  - Colonial Period
    - Independence 1948
    - Sinhala Only Act 1956
    - Open Economy of 1977
    - Presidential Task Force on Education in 1997
    - Mahinda Chinthana 2006

- **GOVERNMENT/MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**
  - What are the key concerns?
  - What is their stance on International schools?
  - What values do they see being promoted?
  - View on English medium of instruction?
  - What support is given to these schools?
  - Any Restrictions? Why?

- **ADMIN OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**
  - What is the process of setting up an international school?
  - What support is received from the state?
  - What affiliations with local education/governing bodies do they have?
  - How do they promote Sri Lankan values and culture?
  - How do they prepare youth for global education?

- **PARENTS**
  - What factors account for choosing an international school education for their children?
  - How do their own educational experience shape this decision?
  - What is the perceived future for their children?

- **TEACHERS**
  - Why teach at international schools?
  - How do their own past teaching experience shape this decision?
  - What novel methods of teaching are utilized compared to the teaching methods in local schools?
  - How do they prepare youth for global education?

- **STUDENTS**
  - What future aspirations do the students hope to achieve from receiving an international education?
  - How much do they interact with the local culture?
  - How is the International school experience at this school different from any previous school experience?
Research Questions

The research will answer the following key questions:

1a. Why do parents opt to send their children to Sri Lankan International Schools instead of schools under the Ministry of Education?

1b. What are the future aspirations of students attending international schools?

2a. What aspects of schooling are being prioritized by international school administrators and teachers when working within this industry?

2b. What aspects do international school stakeholders criticize for being overlooked by these schools?

3a. How does the state mediate these educational forces for change led by international schools?

3b. What are the main concerns of the state with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools?

Significance of the Research

While there have been many features of Sri Lankan education that have been explored by prominent researchers such as Little (1996) on the Plantation sector or Gunawardena (1991) on the Vocational sector, the field of international schools continues to be unexplored territory. While it is clear that the number of international schools in Sri Lanka has grown exponentially since the mid 1980s, the multiple realities of this particular kind of school choice is insufficiently addressed in the literature. It was only Wijewardene (1999) who investigated parental choice in sending their children to international schools in Sri Lanka in her Master’s
thesis. This study however, was limited to the capital city of Colombo alone due to time constraints.

The majority of studies conducted on international school choice elsewhere focus on an economic perspective. Top down studies conducted by Cambridge and Thompson (2004) or MacDonald (2006) for example, investigate policy implementation in the business of international schools. The limited number of bottom up studies that analyse parental choice is limited to a western sphere. For instance, M. Hayden (2006) and MacKenzie, Hayden, and Thompson (2003) research European International Schools. However, a fundamental difference between these studies and the Sri Lankan scenario is that the majority of students attending Western international schools are globally mobile ‘Third Culture Kids’ (TCKs) of foreign expatriates whilst the latter involves a majority of Sri Lankan students themselves. The Fourth Culture Kids, in this instance are Sri Lankans attending global schools, alienated from the local setting that immediately surrounds them.

Nevertheless, there have been some previous studies done on locals attending international schools. Ezra (2007), for instance, looked at Israeli nationals’ choice to send their children to International Schools within Israel while MacKenzie (2009) investigated the motivations behind international school choice in a Japanese context. While Ezra (2007) observed a number of push and pull factors that favoured international schools over their local counterparts, the Japanese example placed a lot more emphasis on the role of English language.

By looking at international schools in four contrasting areas of Sri Lanka, this research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding on the situation of international schools in Sri Lanka as a whole. By investigating a range of international school stakeholders in several regions of the island, this study obtains a rich overall account of the contemporary situation of international school education in Sri Lanka. Exploring the motivations and experiences of international school stakeholders in Sri Lanka is an important contribution to the growing research in the field of international school choice worldwide.
As Marginson (1999:27) notes, ‘education has become a primary medium of globalization and an incubator for its agents’. This research on Sri Lankan international schools conducted in several parts of the country will be the first of its kind and will therefore shed light into a sector that needs much scrutiny. While trying to unpack the role of international schools, this research will delve into a range of other significant elements of Sri Lankan education such as the drawbacks of the present public education system or the debates surrounding contemporary private and English medium education. It is anticipated that this thesis will be a development tool whereby both school systems (national and international alike) could learn from each other’s drawbacks to ameliorate the Sri Lankan educational system as a whole. Furthermore, the findings could later be incorporated into research already carried out in the rest of South Asia so that a more rounded picture of the regional situation regarding motivations behind international school choice could be reached.

**Theoretical Basis**

The researcher’s view on the rationale behind international school popularity and the role of the state in mediating these agents for change have been informed by theories on School Choice (Schneider, Teske and Marschall 2000, Forsey, Davies and Walford 2008), Social Reproduction (Bourdieu 1984) and Globalization (Carnoy, 1998; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999; Marginson, 1999; Stromquist, 2002; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000).

*School Choice – An overview*

Following the Second World War, a revolution of mass education took place. This public education system, or as Hill, Pierce, and Guthrie (1997) refer to as the ‘Factory model of schools’ consisted of the following components:

1. Efficient batch processing of mass children.
2. Rote learning.
4. ‘Conveyor Belt System’ where students move from class to class and grade to grade with little individual catering (in Darling-Hammond, 1997). Choice policies were introduced in order to address the repercussions of this worldwide institutionalization of schooling. Their main aim was to implement agendas that improve the deteriorating quality of public schooling systems. These ‘quality reforms’, as Forsey et al. (2008:14) observe are also paired with ‘choice’ reforms in wide-ranging reform agendas that ‘attempt to harness schooling to strategies of wealth creation’.

Quality reforms, Forsey et al. (2008) note sometimes stand in tension with choice. While choice programs emphasize the need to decentralize power by allowing the free market (and thereby stakeholders such as parents and students) to have a greater say in the decision making process, ‘quality assurance frameworks often serve to decentralize governance over education and direct much decision making power to the hands of bureaucrats’.

Hence, choice has emerged as a ‘tool for transforming schools that are widely perceived as failing’ (Schneider et al. 2000: 5). It is an alternate ideal model for personalizing education and catering for individual need. It facilitates a ‘shift in the balance of power away from centralized decision makers’ (Schneider et al. 2000: 7) and is applauded for its ability to transfer the process of school selection from a passive process based on residency to an active decision making task.

This study aims to show how international school choice in Sri Lanka is a response fuelled by a lack of choice reforms. The uniqueness of Sri Lanka is such that since the 1960s the establishment of private schools is banned leaving Sri Lankans compelled to opt for a public, or a very limited pre-existing private education system. International school choice hence is retaliation on the part of Sri Lankans to address the deteriorating quality of public education by reframing legislation to allow for the existence of international schools. It is driven by a desperate need to establish educational institutions that operate in the global language of English thereby reproducing advantage. Moreover, the allure of foreign curriculums and qualifications as opposed to the out-dated national syllabus is another key factor favouring international school choice in Sri Lanka.
Hill, Pierce and Guthrie (1997) in (Schneider et al 2000:6-7) state that school choice is popular because:

   a) It can influence students’ attitudes, efforts and motivation.
   
   b) School choice holds schools accountable to promises made thereby allowing the development of effective school communities that link teachers and school administrators.
   
   c) By implementing school choice, parents have endorsed the school they have chosen as better than alternatives, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and a stronger commitment to the school.

Summarized below are the steps involved in choosing a school as outlined by Schneider et al. (2000: 87).

Prior to exerting a choice, parents:

- Have a set of preferences about education and schooling.
- Gather information about the set of schooling available.
- Make trade-offs between the attributes of these schools.

Once the choice is made, parents:

- Monitor the performances of the school to make sure their choice was a good one.
- Seek a different school for their children if the choice was not correct.

And ultimately, as a by product:

- Actively and regularly participate in their children’s’ schools.

These steps form the assumptions for the hypothesis that the thesis will elaborate upon. Ideally hence, individuals as utility maximisers will without hassle choose the most rational choices from clear cut value preferences based on ‘calculations of the costs, benefits and probabilities of success of various options’ (Bosetti 2004: 389). School choice however is far more complex and involves a social process
influenced by social class, networks and relationships. Furthermore, repeating school choice is also limited by the difficulty and disruption of changing schools during a given school year (Schneider et al. 2000: 41). The ultimate choice, Ball (2003:23) observes, involves ‘a mixture of rationalities’ involving both the ‘fortuitous and the haphazard’.

**School Choice – parental priorities**

Lareau (2002) coined the phrase ‘concerted cultivation’ to describe how parents today are not only caregivers of basic needs such as food, shelter, and security but increasingly actively take part in providing their children with stimulating educational environments. School choice, therefore is one such form of concerted cultivation. It incorporates economic competence with ‘expectations, experiences and ideals’ of parents (Bosetti, 2004). Upper class parents have a different kind of social and cultural capital to send their children to a school of their choice compared to those of a lower socio-economic status. For instance, they may have access to social networks and privilege to information in English language that those of lower socio-economic backgrounds may not be privy to. Moreover, private schools tend to discriminate against students who do not correspond to a particular social and cultural group.

Parents therefore, when exerting school choice consider a variety of factors such as good teachers, safety, good grades, values being taught, curriculum, extracurricular activities available etc. In some settings, Schneider et al. (2000) highlight that it is the parents’ concern for racial and ethnic composition rather than academic performance that motivates their choice. Likewise, educational priorities also vary depending on a person’s ethnic or racial background. For example, Delpit (1995) observes that racial minorities endorse academic values more strongly. In another instance, Schneider et al. (2000) illustrate that parents from low educational backgrounds are more likely to emphasize safety and discipline as priorities when selecting a school for their children while college educated parents place more emphasis on the values promoted by a school. The authors observe that highly educated individuals are also more likely to be embedded in better networks, which in turn are an efficient ‘shortcut to quality information’. Schneider et al.
(2000) thus argue that this ‘information explosion’ results in ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ where the have-nots are not only low on information but also lack other valuable resources.

Davies and Aurini (2005), speaking about Canada observe that when it came to school choice there, parental relations with public educators shifts from being a mere supportive role to a more active participatory one. They emphasize that parental involvement is a necessity and crucial component of the informed decision making process. It is those informed citizens who exert school choice and as Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Bawy (1996) note, informed citizens are the people who have the capacity for political participation. By actively choosing an international school education for their children, Sri Lankan parents are highlighting the need for a global education and their dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the national system of education.

**School Choice - the information gathering process**

Sources of information that influence school choice include news media, interpersonal communication through what Knoke and Kuklinski (1982) refer to as ‘opinion leaders’ who enjoy the social power to transmit information and social networks and information flows where individuals participate in a social system where many other actors are ‘significant reference points in another’s decisions’ (Knoke and Kuklinski 1982:9). Relationships between network members’ affects beliefs, perceptions, actions and ultimately school choice. However, contradicting this, it can be argued that the degree to which individuals can choose their networks is also limited by school choice where being part of certain schools can restrict the access that you have for a certain caliber of social groups.

Bloch, Sherrel and Ridgway (1986:119) state that ‘consumers have surprisingly little enthusiasm for the pursuit of information even when buying expensive or socially risky goods’. Kahneman’s theory of behavioral economics follows a similar trajectory by outlining that decision-making involves cognitive limitations that account for specific anomalies such as the ‘jumping to conclusions’.

Kahneman (2003) in his article on ‘Bounded Rationality’ goes a step further to state that ‘agents do not reason poorly but often act intuitively’. In this case, it is ‘by
what they happen to see in a given moment’. Hence witnessing a trend towards international school popularity may convince parents to believe that it is the most rational choice to make. However, as Kahneman (2003:1469) observes, “what is natural and intuitive in a given situation is not the same for everyone; different cultural experiences favour different intuitions about the meaning of situations and new behaviours become intuitive as skills are acquired”.

School Choice - the perceived benefits and drawbacks

Schneider et al (2000:88) states that ‘education is so multifaceted that even experts disagree considerably about both the importance of the various educational inputs and the outputs of the process’. However, school choice is widely acknowledged for creating conditions for competition that facilitate all schools to improve quality. The benefits of school choice as Schneider et al. (2000:9-10) outline are that:
   a) Choice pressures schools to be more efficient providers of education (a term they referred to as the ‘productive efficiency’ of schools).
   b) Competition between schools helps to ‘weed out’ the weakest schools or force them to improve in order to survive.
   c) School choice can also reduce the disproportionate opportunities that are available to economically advantaged parents. Wealthy families have extensive choice over where to send their children. If public school choice were to exist, the authors note that this would level the playing field by allowing less well off parents an expanded set of options.
   d) Involving parents in choice making helps create ‘coproduction’. That is, when parents get involved, it increases efficiency of schools, as quality education cannot be delivered with simply the schools acting alone. Quality requires all stakeholders coming together and collaborating in order to come up with best forms of education.

Ostrom (1996:1079) takes this concept of co-production a step further and states that “if students are not actively engaged in their own education, encouraged and supported by their family and friends, what teachers do may make little difference
to the skills students acquire”. Hence, co-production and especially cooperation and trust between all the different stakeholders of the educational system are crucial to shape effective schools.

School choice likewise has many drawbacks. The most frequently made allegation is that school choice leads to social stratification when parents most concerned about education concentrate in a few schools. This leads to a minority of students who will be better off at the expense of the majority who will remain in schools that continue to worsen. It can also result in ‘skimming’ or ‘creaming’, a process by which parents (particularly low income parents) make school choice based on practical reasons such as proximity as opposed to other parents who select schools based on educational quality resulting in the stratification of high and low performing schools based on different preference of parents (Schneider et al. 2000).

Narodowski (2008) speaking on school choice in Argentina highlight a setting where private school choice was opted by parents in order to differentiate themselves from the lower socio-economic groups and to form exclusive identities. Here the rationale was that children needed to be safe from the violence that the lower socio-economic groups were exposed to. Narodowski (2008) also points out that this segregation helps take pressure off the public system thereby enabling amelioration of state schools.

Carnoy (1993) remarks that school choice leads to social stratification between enthusiastic parents and those who are not that concerned with where their children receive an education thus reducing the ability of communities to address collective problems. Informed parents hence are criticized for making decisions that harm the children of less well-informed parents. School choice furthermore tends to be divided along ethnic, religious or racial lines leading to further social stratification. As Levin (1989:6) note, the role of capitalist societies is to rely on schools to ‘preserve and support the fundamental political, social and economic institutions that comprise these societies. Schools must hence provide students with a common set of values and knowledge to ‘create citizens who can function democratically’. When schools segregate based on socio-cultural divides, it is difficult for governments to promote a shared sense of nationalism.
Sri Lankan international schools strive to break this barrier to cultural isomorphism that is emphasized by the public education system which divides students along linguistic and religious divides by welcoming students from all backgrounds. However, in the process, international schools have threatened the national agenda of providing free public education for all and pose the danger of recreating an elitist classification of education that existed prior to independence. It is this fear of social systematization that has paved the way for a banned private education system in Sri Lanka.

One country where the state has managed to encourage choice whilst at the same time safeguarding its nationalistic agenda is Singapore. Vidovich and Sheng (2008) show how the Singaporean government has encouraged the establishment of international schools in Singapore where education is very much state centred, cautious steps are taken to promote funded international schools in order to attract children of expatriates and foreign students from neighbouring countries to come and study in Singaporean international schools. This example shows how the Singapore government is integrating both the local and global markets in an attempt to encourage school choice within a controlled environment. Perhaps Singapore could be utilized by Sri Lanka as a model for implementing a minuscule yet significant step forward towards once again legalizing private schooling.

*Bourdieu’s concept of Cultural Capital and Social Reproduction Theory*

Another research paradigm that is explored in this study stems from the works of Pierre Bourdieu. The research will attempt to disclose how Sri Lankan international schools function as agents for social reproduction where the possession of international qualifications or the acquisition of advanced English language skills serves as forms of cultural capital that grant international school students a competitive edge over their national school counterparts. While all individuals already possess a degree of cultural capital, the international school environment helps accentuate these traits. Moreover, attending these schools provides students with access to specialist social networks whereby they can profit from their heightened social capital. Ultimately, hence, international schools act as a newer
mode of class indicator by giving rise to a dichotomy between those that receive a
global education within these schools versus those left behind in an out-dated
national schooling system.

**Cultural Capital**

Cultural capital, as described by Mohr and DiMaggio (1995) refers to proficiency
with certain dominant cultural practices such as the ability to converse fluently in a
global language. Cultural capital furthermore is "institutionalized as legitimate and
valuable at the societal level". Researchers have given cultural capital various and
sometimes contradictory meanings. DiMaggio and Useem (1978) view it as the
possession of knowledge on high culture; Robinson (1985) sees it as the possession
of educational attainment and Cookson and Persell (1991) see it as having access to
the curriculum of elite schools. However the most significant point is that cultural
capital helps us understand how social stratification is maintained. By attending an
international school in Sri Lanka, the students are able to obtain foreign
qualifications and associate with a wealthy social class that can afford high school
fees and possibly have access to social networks that the local school student may
not be privy to. Lareau and Lamont (1988:156) summarizes Bourdieu’s various
studies; *Inheritors* (P. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) *Reproduction* (P. Bourdieu &
Passeron, 1977) *Distinction* (P. Bourdieu, 1984) and *Les Strategies de Reconversion*
(P. Bourdieu, 1977) by stating that for Bourdieu, ‘cultural capital is alternatively an
informal academic standard, a class attribute, a basis for social selection and a
resource for power which is salient as an incubator basis of class position’.

**Social Capital**

Social capital on the other hand, comprises of “the power and resources that accrue
to individuals or groups by virtue of their social networks and contacts” (Painter,
2000, p. 243). Bourdieu (1993) defines social capital in terms of tokens in a game of
Bridge. When individuals enter the education system, they already possess a
certain amount of cultural capital with them. Getting an international education
therefore implies a higher level of social and cultural capital that gives them a competitive edge. Moreover, social reproduction theory implies that parents’ social and cultural capital has strong correlations with the type of cultural capital that the children possess.

‘Capital apprehended instantaneously is a product of history that will produce more history...those who have a lot of red tokens and a few yellow ones, that is, a lot of economic capital and little social capital will not play in the same way in as those with many yellow tokens and few red ones. The bigger their pile the more audacious they can be (bluff) and the more yellow tokens (cultural capital) they have, the more they will stake on the yellow squares (education system)’ (Bourdieu 1993: 34).

Language is one such form of cultural capital that plays a vital role in the Sri Lankan International school system. Its use extends beyond being merely a tool for communication to encompass power through which people are able to frame their future. As Bourdieu (1993:80) notes,

‘Linguistic capital is power over the mechanisms of linguistic price formation, the power to make the laws of price formation operate to one’s advantage and to extract the specific surplus value. Every act of interaction, every linguistic communication, even between two people, two friends, a boy and girl, all linguistic interactions, is in sense micro-markets, which always remain dominated by the overall structures’.

One path to becoming superior involves an ‘estrangement from the familiar, domestic, native world' through the ‘making strange’ (Bourdieu 1984:14). This mode of ‘racism of intelligence’ can be achieved in Sri Lanka by obtaining foreign credentials in the global language of power via International Schools.

‘Education classification is a euphemized version of social stratification, a social classification that has become natural and absolute, having been censored, alchemically transmitted in such a way that class differences turn into differences of intelligence, talent and therefore differences of nature’ (Bourdieu 1993:178).

Whilst increasing social stratification, Putnam (1993:90) observes that social capital also involves ‘civic virtue’, that is, a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavours. Choice can increase the capacity of citizens and consumers to act as responsible involved citizens. High quality education therefore is associated with
activities that build social capital and an avenue though which a virtuous cycle is created.

The way we perceive cultural capital is influenced by the subtle social cues that we learn from being part of a certain culture. The Habitus, as Bourdieu (1993:86) describes is a word that implies ‘that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought as opposed to essentialist modes of thought’.

The Educational structure of Sri Lanka is also shaped by its past. Resentment of the colonial past and patriotism in the face of nationalism has inevitably affected how educational policies are implemented and how different groups interpret education. It was pre-colonial inequality between those educated in private English schools and public vernacular schools that led to the promotion of free public education since independence. It was also for the same reason that private education was banned in 1961 to ensure that social divides as a result of unequal education systems will not be perpetuated. Yet, stemming from this ban was once again a desire to establish a newer mode of education through international schools that addressed the shortcomings of the existing public schooling system and differentiated one from the masses.

‘In each of us, in varying proportions, there is part of yesterday’s man; it is yesterday’s man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result’ (Bourdieu 1977:79).

Globalization Theories

Economic, cultural and political globalization taking place at an ever-intensifying rate is compelling educationalists to rethink the basis of contemporary education. With increasing social mobility and the merging of culture, education is rapidly converging to a western model where English, technology and intercultural education are at the forefront of pedagogy. One reason for the emergence of Sri
Lankan international schools is a demand for a global education that keeps students in par with current tendencies. The following section will hence set the stage on how globalisation is shaping today’s educational trends. Chapters 6 and 7 will then utilize the theory outlined in this section to understand the justification in opting for an international school education in the Sri Lankan context.

Globalization is defined as the ‘widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life’ (Held et al. 1999: 2). With this definition emerge several debates about the role of the nation state and its ability to exert power and maintain sovereignty. Some academics argue that there has been a shift in power from nation states to multinational firms (Strange 1996) while others claim that globalization has meant that a few global superpowers such as the USA or Western Europe exert political authority over all other states (Hirst and Thompson 1995). The idea that a newer form of American imperialism has replaced past colonialism is another popular contemporary notion. Tikly (2004) examines this claim in the field of education and concludes that the hegemony of western textbooks, resources and learning material have a way of controlling populations to think in western ways; a term that Nandy (1997) refers to as the ‘colonization of the mind’. For instance, at Sri Lankan international schools, the teachings speak of foreign currency, use western names and sometimes even the school vacations are referred to as the summer and winter vacations when in fact there is neither summer nor winter in Sri Lanka!

Contemporary ideas of globalization reflect a ‘silent takeover’ of power from the state to the hands of private firms resulting in what Hertz (2003) refers to as the ‘death of democracy’. In such a ‘borderless world’ (Ohmae 1999), hyper-globalists envision the presence of a single ‘global civilization’ devoid of national sovereignty (Held et al. 1999) while tranformationalists see it as a dynamic juxtaposition of increased interconnectedness on one hand while other parts of the world are becoming increasingly marginalized. States therefore are not necessarily losing power but rather re-structuring themselves ‘in response to the growing complexity of processes of governance in a more interconnected world’ (Held et al. 1999: 9).
The concept of globalization follows a neo-liberal approach where individuals (and nation states) are expected to contain an agency within themselves that enable them to reap the benefits of market liberalization. This capitalist ideology emphasizes states to open their economies to a free-market, lift tariffs on trade and finance and encourage foreign direct investment. What results, hence, is an ‘emerging managerial technocracy’ (Stopford, Strange and Henley 1991:22) that has replaced the conventional political bureaucracy. The state therefore is compelled to take on a ‘business outlook’ towards governance (Amoore, 2006). The role of the welfare state therefore is particularly diminished under this view. This gives rise to a deeply fragmented system where some powerful nations are the ‘architects’ of internationalization whilst others are merely the victims losing their authority in the process (Held et al. 1999). Those who profit from the outcomes of this international division of labour form the ‘core’ of the world while those left behind make up the global periphery (Sklair 1999). However, Strange (1996) also contradicts this by pointing out that states, unlike markets, have a ‘capacity to repel attacks by others’. As Chase-Dunn (1998) notes, ‘at the economic level, there is a global logic taking place whereas at the political level, state-centred logic still operates’. This is visible in Sri Lanka where private education is banned even though global logic calls for more private educational institutions.

Economics today is centred on production and consumption (Carnoy 1995). Universities therefore have become more ‘client and customer focused’ as a result of economic globalization (Stromquist and Monkman 2000). School choice in an era of globalization is said to “advocate the flattening of bureaucratic structures with a greater focus on excellence ahead of equity and shifting the emphasis of national governance from citizenship and service towards client-ship and consumerism” (Forsey et al 2008:15). The Sri Lankan international schools cater for a clientele that can afford the high fees and as shown later in chapter 6, business and money making ethos of these schools sometimes take precedence over everything else including providing a quality education. Appadurai (1996) remarks that globalization involves a flow of ideas, people, policy and practices. However, this flow is uneven and deeply embedded in the local cultural and political landscapes.
Another intrinsic element of neoliberalism is the idea that the market doesn’t discriminate but is based on merit-based competitiveness. Being well educated therefore helps to reproduce ‘relative scarcities’ (Arrighi, Silver, & Brewer, 2003) via increased social mobility. Yet a closer examination shows that social mobility is polarized. Those with high levels of education such as doctors can penetrate national boundaries more conveniently and so can people with very low levels of education such as domestic maids and cleaners. Schooling thus, is used as a platform to differentiate students at an early age into those that emerge victorious and those that will grow up to become the future supply of this ‘missing labour’ of low skilled menial jobs (Stromquist and Monkman 2000). In Sri Lanka, those educated in international schools have better English language skills that facilitate them to get better jobs in the private sector where good English skills are a prerequisite.

Stromquist and Monkman (2000) argue that globalization has resulted in a homogenization of values and norms concerning education. Any variations in values are also class based leading to polarization within communities. In the case of elite schooling in former colonies, Maseman (1999) observes that the elite have more in common with the colonizers than the other people of their own countries leading to the emergence of resistance to state systems by minorities and the ‘growth of a plurality of voices’ that contradict each other. As it would later be shown in Chapter 6, the western curriculum coupled with a lack of exposure to local culture, history or language via education in Sri Lankan international schools have resulted in an alienated breed of students that grow up confined to an international cultural bubble within a traditional Sri Lankan backdrop.

Private education as Stromquist and Monkman (2000) observe enables parental choice and demands competition while simultaneously making education a commodity. When international schools operate as businesses in Sri Lanka, education becomes a commodity that could be purchased so long as parents are able to afford it. The commoditised nature of international schools also means that schools place a great deal of emphasis on money making rather then providing education with a virtuous intention. The quality of the curriculum, facilities or teachers is therefore sometimes compromised in order to simply amass fee-paying
clients. The repercussions of the business focus of Sri Lankan international schools are discussed in detail later in Chapters 6 and 7.

Schneider et al. (2000:254) make the following observations as to why private schools remain superior:

a) They attract advantaged students whose parents have higher educational expectations.

b) Since private schools remain outside the authority of public bureaucracies governing public schools, they have more control over the organization, operations and missions of the schools.

c) Sectarian basis of many private schools give them an advantage that stems from values that are shared among the private school students, parents and staff.

However Forsey (2008:73) note that ‘the free market is rarely free’ and ‘does not necessarily generate greater levels of efficiency and accountability, nor are their standards automatically higher than those found in the public sector. Globalization has thus raised questions not just about how nation states would manage public education but also how they could manage private education that is rapidly rising to ensure that it is of a high standard, promote unifying values and at the same time not simply become accessible to a wealthy minority.

**Summary**

This chapter set the stage for this research by outlining an overview of the thesis and providing a justification for the significance and need of conducting such a study in Sri Lanka. It provided a brief context of the study and then offered a more detailed account of the primary research goals through an introduction to the research questions and the stakeholders involved. The final section of this chapter provided an in-depth look at the theoretical basis underlying this study allowing for the next chapter to review the literature with regard to school choice and international school education.
Chapter Two: Unpacking School Choice and International Schools

The following chapter delves into the literature on international schools that is currently available. Firstly, the researcher highlights the complexity involved in defining an international school. Next, an examination of how globalization impacts international education is put forward. The power of language in shaping societies is then explored via an examination of the literature. A brief introduction to the issue of language in Sri Lanka is provided here to make way for a deeper analysis that is presented in Chapter 3.

Following this section, the researcher investigates how global education can lead to social polarization and raise issues of identity and belonging that emerge when receiving an international school education. Finally, the role of culture in shaping societies is explored via an examination of the literature. The intention here is to conceptualize how education is both a genesis and a by-product of culture. The role of international schools in emerging out of existing culture and then ultimately having the potential to alter culture is therefore explored in this section.

Defining the International School

Research on international schools is still in an early stage (Dolby and Rahman 2008) and finding an agreed definition is like finding the ‘holy grail for international educators and academics’ (Richards 2004). International schools, Bagnall (2008:1) observes are not ‘static institutions’ but rather ‘living organisms that continue to develop and change as the world changes’. For Hayden and Thompson (1995), their focus on international schools were those schools that catered for third culture kids (TCKs), usually the children of foreign diplomats and expatriates that were based temporarily in major global cities. Consequently, international schools were places that celebrated the diversity. They were also institutions that had an embedded element of quality in them, particularly because the private fee levying international school was accountable to its ‘customers’ (Fertig 2007).
Leach (1969) observes that the main contestation of defining an international school lies in the fact that there is a distinct notion of hierarchy among these schools. Bagnall (2008) elaborates on this hierarchy by outlining some of the major international school networks that exist within this system. From the top ranked United World Colleges and function specific schooling organizations such as the NATO and US Military Schools or the Aga Khan Foundation of International Schools to French, British and Japanese international schools that act as replications of national schooling systems in foreign lands, the existence of international schools along various organizational clusters is evident. In Sri Lanka, The International Schools of Sri Lanka (TISSL) was set up in February 2013 with 23 elite member schools. TISSL will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Both national and international schools alike can provide an international education but what sets international schools apart is the presence of a more culturally varied student population that allows for greater interaction between different groups. While national schools strive to unify the population around a civic responsibility, proponents of international schools realize the limitation in doing so when the average number of years the international school student attends one international school is about three years. However all schools have imagined communities that they wish to envision for their students (Bagnall and Cassity 2012). When schools foster intercultural tolerance, it is likely to manifest in society at large as well. For Gellar (1981), international schools represent their all-inclusive nature by welcoming pupils from many different places. As he later observes, they are places that ‘build bridges and not walls’ (Gellar 1993). Thus, international schools can act as ‘agents for change’ where the hidden curriculum of friendships and cross-cultural communication contribute in creating multicultural societies (Bagnall 2008). Yet no two schools share exactly the same characteristics (Hayden and Thompson 2000). As Renaid (in Jonietz and Harris 1991:6) points out, international schools are similar to ‘educational department stores’ that cater for a varying audience with varying needs.

In an attempt to define international schools, Terwilliger (1972) came up with four prerequisites for a school to be defined as international. He notes that not only
should a school have a certain percentage of foreign students, but the administration board should also comprise and deal with a local and foreign blend. Furthermore, teachers should have experience with cultural adaptation and the curriculum should be one that enables university entrance to other parts of the world. An alternate approach to international education is proposed by Heyward (2002) who suggests that the focus of international schools should be on the ‘intercultural’ rather than the ‘international’. It is important to not defy the local culture but to focus on intercultural literacy through the curriculum as well as the institutional structure. Heyward (2002:10) thus defines intercultural literacy as the ‘understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement’.

International schools are also a ‘global multi-billion dollar industry’ where the lines between education and business are blurred (MacDonald 2006). As Cambridge (2002) notes, international schools are ‘brands’ where the concept of branding distinguishes them from the rest of the national schools that are its competitors. This idea is further emphasized by Canterford’s (2003) article titled ‘segmented labour markets in international schools’ where he talks of how in the international school industry the term ‘school’ is replaced with ‘company’ and ‘students/parents’ are replaced with ‘customers’. MacDonald (2006) speculates as to whether Canterford’s interchange of the words signifies the complex intertwining of business and education within the international school system. MacKenzie, Hayden and Thompson (2003) follow on this dual focus of profit versus service in international schools when they investigate how the degree of differentiation between international schools defines competition within markets. In an ideal scenario there should be perfect competition. However, what is observed is that a few ‘top-tier’ international schools form an oligopoly within most countries while in other cities, the international school industry may even be limited to a monopoly (Baye and Bell 2000).

As Leach (1969:2) summarizes, ‘the problem of definition lies in the dichotomy between expatriate and local populations, in the decision as to which language is to be used as the language of instruction, in the gap between privilege and underprivilege and in the tension between attachment to known national systems of
examination for university entrance and the desire to experiment with genuine multilaterally international certificates’. Hence, generalizing definitions is problematic and perhaps the best approach would be to make distinctions based on observations (Matthews 1998).

Globalization and International Education

The popularity of international schools can be attributed to a rising demand for a global education in the wake of neo-liberal agendas. The focus of neoliberalisation is to move away from the Keynesian welfare state and public education to allow more consumer choice at the hands of decentralisation and privatisation. The following section will present three views that are present on globalisation and examine how neoliberalism paves the way for increase in international school numbers.

Globalization explores the concept of interconnectedness in detail. It is not just about technology but also about ‘international movements of people’, formation of ‘global societies’ and ‘linguistic, cultural and ideological convergence’ (Marginson 1999). At present, for Held et al (1999), three views on globalization exist. The ‘hyper-globalist’ view talks of the demise of the nation state as the world becomes increasingly interconnected. The second view, that of the sceptical approach, sees globalization as bringing about greater polarization and stresses the significance of the nation state in managing capitalism. The third view, that of the transformationalist, sees greater integration but also greater fragmentation where some are ‘increasingly enmeshed’ in the global order while others are ‘increasingly marginalized’ (Held et al 1999). Green (1997:171) states that this intense interconnectedness and increased mobility has resulted in the ‘partial internationalization’ of education with ‘attempts to enhance the international dimension of curricula’.

Globalization affects schooling in three distinct ways. First of all, financially, there is pressure to reduce public spending with the rise of privatization. Next, in terms of the labour market, the payoff to higher levels of education is rising. Finally, with
a shrinking of space and time, national education systems are increasingly compared with international systems (Carnoy 1998). As Marginson (1999:30) quotes, ‘the globalization of certain education institutions themselves provide one avenue whereby national fiscal limits can be overcome through fee based international education’.

A distinct feature of globalization is the neoliberal ideology of free market capitalism. Neoliberalism involves an emphasis on the open market where privatization in favour of cost recovery and efficiency, deregulation for the elimination of unnecessary state expenditure through subsidies, and liberalization that relinquishes domestic protection takes place (Stromquist 2002). ‘Neoliberal globalism constructs active, self actualizing individuals who optimize a narrow sense of the good life by their own decisions regarding consumption and prepares students to be global citizens and global consumers’ (Apple, Kenway and Singh 2005:11). Thus we witness a massive rise in the number of fee levying private international schools worldwide with the emergence of the neoliberal decades.

In light of the new era of globalization, Carnoy (1995) notes that education needs to change from merely teaching students how to ‘manage and reproduce facts’ to one that fosters ‘problem solving’ and ‘critical thinking’. Privatization and competition therefore are an inevitable outcome of neoliberal policies. This is because pre-existing public education is associated with a passive mode of teaching that does not stimulate creativity the same way that competitive private education does (Stromquist 2005). It is those who are creative and flexible and can come up with innovative entrepreneurial skills that succeed the most today. Neoliberal policies also encourage commodification and encourage people to exert choice (Berry 2008). Since the new economy is global, there are high rates of return for those that invest in education (Carnoy 1995). By giving parents the choice to select schools, neoliberal values are promoted, which increases market competition and social capital (Robestine 2001). The juxtaposition of private international schools with public national schooling systems also helps, as Lee (2006) observes, to fill the gaps left by policy makers.

Pearce (1998:28) states that international schools are a ‘free market response to a global need’ while Fraser and Brickman (1968) view international education as an
instrument that prepares youth for all the interconnectedness that globalization has to offer. However, the origins of many international schools are ‘community driven’ with concerns far more prosaic than based on some philosophical disposition of internationalism (Richards 1998). As the world steps into this so called ‘cult of technology’, education is said to be ‘losing ground as a public good to become rather another marketable commodity’ (Stromquist 2000: 15). As Carnoy (1998: 28) concludes, ‘globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse and its effects on education are largely a product of that financially driven, free market ideology, not of a clear conception for improving education’.

Global Education and Social Polarization

Globalization not only intensifies the interconnectedness of the world but also exacerbates social inequality (Apple, Kenway and Singh 2005). The new international division of labour creates winners and losers where winners have educational strategies in par with growth (Carnoy 1995). As Ilon (1994:99) quotes, ‘a national system of schooling is likely to give way to local systems for the poor and a global system for the rich’. Hence you find locals attending international schools gaining a new competitive edge via foreign qualifications. Bagnall's (2010) study of the International Baccalaureate (IB) for instance highlights that the IB is a form of global cultural capital that acts like trumps in a game of cards, which ‘define the chances of profit in a given field’. Thus, ‘Schooling is a social process with implications for a student’s social status – it is a link between a child’s social origins and their social destination’ (Bulman 2004:514).

A study of school choice in the UK by Ball et al. (1996) showed that it is an environment of competition and consumerism where schools compete for students and parents ‘shop’ for quality. Schools are also places where power is reproduced among young citizens; places where the power of selecting a worthy school is reflected in the future status that one is able to attain (Levin-Rasky 2007). Power explains the emergence of ‘bodies, discourses, gestures and desires that have come to be identified as individuals’. Thus individuals are the ‘vehicles of power, not its application’ (Foucault 1980:98). Bridge and Blackman (1978) observe that the more educated the parents are, the more access to networks of information they have
through which they can activate school choice. Thus parental education is an indication of the value a family places on education (Schneider et al., 1998). In Sri Lanka, well-educated parents such as doctors and engineers tend to send their children to good national or private schools because of a long-standing history of good reputation. International schools are a new phenomenon and therefore often associated with the noveau riche who want to buy an English education and thereby gain social prestige. However, international schools are also becoming a proxy option for those that do not want to go through the hassle of placing a child at a reputed local school where gaining admission is a highly competitive and tedious procedure.

Reay, David and Ball (2005:21) note that ‘economic capital or wealth that is either generated or inherited can be “converted” into cultural capital by buying an elite education’. This cultural capital can then be converted into social capital via ‘social networks’. What is meant by cultural capital in this sense are the ‘values, norms, institutions and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance’ (Brown, Hayden and Thompson 2002:67). By investing in an international education that grants them access to a certain level of cultural capital, individuals can thus maximize their upward mobility (Bourdieu 1986). In educational settings, this form of cultural capital is established via hierarchies of linguistic competence, fee paying, socio-economic status and educational credentials; a term that Dore (1976) refers to as the ‘diploma disease’ where everyone strives to collect qualifications to outdo their rivals.

The emerging division of labour has redefined core-periphery relationships. The division of core and periphery in light of globalization exists therefore not only between nation states but also across national boundaries. As Hoogvelt (1997) denotes, the core is made up of the elites in poor nations while the periphery includes the poor of many affluent states too. International schools, within this framework, act as ‘big businesses’ that cater to the richest 5% of the non-English-speaking world (ISC 2009) where Cambridge (1998:205) defines international schools as ‘private islands of plenty in contrast to an impoverished local public education system’ in developing countries.
Since international schools have better resources, smaller classes, greater autonomy and more selective intake (Forestier 2006), most parents’ choice in sending their children to an international school have more to do with academic achievement than a philosophy of producing internationally sound offspring (Fox 1985). In Hong Kong, Ng (2012) observes that the decision to attend international schools has to do with social prestige and a general dissatisfaction with the local system while Jayawardena (2000) in her book titled ‘Nobodies to Somebodies’ observes that in Sri Lanka, education and particularly English education can buy a person ‘class’ in society.

Power of Language

Language is not simply a means of communication but a vehicle of power that enables people to pursue their dreams. As Phillipson (1999) sums up, ‘at the heart of all education is language policy’ and English forms the foundation of contemporary globalization processes. Thus for those that view the world in purely economic terms, an education in English medium might therefore seem like the most rational choice to make. Studies on international school choice show that English language is the main attraction for choosing an international school (MacKenzie et al., 2003; Murphy, 2001). As one parent in Mackenzie et al’s (2003) study of Swiss international schools state, ‘English is the lowest common denominator of language, at least perceptually, and the most useful’. International schools are also described by Deveney (2000) as ‘proxy language schools’ where the main reason that most students attend International schools teaching in the English language is for future relocation abroad or to attend a university in an English speaking country (Sears 1998).

As O’Brien (1981:67) states when talking of Malay students, ‘those competent in the English language are the most well equipped to take part in the global economy’. English is the most dominant syntax and most social and economic transactions being formulated within the ‘network society’ are carried out in this medium. With the development of what Harvey (1989) called an era of ‘time-space compression’, westernization or homogenizing towards an Anglophone way of life is clearly taking place (Stromquist 2000). Whether or not a child attending an international
school will learn the local languages depends on the kind of market that having good competency of that language opens. For example, Hayden and Thompson (1998) note that English speaking students in Spain or Germany are more likely to learn these languages than a student in Tanzania learning Kiswahili which has a very limited scope.

According to Gunasekara, Samarasinghe and Dharmadasa (1996) in their book on National Language Policy in Sri Lanka, the possession of an international language in a post-colonial era is regarded as advantageous and worthy of being preserved regardless of the circumstances under which it was acquired. English language however has contradictory effects. It can contribute to western hegemony but at the same time can resist western hegemony where access to English language means the access to global networks for a wider array of populations (Pennycook 1995).

The Language issue in Sri Lanka

English language and Private education are two fields that have been debated controversially for years in Sri Lanka. They are both seen as socially stratifying legacies left behind by colonial rulers and hence, best effort is made to steer education away from these elements of education. However, the prevalence of international schools that operate in the English medium registered as companies or the ever increasing presence of private colleges with affiliations to overseas universities highlight the fact that there are loopholes in the legal framework that make way for the covert existence of private English education without explicitly wording them as such. The following section will explore the connotations of language and its relationship to education in Sri Lanka from the colonial period to present day.

The issue of language has always been surrounded by controversy in Sri Lanka. The long history of colonization has strengthened nationalistic sentiments to the point where private schools and English language today are symbolic of the injustices that prevailed in an education system that benefited an elite minority. Therefore, in
1931, when for the first time educational policy was controlled through a Minister of Education and an Education committee elected by Sri Lankans, the focus shifted to providing equal opportunity for all. Moreover, the decision to implement free education island wide in 1945 reinforced a culture in Sri Lanka where education was solely the responsibility of the state.

Political commitment to social welfare and providing equality of access to education has taken precedence over any reforms that attempt to improve quality over quantity. As Wikramanayake (2010:90) in her study of educational policy in Sri Lanka observes, in the six decades following independence, equality was the sole focus of policy agenda while ‘any reforms that even hinted at challenging the status quo with issues related to relevance, modernizing the curriculum or enhancing future employment were rejected’. When regional disparities in facilities and resources showed up within the public education system, instead of ameliorating standards, curriculum standards were continually lowered so that well resourced students would not dominate.

In 1956, to make matters worse, Sinhalese was made the official language taking precedence over English and Tamil. While both the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders fought for independence in Sri Lanka, the sudden shift in prominence given only to Sinhalese alienated the Tamils of the country. This Sinhala Only Act had immediate impact on the educational and employment opportunities for the minority races of the country. Sinhalese became a pre-requisite for obtaining government jobs even in majority Tamil areas and Tamil students’ entry to Sri Lankan universities dramatically dropped following the introduction of quotas based on each district. In many previously colonized countries, national governments have promoted singular local languages in place of the colonial languages despite having several other vernacular minority languages. In Indonesia, for example, Bahasa Indonesia was promoted over Dutch while in Malaysia, Malay was introduced over English. Other states, such as India have chosen to make multiple local languages official while certain other nations have opted to retain the language of their colonial rulers.

As Bray and Koo (2004:215) highlight, these decisions have ‘long been recognized not only as a very significant indicator of power relations in society but also as a
very important instrument for continuity or change’. Language in Sri Lanka helps identify each ethnic group’s cultural heritage. According to Wikramanayake (2010:90), ‘it is what language represents that is important, not language itself’. By giving Tamil and English inferior positions Rajan (1995:40) accuses the politicians of ‘depriving the masses of the opportunity of assimilating contemporary learning and knowledge, a deprivation which created a network of social imbalances which only deepened pre-existing class differences’. As Dharmadasa (1996: 4) observes, ‘language, like religion and culture, has a sentimental dimension as well, which infuses it with a special power potential in social life, particularly in multi-ethnic settings’.

Politicians even today are afraid to make amendments to the language and private schooling acts. The masses, almost brainwashed by the works of left wing political groups such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) believe that introducing English education or allowing private schooling and private universities to operate in Sri Lanka would violate the fundamental rights of the Sri Lankan students by recreating the ‘elite educated in private English schools’ versus ‘the masses with blue collar jobs educated in vernacular languages in public schools’ that existed in British colonial times. In 1980, for instance, amidst severe opposition by the JVP, the North Colombo Medical College was opened. However, in 1989, it was taken over by the government to become part of the University of Kelaniya. In 1998, another attempt at establishing a private medical college was withdrawn due to severe opposition. In 2005, again when the government tried to give private education institutes degree awarding status, a massive JVP rally of students as well as local University lecturers threatening to join the rally halted the process.

When it came to the issue of language, once again the JVP equated language to class. This is what gave rise to the Anti-Kaduwa campaign where English, colloquially referred to as the kaduwa (sword) was seen as an instrument for cutting off opportunity and therefore something that needed to be destroyed. As Wikramanayake (2010: 104) states, ‘because of this fatal flaw in thinking, the JVP mired the Sinhalese youth in anti-English populism that after three generations left their status untouched’.
In theory, the Sinhala Only Act means that administration had to be conducted in Sinhala only. However, the elite continued to operate in English. At regional level, As Wikramanayake (2010) state, there was Sinhalese and English in Sinhalese areas and Tamil and English in Tamil areas. Hence, despite efforts to shut out English language, those competent in English still continued to be in better off positions compared to those that were conversant in just the local languages. Furthermore, the tradition to follow the British system was reinforced when the University College of London began to prepare students for external degrees. What resulted hence, was the existence of a highly literate population in Sri Lanka that overlooked English competency as a result of not having enough opportunity to learn the language and therefore restricted from all the advancements that globalization has to offer. The main reason for this, Wriggins (1960) noted was a growing demand for English that was not met as a result of shortage in English teachers. Those left out, therefore naturally saw English as a ‘barrier to advancement’.

A statement made by a Sri Lankan Member of Parliament about the downside of restricting English in place of Sinhalese in DeVotta (2004:44) notes, ‘It is true that we have a developed language, but what is the knowledge that we have in that language? Is it possible in the near future that we shall make treasures of knowledge available to the students of English? That would be like trying to empty the ocean with a bucket’. Realizing this crucial flaw in the Sri Lankan educational system, in 1997, the Presidential Task Force (PTF) under President Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaranatunge made significant English reforms to the existing curriculum. English for communication was introduced in Grade One with formal teaching commencing in Grade Three. English was then taught as a subject from Grade Six and offered as a compulsory subject for GCE Ordinary Level Examinations. At Advanced Level, a new subject called General English was introduced where a range of themes helped prepare students to life after school.

In 2000, a motion was passed by the cabinet to allow Advanced Level Science students to follow English medium education and students from Grade Six onwards the option to study certain subjects in the English medium provided there were teachers in the schools that could teach the subjects in English.
The rationale for such decisions, as the NEC (2003:115) pointed out was that ‘English continues to be a badge of distinction reinforcing privilege and socio-economic differentiation. With globalization, increase use of English as an international language and the expanding role of ICT, the need and demand for proficiency in English has escalated’. Hence English was re-introduced to the curriculum in the guise of ‘bilingualism’ as this was a term that was deemed acceptable even for those with extreme nationalistic sentiments.

The World Bank (2005a: 51) provides four rationales as to why private education should be reintroduced in Sri Lanka. Firstly, it will increase resources to education, next it will release more public resources per student from poorer families. Thirdly, private schools will stimulate economic activity in a sector that so far has been restricted and finally, private schools will be compelled to provide high quality services to be in competition with the free public system of education. Despite such claims, private schools continue to be banned in Sri Lanka. However one way getting around the issue of private schooling is through international schools that are allowed to operate in the country as businesses registered under the Company’s Act.

When it comes to the issue of establishing private higher education institutions, the Central Bank (2008) highlights that allowing foreign universities to set up campuses in Sri Lanka could save valuable foreign exchange that is lost as thousands of Sri Lankan students leave each year to attend universities abroad. To partially get around this problem, from the 1990s onwards, it is possible for private degree awarding institutions to operate as long as they don’t carry the title of ‘university’. As the Central Bank (2008:67) indicates, ‘it is necessary to impress upon the internal students that the introduction of external degrees and off campus students is not privatization of universities or higher education but a creation of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to safeguard the fundamental rights of all students’.

The fact that such higher education institutes as well as international schools are allowed to operate in Sri Lanka despite them creating the very same inequalities through the production of an English fluent elite minority is ironic. Hence, it is only logical to assume that the reluctance to reinstate private education has more
to do with historical legacies associated with the wording ‘private education’ and symbolic prejudices that have built around these definitions over the years.

Identity, Belonging and Global Education

The cross cultural experiences that take place during the early years of a child’s education has a significant role to play in one’s sense of identity, relationships with others and view of the world (Pollock and Van Reken 2001). In addition, the social image that an institution offers tends to produce as well as reproduce differences by promoting certain behaviours. Identity, Pearce (2002:150) claims, ‘is the perception that subjects have of their own properties, applying to themselves the value system that they have constructed through interactions with their social group’. The relationship that a student has with their ‘significant others’, ‘referent others’ and ‘reference groups’ all contribute to a child’s formation of self-identity (Keats et al 1983). As Bauman (1996:16) states, ‘one thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs’ and belongingness according to Cohen (1982:21), ‘implies very much more than merely having been born in the place. It suggests that one is an integral piece of the marvelously complicated fabric which constitutes the community’. Bagnall and Cassity (2012) elaborate on this search for belongingness of International school students by relating a conversation with a Maori colleague. According to Maori culture, people are on a constant quest to find their father; that is, a spiritual sense of belonging somewhere between their origin and destination.

Maseman (1999) observes that socialization and formal education are two distinguishable factors. While socialization refers to ‘activities that are devoted to the inculcation and elicitation of basic motivational and cognitive patterns through ongoing interactions with family or members of the community’, formal education is an ‘inculcation of standardized and stereotyped knowledge, skills, values and attitudes through standardized and stereotyped procedures’. Socialization thus is directly proportional to networks of personal relations and cultural domains. International schools therefore, produce children with a more geographically spread out social network. As Willis (1992:38) describes, international schools are places of tolerance, concern and understanding’ fostering institutions. They
produce third culture kids (Pollock and Van Reken 1999), trans-culturals (Willis 1987), Global Nomads (McCraig 1996) and internationally mobile adolescents (Gerner et al 1991).

These students are described as being both ‘rootless’ (Eidse and Sichel 2003) and being rooted to many places at once (Hayden 2006). While Pollock (1993) describes the international school student as a ‘cultural chameleon’ who can easily switch language, appearances and cultural practices, they are also described as experiencing ‘confused loyalties’, a sense of ‘restlessness’, lack of true identity or ‘unresolved grief’ (Rader and Sittig 2003). Hence, despite their ‘exciting lives’, the international school pupil experiences ‘hidden losses’; losses that Pollock and Van Reken (2009) elaborate as the ‘loss of the past that wasn’t’, ‘loss of the past that was’ and overall loss of ‘system identity’. Even though international schools have developed on an ad hoc basis, Hayden and Thompson (1995) state that the common concept of international education should form a bond between anyone who attends an international school regardless of who they are or where they study.

Gould (1999), in a study of a British international school in Saudi Arabia, divides the students attending international schools into three distinct groups: the British ‘natives’, the non-British ‘captives’ with no national school available locally and the non-British ‘electors’ whose national education system is available locally yet those who somehow choose to study in the British system. By focusing on the electors, Gould (1999:18) points out that the parental choice to attend international schools was influenced by the desire to maintain national and ethnic cultural identity while developing multiple alternate identities, the need for an education that was also necessary for personal survival in relation to the economic situation of developing countries and the need for education as a cultural capital investment of the global elite. As Bagnall (2008:16) states, international schools ‘have a critical role to play in the preparation of global citizens who can learn from the past, live in the present and make change into the future’. A similar rationale is evident in international school choice in Sri Lanka where the Sri Lanka ‘electors’ are opting for a foreign education system that grants them multiple identities and a competitive edge in the global market, even when a free national education system is readily available.
The schooling system is crucial in forming the basis of the ‘imagined communities’ of a nation (Anderson 1993). Schooling is a form of nation building where educational policies directly influence the identities that they produce (Henry 1999). As McCarthy (1998:92) quotes, ‘contemporary educational system has become a site of culture wars that is of contestation between backlash national chauvinism, traditional representation of nationalism and emergent post national forms, along with contestation about what types of citizens and identities education ought to produce’. It is due to this reason that Fail (2002) observes that students who attend international schools and go abroad for their studies will never be entirely successful at readjusting to their home environments upon return. Thus their initial departure would have a more permanent effect than was envisaged at first. To elaborate this argument, Pollock and Van Reken (1999:53) came up with the following matrix of belongingness in relation to one’s surrounding:

**MATRIX OF BELONGINGNESS** (Pollock and Van Reken 1999:53)

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The above-mentioned concept has serious repercussions for Sri Lankans attending international schools as many of them are compelled to leave their home country for an overseas university education. While initially, this transition may seem only to be for 3-4 years, the global exposure has more profound implications where international school students that have left Sri Lanka may not fully re-adjust to Sri Lankan culture upon return. Their departure in this instance may be more
permanent than initially anticipated or their re-entry may create a space for re-creating alternate Sri Lankan cultural identities.

Furthermore, assuming that offering an international curriculum equals an international education is a false notion. Some international schools provide western curriculums delivered by western teachers with little interactions with the local or outside communities. An international education therefore requires greater interaction with diverse groups through a range of extra curricular activities (Hayden 1993).

Culture

Economic liberation and the adoption of global education systems have many adverse effects on local culture. For instance, there are many disadvantages to not choosing to attend a national schooling system. Some of these include a lack of national identity, lack of connections to local society, deficiencies in local language skills and the difficulties of having lasting friendships (Ezra 2007, Heyward 2000). As Hanchanlash and Rutnin (2004) note, the ‘fourth culture kids’ that attend international schools within their country of origin grow up in their country of citizenship espousing western cultural values. They become alienated from their home culture to the extent that they ‘feel like strangers in their own land’. They often also have a lower standard of literacy skills in their mother tongue even though it is the ‘instrument of communication and understanding’ within their home culture (Hanchanlash and Rutnin 2004:13).

It is for this reason that national schools are resistant to international schools, ‘fearing that their own culture may be contaminated by the Anglo-American’ culture’ that often predominates international school settings (Jackson 2005:207). It is this gap in culture perpetuated by Sri Lankan international schools that has been at the forefront of tensions between national and international schools. However, it is important to realize that international schools cannot operate with absolutely no connections to the local setting as accreditation, authorization and
quality assurance measures require international schools to have affiliations with national governing bodies (Hayden 2006).

Culture, as Bulman (2004) defines, is a lens through which people make sense of their social world. The decision to activate resources is often mediated by culture. As Swidler (1986) describes, culture is a ‘toolkit’, which people actively use to make sense of their world. Hence for international school students in Sri Lanka who grow up alienated from the local cultural practices, their making sense of the world would inevitably be altered. Thus different backgrounds and experiences imply the use of different toolkits. For instance, parents may draw on the tools of their past experiences to interpret and shape the educational world of their children. Bourdieu (1992) speaks of ‘symbolic imposition’, a manner in which an academic qualification guarantees possession of a general culture. Often, as Bosetti (2004) points out, this possession is carried out via Rational Choice Theory (RCT) where actions are reduced to mere profit and loss terms. Rational Choice Theory infers that people always act realistically and reasonably while negating the role that emotion and culture plays.

However, mere possession of resources does not necessarily imply that the resources will be activated (Lareau and Hovat 1999, Walfor 1996). Ezra’s (2007) study of the motivations behind local Israeli parents to send their children to international schools uses a modified version of the push-pull model that was originally utilized to explain migration (Peterson 1968). What she observed was that there was an emotional component that those thinking simply in rational choice theory terms overlooked. A child’s potential happiness in terms of security, community ethos or discipline is thus a crucial element in school choice (Coldron and Boulton 1991).

Parents may choose an international education in order to avoid culturally bound norms about what education should be and in order for their children to have more western values. For instance, MacKenzie’s (2009) study on Japanese international schools showed that the local education system focused on conformity rather than creativity, which certain Japanese parents were not too happy about. In another instance, Carnoy (1995:215) observed that with globalization, the socializing aspect
of education should change from ‘one of strict obedience to that of more participation’. Most Asian countries for example still emphasize teacher-centred education where rote learning and austere punishments for talking out of turn are common. For those that do make the shift from a local school to an international one therefore, the shift to a more child-centred system may leave the students confused and misunderstood as they miss all the subtle cues understood by others (Hayden 2006). The Sri Lankan education system too encourages a teacher centric mode of education where students are expected to be obedient and respectful to teachers at all times. There are strict dress codes, punishments and the syllabus is more theory oriented than practical. The schooling system also promotes rote learning and is criticized for being highly textbook oriented.

Culture is a fluid concept that is changing and is constantly being constructed through experience of cross-cultural situations (Heyward 2000). The intercultural literacy that most international schools strive to achieve is derived from what Allport (1954) describes as the ‘contact-hypothesis’. It is the idea that ‘prejudice and hostility between members of segregated groups can be reduced by promoting the frequency and intensity of inter-group contact’ (Miller and Brewer 1984:15). Oberg (1958) came up with four stages that describe a person’s adaptation to culture shock. This culture shock theory denotes that initially, one is in a stage of elated euphoria, excited by all the new encounters. However, this is followed by crisis and hostility as one recognizes the significant dissimilarities. A stage of recovery and learning follows this until you come to the final stage of complete recovery and acceptance or bi-culturalism. Lysgaard (1955) explained the stages of culture shock with what he referred to as a ‘U-curve’ of culture shock theory. For Lysgaard (1955), when a person faces a new environment, there is a period of initial enthusiasm followed by disenchantment and finally a period of recovery. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) took this theory one step further by stating that when re-entering a home environment, people may experience re-entry crisis prior to a final readjustment. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) termed this the ‘W-curve of culture shock’. Cross-cultural engagement, likewise, can bring about four possible outcomes. It can result in mild forms of marginalization and assimilation or more extreme forms of chauvinism such as genocide or complete integration and
pluralism (Bochner 1986). As Hall (1996) points out, with globalization, ‘new ethnicities’ of cultural hybridization get formed. Thus the role of international schools in shaping the identities and sense of belongingness of Sri Lankan students is an important feature that will be explored throughout this thesis.

Sometimes the limitations of international education lie within the national policy frameworks. South Korean nationals, for instance are banned from attending international schools (Choi 2004) while in Singapore there are limitations to the number of people allowed to enter international schools (Vidovich and Yap 2008). At other times, local parents may engage in customer discrimination whereby they insist that teachers of native English language with western experience teach their children (Canterford 2003). In this case, Cambridge and Thompson (2004) point out that International schools form a ‘cultural bubble’ that excludes exposure to the local cultures.

This cultural bubble may also be present in the type of curriculum that international schools follow. A curriculum consists of a combination of what is planned and what is received (Kelly 2009). The intended curriculum not only involves an academic component but also incorporates the pastoral or social skills as well as the hidden non-explicit practices of a school such as rules, reward structures or relationships (Bulman and Jenkins 1988). In most international schools, as Hayden and Thompson (2008) show, the curriculum is exported ‘unapologetically’ from another country. Hayden and Thompson (2008) emphasize the need for an international school curriculum to be adapted to fit in with the national context or even better, be an integration of the ‘best practices’ or a new creation altogether. Interaction with the local community thus is crucial in cultural terms.

Summary
Defining an international school is a complex process that is both location and time specific. This chapter outlined some of these difficulties and then went on to explore the rise and growth of international schools over time. It was highlighted that although the underlying ethos of many international schools is to unify populations based on a common global agenda, many international schools in fact
perpetuated social polarisation via a process of ‘othering’ and standing out from the rest of the education systems. In relation to this idea, this chapter also explored the themes of identity, belongingness, culture and the power of language with a brief introduction to the language issue in Sri Lanka. While chapter two was an exhaustive summary of the literature on contemporary issues concerning international education worldwide, the next chapter will provide a detailed historical account of the factors that led to the rise of international education in Sri Lanka.
Chapter Three: Historical Legacies in Shaping Sri Lankan Education

‘The comparative approach demands first an appreciation of the intangible, impalpable, spiritual and cultural forces which underline an educational system; the forces and factors outside the school matter even more than what goes on inside it. In order to understand, appreciate and evaluate the real meaning of the educational system of a nation, it is therefore essential to have a knowledge of a country’s history and traditions, of the forces and attitudes governing its social organizations, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development’.

Kandel (1993:xix)

The major challenges of the present Sri Lankan education system include ‘inter-regional disparities, lack of inter-racial harmony, lack of curriculum relevance, lack of accountability, lack of quality and effective monitoring’ (Ranaweera 1995 in Wickramasuriya 2005:173). The following chapter will firstly provide an account of the various historical forces that have shaped present day public education in Sri Lanka. Next, it will outline the general structure of national education and delve into the shortcomings of the national schooling system. Finally an examination of recent education reforms will be explored before the Sri Lankan international school system is introduced.

An Overview of the Island

Sri Lanka is an independent island state off the southern coast of India, home to a population of 21 million. There are four major ethnic groups. The majority being Sinhalese that constitute 73.9% of the population, followed by Indian and Sri Lankan origin Tamils that make up nearly 12.6% of the inhabitants. 7.4% of the population represent the Moors while the rest include Burghers (those of Dutch and Mixed descent), Parsis (Western Indian Immigrants) and Veddas (the indigenous inhabitants). Likewise, the religious make-up of the island is equally diverse with around 68% being Buddhist, 7.6% consisting of Hindus, 7.1% being
Muslim and 6.2% of Christian faith (Index Mundi, 2013)

The ‘Mahavamsa’ (an ancient text) portrays a special bond between Buddhism, the Sinhalese people and Sri Lanka. This connection between religion, language and national identity established in the ancient scripture depicts a portrayal of Sri Lanka as the exclusive homeland of the Sinhalese culture emphasizing an anxiety to ‘revive, preserve and strengthen’ this alleged ownership by the Sinhalese ‘Lion’ race. The Tamils on the other hand are characterized as a threat with historical antecedents that generate and sustain hostility (Sharma 1976). Hence, as Udagama (1990) criticizes, Sri Lanka does not seem to have a national identity but an ethnic one.

This strong culture of identifying oneself with ethnicity makes Sri Lanka a robust case for this research as international schools are domains that strive to break such identities by welcoming students from all religious and ethnic backgrounds so long as they can afford the fees. However, in the process of creating a pluralistic generation with a global outlook, international schools also foster alternate identities that may not resonate with the Sri Lankan way of life.

The island was plagued by a 30-year civil war that lasted from 1983 until 2009, claiming the lives of over 60,000 Sri Lankans and displacing over a million of its inhabitants (Stewick and Levinson 2007). It was a war fought between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Elaam (LTTE) that demanded a separate state in the North and East of the country for the Tamil population. The roots of this civil dispute lay in post-independence political decisions of which education was a significant contributing factor.

A Brief Historical Narrative of Sri Lanka

Pre-Colonial History

The pre-colonial history of Sri Lankan education began as early as 543BC with the arrival of Prince Vijaya to the island. Education at that time was the sole privilege of the Royals under Brahmin scholars in their places of abode known as the gurugedara (home of the scholar). With the introduction of Buddhism, the responsibility of education shifted to the pirivenas (monastic colleges) where not
only monks but also male lay students were provided with the opportunity to learn. During the reign of King Mahasen, the curriculum of these monastic colleges incorporated a range of subjects in addition to Buddhism such as languages, astronomy or literature, and there was a clear organizational structure evident. The temples became the provider of primary education while the pirivenas provided secondary education and the *mahaviharas* (head temples) became centres for tertiary education and research (Stephen 2007).

**Colonial Rule**

Sri Lanka’s (then Ceylon) colonial history dates back to Portuguese, Dutch and British rule. It was during the Portuguese rule between 1505-1658AD that an education system involving primary and secondary schooling for males and primary schooling for females was set up in the maritime cities such as Kotte (Western coast) and Jaffna (Northern Coast). During the Dutch period (1658-1796), education continued to prevail in this fashion. Once the British got hold of the entire island in 1815, the development of education advanced rapidly. The British period was known as the missionary era of education where many Christian missionary schools were set up.

When the British took over the entire island in 1815, the education system of Ceylon underwent some major changes. The British commenced mass education (MoE 2004) and at the same time promoted a dual system of education. During British colonial rule, existing pre-colonial vernacular primary schools continued to function. Warnasuriya (1969: 814) denotes that the vernacular schools were meant for the ‘poor and humble sections of the community and provided a narrow literacy program just sufficient to serve the needs of the class concerned’. However, more attention was placed by the colonial power on high fee levying high status schools that operated in the English medium. These English medium schools patronized by the elites provided high quality education for those who could afford to pay the fees. These schools provided education up to secondary level. They were limited to a few urban areas and those who went to these English schools gained most of the
white-collar jobs during the colonial period. All government employment, for instance, was open only to those that attended these schools (Ranasinghe 1999) and the ‘English educated Sri Lankans began to look down upon their own people who did not speak English’ (Punchi 2001, p.367). As Fernando (1977) observed, English was a ‘passport’ for better education, jobs and money and the elite who were educated in English were ‘economically and culturally divorced from the vast majority of Sri Lankans’ (Fernando 1977 in Wickramasuriya 2005:169).

Simultaneously, the British strategy of ‘divide and rule’ meant that the Tamil ethnic minority received preferential treatment and held high-ranking jobs in comparison to the majority Sinhalese ethnic group. All this exacerbated social inequality. Parallel to this system, the Buddhist pirivenas continued to exist.

In 1931, although still under British rule, Ceylon was granted a semi-autonomous status that allowed the people of Ceylon to control education policy through a Ministry of Education. Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara was appointed as the first Minister for Education and he laid the foundation for the national educational system that prevails today in the country. It was during this period that the official language of Ceylon was switched from English to Sinhalese and Tamil. There were ongoing debates to promote free education throughout the years 1943-44 and finally in 1945, the free education policy was established. The Minister for Education, Dr. Kannangara was at the forefront of a number of education reforms during this period including the establishment of free education, diversification of the curriculum, provision of a midday meal, establishing the University of Ceylon and the network of Central Schools.

The Central schools was a novel concept that involved the brightest students from the primary schools being given entrance to these schools through a public competitive examination so that they could receive quality education in the English medium. Central schools were thus a primary driver of upward social mobility. As Kannangara, in Sumathipala (1968:288) sums up, ‘It was the boast of the great Augustus that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble. How much nobler will be the state (of Ceylon) boast when we shall be able to say that we found education dear
and left it cheap, that we found it a sealed book and left it an open letter, that we found it the patrimony of the rich and left it the inheritance of the poor”.

**Independence and the Rise of Nationalism**

Upon independence in 1948, free education was made available to all children in the country in the Sinhalese and Tamil languages. In 1953, vernacular language was introduced at secondary level and by the 1960s was extended to university level. In addition, central colleges with a full range of facilities were established in each electoral division to ensure greater access to education for all (Punchi 2001). As the constitution of the democratic, socialist republic of Sri Lanka (in MoE 2004:1) states, ‘the state is pledged to establish in Sri Lanka a democratic socialist society, the objective of which include the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels’.

One of the immediate effects of this was a rapid rise in educational participation. As Jayaweera (1989) notes, urban, rural and gender discrepancies declined unlike any other country in South Asia. Figures such as a 90% literacy rate and an average life expectancy of seventy-two years were all possible in Sri Lanka because of this freely available education in the native language. Free education hence resulted in exceptionally high literacy rates in Sri Lanka compared to the rest of the developing world. Wickramasuriya (2005: 172) contests this by claiming that despite the high human development indicators, Sri Lanka also has the highest suicide rates in South Asia signifying ‘frustration, demoralization, loss of opportunity, inequality and poverty’ within this highly literate community.

Taylor (1997:27) describe, ‘policies are never value free and power and control are central in policy processes’. It is due to this reason that all elites have a common key characteristic; ‘the exercise of power, which gives them the common motive to preserve that position of power and the system that gives rise to it, over and above all other considerations (Dye and Ziegler 1996:12). Soon after independence, most of the political leaders that came into power were those educated in private missionary schools in the English medium. However, affiliations with the English language were seen as unpatriotic and at odds with the emerging sense of
nationalism. Thus, English was subdued and the shift to education in the national languages took place.

‘Language in education systems has long been recognized not only as a very significant indicator of power relations in society but also as a very important instrument for continuity or change’ (Bray and Kao 2004:215). In 1956, under Prime Minister SWRD Bandaranayake’s government, the Sinhalese language was made the official language giving it prominence over Tamil and English (Richardson 2005). Bourdieu and Thompson (1991) highlights the significance of education in the creation and reproduction of socio-linguistic hierarchies when they state that, via agents of regulation and imposition, ‘legitimate languages’ are produced and thereby social inequalities are generated. This was precisely the case in Sri Lanka as schools were segregated along linguistic lines.

The state steers sentiments of its citizens by making them feel like part of a community or by making certain groups feel like outsiders with their top-down linguistic policies. The state can make one feel at home but can also make you feel like strangers in your own homeland. The ‘Swabhasha’ policy commenced with the educational reforms in 1945 and required students to be educated in their ‘mother-tongue’. Sinhalese, Tamil and English medium schools were thus set up. Sri Lankan Muslims were able to claim Arabic as their mother tongue and therefore choose to be either educated in Sinhalese or Tamil schools. However, for the others, educational segregation based on language indirectly reinforced ethnic partition. As Davies (2004) notes, this segregation promoted inter-ethnic enmity and mistrust.

The struggle for independence in the late 1940s was a joint effort by the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders of the time. However the decision to make Sinhalese the national language was one of the key reasons for the Tamils to lose faith in the Sinhalese leaders. The quality of Tamil medium schools with mistranslations in textbook translations or poor infrastructure was generally poor compared to Sinhalese schools (Stewart 2005). The Sinhalese Only Act of 1956 made fluency of Sinhalese a requirement for all government jobs. This meant that migrant Sinhalese people occupied the civil servant jobs of the majority Tamil areas. Nevertheless, in the years following 1956, Tamil students performed better at
university entrance in the Sciences than the Sinhalese because of their comparatively high literacy in English (De Silva 1984:126). The Sinhalese majority government also passed a number of other educational policies at the direct expense of the ethnic minorities. The government introduced quotas for university entrance that required Tamils to get much higher scores than the Sinhalese. The representation of the Tamils in the sciences fell from 35.3% in 1970 to 19% in 1975. The national schooling system thus contributed to the creation and perpetuation of conflict through its political affiliations and bias towards economic inequities.

Sorenson (2008:426) observes that the LTTE’s fight for separatism had direct links to the discriminating measures of the Sri Lankan schooling system. He notes that ‘schools defined the Tamil person through alternative social imagery’ and this was even more apparent during the peak of the war when in certain LTTE controlled areas of the North and East, the LTTE established their own department of education, promoting norms that were altogether different from the national schooling system. It was not only the education system within the schools that generated conflict but the way in which social identities are formed via interaction among peer groups within the classroom (Davies 2004). War can alter the experience of childhoods (Bernat 1999) and this was the case in Sri Lankan schools where minorities were looked upon with scrutiny. Balasundaram (2008) on his study of Tamil students in Sinhalese schools highlights harassment that was based on making fun of their accents, referring to them as ‘Tamil Tiger Terrorists’ or restricting the students from speaking in Tamil during school hours. These strong makings of a Sinhalese Buddhist cultural domain is likely to bring about resistance to the newer commoditized international schooling system that approaches education from a diversity driven western model. As the results section later highlight, one of the biggest allegations made towards international schools is that they strip the Sri Lankan students of their traditional values and identity.

Even though the national schools have made many reforms in recent years to appreciate the multiplicity of ethnic diversity, Levinson and Stevick (2007) note that there was little mixing between students who study in different mediums within the same school. The Sri Lankan schooling system is thus critiqued of being
'exam-oriented, individualistic, competitive, and neglects social concern and value promotion' (Udagama 1990). Wijewardene (1999) in his study of international school choice in Colombo points out that one of the primary reasons for opting into an international education was that international schools provided equal opportunity to any race or religion. This ‘ethnic sensitivity’ is further complimented via the gender-neutral co-educational system that international schools in the island offer as opposed to many of the national single sex institutions in Colombo.

Private School Debate

Sri Lanka is a unique case as it is one country where legally, the establishment of private schools has been banned post independence. Yet, numerous loopholes in the legal framework prevail that allow for the existence of private education so long as they don’t carry the terminology ‘private’. The following section will outline the development of the anti-private education debate in Sri Lanka and conclude with the pressures it has launched for contemporary Sri Lankan governance.

The private schools started by Christian missionaries during British times were seen to evoke colonial pro-elitist sentiments. Thus, for those that grew up within the free national education system, private schools continued to be a reminder of colonial power and a driving force for social stratification. In 1961, therefore, the government of Ceylon decided to ban the establishment of any new private schools under the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges Special Provisions Act. Existing private schools were given the option of abolishing fees and receiving state grants to become semi-government assisted schools or continue to remain as unaided fee levying schools.

As the Government of Ceylon 1961 (in Wikramanayake 2009:107) notes: ‘No person shall, on or after the date of the commencement of the Act, establish any schools for the education of persons who are between the ages of five and fourteen years (both ages inclusive)’. 
From the above quote it is evident that schooling was hence viewed as the sole responsibility of the state. Moreover, it was the general consensus that private institutions perpetuated injustices prevalent during colonial times and the state was the only responsible body that could counteract these existing problems by providing free and fair education for all.

The Sri Lankan education system thus differs from the classical developmental model of education in post-colonial countries in this important aspect where private sector is discouraged from financing and delivering education. There are legal restrictions concerning the establishment of private schools and government reluctance to accredit private universities. This has weakened the flow of resources in Sri Lanka when even former communist countries such as Russia and China have thriving and expanding private education sectors today (Aturupane 2008). Hence Sri Lanka has about 9790 national schools in the government sector and only 78 private schools (MoE 2004).

As a result of the earlier restrictions of English education, by the 1970s, youth educated in the vernacular languages were still not able to reap the benefits of free education, as jobs required a high standard of English proficiency. Not only was English a pre-requisite for employment but also for equal social standing in post-colonial Sri Lanka (Wickramasuriya 2005). English, referred to as 'kuduwa' (the sword) colloquially by Sri Lankans, needed to be overthrown. These sentiments stemmed from a notion of inequity and elitist views associated with private schools where English was seen by many language activists as ‘cutting off opportunity more than delivering it and damaging cultural esteem and ethnic relations’ (Lo Bianco 1999: 61). Perera (2006) thus concludes that it is ironic that English was introduced as a compulsory second language to be taught in all schools so that ‘it would cease to be a badge of social distinction’ as it simply continues to be ‘an agent of social differentiation’ (National Education Commission Report, 2003 in Perera 2006).

Moreover, Perera’s (2006) study of slum schools in Sri Lanka shows that children tend to reproduce adult outlooks of fatalism and helplessness and simply reject English as being impossible to learn. Motivation to learn English is therefore multifactorial, depending on the social cultural milieu, prior experiences,
achievements etc. As Lewis (1970) states, ‘in addition to being a condition of chronic economic poverty, the culture of poverty is characterized by the cognitive poverty of its ‘members’, instilling a fatalism with reference to any possibility of ever achieving a different way of life’ (Lewis 1970 in Perera 2006:23).

Supremacy of English, Tollefson (1991) claims is a legitimate model for governing society where a minority of English speaking elite governs while the masses are shunned from important political decision making. This supremacy of English is evident in early colonial literature where the British claimed to have quoted, ‘Ours is the language of the arts and sciences, of trade and commerce, of civilization and religious liberty.... It is a storehouse of a varied knowledge, which brings a nation within the place of civilization and Christianity... Already it is the language of the Bible...So prevalent is this language already become, as betoken that it may soon become the language of international communication for the world’ (Reads, 1849, p.48, cited in Wickramasuriya 2005: 167).

Thus, any attempts to improve the quality of English education or the setting up of private education institutions were viewed as reforms that appeared to challenge the status quo of post-independence Sri Lanka. Hence there was a rise of insurrections by the JVP (a leftist group) led mainly by the unemployed youth in 1971 and again in 1988. As Wikramanayake (2009:99) observes, ‘English has been, and sometimes still is viewed as the language of the colonial master and the privileged elite in society, rather than an international language that is useful in a global world’. These issues were politically very volatile and as Wikramanayake (2009:99) notes, had a strong element of inhibition. As one of her research interviews revealed, ‘people tend to look at these things not in a cerebral way but in an emotional manner, and then governments in power are reluctant to get involved in these issues because they feel the political fallout will be very negative and uncomfortable’.

Hence, reforms that attempted to modernize the curriculum and enhance future employment prospects were rejected whilst those reforms that promoted equity were retained (Perera 2005). Progressive change therefore was met with opposition influenced by past colonial sentiments. As Udagama (1999:5) observes, Education in Sri Lanka is very much a political act and sometimes a party political act.
Consensus on education reforms introduced by any government in power seems virtually impossible to achieve by a society that is highly politicized. For example, when the Presidential Task Force on Education in 1997 attempted to introduce English medium teaching in schools, Perera (2001:8) questions, ‘why this persistent slavery to the English language and this too after 53 years of independence?’ This form of resistance extended beyond schools to include tertiary educational institutions as well. Despite the national universities being able to accommodate only three percent of the age group entering university, there are heavy restrictions on private universities. In 1980, the setting up of a private medical college was met with violent protests and the subsequent integration of it into the state sector. The socialist groups have almost brainwashed the minds of the students into believing that ‘any non-governmental involvement in tertiary education will result in the creation of an elitist culture which they will not be part of’ (Wikramanayake 2009:114).

Castles (1988:4) notes that the state is ‘at one and the same time the guardian angel of the capitalist economic process and the chosen instrument for protecting society from the corrosive impact of that process’. This is evident in the Sri Lankan government’s stance on establishing private educational institutions. Sri Lanka actively promotes private tertiary education from establishments that are linked to foreign universities as well as local private institutions by reframing the issues to avoid confrontations. Thus private tertiary education establishments are encouraged as long as they do not carry the connotation of ‘university’. Likewise, it is permitted to establish ‘International Schools’ (private fee levying secondary schools that teach in the English medium) under the Company Act with no government affiliations. (See section on International Schools for further details).

The National Schooling Setup

**Governance Structure**

The Education Sector Development Framework Programme (ESDFP 2006) points out that Sri Lanka has about 9800 government schools, 600 pirivenas, 25 special
education schools and about 80 private schools. The government schools are further categorized into national schools and provincial schools. Since 1987, with effect of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, the administration of Sri Lankan education follows a five-tier structure. The Ministry of Education is directly responsible for the administration of the 327 national schools. The provincial council department of education supervises the provincial schools. The responsibilities of the provincial council involve developing education plans and budgets, and deploying education administrators, principals and teachers to the provincial school.

**Figure 2: The Five-Tiered Structure of Education**

The Educational functions of the central government are carried out through the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing policy guidelines, donor coordination, planning at national level, monitoring evaluation and supervision. The Ministry furthermore, also oversees quality assurance, teacher training and development as well as the administering of National Schools. The Ministry provides bursaries for deserving students of low-income families and incentives such as school uniforms, school-meals and transport subsidies. They also conduct a range of educational development
initiatives such as special education, non-formal education, adult education and library and reading habit development programs (MoE 2004).

In addition, a National Institute of Education (NIE) was set up in 1981 in order to promote curriculum development and educational research. The functions of the NIE, the Department of Examinations (DoE) and the Department of Educational Publications (DEP) as outlined by ESDFP (2006) include the preparation of primary and secondary school and teacher education curricula, the conducting professional development programs and courses for principals and other educational administrators and the conducting of public examinations. In addition, these three institutions collaborate in order to publish textbooks and supplementary readers directly or through private publishers, and distribute textbooks free of charge to all school and pirivena (clergy) students.

In 1991, the government felt that they needed to have more research conducted on educational issues and hence the National Education Commission (NEC) was set up to advise the government on overall policy in all aspects of education. The functions of the NEC include making recommendations to the President on educational policy in all its aspects and reviewing and analysing periodically, the National Educational Policy (NEP) and plans in operation and where necessary, to recommend to the President, changes in such policy.

The commission furthermore has the right to make recommendations on the changes in curricula and teaching methods in educational institutions that are necessary to match education to employment, industry and social needs. The NEC is also responsible for suggesting educational institutions to adopt novel and adequate guidance and counselling to students in order to enable them to develop their potential to the full. The NEC furthermore, makes recommendations regarding the measures necessary to strengthen the links between educational institutions and the community and the development of educational institutions as resource centres for all round human development in the community. NEC facilitates the measures necessary to reduce disparities among schools and enhance the professional standing of teachers and other education service personnel.
The institution suggests alternate programs that could be provided for the benefit of the children leaving primary and secondary schools prematurely, to enable them to develop their potential to the full. The NEC is moreover the governing body responsible for initiating changes in curricula necessary to foster the cultural and religious aspirations of students of all communities and religions and initiating legislative changes necessary to give effect to any such recommendations (ESDFP 2006).

In addition to these key-governing bodies, there is the Ministry of Finance and Planning that deals with issues of liaising with donor agencies and international finance organizations to coordinate effective mobilization of foreign aid. The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission deals with technical and vocational education in the island while the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) conducts research in the field of education to provide advice to educational planners.

**FIGURE 3: THE SRI LANKAN EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE**
The Sri Lankan schooling structure is a 13-year program. The years 1-5 are considered as Primary Education while the years 6-13 are regarded as Secondary Education. Education is compulsory for all students aged 5-14 and hence the schooling years 1-9 are considered mandatory. At Primary Level, the focus of education is developing mother tongue, mathematics, religion and environment through play and desk based activities. At this stage the class teacher promotes English via conversational and situational approaches.

In Years 6-9 (also known as the junior secondary level), the curriculum is organized on a subject basis where in addition to mother tongue teaching, a second national language (Sinhalese or Tamil) and English is included. The next two years focus on the GCE Ordinary Levels for which students take 8-10 subjects and the final two years focus on the Advanced Levels for which the students select three subjects from the streams science, commerce and arts. In addition, students are also required to sit for a common general paper and a paper in General English.

**Vocational Education**

Parallel to this conventional system is the technical and vocational education sector. Vocational education gained popularity in Sri Lanka since the 1977 open economy and was seen as a means of integrating rural youth into the economic sector. However, vocational education is usually associated with the poor sectors of society as the conventional academic path is still considered to be the acceptable form of education. The vocational sector operates outside of the Ministry of Education, however unlike the international school industry has strong links to the national government. The following section will outline the vocational education sector to show that it is a default option for those who cannot access the conventional schooling system and an area where the retaliation against English language was perpetuated. The rationale for emphasizing the vocational education sector at this point is to highlight the fact that since the 1970s, Sri Lanka has placed much more emphasis on vocational education that appeals to the lower socio-economic classes rather than actively encourage privatisation or English education. While vocational education inevitably improved the living conditions for those
who could not reap the benefits of the traditional academic educational path via the creation of jobs in the secondary sector, it also exacerbated the divide between the social classes. It thus inadvertently promoted the shunting and slowing down of private education growth.

Henry (1999) notes that education is increasingly commoditized and transformed into a service. The purpose of it has therefore shifted to that of ‘participation’ in the greater agenda of economics. Hence we witness a shift away from child centred education to a more industry centred vocational system. Due to advancements in modern technology and automation, fewer highly qualified middle and lower level skilled personnel are needed. Instead, there is an unprecedented demand for the two extremes of highly competent and low skilled workers (Tilak, 2002). A concept which made Foster (2013:153) declare that ‘vocational education is the cart rather than the horse in economic growth’. In relation to this, Stromquist and Monkman (2000) observe that schooling is used as a method for differentiating students in their early phases into those that grow up to be the top dollar earning innovators of the 21st century and those that simply supply the missing labour. They note this by stating that a ‘knowledge society must count on a cadre of individuals whose knowledge is low enough to accept menial tasks or whose social conditions are such that they cannot claim the more dignified, high paying tasks for themselves’ (Stromquist and Monkman 2000:13).

Vocational education was seen as a means of integrating the working class youth to the economy while upholding basic moral commitments to equal educational opportunities (Benavot, 1983). In Sri Lanka, a similar rationale holds true. As Diyasena (1976) notes, by introducing pre-vocational studies at junior secondary level, the enrichment, diversification and partial vocationalization of the secondary curriculum will hope to correct the prevalent ‘white-collar’ bias within the island. Vocational education would also be a method of teaching and learning that is more interesting and meaningful by relating it to the environment of the student. The emergence of trade liberalization and the growth of the private sector since the political reforms of 1977 meant a greater demand for a workforce to serve in the modern technical environment. Changing livelihood opportunities to production
and service oriented private firms demanded youth with specialized skills at different levels thus resulting in a greater demand for vocational and technical education (Hettige 2004). Moreover, technical training was to also denote an avenue for self-employment in the booming informal sector that is an inevitable characteristic of large developing cities.

Unlike the rest of her South Asian neighbors, Sri Lanka does not have large-scale industries. Rather, small to medium enterprises (SMEs) govern the country. Hence, vocational education was also seen as a means for youth to obtain training within these SMEs (ADB, 2011). Furthermore, in 1971, an insurrection led by unemployed youth to overthrow the government generated violence throughout the island, questioning the quality of education as well as its effectiveness in aiding people to find suitable livelihoods (Aturupane 2008). Thus, the corporate plan by the Tertiary Vocational Education Commission (TVET) was initiated and called for reforms in the light of ‘providing education that keeps up with the human resource needs of the economy. The Ministry of Education recognized the importance of globalization demanding flexibility in the workplace and thus decided to implement a flexible learning opportunity with the introduction of a ‘life-skill’ component to the general curriculum.

Another intrinsic element that emerged with globalization was the flourishing of the high tech industries; a concept that Carnoy (1998) referred to as the ‘rise of a science and math culture’. Techno-science, Slaughter (1998) states, at once becomes both science and product and hence collapses the distinction between knowledge and commodity. Sri Lanka has therefore recognized a potential niche to provide not just low skilled labour but also highly competent technologists to specific industries. The vocational educational component thus plays a vital role in facilitating the development of knowledge-based experts (Obeysekera, 2009).

Technical and Vocational Education too has a prominent place in history, being established for over a century. The first technical college of the country was set up in Colombo in the year 1893 when agriculture needed irrigation expertise. Since British rule, however, the focus was shifted away from vocational education to a more colonial induced general education system that prepared students for national Ordinary and Advanced Level examinations. The insurrection events of
1971 however re-focused the attention on vocational training. This was because well
qualified yet unemployed youth ended up becoming militant, attempting to
overthrow the government as they struggled to make ends meet. The Ministry of
Education hence introduced pre-vocational education into the junior secondary
and secondary curriculums (Grades 6-9, 10-13) in 1972; the justification being that
vocational education would ‘introduce the student to the world of work and its
ethics and bring the school closer to the community’ (MoE 2004).

Pre-vocational education was to take 20% of class time meaning that out of the
compulsory subjects, two subjects were to be of a vocational nature. A decade later,
pre-vocational education was replaced in schools by ‘life-skills education’. The
difference between these two forms lay in the fact that life skills was not linked to a
particular vocation or locality, which was the case with the former system. In
addition to the compulsory vocational component of the formal schooling system,
there are also non-formal schools such as farm schools present in the island
(Gunawardena 1991).

In 1991, the Technical and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) was
established as a nationally recognized system under the Ministry of Vocational and
Youth Affairs to provide Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET).
TVET was defined as the ‘study of technologies and related sciences, and the
acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understandings and knowledge relating to
occupations in various sectors of economic and social life’ (Jayalath 2010:2).

According to the TVEC corporate plan, ‘their vision’ was to assure gainful
employment globally that is relevant to changing market needs. Consequently, in
1997 a presidential task force on TVET was set up in order to implement some
major reforms to the existing vocational system. The National Vocational
Qualifications were to be extended to a seven level plan from certificate level
(levels 1-4) to Diploma (5-6) and Bachelors level (7) (ADB 2011).

Sri Lanka currently has over 600 vocational courses that cater for 96 craft
occupations, 14 middle technician jobs and 4 degree level occupations. The
Vocational Training Authority has 275 training centres operating throughout the
island at national, district and rural levels in addition to the 1138 private and NGO
led training centres of the island (TVEC, 2011) In 2008, Universities for Vocational
Technology (UNIVOTEC) was set up that provides degree level education in 38 technical colleges out of which 09 receive external funding from the Asian Development Bank. Moreover, there is also a National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority that provides apprenticeships to students with vocational education.

Sri Lanka has recognized the need to focus beyond the industry sector and recent changes to the system include vocational qualification that are specific to the service sector such as beautician courses and information and communication technology (ICT). Hettige (2004) observes that increased integration into the global system requires ICT and English skills. In 2001 therefore, the school curriculum was upgraded so that all students would be competent in ICT by the end of their secondary education. As Aturupane (2008:37) notes, incorporating English and ICT would ‘orient the education system better to the world of work’.

Cooray (2006) shows that technical education in Sri Lanka is lacking a market-driven approach. The modern world changes rapidly with technological evolutions and vocational teaching needs to keep in par with these global economic trends. Yet it often lags behind (Obeysekara 2009). ‘Relative scarcities’ such as computer technology are an intrinsic element of the neo-liberal world (Stromquist 2002) but in Sri Lanka, machinery and equipment in TVET centres are ‘irrelevant and obsolete’. Syllabuses are too rigid with a lack of capital, skilled teachers and learning material in local languages (Lillis, 1983). Thus, nearly one fourth of the students are trained in sectors that are not in industrial demand (Amarasinghe 2009). The strong vocational education heritage is yet another phase of resistance in Sri Lanka.

However, a historical expectation about what is valid knowledge is embedded in Sri Lanka’s colonial history. The British colonists and the local elites perceived education as ‘wholly restricted to reading, writing or the academic’ (Lillis 1983:92). Hence, TVET was considered as something for the poor and it was the interests of the elites that received most commendation and funding. These normative perspectives based on colonial value have shaped the emerging division of labour and re-defined the core-periphery relationship. This ‘colonization of the mind’, as
Tikly (2001) observes, limits the state capacity to reinforce own educational agendas.
Parents therefore resent the TVET system and students select it only as a default option due to its lower level of recognition. Moreover, regional disparities in vocational education also exist. For instance, better off schools in Colombo offer photography and motor mechanics while rural schools limit their vocational education to subjects like local ‘fishing techniques’ (Diyasena 1976). Even government organizations and private industries fail to see its worth. There is an absence of a fixed salary structure for craft personnel and a lack of compulsion for public institutions to recruit TVET candidates (NEC 2010). As the ADB (2011) points out, the biggest challenge is to promote vocational education as a recognized qualification among the general public.

**Problems with the National Education System**

**Access Issues**

Although the government implemented free education with the hope of achieving near universal rates of attendance, participation and access to schooling have continued to be somewhat unsatisfactory. At Primary stage, the MoE (2004) observes that attendance is 96%. However, 17% of students are said to be dropping out when they reach the 9th year of their education. This is approximately 10% of children aged five to fourteen who are not attending schools. The primary reason for this is poverty. The option of child labour seems more enticing for those that live below the poverty line. Moreover, increased family breakups as mothers leave for foreign countries to work as housemaids have also contributed to student dropouts. The civil war that plagued the island till 2009 was another contributing factor. The Ministry of Education (2004) claims that in 2004, there were approximately 50000 in refugee camps unable to receive proper schooling. The recruitment of child soldiers by the LTTE was a further reason for high drop out rates in the North and East of the country.
Amarasinghe and Ratnayake (2008) observe that attempting to provide free education to an entire nation has come at the cost of poor quality. The government expenditure on Sri Lankan education in 2008 amounts to about US$175 million annually. The education budget has accounted for approximately 3% of national income and 10% of government spending. However Amarasinghe and Ratnayake (2008) note that the government expenditure has been on recurrent expenditure rather than capital accumulation. The majority of investment is on textbooks, teacher salaries, uniforms and scholarships while little is spent on building new infrastructure or putting in quality inputs such as equipment, technology or furniture. The fact that Sri Lanka built the majority of her schools during the 1950s-1970s has meant that there is no need for major investment in building new schools and hence low capital budget allocations.

**Figure 4: Total Public Expenditure on General Education 2005-2010**

Source: Amarasinghe and Ratnayake 2008
The above table illustrates that despite receiving increasing foreign aid for educational development, Sri Lanka's investment in building newer educational infrastructure is significantly low. Instead, money is spent on recurrent expenditure. International schools therefore are a blossoming field that aims to fill the gap left in new investments by mushrooming to meet increasing demand throughout the country.

In an attempt to provide universal education, Sri Lanka has established primary schools not more than 2km from a person’s abode and secondary schools within a 5km range. In practice, students are given preference to attend the schools closest to their residential area. After sitting for the Year Five Scholarship Examination, highest achieving students have the opportunity to shift to better schools throughout the island. Not all schools however are of a similar standard. Schools from the major cities such as Colombo, Kandy and Galle are generally of a higher standard with better infrastructure. There are regional variations in cognitive achievements with the more affluent schools from the Western Province having the highest achievement levels. Small schools do not have the same facilities as

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1 Rs. M = Sri Lankan Rupees Million. The exchange rate as of 22nd August 2013 was 1USD= 132 SL Rupees.
some of the well-known urban schools. Thus there is an increased demand for popular prestigious urban schools. Parents forge residency details in order to gain access to these popular national or central schools despite government restriction. This has meant that most urban schools are overcrowded (Amarasinghe and Ratnayake 2008). As Hettige (2004) notes, the ban on private education did not necessarily lead to equalization. The Grade Five Scholarship Scheme in fact has reinforced the importance of privileged urban schools.

**Quality Issues**

Aturupane (2008) observes that the main focus of education in Sri Lanka till recent years has been on the quantitative expansion at the expense of quality. The 1971 insurrection led by unemployed JVP youth to overthrow the government called for serious reconsideration of the quality of education. Despite the Swabasha policy to conduct education in one’s mother tongue, the value of English language competency continued to persist. The Swabasha policy reinforced monolingualism and had serious repercussions on ethnic harmony.

English continues to be the path for upward mobility (De Silva and De Silva 1990). The expanding corporate sector for example uses English as their language of business and hence employs English educated youth. As Hettige (2004:1) states, ‘English education is the most significant avenue of upward social mobility irrespective of one’s class position and has come under the influence of a competitive market that naturally favours the well to do’. However, the ‘need for competence in English has been downplayed in an attempt to provide equal opportunity for the rural child’ (Wikramanayake 2009:94).

As Perera (2010) observes, English language teaching in state schools has been particularly problematic due to the heterogeneity of the students. Students from English speaking backgrounds, especially from cities such as Colombo and Kandy are more competent in English skills compared to certain rural students whose exposure to the language is limited to what is being taught at school alone. When year five scholarship holders enter the urban schools with very little prior exposure to English, Perera (2010) notes that teaching that attempts to accommodate both
groups can become very problematic. Hence, ‘English language papers are not set to test competency at a high level and even a distinction pass is not necessarily an indicator of a very high level of achievement (Hettige 2004:10). The growing demand for English therefore has not been met due to a shortage of teachers. This caused those left out to look at English as a barrier to their development. As Wikramanayake 2009:90) notes, this ‘inequality of education opportunity was followed by a surge in Sinhala nationalism’.

Lack of quality has been highlighted in the Sri Lankan schooling system in many fields. Apart from the apparent lack of English teaching, the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is also criticized for being rather poor. Furthermore, the curriculum is criticized for not being par with modern day needs by the majority of the interviewees. As the Marga Institute emphasize, ‘an enquiring mind, ability for analysis and reasoning, the application of knowledge to practical problems and a problem solving approach, knowledge and interest in contemporary social and economic development, capacity for leadership and teamwork, a work ethos with values of productivity and discipline imparted through appropriate learning experiences in suitable technical/vocational subjects, and most importantly good communication skills, both oral as well as written, even in the mother tongue not to mention English’ are all necessary changes that the present education system must address (MoE 2004:10). Parents address this lack of quality by spending money on private tutoring which shows that apart from the lowest earning strata, the middle-income obtaining people are willing to pay for improved quality.

The lack of teachers and teacher absenteeism are adding to the problem of quality. In Sri Lanka, teaching is one of the lowest paid sectors of government employment. Teachers are entitled to 40 days personal leave in addition to their normal school vacations and public holidays. Taking into consideration the fact that regulations are sometimes not strictly enforced, the number of personal leave days taken could be higher with de facto absenteeism. As Amarasinghe and Ratnayake (2008) point out, the average teacher absenteeism in the North Central Province is 43 days. Furthermore, only a third of teachers are computer literate while only 53.7% being
English literate. Teacher placement, in theory requires teachers to be transferred to more rural disadvantaged communities. However, in practice, this is hindered by political interferences that order specific transfers resulting in a surplus of teachers in urban schools and a deficit in rural areas.

The problem of quality concerns in education have transcended beyond the schools to include universities as well. The politicization of the university system is a major cause for concern. Students perceive universities as an extension of state derived powers and have turned universities into ‘battle grounds of political struggle and inevitably of conflicts and violence, trying to challenge the power of the state’ (Amarasinghe and Ratnayake 2008:20). There is deteriorating discipline evident from the frequent strikes and student unrests. This was clearly demonstrated during the insurrections of 1988-1989 led by the JVP students who sought to gain control of every aspect of the university and topple the government. In 2005-2006, 275 working days were lost due to student unrest (Amarasinghe and Ratnayake 2008). Moreover, newcomers to university are harassed during the ‘ragging season’, sometimes receiving physical threats besides verbal abuse. There have even been cases of the loss of life as a result of such activity.

Recent Education Reforms

Reforms aimed at rectifying the government concerns regarding the drawbacks with the national education system such as lack of accessibility to education, deteriorating quality and low English competency began as early as the 1940s. The first reform was held in 1943 under the special committee report to encourage free education. Subsequent reforms took place in 1960, 1971 and 1981 (MoE 2004). However it was only in 1997 under President Kumaratunga that a comprehensive package of reforms was introduced to the island.
The Presidential Task Force Reforms of 1997

The Presidential Task Force Reforms of 1997 were a comprehensive response to the deteriorating quality of public education outlined in the previous section. The reforms coincide simultaneously with the boom in international school numbers in Sri Lanka, signifying the increasing demand for an alternate form of education at the failure of public schooling to satisfy late 20th century educational expectations.

The National Education Plan of 1997 notes that ‘values are not taught but caught’. Sri Lanka was in a state of turmoil in 1997 with the war ravaging in the North and East of the country. Suicide bombings were a common occurrence and there was increased hostility between different ethnic groups. Thus, attempts were made to incorporate value education to the classroom in addition to the religious lessons. The promotions of moral, ethical and spiritual values through the humanities as well as the promotion of peace and social harmony via the introduction of subjects such as conflict resolution and democratic studies were some of the reforms that took place in 1997.

The year 1997 was thus declared as the year of educational reforms and President Kumaratunga appointed a special task force on general education. Primary level reforms were concluded island wide by 1999 and secondary level reforms were completed by 2003. The main focus of the 1997 reforms were to ‘empower the students with skills and necessary knowledge’ to face the modern world. In 1997, the same time that fighting between the LTTE and Sri Lankan forces was at an escalating stage, education reform was aiming to promote core values, compassion, care and tolerance. The 1997 reforms attempted to improve the quality of education, extend educational opportunity by providing education for all, develop practical and technical skills, provide training opportunities for teachers and improve the provision and management of resources (UNESCO 2010/2011 in MoE 2004).

One of the first things that the 1997 government did was to make education compulsory for all students aged between five and fourteen years. This was followed by a focus on favouring disadvantaged areas and schools with
development projects such as the plantation sector school development, primary school development and the Navodhya school project. Next, in order to encourage special education, 34 registered special schools that receive government assistance were set up. In addition, literacy centres in disadvantaged areas for those dropped out or not enrolled in schools and community learning centres were also established.

To keep education on par with present day global needs, the Task Force carried out several steps to ameliorate scientific, mathematical and technological knowledge. More focus was placed on ICT education and a new technology stream was introduced at Advanced Level. In addition, co-curricular activities that developed technical and practical skills were also encouraged. In order to strengthen the level of English, English language was taught as a subject from Year 6 onwards and made a compulsory subject for the Ordinary Levels.

In 2000, a cabinet decision to allow Advanced Level Science students to study in the English medium and for students from year 6 onwards to study certain subjects in the English was passed (National Education Commission (NEC) 2003). Moreover, in 2001, the Secondary Education Modernization Project sought to provide ICT facilities, junior science labs, activity rooms and resource rooms for English in many of the government schools (UNESCO 2011). As the NEC (2003) point out, there was a need to focus on resource allocation where government funding should be distributed within the school in an ‘equitable and efficient manner to benefit all students’. The present Sri Lanka education system therefore is trilingual with English, Sinhalese and Tamil compulsory with English facilitating both as a link language and an asset for a globalized world.

The standard of English in national schools, despite these improvements was still inadequate. One reason for this is that the best English teachers concentrate in a few of the established schools in urban areas while rural schools lack high quality English teachers. Another reason is that spoken English is not adequately encouraged with more emphasis being placed solely on teaching grammar. Without frequent conversing, students become backward to practice their English
skills.

The rising demand for high quality English education is a major factor that contributes to the popularity of Sri Lankan international schools. International schools operate entirely in the English medium and students are discouraged from speaking in the vernacular language during school hours. This aids to improve students’ English language skills vastly.

Moreover, as international schools charge high fees from the students, the international school owners in return are able to provide higher quality resources such as larger computer labs, well equipped laboratories, multimedia educational aids etc. By welcoming students from all ethno religious backgrounds, these schools also inadvertently break any racial barriers.

*The ‘Mahinda Chinthana’*

In 2006, Under President Mahinda Rajapaksa, education reforms were incorporated into the government policy document, the *Mahinda Chinthana*. The broad objective of the Mahinda Chinthana Vision 2011 was to promote the development of 1000 Secondary Schools of very high standard. As the *Mahinda Chinthana Vision 2011* (in Ministry of Education 2012) states,

“Under the massive program for the development of 1000 Secondary Schools distributed over Divisional Secretariat areas, complete in quality with the future in mind will be established. They will protect the Sri Lanka identity, promote core values and will provide equal opportunities for the children of the nation to acquire the knowledge and skills through access to an equal and high quality education which will enable them to be active citizens of the global village. This will promote, broaden and give a greater practical meaning to free education”.

The above quote highlights Sri Lanka’s primary focus of providing equality that the private schooling system aims to impair. However, the objective here is to ameliorate the quality and relevance of national education to an extent that it meets the demand of globalisation whilst ensuring that it does not give way to an
imbalance in opportunity. The practicality of this massive project is hard to scrutinize at present since only one school has so far been established.

The first of these schools, named the Mahinda Rajapaksa Vidyalaya was set up in Homagama. This school operates like the rest of the schools till 1:30pm. However between 1:30 and 3:30 pm, various extra-curricular activities such as English language, foreign languages, indoor and outdoor games, aesthetic events, scouting and Red Cross take place. Moreover, this school comprises of three computer labs, science labs, arts theatre, sports field and an agricultural farm. By establishing another 999 schools of a similar standard, the Ministry of Education hopes to significantly solve the problem of quality in secondary education.

Other steps taken so far under President Rajapaksa include a collaboration with the Dialog Axiata company to provide colour television and antennas to the 1000 schools so that children could watch the ‘Nenasa Channel’ that broadcasts educational programs in par with the Sri Lankan curriculum. Furthermore, taking part in events such as the Intel World Ahead Programme that effectively integrates ICT to student learning or the Oracle Think Quest training programs and international competitions are encouraged under this new vision.

Sri Lankan International Schools

In recent times, a new set of co-educational (most of the time), fee-levying private schools that teach foreign curriculums (and more recently the Sri Lankan Curriculum) in the English Language have emerged to be known as International Schools. They have diverse modes of instruction, fee structures, curriculums and standards. However one thing that all Sri Lankan International Schools share in common is that their medium of instruction is English. Sri Lankan International Schools hence are primarily a language driven response to education with a secondary finance driven element that is a response to increasing competitiveness. Although English was initially viewed as a legacy of colonization, it has now become more of a response to globalization as far as Sri Lankan International Schools are concerned (Jenkins et al. 2005).
English, despite being replaced by the vernacular languages still withholds a strong element of value in society. It is a prerequisite for private sector jobs and a valuable tool even when working in the public sector. English is vital for accessing and sharing global knowledge. In a world where English dominates the World Wide Web, if Sri Lanka is to maintain and develop ties within the global economy, English plays a pivotal role. This is the reason why as Lo Bianco (1999) points out, Sri Lankan language policy has undergone four distinct phases. Firstly during colonial time there was Official English, replaced upon independence by Official Sinhalese. Thirdly, with ethnic conflict there have been attempts to restore Tamil and finally as Sri Lanka steps into this era of globalization, restoration of English is taking place. As Raheem and Gunasekara (1994) observes, ‘Sri Lanka is a culture that is struggling between old colonial systems and new bilingual trends’ (Raheen and Gunasekera 1994 in Jenkins et al. 2005: 114).

Since the establishment of the first international school in Sri Lanka in 1957, in recent times there has been a profusion of institutions in Sri Lanka that claim to be ‘International Schools’. Yet, a few distinguished schools mainly located within two major cities stand out (ISC 2011). Lately, hundreds of international schools have emerged with the International Schools Research Centre (ISC 2012) recognizing 39 international schools in Sri Lanka. The student populations of these schools vary from several thousand to less than a hundred in some cases. NEC (2003) estimates the number of international schools in the island to be between 150 and 200 with an approximate student population of 70000. Aturupane (2008) estimates the number to be even higher and close to 100000. The majority of these schools have very few if any foreign students. Rather, they cater solely for local students who wish to study in the English medium. The teacher composition of these schools is also mainly Sri Lankan.

While the establishment of private schools has been officially banned in Sri Lanka since 1961, international schools operate under a loophole in the legal system. Initially, International schools were established under the Board of Investment (BOI), which is an administrative body that accepts and manages foreign investment. Lately, International Schools are set up under the Companies Act and operate as private businesses. Recently, certain private schools have also been
converted into international schools. This has meant that International Schools are not regulated by the Ministry of Education and therefore show vast diversity in quality. However the popularity of International Schools in Sri Lanka reflects the demand that is present for English education.

In countries with limited financial resources, the quality of state run schools is debatable. The welfare state is no longer adequate or efficient enough. Hence we witness a shift towards private education. As Sen (1982:99) summarizes, ‘the political consensus has shifted in many parts of the world to the point where the so called ‘big government’ of the welfare state has become the enemy of efficient and free markets, where citizens are portrayed as ‘clients’ of the state or consumers of government products and individuals are accepted on the basis of community. As part of the emergent neo-liberal logic, the expansion of consumer choice has trumped equity as a major political goal”. Thus there is “no choice but to choose” a private system of education.

The government has reintroduced English into the National curriculum but the reforms are criticized for being too slow. There are not enough teachers and those who can afford the high fees that International Schools levy take this ‘shortcut’ option for better English education (Jenkins et al. 2005). International Schools with their more modern curriculum are said to ‘narrow the gap between the curriculum and the needs of the current employment atmosphere in Sri Lanka (Jenkins et al 2005: 119).

The re-introduction of English via International Schools increases employment and educational opportunities only for a minority that can afford the high school fees. Hence, the Sri Lankan International Schools are criticized for widening the gap between the rich and the poor and are depicted as a threat to the national system of education (Wickramasuriya 2005). International school students are better in English and attending a private schooling system with better professionals, resources, well-structured education management leaves them in a better off position. They, therefore, receive preference in employment. Students who attend the public system are said to ‘lag behind’ those in the international education system and this might in fact exacerbate existing disparities between different social classes (Jenkins et al. 2005). Moreover, higher wages in International Schools
may attract public school English proficient teachers to the International system causing further deficit to the national education system. This point however is debatable since the private sector, despite its higher wages has little job security. Public school teachers, after completing a certain number of years are entitled to a government pension upon retirement, which is still a very attractive incentive in Sri Lanka.

One of the functions of these international schools is to downplay ethnic differences by welcoming students from all religious and ethnic backgrounds. These schools encourage religious and cultural tolerance and promote multiculturalism. By celebrating festivals from all ethnic and religious communities, international schools encourage cultural isomorphism and a more heterogeneous society. The parents however are concerned that International schools encourage Westernization in place of traditional Sri Lankan values. The International Schools therefore strive to preserve Sri Lankan culture. As Phillipson (2007) observes, if international schools teach English at the expense of the vernacular languages, Sri Lankan cultural identity can be threatened but if English is “anchored in local cultural traditions”, the international schools can ultimately strengthen Sri Lankan culture (Jenkins et al. 2005: 122).

Nevertheless, by imposing very high school fees, these schools accentuate class-based discrimination. The average term fees of Sri Lankan International Schools vary from Rs.8000-40000 (approx. USD 65-300) to even those institutions that charge even higher rates in US dollars. As Wikramanayake (2009:111) observes, ‘students from strictly English speaking homes, those of ethnic minorities or with parents of mixed races, found these schools a haven’. Jayawardena (2000), thus claims that one can ‘purchase’ class by spending money on an elite form of education. Thus international schools cut across the traditional schooling system by producing a socially constructed platform where one could invest in and thereby appear more socially acceptable. English as well as private education that is therefore available to purchase via international schools has thus given rise to a new class of Sri Lankans. They are criticized by some for creating a new kind of
privilege while others look down upon the international school education as something that appeals to the noveau riche.

Amarasinghe and Ratnayake (2009) point out the advantages of establishing private schools in Sri Lanka by stating that they increase the volume of resources invested in education, and allow upper income families to participate in paid education that allows more public resources to be available for students from poor families. Moreover, if more and more private schools were established in the country, it would stimulate economic activity in a sector that has so far been restricted. Lastly, private schools are compelled to provide high quality education in order to compete with free public education. The fact that International Schools manage to exist within a loophole in the system without much opposition show that the real reason for the resentment of private schools has more to do with the historical recollections that continue to persist rather than a genuine concern for exacerbating social stratification.

A key problem for those that graduate from high school with foreign credentials is that they are denied entry into the state universities. Students from Sri Lankan International Schools, hence have the option of sitting for the national curriculum privately in order to seek entrance to State Universities or attend the limited number of private tertiary colleges and institutions. Entrance to Sri Lankan universities are limited anyway with only 2% of the cohort sitting for their Advanced level gaining entry into universities each year. Being more fluent in English compared to their national school counterparts, the International school students are able to obtain decent employment even without attending university (Udagama 2001 in Jenkins et al. 2005).

Most students however opt to go abroad for their studies. The earning capacity for students attending foreign universities or local institutions that offer foreign degrees is considerably higher compared to those that pass out from local universities. This places the international school student at a further advantageous position accentuating existing opportunities for acquiring social capital.
FIGURE 5: EARNING CAPACITY FOR STUDENTS WITH LOCAL AND FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS

Yet a major cause of concern is that 90% of Sri Lankan students who leave for universities overseas do not return to their motherland (Ginige 1994).

Another reason for choosing an International Schooling System in Sri Lanka is as a form of back-up plan for those who do not get into the desired prestigious national schools. The National Schooling system is such that parents are expected to send their children to schools within proximity to their residence. Most of the time, this means that parents are compelled to send their children to substandard local schools. To gain entry into highly competitive prestigious schools in the main cities, proof of residency such as years of electricity bills, house deeds etc. need to be produced.

When students reach Year Five in the national schooling system, they sit for a highly competitive scholarship examination. This exam allows them entry into the more prestigious schools. For parents, this involves, sending children to many tuition classes and if their children do gain entry to better schools, having to deal with transport, boarding or in some cases residential relocation. As Jenkins et al’s (2005) research points out, avoiding the grade five examination hassle is another reason parents place their children in International Schools.
The private sector, despite all its perceived benefits, is not necessarily the best. The fact that international schools are outside the Ministry of Education is viewed by the NEC (2003) as unacceptable and they stress the necessity to establish a valid accreditation and monitoring processes. At present, there is no accountability or monitoring processes in place and therefore the quality of international schools vastly varies.

The researcher’s preliminary visits to International schools throughout Sri Lanka showed significant disparities in facilities. Physically, some international schools where single buildings partitioned poorly into several classrooms with very few basic facilities. Others were high-rise urban institutions lacking any school grounds with very little room for further expansion while only a minority had quality infrastructure such as swimming pools and sporting grounds.

The quality of the education provided too varied. Some schools had a range of extra curricular activities, a range of curriculums such as the IB, Cambridge, Edexcel, Sri Lankan curriculum etc. and qualified teachers while the quality of others were highly disputable. As Jenkins et al. (2005) point out, one of the biggest drawbacks of international schools is that the staff selection is based on English proficiency rather than on pedagogical knowledge. This means that the teachers may speak English fluently but not necessarily be able to teach. One way in which International schools try to avoid this situation is by employing retired teachers with English proficiency from the public system. However this means that these teachers were trained in the mid 1900s and therefore utilizes outdated pedagogical practices (Jenkins et al. 2005).

**The International Schools of Sri Lanka (TISSL)**

In February 2013, as a response to the deteriorating reputation of Sri Lankan International Schools, The International Schools of Sri Lanka (TISSL) was set up. This is a group consisting of 23 ‘Premier’ International Schools. These 23 member schools coordinate with each other in order to ensure that certain standards are maintained and that they provide a high quality international education. According to TISSL (2013), their main objectives are:
1. To enhance and promote the goodwill and relationships between member schools.

2. To contribute to the development of the international education in Sri Lanka.

3. To provide holistic international education while promoting and upholding the values and culture of the country.

4. To assist the Government in promoting and delivering the English Medium education in Sri Lanka.

5. To organize special events to enhance the quality and efficiency of the member schools.

Students attending these schools are given ID cards that help recognize them as belonging to TISSL. The member schools also organize inter-international school sporting and social events so that students can compete and interact with each other and the wider Sri Lankan international school community.

The above-mentioned objectives of TISSL aim to create an even more exclusive culture among a few international schools. By referring to themselves as ‘premier international schools’, these schools differentiate their schools from the plethora of international schools that have emerged lately in Sri Lanka. One objective is to address the demand for quality global education. Another objective is to address the allegations from the government and the national education system that international schools produce Sri Lankan students who are not knowledgeable of Sri Lankan history, geography, religion or mother tongue. Both these objectives at first glance seem practical and attempt to address fatal flaws in the present Sri Lankan international school system.

While the objective regarding the assistance provided to the government in promoting and delivering English medium education seems virtuous, it is important to realize that these premier international schools charge very high fees
that the lower and middle class Sri Lankans will find impossible to afford. The possibility, hence, of actually promoting English medium education will be limited to a small minority.

The first and fifth objective emphasize increased co-operation between the member schools and the wider international school community. However, from the literature review analysed so far in this thesis as well as the discussions following the research results, it is apparent that a major issue is the alienating of international school students from the non-international school sphere. These objectives hence do not indicate any intention to mingle with the wider public school or Sri Lankan community. However, as TISSL was established only in 2013 and the data on their activities are so far limited, it is too early to state whether the objectives are feasible or if they are implemented successfully.

A Review of the History

In the late 19th and early 20th century, gender, class, language, ethnicity and region of origin dictated the quality of education that an individual received in Sri Lanka. To counteract the unfair advantage that those educated in private English schools during the colonial times gained, the government actively encouraged free education in the vernacular. Educational inequality however continued to persist as the quality of Sri Lankan government was under serious scrutiny. Regional disparities in literacy levels meant that pass rates at GCE Ordinary Levels as well as school drop out rates were a major cause of concern. As Perera (1991) ascertains, just one in four of those that sit for Ordinary Levels actually pass.

In 1990, a sessional paper put forward by the Presidential committee outlined the poor quality of the rural schools through the following excerpt that describes a school in rural Anuradhapura district.

‘...The school has no well and therefore there is no drinking water for children or for staff. There are no sanitary facilities...the school has only one lock for the room of the principal, but it can only be opened from the inside. Every morning, a child climbs in through the corridor and unlocks the door for the Principal to come in. School
attendance has improved since the midday meal primarily because parents send their children to collect Rs.3 each day for use by the family. School books rarely arrive on time, sometimes months after school begins, dumped by the lorries in a central location awaiting distribution. There are not enough desks and benches so children are forced to share or sit on the floor.'

(Wickramasinghe 2006:310-311)

Despite high levels of literacy as a result of free compulsory education, there is said to be illiteracy of subtle shapes. For instance, Wickramasinghe (2006:311) highlights that there is an ‘ignorance and inability to understand and use information such as medical knowledge, financial knowledge, or technological knowledge’. There is similarly a ‘lack of understanding of the complexity of certain modern concepts’. Those who could afford private education and those fluent in English therefore continued to be in a privileged position.

International schools provide the Sri Lankans with an alternate school choice. The arguably better infrastructure, facilities, teaching quality coupled with English medium education and foreign qualifications provide an advantage for international school students and their stakeholders compared to their counterparts attending local schools. Moreover, the bureaucratic procedures and the hassle it brings to the local education sector is another factor driving Sri Lankans away from the local education sector. National education is highly politicized and entrance to good national schools is extremely competitive as shown later in chapter six.

Furthermore, appointments within the education ministry are often made depending on political allegiance. Therefore, frequent government changes as well as shifts in political allegiance means frequent changes in educational administrators within the national system. The secretary for education that was interviewed for this research for example is no longer active and was recently replaced with another individual. Likewise, politicians manage to disregard the proximity to residence law and place their children (or supporters’ children) in well-established national schools. This means that those entering these schools via
the Year Five scholarship examinations find themselves in overcrowded schools where education quality is steadily deteriorating. While parents opt to send their children to international schools in order to gain a competitive advantage and avoid bureaucratic hassles, the research will later reveal that a major cause for concern was the deterioration of Sri Lankan norms and values via an international education. The argument made by both the state as well as international school stakeholders was that since the majority of students attending international schools were Sri Lankans, the schools needed to safeguard and maintain local cultural education within these institutions whilst prioritising an English medium of instruction. The following section will therefore explore tradition, local culture and the ideological essence behind international education.

**Tradition and Modernity**

A traditional economy, as Bendix (1967:319) defines, is characterized by ‘economic and familial activities *within* more or less self-sufficient households or estates’ as opposed to a modern economy that therefore is defined via the presence of ‘structural differentiation between the family household and workplace’ where there is ‘increased interdependence of the family with the market or of workers in the factory’.

In a traditional society, the voice of the religious leaders and community chiefs (or elders) is acknowledged with little defiance. There is a stronger sense of solidarity among society members as they unite against alien modernizing forces. Growing from this unity is a strong element of emotional attachment to the ‘way things have always been’ and a downright rejection of external modern influences. In contrast, modern economic societies, via their advanced information and communication technologies, tend to be much more inter-dependent and individualistic at the same time.

Modernity furthermore is viewed as a redirection of societies to suit the western model of capitalism that first evolved during the industrial revolution in Europe. It is synonymous with the collapse of the ‘backward’ feudal societies that were replaced by ‘a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom’ as Truman notes in his 1949 inaugural speech. With scientific and technological
Expertise and via the *technology of social management*, it was deemed possible to fight off the evils of traditional society such as hunger, misery and despair. A major difference between traditional and non-traditional society is *the systematic application of technology and science*. This implies an inquiry into the way we perceive societies, something, which can be viewed as a critique on culture and the way in which different cultures decipher globalization/westernization and/or modernity.

**Westernization as loss of tradition**

Lowe (2000) paints an image of globalization as a net with holes where the international schools and their global connections signify the connected parts of the net. The local, in this scenario, indicates the pitfalls of falling through the net into an abyss that is so disconnected from the rest of the world. Thus international schools that try to be global as well as maintain ties with their immediate local surroundings are as Lowe (2000:1999) describes ‘caught in a dialectic of sub-nationalism and supra-nationalism’. Allan (2003: 133) takes this metaphor a step further to explain that the lack of contact with local community by international schools also represent this hole in the globalization net. ‘Bridging this hole’ he remarks, will allow international schools to ‘enhance internationalism’.

One of the pitfalls of global schools within local settings is that ‘in many less developed countries, schools offering international education provide opportunities for the children of the socio-economic elites of the host country to turn their backs on their own educational system and embrace values of the economically developed world’ (Cambridge and Thompson 2004:170). Certain international schools are reluctant to embrace the languages, values and customs of the local culture and refuse to incorporate them into the curriculum. This lack of contact with local schools is usually a result of a preoccupation of winning over the international community. When international schools do interact with the local culture, the interaction is critiqued of being merely at a superficial stage that only delves into the exotic and merely touristic ‘saris, samosas and steel bands’ aspects of the local culture (Pasternak 1998:260).
At other times, Heyward (2002:27) highlights that ‘genuine attempts to engage with local cultures may unwittingly reinforce attitudes of superiority and paternalism of cultural chauvinism’. Furthermore Heyward (2002) observes that salary disparities between expats and local teachers, as well as issues in cross cultural education result in the further devaluation of local culture at the expense of chauvinistic international attitudes. International schools, as Allan (2002) emphasizes are ‘atolls in a coral sea’ that need to get involved in local community without imposing the school’s value system locally.

A threat to Sri Lankan traditions

Ever since colonialism, there was growing fear of western influences tainting the perceived Sri Lankan traditions. The imagined communities of traditional Sri Lankans were developed not just through ‘ideas of representation’ but also via ‘structures of legal identification and representation’ (Wickramasinghe 2006:xv). From the late 1800s onwards, there was a literal and theatrical revolution taking place that strived to establish what it means to be Sri Lankan. For most part, it was an attempt at distinguishing and differentiating Sri Lankan values from the then dominant colonial norms.

The first mode of legally establishing an imagined Sri Lankan community was through the press. The rise of publications such as the Sinhalajatiya (Sinhalese Race) and Sinhalabaudhya (Sinhalese Buddhist) brought about a change in ‘content and rhetoric’ of Sinhala Buddhist thinking (Wickramasinghe 2006:78). In 1898, Anagarika Dharmapala² published a Sinhalese pamphlet called Gihi Vinaya (The Daily Code for the Laity) that provided a guideline for authentic Sinhala Buddhist behaviour. The qualities attributed to Sinhalese Buddhist culture were defined in contrast to the ‘bad habits’ that the Western nations endorsed. Likewise, secular Tamil newspapers such as the Illangai Mitran and Vijayabahu were also said to have emerged reinforcing notions of what it means to be a Tamil Hindu (Wickramasinghe 2006).

² Anagarika Dharmapala, born as Don David Hawavitharne, was a Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist and writer. He was a founding contributor of non-violent Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalism and a pioneer in the revival of Buddhism in India.
The Theatre was another platform for collective consciousness that was accessible for those who were not as proficient in literature. Wickramasinghe (2006) describes the theatre as a space where the anxieties of the colonized people could be exposed without receiving any political persecution. Hence, ‘through the practice of modern Buddhist rituals, attendance at Buddhist schools, participatory practices such as the theatre and individualist practices such as reading novels and newspapers in the vernacular, a collective identity was taking shape that recognized the white man as the ‘other’. Minority communities were in the same throes of identity formation’ (Wickramasinghe 2006:87).

The degree and descriptions of authenticity varied depending on the religious and ethnic backgrounds of the party concerned. For instance, Christians and Muslims had authentic histories that were from other parts of the world. However, the major argument with each authentic tale was the emphasis on each groups’ purity. Purity was seen as superior to the more impure histories of mixed religions and ethnicities in Sri Lankan nationalist discourse. Hence, safeguarding and breeding this purity was at the forefront of traditional priorities. This concept was true not just for the Sinhalese but all ethnic and religious communities in Sri Lanka. To quote Wickramasinghe (2006:92), ‘this led to a vision of society made up of a number of pure and unconnected communities, a juxtaposition of purities as it were’.

**Clothing and Women**

A closer examination of Sri Lanka's recent history shows two major measures of tradition; namely clothing and the role of women. The post-colonial dress is an object that is highly politicized. In colonized states such as India, western clothing, particularly for women was considered vulgar. The westernized woman was described as fond of useless luxury such as cosmetics and cared little for the wellbeing of the home. The women in Indian culture, for instance were associated with goddess like attributes where modesty was a key element. Modesty, Chattergee (1989) argues, was of a human nature that had more spiritual and god like qualities. It was something non-existent in the animal realm and therefore a defining factor that set humans, and women in particular apart.
In traditional society, the role of women was to protect and nurture that spiritual quality. This does not mean women were confined to domestic roles of caregiving and housekeeping. While previously, national education highlighted the central place for women as the home, modern formal education appreciated and encouraged women to increasingly participate in the open economy. In fact, educated women were the epitome of modern society as long as they safeguarded their divine hallmarks and did not jeopardize their place at home. Adopting western attitudes and conforming to western fashion was hence deemed a threat to these traditional female characteristics and gender roles. It is for this reason that Chattergee (1989:627) states, ‘no matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not lose their essentially spiritual feminine virtues, they must not, in other words become essentially westernized’. What set the educated modern Indian woman apart from the western modern woman was the fact that the western women believed, ‘education meant only the acquisition of material skills to compete with men in the outside world and hence a loss of feminine values’ (Chattergee 1989:628).

A similar mode of thought was taking place in Sri Lanka from the late 1800s onwards that depicted western clothing as a threat to the sovereignty and traditional gender expectations of women. Wickramasinghe (2006:100) quotes an excerpt from the Sinhala Jatiya paper which retorted that a ‘new trend among the Sinhalese women is to waste money unnecessarily to beautify themselves following the latest fashions and using strange things like perfume’. Western women were seen as brazen avaricious, irreligious and sexually promiscuous.

This was because Sinhalese Buddhists celebrate development with morality and foresees the destruction of morality as the prime threat of development to the Sri Lankan way of life.

A study of the Sri Lankan garment sector, for example shows how women in the villages or non-urbanized areas are described as ‘good girls’ or ‘honda lamai’ – a morally pure woman who preserves and passes the nation’s traditions as opposed to ‘naraka lamai’ or ‘bad girls or naughty girls’ (Lynch 1999:62). Garment girls were associated with sexual promiscuity, a reason why certain marriage proposals in newspapers sometimes clearly stated ‘no garment girls’. Moreover, the free trade
zone (nidahas velanda kalapaya in Sinhalese) was nicknamed as vesakalapaya (a pun on the word meaning zone of prostitutes). When ‘good girls go bad’ they were described as hard to ‘control’ and having no ‘lajja baya’ (shame-fear); a phrase which signifies morality.

Having no lajja baya is thus synonymous with being ‘loose’. That is, those who move in public too much and girls whose parents have no control over them. Lynch (1999:69) also remarks that there is a strong correlation between the notion of virginity and sexual morality. ‘During the anti-colonial nationalist movement at the turn of the century, the ideas of female virginity became part of a new morality...today this new morality is understood as traditional’. It is for this reason that cities such as Colombo are viewed as corrupt places with western influences as opposed to the morally superior villages that are ‘relatively immune to western influences’.

The international school students, as the results chapter later outline, were revealed to be more outgoing. Public speaking, critiquing what is being taught and learning through practice rather than memorizing theory are features of education that the international school curriculum encourages. These features of the pedagogy require students to be social, step out into the world and learn through experience. This in turn means that the international school student, as part of their international education takes part in overnight long distance field trips, social activities, extra curricular activities and education related conferences, exhibitions etc. more frequently compared to local schools. For female students especially, spending time away from their homes interacting and socializing raises questions related to morality and gender expectations within a traditional setting. The female international school student’s confidence and outgoing nature therefore is sometimes misinterpreted as ‘looseness’ that is historically associated with the woman under fatalistic western influence.

Moreover, the co-ed nature of Sri Lankan international schools means that there are greater opportunities for students of the opposite sex to interact with each other; a feature that gave rise to claims that the international school students were more prone to having ‘love affairs’ during their school days.
The idea here that many of the parents voiced their concern over was that there is more opportunity for international school students to engage in sexual relations. This was in contrast to the predominantly single sex national schools where students have fewer opportunities to mingle with the opposite sex apart from the after school tuition classes and occasional inter school events.

**Schooling and Fashion**

Since independence the rise of the Sri Lankan national dress was seen as a way of defying the colonial authorities. The Sri Lankan national costume for the men is a white shirt in the form of a tunic falling above the knee accompanied by a long white sarong. Depending on ethnicity, men would accessorize their national costume. For example, Tamils would ornament it with a turban while Muslims wore a fez. For women, the authentic dress was the Osari, a Sari with a frill at the waist, while the normal Sari was also acceptable. Cultural nationalists who were advocating the Osari and new moral standards for women were annoyed by the consumer culture based on western ideals of fashion. Even today, some people regard high heels and short skirts in a negative derogatory manner.

Within the national schooling system, while male teachers have widely adopted the western dresses consisting of a shirt and trousers (with tie for a more formal appearance) over the national costume, female teachers are required to wear either a sari or an *osari*. There is no set rule, however, western attire such as dresses, trousers, skirts and blouses for national schoolteachers is generally not tolerated and limited only to jobs in the modern corporate sector (or a few office jobs within the education sector). Contrastingly, international schools that operate as private businesses with foreign expat teachers have a more lenient dress code for teachers. Western attire is tolerated and not discouraged by management. However the four schools that the researcher studied encouraged female teachers to wear saris in order to appeal to Sri Lankan clientele that have an image of female teachers wearing saris embedded into their minds via Sri Lankan cultural influence.
Female international school students likewise have more lenient dress codes compared to national school students. In government schools, female students have to tie their hair in two plaits or pony tails, wear no makeup and are not allowed to accessorize their uniforms with anything fancy. Depending on the international school, some administrators enforce strict dress codes for students. However, the majority of the schools were generally lenient partly due to their modern more liberal outlooks on appearance and partly due to fear that strict rules will result in students changing schools that thereby result in loss of business. The common allegations made by the parents interviewed as outlined in chapter six were that international school students wore short skirts or excess make up that went against Sri Lankan cultural norms and thus made them appear in a sexually promiscuous light.

Freeman (1997) states that the middle class is more receptive to changes in the status quo whereas traditional elite and uneducated lower class tend to be more resistant to change. There is a growing shift to individualism as opposed to collectivism evident in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has embraced modernity to a large extent. Foreign TV channels, mobile phones, and an increasing number of Internet cafes are accessible to most. The change in dress codes or sporting preference, for instance are good examples of the complexity of cultural flows and the imagery of modernity. Clothing such as jeans, shirts and skirts have now become familiar for people from all classes. Previously, such elements were only identified with an elite minority that mixed with the colonial rulers. When the masses adopt these symbols of modernity, the elite try to standout by reimagining what it means to be classy. The privileged classes, in order to stand out, tend to return to the roots where handlooms and raw cotton sarongs have now become a fashion statement. Replacing the now common sport of cricket with rugby or golf is once again the ‘posh’ thing to do.

Similarly, in International schools, while embracing all things western was previously seen as the modern approach that set international schools apart from the local schools, coming back to roots and emphasizing Sri Lankan cultural identity through the celebration of traditional culture is yet another way of being unique. This incorporation of the local may not hence necessarily come from a
genuine interest for multiculturalism and an aim at the revival of the local into the global education but merely a fashion statement, symbolic yet again of a distinctive phase of standing with the reinforcing of class divides via newer forms of social re-imagery.

*Westernization doesn’t necessarily mean end of traditions*

The common belief is that tradition is a hindrance to change and an impediment to modernization. This is because tradition and modernity are seen as two dichotomies that are unable to co-exist within the same setting. However, traditional society itself is dynamic and constantly evolving. Gusfield (1967) ascertains that traditional symbols and behavioural patterns can be crucial in shaping modern norms and modernizing frameworks. Likewise, foreign powers, social and cultural movements can in turn affect the beliefs, practices and social structures of modern society. Referring to India, Gusfield (1967:353) remarks that ‘speaking of traditional feudal structure of India is to confuse recent history with past history’. Tradition then is merely elements of the past that once formed modern society at one point in time. Tradition is forever evolving and like culture varies both over time and space.

Gusfield (1967) furthermore points out several fallacies in our understanding of tradition. Not only are developing societies never static and traditional societies forever evolving over time and space, older and newer traditions are capable of coexisting, sometimes forming hybrid traditions. Newer ones hence do not necessarily replace older traditions. They sometimes form mutual adaptations to bring about a newer culture where the range of alternatives available is significantly higher. Thus tradition and modernity are not always in conflict. Nor are they mutually exclusive but rather, more frequently ‘mutually reinforcing’.

Another fallacy is the misconception that modernity erodes tradition. Alternately, in certain circumstances, modernization can strengthen traditions. For example improved infrastructure makes it easier to travel to distance places of cultural significance and improved communication aids marginalized cultures or groups to come together. Another instance is when mediating elites between western elites
and local society brings traditional commitments into the political and cultural arena (Gusfield 1967).

When it comes to the culture of international schools impacting local traditional culture, a country such as Saudi Arabia, in the mid 1960s had no international schools for the fear of them infecting local culture. Other Middle Eastern countries during that time valued the quality of the education offered by international schools but wished to safeguard national culture, religion and identity through curriculum legislation or ‘by ensuring the business of the school is restricted to less culturally sensitive areas’ (Gusfield 1967:327). In Sri Lanka, the eroding of Sri Lankan culture through the mere focus of western culture by international schools is the primary concern that the government is trying to tackle. Through the imposition of compulsory local language, history and religious education, Sri Lanka is trying to encourage international schools whilst shaping the pedagogy to suit national agendas.

Historically, while the previous section dealt with all the negative connotations attached to westernization in Sri Lanka, Straus (1966) believes that westernization can in fact help Sri Lanka evolve from a more loosely structured society to a closely structured one. Straus (1966:130) describes societies as ranging from a scale of loosely structured to closely-structured. In loosely structured societies, the ‘variation of individual behavior is sanctioned’ whereas closely structured societies in countries such as Japan pay close adherence to behavioural norms where ‘reciprocal rights and duties are stressed and tend to be strictly enforced’. Within this spectrum, Sri Lanka falls into the more loosely structured and ‘happy-easy going’ category. Not keeping on time or displaying precise adherence to ritual or traditional practice is characteristic of such a society. However this very structure, Straus claims makes them insecure, as there is little dependability.

A study conducted via the use of direct indicators of westernization as the use of English, having attended a Missionary (private) school and protestant religious affiliation, Straus concludes that westernization makes Sri Lankan society more closely structured and hence lead to a reduction in insecurity and anxiety that is part of a loosely structured society. Contrary to expectations of higher anxiety due
to culture shock or culture conflict then, westernization can sometimes bring order to a somewhat chaotic society.

Culture

Within this backdrop of conflicting and complementing tradition versus modernity debate, it is important to ask the question what is culture? Brislin (1990:11) remarks that ‘culture refers to widely shared ideals, value formation and use of categories, assumptions about life and goal directed activities that become consciously or subconsciously accepted as right and correct by people who identify themselves as members of a society’. Culture, in this sense is the ‘software of the mind’ that we are programmed from small age to believe as acceptable (Hofstede 1983). It is something that we accept as the way things are supposed to be without any doubt or scrutiny.

Triandis (1990:98) states that ‘we dislike members of other groups because of their ‘strange customs’ and therefore do not want to see the world as they do’. This dislike evolves from our unfamiliarity with certain cultures and eventually ‘these dislikes become a barrier to understanding and effective communication and interaction’. Growing up in a cultural bubble such as the gated communities of Sri Lankan international schools where students are chauffer driven to and from home, protected from the ‘normalcy’ of their immediate surroundings will in fact result in the international schools student growing up in a subculture within the mainstream Sri Lankan culture.

Culture, however is much more complex. It is not easily acquired and cannot be understood by simply looking at one aspect. As Fennes and Hapgood (1997:17) describe, culture can be understood in terms of an ‘Iceberg model’ where laws, rules and customs are just the tip of the iceberg while the bottom of the iceberg consists of traditions, routine behaviours and unconscious habits that often get overlooked in our study of culture. International schools alone do not impact a child’s understanding of culture but other factors such as family background also come into play.

Warchauer (2000) observes that with the changing global economy, simple functional curriculums prove ineffective. Instead, project based learning that
incorporates own cultural frameworks are crucial. According to Warchauer (2000:514), 'culture remains an integral part of language learning, but the approach toward culture must become multifaceted, taking into account the diverse cultures of many people who speak English around the world'.

*Summary*

Four centuries of colonial rule paved the way for Sri Lanka to believe that the language and education system of the colonial masters was superior to the local systems in place. In particular, during British rule, the benefits that one received via a private English education created a rivalry between the elite that had access to private English education and those who did not to such an extent post-colonial Sri Lanka made extensive and commend worthy changes to ensure that education was free and accessible to all.

However, by overemphasizing equality through free general and vocational education, the quality of national education steadily deteriorated. Simultaneously rising was resentment to private education that still continued to be a marker of superiority and led to the banning of the establishment of any new private schools. Within this turmoil, international schools have emerged in Sri Lanka, finding a way to evade laws and exist as businesses. These contradictory and competing needs and desires of Sri Lankan parents have given rise to this dynamic international school scene that at times goes against what is regarded as ‘traditional’ and ‘appropriate’ in Sri Lanka. Amongst these schools too, a clear hierarchy is developing giving rise to even further polarisation. The following sections of this thesis will therefore attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the rise and existence of Sri Lankan international schools. Chapter four will outline the methodology of the research, while chapters five, six and seven will provide a descriptive account of the case studies used, present the results and then furnish a discussion based on the findings.
Chapter Four: The Research: Approach, Data Collection and Analysis

Research Strategy

The researcher utilized a strategy of mixed methods for this project. Mixed methods, as Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) observe, is an approach ‘that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints’. In this particular case, the primary focus of this study was to adopt a qualitative stance that was based on the outcomes of interviews and focus groups. Hence, much of the second part of chapter six deals with the qualitative findings of this study. However, quantitative data was initially used to furnish descriptive statistics such as the number of schools attended or the most frequent reasons for opting for an international education, which can be found in part one of chapter six. Secondary data was also collected from the schools where available and used in conjunction with newspaper articles (where available). Such a mixed method stance allowed for ‘triangulation’ to take place. By investigating via a variety of methods, new modes of thinking can be initiated as the researcher pays attention to ‘the paradoxes that emerge from the varying data sources’ (Rossman and Wilson 1985). Whatever the outcome, Denzin (1997:14) notes that triangulation results in a ‘convergence upon the truth about some social phenomenon’.
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<td>Analysis of Government Documents</td>
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FIGURE 6: THE SIX STEPS IN RESEARCH DESIGN

STEP 1
- Email all international schools in Sri Lanka (list derived from Wikipedia) requesting permission for conducting research and email the Ministry of Education requesting government data and an interview with a government official from the minister for education.

STEP 2
- Select four schools (cases) from those schools that opted to be studied. (Selection process explained in next page)

STEP 3
- Interview administration staff of selected case study schools
- Interview a government official regarding their stance on international schools

STEP 4
- Collect secondary data relating to selected case study schools
  - School anthems
  - Mission statements
  - Mottos
- Collect secondary data from government
  - Ministry of education publications

  *Where such documents are available, they help understand how administrators’ views are disseminated to the public.

STEP 5
- Questionnaires for case study schools
  - Students
  - Parents

  *Provides pointers on the burning issues which can then be examined in detail in the next step.

STEP 6
- Interviews and group discussions for case study schools
  - Parents
  - Students
  - Teachers
Case Studies

A case study, as Yin (2009:18) describes, is ‘an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon set within its real world context; especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly visible’. Case studies provide examples of ‘real life people in real situations that enable readers to situate everyday events in broader social settings’ (Cohen, Manion, Morrison and Morrison 2007:181). While case studies cannot ‘prove’ something, a single case study has the ability to ‘disprove’ a general statement (Payne and Payne 2004). Case studies are best utilized to answer ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions where the investigator has little or no control (Rowley 2002). This research inquires as to why Sri Lankans opt into an international school education and how societal attitudes are reflective in this choice. At first, the researcher was considering the use of mere questionnaires; however, the study goes beyond the quantitative investigation of isolated variables. The researcher was interested in conducting the primarily qualitative part of this study within the ‘natural setting’ of these schools. Therefore, by opting for a case study approach, it is possible to generalize findings to other situations through analytical (not statistical) generalizations. The use of case studies hence seems most appropriate for this approach.

**FIGURE 7: MAP SHOWING CASE STUDY SELECTION**

CASE 1 – A high fee levying school from the capital Colombo
CASE 2 – A medium fee levying school selected from the second largest city and hill capital Kandy
CASE 3 – An international schools selected from one of the more relatively periphery provinces that have a majority Sinhalese population
CASE 4 – An international school selected from one of the more relatively periphery provinces that have a majority Tamil population. These provinces were impacted significantly by the 30-year civil war that ravaged the island until 2009.
Four contrasting international schools from four different provinces of the island were selected using deviant case sampling (Neuman 2006). One case study was a high fee levying school from Sri Lanka's capital Colombo. Another was a high fee levying school from Sri Lanka's second largest city, Kandy. The third and fourth schools were from two more peripheral regions where the predominant populations are Sinhalese and Tamil alternatively. The third school hence was from the city of Matara in the Southern Province while the fourth case study was from Jaffna in the Northern Province that was ravaged by the civil war for the past thirty years. By using such contrasting cases, a clearer picture of overall international education within Sri Lanka could be obtained whilst bringing out any distinct urban/rural disparities.

Research Participants and Recruitment

A Government Official

Initially, it was anticipated that a government official from the Ministry of Education, ideally the Minister for Education himself would be interviewed on the government stance and concerns regarding the rise of international schools. Having contacted the Ministry of Education, the researcher was authorized to interview the present Secretary for Education.

Administrators

An appropriate administrator, either in the form of a principal, owner or a member of the board of directors from each of the four chosen international schools was interviewed. For one school, the interviewed administrator was the Principal of that school. For another school it was the Vice Principal while the remaining two schools granted permission for the researcher to interview the Headmasters for the specific branch of the International school chain where the research was carried out. Initially, the selected schools were called up and an appointment made to interview one of the administrators who had a certain degree of control over the curriculum and extra-curricular activities that the school makes available to its student body. However, what was apparent from the interviews was that the
administrators interviewed were responsible for the smooth running of the schools but had little control over the curriculum, fees, and extra curricular activities. These were facilitated by the chairpersons and the board of directors who were not accessible for questioning.

Parents
Parents with at least one child attending the senior section (Years 7-13) of an International school were selected to participate in a series of questionnaires and interviews. A hundred questionnaires were sent out (25 per school) to parents via the students to be filled out and returned to the school. The questionnaires had an ‘opt-in’ option for an additional interview. From those that volunteered to be further interviewed, around four parents per school were selected for telephone interviews. Parent interviews were also facilitated using a system of snowballing participants where those parents who were initially interviewed via the opt-in forms helped the researcher to make contact with more parents whose children were attending international schools. This meant that the parent interviews were not strictly limited to the four case studies schools.

Teachers
A focus group consisting of ideally eight persons was carried out in each of the four schools being studied. The teachers were those currently teaching in the secondary sections (Years 7 and above). They were recruited on a voluntary basis. However, care was taken to include a mélange of different age, gender, racial and ethnic groups. However, when trying to not disrupt class time, it was beyond the researchers control to select the participants and the schools sometimes pre-selected a group (or sometimes two smaller groups) for interviews based on their free periods. The duration of the teacher focus groups also varied with some of them being limited to the time of one school lesson.

Students
A series of questionnaires as well as focused group discussions were carried out on students attending the senior sections of the four international schools. The questionnaires were sent out at random to twenty-five students in each school. The age range of the students in this instance was estimated to be between 11 and 18 years.
The focus groups however were limited to students in their final three years of secondary education. This is because the researcher will explore their future expectations and it was assumed that the majority of these students would be heading overseas for tertiary education. Thus, the anticipated age range was between 15 and 18 years. However, in some cases, the presence of ongoing public Ordinary and Advanced Level examinations meant that most of the senior students were on extended study vacation. In these cases, the three most senior classes were selected and the age range of the students varied respectively. Ideally focus groups consisted of eight students in each of the four case study schools. Where it was difficult to get a large group of students without disrupting classes, two smaller groups were obtained.

Purposive quota sampling was utilized to ensure that the participants contained an equal ratio of males and females as well as a range of ethnic backgrounds. The researcher is aware that although purposive quota sampling allows for representing significant strata of the population, there is a disadvantage of introducing the bias of a researcher’s classification of subjects where some groups maybe pulled out of the research simply because there is an overrepresentation of that group (Miller and Salkind 2002).

Role of the Researcher

“The most important ‘instrument’ in qualitative research is the researcher”
(Miles and Huberman 1994:38).

Swarkz (2007:2) points out that ‘knowledge is not value neutral and neither are the epistemological assumptions and methods meant to produce it’. It is therefore impossible to be completely objective and obtain what Haraway (1988) refers to as a ‘god’s eye view’ of things. The actions of a researcher as well as their positionality and ‘subjectivity could have significant impact on the study (Peshkin 1988). For instance, the mere presence of the researcher asking questions about identity and school choice can alter the perceptions and perhaps even the practices and policies of the international schools being studied. The researcher, being a Sri Lankan who has attended an international school herself, may sometimes come across as an
insider who is accustomed to the cultural nuances of ‘Sri Lankan English’ thus allowing a closer rapport with a higher degree of trust to be built with the participants.

When discussing specifically about social views regarding those who attend international schools, the researcher felt that the interviewees and students in particular seem to be more open in critiquing the negative attitudes that Sri Lankan society has concerning the values and behaviour displayed by international students. They seemed to automatically consider me as one of them and ‘other’ the rest of the Sri Lankan society that has attended the national schooling system. However, coming from overseas in order to study the local culture, may even be depicted as an outsider and therefore treated with scrutiny. There is likelihood for social desirability bias and acquiescence to take place and hence, as Amin and Thrift (2002:960) observe, the researcher needs to be sensitive to the ‘micro-politics of everyday social contact and encounter in order to reflect on the everyday geographies of social interaction’.

Sometimes the interviewees had pre-conceived notions about the researcher’s understanding of Sri Lankan society and took time to explain to me that even though this is what ‘you think is happening, this is what is really taking place’. In such instances, being an ex- International student meant that the researcher was considered as being pro international and anti national schooling. Reassuring objectivity and in particular convincing the participants that the researcher was not looking for particular right or wrong answers was something that had to be constantly repeated.

**Data Collection Procedure**

**Piloting of Data**

Since the researcher was based primarily in Australia, it was difficult to conduct a pilot study in Sri Lanka due to time constraints. The piloting of the data therefore was limited to seven student questionnaires and one interview with a parent/teacher of an international school. The interview was conducted in person in December 2012 (during school Christmas holidays) when the researcher was able to interview the volunteer as both a teacher and a parent.
Students of the pilot interview participant’s school filled out the seven pilot questionnaires during early January 2013. The piloting of the data enabled the researcher to make slight adjustments to the phrasing of certain questions, which were not clear in the original questionnaire/interview schedule.

**Preliminary Email**

All international schools in Sri Lanka based on extensive Internet searches were emailed giving details of the research and invited to volunteer for further study. The researcher then selected four schools from these volunteers as explained in the case selection section. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education was also emailed seeking permission to have an interview with the Minister for Education and requesting any relevant publications regarding the government stance on international schools in Sri Lanka.

**Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were sent out to the parents and students in order to gain an insight into factors influencing school choice and what it means to be educated at an international school (See Appendix for samples). The questionnaires had both open and close-ended questions allowing the participants to further elaborate on certain questions. They were performed in a funnel sequence beginning with basic background information on the participants such as their nationality and language proficiency followed by more specific questions on the themes of factors influencing school choice, future intentions and interactions with local and global culture. A range of question types, from multiple-choice to likert scales was used. The final questions in the questionnaires were open-ended and questioned the perceived strengths and weaknesses of receiving an international school education. Attempts were made to avoid the use of jargon, emotional language and double negatives as these would invariable affect the validity and reliability of the questionnaire (Neuman 2006).

**Interviews and Group Discussions**

The four administrator interviews and the interview with the Minister for Education were conducted in person whereas the parent interviews were carried out via telephone. The students and the teachers were surveyed via a series of
focused group discussions. Neuman (2006:312) observes that ‘by standardizing human interaction, the survey interview strips away features in ordinary conversation that provide self-correction, promote the construction of a shared meaning among different people and increase human mutual understanding’. Bearing this in mind, all qualitative surveys were semi-structured in nature, allowing the participants to come up with issues that did not occur in the literature search or otherwise (Cohen et al. 2007).

The format for the semi structured interviews was as follows:

1) Introductory questions- e.g. Personal background and experience in international schools.
2) Questions about setting up an International School – (asked from the administrators and the Ministry official).
3) Questions about school choice – influence and experience regarding international schools.
4) Questions on Social views regarding International schools in Sri Lanka.
5) Questions about the future of International schools - (asked from the administrators and the Ministry official).
6) Questions about the future aspirations - (asked from parents, students and teachers).
7) Concluding questions - e.g. ‘any additional remarks you would like to make?’

It was anticipated that the inter-personal interviews and the group discussions were approximately one hour in length while the telephone interviews would last forty minutes. However in reality most telephone interviews were no more than 30 minutes long. The length of the focus groups and individual interviews varied depending on group dynamics and the nature of the participants. The average time of these were approximately 40 minutes each.

While face-to-face interviews provide the highest response rates with the possibility to capture non-verbal cues such as boredom; telephone interviews are more feasible when dealing with busy participants that are otherwise harder to access (Zulawski and Wicklander 2002). Hence, telephone interviews were seen as
the best resort in interviewing international school parents even though the researcher is aware that they may last a shorter duration than interpersonal ones. As for the group discussions, the researcher is aware that it is an artificial situation where it’s impossible for everyone to have an equal share of speaking. Payne and Payne (2004:104) emphasize the need for a researcher to be mindful of the underlying opinions and feelings that members possess which are ‘expressed, amplified and possibly modified through the collective interaction’. However, group discussions in this scenario seemed the most practical and allowed the researcher to observe how others receive an individual’s view in the group.

Recording and Storage of Data

Transcription and Translation
All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and translated where necessary. Since the researcher is fluent in two of the national languages, the participants (i.e. parents) were given the option of choosing their preferred language. However, it was kept in mind that translating has several downsides to it (Temple and Young 2004, Esposito 2001). English, most of the time is unable to capture the nuances of the original language that is embedded in social and cultural contexts (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As Hirschauer (2006) notes, there are some phrases that ‘tell us nothing’ while ‘cultural unmentionables’ lie just below the surface of what is being said at other instances. Meaning, at other times, data simply becomes ‘lost in translation’ (Hoffman 1989). Translation therefore, isn’t just a technical task but one that entails ‘judgment and interpretation’ (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Translated data, in this case is ‘processed data’ (Wengraf 2001). To avoid false connotations, some phrases were left in the source language (Muller 2007).

Analysis of the Data
The following table shows an outline of the three-stage analysis procedure that was used.
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**Quantitative Analysis**

The questionnaire data were manually entered into statistical software and then analysed quantitatively. First, descriptive statistics were used through scatter plots, histograms and pie charts to show the various factors in play.

**Grounded Theory**

Payne and Payne (2004:98) describe grounded theory as ‘a method of analysis where the theoretical statements are built inductively from coding and analysing data’. It requires ‘defining and refining of conceptual categories which are then tested and retested with further data collection’. In grounded theory, ‘theory emerges from the data’ and is a ‘continuous method of discovery’. However, the researcher does not begin with a blank slate but brings in background knowledge from subjective life experiences (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

In the case of Sri Lanka, being a Sri Lankan citizen who has attended both the public and international education system means that the researcher brings into this thesis pre-conceived notions stemming from personal experiences. The researcher is aware that the themes explored, quotations from the interviewees that are used in this thesis may therefore be those that resonate with, or are influenced to a certain extent by personal inclinations.

The interviews and group discussions were analysed from the time they were recorded using this method. Initially, ‘open coding’ was used to highlight items that seem important without too much overthinking. Next, ‘axial coding’ where comparison and grouping at a more intense stage was performed. Finally, all
categories were unified around core categories in the ‘selective coding’ stage before certain theories were put forward (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

In addition to manual coding, qualitative analysis was conducted using the software NVivo. This software facilitates coding of transcriptions as the transcription takes place. NVivo also allows for the creation of hierarchies of linked themes, create memos, coding templates, and transfer coding between the four different case studies. Another highlight of this software is that it enables report building, allowing the building of customized reports based on the different codes or groups of data.

Content Analysis

When qualitatively analyzing data, it is the meaning behind words and symbols, the manner in which the ‘social is contained in the communication’ that matters the most (Payne and Payne 2005). It is necessary to address attitudes, motivations as well as norms. The secondary data collected therefore was analyzed using a method of ‘systematically allocating the content into pre-determined, detailed categories and then quantifying and interpreting the outcomes’; otherwise known as content analysis (Payne and Payne 2005). The researcher analyzed the frequency, intensity, space and direction of the texts (Neuman 2000) so that the texts that are usually taken for granted can be transformed to reveal ‘interesting’, ‘systematic’ and ‘detailed’ theoretical interpretations (Payne and Payne 2005). However, obtaining secondary data proved difficult with the exception of just one school providing the researcher with their school magazine. The use of content analysis as a third method of data analysis was therefore restricted in this research.

Ethical Considerations

Wong (1998) observes that seemingly innocent research too has dangerous implications: instances where institutional safeguards, resistance and betrayal come into play. The researcher will ensure that the study is safe; bearing no harm to the participants or the researcher while informed consent, security of the data collected and anonymity of the participants is guaranteed. Each participant therefore was handed an ‘Informed Consent’ form that needed to be signed prior to
any data collection. This form ensured confidentiality, anonymity and the participant’s right to withdraw from the research at any point in time. This form was complimented by an information sheet that provided a clear explanation of the process and purpose of this research outlining what the research was about, who was doing the financing, why the study was conducted and how the findings were to be disseminated.

Furthermore, all data will be securely stored to avoid social, legal or psychological stress. The researcher will not discuss interviews or comments with other participants or use help with transcription from people who had any affiliation to the participants. When reporting the data, a pseudonym was used to safeguard anonymity.

Furthermore, when conducting the student focus groups, it was necessary to ensure that it did not affect their studies. Discussing with the school Principals about the best possible time to conduct the focus groups was thus necessary. The same principle applied for the teacher focus groups and effort was made to minimize disruption to normal classroom function.

**Unexpected Problems and Limitations**

The International Schools in Sri Lanka were closed for a couple of months for the Northern Hemisphere summer vacation, for a few weeks in December for Christmas and New Year and once again in April for the Sri Lankan New Year. Furthermore, taking into consideration that every full moon day is a public holiday and Sri Lanka celebrates many religious holidays such as Vesak (Buddhist celebration), Eid (Muslim holiday) and Thai Pongal (Tamil Harvesting Holiday) to name a few, the researcher had to schedule fieldwork time to make sure it was term time. Schools were also unwilling to have the fieldwork conducted during exam times. Furthermore during the London O Level and A Level exams, those students sitting for these examinations were on study leave and not present in the schools.

It was also necessary to have several ‘backup’ schools selected and additional participants from each school involved in case certain schools or individuals decided to withdraw from the study. This was the case in particular with students
and teachers as focus groups were conducted during schooling hours when classroom activity takes priority. At other times, certain parents were willing to give interviews but refused for the interviews to be recorded thus disabling transcription. Finally, since the research followed a sequential pattern, it was necessary to ensure that each phase was completed on time to keep the research on track. The period of fieldwork, after solving all these minor issues, ended up being a little over seven months.

While this chapter dealt primarily with the methodological stances and challenges that the researcher had to consider when implementing the fieldwork part of this research, the next chapter will provide a detailed and descriptive account of each of the four schools where the research was carried out. Prior to providing an account of the four schools, a brief introduction to their locality and any relevant historical information about the towns in which these schools are situated will also be briefly addressed.
Chapter Five: The Case Studies

*Names of the schools in the following section have been changed to retain anonymity.

Colombo: Kingston Institute, Main Branch

In the developing world, a striking feature that Krugman (1999) observes, is the presence of one primary urban concentration; usually the capital city. These ‘urban giants’ dominate the rest of the cities via decades of in-migration and more importantly, via a ‘multiplier effect, perhaps even a catalytic effect of political centralization’ (Krugman 1999: 155). This ultimately leads to intense inequality, not only regionally but also within the primary city where pockets of the so called ‘Fourth World’ made up of the super rich elite minority of developing nations exist in near proximity to an impoverished immigrant population of slum dwellers (Tikly 2004). Secondary cities, in such developing countries are virtually non-existent.

Sri Lanka’s Western Province constituting of Colombo and its suburbs is home to nearly six million people (Geohive 2013). This adds up to being nearly 30% of the country’s population. Although Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte is the administrative capital of Sri Lanka, Colombo is the largest city and the industrial and commercial capital of Sri Lanka. It is also the administrative capital of the Western Province and the district capital of Colombo district and hence willfully referred to as the capital city. Colombo is home to most of the country’s leading prestigious schools, be it national, private or international schools.

The selected case study from Colombo is the main branch of a chain of International schools within the Western Province established in 1982 as a private limited liability company to provide international education by offering the London Advanced and Ordinary Level curriculum. This school is currently one of the twenty-three members of The International Schools Sri Lanka (TISSL), an association that was formed in February 2013 and claims to represent the ‘premier international schools in Sri Lanka’. The school’s website claims it as a ‘pioneer in
international education’ with a ‘reputation for devotion to academic excellence’. Moreover, the school boasts of providing:

‘Excellent infrastructure facilities consisting of land and buildings in several strategic locations equipped with state-of-the-art facilities such as fully-equipped Computer and Science Laboratories, well stocked libraries. Facilities for all extracurricular activities are provided. Our biggest asset is also the team of handpicked teachers teaching at primary and secondary levels”. (The school website 2013).

In addition to this main branch, the school also has three other branches in several other suburbs of Colombo, one of which is an International School exclusive to girls. When questioned about the reason behind establishing a girls only international school, the Principal claimed that it was to cater for concerned Sri Lankan parents who wish to provide their daughters with an international education in the English medium, yet are concerned about the cultural and social implications of co-educational studies in International Schools elsewhere in Sri Lanka.

Currently, Kingston Institute provides a range of curricula such as the London Advanced and Ordinary Levels (Edexcel), Cambridge IGCSE and Advanced Levels and the Local Sri Lankan curriculum in the English medium. The interview with the principal revealed that Sinhalese is compulsory up to Grade five and the focus group with the students showed that Sri Lankan history, local languages and religious education was all offered up to grade 8. When the students decided which curriculum they were going to follow in year 9, the subjects varied accordingly. Students following the National curriculum had compulsory mother tongue, religion and social studies (combination of Sri Lankan history and geography) while the students following foreign curriculums could take these subjects as optional subjects if they wished to do so.

The total student population of Kingston Institute currently exceeds 5000 students. Right next door to the main branch of the International school that the researcher conducted the study was the Kingston Institute Higher Education Branch that offers education up to tertiary level. It is an affiliated centre of the University of London and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and
prepares students for a range of international diplomas and degrees from the University of London. A Sri Lankan entrepreneur, Attorney-at-Law and Solicitor, privately owns Kingston Institute.

At first glance, the physical infrastructure of the case study from Colombo was a tall building having several stories. It was located in the same premises adjoining its partner higher education institution (this too was yet another giant building expanding upwards) but had a separate entrance from outside with the words 'International School' engraved in bold Silver on the gate. From within the premises, it was possible to commute between the school and its higher education division.

The ground floor consisted of a small open foyer where the school buses were parked along with a canteen and several administrative offices. A staircase marked the entrance to the rest of the school. The school itself consisted of several levels separated by a range of stairs. Each grade had several parallel classes. The years that followed the National Curriculum were labeled as 'N', for example, Year 9N, 10N etc. The library, computer rooms and laboratories were all located within the building and accessible to all classes regardless of which curriculum was followed.

The school offers a range of sports including cricket, netball, athletics, swimming, badminton, table tennis, boxing, karate, basketball and football. Non-sporting extra-curricular activities range from chess and debating to drama and music. Currently, the school claims to have around twenty clubs, societies and circles. The researcher's initial impression when told about the range of sport offered was that the school lacked physical space for any sports. Upon inquiring, it was found out that the International School had a separate sporting complex open to students of all branches in a separate location. The complex constituted of a swimming pool, badminton, tennis and basketball courts. In addition to this particular international chain, the sports complex was also available for other schools and outside individuals for a fee.

The school fees consisted of an admission fee, refundable deposit, and term fees. The term fee varies not only with each year of study but also with the curriculum that the students follow and the branch that they attend. At Advanced Level, the term fee for the London curriculum was Rupees 50286 (about USD 500) while the
fees for the Local curriculum were Rupees 30500 (about USD 300). The maximum fee difference between the branches was Rupees 2000 (about USD 20). Kingston Institute offers scholarships to those students who excel in the public examinations and provides discounts on school fees for parents who have more than one child in the same school.

The data collection at this school consisted of a semi-structured interview with the Principal of the main branch and a focus group each with teachers and a mix of students from the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. In addition, several telephone interviews were carried out with parents who filled out the optional form that was sent home with the parent questionnaires via the students. Random students were also given questionnaires that they completed and returned to the researcher.

Kandy: Liberty College Kandy (LCK)

Located 116 kilometres away from Colombo in the hilly centre of the island, Kandy is the second largest city in Sri Lanka. It is the capital of the Central Province and the Kandy District is home to a population of around 128,000. Kandy is also listed as a UNESCO world heritage site and often referred to as Sri Lanka’s cultural capital. It was the last remaining independent kingdom while the Portuguese and the Dutch took over the coastal regions and was taken over by the British in 1815.

Located 500m above sea level, Kandy has a comparatively cooler climate to most of the other urban areas of the island. It’s unique history, culture and climate makes Kandy a popular tourist destination. Due to its central location, the ethnic composition of Kandy is also very mixed. Sinhalese, Tamils (of both Sri Lankan and Indian origin), Muslims and Burghers all co-exist in these central hills.

Kandy is home to some prestigious single sex ‘Buddhist’ National Schools such as Mahamaya Girls School and Dharmaraja College. It is also well renowned for one of the leading elite private boys’ schools in Sri Lanka (established 1872 by Anglican Missionaries); the Trinity College Kandy (TCK). Trinity College has produced generations of prominent individuals who have gone on to hold notable positions at both national and international level. It is also the only secondary school in the world to own and maintain an international test class cricket stadium.
The International School case study from Kandy for this research is Liberty College Kandy (LCK), one of the four branches of the Liberty Colleges independently owned by Liberty Group. Both the Colombo and Kandy Branches of Liberty College are members of the TISSL association.

Established in 1986, the Liberty Group is a leading organization founded by a former State Secretary of Education and renowned educationalist in Sri Lanka, that provides educational programs that have been certified or endorsed by leading training providers in the UK. Liberty Group currently has 33 centres of education spread throughout Sri Lanka. Their expertise varies from providing secondary education at the four Liberty Colleges to the Liberty Graduate School, Liberty Kids School of Computing, and Liberty Centre for Information Technology, Liberty Language Centre, Liberty School of Speech and Drama to Liberty Consultancy Services and the Kindergarten Group in the UK.

Liberty College was initially established in Colombo in 1997 in a converted house with just 33 students and 8 teaching staff. Since then, it has expanded into four campuses with over 3500 students. Liberty College Kandy (LCK), formally known as Liberty International School Kandy (LISK) currently has over 1100 students and around 120 staff members. The school provides its students with the Edexcel British curriculum. LCK was originally Kandy International School that was taken over by the Liberty Group in 2000 and renamed Liberty International. Then, in 2005, the Liberty Group decided to rename all their international schools as Liberty Colleges dropping the word 'international'.

The Liberty College website reveals the reason for this change as ‘signalling a new era in the history of the school and in the International School System of Education in Sri Lanka. The establishment of Liberty College was a bold new step not only to elevate school education to a higher standard, and to benchmark with the best of schools in England, but also to provide the opportunity for the students to continue their studies up to Graduation’. When the researcher inquired about this change from the Headmaster of Liberty College Kandy, he had the following justification: ‘No, we didn’t want this to be named as an International School which means generally a sophisticated school meant for, you know, some sort of an elite crowd of people. We just want to give the impression that it’s a college so that concept ‘college’
is a better name for a school because that involves so many things. Now almost all the prestigious schools in the island are termed ‘colleges’ you know, places like Royal, Ananda and all. Those places, they are referred to as colleges so we also wanted to maintain that Sri Lankan culture'.

(Headmaster, B1)

The data collection at this school consisted of a semi-structured interview with the Headmaster of the Kandy branch and a focus group each with teachers and students from the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. In addition, several telephone interviews were carried out with parents who filled out the optional form that was sent home with the parent questionnaires via the students. Random students were also given questionnaires that they completed and returned to the researcher.

(Additional information about subjects and extra-curricular activities offered at LCK are included in the appendix).

Matara: Sheffield International School (SIS) Matara Branch

Located 160 kilometres from Colombo, Matara is a bustling commercial centre in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. Matara has a population of around 70,000. The popular lighthouse built in Point Dondra by the Dutch marks the southern-most point of Sri Lanka. The Dutch and Portuguese Fortresses found inside the city along with its unique architecture reflects the colonial influence that the Dutch and the Portuguese have had in Matara. The majority ethnic group of Matara is the Sinhalese. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Moor (Muslim) traders came into Matara and even today their predecessors continue to live harmoniously among the Sinhalese. Compared to the rest of the island, there are very few Tamils living in Matara. Matara thus emits a very strong Sinhala Buddhist cultural vibe.

Education in Matara is primarily delivered through National schools belonging to government, semi-government or private categories. The researcher was told during the fieldwork stage that apart from the international school being studied, there was only one other International School in the district. This other International School was merely a private home converted into an international school by a private entrepreneur and did not have advanced level classes at the moment.
The case study from Matara was one of six branches of a leading international school chain; Sheffield International School (SIS) in Sri Lanka. The Sheffield International group of schools was founded by the director and current chairman, a private entrepreneur in Sri Lanka. The main branch, located in Colombo district is a member of the 23 elite international schools that form the TISSL association. Sheffield International Matara was the second branch to be established in the Sheffield chain and the first International school in Matara district. It was established in June 2000 and currently has a student population of over 450. LIS Matara has classes from Playgroup to Advanced Level offering the British curriculum.

Like most international schools in Sri Lanka, upon entering the researcher felt that the school lacked the physical space for extra-curricular activities. The entrance section of the school was a former Walauwa (traditional manor house with a mix of Sri Lankan, Portuguese and Dutch architecture) complete with an interior garden in the atrium. The rooms were converted into office space and the front garden concreted to form a mini play area/ basketball court. The interior garden was still intact and adjacent to it, the dining room was utilized as a common room. In fact, the students sat in the dining table and completed the questionnaires that the researcher handed out to them. The back garden of this traditional manor house was cleared and there existed the ‘rest of the school’ in the form of two multi-level long modern structures that were recently built facing each other to accommodate expansion. The Principal stated that for sporting activities that required a bigger space, the school rents out and provides its students with transport to nearby Matara Uyanwatte Stadium.

The data collection at this school consisted of a semi-structured interview with the Principal of the Matara branch and a focus group each with teachers and students from the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. In addition, several telephone interviews were carried out with parents who filled out the optional form that was sent home with the parent questionnaires via the students. The principal selected 25 random students from Years 7 up to Advanced level and got them to complete the questionnaire during school hours in the common room. (Additional information
about subjects and extra-curricular activities offered at SIS are included in the appendix).

**Jaffna: Saint International School, Manipay (SISM)**

The Jaffna District is an area of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka mainly consisting of the Jaffna Peninsula that is linked to the mainland by a small strip of land. The capital of this district, Jaffna, is home to a population of around 88,000 people while the entire Jaffna district has a population of 559,000 (Department of Census and Statistics 2007). The Department of Census and Statistics (2007) also reveals that in 2007, the ethnic composition of Jaffna consisted of 99.9% Tamils, 0.1% Muslims and almost 0% Sinhalese. Prior to the Civil War, Jaffna was the second most populated city after Colombo. However, three decades of war has meant that there was intense depopulation. Since the end of the war in 2009 however, there have been people moving back into Jaffna.

Jaffna has a rich and almost chaotic history. It was primarily a colonial port during Portuguese rule that was subsequently lost to the Dutch who then lost it to the British in 1796. After independence in 1948, there were strained political relationships between the majority Tamil inhabitants of Jaffna and the Sinhalese majority government. The famous burning down of the Jaffna Library in 1981 was a significant marker of ethnic tension. In events following the ‘Black July’ of 1983, this tension erupted into civil war and Jaffna was under the control of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elaam) in 1986 and again from 1989-1995. The Indian Peace Keeping Forces also briefly occupied the city in 1987. In 1995, Jaffna was under the control of the Sri Lankan military and today forms part of post-war Sri Lanka under the control of the Sri Lankan government. Parts of the Jaffna Peninsula were also severely affected in the 2004 Asian Tsunami.

The Northern Province of Sri Lanka has over 1000 schools, eleven of which are National Schools while the rest comprise of provincial schools. There are six private fee-levying schools that were established prior to the 1961 ban on private education. These schools are primarily Christian missionary colleges that were set up during British colonial rule. The researcher’s visit to the Peninsula for fieldwork revealed
that as of March 2013, there was only one International School in Jaffna; the Saint International School, Manipay.

Manipay is an affluent town in the Northern Jaffna District, often referred to as the Colombo 7 (an elite suburb of Colombo where the affluent reside) of Jaffna. When the American Ceylon Mission came to Jaffna in the 19th century, they established the Green Memorial Hospital, a non-profit charitable hospital run by the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (JDCSI) in this town. This hospital served as a medical school in then Ceylon and helped popularize Manipay. Manipay today is home to a number of significant individuals such as Mudaliyars (a colonial title), judges and bureaucrats.

Although located in a relatively affluent part of Jaffna, Saint International School Manipay prides itself on having humble roots. Established in 2005 as a school for the tsunami victims, SISM initially provided free English education for those affected by the tsunami as well as those who were displaced as a result of the civil war. The school was established with the aid of a German philanthropist and is currently managed by a Pastor. SIS Manipay therefore provides a Christian education and hence is referred to as both an International School and a religious school. The annual fee at SISM is only Rupees 36000 (Approximately USD 360). Moreover, SISM also provides numerous scholarships and as the interview with the Vice Principal revealed, the pastor decides on the level of scholarship the students receive depending on their socio-economic circumstances.

SIS Manipay offers its students both the National curriculum in English medium as well as the Cambridge curriculum. Currently the school has over 800 students and over 60 teaching staff. Due to its close ties with the church, the school welcomes volunteer teachers from abroad. During the researchers visit, the school had two volunteer teachers from Australia who were training the local teachers on western pedagogical practices. The Vice Principal stated in her interview that voluntary missionary teachers from overseas have been constantly coming to AIS to teach for a year or so before returning to their home countries. The school helps integrate the children of returning Sri Lankans who have migrated during the civil war to other countries. These students are mainly those who were born and bred in countries such as the UK or Canada who have now returned to Jaffna with their
parents whose hometown was originally Jaffna. These ‘Foreign Sri Lankans’ as the Vice Principal referred to them, have had their initial education in the English medium in foreign countries.

Apart from its academic component, SISM also offers its students a range of extra curricular activities including indoor games, outdoor sports and numerous clubs and societies. The school, having a religious basis, also places emphasis on community and social services. The school is built in a relatively spacious area and has facilities such as a 3000 capacity auditorium, computer labs, school grounds and modern equipment brought in from Germany. Moreover, the school provides a transport service in the form of four buses that go around a 22-mile radius within the Jaffna peninsula picking students to and from school. The school also opened a branch in the Jaffna town in March 2013.

The data collection at this school consisted of a semi-structured interview with the Vice Principal, two focus groups with students from Years 8 and upwards and one focus group with teachers. Parental response at this school was significantly low. Out of the 20 questionnaires sent out to parents, only four were returned and only one parent opted to provide an interview. Hence one telephone interview was conducted with this parent. Random students were also given questionnaires that they completed and returned to the researcher.
Chapter Six: Results

Part One

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand the factors that compel parents to select an international school education for their children instead of the existing national or private education system. It was also about understanding some of the socio-economic and cultural impacts of receiving an international education and finding out the concerns and measures taken by the state in order to mediate these forces of change.

The data collected is reported in the next two chapters. The results begin with an account of the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires as well as the qualitative data from the various interviews, focus groups and telephone conversations. This is followed by a more in depth portrayal of the specific themes that emerged out of the grounded theory analysis.

The first section of this chapter provides an analysis of the questionnaires, and is reported using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics have been organized by a) Demographic Background b) Educational Background c) Factors of Influence d) Future Trajectories and e) Perceived Interactions with the local and global cultures. Next, the main themes that emerged from the qualitative data collected will be explored. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, then discusses these findings and hence provides further insight into International School Choice in Sri Lanka.

Questionnaire Data

Demographic Background

The majority of respondents were Sri Lankans. Of the 44 parents who completed the questionnaire, 41 (93.1%) were Sri Lankans with only 3 (6.8%) non Sri Lankans. With the student questionnaires, out of the 77 questionnaires completed, 71 (90.9%) of the students were Sri Lankan with only 6 (7.8%) students holding either
foreign or dual nationalities. In the case of the parent questionnaires, the majority of respondents were mothers (56.8%) with 17 (38.6%) fathers and 1 (2.3%) guardian also filling out the questionnaires. When inquired by the parents about the language spoken at home, 26 (39%) replied that they spoke in English. The majority of 28 (42%) spoke in Sinhalese at home while 12 (18%) conversed in Tamil. One family spoke Dutch (1%) at home.

**Graph 1: Languages Spoken at Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages spoken at home</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Sinhalese</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher was also interested in finding out the average number of children that these parents have and where these children were/are being educated. Most parents had two children on average and it was evident that if one of their children study at an international school it was more likely for their siblings to also be educated in an international school. The following table outlines the number of children that the parents had and where they are/were educated.
TABLE 3: AVERAGE PERCENTAGES OF CHILDREN AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/Private Schools</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Schools</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or Universities in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or University Overseas</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Educational Background**

In the case of educational background, the researcher was interested in the educational history of both the students as well as the parents. With students, the questionnaires allowed them to outline their language competencies as well as the number of schools they attended. As for the parents, the questionnaires explored the type of primary, secondary and tertiary education that they received as well as the medium of instruction in which the parents were educated at each level.

The questionnaires revealed that on average, most students (44%) attended only one school most of their lives. However 35% of students said they have attended two schools during their school lifetime while 11.6%, 5.2% and 3.8% said to have attended three, four and five schools respectively. The following table outlines the number of schools that the 77 student respondents attended over the duration of their schooling lives.
### Table 4: Educational Backgrounds (in Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF SCHOOLS ATTENDED</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/Private Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Schools in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Schools overseas</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Schools Overseas</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language proficiency of the students varied considerably when it came to reading, writing and speaking. 100% of the students were able to speak, read and write in English, which came as little surprise considering the fact that the medium of instruction at Sri Lankan international schools was entirely in the English medium. Fewer percentages demonstrated proficiency in the two local languages and even when students could speak Sinhalese or Tamils, even fewer numbers could read and write in the same language. However, a significant observation was that more than half the students at these international schools were able to speak another foreign language (mainly French and German) with nearly 40% able to read and write in these languages as well. The following graph summarizes the language proficiency of the students as evident from the questionnaires.
Not all parents filled out the section on their educational background or the language in which their education was carried out. Some would indicate simply the secondary education, omitting primary education or vice versa. However, from the data in the questionnaires, it was apparent that most parents received their primary and secondary education at national or private schools in Sri Lanka. Only four parents received their primary education at International schools and just one parent had attended secondary school at an international school. The numbers of parents who had tertiary education, be it at universities or colleges in Sri Lanka or overseas were also significantly low (only 7 in total). The following graph summarizes the educational backgrounds of the parents as evident from the questionnaires.
The majority of parents were also educated in Sinhalese at all three levels. 35% also received their tertiary education in English medium. It was interesting to note that no parent was educated in a language other than English, Sinhalese or Tamil. The following graph summarizes the medium of instruction in which the parents were educated as evident from the questionnaires.

**Graph 3: Educational Background of Parents**

![Educational Background of Parents](chart)

**Graph 4: Medium of Instruction of Parents' Education**

![Medium of Instruction of Parents' Education](chart)
Factors of Influence

The questionnaires explored the factors of influence in International School choice in Sri Lanka from both the students and the parents using three questions. The first question had eleven factors that the researcher initially identified as significant which were listed. The students as well as the parents had to rank them using a five point likert scale where the responses could vary between very important, important, not that important, not at all important and not applicable. This question also had additional space for the respondents to list any other factors that were not already discussed. The questionnaires also had two other questions where students and parents could write in more detail a) the perceived strengths/advantages of attending international schools and b) the main drawbacks/disadvantages of attending international schools.

According to the two more open-ended questions asking of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of international schools, the most common responses were:

Advantages/ Strengths

- English Language helps us get good jobs, fit in anywhere in the world and become more confident individuals.
- Foreign curriculum gives an advantage over the rest of the Sri Lankans and allows entry to foreign universities without hassle.
- Children get good exposure to the world which makes them confident.

Disadvantages/ Weaknesses

- Too expensive therefore difficult to keep the child in these international schools for their entire school life.
- Children miss out on learning to write in their mother tongue and religion.
- Schools are too business oriented trying to make money out of everything. Even intercultural celebrations are promoted so that they can charge parents for them.

The question asking the respondents to rank each factor of influence in order of perceived importance revealed that similar to previous studies conducted on school choice by Ezra (2007) or Ingersoll (2011), the quality of teachers was the
most important influencing factor. However within these schools the medium of instruction being English was also very highly valued. Parents and students alike were also mindful of the extra-curricular activities, foreign curriculum and reputation of these schools. The following charts outline the perceived importance of each of these factors from the eyes of the students as well as the parents.
Graph 5: Student Responses – Important Factors when choosing an International Education

Importance of Factors when Choosing an International Education - Student Responses
GRAPH 6: PARENT RESPONSES – IMPORTANT FACTORS when choosing an INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION - PARENT RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not That Important</th>
<th>Not At All Important</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as Language of Instruction</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to Where We Live</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Curriculum</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Student Population</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Curricular Activities Available</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Class Size in Comparison to Local Schools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks Accessible</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bar chart visually represents the distribution of responses from parents regarding the importance of various factors when choosing an international education. Each bar corresponds to a factor with categories ranging from 'Very Important' to 'Not At All Important.' The chart provides a quantifiable summary of parent preferences, with numerical data listed below the chart for each factor category.
Another question asked from both the parents and the students in the questionnaire was ‘what kind of a future do you see for yourself (your child) after attending an International School?’ There were six options and the respondents were allowed to tick multiple answers if they wished to do so. The six options were:

- I (wish)/(would like my child) to be a global citizen.
- I (hope)/(would like my child) to get a good job in Sri Lanka without any tertiary education.
- I (hope)/(would like my child) to attend a local university or college and get a good job in Sri Lanka.
- I (hope)/(would like my child) to attend a local university or college and get a good job overseas.
- I (hope)/(would like my child) to attend a university or college abroad and get a good job in Sri Lanka.
- I (hope)/(would like my child) to attend a university or college abroad and get a good job overseas.

The data revealed that in the case of parents and students, the two most popular answers were to attend university or college overseas and obtain a good job overseas and become a global citizen. 34% of students wished to attend university or college overseas and obtain a good job overseas while 26% hoped to become global citizens. 29% of parents wished their children to be global citizens while 22% wished for them to attend university or college overseas and obtain a good job overseas. However what was interesting to observe was that the same percentage (22%) of parents also wished for their children to attend local college or university and obtain employment in Sri Lanka while only 11% of the students held a similar view.
Graph 7: Imagined Future: Students

Imagined Future - Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Series1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be a global citizen</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a good job in SL without tertiary education</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a local college/university and get a good job in SL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a local college/university and get a good job overseas</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a college/university overseas and get a good job in SL</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a college/university overseas and get a good job overseas</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series 1

Imagined Future - Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Series1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be a global citizen</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a good job in SL without tertiary education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a local college/university and get a good job in SL</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a local college/university and get a good job overseas</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a college/university overseas and get a good job in SL</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend a college/university overseas and get a good job overseas</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series 1
**Perceived Interactions with local and global cultures**

In order to investigate the perceived local and global cultural interactions of those who attend international schools, the respondents were given two questions that asked them to rank a list of global and Sri Lankan cultural activities by order of their (their children’s) perceived interactions using a four point likert scale measuring lots of interaction, some interaction, little interaction and hardly any interaction.

**For Sri Lankan cultural activities, the list included:**
- Having friends who attend local schools.
- Practicing or taking part in Religious Activities.
- Watching Sri Lankan movies/television programs.
- Listening to Sri Lankan music.
- Interactions with Sri Lankans in local languages.
- Attending or taking part in Sri Lankan cultural activities.

**In terms of global cultural activities, the list included:**
- Having friends who attend international schools.
- Watching International television programs/movies.
- Listening to International music.
- Interactions with people from countries outside Sri Lanka.
- Attending or taking part in international cultural activities.

Both groups of respondents had similar responses, which were that in terms of local culture, when it came to watching Sri Lankan television or listening to Sri Lankan music, international school students preferred to refrain and opt for global television shows or Western music. Contrary to the interview findings or the literature, respondents claimed to have frequent interactions with locals in the local languages and frequently took part in religious activities. In terms of global interactions, respondents revealed that there was a lot of interaction with the global culture through the mass media such as listening to international music, watching international movies and having friends who...
attend other international schools. However there was very little interaction with foreign nationals or taking part in global cultural activities. The following charts outline the local and global interactions as perceived by parents and students.

**Graph 9: Perceived Interactions with Local and Global Culture:**

- **Hardly Any Interaction**
- **Little Interaction**
- **Some Interaction**
- **Lots of Interaction**

The charts show the perceived interactions with local and global culture based on students' experiences.
Perceived Interactions with local and global culture - Parents

Graph 10: Perceived Interactions with local and global culture: Parents
Interviews and Focus Groups

Out of the hundred questionnaires sent out to parents, 44 were returned and 16 individuals agreed to take part in telephone interviews. The qualitative data gathered hence consisted as follows:

**Table 5: Interviews and Focus Groups**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals or School Administrator Interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Focus Groups</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Focus Groups</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Telephone Interviews</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary for Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections explore the themes that emerged out of the interviews and focus groups. The researcher has categorized these under the three broad research questions that this study aims to answer. Next in Chapter 7 these themes will be discussed in relation to the wider socio-economic landscape of Sri Lanka in order to get a more nuanced understanding of the rationales and repercussions of International School choice in rapidly globalizing Sri Lanka.
Part Two

Why choose an International School?

The following section will attempt to answer research questions 1a and 1b by delving into the primary themes about Sri Lankan international school choice that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. While research question 1a refers solely to parental choice and research question 1b looks at student aspirations, by this stage of the research it is clear that school choice is not just limited to what parents want and aspirations from attending such schools extends beyond students to include parent expectations, teacher expectations and sometimes even international school administrator expectations. Hence, the next section will look at the factors influencing international school choice from a multitude of stakeholders that were interviewed by this study.

Firstly, an examination of the pull factors of Sri Lankan international schools is analysed. These include the facilities offered by international schools such as the provision of English medium education and foreign curriculum, the physical infrastructure such as class size, teaching quality, and the focus of international schools in producing a different calibre of global students. Next, the push factors that drive Sri Lankans away from the national system of education into this international school industry are investigated. Examples of this include dissatisfaction with the local education system such as the deteriorating standards of the national curriculum and factors that make way for international schools to be chosen as a proxy option due to the intense competition that is present in order to gain entry to prestigious national schools.

Superior Facilities

The consumer driven nature of International Schools makes it a possibility for its ‘clientele’ (parents, students and sometimes even teachers) to demand
certain facilities. As parents observed, the schools make way for facilities upon request. Better facilities allow for better quality education thereby improving reputation and facilitating better business.

**Infrastructure: equipment, resources and technology**

One of the primary ways in which Sri Lankan International Schools boast better facilities is through the presence of high-quality infrastructure. While some local schools may not have adequate desks, chairs, fans, laboratory and computing equipment, the case studies where the fieldwork was conducted had good quality amenities provided for its students. Some of the classrooms were air-conditioned and as some students noted in their focus groups:

‘We have got the best equipment, even the tables and chairs are not just taken from Sri Lanka, they are imported from Malaysia. Each of us has computers in the ICT labs. No need to share. We have a lot more facilities compared to National Schools, like better toilets, computer labs and smart boards. We adapt to the latest technologies’.

(Student 2, Student Focus Group, LCK)

Parents stressed that they wished for their children to have access to individual computers as that allows them to gain better ICT skills; this was deemed as a basic necessity in a globalizing world. Technology was also viewed as essential in 21st century schooling and a feature that was exclusive to a minority who especially attend these International Schools. The use of smart boards or multimedia presentations and access to the World Wide Web during school hours were seen as useful aids to educational development. Better infrastructure not only aided students to learn well but also facilitated teachers to teach better. Focus groups with the teachers revealed that library books, e-books, surfing, lab equipment made the International School teachers more privileged and helped them to improve their teaching methods. Superior infrastructure was not merely useful but also served a symbolic purpose. Good infrastructure and international schools, as parents noted, were often synonymous and evoked a sense of superiority for the international school
consumer. As one parent stated:

‘Facilities are good because in the government schools the toilets are not ok. Here, they are always cleaning them. There are servants and helpers so then our children don’t have to clean the class or do those types of things. They have to have some quality of life and so we are happy about it’.

(Parent 14, Matara)

There was a sense of pride and superiority associated with attending schools that had imported furniture and state of the art equipment. Not only were the tools useful in aiding the students’ education but also served as a class distinguisher that set the parents as well as the students apart from ‘ordinary’ stakeholders of the public education system. Sending one’s children to a school where the students did not have to clean the classrooms themselves but instead had the aid of domestic workers helped differentiate the international school parent in the above quote from a social strata that was unable due to economic factors or unwilling due to social factors to send their children to international schools.

Class Size

All international schools that the researcher visited had restrictions on the maximum number of students in a class. While the average maximum class size in international schools was 25 students per class, one of these schools had expanded this number initially from 15 to 30 students as demand rose. The interviews also revealed that some of the reputed international schools had long waiting lists. However, student admission was also highly selective and only guaranteed upon passing a placement test. Employing more teachers, and physically expanding the schools with the construction of newer buildings in order to conduct parallel classes tackled rising demand. In government schools, parents noted that the average class size was 40 and it was not uncommon for certain classes to even have over 60 students. Smaller class size at international schools allows for lower teacher-student ratios. This in turn facilitates individual attention for students and also allows teachers to have lighter
workloads.

‘In government schools what happens is the child who is bent towards studies will study and get through the exams. They are not concerned about the weak children because they don’t have the time to devote to them. They have large numbers in class. But here in internationals we have only 23 children so the teacher is accountable to every child and so because of that the children get individual attention and have a closer relationship with the teachers. They are more like friends. They are firm when it comes to discipline but otherwise they are very close to the students. Even if something happens with their families we are there with the family. For a funeral generally all of us attend and we are very concerned about our children. So that type of relationship is there in International Schools.’ [sic].

(Teacher 2, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

The above quote not only highlights the difference in class size and therefore provides an estimate of the quality of education offered at international schools but also hints at the tension that is present between the national and international schools. While this research did not interview any national school parents, students or teachers, it was apparent from the data collected that interviewees often attempted to justify why their choice was the best by highlighting the drawbacks of the national system of education. The interview with the Ministry of Education, on the other hand, strived to highlight the attractions of a national education system by listing all the drawbacks of the international system. It was evident that the two systems were mutually exclusive with stakeholders picking sides and refusing to see the benefits and drawbacks present in each sector. If education, as a whole in Sri Lanka is to be ameliorated, it is necessary to move away from viewing education through this binary definition of two sectors that are at odds with each other.

‘I saw in this school in Matara, there are 55 students in one class. So can one teacher correct all the books? Now here, all the books are marked, all exercises and homework corrected but this cannot be done in a government school. How
can one teacher correct 55 books during the day and there are so many parallel classes where she has to teach so it is difficult’.

(Parent 15, Matara)

The above quote makes the assumption that smaller class size would simply result in more efficient and dedicated teachers who mark student homework on time. However, teacher quality and the level of dedication are depended upon numerous other factors, the primary factor being an individual’s love and commitment to one’s profession. However, the difference is that international schoolteachers are more accountable to the principals and teachers in this private sector where the higher salaries they receive means that they are expected to perform their duties to the fullest and on time. In national schools, the chain of command between the teacher and their employer (i.e. the government) or the parents and the education provider (again, the government) is much longer. This means that any action taken against an undedicated teacher takes a longer time to process and allows for a leeway for certain national school teachers to be slack at their job. Another attractive feature of international schools is that smaller class size allows teachers to easily recognize any student who is falling behind and provide them with supportive classes. As the Vice Principal of the Jaffna International School states: ‘we conduct free supportive classes in the evenings where teachers have to work free of charge about two days a week at least. So especially with regard to important subjects like Mathematics, English, ICT, the supportive classes provide free support. Any student who wants to stay can attend these classes. Normally we keep the children who get below 40% in the term tests’. In this instance, it is evident that international schools have the possibility to make use of their smaller class size to pick out weaker students and provide them with additional academic guidance.

Teacher Quality

While high-tech facilities and smaller class sizes allow for improvements in teaching standards, the International Schools researched also demonstrated additional attention placed in order to improve teaching quality. This included
numerous teacher-training resources. In one school, the principal noted that teachers have peer observation sessions when teachers go and observe another teacher and then they make comments and have discussions with each other so that they could ameliorate the teaching methods. In addition to peer learning, teachers also have mentor systems where new teachers are guided by more experienced teachers.

‘Being an international schoolteacher, we have to learn something new everyday in addition to teaching. So it’s learning and teaching, teaching and learning, I love that’.

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Some International Schools also provide scholarships for teachers to go out and obtain skills that would add value to their expertise. For example, one school sends their teachers to the UK for teacher training. Other schools had less elaborate forms of teacher training such as bringing in international examiners to conduct seminars and workshops that exposed teachers to more modern modes of teaching.

Unlike the local system, International Schools were praised for having teachers that had better personal rapport with their students. In the traditional Sri Lankan educational system, there is a distinct hierarchy among teachers and students. It’s the role of the teacher to impart knowledge while it is the duty of the student to obediently take in whatever is being taught. Although teachers in Sri Lanka are highly respected, this hierarchical system leaves little room for inter-personal rapport building, questioning or challenging what is being taught. As one particular teacher reminisces: ‘back in our schools it was the teacher talking. Teacher did a lot of talking but here we try and make the students speak. We try and get them to read, ask questions and speak up’.

(Teacher 3, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

At international schools, students have better rapport with teachers and therefore are in a position to approach students if they don’t understand something or learn by questioning. Having smaller class sizes also means that students get to know their teachers at a closer level. As one teacher remarked: ‘even older students you know, once they have a trust in a particular teacher, they
tend to approach them with their problems. Even personal problems, which even their own parents may not know sometimes’.

(Teacher 6, Teacher Focus Group, LCK)

Wider Choice

International Schools offer their students a wider subject range that spans away from the traditional Science, Commerce and Arts stream that is popular in the traditional Sri Lankan schooling system. This allows students to dream big and provide the possibility to grow up to be whoever they wish to be. As one student remarked, ‘normally in the local schools it’s maths or science to become a doctor or an engineer, but here you know, we have many more paths...you can do modelling or fashion designing or do accounts...preference is given to other subjects like modelling, arts and history’.

(Student 2, Student Focus Group, LCK)

International schools, furthermore, make way for a wider range of extra-curricular activities. All the schools that the researcher visited compensated for their lack of physical space by providing students with transport to and from the school in order to take part in extra activities. For instance, the schools encouraged their students to swim or play tennis by hiring local pools and tennis courts and taking the students to these venues during school hours. They also encouraged their students to take part in Model United Nations and try out for international sporting events. For activities that required students to travel to the capital Colombo, some schools even took care of temporary student accommodation. This provision of transport even when the schools lacked the facilities to accommodate for certain activities was another reason for selecting international schools in Sri Lanka.

‘You don’t get this type of facilities in government schools...when it comes to extra curricular activities we have our own vehicles that take these children even to Colombo. We have a place to keep these children in Colombo. Now in government schools you don’t have those things, you’ll have to go to Colombo and find a place, most probably a school or something like that to keep the children. Here it is not so, here you have a definite separate place where we can
accommodate 100 or 150 children in our own premises...and they are being very well looked after. And for swimming and other things, even though we don't have a swimming pool, we take them to the university swimming pool...we are paying high fees alright, but then we are doing all that for children’.

(Headmaster, B1)

In addition, international schools pay particular attention to try and foster skills for life after school. Some schools have career guidance counsellors, others have tertiary education branches with affiliations to foreign universities through which students can graduate while other schools help their students to obtain scholarships for foreign universities. The following quote, from the Headmaster of Liberty College Kandy outlines some of the facilities that the school provides for their children:

‘We have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the University of Hong Kong and The University of Canterbury, New Zealand and so we are getting a few scholarships. Last year we had six scholarships to HK and two to Canterbury...we also have our graduate school where children can pursue studies even after leaving school, even aviation we have started there now and we expand...at times we give them first-hand information about universities, we took a batch of students to University of Canterbury, New Zealand. They get good exposure. They were residing in university premises itself and they attended lectures. Likewise we sent another group to Hong Kong. They will stay for about 4 days and get very good exposure to university life’.

(Headmaster, B1)

Facilities mentioned in the above quote are exclusive to a handful of elite international schools in Sri Lanka as visiting universities overseas for taster courses or actually opting for higher education abroad are limited to a minority that can afford the expenditure related to sending their children overseas such as flights, accommodation and university fees. While students from national schools do sometimes opt to attend universities overseas, the schools will not actively encourage this and therefore any MOUs at this stage will be non-existent. If overseas education in encouraged in the national education sector,
it will be at university level where scholarships are provided to study abroad.

*International Schools produce a different calibre of students*

Parents often remarked that a primary reason for sending their children to International Schools was because these schools helped create a different type of student. The following diagram outlines the most frequent vocabulary used to describe the international school student by all stakeholders of this industry.

**FIGURE 8: A DIFFERENT CALIBER OF STUDENTS**

What parents observed was that their children who went to International schools displayed superior skills compared to other siblings or known children who attended national schools. Parents, teachers and sometimes even international school administrators deemed these children as being superior in education, general knowledge, and social skills. A quality education, parents illustrated, resulted in forward thinking citizens who had good leadership, practical skills and were critical thinkers and independent learners as these were areas that the international curriculum placed more emphasis on. The co-educational and all-encompassing nature of international schools furthermore, allowed students to mingle with various racial, ethnic and religious groups as well as members of the opposite sex. This made them tolerant individuals with better socializing skills who were able to break cultural barriers and fit well
within a pluralistic society.

The following sections outline how exposure to global culture, English medium education and an international curriculum help foster these positive traits among international school students. Furthermore, it will also explore how an international education helps augment social class and aids in possible future migration opportunities. The parents also remarked that international schools made students 'way more advanced' (Parent 16, Matara) compared to their schooling days. The word advanced mostly has negative connotation attached to it and these negative outcomes of attending international schools are discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

**Exposure to a Global Culture**

The curriculum, extra-curricular activities as well as the social networks made accessible during an international school education exposes the students to a global culture. This global culture values and promotes leadership qualities. It promotes work but also play. As one parent observed, students who attend international schools get to live life and enjoy their schooling years to the highest potential.

'I would say people who attend local schools would be the people who make their lives according to the Sri Lankan recipe, you know they go to university, find a job, get married, build a house...in general people live for others, like parents live for their children and children live for their children. But in a westernized culture they tend to enjoy, I mean they live life'.

(Parent 7, Colombo)

The education received at international schools, hence goes beyond the academics to become a lifestyle choice where children mingle with all kind of people and develop inter-personal communication skills. Most students were described as ‘polished’ meaning they were able to converse fluently and eloquently in an international stage.

'Now in this time, it’s not like 2000s, I think they have to face 2020. My husband always says that the world in 2020 will be different. They have to move with
people. Black people, white people, everyone has to be like one family. So in international schools they get that chance. Foreign children, local children, different types, different religions, different families... I think its good’. [sic]

(Parent 10, Kandy)

Several research participants stressed the importance of promoting a tolerant society stating that in a globalized world, people need to be able to get along with all different kinds of individuals. For a trilingual country, Sri Lanka is lagging behind. Languages should be core strength in a country and not a divisive element. For a country that already consists of people speaking three official languages, downplaying the role of English due to historical legacies is not the best way forward. Instead, utilizing the already existing competency in English language and furthering it is crucial. The two vernacular languages, however should not be shunned in the process but instead used to complement and promote local culture simultaneously. The physical location of Sri Lanka in the centre of Asia, coupled with its cultural diversity should be something that needs to be promoted in the global market. Investing in an international education hence facilitates a smoother transition to the global market.

‘Whatever the school, the question should be can the students compete in the market place? The market place is not local, it is global. So our students can compete in the global market place. Now again you might say, ah hold on so that means that our culture will go for a six. Nonsense! If you don’t give respect, if you are not trustworthy, tolerant and decent, how are you going to compete in the global market? ...I always tell parents, if you are swimming in money and don’t know what to do with it, don’t spend on houses and cars, spend them on your children’s education. Send them abroad to the best universities. It is an investment for the country. A few millions going out cannot be compared to what comes in’.

(Principal, A1)

The schools, furthermore, provided students with skills to live and work with various groups. Parents claimed that schools allowed students to have contact with foreigners, which meant that they wouldn’t have any culture shock when
they step out into the wider world. The opportunity to learn from foreign teachers and also learn foreign languages made the students familiar with different accents, social cues, communication methods and ways of life. It helps remove prejudices towards the unfamiliar and produces confident and independent individuals that can adjust themselves to situations on an international scale. Students were seen as more social as activities such as the Model United Nations encouraged communication skills. The international school student thus was regarded as more outspoken.

‘It’s all about socializing. It’s all about how we interact with other people. For example if you are given a specific topic to talk about, government school students, they find it difficult since they are not used to it. Since they are not familiar with the language. The international school students since the beginning have been communicating in English and they find it much easier to and more relaxed when they have to speak’.

(Parent 2, Colombo)

Socializing was also crucial between the two genders. Since most national schools are single sex institutions, there is a sense of unfamiliarity building with members of the opposite sex. This reinforces traditional gender norms where men are seen as the breadwinners in society while women make up the caregivers. When students are segregated based on gender from an early age, they grow up endorsing traditional norms. For instance, they perceive any innocent interaction between the two genders in an over sexualised manner. This is because in a traditional Sri Lankan setting, it is not normal for males and females to be good friends unless they are related or married primarily because their school life allows no room for males and females to interact. At international schools, this gender divide is somewhat reduced thus resulting in the promotion of less patriarchal norms. The researcher understands that mere interaction between the opposite sexes from an early age is insufficient to alter patriarchal norms. Yet, the interviews with the school administrators revealed that these schools were making a genuine effort to lessen this gap. For instance, there were equal opportunities for children to participate in academic and extra-curricular activities regardless of their gender. Seeing female students
take part in the mixed soccer clubs for example was a minute but encouraging aspect in the governance of one of the case studies. Other schools in this study had separate male and female clubs for certain contact sports. However, this very same interaction is viewed in a negative light, seen as something that goes against what is expected in a traditional Sri Lankan setting and is therefore explored in detail later on in this chapter when the research discusses the negative socio-cultural impacts of attending an international school.

Freedom was another aspect that parents drew upon. In the local education system, they claimed there were strict rules that restricted the creativity of children. For instance, parents illustrated that within Sri Lankan culture, the adults controlled the behaviour of students very much. This meant that children were often banned from going out, talking to people, socializing and hence not exposed to the ‘real world’.

As one mother contends, ‘In government schools, Facebook is 100% prohibited, but here in International Schools even the teachers are Facebook friends with the students so they have that freedom. In a way this is good because the world is developing so you have to mix with those things. In government schools, they are putting strict rules and putting the children down...so international school students are very forward and they catch up with things very quickly’.

(Parent 11, Kandy)

**Foreign Curriculum**

While some international schools offer the national curriculum in the English medium, the majority of these schools offer a variety of foreign curriculums. The most common out of these are the British (Edexcel and Cambridge) syllabus which the four case studies for this research offered and the International Baccalaureate (IB) that only two schools in Sri Lanka follow. The core subjects such as Mathematics, the Sciences and English are offered (and are compulsory) in both curriculums with the exception of Religion, Mother Tongue and Social Studies. For students attending schools under the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education, it is compulsory until Ordinary Level to follow Religion,
Mother Tongue and Social Studies (a combination of Sri Lankan history and geography). With foreign curriculums, there is the possibility to follow Sinhalese, Tamil and Religions however it is not compulsory. History and Geography are available too but focus on the World rather than having specific focus on Sri Lanka. In certain cases, depending on the country of origin of the curriculum, history and geography that students learn about maybe location specific, such as British History or American Social Studies.

Qualitative data collected from each level of stakeholders conveyed that foreign curriculum was yet another decisive factor in opting for an international education. Foreign curriculums, parents observed were being constantly updated and were arguably contested to be of a superior standard. For example, at Ordinary Level, the Sri Lankan syllabus offered one combined subject known as Science while the foreign curriculums often had at least three science subjects (Chemistry, Biology and Physics).

The interviews also highlighted that the standard of English and ICT were far superior in the international syllabuses. The textbook anecdotes, experiment procedures and ways in which subjects were explained in the texts were also deemed more modern and in par with present times in the foreign curriculums. Another feature of the curriculum that international school clientele appreciated was the critical thinking and independent learning that these curriculums promoted. The Sri Lankan curriculum was criticized for providing the student with a lot of theory but not enough hands on practical experience. The foreign curriculums are very much practice oriented and also promote independent self-learning and fact-finding. This, parents argued, encourages students to take initiative and readily face challenges rather than develop a generation of individuals who need to be constantly spoon-fed information. The foreign curriculum also fostered multiple non-academic skills such as inter-personal communication and group work through the requirement of

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3 In 2014, the government implemented a cabinet amendment that now makes it compulsory for students to follow mother tongue and religion at international schools. However, during the time that the data was collected, this law was not implemented.
listening, speaking and project designing activities.

‘Self-learning and fact-finding, that kind of things and projects creates more entrepreneurs, people who provide employment than work for someone. I have seen in other countries like New Zealand that the majority of people want to have their own thing. I think that has something to do with the education system’.

(Parent 7, Colombo)

The foreign curriculum also aided foreigners or Sri Lankans settled abroad to easily (re) adjust to schools in Sri Lanka. For those intending to go abroad, an international curriculum means smoother transition to schools elsewhere at a later stage. However, the foreign curriculum is mainly criticized for producing Sri Lankans with little knowledge of their immediate local environment. Learning about distant places, parents argue are impractical as students may learn things by learning theoretically about a place but have very little experience actually being there.

‘When it comes to the London Syllabus, as far as I know as a parent and a teacher is that the student’s knowledge is nil because they do British History and British Geography. It’s just in a book. They write notes and study the book but practically they don’t know anything that is in London. They simply learn by-heart and write but if it’s Sri Lankan geography, we can think and write since after all we are surrounded by it’.

(Parent 8, Colombo)

In some instances this lack of familiarity with what is being taught poses a problem for international school administrators. As the Vice Principal of SIS, Jaffna noted, the syllabus is adapted to suit the local setting. Later on in this chapter, the researcher discusses the negative aspects of following a foreign curriculum in more detail.

‘The British Pounds, here we have Rupees, so children don’t know. Some food items also they may not know. So sometimes we change to our currency. It’s a genuine problem we are facing, when you go teach rupees and cents, you can’t talk about Pounds and Shillings. Some names are changed too. So for McMillan they say Gopal’.

(Vice Principal, D1)
English Language

English opens many doors. If one is fluent in English, they are able to gain access to a wider range of books, media and other material available through the World Wide Web. It helps communicate with a wider audience and ensures greater mobility. English has world recognition; it is symbolic of social and cultural capital and is seen by most parents as the way forward. In a global village, interviewees note that Sri Lanka is only a tiny dot in the world map. Native speakers of Sinhalese and Tamil are almost negligible in comparison to speakers of English. Historically, it was those fluent in English who were able to attain higher echelons in society. Fluency in English is hence seen as a valuable asset in securing employment and a vital tool for a globalized future.

‘I think in the future all government schools will also become Anglicized. That’s the way they are going forward no? Because you need that. Not only now but in earlier days also there were people who reached higher positions by following English medium’.

(Parent 15, Matara)

One parent observes that in present day Sri Lanka, despite the notion that fluency in vernacular languages is sufficient for survival, within Sri Lanka it is not so.

‘Though they say that here there is independence and everything is in Sinhalese the law is in English. If we want to take a bank loan, the papers need to be filled and everything must be done in English. If we have to do something to obtain insurance, even that is in English. Even the parliament does most things in English. Those who wish to go forward learn English because the country is going forward towards English’.

(Parent 16, Matara)

This quote reinforces the argument that despite independence and a shift towards nationalism that moves away from English, the superiority and the significance of this global language in impacting day-to-day life still remains strong in Sri Lanka. While fluency in only the vernacular languages will facilitate mere existence in Sri Lanka, knowledge in English aids Sri Lankans to
be part of the global economy that Sri Lanka is very much a part of.

Since the international schools teach all subjects in the English medium, the standard of English proficiency of international school students is significantly higher. Moreover, at most Sri Lankan international schools, students communicate with each other solely in English. In some of the schools where the research was carried out, it was unofficially banned for students to converse in the vernacular languages during school hours. This, coupled with the introduction of English Literature from an early stage allows the international school students to possess a superior command of English. Parents, therefore claimed English as the primary factor for choosing an international education:

‘Now our son and daughter’s future is clear because they are learning in an International School they are fluent in the English. Now you can understand my English is not fluent no, I got my studies in the government school, I got a degree also but my English is not fluent...it’s mainly that I wanted him to have a good knowledge of English because that’s the most important thing.’ [sic]

(Parent 5, Kandy)

Actually parents, those who have missed the English education, they feel, why not give this. Because the parents think, because I did not get English, I couldn’t go to that level, I couldn’t get a job, I couldn’t go to a higher level in life so why not I give that opportunity to my children’. [sic]

(Parent 8, Colombo)

‘Because of their English, international school students are very forward and so they shine better than the local school students’.

(Parent 9, Colombo)

By opting for an international education that operates in the English medium, parents were making an active decision to exit the local system in favour of a global one that they foresee as providing an advantage to their children. The implication of this for those left behind in a national system of education is that even though they may have better opportunities within a national sphere, they were at a loss in a global arena.

Even within the local stage, fluency in English means that international school
students, even if they are not necessarily better qualified can secure employment. The optional information that the open ended questions in the questionnaires allowed parents to put forward revealed that another motive for placing students in international schools was so they could gain employment without necessarily investing in tertiary education.

‘One student from here, he went for an interview with Dialog (a leading telecommunications company in Sri Lanka) and he only had O/Levels. He was selected over a graduate because of his English and the leadership qualities’.

(Vice Principal, D1)

‘In Jaffna, not all the schools teach English well so for jobs they expect English...so even if we fail examinations, the international school students, they get jobs outside’.

(Student 4, Student Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

Social Class

Attending an International School furthermore has a sense of pride attached to it. There is pride in attending a reputed international school and often this trickles down to the prestigious universities that international school students have the opportunity to attend. Most schools boast of their students going to top class universities around the world. An international school education is synonymous with a higher social class and another reason for parents selecting an international education is to expose their children to such a social background. It’s the Sri Lankan mentality that fluency in English automatically results in higher social position. When inquired, parents informed the researcher that they wished for their children to move about in high society rather than be in an ‘ordinary environment’. As one parent remarked, ‘...our children have recognition and there is pride. Even parents are in a position to show off saying that my child receives his education in the English medium. So social class can be maintained’.

(Parent 13, Matara)

However, this is not always true, as the massive growth of Sri Lankan International Schools signifies a trend for the noveau riche to purchase an elite
education. Class, in this instance is equated to fluency in English language and access to a social network of English savvy Sri Lankans who have opted to send their children to international schools.

**Migration**

An international education helps students to migrate, either temporary for higher education or more permanently. For parents who wished to send their children overseas later for higher education, following a foreign curriculum grants faster access. It aids children to pass any English language assessments without hassle and adjust smoothly to school life abroad both academically and socially. Temporary visitors to Sri Lanka such as foreign expats or Sri Lankans settled abroad find International schools a haven as they help children to keep up with their skills before re-adjusting to schools or universities abroad. International School administrators assessed that these schools helped non Sri Lankans to continue in a similar education system to what they were following in their home countries. School principals also revealed that the majority of their students, upon completing high school tend to go abroad for higher education.

The reason for migration often varies. Some children wished to reach international heights such as become scientists at NASA that they claimed would be much easier if they receive an international education. Others were simply disappointed with the existing political situation in the country and were looking for avenues of migration.

*The natural beauty in our country is exceptional but the people have no freedom. They cannot talk straight and even if they study there are no proper jobs to suit the education*.

(Parent 17, Matara)

A student from Jaffna declares, *Due to the revolution in our country our parents didn’t want us to study and stay in this country. They wanted to put us in an English school and send us to some other foreign country. That is why they put us in this school*.

(Student 4, Student Focus Group 2, SISM, Jaffna)
Moreover, students noted that following an international curriculum makes it easier for them to obtain a foreign visa. Intention in this case was not to gain higher education but simply find an easier path to obtaining a foreign visa. ‘Here we have Cambridge syllabus not Sri Lankan syllabus so we can get student visas. We are able to go to foreign countries easily without delay. The normal person, if he wants to go abroad he needs to wait around 6 months to get the visa and things like that. But if we go on student visa we can show our results sheet and we can get within one or one and a half months’.

(Student 3, Focus Group 2, SISM, Jaffna)

Comments about the reason for opting for an international school primarily being for migratory reasons was observed primarily in the Jaffna International School. Moreover, these comments came from the students and not the parents who were more cautious about what they revealed in the interviews. Perhaps intentions to attend international schools and then obtain foreign visa’s with the pretence of attending higher education institutions overseas was pronounced in Jaffna as an outcome of the turmoil history of the Sri Lankan civil war. Jaffna, a primarily Tamil populated district in the North was at the forefront of the civil war and the data collected was only four years after the end of the war. Urgency to leave Sri Lanka hence can be inferred to have a strong correlation with dissatisfaction regarding the political situation of the country.

Shortcomings with the existing National System of Education

The data gathered from the interviews and focus groups revealed that another primary reason for choosing an international education was shortcomings in the national education system. Parents sent their children to international schools either due to dissatisfaction with the national education system or as a result of not being able to gain admission to desired prestigious national schools. The following section will explore these factors in more detail.
Dissatisfaction with National Education System

Dissatisfaction with the National system of education could be divided into four broad categories; discontent with the local syllabus, disapproval of the learning environment, annoyance with political interference and displeasure with teacher behaviour.

Syllabus

The local syllabus is criticized by the majority of interviewees for being of poor quality. For example, the syllabus placed emphasis on theory teaching for students rather than giving them the opportunity to practice what was taught. Moreover, the syllabus, interviewees claimed, was out-dated with frequent mistranslations. ‘Most of our national schoolbooks are translated from English. So when the translation is not up to the mark again you get problems. It is a common thing in Sri Lankan exams also, sometimes you know even the exam papers are translated wrong and finally at the end of the day they give concession marks in the final results. So it is you know, everything is in a mess I would say’.

( parent 15, Matara)

English was taught from a primary level, however the number of periods devoted to it was seen as insufficient. Parents claimed that English teaching in the national education system focused primarily on teaching students grammar but failed to encourage listening and speaking skills. If the education system does not encourage conversing, there was little point in knowing a language as students lacked confidence to utilize it on a daily basis. This coupled with overcrowded classrooms leave little room for individual attention. Those students who are able to catch up work hence succeed while the rest are left behind.

‘Government school English level is very very low. The "allaganna ekkena allagena yanawa" (those who catch it continue to hold on). Others are backbenchers’.

‘Now when you get a child admitted to a local school, the children don’t converse
in English and that’s where they get handicapped you know, because the problem is if you cannot converse it is going to affect your future’.  

(Parent 8, Colombo)

Learning Environment

The learning environment was equally disheartening. There is a distinct notion of hierarchy among students and teachers in the National Education System. The teachers have a system of what Paulo Freire refers to as the banking of knowledge to the students while the students are expected to passively take in whatever that is being taught. Usually, the teacher comes to class, gets the students to read off the textbooks and copy notes off the blackboards. This method of spoon-feeding data to children coupled with the popular usage of rote learning practices leaves little room for self-learning and critical thinking. ‘I am not happy with this hierarchical system in local schools where there is a gap between children and teachers…the teachers consider the students are supposed to learn whatever they teach…instructions are given and students have to copy down the notes and cram and get through exams. I would say the child is entitled to find their own information and kind of form their own opinions too’.  

(Parent 6, Colombo)

‘In the local schools it was mostly memorizing the curriculum and getting through exams. But here (international schools) we focus more on the practical side of things. Students have to do a certain amount of research and learn themselves. That’s something we don’t do in the local schools, research is not something we usually do.’  

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Education instead should move away from this Human Capital Theory approach that focuses on mass producing students that is deemed to be an asset to the development of a country by emphasizing on the liberation aspect that Freire talks about (Fagerlind and Saha 1989). Liberation Theory, alternatively emphasizes the need for education to empower individuals via the encouragement of freedom and critical thinking.
In international schools thus, there is the opportunity to question, challenge and think outside the box, which leads to freedom and creativity. International schools furthermore, encouraged students to regularly take part in group activities and public speaking in the form of student presentations. These were seen as skills necessary for excellence outside of the schools in real life scenarios and hence another attractive feature that was not entirely promoted in local schools. ‘Now here we teach children how to do presentations and group work. They all get the chance to do them. Now in government schools they don’t have that so once they are out of school only they start learning these things. But international school students, while they are in school they learn so they come out with public speaking talent, you know, knowing all these things’.

(Teacher 4, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

Intense competition was another characteristic of the national education system that international school stakeholders highly disapproved of. Entrance to national schools is theoretically based on a system of residency proximity. In Year Five, all students in the national education system have to undergo the Year Five Scholarship Examination. Those who excel at this examination are then granted scholarships to enter more prestigious schools from different parts of the island. The Year Five Examination is highly competitive and hence claimed to foster a pressure system from a very young age. Students as young as eight or nine years of age prepare for this exam by going for extra classes after schools. ‘They are only thinking of shishathwaya (scholarship)’. Moreover, national schools have harsher punishments for children with infrequent but nevertheless cases of student caning or corporal punishment still present. International schools have significantly less severe disciplinary action.

‘They have very strict rules in government schools. I think it’s bad sometimes because they must have some freedom you know. Then only they can have creativity’.

(Parent 3, Matara)

This lack of discipline in International Schools is also viewed negatively and is thus explored in more detail later in this chapter.
Intense competition not only takes place at school level in the National education system but also intensifies even further at tertiary level. Since private universities are non-existent, the existing state universities are full beyond their maximum capacities. Parents claimed that it was only less than 10% of students sitting for their Advanced Levels in a particular year are granted university entry. Furthermore, if a local school student wishes to become a doctor or an engineer, since they are extremely competitive subjects, students have to obtain very high scores or settle for secondary options such as Veterinary Science or Nursing that have comparatively lower entry requirements. Those who attend international schools on the other hand, as a result of being able to afford university education outside of Sri Lanka are able to pursue studies in their preferred field even if they do not get the best grades as there is a wider range of universities of various levels accessible to them.

‘Now in the Sri Lankan system what happens is that you may do very well when it comes to the Advanced Level Examinations. Even after getting 3As in all three subjects you may not still stand a chance of entering the university because it has become so competitive’.

(Teacher 3, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

‘I think only a small decimal place of students can enter the university. When you want to become a doctor and so few can get into medicine, dreams are being ruined. They have no time to turn back and do something else...one or two marks can decide their whole future so that unlucky factor is destroyed when you are going to an international school because we have a lot of universities to choose from...according to the ranking, according to the marks they get and according to what we like’.

(Student 9, Student Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

**Politics**

Another drawback of the National Education System is political interference when it comes to performing bureaucratic requirements common to many centralised systems, especially in developing countries. There is a long chain of
command in the national education system with almost all action requiring approval from the Ministry of Education. A former principal of a National School presently headmaster of one of the international schools where fieldwork was conducted noted that in international schools, if any change such as the addition of extra furniture was necessary, all he had to do was request them from the owners of the international school or the management and they would take immediate action. However, in the case of his previous National school, it was necessary to fill out paper work and wait for approval for a long time since the school had to send the request to the Ministry of Education that would then review and send a reply. In the case of a Provincial School, this chain of command was even longer with approval requiring going through the Divisional Education Office, Zonal Education Office, Provincial Department of Education, Provincial Ministry of Education and ultimately the Ministry of Education.

‘Principal can’t do things the way he wants to do, I mean he may have his own views and ideas but he has to abide by the government rules and regulations. So because of that you are not free to improve the system of education. I had this experience when I was Principal in a National School. So many constraints!’

(Headmaster, Bi)

In government schools you have to go to this man and that man and everybody to get down your furniture or infrastructure...for a lot of things actually'.

(Principal, Ci)

Teacher transfers were another aspect that was highly politicized in the National education system. Politicians would often interfere and get their favourites to certain schools while punishment transfers to far off rural schools when teachers lacked allegiance to certain political agendas was also common. Teacher allocations were often not based on merit or an organized structure but rather based upon political allegiance and social tact. Interviewees also observed that teaching at local schools was often disrupted by politics. For instance, if there was an Independence Day parade and the Ministry required a number of students from a particular school to take part in such activities, it was necessary for those event preparations to take precedence over everything
else.

‘In government schools really it’s all politics. If you know a politician then you can go to any school and if the politician favours the teacher then they can stay without doing any work. Teachers are always worried about transfers due to political acts. Sometimes directors or unwanted people come and worry them with transfers. Here it is not so’.

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

Teacher Quality

Teacher absenteeism is a major cause of concern within the national educational system. Teachers in the government sector are granted around 40 days of leave annually while this number is less than half of that in the private sector. Teaching is one of the least paid jobs in the government sector and hence government schoolteachers are renowned for conducting tuition classes beyond schooling hours in order to gain additional income. Tuition has become almost an inherent part of school life for stakeholders in the local education system.

‘If we put them to government schools, for every subject we will have to send them for tuition’.

(Parent 10, Kandy)

Teachers are criticized by parents for not covering the syllabus or teaching properly during school hours but encouraging students to attend their private classes where they charge the students for their services.

‘In government schools the teachers won’t teach properly. In tuition only they will teach. In schools they teach briefly...90% of the students will go for tuition because teachers will ask them to go for gaining money’.

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

Thus it is not uncommon for students in the final years of their schooling life to stop going to school months before a public examination and simply attend all
the extra tuition classes.

‘In Sri Lanka the GCE A/L exams are in August. So for the last two terms children will stop going to school. They won’t go to school and nobody cares about it. They go for tuition. But here until the last day before the exams the children will come to school’.

(Student 1, Student Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

One of the reasons for this, interviewees reported was because the teachers in the government sector get paid, even if they do not work properly. Teachers in the government schools usually teach for about 25 periods a week while teachers at the international schools claimed to be teaching for more than 32 periods per week. Teacher strikes and marking delays of public examinations are also frequent occurrences that delay the speed at which a child in the local education system could complete their education. This is particularly true for the university sector where frequent strikes and university closures tend to delay the length of undergraduate degrees by several years.

‘Our children finish their A Levels when they are 19 or 20 but at international schools by about 17 they have finished school...this is because even before the results of the O Levels come they start their A Levels. But when it comes to local schools now the last December batch is still waiting for their results and their classes will only start somewhere in July so 6 months gap there. Once again the A Level results will also result in about a 5 month gap so nearly one year the child is wasting’.

(Parent 8, Colombo)

‘If you have a little bit of money you can go abroad and study and get the degree more easily than in Sri Lanka where the children go on strike and sometimes for a child to complete a degree it will take about more than 5 to 6 years!’

(Teacher 4, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)
Difficulty getting entrance to prestigious national schools

Another reason to opt for an international school education was because entry into prestigious national schools is highly competitive. When parents fail to send their children to prestigious national schools, their second option is to opt for an international school education instead of the local schools of poorer quality that they are entitled to attend under the residential proximity law. The following section will analyse the difficulties in gaining entry to prestigious national schools in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, entrance to schools at primary level is based on proximity to residency. Parents are expected to send their children to schools nearby and then once the students sit for the grade-five scholarship examination, students are eligible to gain scholarships to more prestigious National Schools depending on how well they fared in the scholarship examination. However, this rule is not strictly adhered to and hence everyone strives to send their children to some of the well renowned schools in the urban areas. The primary way of evading the proximity rule is via corruption. Every year, Sri Lankans spend millions of rupees to forge residential details, bribe school principals and politicians in order to gain entry to these high-demand schools. For those that cannot afford this additional expenditure associated with corruption, the schools closest to them are their only option until they can sit for the Year Five Scholarship exam and strive to secure a place.

‘Only the students who get high marks and only the students in a particular area or some children of people with high power can enter the big schools in Matara. The others must go to their local school in their area or village...there is a point system for city limits and only if you have a certain score can you put your child there. Because with our points obtained we don’t come up to that score. We can only send to small schools depending on where we live. Now suppose you ask if we have the necessary score, then we will definitely put them there. Because we
Getting into a prestigious school ensures bright prospects for the students. In Sri Lanka, attending a reputed National School carries a long way as school reputation is synonymous with prestige and people often offer jobs to alumni of certain schools simply because they attended these schools. Often, it is a case of successful entrepreneurs and elite preferring to employ people who have gone to the same school as them.

‘Royal College, these guys are very famous so then even the old boys when they hear Royal College they give jobs because of the reputation’.

(Student 2, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

‘In society, the name of a school matters you know. They are giving jobs for the school name only. Now Trinity College means they can get jobs easily’.

(Parent 11, Kandy)

For this reason, Sri Lankans try various dubious methods of sending their children to prestigious schools and as a result many of the popular National Schools (both Public and Private) are often the most crowded. However, despite overcrowding, these schools are renowned for having the best teachers, very good facilities and producing the best results at public examinations. In theory, entrance to these prestigious National Schools is possible either via scholarship entry after the Year Five Scholarship examinations or once they are deemed eligible upon passing the points based entry system. The points for entry include factors such as proximity to permanent residence or the fact that a child’s parents were formerly alumni of this school or their siblings are currently studying in the same school.

For each of these factors extensive proof is required. The interviews revealed that sometimes in order to prove residency, it was necessary to produce house deeds, several years’ worth of electricity bills etc.

‘They will be asking for your fixed house. You can’t stay in a rented house and get entry to Royal College. You should have a fixed job, have electricity bills for ten years. Like that they will ask for so many things. Not like International Schools.’
They won’t ask, you pay the admission, you enter but for government schools there are so many regulations’.

(Student 1, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Despite such efforts to ensure authenticity, it was common for parents to get involved in corrupt methods such as bribing officials, forging residency and getting local politicians to bend the rules for the entry of their children to such schools.

‘Now in our system it is so difficult for a person to get a child admitted unless you know, you indulge in some sort of wrong methods you know to satisfy the authorities’.

(Parent 7, Colombo)

Most National Schools have religious affiliations and hence only a limited quota of students from other religions can gain entry to such schools. It was hence not unheard of therefore, for some parents to even fake false religious affiliations in order to send their children to these schools that they preferred.

‘For Muslims there is a particular percentage that can enter to that school so basically there are like thousands of students and only 10% of Muslims so if they exceed 10% they won’t take’.

(Parent 5, Kandy)

The fieldwork conducted with international school parents revealed that in a significant number of cases, parents ideally preferred to send their children to these prestigious national schools. However, failing which, they opted for reputable international schools in lieu of the other unappealing local schools that they are eligible to apply within the national education system. International school choice hence was a proxy option of those who could not gain entry to the prestigious national schools.

‘I think they started putting children to international schools because they couldn’t get into a good national school. Because the craze is to get into good national schools which is really hard so when they don’t have the opportunity they just opted for the next best thing which are international schools’.

(Parent 4, Colombo)

‘Most parents select international schools because when it comes to Colombo just
because they don’t get Royal or St Thomas’ (Prestigious boys schools) or Visaka or Museaus (Prestigious girls schools), second option is international schools’.

(Parent 3, Colombo)

Most of my friends were shocked when I put my son to just a normal school which has just two buildings. So from there he got his scholarship later to go to a bigger school. Most parents don’t look at that side. They think when they don’t get these so called ‘big schools’ next thing is they just put to international schools because they don’t like to put them to nearby schools in the village. It’s really a prestige issue for the parents’.

(Parent 3, Colombo)

Some parents claimed that especially in the urban areas of Sri Lanka where families have migrated to, it was impossible to neither prove long-term residency nor gain favours from any locals to get into their preferred national schools. Hence, they were compelled to select international schools.

‘When it comes to Colombo most are migrants from other places so it’s hard to get a school. No need to run behind people getting admission or paying money to Grama Sevaka (public official appointed by government) certificate or house deeds, light bills, phone bills etc. For international schools it’s not that, you just pay the money and you get admission’.

(Parent 3, Colombo)

Attending smaller national schools close to their place of abode hence was strongly associated with the lowest socio-economic strata that had no means to send their children to big schools. Hence, although the free education policy of post-independence Sri Lanka attempted to diminish inequalities, the presence of the Year Five Scholarship examination only reinforced educational inequality. The proxy option of international schools hence acted as a method for those parents who were unable to gain entry to the prestigious national schools to save face in front of society. For others who refused to invest time and money in this tedious task of placing one’s child in a prestigious national school, the emergence of international schools proved to be the easy way.
Socio-cultural impacts of receiving an international education

The next section attempts to answer research question 2 regarding the socio-cultural impacts of receiving an international school education through an analysis of the interviews and focus groups. The data collected revealed that international schools devalued the worth of education, and gave rise to a generation of ‘spoilt rich kids’ that attempted to resolve all problems by spending money. It was also outlined that international schools produced over protected children, intrusive parents, led to social fragmentation and challenged the traditions and cultural ethos of Sri Lanka. However, the participants also put forward counter arguments against these allegations. The following section will assess these factors in more detail.

Value of Education diminishes

Contrary to the above-mentioned arguments, respondents contended that the provision of international school education in Sri Lanka results in a diminishing of the value of education. Their assertion was that in present day Sri Lanka, if one makes enough money they were able to purchase any kind of education without necessarily putting much effort into the process. International school students hence were claimed to be able to become doctors and engineers without as much effort in comparison to those students who attended national schools and competed vigorously to enter limited spaces in the Sri Lankan universities.

‘I mean if a doctor comes out of a local school, the doctor is the best. He is selected out of a maximum number and is the best...in international schools if they can pay you can be a doctor from a wide choice of universities with lower marks so he is not the best. I mean people he treats are at risk because he is not the best in this society’.

(Student 5, Student Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

Closely related to this idea of the value of education are the notions that since international schools are also businesses, their primary motive of moneymaking results in questionable educational integrity. Parents often interfere constantly
with administrative matters, demanding certain things simply because they are paying for their children’s education. Interviews with the teachers revealed that the most common of parental demands is retaliation to any disciplinary measures that teachers take. In such instances, the management is more likely to take the side of the parents as they are the paying clientele and in extreme cases, even resort to firing those teachers in order to merely please parents.

‘Parents scream at teachers when teachers scold their children and they will call the chairman sir and complain. From the management side they don’t want parents removing their children from the school’. [sic]

(Teacher 7, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

‘Parents have this impression why are you scolding my child when I am paying for this and paying for that’...in international schools parents are always interfering. Everyday they come to schools and asking about teachers and the work. Even though the principal has given them a time to meet, they come after school everyday.’[sic]

(Teacher 4, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

‘Say some child breaks a glass and we ask them to replace it, the parents sometimes come and say we are paying fees for the school so it’s up to you and they don’t pay to repair school property. Merely because they are paying they expect us to provide everything so that type of attitude is there in a few’. [sic]

(Headmaster, B1)

The above quotes reflect a need for Sri Lankan international schools to find a healthy balance between education and business. When schools start treating students and parents as clients, they expect customer service with a smile. Management, in this instance makes decisions based purely on safeguarding business interests such as firing teachers for the slightest complain in order to prevent loss of customers. This moneymaking priority of international schools is discussed in more detail when exploring research question 3 about the concerns of the state with regard to international schools. However, it is important to note that international schools, as perceived by the parent interviewees, have become a breeding ground for inimical moral behaviour that
the very same system is trying to prevent through the promotion of an intercultural education that places emphasis on pluralistic and ethical behaviour.

‘Spoilt Rich Kids’

This concept of parents expecting everything from international schools simply because they are paying for their children’s’ education transcends to the level of the child as well. The interviews and focus groups constantly referred to international school students as arrogant, spoilt individuals who are mollycoddled by the parents as well as the international education system. Students were said to be lacking in discipline as they retaliated to any disciplinary action as a violation of their rights as fee-paying customers.

‘Children who go to international schools about 80% maybe have no care for anyone. They don’t care for elders, teachers like in local schools where when they see a teacher they speak with love and respect. Now in these schools it is very rare. They think we pay and learn so we will behave the way we want’.  

(Parent 16, Matara)

‘Children have this impression that we pay for what we get so even if a teacher scolds them they can’t say anything because they have that impression we are paying so why are you scolding me like that. In our age we never thought like that so that is bad I think’.

(Teacher 27, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Moreover, international schools were criticized for bringing up a generation of Sri Lankans who believe that the solution for every problem could be solved by spending money. ‘Because they have got used to parents paying for everything they think that they can get even the stars for money’. As one parent illustrates, this attitude is not discouraged in the schools and hence have the potential to create individuals who will grow up trying to solve all issues through monetary means:

‘I will give you an example now at my daughter’s school one student has accidently spilt some milk all over the floors the teacher has scolded and asked him to clean it up. So then you know what the child has done, he has taken a
thousand rupee note and given it to the tuck shop man and asked him to clean it up. So this is bad. As a child you must not do like that no. When they grow up they will do the same thing in the public you know. So money is not everything but they think if you can spend money you can get anything like that’. [sic]

(Parent 10, Kandy)

Students at international schools were also described as selfish individuals who would take advantage of the teachers, expecting them to provide undue services simply because they pay for their education. Thus, international schools were criticized for producing a different type of child that was unwelcome within the traditional Sri Lankan sphere.

‘Because they are paying, sometimes the students think we are servants only. Yes sometimes they think we are their servants. It means we have to always be teaching and always have to help them. Sometimes they can’t do anything on their own. Even to plait their hair they are asking us to do’.

(Teacher 5, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara

‘At international schools, the students are a little what I call in our language a little ‘high-fi’ you know. The kind that behaves like money is not a matter. They come spend hundreds in the canteen each day, their hair is all grown and that’s not the way a student should be’.

(Parent 12, Matara, Translated from Sinhala)

The above mentioned interview quotes signify an antagonism that is steadily building between those who are part of the international school sector and the rest of Sri Lanka. Sometimes words such as ‘selfish’ or ‘spoilt rich’ are used merely as synonyms to describe anyone who is westernized. Ever since the colonial period, tradition and modernity were viewed as opposites that were mutually exclusive. Hence by describing the international school student as ‘having no care for elders’ or behaving in a manner that ‘in our age we never did’, interviewees are highlighting a process in which international schools are producing students that are culturally distant from traditional Sri Lankan way of life. This alienation of international school students from the traditional Sri Lankan students reveals an urgent need for Sri Lankan international schools to
promote an education that finds a balance between Sri Lankan culture and the alternate culture(s) that are bred within these schools. This concept of finding an appropriate middle ground between tradition and modernity is explored in detail in the final discussions chapter.

Overprotected children

The international school students, in addition to being of a ‘spoilt rich’ nature were also described as overprotected. When schools charge such high fees, the management as well as the teachers have a greater accountability towards the wellbeing and safety of children. Thus students were restricted from performing any activities that could potentially cause them any physical harm.

‘Really at international schools we are spoon-feeding the child. During my childhood we were quite free and had the freedom. Now when it comes to experiments in my day the children were taken to the ground and asked to measure. We had to take ropes and tie them from tree to tree and measure or take buckets of water and measure it practically ok. But when it comes to international schools we don’t have that. One reason is we don’t have much space but another reason is we are scared to make the child carry water. The floor is tiled so we are scared the child may slip and fall and if anything happens we are responsible. Finally the management will ask why did you make that child carry that water? Because you charge fees you have a bigger responsibility towards the child’. [sic]

(Parent 8, also a teacher at KI, Colombo)

Furthermore, the physical lack of space also posed a problem for the upbringing of the international school students. Most international schools expand vertically with little open space for children to play. These schools usually rent out grounds in distant areas and have transport arranged to take students to the grounds or pool during physical exercise classes, sporting events or extra-curricular game time. School administrators therefore are once again reluctant to take all the children to the grounds for fear of students falling or getting injured, as ultimately the students are the responsibility of the school.
'They don’t have space like we did during our childhood to run and play and shout and sing and dance. And the other thing is at sports meet, the amount of fun we had, I don’t think nowadays these international school children have it. One reason is they don’t have their own grounds, the other is management doesn’t want to send all the children at once to the grounds again because of responsibility'.

(Parent 14, Matara)

‘None of the schools have a ground right. Maybe a small one where you can park 4 or 5 cars that’s all there is for children to play. That also when I was teaching we were asked not to send children out to play because they could fall and get injured. They don’t have enough space to play or put out their energy. So as a result what I feel is they make a lot of noise in class when we teach’.

(Parent 8, also a teacher, Colombo)

In comparison, the local schools were less accountable for their students. What the researcher observed at the case study schools was that unlike in the national schools where the majority of students travelled to school by school van or public transport, a majority of international school students were chauffeur driven or had their parents drop them to and from school. International school students therefore are brought up in a restricted gated environment away from the real local Sri Lankan surroundings. They thus find it difficult to assimilate with the local sphere and as students observed during their focus group sessions, international school students tend not to be as street smart as students that attend local schools. For instance, students revealed that international school students sometimes do not know how to use public transport and tend to get easily cheated when moving outside their immediate surrounding within Sri Lanka as they are unaware of the subtle local social cues.

‘They are like nerds. They don’t know how to get into a bus even but if you ask them any subject they will explain everything because they are trained to do those things. They are robotics’. [sic]

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)
Students from International Schools are, they are not cheated, I mean cheated while being in the school, so then, they don’t normally have the habit of being cheated so when they go to the society because they don’t have the ability to catch up with what is going on until the last moment. It is only then they recognize ok, I am finished! But it’s not the case with the local students because from the start they go to school they are been given the rag and the exposure to become cheated and deal with harsh conditions. Normally students from International Schools, normally they are not exposed to blames and harsh words and normally, actually they are pampered. [sic]

(Student 2, Student Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

Once again, the quotes reflect a process in which the international schools as well as the parents of those attending these schools are contributing to alienating Sri Lankan students from their immediate Sri Lankan locality. Education that gives you a global exposure with little affinity for local culture serves little purpose and is something that is explored in more detail in the discussions chapter.

Us vs. Them divides

Private education in Sri Lanka has a long history of fostering social stratification. It is for this reason that the majority views the establishment of any private education institution negatively. Moreover, education in the English medium is condemned for further exacerbating this social divide by producing an English fluent minority that goes on to rule those with little grasp of the English language. The interviews revealed that international schools thus brought up students that look down upon the rest of the national school students and encourage the creation of an international educated versus national school educated divide among Sri Lankan society.

The international school student was described as haughty and scornful of the local school students whom they perceived as inferior to them. It was not unheard of for parents to describe instances where their children teased the local school students about their lower level of English competency.
‘Ah that boy is from a government school so I had to tell him like everything in Sinhala. That mentality is there’.

(Parent 1, also a teacher at an international school in Colombo)

‘Students think that government school children are like rubbish. We are rich, we have money, and we come to international schools and do them in English so we know everything. That is there sometimes’.

(Parent 1, also a teacher at an international school in Colombo)

Student’s who attend local schools thereby were said to develop inferiority complexes, sometimes shying away due to their perceived lack of English language skills. As a result, the two groups of students tended not to integrate but instead stick ‘to their own kind’.

‘Sometimes they can develop a sort of complex where the national school students might think that international school students think that they are above them or something like that’.

(Headmaster, Bi)

‘They (international school students) are proud and they are not speaking in Sinhala and if other government school children are there they always speak in English to them and are proud. So that’s not good but they don’t like to move with other people meaning some that use filthy words. They don’t like to move with other children. They are a different gang’.

(Parent 15, Matara)

Since international schools charged high fees, the majority of those who attended international schools were relatively affluent being able to afford the high fees. Students therefore rarely interacted with poorer students. In local schools however, since education was free it was more likely for students from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds to mix with each other.

‘People who go to international schools are mostly rich so when they meet with someone who is poor then the class difference may come and they may not want to talk. But for students who are going to local schools, students of every class
are there so they may have at least seen and at least spoken to them so class range is not something big for them'.

(Parent, 15, Matara)

The international school student was also criticized for being less community spirited. Instead they were brought up with individualistic values where they tend to be courteous to others but wouldn’t go out of the way to help members of their community. Local students on the other hand were described as unified and had a strong sense of belonging to their school community.

‘Let’s say there is a fight between a government school and an international school student. Even if it’s one student, there the whole school will back him especially after cricket matches. Yes they are more united than us…with international schools only 2 out of hundreds will back you in a fight. We are concerned about ourselves only…international school students will say should we fight for some guy and leave saying sorry man I have work, take care of yourself’. [sic]

(Student 6, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Despite such negative allegations against the international school students, the research also revealed that negative stereotyping and othering not only is propagated by the international school student but often cultivated against them as well. For instance, student focus groups revealed that international school students felt that local school students avoided them owing to pre-dispositional misconceptions about them being conceited and unwilling to mingle. International school students were stereotyped as ‘big-headed’ and frequently accused of being conceited. The interviews highlighted several anecdotes about them being teased for speaking in English and not conversing in local languages as a sign of disregard for local traditions.

‘They are the ones who are pulling back. They think we know better English and sometimes they are shy and sometimes they have a bad impression on international school students…most of us are open towards relationships with them’.

(Student 2, Student Focus Group 1, SISM, Jaffna)
‘Local students say that international school children have big heads...I am big headed and I’m not coming to play or speak with them...the society can’t understand what has really happened to us and with time I mean you are separated and we change and they change’. [sic]

(Student 4, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

‘You get relatives talking to you saying that now you are going to an international school and now you are trying to be posh and all that. If we speak even a word in English they will be like oh you forgot Tamil, you forgot your mother tongue now you speak only in English and they will make fun of us’.

(Student 1, Student Focus Group 1, SISM, Jaffna)

Another allegation against the international school student was that because international schools were co-educational institutions, the students were seen as sexually promiscuous. In extreme cases, this perception affected their future marriage prospects as well.

Guys going to international schools might be big shots you know. Girls specially, like some religious people and all, when they get married they think she went to an international school, she might be a big shot now...they will be a little unwilling to give you a husband or wife because they will think how many girls have you been with, how many boys have you been with...but this problem is mainly for Muslim girls. [sic]

(Student 7, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Stakeholders of the national schooling system hence perceived themselves to be morally superior, untainted by the detrimental influences of globalization and westernization that has corrupted the international school students. It is for these negative stereotypes associated with merely the term ‘international schools’ that one of the case study schools recently scrapped the ‘international school’ part from their school name and replaced it with the word ‘college’.

‘No, we didn’t want this to be named as an International School which means generally a sophisticated school meant for, you know, some sort of an elite crowd
of people. We just want to give the impression that it's a college so that concept 'college' is a better name for a school because that involves so many things. Now almost all the prestigious schools in the island are termed 'colleges' you know, places like Royal, Ananda and all. Those places, they are referred to as colleges so we also wanted to maintain that Sri Lankan culture'.

(Headmaster, B1)

Just the way the wording ‘private missionary schools’ established during colonial time were associated with social stratification and the creation of an elite group that ruled the majority, international schools today are beginning to be associated with many negative connotations that rise from a shift away from local culture to a more global one. Since the lack of private schools was compensated by the rise of international schools, it is possible that there may well be, in the near future, a shift to private colleges (schools registered under the company’ act but not carrying the words ‘international school’) in order to once again, conceal the negative associations.

Cultural Bubble

Another outcome of attending international schools was that the students (note that the majority of them are Sri Lankans) grew up in a cultural bubble that endorsed western values. This cultural bubble is created via the restriction of local content in the curriculum. Moreover, participants accused international schools for not giving their students enough opportunities to assimilate with the local culture.

Since English teaching was the primary focus of these schools, the teaching of mother tongue was often overlooked. As a result, the students sometimes were unable to communicate with locals.

‘Because my children speak English mostly they can’t communicate with their grandparents and aunts and like that in our village. It is very difficult’.

(Parent 6, Jaffna)

Another allegation was that international schools did not teach religion in schools that gave rise to individuals that had little good values ingrained within
them. An outcome of this, parents often expressed was that children grew up too fast engaging in activities that were inappropriate for their age. For example, parents indirectly raised concern about students having romantic relationships with each other and possibly engaging in sexual relations. Others were concerned about the norms and values that international schools fostered such as dress codes that were culturally inappropriate.

“Because we don’t teach religion...the child grows up without religion. All these drug cases mainly from international schools right. It’s a well-known thing so parents have this idea that international schools are going to ruin kids. Even though my child goes there...I am scared. I am always watchful. I am trying to go teach there because I want him in front of my eyes’.

(Parent 1, Colombo, also a teacher)

It was evident from parent interviews that international school choice was a gamble that parents had to take. While international schools were renowned for promoting a less desirable culture that rivalled the culture promoted via national schools, the significant lack of English and modern curriculum that meets the demands of a globalized world in the national system compelled parents to make a reluctant yet necessary choice of opting for an international school education.

Another issue that the interviews revealed was that international schools did not encourage teaching Sri Lankan history or geography. Hence international schools produced a generation of Sri Lankans that had much knowledge about the outside world but little awareness of their immediate surroundings.

‘They don’t know anything about Sri Lanka but they know everything about the UK culture and UK history...I think they can get along with foreign children than with the Sri Lankan children so this is why I tell that they are advanced children’.

(Parent 16, Matara)

One dangerous outcome of not being familiar with their own culture was that international school students engaged in culturally inappropriate behaviour that sometimes even caused them physical harm. As one student focus group
pointed out, it was ‘inappropriate attire’ or ‘over friendly’ interactions of female international school students that could lead to them to be raped or even murdered in Sri Lanka!

‘We get more westernized when we come to these schools. Normally the girls get more westernized...start wearing all those westernized clothes and they forget our traditions. They move out with guys and all sorts...in Sri Lanka girls don’t talk much with boys unless they are related or you know bonds or something like that. When you come to internationals they interact, they get a little too much. When they interact too much they end up getting raped or something...it leads to unnecessary things’. [sic]

(Student 3, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

In London and America there are like nude beaches and stuff. If somebody goes like that in Sri Lanka or India they will end up like killed or something! Issues like parties are the main problem we have. International Schools they attend parties. So with all these parties sometimes things end up badly’.

(Student 4, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Not only was the lack of religion, history or geography creating negative impacts, but the very same desirable qualities of the international curriculum also created certain undesirable outcomes. For example, exposure to western culture was seen as something desirable and undesirable simultaneously. The interviews revealed that a global curriculum was stripping the children of their childhood. Sri Lankan culture promotes the image of childhood as innocence. By giving greater access to the mass media and the world wide web, international schools were hence seen as taking away this perceived sense of innocence from Sri Lankan children.

‘International school students are more advanced in both the good ways and the bad ways. What I see is that even though they go to internationals, children should be children. Now children who are 12 or 13 years do things that we do at 18
or 19. So when they become 18 or 19 they have nothing left to do. The children don’t have a childhood in international schools. It is because they are too advanced and want to hasten everything. They don’t behave like children in their childhood but they go to be like adults’.

( Parent 16, Matara )

‘They wear dresses that are really short and keep mobile phones and there is a different wave in Colombo’.

( Parent 1, Kandy )

Moreover, the researcher observed that most of these negative impacts were highlighted in Colombo by the interviewees. This reflects differences in the quality of education within international schools in the capital and the rest of the country. The international schools is Colombo therefore were deemed as more ‘international’ indicating both a superiority in terms of the quality of education offered and at the same time a perceived inferiority in terms of detachment from traditional Sri Lankan culture. This was apparent from the interviews conducted with teachers as well as the administrators of the case studies from the outskirt schools. They repeatedly pointed out the moral superiority of their schools in comparison to either Colombo schools in general or their affiliated branches in Colombo. Media reports too tend to highlight any incidents involving international school students instigating a sense of moral panic that these schools are marring Sri Lankan cultural values.

Counter arguments

The lack of Sri Lankan history, geography or religious studies in the international school curriculum, some parents argued was of little consequence. It was their judgment that values are not learnt from the syllabus but ingrained into one’s upbringing. School was only a small part of the student’s life and religious education or exposure to local religion or culture was seen as the responsibility of the parents. Family background hence, was deemed as crucial in shaping a child’s upbringing.

‘We can’t expect the good behaviour from the school, that parents have to teach them how to behave’. [sic]
Moreover, parents claimed that the curriculum in national schools was so exam oriented that even if subjects such as Sri Lankan history or social studies were taught, students simply learnt to get through the exams and hardly remembered what was taught later on anyway. With religious education, it was argued that simply learning religion as a subject had little relation to one’s moral code of conduct. A religion they argued cannot be imposed upon a person but should rather develop out of individual passion.

‘What I learnt about Sri Lanka I can’t remember most of that stuff. I mean I crammed it just to get through the exams. Many children go to State Schools and they are taught religion, ok, and majority of the people go to Buddhist schools and Buddhism is taught as a subject, not as a religion. So people study the religion and they know everything about all the Jathaka stories and end of the day they don’t know why the religion is there and what they are supposed to do as a Buddhist. So they do end up being a labelled Buddhist or labelled Catholic than a person who follows or rather take benefit from the religion. So in that sense I don’t see a value in teaching religion technically you know’. [sic]

(Parent 5, Kandy)

This labelling of Sri Lankans as belonging to specific religious, ethnic or linguistic groups has been a focus of nation building even as far back as pre-colonial times. It is this segregation of society into pure and unrelated groups that has been continually promoted and perpetuated via the contemporary national system of education. By shifting the focus of education away from religion or mother tongue, international schools are in one way aiding to create a more pluralistic society that isn’t determined by one’s religion or ethnicity. However, attempting to challenge this age-old culture in Sri Lanka is the primary reason why international schools are regarded with hostility. When education no longer promotes the safeguarding of ethno-linguistic or religious identity, it is challenging the very basis upon which Sri Lanka as a nation state is based upon.
At times, parents came to terms with the fact that being globally competitive meant that certain aspects of local culture sometimes had to be side-lined as a response to globalization.

‘Yes that language, religion they get cornered a bit. When you have to go with the flow of the next century those things get a little side-lined’. [sic]

(Parent 16, Matara)

Some even argued that accusations about the lack of traditions and local culture at international schools were jealous accusations of those who could not afford this privileged form of education.

‘I think general idea, I think most of them like but most of them can't afford so may be because of that only they are just putting them down’. [sic]

(Parent 10, Kandy)

Lack of discipline therefore was put forward as a problem with the entire new generation and not something particular to international schools.

‘Not only the International schools; in every school, children are now not well disciplined. I can't tell that International School children are well disciplined than other school children. All that now I think depends on parents’.

(Teacher 3, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Instead, international school students were praised for creating tolerant, heterogeneous societies where students were able to get along with individuals from any cultural background. Racism was minimal in international schools and students were praised of treating each other equally regardless of their socio-ethnic backgrounds.

‘Generally, now they can move with all the communities. Now Buddhist children also coming, Muslims also coming, sometimes foreigners also coming, then they can move with everyone equally’. [sic]

(Principal, SIS, Matara)

‘There is one advantage in a co-education school. People from all religions come to the same school and there is a good community. They become very ...yes ... for everything, they exchange and they have a better understanding ... so no racism...'
You don’t have racism...like everyone they treat equally; there is no difference between us'. [sic]

(Parent 10, Matara)

The researcher posed a question to stakeholders of international schools inquiring them of this perspective that international schools are eroding traditional culture. The International School administrators were quick to defend this allegation revealing that the schools in fact did try to promote the local culture. All four case studies encouraged community service and celebrated almost all the local festivals. Students of all religious and cultural backgrounds had to celebrate each other’s festivals.

‘We want children to grow up patriotically. Now here, I have included the school song, which is of very high patriotism value. They all sing together, that’s about some ancient kings and all, like that, so that is one thing, and then by holding this Sri Lankan New Year Festival and all, now the present day children they don’t know about the rituals, tradition, customs and manners of the New Year. Now we do it so they learn all that because we want a group of children who are not only good in English, who are cultured well. That is very important as Sri Lankans. That is there especially in this International School, when you look at the vision, it states ‘educational excellence in a religious background with total personality development’. [sic]

(Principal C1)

The principal of Kingston Institute furthermore pointed out that it was essential for the students to first and foremost love their own country if they are to have respect for other countries and their people. He ascertains that true democracy is possible only when education is not politicized. In his opinion, in Sri Lanka the politicization of education was a primary cause for the 30-year civil war that plagued the island. The principal observes that Sri Lanka already has a long-standing open mindedness between people of different faiths.
However, politics has framed a problem particularly in the educational field and more recently in the field of international school education.

‘Just because you are an International School it shouldn’t mean that you don’t love the country, you have to love the country and our loyalty should be to the country first, and secondly, but perhaps more importantly, to humanity. So, the word ‘international’ shouldn’t mean much. You need to love your country and you need to think about others, the international community also...there needs to be Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, KSA, so that has to be there, only then can you have true democracy. So that is why I said great education system is not politically negotiated, because the vast majority of this country is lovely, forgiving, generous, passionate people.... but then as I said, it’s very important to maintain your identity. That’s what happened, that’s why we were at war for 30 years, we decided to go for one language and finish the country’. [sic]

(Principal, A1)

‘...So honesty, keeping your word, respect, gratitude, decency, generosity, the ability to forgive, doing things with passion, are they local values or foreign values? I think we should not politicize education. That is my answer. So we need to, again, maintain who we are, we need to be globally competitive, but this is a free country, now this is the only country where a Muslim could be covered from head to toe or could run around as if they are straight from Paris. This should remain same. So this is, I mean, this is the only place you could have a Buddhist temple and you could have any other religious institution coming and putting up right next to it. This is the only country where you do that. In certain countries you will be killed instantly. So this is a tolerant country...so I think the law has to do a lot of things to stop politicizing these very delicate issues because we have no choice but to celebrate culture, we have no choice but to celebrate cultural diversity, because otherwise we’ll go back and we don’t want to go back, 30 years is enough, now we live without fear, people forget, Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, we were living in fear of bombs. We cannot discriminate on race and
religion, that's stupid, we were all living in fear, so enough is enough, and so this is the thing, we shouldn't make it political. [sic]

(Principal, A1)

This response reflects an urgent need for national and international schools to stop being at odds with one another. Highlighting the flaws of each education system should be important as it facilitates the opportunity to ameliorate the drawbacks of each system. However, using these drawbacks of each system for political vantage is something that is not going to benefit either of the education systems. Moreover, interviewees argued that claims about international schools lacking culture was an unfair accusation and a false stereotype based on just a few isolated examples. They reaffirmed its political nature by pointing out that no two schools, whether international or national were alike and therefore it was absurd to make generalizations based on a few incidents.

‘Yes, general perception, they think there is no culture in international schools. I think that's a perception, the perception is that, and when we say it is wrong to single out so called ‘international schools’, that's wrong because no two international schools are the same, no two government schools are the same, it is very political to say international schools and non-international schools because no two schools are the same’. [sic]

(Headmaster, B1)

Students furthermore expressed that this stereotyping had negative consequences on them, which they deemed as unfair. This so-called ‘bad behaviours’, students remarked had more to do with values of the individual passed on to them from their families than the school itself.

‘Basically a lot of people have like the wrong idea about international schools, they always think that we are posh and they always think there is bad behaviour, people only within the school really know that they just judge by the appearance...it’s girls usually, in some international schools, girls wear like you know, inappropriate stuff even to school, but that, that in my opinion, doesn’t reflect the whole international community...yes, it doesn’t reflect the
international school but in my opinion it's because of the family background'. [sic]

(Student 2, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

‘Recently there was a beach party or something, long time back, all the rich people who study in International Schools went for it. So you know the parents, my cousins and all they had a bad image about me. Like these International Schools students only do things like that. People who are half naked and fully drunk. It's very unfair right, maybe some students, just because they go to an International School doesn't mean they are bad right, maybe they must have been well raised by their family but people outside they get a very bad image even of them. That’s very unfair'. [sic]

(Student 5, Student Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

‘That’s because most of the people are very narrow-minded, they usually judge a book by looking at its cover, and when they hear the word ‘international’ they get a very bad idea. That’s because they haven’t experienced such situations right. I mean just because you know it’s a mixed school doesn’t mean you should have a very bad idea about the school’.

(Student 2, Student Focus Group, LCK)

The above-mentioned quotes by international school students portray a growing tension that is being perpetuated between those that attend international schools and those that do not. Whilst schooling does influence student behaviour, it is important to keep in mind that it is only one aspect whereas influences outside of schools also shape future generations. International schools have tried to take remedial steps to address these accusations. However, as seen in the next section, due to the business focus of these schools, sometimes the promotion of values and intercultural education is forced upon the students. The intentions of promoting Sri Lankan culture and values, in this instance are less virtuous intentions and have more to do with pleasing customers of various faiths so as to safeguard their business. This
aspect of forced pluralism and moneymaking priorities will be explored in more
detail both in the next section and the discussions chapter.

The role of the state with regard to international schools

The following section will look at the concerns, tensions and steps taken by the
Sri Lankan government with regard to Sri Lankan international schools in order
to answer research question 3. The researcher will explore how the concepts of
private schooling, the business of international schools, teacher quality and
syllabus shortcomings of Sri Lankan international schools are seen through the
eyes of the Sri Lankan state.

National Education System

Sri Lanka endorses a free national system of education where textbooks,
uniforms as well as midday meals for rural school students are all provided free
of charge.

'It’s absolute free. We spend 40 billion from the ministry and the combined
expenditure from the three ministers amounts to around 120 million rupees. The
mid day meal is free. In addition about four million is spent on textbooks, to make
them absolutely free. Another four million is spent on uniforms, and around 12
million rupees is spent for other education services. Apart from that there’s the
salaries and other things. It’s absolutely free. We charge only 35 rupees per year.
Sometimes the school development society, they collect money from the parents
to develop the school, to maintain and do kind of extra-curricular activities or
some other things. That is there’. [sic]

(Secretary of Education, MOE: Sri Lanka)

The Private Schools that existed prior to the 1961 ban and opted to continue as
private schools levy school fees from their students. However, these fees are
significantly lower than what the international schools charge. Other previously
private schools have abolished school fees to become semi-government schools
that sometimes charge miscellaneous fees such as entrance fees. Both the
private and semi government schools in Sri Lanka still fall under the Ministry of Education and follow the National curriculum. As the Secretary for education points out, these schools, despite being non-national schools have strong ties with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education.

‘Once we absorbed all the schools to the public sector, there were 72 schools remaining as private schools. Some schools are actually getting aid from the government, while others they have their own income, but are run according to the mandate of the government policy. They have a Board of Administration like Trinity College, Kandy, where they collect money but we pay salaries and they are within the national educational curriculum framework as well as the initiative policy’. [sic]

**Private schooling**

Private schooling has long been an issue of concern in Sri Lanka. As the Secretary for Education highlights, private education is an essential driver for economic growth and choice is an intrinsic element of democracy that should be made available to the public as exemplified by several democratic states.

‘There should be alternatives; all should not fall into the one umbrella of public schools. It should depend on the need of the parents actually. If they have a wish they should have opportunities to get the education they desire for their child. That freedom they should have because we are a democratic country, we have to allow parents to get education according to their own wish. Even Singapore, Malaysia, even Australia, and other countries they allow that right?’ [sic]

Private education also facilitates parents to provide their children with better facilities. It is seen as a way forward where education could be used as a commodity that is promoted in the global market. Private education furthermore helps take pressure off existing public schools as competition for public school resources decreases with people opting for more private schooling options. Market liberalization and the introduction of private schools, hence are described as the way forward.

‘We have to allow parents to get more facilities which the government may not be able to supply from the public schools, then actually if they have money they can
pay and make it fit in to their requirement. It has to be done because everything can't be developed by the government, because the private sector...actually the private sector is the engine of the boat...because we have big targets, and because the education infrastructure has been well developed, even the infrastructure of the country has been well developed, we have to allow the private sector people to invest in the country. Actually education is one of the businesses in the world now, it’s a qualitative spiritual thing but even though it’s a business’. ‘We have to allow certain areas to develop. For business to develop, the quality people to bring in to the country to get more education, to allow more exposure for people...we have to liberalize, we have to understand that and then we have to develop the policies and ... go forward’. [sic]

However, the situation in Sri Lanka is such that private education is a reminder of the stark inequalities that existed during British Colonial times. Private education is synonymous with social stratification and the rise of an elite ruling class minority. English education furthermore is not only represented as a form of capital available to a rich minority that often attend private schools but is also seen as a hindrance to the national traditions and cultural values. It is seen as a driver for Western ideals that often contradict the traditional Sri Lankan norms. Attempts to establish private educational institutions therefore are met with strong opposition. Free public education, on the other hand is a symbol of equality and opportunity that extends power to the common man. It signifies an era where education is no longer a luxury that is available only to a privileged minority.

The situation of the country is that some political parties are not allowing the government to privatize the education, and by that I mean to allow the private sector to start education. [sic]

(Secretary for Education, MoE, Sri Lanka)

One reason for the anti-private school debate, as the Secretary for Education points out is the expectation by Sri Lankans for a welfare state where the government provides basic rights such as education and health free of charge. This socialist mentality extends to the belief that the establishment of any private education institutions would extend a competitive edge for the wealthy
at the expense of the rest. Moreover, this ideal of education being the sole responsibility of the state stems from a deeper issue of cultural antagonism regarding what international versus national education is delivering. International schools hence, are once again equated to the socially stratifying private schools that existed prior to independence. However, with globalization, the westernizing effect of local students attending Sri Lankan international schools is amplified. Anti-international school advocates constantly highlight these ‘detrimental western values’ that ‘taint the local culture’ in the media in order to publicly shame and drive parents away from choosing an international education for their children.

‘One thing is the perception of the people of the country. Because we are democratic still, the public think the government should look after education and health both because still around 55% of the money goes to the welfare budget...we are allowing private universities to start in Sri Lanka but then because of the political perception of some kind of political party the government is not able to allow that.’ [sic]

There is this socialist kind of thing you know, like in Sri Lanka they had that influence from the fifties, that the people are taught that some people are successful or rich because they had an advantage or they had something like that. Asian cultures sometimes do kind of, looked at it as a bad thing you know. [sic]

The ban on private education and in particular the opposition to establish private universities however has many detrimental effects to the Sri Lankan economy. One such effect as pointed out by the Ministry for Education is brain drain caused by high calibre individuals leaving the country to attend universities elsewhere and not returning.

‘Ten thousand students are leaving, the most qualified students in Sri Lanka leave after Advanced Level once they are not able to get into Sri Lankan universities...high calibre candidates are leaving so we are concerned about that because we want to stop that...when high calibre young qualified people leave the
country what happens to Sri Lanka? Definitely Sri Lanka needs these Sri Lankans’. [sic]

Elsewhere, economically the country is losing out on the revenues that could be earned by expanding the private education sector. International schools therefore are accepted by the government under the company’s act due to the revenues that they are able to generate. International schools, as the Secretary for education points out, form part of the national initiative to double the GDP by the Year 2016.

‘It is a kind of investment program because it is the target of the country since we are planning to double the GDP by 2016. We are allowing business people to start businesses. So one of the objectives of these schools is a business actually.’

The government can’t afford to always provide everything. Because the private sector can get more support, develop more infrastructure, develop more quality, more standards, they can pay higher salaries to the qualified teachers. We pay fewer salaries actually compared to private sector and so we are not in a position to get good teachers’. [sic]

The interviews with the international school administrators demonstrated similar insights. International schools were not a burden to the taxpayers and this was something that the schools were very proud of. As the Principal of Kingston Institute highlights:

I don’t think schools should depend on government help, it’s taxpayers’ money. But if it’s not taxpayers’ money I don’t think government should intervene too much. International Schools are not a burden to the taxpayer. So therefore it’s a blessing to the country, it’s not a burden, it carries its own weight, in our case, I want to, I clearly want to not follow legislation but lead it, you know, so I don’t want to be driven by the government. [sic]

(Principal, A1)

Private education, and the international school industry in particular is seen as a potential avenue for development that Sri Lanka can utilize to become a regional hub in South Asia. The multilingual nature of the country, coupled with the fact that Sri Lanka already has students from neighbouring countries coming for studies means that a lift on the private education ban and more
encouragement for international schools to operate could bring great benefits to the country.

'This country needs to get an edge in other areas where we are good at which is languages; we need to be geo-strategically good at languages. So why are we competing with any other country when we’ve got an advantage which others can’t match. So for example, we could have everyone in Africa, all the rich people in Africa, in the Middle East and Asia coming here for education. So we could be thriving… Maldivians already keep coming here, people from Nepal sometimes. We need to find out what we are good at and then put all our chips in it and become really good at it.’ [sic]

(Principal, A1)

Moreover, the existing system is such that international schools already pay much higher amenity fees for government property compared to the national schools that it is already generating significant income for Sri Lanka. For instance, in order to hire a public ground, international schools have to pay a much higher fee compared to another public school.

'We don’t get anything from the government... we pay tax only. Say even if we want to book the grounds, international schools have to pay a bigger amount than government schools. When they are paying 5000 we have to pay 10,000... They think international schools are money generating institutions so whatever it is for the government schools, they treat us in a separate way. Now we had our sports meet last month, we had to pay Rs.7500 for the ground but for an ordinary government school they would have taken about Rs.500'.

(Principal, C1)

It is vital at this stage to make it absolutely clear that international schools in Sri Lanka do not fall under the Ministry of Education but are registered under the company’s act. Therefore, technically these schools are in fact companies. Contradictorily however, these companies are also schools. The Sri Lankan government therefore readily accept students who attend international schools as having received a legal education even though the curriculum these students follow may be something dubious. In the case of most Sri Lankan international schools, the foreign curriculum taught is the London Edexcel or the Cambridge
curriculum. Sri Lanka has two international schools that provide the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program while just one of these two schools continues with the IB Middle Years Program and the IB Diploma Program.

Just because they are companies does not mean that there are no set standards for the international schools to follow. As the Secretary for Education points out,

'It’s absolutely an investment program. Yes it is under the Finance Ministry under the Public Enterprise division...but under the Company's Act they have to ensure basic standards'. However, the problem lies in the fact that since they are private companies, the Ministry of Education has no legal ground to interfere with the way in which these schools are run. The Finance Ministry has little expertise on matters relating to education and the Ministry of Education has no jurisdiction over international schools, which is a major cause of concern for the Sri Lankan government.

'That's the difficulty actually. We are not in a position to do that. Legally, because even though we are trying to collect the information based on the number of International Schools, the number of students and number of teachers and qualification framework are not available to us. We do have the information in an indirect way...There is no direct link because within the legal framework we are not in a position to officially enter even with the current situation. We are trying our best to develop the framework, having support from the Cabinet portfolio, yes, to monitor this program and to check qualification framework on the teachers as most of the students are Sri Lankan. Because of that we are committed to monitor the schools, the education and Human Resources Development. So those are happening in an indirect way. Sometimes through the Divisional Secretary, sometimes the Inspector of Police, if there is a complaint, sometimes the, BOI themselves, Board of Management, they monitor but they are not qualified to do education. That is there'. [sic]

(Secretary for Education, MoE, Sri Lanka)
This lack of jurisdiction over the functions of international schools is something that the government is constantly attempting to rectify. While this research was being carried out, a number of debates were addressed in the parliament regarding the curriculum that is offered at international schools. In January 2014 therefore, a cabinet amendment was passed making it now compulsory for Sri Lankan international schools to offer mother tongue and religion as part of their curriculum. However, the steps taken to ensure how this will be conducted and any involvement with the ministry of education are still unclear as it is at an early stage of implementation.

Money Making Focus of International Schools

The interviews revealed that one major cause of concern for the state as well as the parents is the money-making priority of international schools. The fees levied by international schools significantly vary with some schools charging relatively reasonable fees while others are severely overpriced. When asked from the Ministry of Education whether they have any say over the school fees, it was made clear that each school had the right to levy any fees they wished and it was up to the 'customers' to buy such an education or not.

Researcher: Can you control the fees that International Schools charge because you get schools charging eight thousand dollars to eight thousand rupees or more a month?

Secretary to the MoE: No. That’s a business… there is an agreement between the parents and school management, they have to pay, unless they can’t get admission. Yes, whatever amount they have to pay.

Parents often claimed that some international schools kept on increasing their fees which meant that they were compelled to pay the higher fees or remove their children as they could no longer afford the increasing fees.

‘Sometimes they increase fees. After all, these schools are businesses at the end of the day so anyone will do with profit in mind so when profit is less they increase by about 6000 a term so then it is difficult and parents complain. So for any small thing they charge.’

(Parent 14, Matara)
In some cases, the parents highlighted that the multicultural nature of international schools as well as the fact that international schools are renowned for providing a wide range of extracurricular activities were merely excuses to charge additional fees. Moreover, being multicultural was described as being merely a survival tactic rather than something implemented with genuine good intentions. Hence, due to business priorities, there was forced multiculturalism taking place at Sri Lankan international schools purely because of the monetary benefits that holding festivals and events could bring to the school.

‘Like for sports if we ask them not to go, they force because of money. It is always money money money for them. That is there like they always try to get money from parents for something...their aim I think is mainly money’. [sic]

(Parent 15, Matara)

‘If you take Christmas season they have a Christmas Carols or something, they take children for it and they charge a very big amount for the costume. So parents, not that they like or not that they want to, just because now they have put their children, there is no other option but to pay all the extra fees that they charge. Then you get the Vesak (Buddhist Festival), then Pirikara (offerings for the monks) they ask to bring Pirikara when they have a, what do you call, Bana sermon. So when it comes to that they don’t have a good impression. For Vesak they decorate the school and they call a priest and they have a sermon. For Iftar, I mean, our Ramazan (Muslim festival), fasting days, they have, one evening they organize to break-fasting, then for Deepavali, they have their own programs. They should have it otherwise it’s difficult for them to survive. So that is just to make sure all communities will come’. [sic]

(Parent 8, Colombo)

Some international schools were so pre-occupied with maximizing their incomes that they failed to provide students with facilities of an acceptable standard. Parents sometimes spoke of instances where certain international schools that their children previously attended had gymnasiums partitioned into several classrooms to accommodate for rising student numbers. Schools were overcrowded with little space and few extra activities. In extreme cases, international schools start off in people’s houses and expand vertically with
very little attention paid to the aesthetic appearance and fundamental architectural differences in having a school as opposed to a mere collection of randomly scattered buildings that serve as classrooms.

‘What I feel is international schools in Sri Lanka have gone bit beyond the concept. All these schools have turned into money making machines so we have schools being built with no playgrounds, only just one building, nothing no extracurricular activities or at the same time we make broiler chicken like students’. [sic]

(Teacher 2, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

Another visible impact of the money-making priority of international schools is a significant lack of space in the recently established international schools. As land prices hike, the newer international schools, especially in Colombo find it hard to find land with ample space. Thus, it is very common for new international schools to be high-rise establishments that expand vertically with little outdoor space. These schools rent out public grounds and swimming pools instead of having their own. The older, more renowned public and private schools on the other hand pride themselves for having spacious buildings, large grounds and ample space for students to run around.

‘It’s a disadvantage when you compare to state schools. State schools have several acres of land, big swimming pools or playgrounds, basketball courts. In this school facilities are very limited. When you came you saw no the ground is very small. No swimming pool and there are computer rooms but very limited’.

(Parent 1, Colombo)

This lack of space at international schools, some would argue is a reason for lack of discipline as children growing up in congested schools do not have space to play and let out their energy.

‘International schools you know are vertical like they go up several stories...very congested. They are kind of like flats or apartments. I can’t call it a school...a child is unable to put out the energy to express themselves. Especially the primary
children are losing their childhood. So called ‘lamakale eyaalaghen ayin wela thiyenne’ (Translation: they have been robbed of their childhood). [sic]

(Principal, A1)

Another issue that the international school stakeholders brought to light was that these schools failed to implement any disciplinary action against students due to fear of losing business. Teachers therefore were often sandwiched between demanding parents (and students) on the one side and management at the other end. If any disciplinary action required attention from the principals’ or international school administrators, it was more likely for them to side with the clients (parents) than the employees (teachers). The fee paying clients therefore were also perceived via the interviews as being more interested in the child’s education, often visiting school even without prior appointments, demanding answers to any questions they might have at all times.

‘At meetings and all the Chairman or Principal, they say, “these are the moral values and we want this type of children; you have to be useful citizens and all”, but when it comes to disciplinary side, though they preach like that they can’t take action, they don’t take action. They don’t even suspend or they don’t, like, put a child out because they fear in return there won’t be admissions’. [sic]

(Teacher 5, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)

‘Because of the money making, because of the marketing they can’t be strict with children. They want to take more and more children so any problem means they
don’t like to put the children out so the government schools are not like that. Because of that only discipline is worse...very difficult to control’. [sic]

(Parent 3, Kandy)

Unlike the parents of those children attending the schools under the Ministry of Education, the international school parents were perceived as wealthy whose primary objective again was money-making. Hence, contradicting the previous point made by international school teachers as principals of parents being more involved, as the Secretary for Education points out, the government is concerned about the lack of parental involvement in a child’s education at Sri Lankan international schools.

‘Parents are so busy, they have more money, and they invest money rather than having a personal, physical participation...in our schools (public schools) we do have a system, a school development society where all the parents are supporting them. Teachers, students and parents are together because there is more ‘peoples’ participation’. International schools are a little further away in that aspect. [sic]

(Secretary for Education, MoE, Sri Lanka)

International schools, in this instance are seen as institutions where busy parents send their child paying high fees, with no real concern for the quality of the content being taught.

*Teaching Quality*

There were mixed responses from the interviews regarding the teaching quality at international schools. While the previous sections looked at the positive aspects of teaching in international schools, the following section will outline some of the drawbacks of this system.

Since fluency in English is the main priority of international schools in Sri Lanka, schools employ teachers who are fluent in English but those who may not necessarily have teaching expertise or experience. At other times, when international schools attempt to employ teachers who are both fluent in English and experienced teachers, they employ retired government schoolteachers. These teachers, the majority of whom were trained as teachers
in the mid 1950s, practice archaic teaching methods that do not comply with the modern curriculum that the international schools are trying to promote.

At other times, when international schools employ young graduates, it is likely that these teachers have low levels of proficiency in the English language. Young graduates, hence tend to join international schools as teachers for very low pay merely in order to improve their English skills by daily conversing with the English fluent students and senior teachers. These teachers hence work short term and move on to non-teaching private jobs as soon as they get better-paid opportunities upon improving their English.

‘Teachers finds us a stepping stone, because they step up their English and their leaderships skills and they move on to other places. We will train, train, train and send them out. They are going to banks and they don’t like teaching. They are coming to pick-up English and after that they leave, that’s a problem. And also, after training, some teachers, after graduation they have a two-year break and during that time they will come and join us. They will promise saying, “we will be here for five years” but after that when they get called by the government, they will go because of the pension, we don’t have pension, that’s the thing’. [sic]

(Vice Principal, B1)

They learn English here, they get experience here and after that with a certificate from the Director to say that this teacher had been working here for such a long time, they will leave. That certificate carries a long way for them to get a new job.

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

A negative impact of regularly employing teachers for short periods is that students do not get to build stable relationships with the teachers. This in turn, parents claim could affect the learning ability of their children. For instance in the junior classes, teachers serve as confidants and each time a new teachers comes, the students take time to adjust to their teaching methods and feel comfortable around them thus delaying their education. In senior classes, particularly those classes that are preparing for public examinations, constant teacher shifts can disrupt momentum and exam preparation.
‘I don’t know why, but I can see, they come and they stay for a short period and they then go. So the students are sometimes, in you know lower grades, preschools and all are disturbed when the teachers are changed regularly. You know it has a psychological effect and they give up studies. So that may be one of those reasons why these people, they think these international schools wouldn’t last for long because of this type of attitudes. I mean the teachers are temporary in their mind’. [sic]

(Parent 12, Matara translated from Sinhala)

One reason why the teachers do not wish to remain in the international schools is that they prefer to obtain pensionable jobs in the government sector. A job in the public sector ensures job security and financial security in the form of a pension after retiring. In Jaffna in particular the interviews revealed preference for pensionable jobs as it was something highly valued among the Tamil community.

When the government gives appointments to graduates, most of the graduates do like this. They come here (to international schools) until they get the appointment and after that they leave to the government sectors.

(Teacher 3, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

My parents worked in the government sector so they always encouraged me to like, you know, go and teach in a national school because your future will be secure. I think that’s a big thing right.

(Teacher 5, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)

Some of the interviews further revealed that some international schools were reluctant to employ qualified teachers with expertise, as they would then have to pay them well. Instead, they willingly dropped the teaching standard by employing poor quality teachers.

‘They don’t have proper teachers or they don’t pay them well or else teachers come and go, so like these things. Now I think if you pay good money for good internationals, they charge a lot, I think there they have some good education but
overall I think it has not, the standard has come down, everywhere there are so many internationals, each and every corner.

(Parent 4, Kandy)

‘One thing is, the main reason is, it is unqualified teachers, because I have been a government schoolteacher plus an international school teacher, when the, when like they know English normally they are recruited. It’s through my experience I am telling, but there are few internations, they really take “the best”, “the cream”. But most of the internations, they take from here and there, like every Tom, Dick and Harry becomes a, can become a teacher in an international. Like they come and get their training and then they get their experience and go to a new place like. But when it comes to government schools they get fully trained teachers who go for seminars and all those stuff. [sic]

(Parent 1, Colombo, also a teacher)

In one instance, a parent interview revealed that in a previous international schools where his children studied, the school employed students soon after they finished sitting for the public exams as teachers.

‘Ummm in the school that my son went to they taught well but later a few students who sat for their Ordinary Levels started wearing saris and ties and started teaching our children. After that I asked why they were teaching? Yes so I told this is not going to work. Sorry not O Level but Advanced Level children. So I asked why they were teaching like this? They said for training so I told we pay you well and you have told us there are qualified teachers but they are not qualified and I don’t like them teaching my child. So after a small argument like this only I removed my children and came here. Here there are good teachers but sometimes they leave and new teachers come so it’s a problem like this here’. [sic]

(Parent 16, Matara)

The lack of any governing body means that international schools are free to employ whomever they want as teachers, pay them any amount they wish and treat them in any manner. The interviews revealed, therefore that another major concern for the government was who these schools employed as teachers and how these people were treated. While international schools are renowned for employing the best teachers as they have the financial capacity to do so, at
the same time, these schools also try to sometimes employ the cheapest teachers possible in order to maximise profits. As some teachers pointed out, it was necessary for some rules to be put in place regarding minimum qualifications necessary to work as a teacher and proper monitoring should be set up in order to prevent teachers from being over-worked.

‘The government should like approve some sort of like rules and regulations ...when appointing teachers to the international schools. A minimum requirement like a degree from a recognized university. Not from shanty universities. And their skills, they should undergo a proper training program because you need to understand child psychology to teach little minds’. [sic]

(Teacher 6, Teacher Focus Group, LCK)

In the public schooling sector, all teachers are either graduates or trained teachers that have undergone extensive training. There are clearly set out calendars with working hours, pay sheets and entitled holidays. In some of the schools that the researcher visited, teachers revealed that they were expected to report to work without set number of leave and sometimes compelled to work on public holidays as well. Questions regarding the accountability of these international schools therefore extend beyond merely providing quality education for the students. There needs to be proper governance of worker (teacher) rights within these schools as well.

Teacher 2: ‘Local schools we have 40 days holidays [...] 20 sick leave and 20 casual and most of the teachers take all the holidays but here they are very strict about the holidays’.

Researcher: So how many days do you have?
Teacher 2: ‘No restriction about that. Unless we are very sick [...] Yes, we have to come’.

Researcher: Is there like a fixed number of days that you can take, like, medical leave or?
Teacher 2: No, no such [...] if we are really sick Pastor will give us leave [...] like, so the Poya days (public holiday) the teachers don’t have a public holiday, they come here for training.

(Teacher 2, Teacher Focus Group, SISM, Jaffna)
Another way in which Sri Lankan international schools fail to protect the rights of the teachers is that teachers are constantly at risk of being fired at the slightest complaint made by students or parents. The reason for this, teachers revealed was because it was much more practical to find a replacement for a teacher compared to losing business through customer dissatisfaction. Children hence sometimes abused this knowledge to misbehave as they had the assurance that the school will always take their side instead of the teachers. In some cases, it was revealed that parents too increasingly interfered with teaching matters abusing their power, often threatening to remove their children if their requests were not met.

‘It’s really challenging... for the teachers, they are like sandwiched in between the management and the parents. They have to satisfy the management, they have to satisfy the parents’.

(Parent 8, Colombo also a teacher at KI, Colombo)

‘Mainly it’s a business for them, they want their customers. Otherwise now, in the International Schools, even the management won’t respect the teachers much no? If there is a simple complaint they chase the teacher out. They always...what they want is their customer. They don’t want the parent to take their child and go but more than that they want to chase the teacher out and there is million to come, walk-in. Whether you are qualified or experienced or, the moment something happens you have to be ready to walk out. They just chase you out. That’s because they want money, they don’t want to lose their customers’. [sic]

(Teacher 1, Teacher Focus Group, KI, Colombo)

‘Parent /Teachers Meeting in government schools, teachers feel very convenient there. You know, the Principal will be always taking the side of the teachers and ... and we are not, we are very free there... but here of course, we will have to, principal takes the side of the students’. [sic]

(Teacher 5, Teacher Focus Group, SIS, Matara)
Syllabus shortcomings

As international schools begin to emerge exponentially everywhere in Sri Lanka without regulation, one major issue that arises is about what is being taught in these schools. Two schools teach the International Baccalaureate, others follow British or Sri Lankan curriculums while some may teach whatever they please. Certain international schools tend to switch curriculums often confusing the students and requiring them to adapt to newer texts, examination styles etc.

‘These schools have just come up and then you know they introduce a curriculum, they introduce books and then they remove them, then they introduce something else’.

(Parent 2, Kandy)

These shifts affect a child’s education and as some parents pointed out, there were certain drawbacks of not following the local curriculum. For instance, the local curriculum prides itself in developing good mathematical skills by banning students from using calculators up to Ordinary Levels. Therefore, students who depended on calculators from an early age at international schools were claimed to have lower mathematics skills than schools under the Ministry of Education.

‘When comparing with the local, our Sri Lankan syllabus, it’s very, it’s low, not very low, I can say it’s low. And they can use calculators from O/Level onwards, so from Grade 8, 9, then O/Level, A/Level they use calculators for the subjects where ever it’s needed. Local schools it’s not allowed Ok. So that makes the children…….They don’t think much, isn’t it? Because there are calculators. So whenever I ask something from my son he says ‘wait Amma’ and he goes to the calculator, multiplies and tells me’. [sic]

(Parent 8, Colombo)

However, the biggest criticism about the foreign curriculums being taught at Sri Lankan international schools was that they failed to provide sufficient education about Sri Lanka. As the Secretary of Education pointed out, since the majority of students at these international schools were Sri Lankan citizens, it was crucial that they were taught about the history and grounded within the
local culture to begin with. By overlooking the teaching of history, geography, mother tongue or religion, international schools were producing a newer generation of Sri Lankans who didn’t really fit in to their immediate surroundings.

‘We do have a long history of more than 2500 years. The objective of education development should be to produce fully fledged persons to the nation as well as to develop the cultural and religious based person to have work for the generations. The government is thinking that way; International Schools are away from our tradition as well as that Sri Lankan objective and we do need to maintain that Sri Lankan identity. It is not happening in International Schools because of a lack of mother tongue teaching. They are not promoting that one. Next, we do practice religion and history. Sri Lankans need to know what is our history and how generations and generations developed the country because then you have that strong feeling you know of belonging to the Sri Lankan nation and you are one of those persons with historical value. Not only Sri Lanka but all the countries believe that. That’s why Indians belong to India and they produce Indians’. Children should start with the mother tongue...they have to be localized to start their life’. [sic]

(Secretary of Education, MoE, Sri Lanka)

Sri Lankan students attending international schools were therefore missing out on vital elements of their locality that can be learnt at a young age only if the schools promoted them. Not learning Sri Lankan history means that students have little attachment to their heritage. Not learning mother tongue could mean that perhaps students will be unable to communicate with locals, miss out on Sri Lankan literature or important mode of information transfer via local press and media. Lack of knowledge regarding Sri Lankan geography again could have detrimental effects for Sri Lankans growing up unaccustomed and unaware of the phenomena taking place in their immediate vicinity.

Moreover, even if subjects like religion are taught at international schools, because they are taught in the English medium, sometimes they fail to capture
the subtle nuances that can only be caught if they were taught in the local languages.

‘When you teach them in English you don’t get the real, what do you call, the... what you should get from a religion you don’t get it because religion is not just a subject, it is lot more than that for a child. And now, especially when you take Buddhism, though I am not a Buddhist, when you take Buddhism we talk about Lord Buddha and in Sinhala we have certain respectful words, but when it comes to English we just say “Lord Buddha came home”, something like that’.

(Parent 8, Colombo)

International school students were therefore said to have foundation knowledge of Sri Lanka while those who attended schools governed by the Ministry of Education had more in depth knowledge on matters relating to Sri Lanka.

In extreme cases, international school students had such poor local language skills that they found it difficult to communicate with locals. This was usually the case with Sri Lankan children who grew up overseas and recently returned to Sri Lanka. However, in most instances it was more of a reluctance to mingle with those outside of the international school circles. It was an inability to communicate and a reluctance to mix that caused the 30-year civil war in Sri Lanka which is why Sri Lanka has now switched to a bilingual policy where both Sinhalese and Tamil are strongly encouraged. According to the Secretary of Education, there is no restriction anymore as to which medium of language you can choose to be educated in:

‘They have freedom; if you are Sinhalese you can go to a Tamil school. They won’t most likely but they can. There is no restriction, it’s a democracy’.

‘The Swabasha policy, we now refer to it in a different name, that is the bilingual policy where Sinhalese and Tamil should be developed. The ethnic crisis and civil crisis took place because we were not able to communicate with each other. Tamil or Sinhalese it is not the race or ethnicity that matters but the fact that we were not able to communicate. Lack of communication skills means there is no
trust between the two people. We should be able to communicate with each other very well because then there is no mistrust’.

(Secretary of Education, MoE, Sri Lanka)

International schools therefore should be aware of the long-term consequences that generation of Sri Lankans without the ability to converse in the local languages could produce and therefore attempt to bring in a localized education into their education system as well.
Chapter Seven: The Discussion

So far in this thesis, it was evident that the existence and popularity of Sri Lankan international schools stems from an urgent need for an education system that is in par with global demands. The factors that contribute to the exponential growth of international schools include both pull factors such as English Language and Foreign curriculum that drive Sri Lankans towards these international schools as well as push factors such as deteriorating quality and intense competition to get into prestigious national schools that drive Sri Lankans away from the public education system.

Sri Lankan international schools, however, are not flawless. There was a range of shortcomings with the international school system that the previous chapter brought forward. Moreover, their very existence has given rise to a newer tension between the international and national systems of education in the country. The following chapter hence attempts to draw these findings together in order to evaluate if it is possible to have global schools for local students by re-examining the contemporary Sri Lankan context that is inevitably shaped by its past.

This chapter firstly examines the role of international, intercultural and multicultural education in shaping these educational institutions. Next, the researcher will re-evaluate the concepts of business, cultural capital and language in education with regard to international schools. Finally the chapter attempts to highlight the complexity in embracing the global while safeguarding the local via the conclusions before limitations and implications for future research are put forward.

Global Schools for Local Students?

International Education

According to McKenzie (1998), the word international has five meanings. International primarily means non-national and implies instead of a pan national relationship where there is bridge building between countries. That is,
not just merely being non-national. The word international also signifies a sense of being ex-national and adopting a multinational approach. For instance, when we speak about an international pedagogy, we think of a multinational curriculum that merges teaching methods and content from a number of education styles. Finally, international also implies being transnational. International qualifications, for example make way for people to cross transnational borders with ease and gain employment elsewhere.

In the Sri Lankan scenario, international education implies a shift away from the national (government administered) education system. It also signifies an education system that is rooted in the English and private education that was a part of Sri Lanka’s colonial past but also presents a linking with global education systems in the face of globalisation. Whilst the outlook of international schools is global, Sri Lankan international schools are simultaneously local, adopting and altering pedagogy to suit both international and national demands.

Ilon (1997) categorizes future employment into five groupings. Jobs can be world class, internationally linked, locally supported, community supported or non-participant jobs. Likewise, education too as Lowe (2000: 366) observes is split into ‘private provision of internationally comparable quality versus public provision of variable quality’. In a world determined by such multiple definitions, what does it really mean when you say a school is international? Luke (2004:1437) notes that teaching and schooling were initially ‘developed as technologies of nations, nationality and nationalism’ but lately international concerns and global flows have begun to influence national education systems. National school pedagogical content then is not free from international constituents. Rather, international school pedagogy should in theory embrace both the local and the global.

An international education therefore implies something more than the mere inclusion of international content. It is an education that helps students to become ‘flexible citizens’ that can permeate national borders to become part of a global economy. In Sri Lanka, it was apparent from the qualitative data gathered in relation to research question one that opting for an international
education allowed students to leave for foreign countries to complete their higher education at Bachelor’s level quite easily compared to those that attended public schools. The researcher highlights this mention of Bachelors level since those that attend international schools are left out from attending local universities. This coupled with the lack of high quality private higher education institutes inadvertently compels a significant majority of students completing secondary studies at Sri Lankan international schools to leave for universities overseas. The fact that international school students follow global curriculums in the English medium facilitates a smooth transition overseas. This initial departure, in most cases results in a more permanent migratory choice that facilitates the lifestyle of a global citizen who is able to permeate national borders with ease.

At national level, introducing a curriculum such as the IB is seen as the ‘acquisition of a form of cultural and symbolic capital that eventually contributes to a country’s overall worth in a market driven economy’ (Ong 1999:221). The primary focus of the IB is ‘stimulating curiosity, inquiry, reflection and critical thinking (IBO 2002:1) by encouraging an ‘eclectic, creative and independent approach to inquiry and learning’ (IBO 2002:10).

The IB allows and encourages insertion of local cultures into curriculum. However, teachers perceive international text as superior and are therefore reluctant to incorporate local culture into the curriculum of international schools. Although the nation state remains important and the national education system is far from obsolete (Green 1997), the local culture is often disregarded in favour of the global at international schools. Moreover, Ong (1999: 226) states that the ‘imagination of the nation is absent in the literal mapping of literary texts from around the world’. International education, therefore sometimes fosters ‘transnational practice’ that helps maintain privilege position of the transnational capitalistic class both locally and globally (Drake 2004). In the case of the four schools researched, although the IB was not the curriculum used, we see a similar line of thought. As an investigation of research question two revealed, these schools were prioritizing British pedagogy at the expense of any reference to Sri Lanka.
Hayden, Rancic and Thompson (2000) emphasize the need for open
mindedness and flexibility where the cultures and attitudes of others need to be
made as equally valid to one's own within an international pedagogy. There
should be respect for those with contrary views and linguistic diversity and a
need to be sensitive to certain contexts and global generalizations or
stereotyping. In other words, there needs to be a ‘more balanced bridging
between the North and the South, or East and West that recognizes both the
interdependence of nations and the significance of cultural difference’ (Crossley
2000:325). Since different cultures place value emphasis on different learning
techniques, ‘cross cultural cloning’ of education programmes help international
schools to gain from the best of both (or several) worlds (Walker and Dimmock
2000).

For instance, different cultures emphasize different traits. Some cultures
appreciate high power distance relationships and collectivism as opposed to
individualism. In other cultures open criticism of elders is culturally
unacceptable which go against the International Baccalaureate’s focus on
encouraging students to challenge what is being taught by teachers. ‘A Chinese
or Japanese child successfully adapted to the skill of independent inquiry would
find it difficult to distinguish appropriate lack of respect at home, producing an
inevitable cultural dissonance’ (Drake 2004:195). Another example is where
some cultures appreciate honest feedback while others find it discouraging as it
has a negative influence on student confidence. Likewise, rote learning that is
discouraged in modern education systems is seen as a necessary part of
memorization that is linked to deeper understanding in some cultures. Hence,
it is crucial to recognize that alternate modes of thinking and teaching need to
be appreciated and not readily disregarded.

Such culture clashes, as Van Oord (2007:384-386) notes are ‘essentially
encounters between different configurations of learning and meta learning’ that
facilitate ‘understanding valued over memorizing concepts over facts’ and
‘thinking skills over encyclopaedic knowledge’. By receiving an international
education, not only will students be able to obtain freedom of travel but they
will also be ‘able to relate to people of other nationalities and realize that there
is no one culture that’s perfect or completely wrong’ (Hayden and Wong 1997:355).

The traditional Sri Lankan schooling system, as previously highlighted, encourages rote learning where more emphasis is placed on theory rather than practice. The pedagogical culture of Sri Lankan international schools is such that they encourage a more hands on practical approach to learning in a multicultural environment. This alters the way students comprehend what is being taught in the classroom, as they become independent learners taking part in engaged inquiry and carrying out tasks with autonomy rather than depending on the spoon-feeding of material in order to pass exams. Moreover, the multicultural approach significantly alters students’ interactions with each other thereby influencing their future relationships with people from varying socio-ethnic groups. Referring back to research question one, this alternate mode of teaching and learning is a significant factor in favouring international school choice in Sri Lanka.

Being international however, also implies a sense of being lost as third culture students grow up without any real roots. Allan (2003) in his work on international students and cultural dissonance point out that by opting to be international, losing certain national features that were regarded as undesirable were regarded as a good thing by his research participants. Students sometimes welcomed losing what they perceived to be negative aspects of their culture so that they can be replaced with the alternate option of broadening one’s horizons.

Losing traditional aspects such as the intolerance of narrow perspectives hence was a welcome outcome of international schooling. However, the bottom line of Allan’s (2003) study was that despite an attempt at learning from the best aspects of all, ‘cultural dissonance in the international school can lead in many cases to the intermediate or incomplete outcomes of ethnocentrism, adaptation and assimilation, and in relatively few students to the desired outcome of multiculturalism or the multicultural personality’ (Allan 2003:84). In order to understand whether or not Sri Lankan international school students are truly
multicultural, it is important to first analyse the definitions of intercultural and multiculturalism. The following section analyses this in order to answer the claims made in relation to research questions one, two and three. That is, the parental and student claims that they are opting for international schools to be more global, international school administrator claims that these schools provide a multicultural education with a global and local outlook and finally the government and parental claims that international school students alienate their students by adopting a primarily western cultural form of education.

**Intercultural Education**

Cambridge and Thompson in Allen (2004:1999) highlight that ‘international education can be interpreted as an ideological construct which promotes hyper globalism. Yet, the essential pro-democratic logic of internationalism stands in sharp contrast to the logics of globalization’. That is, while we constantly encourage the formation of a global community, we are also actively encouraging nationalism. As Thomas (1998) in Hayden and Thompson (1998: 103-104) further elaborates, education for peace has ironically been made a priority by the same education ministers who ‘in the contexts of their own national systems, have been traditionally associated with a mission of seeking to produce citizens proud of their national identities and heritage, and willing to give up their lives if necessary in the service of their country’. The focus of international schools to produce global citizens with national priorities thus at times contradicts their ideological stance.

Another downside of international education is that the majority of students attending international schools and following curriculums such as the IB tend to be the children of national or global elites. While the imagined community in a globalized world is multifaceted, when the curriculum is unapologetically transported from elsewhere, ‘particular ideologies and value systems are transported into these new contexts and rewarded into local forms’. The curriculum therefore is a product of ‘negotiation between what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts’ (Rizvi and Lingard 2008: 223).
The focus of the school curriculum therefore, should also be to help these children of global and national elite to be socially conscious and take social action in a global world (Bunnell 2010). With Sri Lankan international schools, it is evident that these schools are trying to stand out from the rest of the national schools by adopting a western ideal of education. The four case studies researched in this study based their education on the British system, where the subjects being taught placed more emphasis on British history, geography and language compared to Sri Lanka. Through the levying of high fees, these schools continue to be accessible only to a minority that can afford them thereby distancing their students from their local counterparts. When the majority of students that attend these schools are locals, international school curriculum should facilitate students to integrate with the masses. If not, the Sri Lankan international school students grow up alienated from the majority of their own national peers having more in common with people beyond their national borders that sometimes they haven’t had any physical connections with than those within their immediate vicinity.

Another criticism of international schools is that they tend to have a large monoculture and the minority culture students are left out. This in turn annuls the intercultural ethos that these schools strive to establish in the first place (Allan 2002). The culture of the majority student and teacher population becomes the dominant culture and for this reason it is crucial that the international school adopts a ‘culturally democratic pedagogy’ where different learning styles are recognized and accepted.

With the four case studies that the researcher visited, it was observed that the two schools from Jaffna and Matara emitted a very strong Tamil and Sinhalese vibe. Both these schools had strong ties to religion where the school in Jaffna was run by a pastor with Christianity at the forefront of education. In Matara, the school day began with Buddhist prayers. For students from other ethnic and religious groups hence, their ethnic and religious needs were often shunned by the majority culture. The case study from Colombo highlighted this dominance of a majority culture when the principal pointed out that the establishment of an all girls’ branch of the school was directed particularly at
Muslim minority clients who wished for their children to receive a global education in the English medium but at the same time had concerns of sending their children to mixed schools. Real intercultural learning hence conflicts with ideological goals and more pragmatic goals that are linked to academic achievements (Allan 2002:82).

One solution to these pitfalls in ‘international education’ is for international schools to instead promote an ‘intercultural education’. Luke (2004:1429) defines intercultural capital as ‘the capacity to engage in acts of knowledge, power and exchange across time/space divides and social geographies, across diverse communities, populations and epistemic stances.’ An intercultural education therefore requires teachers to access both local and global knowledge in order to understand and teach in local conditions. Local and global are intimately interconnected and an education that is aware of this fact and tries to genuinely promote this concept seems the most appropriate way forward for international schools. As Hannerz (1990) concludes, true cosmopolitanism requires understanding the place where one is situated in order to understand others. Local and global exposure is both essential. A relevant curriculum therefore keeps both these aspects in mind. Rizvi and Lingard (2008:11), talking about cosmopolitan education, observe that ‘situated-ness’ is important as well as ‘positionality’. According to them, ‘a cosmopolitan education must have the potential to help students come to terms with their situated-ness in the world- situated-ness of their knowledge and of their cultural practices as well as their positionality in relation to social networks, political institutions and social relations that are no longer confined to particular communities and nations but potentially connect with the rest of the world’. Likewise, mutual understanding leads to adaptation, acceptance and respect leads to assimilation while appreciation and valuing ultimately lead to multiculturalism (Rizvi and Lingard 2008:102).

To become an international citizen, first and foremost, one must be a good national citizen (Fox 1985) and fostering these attributes takes place not just through the curriculum but via the school environment as well. The whole
educational experience is important in bringing about ‘charismatic personalities’ through the development of cognitive skills and attitudes. As Hayden and Thompson (1995: 402) note, ‘an international attitude was not necessarily perceived to be indicating a positive perception of the concept of an international attitude rather than a negative perception of something existing in the absence of one’s own identity’.

Losing one’s identity and culture does not help anyone get closer to the goal of becoming international. That is why, international curriculums such as the IB strive to enhance nationalism by making students become more proud and aware of national identity with relation to a greater international sphere. The pitfall of intercultural literacy however is that it may not necessarily ‘deepen understanding of others and their cultures; instead it may be a superficial emotional multiculturalism that is effective for teamwork in transnational corporations (Loh 2012: 222). This is because the aims of building intercultural awareness are not humanistic but primarily economically driven. It is fundamentally seen as a ‘way of giving rise to global workers to take part in global knowledge economy’ (Tarc 2009:109).

Moreover, haphazard and improper implementation of intercultural education could help highlight confusing stereotypes. Stereotypes pose a real danger because they represent the unknown with negative characteristics that goes against the whole ethos of intercultural education. In a country like Sri Lanka where long histories of enmity and mistrust prevail between different religious-ethnic groups, a superficial intercultural education that reinforces stereotypes merely for the sake of having a curriculum that addresses a multicultural student body can pose an even greater threat to the people. The good intentions of having an intercultural education, in this instance can sadly misfire reinforcing pre-existing divides.

**Multiculturalism**

An alternate option, then, for international schools is to try and foster multiculturalism within their student body. Multiculturalism, as defined by
Hoopes (1979:21) is ‘the state in which one has mastered the knowledge and developed the skills necessary to feel comfortable and communicate effectively with people of any culture encountered and any situation involving a group of diverse backgrounds’. A multicultural person then is someone who has ‘achieved personal growth as a result of encountering cultural diversity, enhancing and extending their individual cultural identity’ (Allan 2003: 84).

A multicultural education highlights the importance of interdependence, connectedness and perspective where perspective should be of both global as well as multiple local perspectives. As Pike (2000:66) notes, there is national distinctiveness on what constitutes as global education and ideological differences. The common thread in multicultural education then is ‘understanding similarities and differences among people’. With global education hence, national culture does not disappear into an ‘amorphous global pot’, because culture is ‘essentially about an individual’s sense of belonging’ (Pike 2000:68). Instead, multiculturalism is about cross-fertilization of ideas and practices.

In the case of Sri Lanka, it was evident from the interviews and focus groups that there was a growing tension between those from the international and national school spheres. Whilst international school students were more welcoming for people of various ethnic, religious and linguistic groups within their school community, they formed a sense of ‘othering’ with the non-international school community and vice versa. What the researcher observed was that a politicized divide was being created between those that belong to the global international schools and the local schools under the Ministry of Education very much similar to the tension between the public and private schools during colonial times that led to the ban on private education in the first place.

This divide stemmed from a perceived ‘global and English savvy superiority’ of the international school student as opposed to the ‘poor quality of English competency and backward pedagogy’ of the national schools. Moreover, this divide was accentuated by a perceived ‘moral superiority’ of national school students as opposed to international school students who were ‘corrupted by
global influences to the extent that they marred traditional Sri Lankan cultural values’. The multiculturalism that these schools provided hence did not tend to address and ameliorate this existing tension. The all-encompassing nature of Sri Lankan international schools was therefore restricted to the community within these schools as well as the global community beyond the borders of Sri Lanka while little effort was made to promote dialogue or camaraderie between the international school students and Sri Lankans elsewhere in the country.

It is also important to keep in mind that national culture itself is poly-cultural with a predominant culture and minority cultures each separate but also interacting with predominant culture. Moreover, within ethnic or religious groups there are further divisions based on caste, region or religious sectarianisms. As Wickramasinghe (2006:68) remarks, ‘if one accepts that all identities are forms of identification, and that a social agent must be conceived not as a unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, the formation of ethnic enclaves is troubling’. The curse of multiculturalism is such that ‘while providing for more freedom and recognition to the group or community, it is a closure in that it denies the contingency and ambiguity of every identity’ (Wickramasinghe 2006: 199).

International schools, in this aspect are schools whose culture is different despite having links to the local community. These schools as Allen (2003) describes are ‘atolls in a coral sea’. Yet Wickramasinghe (2006) concludes that, overtime, an individual’s sense of belongingness may shift by varying degrees from minority to mainstream culture. Perhaps then, the norms and values promoted by Sri Lankan international schools will eventually cease to be a minority culture as it gets assimilated into mainstream Sri Lankan education sector. Quoting Allan in Hayden Thompson and Walker (2003:1989), it can be argued that schools no longer are able to operate merely as ‘islands of airy academia within an ocean of employment’. International schools are communities. Moreover however, these schools exist within communities, serve communities, form communities and interact with communities (Allan 2003). Thus, via their intercultural/ multicultural/ international/global education
systems, international schools have the potential to shape their community as well as the multiple communities around them. The biggest issue for international schools however is that it is their superiority as well as the view of separateness of these schools, be it religious, curriculum wise etc. that tend to be a valid marketing tool for attracting customers. The challenge hence for international school administration is to make these schools both selective and inclusive at the same time. That is, to juggle the dual promotion of an education system that reinforces privilege and promotes multiculturalism at the same time.

**Business of international Schools**

International schools, as outlined very early in this thesis are businesses registered under the company’s act. Their dual purposes of promoting international education whilst maintaining business calls for certain commercial decisions that the stakeholders were critical about. Natale and Doran (2012), talking about the tertiary education sector observes that financial feasibility of many colleges is dependent on how they promote the brand of schools and maintain their market share. Educational institutions try to differentiate themselves and a key method is through branding.

In Sri Lanka, branding takes the form of cross branding where branding takes place between schools and examination boards in order to promote their education. This linking of schools and private examination boards is symbolic of education that is financially privileged. Cambridge (2002) in MacDonald (2006:207) states that ‘schools and examination boards are joined in a symbiotic relationship giving mutual benefit, because the examination boards require the schools’ local market while the schools derive benefit from their association with the name and reputation of the branded product they are retailing’. In Sri Lanka promoting the International Baccalaureate or in most cases examinations awarded by British private examination bodies such as London Edexcel or Cambridge Examinations is popular.

The value of schools is measured via inputs and outputs to education where inputs include teacher salaries, per pupil expenditure, mix of students in
schools, quality of the administrators etc. while outputs consist of test scores or financial gains such as higher wages later in life (Black 1998). Sri Lankan international schools generally displayed higher inputs as well as outputs to education. Teacher salaries were the only debatable input where the public sector with their pensions and set salary scales was seen as a more secure long-term option for teachers. Black (1998) furthermore observes that educational institutions tend to ‘dumb down’ in order to keep students and avoid giving honest feedback in order to keep the students happy.

The research revealed that in order to retain customers, international schools sometimes avoided giving honest feedback or allowing students to conduct certain science experiments that could harm them. The rationale was that any practical that could injure a student would cause liability issues for a fee levying international school more than it would for a free education national school. Moreover as Rotfeld (1999:416) states, ‘once students are told to see themselves as customers for education degrees, they expect customer service with a smile’. This leads to pressure and bullying of staff (Newman and Jahdi 2009), which was a cause of concern in Sri Lanka. International schools were criticized for not allowing teachers to take any disciplinary action against students for example due to fear of students choosing alternate schools. In case of any dispute between students and teachers, the administration would take the side of the students, as teachers were easily replaceable in comparison to the irreplaceable student clientele. Such claims came from the international school teachers interviewed while the principals were more cautious with their responses. While they did not deny or accept such claims, they were more likely to highlight the pressure that schools faced from fee-paying parents. International Schools thus try to be philosophically driven with the ideology of internationalism when in reality they are more market driven (Richards 1998).

Another important element of international schools that needs to be taken into consideration is their degree of interaction with the local community. MacDonald (2006:207) states that ‘understanding the local market context relative to an individual school’s strength and weakness is a fundamental factor in the survival of any international school. Interaction with the local
community, in this case needs to be more than mere social service work, which was the main focus of the case studies researched. Instead, Bunnell (2005) notes that the focus should be on public relations. That is, on how international schools interact with local community. There is no clear definition for local community, which could range from the general public, stakeholders to competitors etc. However, public relations, in this context should be about the ‘deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics’ (Bunnell 2005:43-44). Most international schools instead focus on community service, which is a debatable form of local interaction. This lack of varied local relations that extend beyond social services or the occasional public holiday celebrations is something that Sri Lankan international schools need to address more deeply.

**Cultural Capital**

Research on cultural capital takes many avenues. Lareau and Weiniger (2003) summarize various definitions of cultural capital in order to compare and contrast the common themes that run across various researchers. For instance DiMaggio (1982:570) associates cultural capital with ‘symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed’. As Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) observe, these dominant cultural codes and practices, linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, styles of interaction are institutionalized and legitimized to the point that the symbols are used as a method of ‘social and cultural inclusion and exclusion’ (Kalmijn and Kragykamp 1996).

For Robinson and Garnier (1985) cultural capital represents linguistic and cultural competence where attendance at theater and concerts helps people acquire social recognition and status. DeGraaf (1986) describes cultural capital as ‘appropriate manners and good taste’ where the beaux-arts such as classical music, painting and literature help symbolize stature. For Katsillis and Rubinson (1990), it is ‘competence in a society’s high status culture, its behaviours, habits and attitudes’. The most sought out description of cultural capital in the education sector comes from Bourdieu (1974) who clarifies that educational systems expect students to already possess a certain degree of
cultural capital. This possession of cultural capital varies with social class and therefore those from low socio-economic classes will be at a disadvantage from the beginning within the educational system. This is because the cultural capital that is transmitted within homes has as significant an effect on examination performance as the cultural capital that is acquired through a child’s school life (Suillivan 2001).

‘Education is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one’ (Bourdieu 1974:32). Lowe’s (1999) study on national students following international curriculums reveals that an international education leads to a competitive edge where high fees ensure it is accessible only to a wealthy minority. English competency, in this instance leads to social status where the perceived quality of English education as well as the access it provides for business, the commercial world and prestigious universities is attractive. Overseas qualifications are more acceptable by multinational companies and adding to the benefits of international schools is the decreasing standards in local education and local certification.

In Lowe’s study, participation in cultural activities was shown as an aid to the development of knowledge skills, which in turn enable students to be successful in schools. As Lowe (1999:366) notes, international qualifications ‘will be part of a mechanism by which relatively distinct local elite will form a local elite seeking to turn local advantage into global advantage’. International qualifications, in this sense represented symbolic capital that is embodied in an international education. In addition to the positional advantages that students can gain via the competitive edge that international qualifications provide students when compared to local qualifications, they are also symbols of ‘reputational capital’. The prestige associated with certain international curriculums such as the IB itself is a form of symbolic capital.

In Sri Lankan International schools, similar to these studies, the data collected revealed the reason for international school choice being the accumulation of cultural and social capital. The English medium education offered at
international schools, coupled with foreign qualifications, modern pedagogy, facilities and access to the wider world helped the students to reproduce advantage. Moreover, the long spanning historical connotations attached to fee-paying private schools and English medium education further facilitates in the creation of an exclusive reputation that serves as a class distinguisher in some cases.

In a study by Gradstein and Justman (2000), they observe that public schooling plays an important role in building social capital and in particular, nation building in multi ethnic countries such as Singapore. Contrastingly however, in the Sri Lankan education system where public schools are segregated along linguistic and religious divides, the international schools due to their all-encompassing nature tend to play a more significant role in fostering pluralism. Yet the business priorities of these schools sometimes mean that cross cultural education is merely a business tactic to keep customers of all faiths happy and is a superficial feature that is not genuinely practiced at a deeper level. Moreover, Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) claim that early cultural participation is significant across the career but its relative importance declines over time in comparison to later cultural participation. Cultural education that takes place out of school hence plays a greater effect than cultural education within schools. International schools alone therefore are not the sole factor responsible for the norms and values that a child grows up with. Family background, friendship networks and social life outside of the school environment are also greatly responsible in shaping individuals.

Language in Education

Language has long been accused of creating, retaining and destroying culture. English, for instance is referred to as the ‘killer language’ that is associated with the ‘the legacy of linguistic imperialism’. Hence, the ‘imagining of the elites is inextricably linked to the imperialist language’. English therefore is the language of the ‘haves’, which include the elite of the global south while the ‘have-nots and never to haves are confined to other languages’ (Phillipson 2010:243). Skinner (1991) speaking about Native American experience in the
United States, remarks that education policies and curricula have a long history of contributing to cultural and linguistic genocide. According to Skinner (1991:5) ‘we face immediate danger of losing our selves: our very identities via the loss of our languages and the loss of our cultures’.

Within this backdrop, Phillipson (2010:240) notes that ‘education is a vital site for social and linguistic reproduction, the inculcation of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, and therefore particularly central in the process of linguistic hierarchisation’. In Post-Colonial times, this spread of linguistic hierarchies can be covert or overt, conscious or unconscious. Legitimization of languages reflects the dominant attitudes, values and hegemonic beliefs about the tasks that each language is intended to perform in this supposedly hierarchized system.

One reason for this is that English cannot be easily divorced from its historical roots and contemporary associations (Holland 2010:20). English is synonymous of modernization and in postcolonial states such as Sri Lanka, English represents a shift in all schools of thought to mirror the West. Within international school settings hence, ‘languages and intercultural communication are simultaneously the precursor, the medium and the outcome of capital’ (Jack 2009: 121-122). It is through language that capitalist and social relations are formed and language is also the medium used to resist such image formation (Ezra 2003).

The relationship between language and culture is complex and fundamental to the socialization and academic achievement of students. According to Caldas and Caroon-Caldas (1999), sociologists and linguists are concerned by the socializing influence of language on individuals. They denote that there is a strong relationship between cultures and thinking and consequently language is the tool through which thoughts and mental structures are expressed. Likewise, the structure of a language is interdependent with patterns of thinking and culture’. When English replaces the vernacular languages in the Sri Lankan international schools, certain subtle nuances that can only be captured in Sinhalese and Tamil get undermined. Overtime, the extinction of
certain words and phrases could lead to subtle yet significant changes in thinking patterns and ultimately to shifts in behaviour and/or culture. As Holland (2010:129) concludes, the use of English hence, doesn’t always align with global order where at times English grammar is too simplistic and ignores local contents in which speech acts are pronounced and appropriated. This is why international curriculums like the IB encourage the teaching of mother tongue. Mother tongue is essential because the IBO (2002:8) affirms that ‘an understanding of the nature and value of one’s own culture is a fundamental starting point for any educational program claiming to be international’. This is why Sri Lanka is actively trying to include mother tongue as a compulsory component of the international school pedagogy.

While Global English ‘Phobes’ see English as a malignant western capitalist discourse, ‘globophiles’ of English see it as encouraging the creation of a pluralistic society (Holland 2010). Holland (2010) describes English as a least-localized language with no social, political, economic or religious system. That is, a ‘culturally neutral’ language that exists globally. However, in reality, global English is critiqued of initially entering social configurations under this neutral pretence yet in turn become conditioned by discourses that resonate a western agenda. That is, western English culture is described as having a ‘disproportionately loud voice’ within the international educational sector.

Sri Lankan international schools are very much linked to British private qualification awarding bodies. Only two international schools in the entire country offer the International Baccalaureate. The language promoted via literary texts, history and geographic studies are all strongly linked to Great Britain. There is little exploration of Asian English texts or expansion into literature and cultural studies outside of the British context. At times, the focus solely on Britain seems irrelevant and at other times overemphasized to the local Sri Lankan students.

English despite these downsides is a global language that has the potential to facilitate multicultural communication. English is also a language that has the ability to be moulded to suit local settings. Honna (2005) states that English can be a common language only when this diversity of its culture is accepted.
As the Filipino Poet Gemino Abad in Honna (2005:77) claims, ‘the English language is now ours. We have colonized it too’. Teachers teaching standard British or American English in international schools should not force a restrictive conformism. Instead, English should be welcomed in all its localized forms as true globalism lies in the kaleidoscopic facets of language creation, formation and reformation.

Conclusions

The thesis began with the purpose of finding out the rationalities behind international school choice in Sri Lanka, the socio-cultural impacts of receiving an international education and the government concerns with regard to this expanding new education sector. The study extended from previous research conducted elsewhere in the world that dealt with international school choice and its implications on identity, belonging and accumulation of cultural and social capital. It then went on to explore the historical legacies that have shaped contemporary education in Sri Lanka up to the point of the exponential emergence of these private institutions that claim to be international schools. Through a mixed method study that utilized surveys, interviews and focus groups on stakeholders in four contrasting international schools, it was found out that Sri Lankan international schools are a free market response to increasing demand for private education institutions that operate in the English medium and offer foreign qualifications. In Sri Lanka, the children who attend international schools comprise of a unique segment of the Sri Lankan population. Their parents have the financial capacity to afford the high fees that these schools levy and at the same time make an active choice to disregard the negative effects of attending these school that are registered as companies. In their perspective, the global exposure coupled with English medium instruction and foreign qualifications allows a competitive edge for their students unlike those who attend the national schools. The benefits of the Sri Lankan international schools, in the eyes of these parents, therefore outweigh the drawbacks of this private education system with little governance.
Moreover, an interview conducted with the Ministry of Education revealed that due to a lack of proper governance, the quality of education delivered by these schools was under serious scrutiny. Both the state and the parents were concerned with the lack of local grounding in these school pedagogies. However, the main drawback of Sri Lankan international schools is that they strive to reach global standards by disassociating and distancing themselves from the local. When Sri Lankan international schools do delve in the local, it is merely done at a superficial stage that attempts to please the customers of various ethnic groups. The international school curriculum therefore was promoting global knowledge at the expense of the local. In addition, by alienating the students from their immediate surroundings, these schools were giving rise to a generation of Sri Lankans that grew up endorsing western cultural values with little connection to local culture. However, despite these allegations from the research participants that international schools mar Sri Lankan traditions, their popularity reflects an urgent need for improvements in public education quality.

Another finding that emerged from the research was a growing tension that was prevalent between those that were part of the Sri Lankan international school industry and the rest of the Sri Lankans that embraced public education. During colonial rule, there was an apparent divide between a minority who were educated in the English, private schools and went on to become the ruling elite of society and the masses that studied in the free vernacular language schools. These masses formed the lower socio-economic strata of Sri Lankan society. Stemming from resentment to this social stratification was a revolution of the education system immediately following independence. Free education in the local languages was actively promoted with English subdued and private education banned since the early 1960s. This ban on private education evolved from a discontentment towards the social divide these schools perpetuated as well as resentment to the western cultural influences of the colonists that the Sri Lankan elite adopted which was seen as tainting traditional culture. Ironically however, over the postcolonial years private education has found its way back into the Sri Lankan education system in the disguise of international
schools. The acceptance of international schools by the state and the public signify that the resentment to private schooling has more to do with the colonial emotions that the word private evokes rather than a genuine antipathy to the inequalities that private and English education creates. Whilst Sri Lankans are increasingly embracing the global curriculum and the English education that grants the international school student a competitive edge, they are very much aware of the lack of local language, religion, history and geography in the international school curriculum.

The research highlights that similar to the private schools that existed in colonial times, international schools were increasingly under scrutiny for damaging traditional culture. A newer form of resistance based on the unjust privileges that a minority well versed in English language, having foreign qualifications and adopting western cultural values is therefore developing. It is for these new connotations of cultural marring associated with the wording ‘international’ that certain Sri Lankan international schools are dropping the word ‘international’ from their schools and adopting the word ‘college’.

Embracing the global while safeguarding the local: a possible reality?

When governments take a neoliberal stance, the state is no longer able to satisfy the welfare needs of all of its citizens that expect protection (Wickramasinghe 2006). The political upbringing of Sri Lankans is such that postcolonial Sri Lankans expect complete protection from the state. This expectation stems from post-colonial policies and political propaganda that continuously emphasize the state as the responsible provider of public education that guarantees equality over the unfair injustices that persisted during colonial times when education was not under the hands of Sri Lanka. The unfair advantage that private and English education produces is hence met with intense retaliation to the extent that international schools operate as companies; a loophole in an otherwise banned private schooling system.

Another reason why postcolonial attempts at modernization have to a certain extent been a failure in Sri Lanka is that the imagined community that is instilled into a Sri Lankan’s mind from an early age is somewhat anti-
modernization. As Wickramasinghe (2006:333) states, it is a ‘problem of self-vision and national identity’ where people continue to see themselves as ‘a nation of proud and self-sufficient peasantry’ even though the existence of such a prominent farming community is doubtful. A quick look around one’s surrounding paints a different picture entirely if one is able to see their surrounding objectively by isolating the imagery that is ingrained into the minds of the youth from an early age.

For example, Wickramasinghe (2006:334) relates the following depiction from a current Sri Lankan textbook:

‘The adventures of Nayana and Kumari, two children growing up in an idyllic Sri Lankan Village. The setting is timeless. The children collect fruits and play at selling them in a make believe shop while mothers cook and their fathers work in the field’.

Compare this to the social imagery painted via international school textbooks and it is apparent that an international curriculum prepares students for a 21st century education. The world of twitter, virtual learning networks and various educational applications is nothing new as international schools prepare students to both the positive and the negative outcomes of globalization.

The national system of education is not devoid of inequalities and stratification. However, when Sri Lankans privately fund education that is available for free within the public sphere, it raises questions about how further inequities are perpetuated. Moreover, it signifies a perceived discord between the values that are dominant in national schools and the values that are held by those affluent and bold enough to mobilize their means in pursuit of an education that they perceive as superior. For the Sri Lankans who are stakeholders of the international education system, their decision to opt for this system over the national education system is fraught with the complexity of individual experience, historical legacies, and a desire to safeguard local values and simultaneously achieve global aspirations.
Limitations and Future Recommendations

A vital question that arose from this study was whether it was possible for an international school education to value and sustain global ideals while at the same time sustaining local cultural values. It was evident from the research that the national education system failed to meet the expectations of Sri Lanka and hence non-advertently forced them to make an active decision to participate in the international school system although it is important to bear in mind that this choice was enabled by their relative financial wealth. Yet the voices heard were only of those who both had the resources and made an active choice to leave the national system in favour of these international schools. This raises an opportunity for further investigation in light of the theory of reproduction. It is unlikely for individuals to make choices about things they are unaware of, do not have the capacity to access or do not wish to access because they do not value them. For practicality issues, this research omitted the viewpoints of parents, students and teachers within the national education system (public and existing private and semi-private schools). Hence, another avenue that this research could explore in the future is the perceptions of Sri Lankans who are financially capable of accessing the international schools yet have actively elected not to exit the national system of education.

Since this research was limited to four international schools, one from each corner of Sri Lanka, it is important to keep in mind that heterogeneity exists within each context. Every school had its own culture, values and norms. It is therefore useful to share ‘lessons learnt’ but we need to keep in mind that the ‘insights gained are unlikely to lead to universal answers’ (Crossley and Watson 2003:102). Moreover, these observations were made at one point in time with data collected over just six months. Taking into consideration the dynamic evolution of international schools rapidly over the last 30+ years, it is likely that the issues raised in this research would inevitably change over time. Revisiting either the same research participants or similar international stakeholders within a longitudinal study to inquire if they still hold similar beliefs would help gain further insight into the research questions.
Nevertheless, this is the first scholarly investigation of Sri Lankan international schools that is conducted island wide and therefore contributes to the understanding of international school culture in contemporary Sri Lanka. It is a valuable resource for researchers as it adds to the previously limited literature on international schools in Sri Lanka. Whilst the theoretical framework and literature review helps situate concepts such as school choice, globalization theories, cultural capital, language and international education within a global context, the chapter on historical legacies helps map Sri Lankan educational reforms from pre-colonial rule until present day.

The outcomes of this study highlight a current practice of public education that promotes a culture of miscommunication through linguistic, ethnic and religious segregation. In addition, through the promotion of the Year 5 scholarship, the prestigious national schools continue to remain superior dismissing the ethos of equality that the public education system strived to achieve in the first place. The international schools ultimately were no different. The reluctance of international schools to mingle with the local culture fosters divisions that are based on class difference rather than racial divides. Within these international schools as well, there were vast differences in quality with some schools completely embracing international education at the expense of indigenous knowledge and culture whilst other international schools displayed poor education standards driven by a desire to maximize their profits.

International schools therefore need to urgently find a middle ground where the pedagogy and the practices of the schools encompass both the local and the global. They need to collaborate with the government in order to establish a governing body that grants them autonomy yet ensures that basic standards are met. National schools likewise need to shape their education in such away that it addresses global demands without limiting to a narrow archaic pedagogy. One way of raising national school standards would be to raise teacher salaries and enforce more stringent teacher training.
If words such as ‘private schooling’ could have evoked postcolonial emotionalism to the extent of banning an entire private education system, it is possible for negative associations tied to the word ‘international’ to bring about quandary in the near future. It is anticipated that this research would aid educationalists to recognize the drawbacks and realize the potential of each education system in the country. It is crucial, therefore for Sri Lankan education to distance themselves from these politicizing forces that attempt to stereotype education and instead strive to learn from the drawbacks of both national and international schools in order to improve the Sri Lankan education system as a whole.


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Appendices

Appendix A – Informed Consent Forms

Ministry of Education Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I..........................................................[PRINT NAME],………………...[POSITION HELD] at the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:
   
   - Audio-recording YES □ NO □
   - Receiving Feedback YES □ NO □

   If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

   **Feedback Option**

   **Address:** __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

   **Email:** __________________________________________________
Signature

Please PRINT name

Date
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, .....................................................................[PRINT NAME], .......................................................... [POSITION HELD] of ......................... [PRINT NAME OF SCHOOL] give consent for my school to participate in the research project.

TITLE: INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

6. I consent to:
   
   • Receiving Feedback  YES  □  NO  □

   If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

   **Feedback Option**

   **Address:**  __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

   **Email:**  __________________________________________________

   ........................................................................................................

   Signature

   ............................................................

   Please PRINT name

   ............................................................

   Date
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ........................................................................................................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of now or in the future.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

   • Audio-recording YES NO
   • Receiving Feedback YES NO

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: ________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________

..........................................................
Signature

..........................................................
Please PRINT name

..........................................................
Date
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, .................................................................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE:   INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of now or in the future.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I understand that once I submit a completed questionnaire/survey, it is an indication of my consent to participate in the study. I can withdraw any time prior to submitting the completed questionnaire/survey. Once I have submitted my questionnaire/survey anonymously, my responses cannot be withdrawn.

8. I consent to:

- Audio-recording yes no
- Receiving Feedback yes no

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

**Feedback Option**

Address: __________________________________________________

Email __________________________________________________

.................................................................
Signature

.................................................................
Please PRINT name

.................................................................
Date
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of International School Choice in Sri Lanka. The study will examine the multifaceted ideologies that exist on international school education in Sri Lanka. This research will look at the ramifications that this distinct form of education has for the state as well as the parents, students, teachers and administrators of these schools. The primary objectives of the study are to capture the aspirations that parents have when placing their children in International Schools and find out how these expectations are similar to or differ from the students’ perspectives on what it means to attend an international school. Furthermore, the study will attempt to better understand the state's role concerning international schools by investigating how the state mediates the growth of International Schools or what the key concerns of the government are with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools. The research will also attempt to apprehend the kind of imagined communities that the teachers and international school administrators envision for their students through intercultural literacy and to find out what knowledge is being privileged by each level of stakeholders within this industry.
Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Virandi Wettewa and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall.

What does the study involve?

The study will involve selecting four international schools (case studies) in Sri Lanka and conducting quantitative and qualitative research from these schools. The quantitative research will include questionnaires that the students and parents will fill out while the qualitative research will involve interviews, focus groups and secondary data collection. In addition, the research also involves collecting appropriate secondary data from the Ministry for Education and having a face-to-face interview with a government official from the Ministry for Education.

Interview with the Ministry for Education

A government official from the Ministry of Education, ideally the Minister for Education himself will be interviewed on the government stance and concerns regarding the rise of international schools. Initially, the Ministry for Education will be contacted requesting permission to interview an authoritative figure. An appointment would then be made to interview the respective individual at official premises. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The questions will be about the government stance regarding international schools. These include concerns about the values that are been promoted by such institutions, the quality of education, English medium instruction and any support or restrictions imposed by the government on Sri Lankan International Schools.

The interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data maybe used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing. The participants have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reason and incurring consequences. Participants also have the right to request any data collected to be destroyed.

Secondary Data Collected from the Ministry for Education

The secondary data that will be collected from the Ministry for Education will include any relevant published papers on the stance that the Sri Lankan government takes in regard to International Schools. These could be publications regarding
funding support or rules and regulations laid out when establishing an international school in the country.

**How much time will the study take?**

Interview with an official from the Ministry for Education – approx. 45 minutes

**Can I withdraw from the study?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

**INTERVIEWS**  
You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

**Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**Will the study benefit me?**

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study

**Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes.

**What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?**

When you have read this information, Virandi Wettewa will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact PhD Candidate Virandi Wettewa, +61 2 9351 6358 (Telephone) vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au (Email) or Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall +61 2 9351 6356 (Telephone) +61 2 9351 4580 (Fax) nigel.bagnall@sydney.edu.au (Email)

**What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**
Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of International School Choice in Sri Lanka. The study will examine the multifaceted ideologies that exist on international school education in Sri Lanka. This research will look at the ramifications that this distinct form of education has for the state as well as the parents, students, teachers and administrators of these schools. The primary objectives of the study are to capture the aspirations that parents have when placing their children in International Schools and find out how these expectations are similar to or differ from the students’ perspectives on what it means to attend an international school. Furthermore, the study will attempt to better understand the state’s role concerning international schools by investigating how the state mediates the growth of International Schools or what the key concerns of the government are with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools. The research will also attempt to apprehend the kind of imagined communities that the teachers and international school administrators envision for their students through intercultural literacy and to find out what knowledge is being privileged by each level of stakeholders within this industry.
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What does the study involve?

The study will involve selecting four international schools (case studies) in Sri Lanka and conducting quantitative and qualitative research from these schools. The quantitative research will include questionnaires that the students and parents will fill out while the qualitative research will involve interviews, focus groups and secondary data collection. In addition, the research also involves collecting appropriate secondary data from the Ministry for Education and having a face-to-face interview with a government official from the Ministry for Education.

Questionnaires for Students and Parents

Approximately twenty-five students from Years 7 and above and twenty-five parents whose children are in Years 7 and above will be requested to fill out the questionnaires from each school. These will be two separate questionnaires, one for the students and another for the parents. These questionnaires will examine the factors that account for international school popularity in comparison to the national education system. A range of question types from multiple-choice and frequency scales to more open-ended questions will be used. The questionnaires for the parents will be sent home via the students and returned to the schools. All questionnaires are anonymous in nature therefore participants cannot withdraw once they have handed in the questionnaires, as submitted data cannot be directly linked to them. In addition to the questionnaires, parents will also be sent another form through their children, which they can fill out and return if they wish to take part in telephone interviews.

Interview with a School Administrator

An appropriate administrator, either in the form of a principal, owner or a member of the board of directors from each of the four chosen international schools will be interviewed. Initially, the selected schools will be called up and an appointment made to interview one of the admins who has a certain degree of control over the curriculum and extra-curricular activities that the school makes available to its student body.

The interview will be held at the school premises and would last approximately one hour. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The questions will be about
administrative concerns such as how the students are prepared for a global education, how local and international culture is promoted through the curriculum and extra activities and the process involved in setting up an international school.

The interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data maybe used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing. The participants have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reason and incurring consequences. Participants also have the right to request any data collected to be destroyed.

Focus Groups with Students and Teachers

One focus group (containing eight students from the three most senior classes) and One focus group (with eight teachers from the senior sections) will be conducted from each participating school. The students and teachers will be recruited on a voluntary basis. The focus groups will be held at the school premises at a convenient time that does not disrupt teaching and would last approximately one hour. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The focus group discussion with the students will primarily be about the international school experience and their future aspirations. The discussion with the teachers will be about their teaching experience, techniques and decisions to teach at international schools.

The focus groups will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data maybe used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing. The participants have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reason and incurring consequences. However, they will not be able to request to have their answers erased because of the inter-dependent nature of discussions.

Telephone Interviews with Parents

Eight parents who have at least one child studying in Years 7 or above will be interviewed. The parents will be recruited on a volunteer basis by sending a signup sheet home via their children. The sign-up sheet will allow the parents to provide their telephone number. The researcher will then call the parent and arrange a convenient time for the telephone interview to be carried out. The interview will be approximately
Telephone interviews were seen as the most suitable and feasible option when dealing with busy participants that are otherwise harder to access. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The questions will be about international school choice, particularly how it is shaped by their own educational experiences and the perceived future for their children.

The telephone interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data may be used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing. The participants have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reason and incurring consequences.

Secondary Data Collected from Schools

The secondary data that will be collected from the selected international schools (if applicable) will be their mission statements, school mottos and anthems that convey their educational ethos to the general public.

How much time will the study take?

Questionnaire Completion – approximately ten minutes each.
Interview with school administrator – one hour
Interview with Minister for Education – one hour
Focus Groups with Students and Teachers – one hour per focus group
Telephone Interview with Parents – forty-five minutes.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

INTERVIEWS
You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

FOCUS GROUPS
If you take part in a focus group and wish to withdraw, as this is a group discussion it will not be possible to exclude individual data once the session has commenced.

QUESTIONNAIRES
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you are not under any obligation to consent to complete the questionnaire/survey. Submitting a completed questionnaire/survey is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw any time prior to submitting your completed questionnaire/survey. Once you have submitted your questionnaire/survey anonymously, your responses cannot be withdrawn.

**Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**Will the study benefit me?**

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

**Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes.

**What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?**

When you have read this information, Virandi Wettewa will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact PhD Candidate Virandi Wettewa, +61 2 9351 6358 (Telephone) vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au (Email) or Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall +61 2 9351 6356 (Telephone) +61 2 9351 4580 (Fax) nigel.bagnall@sydney.edu.au (Email)

**What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of International School Choice in Sri Lanka. The study will examine the multifaceted ideologies that exist on international school education in Sri Lanka. This research will look at the ramifications that this distinct form of education has for the state as well as the parents, students, teachers and administrators of these schools. The primary objectives of the study are to capture the aspirations that parents have when placing their children in International Schools and find out how these expectations are similar to or differ from the students’ perspectives on what it means to attend an international school. Furthermore, the study will attempt to better understand the state’s role concerning international schools by investigating how the state mediates the growth of International Schools or what the key concerns of the government are with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools. The research will also attempt to apprehend the kind of imagined communities that the teachers and international school administrators envision for their students through intercultural literacy and to find out what knowledge is being privileged by each level of stakeholders within this industry.
Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Virandi Wettewa and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall.

What does the study involve?

The study will involve selecting four international schools (case studies) in Sri Lanka and conducting quantitative and qualitative research from these schools. The quantitative research will include questionnaires that the students and parents will fill out while the qualitative research will involve interviews, focus groups and secondary data collection. In addition, the research also involves collecting appropriate secondary data from the Ministry for Education and having a face-to-face interview with a government official from the Ministry for Education.

Questionnaires for Parents

Approximately twenty-five parents from each school whose child is in Years 7 or above will be requested to fill out the questionnaires. These questionnaires will examine the factors that account for international school popularity in comparison to the national education system. A range of question types from multiple-choice and frequency scales to more open-ended questions will be used. The questionnaires for the parents will be sent home via the students and returned to the schools. All questionnaires are anonymous in nature therefore participants cannot withdraw once they have handed in the questionnaires, as submitted data cannot be directly linked to them. In addition to the questionnaires, parents will also be sent another form through their children, which they can fill out and return if they wish to take part in telephone interviews.

Telephone Interviews with Parents

Eight parents who have at least one child studying in Years 7 or above will be interviewed. The parents will be recruited on a volunteer basis by sending a signup sheet home along with the questionnaires for the parents via their children. The sign-up sheet will allow the parents to provide their name and telephone number if they wish to take part in a telephone interview. The researcher will then call the parent and arrange a convenient time for the telephone interview to be carried out. The interview will be approximately forty-five minutes in length. Telephone interviews were seen as the most suitable and feasible option when dealing with busy participants that are otherwise harder to access. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The questions will be about international school
choice, particularly how it is shaped by their own educational experiences and the perceived future for their children.

The telephone interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data may be used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing. The participants have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reason and incurring consequences.

How much time will the study take?

Questionnaire Completion – approximately ten minutes each.

Telephone Interview with Parents – forty-five minutes.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

INTERVIEWS
You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

QUESTIONNAIRES
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you are not under any obligation to consent to complete the questionnaire/survey. Submitting a completed questionnaire/survey is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw any time prior to submitting your completed questionnaire/survey. Once you have submitted your questionnaire/survey anonymously, your responses cannot be withdrawn.

Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law.
A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.
Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes.

What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Virandi Wettewa will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact PhD Candidate Virandi Wettewa, +619351 6358 (Telephone) vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au (Email) or Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall +61 2 9351 6356 (Telephone) +61 2 9351 4580 (Fax) nigel.bagnall@sydney.edu.au (Email).

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INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of International School Choice in Sri Lanka. The study will examine the multifaceted ideologies that exist on international school education in Sri Lanka. This research will look at the ramifications that this distinct form of education has for the state as well as the parents, students, teachers and administrators of these schools. The primary objectives of the study are to capture the aspirations that parents have when placing their children in International Schools and find out how these expectations are similar to or differ from the students’ perspectives on what it means to attend an international school. Furthermore, the study will attempt to better understand the state’s role concerning international schools by investigating how the state mediates the growth of International Schools or what the key concerns of the government are with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools. The research will also attempt to apprehend the kind of imagined communities that the teachers and international school administrators envision for their students through intercultural literacy and to find out what knowledge is being privileged by each level of stakeholders within this industry.

Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Virandi Wettewa and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall.
What does the study involve?

The study will involve selecting four international schools (case studies) in Sri Lanka and conducting quantitative and qualitative research from these schools. The quantitative research will include questionnaires that the students and parents will fill out while the qualitative research will involve interviews, focus groups and secondary data collection. In addition, the research also involves collecting appropriate secondary data from the Ministry for Education and having a face-to-face interview with a government official from the Ministry for Education.

Focus Groups with Teachers

One focus group (with eight teachers from the senior sections) will be conducted from each participating school. The teachers will be recruited on a voluntary basis. The focus groups will be held at the school premises at a convenient time that does not disrupt teaching and would last approximately one hour. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The discussion with the teachers will be about their teaching experience, techniques and decision to teach at international schools.

The focus groups will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data maybe used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing.

The participants have the right to withdraw at any time without providing reason and incurring consequences. However, they will not be able to request to have their answers erased because of the inter-dependent nature of discussions.

How much time will the study take?

Focus Groups with Teachers– one hour per focus group

Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

FOCUS GROUPS
If you take part in a focus group and wish to withdraw, as this is a group discussion it will not be possible to exclude individual data once the session has commenced.
Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes.

What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Virandi Wettewa will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact PhD Candidate Virandi Wettewa, +61 2 9351 6358 (Telephone) vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au (Email) or Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall +61 2 9351 6356 (Telephone) +61 2 9351 4580 (Fax) nigel.bagnall@sydney.edu.au (Email)

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INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT
(CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS)

What is the study about?

This study is about International School Choice in Sri Lanka. This research will look at the impact that this type of schooling has for the country as well as the parents, students, teachers and principals of these schools. The main aims of the study are to find out the dreams that parents have for their children by placing them in International Schools and find out how these expectations are similar to or differ from the students’ expectations about their future.

Who is doing the study?

The study is being run by Virandi Wettewa at The University of Sydney.

What do I have to do?

*Questionnaires for Students*
Twenty-five students from each school will be requested to fill out the questionnaires. These questionnaires will examine why international schools are popular. A range of question types from multiple-choice and frequency scales to more open-ended questions will be used.

Focus Groups with Students

Two focus groups (each containing eight students from the three most senior classes) will be conducted from each school. The students will be recruited on a voluntary basis. The focus groups will be held at the school premises at a convenient time that does not disrupt teaching and would last approximately one hour. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the students to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The focus group discussion with the students will primarily be about the international school experience and their future aspirations. The focus groups will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes.

How much time will it take?

Questionnaire Completion – approximately ten minutes each.
Focus Groups with Students – one hour per focus group

Do I have to do the study?

It is your choice to take part or not to take part in the study. If you do decide to take part, you can still choose to pull out if you wish.

FOCUS GROUPS
If you are taking part in a group discussion and you wish to pull out, because you have been part of a group the information you have given up to that point will still be included in the study.

QUESTIONNAIRES
You can choose to fill in the form or not to. If you do fill in the form you can still choose not to give your answers to the researchers. If you have already given your answers to the researchers and the form does not have your name on it, you cannot take back your answers.

Will anyone else know?

The researchers may write a report about this study but you will not be named in the report and only the researchers will know your answers.

Do I get anything for being part of the study?

You will not get anything for being part of the study

Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes.

**What if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions you can contact Virandi Wettewa and she will be happy to help you.

**What if I am not happy with the study?**

If you have any concerns or complaints you can contact The University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of International School Choice in Sri Lanka. The study will examine the multifaceted ideologies that exist on international school education in Sri Lanka. This research will look at the ramifications that this distinct form of education has for the state as well as the parents, students, teachers and administrators of these schools. The primary objectives of the study are to capture the aspirations that parents have when placing their children in International Schools and find out how these expectations are similar to or differ from the students’ perspectives on what it means to attend an international school. Furthermore, the study will attempt to better understand the state’s role concerning international schools by investigating how the state mediates the growth of International Schools or what the key concerns of the government are with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools. The research will also attempt to apprehend the kind of imagined communities that the teachers and international school administrators envision for their students through intercultural literacy and to find out what knowledge is being privileged by each level of stakeholders within this industry.

Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Virandi Wettewa and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall.
What does the study involve?

The study will involve selecting four international schools (case studies) in Sri Lanka and conducting quantitative and qualitative research from these schools. The quantitative research will include questionnaires that the students and parents will fill out while the qualitative research will involve interviews, focus groups and secondary data collection. In addition, the research also involves collecting appropriate secondary data from the Ministry for Education and having a face-to-face interview with a government official from the Ministry for Education.

Interview with a School Administrator

An appropriate administrator, either in the form of a principal, owner or a member of the board of directors from each of the four chosen international schools will be interviewed. Initially, the selected schools will be called up and an appointment made to interview an administrator who has a certain degree of control over the curriculum and extra curricular activities that the school makes available to its student body.

The interview will be held at the school premises and would last approximately one hour. Questions will be semi-structured in nature allowing the participants to come up with any additional issues that the questions did not raise. The questions will be about administrative concerns such as how the students are prepared for a global education, how local and international culture is promoted through the curriculum and extra activities and the process involved in setting up an international school.

The interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed for analysis purposes. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the data. The data maybe used in the publication of the PhD thesis and any other conference papers or journal articles. However, in order to ensure anonymity, a pseudonym will be used if any quotes are used in any publications. No information will be released without consent. The audiotapes and transcripts will be securely stored within the University of Sydney for seven years before being securely destroyed via paper shredding and digital erasing.

The participants have the right to withdraw at anytime without providing reason and incurring consequences. Participants also have the right to request any data collected to be destroyed.

How much time will the study take?

Interview with school administrator – one hour

Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.
You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

**Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**Will the study benefit me?**

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

**Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes.

**What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?**

When you have read this information, Virandi Wettewa will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact PhD Candidate Virandi Wettewa, +61 2 9351 6358 (Telephone) vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au (Email) or Associate Professor Nigel Bagnall +61 2 9351 6356 (Telephone) +61 2 9351 4580 (Fax) nigel.bagnall@sydney.edu.au (Email).

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This information sheet is for you to keep.
Appendix C – Participant Recruitment Emails

Recruitment Circular (via email) for the Ministry of Education

Dear Sir,

My name is Virandi Wettewa and I am currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Sydney, Australia. I am looking for participants for my PhD research titled International Schools: The Case of Sri Lanka. I am writing to inform you about my research and to request your participation. The attached participant information sheet outlines the research objectives and the level of commitment required from the Ministry of Education.

If you wish to take part in this research please fill out and return the consent form along with the contact details of the nominated government official from the Ministry of Education via email to vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au no later than April 5th 2013. The interview will be carried out sometime within the month of May 2013. The researcher will contact the nominated government official and arrange a convenient time to conduct the interview.

Thank You for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely,

Virandi Wettewa
Recruitment Circular (via email) for all International Schools in Sri Lanka

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Virandi Wettewa and I am currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Sydney, Australia. I am looking for participants for my thesis research titled International Schools: The Case of Sri Lanka. I am writing to inform you about my research and to request your school’s participation. The attached participant information sheet outlines the research objectives and the level of commitment required from each level of your school community.

If you wish to take part in this research please fill out and return the consent form via email to vwet6924@uni.sydney.edu.au no later than 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013. This email has been sent to most International Schools in Sri Lanka. Only four International Schools out of those that return the signed consent form will ultimately be selected. If your school is selected, the researcher will notify you no later than 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

Thanking You,

Yours Sincerely,

Virandi Wettewa
Appendix D – Questionnaires

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

Student Questionnaire

1. What is your nationality?

Sri Lankan ☐ Non Sri Lankan ☐

2. How many schools have you attended?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local government or private schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>International Schools in Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local schools abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>International schools abroad</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. What is your language proficiency? (tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>

Others (please specify)
4. How important were these factors when deciding to study at an International School Education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not that important</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as the language of Instruction</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity to where we live</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Student Population</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Extra Curricular Activities Available</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller class size in comparison to local schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Networks accessible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation of other people</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of other friends already known to you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others (please specify)

5. What kind of future do you see for yourself after attending an International School? (Tick all that apply)

- I wish to be a global citizen
- I hope to get a good job in Sri Lanka without any tertiary education
- I hope to attend a local university or college and get a good job in Sri Lanka
- I hope to attend a local university or college and get a good job overseas
- I hope to attend a university or college abroad and get a good job in Sri Lanka
I hope to attend a university or college abroad and get a good job overseas

Other (please specify)

6. How much interaction do you think you have with the local Sri Lankan culture in terms of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Lots of Interaction</th>
<th>Some Interaction</th>
<th>Little Interaction</th>
<th>Hardly any interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having friends who attend local schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practicing or taking part in Religious Activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching Sri Lankan movies/television programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening to Sri Lankan music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with Sri Lankans in local languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending or taking part in Sri Lankan cultural activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. How much interaction do you think you have with the global culture in terms of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Lots of Interaction</th>
<th>Some Interaction</th>
<th>Little Interaction</th>
<th>Hardly any interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having friends who attend international schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching International television programmes/movies</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to International music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with Foreign nationals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending or taking part in International cultural activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. In your opinion, what are the main strengths/ advantages of attending an international school?

9. In your opinion, what are the main drawbacks/ disadvantages of going to an international school?
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

Parent Questionnaire

1. What is your relationship to your child?
   - Mother ☐
   - Father ☐
   - Step-mother ☐
   - Step-father ☐
   - Guardian ☐

2. What is your nationality?
   - Sri Lankan ☐
   - Non Sri Lankan ☐

3. What is your child’s nationality?
   - Sri Lankan ☐
   - Non Sri Lankan ☐

4. How many children do you have?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5+

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5. What language(s) do you speak at home with your children (check all that apply)
   - English ☐
   - Sinhalese ☐
   - Tamil ☐
   - Other ☐

6. What is your educational background?

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<th>Sri Lankan University or college</th>
<th>School, college or University Overseas</th>
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<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>☐</td>
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7. What was the medium of instruction when you studied? (tick all that apply)

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<th>English</th>
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<td>Tertiary</td>
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8. How important were these factors when choosing an International School Education for your child?

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<th>Factor</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
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<th>Not that important</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
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<td>Reputation of the School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity to where we live</td>
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<td>Foreign curriculum</td>
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<td>Diversity of Student Population</td>
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<td>The Extra Curricular Activities Available</td>
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<td>Quality of Teachers</td>
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<td>Smaller class size in comparison to local schools</td>
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<td>Recommendation of other people</td>
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</table>

Others (please specify)


9. What kind of future do you wish for your child by sending them to an International School? Tick all that apply

- I want my child to be a global citizen
- I want my child to get a good job in Sri Lanka without any tertiary education
- I want my child to attend a local university or college and get a good job in Sri Lanka
I want my child to attend a local university or college and get a good job overseas
I want my child to attend a university or college abroad and get a good job in Sri Lanka
I want my child to attend a university or college abroad and get a good job overseas

Other (please specify)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>10. How much interaction do you think your child has with the local Sri Lankan culture in terms of:</th>
<th>Lots of Interaction</th>
<th>Some Interaction</th>
<th>Little Interaction</th>
<th>Hardly any interaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having friends who attend local schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practicing or taking part in Religious Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching Sri Lankan movies/television programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening to Sri Lankan music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with Sri Lankans in local languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending or taking part in Sri Lankan cultural activities</td>
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<th>11. How much interaction do you think your child has with the global culture in terms of:</th>
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<th>Some Interaction</th>
<th>Little Interaction</th>
<th>Hardly any interaction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Having friends who attend international schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching International television programmes/movies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening to International music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with Foreign nationals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending or taking part in International cultural activities</td>
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</table>
12. In your opinion, what are the main strengths/ advantages of sending your child to an international school?

13. In your opinion, what are the main drawbacks/ disadvantages of sending your child to an international school?
Appendix E – Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule for Ministry of Education

Introductory Question

Can you please introduce yourself by stating your position in the Ministry of Education and your roles and responsibilities in a nutshell?

What role, if any, do you play with regard to International Schools in Sri Lanka?

Setting Up an International School

What is the process involved in setting up an international school?

How do you ensure Legitimacy and appropriateness of these International Schools?

What kind of support, if any, does the government offer for the setting up and smooth running of the international school?

What kind of restrictions, if any, are imposed by the government on international schools?

International School Choice: influence & experience

From your personal experience or otherwise, in what ways do you see international schools as different from local schools?

In your experience, why do you think people choose to place their children in an international school?

What is your impression of the standard of education/facilities at international schools in Sri Lanka?

What sort of a philosophy do you think international schools in Sri Lanka promote?

Social Views on Sri Lankan International Schools

I now wish to shift to social views on international schools in Sri Lanka.

What do you think is the general perception of international schools in Sri Lanka?

Some people have said that international schools produce different types of students than local schools. Do you agree with this? In what ways?
What values do you see being promoted by international schools?

Do you think that international schools play a role in the community other than just educating the children?

**Questions about the Future of International Schools**

What positive impacts, if any, do you think International Schools contribute towards in Sri Lanka?

What are some of the concerns that the government has with regard to Sri Lankan International Schools?

**Concluding Questions**

Is there anything we haven't touched on today that you would like to add?
What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?
School Administrator Interview Schedule

**Introductory Question**

Can you please introduce yourself by stating your experience in the international school trade and your position at this school?

Can you provide me with a brief overview of your school?

When was it established?
How/Why was it established?
What is the Population like? How many foreign students/teachers compared to locals?
Staff-Student ratio?
What is the curriculum?
What kind of extra activities does your school offer its students?

**Setting Up an International School**

What is the process involved in setting up an international school?

How do you ensure Legitimacy and appropriateness?

What kind of support, if any, do you receive from the government for the setting up and smooth running of the international school?

What kind of restrictions, if any, are imposed by the government on international schools?

**International School Choice: influence & experience**

What factors influenced you to establish or become involved with the administration at an international school?

From your personal experience or otherwise, in what ways do you see international schools as different from local schools?

In your experience, why do you think people choose to place their children in an international school?

What is your impression of the standard of education at international schools in Sri Lanka?

What sort of a philosophy does your school promote?
Social Views on Sri Lankan International Schools

I now wish to shift to social views on international schools in Sri Lanka.

What do you think is the general perception of international schools in Sri Lanka?

Some people have said that international schools produce different types of students than local schools. Do you agree with this? In what ways?

How does your school promote an international education?

Does your school encourage its students to have connections with the local culture? How is this implemented?

Do you think that the school plays a role in the community other than just educating the children?

Are there any local/international events/celebrations held at the school?

Are there any moments of conflict when providing an international education that conflicts with local norms or values?

What do you think about the image of the school in the community?

Questions about the Future of Students

Tell me about your past pupils, where have the majority of them gone for higher studies? What kind of jobs do they do now?

What kind of futures do you see for your current pupils?

Concluding Questions

Is there anything we haven't touched on today that you would like to add? What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?
Interview Schedule for Parents

Introductory Question

How many children do you have?

Are all of your children in an international school?

How old were they when you first enrolled them?

International School Choice: influence & experience

What kind of discussions/conversations did you have when you first decided to send your child to an International School?

Who else, if anyone, influenced your decision to send your child to an international school?

What kinds of things do your friends or family members have to say about international schools in general?

In your experience, why do you think people choose to send their children to an international school?

Ok now what is your impression of the standard of education at international schools in Sri Lanka in general and of your child’s school?

What about facilities? Do you see a difference?

Parents’ Educational Experiences

Next, if you don’t mind, I’d like to shift to your own educational background. Where did you receive your education?

What do you think is the general perception of international schools in Sri Lanka?

Would you say that most of your friends ‘children or relatives’ children are in local schools or international schools?

Social Views on Sri Lankan International Schools

Do your friends or family comment about the fact that your children are in international school and if so what kind of comments have you received?

There is a general idea that children who attend international schools lose out on maintaining their religion, or language, or culture. Have you experienced that? To what extent?
How has the fact that your child is studying at an international school influenced the kinds of friends that he/she has?

Some people have said that international schools produce different types of students than local schools. Is this your experience? Explain.

Do you wish for your child to pursue tertiary education? If so where?

What kind of a future do you see for your child in 10 years?

Do you think your child’s future is different to that of a child attending a local school? If so in what ways?

**Concluding Questions**

Is there anything we haven't touched on today that you would like to add? Any advantages or disadvantages of internationals?

(Thank You Good byes)
Appendix F – Focus Group Schedules

Student Focus Group Schedule

Introductory Question

Can everyone introduce himself or herself by stating your name, the number of schools that you have attended, and the names of these schools and where they were located?

*International School Choice: influence & experience*

What factors do you think influenced you and your family to select an international education for you?

Who else, if anyone, influenced you or your parents’ decision to send you to an international school?

In your experience, why do you think people choose to remove their children from local schools and place them in an international school?

What is your impression of the standard of education at international schools in Sri Lanka?

What sort of a philosophy of education do you think International Schools in Sri Lanka promote?

*Social Views on Sri Lankan International Schools*

I now wish to shift to social views on international schools in Sri Lanka.

What do you think is the general perception of international schools in Sri Lanka?

What kinds of things do your friends or family members have to say about international schools in general?

Would you say that most of your friends ‘or relatives’ children are in local schools or international schools?

What is your opinion on Local School students?

How good do you think you knowledge on Sri Lankan history, religion, arts, etc. is compared to local school students?

There is a general idea that children who attend international schools lose out on maintaining their religion, or language, or culture. Have you experienced that? To what extent?
Do your friends or family comment about the fact that you are in an international school and if so what kind of comments have you received?

How has the fact that you are studying at an international school influenced the kinds of friends that you have?

Some people have said that international schools produce different types of students than local schools. Do you agree with this? In what ways?

**Questions about Future Aspirations**

Tell me about your future ambitions. Whether you hope to go to university? If so where? And how do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

Do you think your future is different to that of a child attending a local school? If so in what ways?

**Concluding Questions**

Is there anything we haven't touched on today that you would like to add? What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?
Teacher Focus Group Schedule

**Introductory Question**

Can everyone introduce himself or herself by stating how long you have been teaching for, the number of schools that you have taught at and the names of these schools and where they were located?

**International School Choice: influence & experience**

What factors influenced you to teach at an international school?

From your teaching experience or otherwise, how do you think teaching at an International School is different to teaching at a local school?

In your experience, why do you think people choose to remove their children from local schools and place them in an international school?

What is your impression of the standard of education at international schools in Sri Lanka?

What is your impression of the facilities available to both students and teachers at international schools?

What sort of a philosophy of education do you think International Schools in Sri Lanka promote?

Salaries – fixed rates or were you allowed to negotiate your salaries? and rapport with management/principal? Do you have a say in the functioning of the school/syllabus?

Welfare societies/trade unions?

Rapport/communication between international schools and teachers/ or at district level.

**Social Views on Sri Lankan International Schools**

I now wish to shift to social views on international schools in Sri Lanka.

What do you think is the general perception of international schools in Sri Lanka?

What kinds of things do your close social or family circles have to say about international schools in general?

Some people have said that international schools produce different types of students
than local schools. Do you agree with this? In what ways?

What is your view on Local School teachers and international school teachers in Sri Lanka?

Do your friends or family comment about the fact that you are teaching in an international school and if so what kind of comments have you received?

How has the fact that you are teaching at an international school influenced your social life?

Questions about Future Aspirations

Tell me about your future aspirations as an international school teacher? How do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

Do you think your future is different to that of a teacher in a local school? If so in what ways?

Concluding Questions

Is there anything we haven't touched on today that you would like to add?
What should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?
### Appendix G – Questionnaire results

**Parent Questionnaire Results**

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## IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS WHEN CHOOSING AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOR YOUR CHILD

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**CHILD'S INTERACTION WITH LOCAL CULTURE**

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CHILD’S INTERACTION WITH GLOBAL CULTURE

| HAVING FRIENDS WHO ATTEND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS | 22 | 16 | 3 | 2 | 43 |
| WATCHING INTERNATIONAL MOVIES/TV PROGRAMMES | 24 | 17 | 2 | 1 | 44 |
| LISTENING TO INTERNATIONAL MUSIC | 24 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 43 |
| INTERACTIONS WITH FOREIGN NATIONALS | 14 | 13 | 10 | 6 | 43 |
| ATTENDING OR TAKING PART IN INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES | 7 | 17 | 11 | 9 | 44 |
## Student Questionnaire Results

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## INTERACTION WITH LOCAL CULTURE

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## INTERACTION WITH GLOBAL CULTURE
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Appendix H – Additional Information

Additional information about LCK Kandy

The Liberty College website states that it is an ‘international school in a Sri Lankan environment’, that has ‘taken meaningful initiatives to inculcate in the minds of children, a sense of belonging and love for the nation and respect for its customs, norms and values’. For example, at Key stages 1 and 2 (until 11 years of age), students study History and Geography that has an added component on Sri Lanka in addition to the usual curriculum on Europe and the World. Students also have the option of following Sinhalese and Tamil at these stages along with a religious subject from the options of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Roman Catholicism. When it comes to Key Stage 3 however, Religion, Sri Lankan history and geography is dropped and students have the option of either following Sinhalese or French as a subject. Liberty College (2011) further reveals that ‘the daily morning assembly starts with observing religious practices while all four major religions are celebrated annually in the form of Bhakthi Gee (Buddhist Devotional Songs), Christmas Carols, Islamic Day and Saraswathie Pooja (A Hindu festival). Students engage themselves in a variety of charitable and social service activities throughout the year. All Liberty students are exhorted to pay obeisance to their parents daily according to the customs of the community they belong to’.

The mission statement of Liberty College, derived from their website outlines the school’s philosophical outlook towards providing an international education. Adding value, creating an educational environment, which naturally drives towards value addition at school as well as at home and creating a culture that consistently enhances one’s spiritual, moral, physical, emotional and intellectual development are the school’s main focus. LCK furthermore, aims to provide opportunities for all to reach the highest potential in their respective areas of interest, through value enrichment, promoting good citizenship and a sense of belonging.

To achieve these goals, the school claims that it is crucial to promote a sharing and caring attitude among its students so that they become confident, committed and honest individuals that have mutual trust and respect for each other. This, they claim are the foundations for an ‘education for tomorrow’ that strives to consistently ‘benchmark world-class educational systems to build best practices, facilitate an open environment to encourage innovative and
creative thinking and provide the best facilities and resources to meet tomorrow’s needs’ (LCK website).

In order to achieve these standards, LCK promotes a research-oriented atmosphere by recognizing and rewarding individual innovation. The school mission statement places emphasis on prudent risk taking, promoting lifelong learning, team spirit and being innovative and first to set standards. They note that speed of action is important. Moreover, determination to get things done, adaptability to change and an open mind and a winning attitude are all recognized as key factors in achieving success.

Liberty College guarantees the maximum number of students in one class to be no more than twenty-five. It has received accredited teaching centre status from Edexcel, UK, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and NCC Education, UK, enabling the school to conduct all examinations in-house. The school also boasts of providing quality teachers who have the opportunity to develop their teaching skills through a range of programs. For instance, each year, staff development workshops are run by professional educationalists both from Sri Lanka and abroad for all Liberty College staff members. In addition, teachers are also sent to the UK on teacher exchange programmes to gain experience and exposure to teaching the British curriculum. The Liberty Graduate School and the Liberty Centre for Information Technology also offers specialist diplomas and courses for teachers who wish to further develop their skills.

The programme of study at foundation school is set out by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority of United Kingdom incorporates six aspects of learning. These involve: Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication, Language and Literacy, Mathematical Development, Knowledge and Understanding of the World, Physical Development and Creative Development. At playgroup level, the ideology is ‘learn through play’ while ICT, Swimming and Athletics are all introduced from Kindergarten onwards. The physical infrastructure of the foundation school, as the Liberty College website describes, ‘consists of colourful classrooms with separate reading corners, a spacious music room, a multipurpose room with a mini library, an IT suite and an indoor play room’ while the outdoor play area is ‘equipped with the most modern equipment to provide meaningful physical development for kids’.

The Primary School consists of Key Stage 1 (5 to 7 years) and Key Stage 2 (7 to 11 years) and like the foundation school, is equipped with a modern child friendly library, a Science laboratory, a Design and Technology laboratory, a room for Art and Crafts, a Dance room, a Drama room, an Auditorium, Music rooms and several ICT suites.

Here, the following subjects are offered at Key stage 2:

Core subjects: English, Mathematics, and Science
Foundation subjects: Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Design and Technology (D&T), History, Geography, Art & Design, Music, Physical Education, Modern Foreign Language (French)

Others: Sinhala, Tamil, Drama, Oriental Dance, Religion (Buddhism/ Christianity/ Roman Catholicism/ Islam/ Hinduism)

At Secondary Level, education is divided into Key Stages 3, 4, and advanced Level. During Key stage 3, students follow all the Core and Foundation subjects of Key Stage 2 and have the option of following Sinhala instead of French if they wish to do so. At Key Stage 4, Liberty College has now shifted from the previous linear Ordinary Level exams to the more child-centred IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) exam mode.

At Key Stage 4, the students have the following subjects:

Core subjects: English, Mathematics, and Information & Communication Technology (ICT)

Stream specific subjects: Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Human Biology (Science combination) or Economics, Business Studies, Accounting and Business & Communication (Business combination)

Non-stream specific subject: Business & Communication (for students taking the Science combination) and Science - Single Award (for students taking the Business combination)

Humanities subject: History or Geography Aesthetic subject: Art or English Literature

Language: French or Sinhala

In addition, during ICT, students are able to take the assessments in e-Citizen at Year 7 and International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) at Years 8 and 9 and obtain these internationally recognized ICT skills qualifications.

At Advanced Level, students generally take 3-4 subjects from a range of subjects offered in the following streams: Science, Mathematics, Business and Humanities. These include Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics (Core), Further Mathematics, Applied ICT, Economics, Business Studies, Accounting, English Literature and French.

Students who wish to follow tertiary education at Liberty College can now do so by following the first and second years of their degrees in Computer Studies and Business. They then can go on to complete their final year in a British University. Liberty College further highlights that arrangements are currently also being made to provide the option of completing the final year in Sri Lanka.
Liberty College Kandy also offers a range of extra-curricular activities from sport to performing arts. A few examples include the Model United Nations, Debating, Swimming, Cricket and the Interact Club. The interview with the LCK Headmaster also revealed that there were certain special facilities at Liberty College such as the availability of counselling and career guidance, an accommodation centre in Colombo for the students to stay overnight when attending activities such as national sporting events or the model United Nations held in Colombo and trips to the University of Hong Kong and Canterbury, New Zealand to gain first-hand experience of university life. Moreover, the LCK Headmaster stated that the school has signed memorandums of understanding with The University of Hong Kong and The University of Canterbury, New Zealand and that students get scholarships from these universities.

Additional Information about SIS, Matara

A look at the Sheffield International website reveals the following facilities available to students: Academically, children get the services of a tutorial staff that is rich with experience, qualified, dedicated and committed to service. A well-equipped computer room, Science Laboratory, Library and School Book Shop also add to the academic facilities in the school. Furthermore, the school also provides the opportunity for weaker students to attend the free evening supportive classes, and well-maintained and spacious classrooms that increase the academic facilities for the children adds to the supportive atmosphere.

In terms of extra-curricular activities, there are opportunities for children to participate in competitions organized by the school and outside organizations. Among school activities, more attention is drawn towards the Annual Concert, Annual Prize Giving, English Day Competitions, Sports Day and Religious festivals. Inter Sheffield sports competitions, Art, Dancing and Music competitions. In addition to this, the school also organizes activities externally in order to provide more opportunities for co-curricular activities. A range of indoor games such as Carom, Badminton, Karate, Table tennis and Chess are available while outdoor sports such as Netball, Swimming and Cricket are made available for the students.

The interview with the Matara Branch Principal revealed that the school encourages an average of 22 students per class and has a teacher-student ratio of about 1:12. Teachers usually do exam papers for different classes from different branches to ensure that all branches maintain similar standards. When it comes to inter-international or national competitions, students from the Matara branch compete with their fellow students in the five other branches first and the winners irrespective of their branch then represent SIS as one team. SIS Matara thus has a strong
cooperative relationship with the rest of the Sheffield International Schools. The Principal also revealed that similar to most national schools in Sri Lanka, SIS places a strong emphasis on religion, starting the school day with Morning Religious activities.

The principal also claimed that the school encourages patriotism and hence introduced Sri Lankan history for years 7 and 8. Sri Lankan festivals are celebrated in school in order for the students to get accustomed to local rituals and customs. For example, the principal states that during Sri Lankan New Year, celebrations are held in school where the children are encouraged to perform rituals such as overflowing a pot of boiled milk and taught the ritualistic significance of such activities. As the principal quotes,

*We want children to grow up patriotically... Now we do it so they learn all that because we want a group of children who are not only good in English, who are cultured as well. That is very important as Sri Lankans. That is... especially in this Sheffield International School, when you look at the vision, it is ‘educational excellence in a religious background with total personality development’.*

Hence the vision of Sheffield International School is:

‘Futuristic and Global in outlook with Religion and Culture as a firm foundation’.

‘Academic Excellence with Total Personality Development’.
Appendix I – Ethics Approval

Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Wednesday, 6 February 2013

Dr Nigel Bagnall
Education and Social Work - Research; Faculty of Education & Social Work
Email: nigel.bagnall@sydney.edu.au

Dear Nigel

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled “International School Choice: The Case of Sri Lanka”.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2012/2834

Approval Date: 6 February 2013

First Annual Report Due: 6 February 2014

Authorised Personnel: Bagnall Nigel; Wettewa Virandi;

Documents Approved:

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<td>Questionnaires/Surveys</td>
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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition/s of Approval

• Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
• Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

• All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

• All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

• Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Professor Glen Davis
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.