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Degree programme in International Business / International Marketing

Thao Bui Ngoc Phuong

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING FOR WELLSPRING INTERNATIONAL BILINGUAL SCHOOL SAIGON

Bachelor's Thesis 2014

ABSTRACT

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BUI NGOC PHUONG, THAO	International Networking for Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon
Bachelor's Thesis	65 pages + 2 pages of appendices
Supervisor	Puustelli Ulla, Senior Lecturer
Commissioned by	Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon
September 2014	
Keywords	international networking, school networking, international school, school partnering.

This thesis gave an overview of networking phenomenon and focused on building proposal for networking practices for the commissioner – Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon. As international networking becomes more and more important to the development of business and education in the globalisation era, Wellspring Saigon also recognised the need to international network with other education organisations and schools around the world. These future partnerships were expected to bring countless advantages to the school regarding the improvement of education programs, teachers quality and students performance.

After the theory and practices of networking were studied, the final aim of the thesis was the proposal for international networking. The proposal will be used to solve current issues of decision making and suggest immediate practical applications for Wellspring Saigon.

Because of the nature of the topic, qualitative method was used to provide in depth understanding of the networking phenomenon. Data collected through participant observation of the researcher during her training at Wellspring Saigon and in-depth interview with professionals and employees of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences, Wellspring Saigon and Wellspring Hanoi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research/Developing Problem

Networking has recently been a key word for any business enterprises and organisations in this era of internationalization and globalisation. Networking is a business activity in which businessmen or business organisations act upon agreement to gain mutual benefits and it is proved to bring many advantages to the organisations.

The topic of this thesis is building international networking plan for private international school in Vietnam and using these partnerships as a marketing tool. The commissioner and also the target organisation in this topic is Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon (Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam). This topic idea emerged during the training in the school in summer 2014. Thanks to the training in the field of education, education investment is realized to be currently a new trend in investment in Vietnam, especially when citizens in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City are increasingly wealthier and more concerned about their children's education. However, the development of the public education system - the traditional schools - has not been able to meet the demands of parents. The public education system has always been well-known for its over-capacity (45-50 students/class), lack of modern facilities and old-fashioned teaching methods. Therefore, when the governments approved the "socialisation of education" policy in 2001 (Noda, 2005), private and international schools has come into the market and soon become successful thanks to high-quality facilities and modern teaching methods.

Since private and international schools quickly become popular to the parents, there is an increasing number of new schools establishing recently in the city, which makes the competition between private and international schools become noticeable. According to Ho Chi Minh city's department of education and training (2013), the total number of children who were in the age for schooling (kindergarten-high school) is 1,388,045, of which 34% is primary students (Grade 1 - Grade 5) while the society is in lack of schools and education facilities, it creates huge opportunities for private and international schools. According to Ho Chi Minh City's department of education and training (2007), the total number of international schools in Ho Chi Minh City

was 27 and international schools are developing not only in the number of schools but also the size and scale. Competition is increasingly tougher not only between public schools, private schools and international schools but also between the international schools. The competition makes every school initiate different strategies and development in order to gain and keep students.

Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon is a totally new school in Ho Chi Minh City and just began their first academic year in August 2014. It is in fact a late-comer in the market of private and international education in Ho Chi Minh City where several schools have become really well-known. As an international bilingual school, Wellspring Saigon aims to provide their students with outstanding education program and international-standard education environment. Those objectives are believed to be achieved only by building strong relationships with foreign high-quality education organisations to exchange methods, experiences and later on education programs and environment. In other words, the cooperation can take many forms like exchanging teachers, students, summer camps, cultural events, and many others. In the long term, Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon can use these partnerships as an effective marketing tool to gain competitive advantages in the competition of schools in Ho Chi Minh City. The school has its own advantages of modern facilities, USA-standard education programs and location near city centre. However, those advantages are not more outstanding and attractive in comparison with other international schools and that's why it is necessary to create a competitive advantage for the school to pull more students. Because Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon is a totally new school and aims at improving the quality of the education program in the school, the board of directors recognizes that it is necessary for the school to build strong and varied partnership with domestic and international education organisations.

1.2 Research and development objectives

The thesis is aimed to assist Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon in Vietnam in establishing strong and long-lasting relationships with international organisations to enhance the teaching quality and education environment. These target partners are famous organisations in English speaking countries, namely United States, United Kingdom, Singapore and Australia as well as other countries. As a

consequence, teaching quality and education environment in Wellspring Saigon will be improved thanks to the help of other international education organisations. By networking with international education organisations, the schools can inquire modern and successful methods and expertise of educating children. In the long run, education in Vietnam will be advanced and the next generation can enjoy better education system.

The thesis objectives are to gain knowledge of networking theory and to obtain deeper insights of international networking activities in the recent years and especially education organisation networking. Many organisations have been doing networking globally and some of them have achieved success. Finally, using those insights to create an international networking plan for Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon is the end objective.

1.3 Research and Development Questions

The main question is how can Wellspring Saigon School build relationship/partnership with international organisations? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand the theories and practices of international networking and answer the following sub-questions of how Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Wellspring Hanoi have established partnership with international organisations and which of those practices may be the most suitable in Wellspring Saigon's situation.

1.4 Research and development methods

There are many methodologies in research and development process; however, concerning the objective of the thesis, qualitative research appears to be more pertinent to the problem. Since qualitative methods help to gather in-depth awareness and the reasons (Clayton, 2010) of human behaviour and decision making, it will be a helpful tool to gain the comprehensive understandings of international networking. In this research, participant observations and in depth interviews were the main data collection methods to acquire the empirical information. The thesis discussed the practices of how different organisations succeeded in building strong partnership,

particularly, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and Wellspring Hanoi; then, benchmarking those networking practices in order to provide useful schemes for Wellspring Saigon to build successful partnerships and partnership marketing.

Besides, the secondary data consist of academic journals, articles, books or case studies related to international networking theories and practices. These data provided the information which was difficult to gain through the interviews.

2 INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Although there is no common definition of international school widely recognized around the world, it is presumed to be the place providing students with cross-cultural knowledge and international competences. This chapter introduced the concept of international schools and international education; finally, the current situation of international schools in Vietnam was explored,

2.1 The emergence of international school

The concept of "school" has surprisingly many variations and they can be different across countries depending on the nations' schooling system or laws concerning education program. Schools can be state-funded or private-funded, can be for children or for older students, can be a vocational or special school and can be for religious purpose or for basic knowledge purpose (Hayden, 2006). Along with the development of the world, education and schools are changing to respond to the human being's emerging needs of the times and now, the recent years have witnessed the raising of international education and international schools.

Since the 21st century has begun for one-and-a-half decade with the development of globalization, people's lives have changed in many aspects. Parents and educators started to recognize the need for changing the education in order to prepare the children to become a global citizen with international competence and multicultural adaptability and behaviours (Wang, Lin, Spalding, Odell, & Klecka, 2011 cited in Merz & Fox, 2014). The current internationalization trend is not only a trend of business but also a trend of education. Many studies and surveys have been taken contributing to help educators obtain more comprehensive view of different

educations in the world and bridge the gap in knowledge or student's ability across countries. PISA - Program for International Student Assessment - is an example of such researches and surveys. When PISA was first administered in 2000 by OECD and UNESCO (2000), 32 countries had their students joining the tests assessing the students' reading, mathematical and scientific skills. The result of the PISA was a shock to most of countries participating. Finland surprised the world for ranking 1st for student performance of reading literacy skills and become a model for other countries in reorganising the education system. Finnish education has become an example for Vietnam to follow. Furthermore, many educational organisations begin to promote the mobility of students, teachers and resources across the countries in order to promote the cultural exchange and enhance the education environment and teaching methods.

2.2 Definition of international school

Looking back to the history, surprisingly, the first international school in world was built very far back in the past - Spring Grove School in Hounslow, Great Britain (Sylvester, 2002 cited in Walker, 2012). Spring Grove School was opened in 1867 by the royalty. Although the school was only in existence for about 20 years, the case of the school helps to illustrate some of the purposes and features for international education: the need for students with the ability to speak many languages and empathy for other cultures (Walker, 2012). These two purposes are also part of the main reasons for UNESCO's Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace in 1974. In the Guiding Principles of the Recommendation, UNESCO recommended that the Member States take legislative or other actions in education policy using these major principles as guiding. Education system should be aimed at providing international dimension and global perspective to students in all forms so that students will, in the end, understand and respect other people, cultures, civilizations, values and their ways of life and work no matter which part of the world they are from. Students should aware that nations and people around the world are increasingly connected and thus more interdependent with each other, so that it is necessary for the abilities to communicate with people from other countries and the understanding for international solidarity and cooperation to be concerned. Students should then acknowledge both the rights and duties of every people, nation

towards each other and be ready for solving social, national or even global problems (UNESCO 1974). International schools, in that perspective, have designs on such education principles.

However, there is no such official definition of international school that would be widely recognized all over the world. Different countries have different obligations referring these schools and educators around the world use the concept in their perspective. For example, Carder (2007) defined those schools as "to serve the educational needs of the children of those working outside of their countries of origin". In the era of internationalization and globalization, it is not a rare case if people live in oversea with their family and children for business, diplomatic or career reason. While living in such temporary basis, they seek suitable schools for their children to prevent the interruption in the education when their children are not able to adapt in the host country's public schools.

Other criteria to define international education and international school are made by the International Baccalaureate Organisation. The education in international school should develop the students' cultural awareness, languages and ways of living together by building and reinforcing their sense of national identity as well as high recognition of universal human values. The program taught in the school should stimulate student's curiosity and foster their joyfulness to discover and learn about other cultures and the world. Furthermore, international school should be able to make preparations of international competences for the students while still responding to local requisites and interests. Of no less importance is applying the diverse and flexible teaching methods with appropriate assessment patterns where international benchmarking can happen.

2.3 International school in Vietnam

The appearance and significance of international schools in the world has been increasingly enhanced and Vietnam experience is no exception to this. However, international schools in Vietnam appeared much later than in other countries and international school in Vietnam is a new controversial issue to the public. The first school was built in 1993 and the number of foreign school and international school

has rapidly increased from the "socialisation of education" policy in 2001 and Vietnam's becoming a member of World Trade Organisation - in 2007. The concept "international school" is defined by Ho Chi Minh City department of education and training (2006) as the school with the curriculum organized based on the standards of a foreign program. The program has to be officially applied in the named foreign country and is recognized widely in other countries. However, the definition is debatable because of the word "foreign" and the difficulties in proving the wide recognition of a program. For example, complying with this regulation, Korean International School or International German School - Ho Chi Minh City are international school since they provide official foreign programs - Korean and German - for their students. However, some are unhappy with the use of the word "international" when debating that those schools should be labelled as "foreign school" rather than "international school".

There are different ways of classifications for international schools. International schools in Vietnam can be categorised according to its education program or by the operation of the school. There are schools that apply the whole curriculum of foreign country, meaning that Vietnamese programs and languages are of little use in teaching and learning. The other international school is also called bilingual school where curriculum is integrated between Vietnamese National Curriculum and a foreign curriculum. Other way of categorising international schools are based on the origin of the investors or the nature of the programs:

- invested by foreign legal investment;
- invested by overseas Vietnamese,
- the company in joint venture with foreign organisations,
- Vietnamese company but carries foreign curriculum.
- Education and training cooperation between foreign education organisation and Vietnam organisation.

3 OVERVIEW OF WELLSPRING SCHOOLS

Wellspring Schools is the name used to call the current two schools of Wellspring School system invested and managed by the SSG Group. The schools are located in two biggest and most-developed cities in Vietnam which are Hanoi – the capital city and Ho Chi Minh City – the biggest centre of commerce and economy in Vietnam. The Wellspring International Bilingual school in Saigon, in short Wellspring Saigon, is the commissioner and the target organisation for this thesis; while the other school, Wellspring Hanoi was introduced and mentioned in this thesis because of its influence on Wellspring Saigon's policies and operations.

3.1 Wellspring Saigon

Following the success of Wellspring Hanoi, Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon (also called Wellspring Saigon), invested by SSG Group – one of the biggest and leading real estate and education investors in Vietnam, was built and put into operation from the school year 2014-2015. The aim of the school is becoming the ideal learning place for students to develop comprehensively. In the first year, the school opened classes for Grade 1 to Grade 8 for about 120 students and planned to offer education program in the next year for Grade 1-12 students.

Concerning the education program, students of Wellspring Saigon will be familiar with the study curriculum which has been integrated to incorporate the major subjects of 2 education programs: National Curriculum by the Ministry of Education and Training Vietnam (MOET) and American Curriculum by Massachusetts Department of Education (Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon, 2014). Meaning that Grade 1-9 students will be taught Mathematics, Vietnamese, History and Geography in Vietnamese according to MOET's programs as well as English, Science, Mathematics, ICT in English based on Massachusetts's programs.

Grade 10-12 students can choose between the Bilingual program and International Program. If the students choose the Bilingual program, the students will get MOET High school Diploma and SAT/TOEFL (IELTs), plus one credit of College Prep. On

the other hand, if they choose the International Program, after graduation, they will get US high school Diploma and Credits of College Board.

Besides the bilingual program, Wellspring Saigon guarantees the environment for students to feel comfortable in school. Students can be provided with school-bus service, meal service and learning tools (Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon, 2014).

Figure 1. The opening ceremony of Wellspring Saigon and the school year 2014-2015 (Facebook Wellspring Saigon)

The main target customers/parents of the school are intellectual elite and wealthier class in the society. Even though the average income of Ho Chi Minh City citizens is more than twice as much as of Vietnam, 4,513USD and 1,911USD respectively, according to World Bank (2013) and Thanh Thanh Lan (2013); middle class in Ho Chi Minh City still cannot afford the tuition fee of the school which is range from 6.500USD to 15.000USD per year. Since the fee for the school is way higher than the average income of the citizens, the parents' financial ability should be strong enough to guarantee their children's study. Those parents are also more open-minded. They

believe that an international education program is way better for their children than the current national education program and it is worth the money they spend in the school. Moreover, since schooling is also a service and the nature of a service is that place or location plays an important role in marketing, parents who can be attracted by the school are likely the ones who live in a short distance from school or who work near the school.

Wellspring Saigon is located in the new Saigon Pearl Residence Complex, within the city centre of Ho Chi Minh City. The school occupies a brand new 1.2 hectare campus, complete with a comprehensive range of academic, sports and recreational facilities.

Then, according to the categorising, Wellspring Schools are hereby classified as organisations whose investor is Vietnamese company but carrying out an integrated program between Vietnamese national program and a foreign curriculum.

3.2 Wellspring Hanoi

As mentioned above, Wellspring Hanoi was built in 2011 and it is the first school of the Wellspring school system, followed by Wellspring Saigon. The school is located in Hanoi - the capital city of Vietnam - and in an area of more than 8 hectares for all students from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Despite being in the same system, Wellspring Hanoi and Wellspring Saigon do not have identical education programs. While Wellspring Saigon provides the US curriculum, Wellspring Hanoi is accredited as a Cambridge International School directly by Cambridge International Examination (abbr. CIE) to use the curriculum of CIE in the school (Wellspring International Bilingual School Hanoi, 2014a).

After 3 years of operation, Wellspring Hanoi has connections with many domestic and abroad partners. These partners are schools from different levels: primary school, high school, university; and various educational institutions with different fields of activity. Those are Missouri University High School (USA), Foxcroft Academy (UK), Invicta Grammar School (UK), Liberty University (USA), College Board (USA), NCC Education (UK), Citysmart Vietnam and Creative International Education

Management (Vietnam) and many others (Wellspring International Bilingual School Hanoi, 2014b). Cooperation activities between these partners and Wellspring Hanoi differ in forms, level of cooperation, but all contribute to raise the prestige and quality of the teaching and learning of Wellspring Hanoi School. Thanks to these collaborations, parents appreciate more the international learning environment that is being created by Wellspring Hanoi for their students. This success of Wellspring Hanoi is the motivation and guidance for Wellspring Saigon searching and building collaborative relationships with other schools and educational organisations worldwide.

4 NETWORKING

The word "network" may be one the most popular word in business nowadays. People are talking about how network is necessary to business in some emerging economics like China, Russia. In this chapter, the definition of networking is discussed together with its advantages and disadvantages for companies and organisations. Moreover, school networking is described, explained and discussed below in this chapter.

4.1 Networking

4.1.1 Definition

Undoubtedly, marketing activities all requires certain type of relationships whether they are business-to-business, business-to-customer or customer-to-customer (Webster & Morrison, 2004). Basically, network means the relationship between people and business networking means the relationship between organisations. Iacobucci (1996 xiii) defined networking as "a verb used to describe the initiation and sustenance of interpersonal connections for the rather Machiavellian purpose of tapping those relationships later for commercial gain." Meanwhile, Vinnicombe and Colwell (1996 88) described networking as "banding together of like-minded people for the purposes of contact and support". The connection between people who share similar goals and ambitions gather together in an attempt to support and achieve those goals is emphasized in both definitions. Nowadays, the concept has developed into many definitions as well as many different forms of cooperative activities (Suen 2005). Defining and categorizing them is now a bigger issue since a wide range of

cooperation forms has been applied, "spawning an extensive literature specifying alliance characteristics and describing alliance types" (Suen 2005 p.3). Generally, partnering can be defined as a mutually oriented interaction between two or more reciprocally committed parties who share common goals in an effort of building sustainable and mutually beneficial cooperation with high degree of interdependencies.

The most basic of network is the connection between two parties, which is called bilateral partnership. Thereafter, the concept continuously develops and evolves into many different coordinate activities. When firms and organisations realised the need of cooperate in a group of more than two parties involved, multiparty alliance was formed. Three or more parties included in the multiparty alliance bound to each other through network of ties (Suen 2005) with or without the central organisation. The central organisation plays a big role like an intermediary to connect all other parties in the network and ensure the proper applications of cooperative activities.

An analysis of Holmen et al. (2006) revealed how a relationship begins in business environment. There are 2 dimensions regarding the beginning of a business relationship. The first dimension is active or reactive dimension. This dimension reflects whether the company initiates interactions (Holmen et al. 2006). It is also like personal relationship in terms of whether a person prefers to make friends or wait for others to make the move. In fact, relationship is not always come by planned but sometimes it just happens by chance. That's why people who are networking need to be ready to network all the time. The second dimension is direct or indirect networking. Indirect networking involves a third party – an intermediate - bringing individuals together whilst direct entails individuals making contact with each other (Leek & Canning 2011). Direct networking means that two parties somehow contact each other, for example, through cold calling, in trade shows, industry events or it may occur outside of a business setting.

Taking a closer look into the effect of networking on the parties, the firms in the network become interdependent on the others, and each brings resources and shares risks and benefits (Suen 2005). In reality, hardly ever a party has total control over the activities; though power in network is not always equal. In fact, power perceived in

network by each party or the extent of dependence can be also a category to differentiate the type of network. According to Ritter et al. (2004), different network situations with respect to how dependent a party perceive in a network are: following partnership when it perceive great dependence on the other(s), mutual relationship when power is perceived equally, and leadership relationship when a party perceive power over the other(s). These interdependencies are also both positive and negative depending on the parties' attitude towards power differences. The positive and negative dependencies exist in all relationships with cooperative, competitive and conflictual elements included (Ritter et al. 2004). Furthermore, interdependencies in network often show in legal bonds, social relations, knowledge, technology, finance, administrative routines and systems.

There are some characteristics of an organisation's networks, for example, size, depth, breadth and structural holes. Size are the number of contacts possessed by the organisation. However, these contacts should be reachable and able to promote a desired outcome, for example a cooperative activity. Breadth is the range of the network contacts. Depth is the type of network contact and it is a concept referring to the level of commitment the organisation feel toward a specific contact. A structural hole is the position of the organisation in the network.

4.1.2 Relationship development process

The process of relationship development are composed of five stages, which are awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment and dissolution (Dwyner, Schurr & Oh 1987).

Awareness → Exploration → Expansion → Commitment → Dissolution

Figure 2. 5 stages of relationship development (Dwyner, Schurr & Oh 1987).

The first phase of the process is awareness. It is the time when one organisation recognize a potential partner. Interaction between parties has not ensued during the first phase. In this phase, no interaction happens between two parties but there may be

some actions to improve the attractiveness to that potential partner or in general (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987).

Exploration is the second phase after the awareness. It begins when the first bilateral interaction is done. It is the phase of the search and trial, testing and evaluation in the relationship. The first discussions about each party's own objectives, obligations as well as the possibility of the relationship. This phase theoretically follows five steps (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987).

EXPLORATION

Attraction   *Communication and bargaining*   *Development and exercise of power*   *Norm development*   *Expectation development*

Figure 3: Sub-stages of exploration phase

The first sub-stage in exploration phase is attraction. Unlike the awareness phase when party improves its own attractiveness; in attraction stage, it will   boast its attractiveness to the others. Like marketing activities which are the effort persuading customers to buy the products, the party is literally making an attempt on persuading the other parties of the advantageous cooperation. In order to attract the attention, rewards play an important role in the formation of the attraction (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987). Those rewards could be the benefits that the party could give or the attractive characteristics of the party (Lott & Lott 1974). Psychological study confirmed that we showed more favourable attitudes toward people whom we are or could be rewarded by (Finkel & Eastwick 2012). There is also a variety of rewards conducing to attraction, for example, the benefits the other could be provided instantly, the strengths of the party assuring the success of cooperation (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987) or the goals probably achieved from successful partnering. Studying the other parties' beliefs, values, corporate personalities, desired benefits and burdens is necessary to successfully attract them.

Following the attraction is communication and bargaining. As its name, this stage includes the task of communicating and bargaining. The parties then begin to discuss and negotiate the distributions of resources, obligations, benefits and problems (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987).

Occasionally, revealing the information about themselves, their needs, resources and others in the discussion express their sincere attitude toward the cooperation. If all parties are willing to participate in the communication and bargaining, it is a sign that they have realized possible values of the further relationship which overpass the time, energy, investment and risks on the negotiation. Notwithstanding, it is also one of the most challenging tasks in the networking process as information disclosure needs certain degree of trust. Risks are discerned in this stage by the parties, for example hesitance in sharing true information and the belief in the reliability of the given information (Kwon & Suh 2004). Consequently, parties hesitate to join the discussion or to be opened out to the others fully. In conclusion, negotiation skill is extremely vital in this phase. The more the standards of fairness, efficiency a party bring to the negotiation, the more likely the fair and desired outcome is produced (Fisher & Ury 1991).

As discussed above, distribution of power plays a big role in networking and also its process. Power in some aspects determines how the whole process of network development happens. Power is perceived upon various factors, for example, parties' authories, control, positions or roles. In negotiation, power is defined as the ability of leaving the negotiation. The more easily and happily a party can go away from the negotiation, the more power it has in the bargaining, the greater its capacity to influence the final outcome (Fisher & Ury 1991). If all parties believe their power over the others', reaching the agreement will be difficult, if not impossible. If all parties acknowledge that a party is the more powerful one among them, the other(s) will become follower and adapt to the wishes of the more powerful party and that powerful party become the leader in the relationship. If no party is clearly more powerful, the relationship will become mutually dependent. However, they are just ideal situation since in reality, it differs across situations and over time (Ritter et al. 2004). In actual fact, exploration phase is usually when the parties explore and

exercise the power, for example, attempting to dominate and coercing the others (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987).

Norm development is the stage when norms and standards of conducts are established serving as guidelines of expected patterns of behaviours for the potential exchange partners. The ground rules for the future collaboration are then set based on these norms and standards (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987).

Furthermore, dispute of interests and the prospects for unity and trouble in future cooperation form and develop the expectations of parties in expectations development stage. The relational unity of future relationship is able to be increased and diminished by these expectations. Trust plays an important role in developing the expectations (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987). The more trustworthy the party is, the higher expectations of future relationship are and the higher the risks of the coordinate behaviours are due to the fact that coordinate behaviours infer from two constructs: desired goal and trust (Pruitt 1981).

The next phase following exploration is expansion which is a result of the fact that all parties satisfied with the performance and rewards of the cooperation. Once the cooperation is considered to be temporarily successful; not only do benefits obtained in the cooperation multiply constantly, but also the trust and joint satisfactions which were established in the former stage upgrade in the relationship. Moreover, the attractiveness of the other party and the network is enhanced and thus the willingness to maintain the relationship is intensified. As a consequence, the level of mutual interdependencies become greater and the relationship becomes more sustainable (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987).

After the expansion, commitment is the next phase in the network development process. Commitment is the extent to which a party are willing and motivated to maintain relationship with a specific party. Each party's perceived commitment waxes or wanes with different situations over time (Dickey, McKnight & George 2008). Many researches stated that trust and mutual commitment have strong influences on each other, in fact, trust is the critical factor stimulating commitment of one organisation to another (e.g., Flaherty & Papas 2000; Kwon & Suh 2004; Doney &

Canon 1997; Morgan & Hunt 2004) and commitment is also a key driver of trust in all types of relationships (e.g., Axelrod 1984; Dickey, McKnight & George 2007). Commitment phase is the most advanced phase of partners' dependencies when the loyalty is achieved, the partner is committed to the relationship because of its willingness instead of contractual obligations. There are three criteria to measure the degree of the commitment: inputs, durability and consistency (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987). Inputs are the resources the parties provide to the relationship. Durability is the duration of the cooperation and consistency of the resources provided is the third criterion.

Finally, dissolution phase happens when the relationship breaks up or the party withdraws from the network. It begins when at least one party privately evaluate the efficiency of the partnership. The belief that the costs and risks of continuity overweigh the rewards leads to the end of the partnership (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987). To avoid the other's termination which can lead to their loss, firms implement exit barriers in the developing relationship process. The barriers are used to make the withdrawal less attractive. For example, raising the amount of resources to ensuring the possibility of success, focusing on informal relationship between partners, withdrawal punishment and so on.

4.1.3 Trust and mutual understanding in networking

The importance of trust and mutual understanding is unquestionable. Without one or two components, the relationship will end in failure beyond any doubt.

Regarding to trust, it is unquestionably important in human relationship as well as business relationship. Many researches agreed upon the definition that trust is the perceived credibility and benevolence that one individual or group or organisation have towards another (e.g., Doney & Cannon 1997, Ganesan 1994, and Kumar, Scheer & Steenkamp 1995). Credibility means how one can rely on the other and benevolence is the extent to which partner's welfare is genuinely interested by the other partner and how motivated the partner is to seek mutual gain (Doney & Cannon 1997). In other word, the party believes that the other has intentions and motives to act advantageously and beneficially for the relationship when new conditions arise even if

the conditions are not stated in the contract (Ganesan 1994). In networking, trust is the factor to decide whether the relationship should be ongoing and it is indispensable because cooperative activities, for instant sharing knowledge and expertise or bearing risk jointly, are impossible to happen without certain extent of trust. Although trust is entirely intangible, scientists believed that in different situations there are varied types of trust and they tried to categorise trust regarding to business networks. According to Perry (1999, p. 12-13), those are:

- *Competence trust* is the confidence that another partner have the capability and skills claimed to perform the obligations proficiently.
- *Contractual trust* is the belief derives from specific agreements in business. The other partner is supposed to adhere to the agreement. It is usually represented in the terms of contract or other oral or written forms.
- *Good will trust* refers to the thoughts that the other will always be willing to perform more and better than the agreement. It is because of the opinion that negotiating explicit commitments is less important than maintaining ongoing relationship in which all parties voluntarily endeavour to achieve mutual benefits.

Since trust is a base element for any relationship to be developed and maintained, studying how trust is built is fundamental to know how to enhance other's trust on oneself. There are numbers of ways that trust can arise from: trust based on the reputation that is somehow verified; trust can appear spontaneously or trust is developed from repeated interactions from time to time. The two first scenarios take far less time than the third one but those are more likely to be false. In the third scenario, trust in the beginning phase of the relationship is naturally rather low and thus time and energy spent on dealing with low-trust relationship are higher (Kwon & Suh 2004) and relationship in the third scenario is often less desired. In conclusion, high-trust relationships make all parties more confident in sharing information and perform agreed obligations and hence overall performance is enhanced.

4.2 Advantages and disadvantages

Generally, networking holds both advantages and disadvantages. In most cases, it serves as a useful and effective way in developing business, pooling resources and improving the firm's operation. On the other hand, business involved in networking

should expect certain risks which may arise in networking. These risks should be minded and evaluated carefully.

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of business network.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- New knowledge, expertise and resources. - Ability to handle changes in the environment. - More cost and time effectively. - Higher success possibilities. - Motive to restructure and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the business. - Advice and help from partner. - Extending network. - More business opportunities. - Popularity	- Risks in terms of the honesty and capability of the partner. - Dependencies prevent decision-making and action-taking from quickly happening. - Possible inequalities in power, contributions and profits. - Conflicts of interests, objectives; possible personal manager conflicts. - Loss & responsibilities because of the other's failure, damaging popularity.

The common reasons why firms and organisations start to network and attach special importance to network are often whether penetrating to foreign market or/and longing for strong position in the markets. Accordingly, building sustainable and beneficial networks assist them in some aspects. It certainly helps to improve the resources use and risks spreading of the business; enhance the flexibility and adaptability when penetrating to a new market; enables business to access important information about the market and competition in the new country and necessary skills; opens up more opportunities for business and masters new technologies and expertise (Perry 1999, Đorđevíc 2009).

Referring to the positive side of networking, business networks are believed to be valuable assets that assist the business's growth and survival by speeding the acquisition of important knowledge and resources. Networking enables the firm to

maintain competitive advantages by obtaining essential knowledge and skills. Networking, moreover, is especially useful for small firms, like Wellspring Saigon, as small firms usually does not have sufficient effective resources and knowledge to handle rapid change of the environment, especially in highly competitive market. In addition, networking enables those resources and knowledge to be accessed more cost and time effectively (Schoonjans, Van Cauwenberge & Vander Bauwhede 2011). Through networking, parties in the network can combine resources, experience and expertise. Collaborative activities that are planned well and supported by rich resources and expertise are unquestionably more likely to be successful than normal business activities.

Occasionally, networking is a motive for business to restructure their modus operandi, for example the decision making process or financial capability, in order to reconcile with cooperation procedures or meet the requirement of the partner. These changes may afterwards improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the business. Sometimes, partner receives advices from the others together with expertise and help, which motivate the partner and leverage the trust and commitment level of the relationship.

Networking bring unaccountable advantages to the firm in terms of opportunity and popularity. By networking, firm can extend its network through the network resource of its partner. It can seek new relationships with suppliers, buyers and strategic partners. These new relationships could be instrumental in the business development. Consequently, the firm can enhance its popularity in the market and acquire new customers.

On the negative sides, there are several disadvantages of partnering that business should be aware of. Some of these disadvantages are difficult to avoid although they may all be conscious of and some are threats that can occur during the cooperation. Partnership holds certain extent of risk since the firm has to rely on the partner in some areas, for example, expertise, capabilities, resources, decision making and implementation process. The ability to make decision on the activities is no longer on its own. The partnership, therefore, is later in reaction to the change of the environment. Instead of the process of realising the change, making decision and implementing changes into its operation, the process now takes much longer to

discuss, negotiate and sometimes quarrel to reach the final decision. In this process, there is certain amount of dead time for waiting the response or matching the schedules. It could be even worse if power is unequal in the relationship and the firm perceives more dependent on the partner, its opinions may be taken less seriously.

There are many reasons why risks may occur in the relationships, including incompatible goals and yardsticks between partners, different priorities over time, value creation potential or organisational, cognitive and cultural differences (Doz & Hamel 1998). Although the commitment between parties in the relationship is often set clear to all the parties, their objectives and modus operandi are indisputably different and it may lead to differences in party's priorities in the relationship after time. Therefore, agreement on the way of running partnership and mutual benefits may then be impossible to achieve (Doz & Hamel 1998). In addition, organisational and cultural differences can notably make the parties' effort of communicating and understanding each other difficult. These differences are likely to be the cause of misunderstanding and interruption in the partnership.

Beside the conflict of parties' interests, objectives, methods and other; personal disputes can also be a trouble, especially when the individuals are important in each party. For example, the alliance between Disney and Pixar disintegrated because of the arguments between high-level executives (Đorđevíc 2009). In addition, benefits and profits after the cooperation are difficult to be equally divided as it is complicated to measure the contribution regarding to time, human resources and opportunity costs. These inequalities may lead to clashes in the relationship.

In case of a party's failure or underperformance, the partner is probably responsible for the consequences of those incidents. In some cases, the partner will not only lose their investments but also suffer the financial liabilities for example, supplier payables or customer compensation. On top of that, it can damage the reputation of the partner at unpredictable level.

In conclusion, for the purpose of diminishing the disadvantages and maximising the advantages of the networking, firm should carefully prepare and plan for all possibilities and make all necessary arrangements. However, the firm will be then put

into a dilemma since the more detailed the arrangements are, the lower the risks they take, but the lower the trust exists in the relationship. It is a tough decision that business should make before engaging in the relationship. This decision is also influenced by cultural dimensions, for example long-term or short-term orientation, and risk taking (uncertainty avoidance).

4.3 Networking for school

Similar to business networking, education networking or school partnering varies across many forms and levels of cooperation. Relationships between those organisations may be differentiated by complexity, maturity, types of organisations and many other factors. In an attempt to connect students around the world and enhance children education opportunities, their cultural awareness and global insights, many education organisations and schools of different forms and at different levels across the world are involving in international school partnerships. There are too many forms and ways of cooperative activities to list. For example, these partnerships can be very short-term and project-based, while they can be long-term and ongoing relationships (Alberta Education, 2008). They can be school-community (or social organisations) in which students can have a chance to acknowledge the realities of the societies they are belonging to or other societies in different part of the world and engage in the development of that society. They can also be school-business or university-business in which students not only practice employment skills but also seek new options for their careers. Through these partnerships, students can be provided with real experience at work field and thus recognize the real-life occupation requirements. Moreover, the need of education reform to close the achievement gap between high school graduates and higher education requirements has created a form of partnership between school and university (Catelli 2006). Additionally, the need of cultural exchange and international competences stimulate the cooperation across borders in education organisations. In general, the goals of school partnership are innumerable. They can be broadening the students' knowledge of many different aspects of real life, enriching education experience, promoting learning opportunities and enhancing students' wellbeing and academic performance, raising aspirations and leveraging the spirit of discovering and level of engaging in the communities, countries and global development as well as many other aims.

Cooperative activities in education partnership can be very various based on different goals of partnership, level of complexity and mutual commitment between parties involved. The focus of the partnership can be the education programs, cultural exchange and awareness, global issues, the education management, the teaching methods, the teachers' quality or students' achievement. The actors in international school partnerships can be students, teachers, administrators, parents and even the communities and all of those involved can get benefits from these partnership (Alberta Education 2008).

4.4 Challenges with international networking

Networking for organisations are unquestionably challenging and difficult, however, international networking is even more complicated and thorny because of the issue of "international". There are many problems that organisations could face when partners are from different countries with different cultures, languages and ways of doing business. Some of the difficulties in international networking arise from the cross-border issues and international communication.

Cross-border issues consist of the factors in the external environment of the network's participants or among them that influence the activities of network. These factors can be long-distance between parties, political, economic, social, cultural, technological, legal or environmental. In reality, these factors have big impact on how the parties decide upon the cooperation. Political factors within the country or across nations may affect the flow of progress of networking among parties. For example, parties from countries of regional cooperation, for example European Union, are easier to collaborate with each other than with party from outside the regional cooperation. Level of economic and technological development in the country can also influence the practices of networking, in some cases it determines the power level within the relationship. The social context in which a company operates significantly affects its behaviours and performance (Schoonjans, Van Cauwenberge & Vander Bauwhede 2011), including the networking approach and decision. The society could also contains the resources and capabilities which are the key success for the company. In addition, legal system of the countries can foster or depress the networking process between parties. Even if the external environment factors are fortunately similar, there

is still a problem of long-distance between parties. It may affect some facets of networking activities, for instance, meeting scheduling and especially instant decision-making.

Language barrier is a huge issue in networking as it is impossible for organisations to collaborate without proper and effective communication. The problem of communication is not only seeking the common language but also understanding cultural factors hidden in their talking way. As a lingua franca of the world, English language is usually the first choice when coming to international communication. However, it is not the only choice if the parties can understand each other through one of their languages or a third one. Parties involved can also employ an interpreter who is fluent in both languages. Nevertheless, sometimes the ability of speaking the language does not mean that there is ability to understand the subtleties of language and acknowledge the cultures, leading to the fact that both parties are unable to converse effectively. Cultural misunderstandings arising from miscommunication is therefore one of the biggest challenge in international networking. It is advisable that before conducting networking, organisations should be clear in the communication strategy that can diminish the potential problems of misunderstandings. Moreover, it is also recommended to learn from the culture sophistication with which the organisation is dealing with.

5 METHODOLOGY

This chapter is going to describe the research methods of the study in this thesis beside the use of secondary data. The research methods were first introduced and supported by the justification of selection. Secondly, the process of the data collection and data analysis were described and then, the problems of the study's reliability, validity and limitation were discussed in the third part. Last but not least, the outcomes of the study were presented.

5.1 Research methods

Due to the reason that research methodologies plays an important role in the outcomes of the research, research objectives and research questions are the main elements to consider the pertinent methods for this thesis. There is a wide variety of research

methodologies that in order to decide on the right one, most of them, if not all, should be put into consideration and gradually excluded. Quantitative research is supposed to work with a large number of respondents and emphasize the measurement of the variables and generalization of the outcomes. Whereas, a smaller number of cases are used in qualitative research and those data are analysed with the nature of reality and the situational constraints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Quantitative research essays an explanatory results and causal relationships while qualitative research aims at in-depth meanings, characteristics and description of the phenomenon (Anderson, 2006). In fact, qualitative research is applied to deal with phenomenon that are difficult or impossible to quantify numerically and, conversely, quantitative research investigate the phenomenon via mathematical, statistical techniques. The objectives of this study is to describe the networking and to provide an in-depth understanding of networking for school based on which a networking proposal is created for Wellspring Saigon managers to make right decisions, therefore, the qualitative research methods were adopted in this study. Detailed information and knowledge supported by societal, organisational and processual descriptions and analyses are in need to create a guidance for the commissioner's preparation, implementation and evaluation. As a qualitative research, this thesis created descriptions of context of networking in Kyamk and Wellspring Hanoi and collected helpful experience and expertise for Wellspring Saigon.

The purpose of this thesis is combining the exploration of networking and description of networking practices in the two cases, clarifying the differences between cases and, finally, concluding what can be drawn from the two cases that are important for Wellspring Saigon. Because of the unfamiliarity of both researcher and the commissioner, a comprehensive exploration of the networking theories and practices are more highlighted in this particular thesis. Moreover, the researcher in this thesis aims to create an applied research which can contribute towards current issues of decision making and suggest immediate practical applications for Wellspring Saigon.

5.2 Data collection

Qualitative data collection in this thesis included participant observation and in depth interview. Participant observation is a qualitative method assisting the researcher to

learn the perspectives held by study population (Mack, et al., 2011). The participant observation are almost always in use with other qualitative method, and in this study, it is used with in-depth interview. Data acquired by observing improved the design of interview questions and ensured the cultural relevance (Mack, et al., 2011) as the interviewees are from different cultures. In this thesis, participation observation serves as data to understand the cultural context and organisational characteristics and situations.

Participant observation (fieldwork) differs from non-participant observation in terms that the observer and also the researcher participated to some extent in these activities rather than watching as an outsider. Previous to this thesis, the researcher had an internship in Wellspring Saigon as part of the marketing team. During this time, the researcher had a chance to participate and attempt to observe networking activities from the inside of the organisation. These activities are seeking domestic marketing partners as well as potential international partners. This fieldwork in the organisation enabled the researcher to understand the interaction and the meaning of networking in their cultures by observing and talking to them.

There are nine dimensions of participant observation serving as guides for the research and help the observer to take comprehensive notes (Myers 2013). Those nine dimensions are: Place, Actor, Activity, Object, Act, Event, Time, Goal and Feeling. They are sometimes closely linked and thus difficult to distinguish. For instant, object might be a performance of an act or sets of activities are combined into an event or acts are occurred to accomplish the goal. Concerning these factors of participant observation in this thesis, the first thing to be mentioned is that the fieldwork happened in the very first stage of Wellspring Saigon when it started its operation and started to plan for international networking. The fieldwork happened inside the office where activities like seeking out the potential partners, planning and contacting happened. Actors in this situation involved Wellspring's marketing department staff, curriculum coordinator and manager. Activities were mainly took place via Internet, namely emailing to potential contacts and searching information. The fieldwork ended after 3 months of internship and at that time, no particular result of international networking activities, for instance Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or partnership contract, was achieved except from making some potential partners

acknowledge Wellspring Saigon. Although the fieldwork period was quite short, in comparison with ideally between four and eight months (Myers 2013), the observer managed to study the operations and internal organisation factors as well as participate in informal discussions about the activities. Information gathered from the fieldwork was put into field notes of the researcher. It is important to mention that there were changes in Wellspring Saigon's human resources subsequent to the fieldwork which included the change in networking personnel. Therefore, information following the fieldwork was gathered through online interview with the new "networker".

Interview is one of the most important information gathering techniques in qualitative researches and it plays a big roles in this thesis. There are three basic types of interviews which are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The major advantage of semi-structured interview is that it takes the best of both structured and unstructured interview, this approach was applied in the research. Semi-structured interview occurred with the use of pre-formulated questions. These questions serve as a script to guide the conversation and were sent to the interviewees before the conversation in order for the interviewees to prepare information and avoid the lack of significant information because of improvising. The researcher did not set a limit to the duration of the interview so that the researcher was not in hurry when carrying out the conversation which might lead to the lack of information. The interview normally ended when the researcher found the information collected was sufficient and in case of in need of information, follow-up interview was then happened. Semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer not to strictly adhere to the questions and enabled to elaborate on an interesting topic arising during the course of the conversation. The aim of the interviews is to acquire empirical data in school networking through interviews with three interviewees.

The interviewees are the ones who are professionals or current employees in international networking of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences – International Business department, Wellspring Hanoi and Wellspring Saigon. Those interviews were all carefully recorded and transcribed. The representative of Kyamk is Ms. Minna Söderqvist - Principal Teacher (IB), Team Leader (BBA/IB, MBA/IBM); the representative of Wellspring Hanoi is Ms. Bao Ngoc – Higher education and Study-abroad consultant and the representative of Wellspring Saigon is Ms. Huong Le

– Senior Admissions Executives. Interviews were taken in English when interviewee is from Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and in Vietnamese when interviewees are from Wellspring schools. Before the interview happened, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the interview and the information expected to be achieved. Moreover, the interviewees' personal backgrounds and experiences were asked and acknowledged so that the researcher understood their points of view. During the interview, the researcher showed an attentive and respect attitude toward the interviewees as it is important to set appropriate and productive atmosphere for the interview. The interviewer was reasonably open and flexible to welcome new perspectives arisen.

Indeed, interviews happened in face-to-face situation and via online meeting (Skype). Due to geographic dispersion between Vietnam and Finland which is difficult to access to interviewees in Vietnam, online interviews were found to facilitate the participation and used to bring participants from other parts of the world. Before conducting the online meeting through Skype, the interviewer made sure that interviewees were familiar and willing to adopt this kind of communication technology. Skype interviews conducted in this thesis were one-on-one synchronous (real time) interview so they were quite similar to in-person interview (Willig & Stainton-Rogers 2008). In both interview cases, ethical issues are treated equally. The researcher obtained consents from all participants and they were fully aware of the audio recordings. In-person recording was done via a separate recorder and Skype interviews were recorded by computer-based software and then all records were transcribed. Recording happens throughout the interviews, meaning that no single statement was left out. Moreover, concerning to the issue of moving from one language of data collecting to another language of presenting the findings, the effect of the issue on this thesis was minimal because of the researcher's native knowledge of language and culture of Vietnamese people. Moreover, conversation in Vietnamese made interviewees fell more comfortable and easier to express their opinions and, consequently, they were more open to disclose information.

5.3 Data analysis

Even though interview transcripts, field notes and observation provide a descriptive perspective for the study, explanations cannot be naturally understood from them. It is the researcher that found the meaning and coherence in the data collected by exploring and interpreting them. Quantitative and qualitative research are not similar in the approach to data analysis. Data analysis in quantitative research normally deals with all or much of the data after they have been collected whereas data analysis could happen simultaneously with the first data collected (Burnard, et al. 2008). There are two fundamental approaches to analysing qualitative data: deductive and inductive approach. Deductive approach is a top-down approach starting with a theory. A hypothesis is derived from the theory and applied to researcher's observations. After that, the researcher will then confirm or reject it, thereby strengthening or weakening the theory (Ritchie, et al. 2014). Inductive analysis, conversely, builds knowledge from the bottom-up through observations and with little or no predetermined theory. The theory will be then derived from the data collected. However, a research is unlikely to be pure inductive or deductive; actually, qualitative analysis varied from the degree of inductive approach involvement.

When analysing data for this thesis, the researcher tended to apply a more deductive application. The objects of the qualitative analysis in this thesis are recorded interviews, field notes from participant observation, documents. The process of data analysis originated from the research object, then theoretical based definitions which enabled the researcher to classified main categories and sub categories of the analysis were studied. After that, the coding rules for the categories were developed and coding data happened, followed by the interpretation of the results. The researcher discovered themes in the interview transcripts and verified, confirmed by searching through data. When transcribing interviews, the researcher decided to scan through the whole interview and lately focus on the main questions and summarize main opinions of the interviews. Opinions were then categorised into themes and those themes were the units of analysis instead of the physical linguistics (analysis of themes). The researcher primarily looked for the expression of an idea when using theme as the analysis units. Categorises of this thesis were decided based on literature review of the networking and researcher's own scheme of the international networking proposal for Wellspring Saigon. Coding schemes in this thesis were therefore developed deductively. When presenting the research outcomes, the researcher strived for a

fundamental interpretation which represents personal and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, while still provided the readers sufficient description to understand the basis for interpretation.

Data analysis of this thesis was followed the three flows of activity represented by Miles and Huberman 1984 (cited in Silverman 2005), which are data deduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Firstly, data deduction meant that the researcher had to select, focus and simplifying the raw data (Silverman 2005). Then, the researcher organized the data in a logical way in order to enable the conclusions to be drawn. This action is so called data displayed. Finally, the propositions and the explanations were concluded in the conclusion drawing phase (Silverman 2005).

The two schools in this thesis – Kyamk and Wellspring Hanoi - were studied by comparing the performance levels of these two organisations. The practices which lead to these levels of performance were identified and supported by social and organisational context. The two schools were useful in providing empirical evidence of real organisations and contributing some aspects for the researcher to build up a customized proposal for Wellspring Saigon.

5.4 Reliability, Validity and Limitation of the study

Validity and reliability are two paradigms of qualitative research. Validity reflects qualitative conceptions while reliability tests the quality of research. In other word, reliability measures how dependable the research is and the validity measures how truthful and accurate the research is (Hesse-Biber and Nagy 2010). The main purpose of reliability is to examine both the process and product of the research for consistency, and validity is to ensure confidence in the findings of the research. Concerning the validity and reliability issues of a research, Hesse-Biber and Nagy (2010) mentioned that the validity and reliability can be checked by asking and answering those questions: "Do the instruments measure the phenomenon that they are supposed to?" and "Will the result remain the same in the future when we take the same method and actions?" In simpler words, the questions of validity are "how well do the researchers answer their research questions" and "is there a rationale why they choose a particular mixed method design over others." Communicative validity refers the translation of the findings in the research.

What to say about the validity and reliability of this thesis is that researcher attempted to use reliable sources and carefully prepare the interviews to ensure the reliability of the thesis. The sources used in the theoretical part are books and academic journals which are highly recommended and cited by other experts in the field. Selected respondents are employees and professionals who are currently working in the networking activities and expert at the field so their responses in the interview is worth using and trustworthy. Concerning the validity of this thesis, in the end, the thesis provides a thorough perspective of networking for Wellspring Saigon which is very useful for them to prepare and plan their networking strategy in the near future. The researcher assured that all viewpoints were stated and shared and if there were some contrasting or differences, they were explained clearly in the research and should not be neglected.

Limitation of the research is the limited number of unit of analysis as well as applicability of the information collected. It is understandable as networking is considered as business resources creating competitive advantage for business, especially in such competitive market like Ho Chi Minh City international schools industry. Neither of the units of analysis enables to draw perfect solution for Wellspring Saigon. Wellspring Hanoi with three-year-experience of operation has just started networking for not a long time. Although it is a success to approach a great number of contacts, cooperative activities are still very limited and thus overall perspective of networking practices are unable to concluded. Whereas, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences has a long history of networking with a large number of partners and rich experience in practicing networking. However, Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences does not have similar social context and operation field with Wellspring Saigon. The researcher's reasons when choosing these two cases are not only because of the availability of the information but also aiming to make the two cases complement mutually to provide a comprehensive cover of networking practices.

6 RESEARCH OUTCOMES

In order to answer the research questions, all data collected are analysed and contrasted so that the best answers can be drawn. Firstly, secondary data and literature review provide the ground for the research and assist in explaining practices. Data

collected from the interviews of the employees handling with networking activities of schools provides the real life practices of networking.

6.1 Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences – International Business department

Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences (Kyamk) is located in Kymenlaakso region, Finland. The International Business department of the school is currently active at international networking with many different universities and universities of applied Sciences in Europe and China. Kyamk has a large number of partners in their profiles and there are a lot of cooperative activities run smoothly without trouble. Currently there are approximately 120 international partners, of which 50 institutions are partnering with International Business department. The relationships are the results of the effort of Erasmus program to promote teachers and students' mobility and quality of European Union.

Number of different coordinate activities happened based on these partnership, including teachers and students exchange program, international workshop, and others.

6.2 Wellspring Hanoi

As introduced earlier, Wellspring Hanoi is the very first school of Wellspring school system by SSG Group started in July, 2011. Three years of experience in the field of education is also three years Wellspring Hanoi spent on finding the right directions for networking and partnership with the aim to meet the objectives of the extra-curricular activities and cultural exchanges program. At the outset of the establishment, school managers highlighted Wellspring Playtime and Extra-curriculum Program. Objectives of the program is to provide all students opportunities to engage in diverse extracurricular activities enabling them to expose to real life and practice the application of knowledge, to acknowledge different cultures around the world and adapt to foreign environment, to practice language skills, especially English language.

At first, the school approached to education organisations which could verify the quality and recognition of the education program. These organisations are namely Cambridge International Examination (United Kingdom) in 2012, Education Records

Bureau (New York, USA) in 2012, NCC Education (United Kingdom) in 2012, and American College Testing (ACT) in 2013. In fact, by verifying the education program of Wellspring Hanoi, these organisations confirm that Wellspring Hanoi is able to conduct the teaching programs, courses and tests provided by them and assist Wellspring Hanoi in terms of teacher capabilities and effective teaching methods. These networks are of use to leveraging the recognition of Wellspring Hanoi high-quality education program. Parents look at them as a guarantee to believe that their children are studying under a school verified by well-known international education organisations. Networking with these organisations requires active communication, professional attitude, excellent language skills and high awareness of their core values. The interviewee from Wellspring Hanoi revealed that managing these networks were routinized by the other organisations to ensure the consistency of their activities. It means that the whole process of networking and verification are stated clearly in the clauses between two parties. Cooperative activities are mainly the information sharing, teacher training and examining the implementations of the programs, courses and tests licensed.

In 2012, Wellspring Hanoi started to partner with other schools around the world, mainly in Singapore and United Kingdom. The partnerships in Singapore were very short-term oriented and project-based, whereas, others in United Kingdom were aimed at long-term strategic partners. The two partners in Singapore were Dimensions International College and Informatics Academy. Wellspring Hanoi cooperated with the two to organise Creative Summer Camp for 2 weeks in Singapore for their students. The collaboration's purposes were to organize language classes and playful activities for students participating in the summer camp. Although the main project for students was only 2 week last, Wellspring Hanoi put much effort in planning, seeking partners and cooperating with the partners. Before the camp, teachers and staff were allocated to visit and work with the two partners. They came to check the facilities and programs and discuss the activities for students. Too much energy and time in return for low profits is the reason why in the next years, the summer camp and winter camp were organized by a third party. Also in 2012, after working with the consulting firm Super Learner Education Consultancy in UK, Wellspring Hanoi established two new partners with Invicta Grammar School and Gateway Primary School in United Kingdom. The initial idea of the partnership was coordination of training and sharing

of expertise in education, training and school management. Cooperative activities included exchange for teachers and students in academic programs and summer camp. It was planned that the British schools would provide training programs for Wellspring Hanoi teachers and the two schools would exchange students for attendance at summer camps that would help facilitate mutual cultural exchanges, and the fostering of life skills.

6.3 Analysis of empirical data

The research outcomes are presented below in connection with the topic of the interviews. Both the similarities and the differences between two units of analysis identified as a result of the collected data analysis are stated and explained based on the grounded theory.

Table 2: Comparing networking practices in two schools

Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences	Wellspring International Bilingual School Hanoi
- High experience in networking - Lack of similar social context - Many active cooperative activities - Direct contacts - Frequent communication and meetings	- Low experience - Similar social context - Limited cooperative activities except domestic partners - Direct contacts and through third party - Nearly no communication with international partners, more frequent with domestic partners

1. Criteria to become a partner

Both schools found it important to outline clear criteria before engaging in networking. Both representatives agreed on the two most important factors when selecting partners: location and operation model.

- Location: based on the organisation's needs and preference, certain locations in which partners located can be more favourable.

- Operation model: there are many different kinds of education organisations, for example: university, university of applied sciences, high-schools, for-profit and non-profit organisations, consulting companies and many others. Different operation models of the partner will guide the networking practices and activities.

2. Objectives of networking

Based on different kind of partners with different operations, objectives and expected benefits from the partnership, the final goal for cooperative activities is accordingly varied.

3. Network building

Different approaches to potential partners are mentioned by the two interviewees and some approaches are in common. The common approach that both schools recognised is the personal profession networks of the staffs, managers or teachers of the schools. Moreover, direct contacting is still a proactive way to attract potential partners as long as we prepared well for the partnership in terms of acknowledging the partners operations, values and visions.

Kyamk representative mentioned the meetings between universities and universities of applied sciences organised by Erasmus program was a good place for them to seek partners because many universities with the same objective attending those events.

Wellspring Hanoi representative mentioned that a consulting company assists in finding partners, meaning that there is an intermediary among the partners.

4. Network management

With rich experience in networking and capable staff, Kyamk manage the partnership in an effective way. Only partners with many cooperative activities are kept as the amount of partners may be so large that it will be a waste of energy and resources to maintain all those partners. The level of trust and commitment in the relationships are also very high and problems raising during cooperation are very limited. Frequent meetings and visits are hold by all parties and the information sharing is sustained.

On the other hand, Wellspring Hanoi is troubling with managing relationships effectively. Partnership with domestic partners are developed due to the frequent business exchange while relationship with foreign partners are partly struggling. Some of them are in "hibernation", in other words, no activities nor communication are maintained. Those partners that they obtained through the third party are very limited in terms of activities because all activities between the school and partners have to go through the third party. Those activities, nevertheless, are well-organized and the third party has experience in school's networking so it is still valuable to keep a third party.

5. Main challenges

The main problem that both schools representatives agreed on is unresponsive partner. It cause certain issues when communication cannot be happened. However, developing reference list of which new potential partner can easily found is the solution.

Since most of partners located in Europe, the problem of cultural differences is much less severe to Kyamk than to Wellspring Hanoi. Wellspring Hanoi interviewee found it extremely difficult to keep contact and work with partners in United Kingdom and United States because of time-zone differences and task scheduling. It slows down the process of networking and takes longer time for negotiation and discussion.

6. Communication

Both two parties found email is the most effective way of communicating to inform information and online meeting channels (like Adobe meeting and Skype) are useful to discuss more serious problems. However, face to face meetings are still very important and those take place every time it is possible.

7 NETWORKING PROPOSAL FOR WELLSPRING SAIGON

In this proposal making for network policies and practices at Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon, the main question of this thesis - how can Wellspring Saigon engage in international networking – is answered, and thereby this chapter focuses on

the foundation for planning, implementing and developing strong and sustained networks.

7.1 Recognising networking needs and goals

In an effort to become the top school in Ho Chi Minh City, Wellspring Saigon set ambitious goals for the upcoming networking of the schools. To acquire these objectives, Wellspring Saigon should establish and develop a wide range of relationships with different organisations in different countries and of different forms of collaboration.

For Wellspring students, the partnerships are expected to benefit their global insights and international competencies with up-to-date knowledge, adaptability to unfamiliar cultures and environment, empathy to regional, national, and global problems, diverse extra-curriculum activities, preparation for future career when they get opportunities to live and study abroad.

For teachers of Wellspring Saigon School, the collaboration aims at enhancing the teaching method and ability, English skills and communication skills; providing opportunities to experience different working conditions and cultures. After attending cooperative activities, teachers are expected to capable in performing great skills of teaching and inspring students to discover and learn different parts of the world.

For the curriculum and education program at Wellspring Saigon, networking promises the diversity of cultural, international knowledge and activities besides traditional teaching methods, the updating of the program and experiences, increasing the quality of school management styles.

On top of those good-will purposes for forming partnerships, as a business, Wellspring Saigon also motivated to networking by some degree of its own self-interests in mind. Those motivations are increasing the status and reputation of the school in the field; guaranteeing the quality of their education pathway to the current parents; using international partnerships as core competencies and competitive advantages to attract more students.

7.2 International networking SWOT analysis of Wellspring Saigon

A SWOT analysis is conducted to investigate Wellspring Saigon's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats related to international networking issues. The point of the analysis as a part of the plan is to assist in developing the strategies based on real internal and external factors affecting the international networking policies.

1. **Strengths:**

   - *Experience of Wellspring Hanoi:* No matter how successful the Wellspring International Bilingual School Hanoi's networking practices are, the experience and expertise it gained through three-year-of-operation are great contributors to the policies in Wellspring Saigon.

   - *Networks of Wellspring Hanoi:* Beside the great experience and expertise of international networking, it is worth mentioning the value of existing networks of Wellspring Hanoi. These current relationships between Wellspring Hanoi and other international education organisations are important sources for valuable networks. These organisations more or less engage in networking with Wellspring Hanoi so they can be aware of the operation of Wellspring Saigon as well as the possibilities of partnering with another Wellspring School. Wellspring Saigon can also get insights of these organisations through Wellspring Hanoi, meaning that the prior knowledge of other organisations necessary to determine the partnership are quickly acquired and thus the level of trust among parties at the beginning phase is much higher comparing to if they newly get to know each other.

   - *Professional networks and cultural expertise of school managers, staffs, and foreign teachers:* Wellspring Saigon can take advantages of its managers, administrators and foreign teachers. These people can bring large number of their professional networks into organisational networks for Wellspring Saigon. Moreover, they are also the ones who are acquainted with cultural issues and aware of international networking which can be turned into great expertise for Wellspring Saigon. To be more specific, there are several managers – for example, Ms. Huong Nguyen and Mr. David Do – who have lived long time in the United States and they possess great personal networks of which there may be potential networks for Wellspring Saigon. Furthermore, foreign teachers in

Wellspring Saigon can also bring great sources of their professional networks into the schools. There are currently five full-time expat teachers from different English-speaking countries in Wellspring Saigon and all of them are experienced in teaching, meaning that there might be a number of professional networks that might be of use in terms of international networking for Wellspring Saigon. Current staffs of Wellspring Saigon are also acquiring necessary skills and knowledge for international networking, especially those who have lived and studied in a foreign country. They are great resources regarding to human skills and competencies since not only are they fully equipped with cultural and international insights but they are expert at international communication as well.

-        *Top executives link with the United States ambassador:* Although it does not directly affect the result of school networking, it might be advantageous for Wellspring Saigon when networking with American organisations in many forms; for instance, organizing some events where Vietnamese and American schools and education organisations can meet up and establish relationship. One example of these events happened in the end of October 2014 in which Wellspring Saigon can have a meeting with representatives of Hollins University (Virginia) and Felician College (New Jersey) thanks to the help of the United States ambassador. Moreover, this advantage are extremely valuable to Wellspring Saigon once the ambassador can act as a reference check ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of both parties before involving in networking. This helps at setting high level of trust from the beginning of the relationship which cost less time and energy for all parties.

-        *Rich physical and financial resources from investors:* Invested by one of the leading and biggest real-estate groups in Vietnam, Wellspring Saigon activities are ensured to be provided with sufficient resources. These resources include physical and financial capital required for current and future activities. It means that any future cooperative activities are fully supported, which guarantees the success of the collaboration in some degree.

2. Weaknesses

-        *Low-experience in international networking:* The fact that Wellspring Saigon as an organisation is unexperienced at international networking is doubtless and, therefore, there could be a lot of challenges and difficulties

because of the inexperience. Unfamiliarity with different types of collaborative activities in school partnerships or ignorance of the necessary skills for successful networking may prevent the school from wise decision-making.

- *Long way to fully develop the operation:* Being a new school means that there are still huge workloads and tasks to complete. With small amount of teachers (about 25-30) and students (about 120), it is difficult to make any further decision regarding to collaboration that require the involvement of great number of teachers or students. The small amount of students and teachers prevent the school to fully investigate the need and goals for their development and thus interfere with the design of the collaborative activities. Accordingly, developing the operation of the school need to be at top of priorities.

- *Lack of human resources:* As a consequence of the previous weakness, Wellspring Saigon is in lack of capable staffs who are expert at handling international relationships. Although the current staffs are very competent and proactive, the amount of workload for each of them makes it difficult for them to productively manage international relationships. Therefore, Wellspring Saigon should outline a long-term human resources development strategy specialising not only the international networking skills but also other skills in need. There should be a recruitment and/or training program for staffs. However, what should not be forgotten is that the whole work of international networking should not be totally dependent on a specific person.

- *Low reputation among similar schools in the market:* As a new comer to the market, Wellspring Saigon is not as well-known as other schools established years ago. This may cause some drawbacks if there might be competition for partnering among schools. As an example, an international education organisation seeks limited number of partners in Vietnam because it is not willing to deeply engaging in partnership in a specific country, there might be a tough competition among similar international schools including Wellspring Saigon and its low-reputation can put it at a disadvantage in the competition. In addition, being infamous can make Wellspring Saigon less preferred in the choice of partnering of the potential partners.

3. **Opportunities**

- *Vietnam is acknowledged as a big student-sending-nation in United States:* In 2011-2012 academic year, Vietnam was the eighth largest sender of students to United States with significant increases in the previous years; and in 2012, there are more than 22,000 Vietnamese students going to Australia (Clark 2013). These data have caught the eyes of many education organisations in those countries and they recognised Vietnam as a big potential market. Seeking a partner in Vietnam is the choice of many of those international organisations and hence it is a great opportunity for Wellspring Saigon to partner with.

- *Many international organisations with representatives in Ho Chi Minh City:* As a consequence of the previous fact, many international organisations have established offices or representatives in Ho Chi Minh City to introduce and promote their organisations in the home country to students. These offices and representatives are the great door for Wellspring Saigon to approach their potential networks. Furthermore, having a representative of partner at arm length facilitates the networking process and reducing problems of long distance and cultural differences as the representatives are knowledgeable about those factors.

4. Threats

- *External environment factors including long-distance, political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and cultural differences:* Beside the common risks of networking such as underperformance or level of trust, external environment factors are undoubtedly remarkable challenges in international networking. For example, long-distance between partners in United States and Vietnam will complicate the communication and decision making process and severe time-zone difference makes the timing and scheduling work problematic. In general, those factors can impact on many facets of networking and each relationship will related with different kinds of factors. Wellspring Saigon should analyse the influence and potential problems of those factors in every international relationship they may involve in.

- *Competition for partnership among international schools Ho Chi Minh City:* It is just a matter of time that international schools in Ho Chi Minh City begin to foster the networking and cooperation with international organisations and the vigorous competition can put anyone at disadvantage. Simply, more effort need to be made in order to attract the partners.

7.3 Criteria and Interests

There are six factors of which the organisations should be aware once they are about to benefit from the networking. Those six factors are: picking good partner, being sensitive to cultural differences, recognizing that all parties are beneficial from the network, ensuring that the agreed commitment is revered, structuring fast decision-making process and last but not least, managing the process and adjusting agreement to accommodate the cooperation to the change of the environment (Đorđevíc 2009). First of all, the selection criteria for partners should be seriously studied and determined. The criteria to choose partners among thousands of organisations should be based on the need and nature of networks that Wellspring Saigon are seeking. There are two main criteria that both Kyamk and Wellspring Hanoi representatives mentioned: location and operation model of the other partner.

The location of the other partners can have great impact on the process of networking, for example, when business want to penetrate into a new market, a partner located in that market is definitely more favourable than the one from outside of the target market. As a school of Vietnamese and American bilingual program, it is natural that Wellspring Saigon's first choice location for partnership is the United States. Moreover, based on the trend of the market, in this case parents and students in Ho Chi Minh City, English speaking countries, namely United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Singapore, Canada, etc. are more preferred. According to the findings of the Institute of International Education in 2010 based on 700 responses among Vietnamese urban high-school and university students, 82% rate United States as their first choice study-abroad-destination due to its excellent education system famous for advanced development of science and technology with a wide range of schools and lots of scholarship opportunities (Clark 2013). Also according to Clark 2013, the most popular oversea destinations for Vietnamese students are respectively Australia, United States, China, Singapore and United Kingdom. Clearly, parents and students in Vietnam show an obvious interest towards English-speaking countries like Australia, United States, Singapore and United Kingdom; in Singapore, English is recognized as the main language of governmental administration, education and law system by government since independence. Because of the fact that parents and students are interested in those countries education system, Wellspring Saigon's networking with

organisations from those countries will consequently catch the eye of parents and students, thus there will be increases in the student admissions of the school and status of the Wellspring Saigon School in the field.

Secondly, the operation model of parties involved in partnership drives the way of networking and designing cooperative activities. It is good to aim at a variety of partnerships as they will all benefit the school in different ways. School-to-school partnership will highlight the cultural exchange, teachers' capabilities or teaching methods; on the other hand, school-to-university partnership might pay more attention to students' performance level, cultural adaptation and necessary skills for higher education. Education for-profit and non-profit organisations can bring language training, teaching methods, educational travel and cultural exchange insights to the networks. They may help in terms of informing students with different study opportunities, providing cultural clash experience and improving teaching quality at Wellspring Saigon. Besides, the reputation and recognition of the potential partners are important because it creates high level of trust in the relationship and highly-recognised partners can somehow promote the competency of Wellspring Saigon.

Of no less importance is recognising the other partner's nature of motivations to network. These motivations can guide the way they network so understanding their motivations is necessary. For example, it should be aware that the extent of self-interest in networking can determine the objectives and the type of collaboration (Horra & Millar 2011). Knowing what the potential partners want from the collaborations can clarify their level of commitment and what to expect from the relationship.

7.4 Current existing contacts and potential networks

When starting to network, the existing list of contacts is great resources for potential partners of the school. As mentioned earlier, the resources lie in numerous places and people at Wellspring Saigon. The personal and professional networks of the school managers, executives, staffs and teachers are all valuable. The only way to exploit these resources is effective internal communication. Any person at Wellspring Saigon

should be aware of the school's need of networking and that they can contribute to the development of the school by their personal or professional relationships.

Currently, there is a promising partnership between Wellspring Saigon and EF – Education First. The relationship is still in the exploration phase in which both parties are studying the other's objectives and goals of further collaboration. Both parties are strive to discuss and negotiate obligations and administrative procedures. Education First can assist Wellspring Saigon greatly in terms of student admissions, particularly providing language training and tests scheme for Wellspring students. In near future, Wellspring Saigon and EF can cooperatively organise educational travel to United States for Wellspring Saigon students. These 2-week-to-1-month trips aim at enhancing the language skills of secondary-school students (13-15-year-old) and providing experience with American culture and interaction with foreign people.

A great suggestion of potential partner for Wellspring Saigon revealed by Ms. Huong Le – senior admissions executives – is Nuffic Netherlands Education Support Office Vietnam (NNESC). This NNESC is a non-profit organisation under the management The Netherlands ambassador acting as initiatives for education relationship between Vietnamese schools and Dutch schools. The organisation is very active in providing cultural insights about the Netherlands and developing education quality in Vietnam. They can provide a variety of training programs for Vietnamese teachers, which can happens in either Vietnam or the Netherlands. Moreover, NNESC can recommend and initiate relationships between Wellspring Saigon and Dutch schools.

Furthermore, some suggestions for Wellspring Saigon are IDP Education, British Council and WorldEdu. They are all famous education organisations and especially having offices in Ho Chi Minh City. It leads to the diminishing of cultural differences and even communication problems as there are more choices of communicating and meeting.

In case Wellspring Saigon is in need of an agency to organise students exchange programs, QUEST Institution (USA) and Creative International Education Management (Vietnam) are the suggestions. These organisations are expert at planning and organising students exchanges activities. QUEST Institution only covers

American high schools while Creative International Education Management covers different types of schools in different countries.

There are countless possibilities for school-to-university partnerships and school-to-school partnership all around the world. To approach these partners, Wellspring Saigon should be active in attending meeting events, promoting the school and following up potential contacts.

7.5 Building networking

ARA-model refers to three main factors Actors, Resources, and Activities in business networking introduced by Håkansson & Johanson, 1992 (Ford et al. 2010). The selection of use of ARA model in this proposal is because it covers well the main elements of every networks and it enables to give a comprehensive perspective of current or future relationships. This model is helpful in analysing and determining the process and outcomes of the interaction within the relationship when studying three layers: Actor bonds, Activity links and Resources ties.
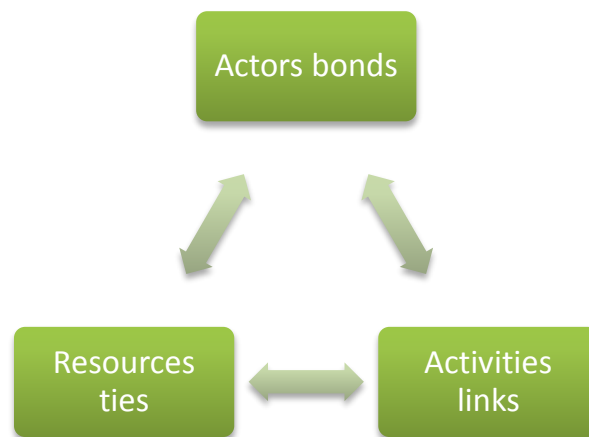

Figure 4. ARA- model (Ford et al. 2010)

It is highly recommended to use this model in all relationships between Wellspring Saigon and other organisations. By using this model, Wellspring Saigon managers can easily define who are involved in the current relationship and determine who should be added into or left out of the process. The actors can be at any levels from individuals like staff, teachers, students to the whole department or organisation. The actors engaged in partnership can either have knowledge of and control the resources

or have knowledge of and perform the activities or both simultaneously. Activity links are collaboration performed cooperatively by parties. These activities are carried out by the actors and using the resources that parties put into the relationship. Activities can have either concrete or abstract results, for instant, organising a cultural exchange event or sharing information and expertise. Moreover, resources are all human, physical, financial capital that parties supply or are committed to provide into the network. Resources can be either used or exchanged in the collaborative activities.

ARA-model for building networks and creating good partnership

1. Actors:
    a. Existing contacts and potential partners
    b. New cultures: culture of potential partners should be well studied to
    c. Professional networks of the school's managers, staffs, teachers
2. Resources:
    a. Financial resources: budget for networking activities, including travelling to partners, organising meetings, capital investment in coordinate activities.
    b. Human resources
    c. Material resources: all physical resources that are needed to maintain the relationship. For example, school can provide accommodation for their guest coming to the school with the support of SSG Group – the investor of Wellspring Saigon – which owns hundreds of apartments.
3. Activities:
    a. Developing the operation of the school is the first task of Wellspring Saigon.
    b. Actively seeking contacts and communication
    c. Starting locally: although Wellspring Saigon seeks international partnership, there can be potential partners locating around. For example, there are offices or representatives of international organisations in Ho Chi Minh City.
    d. Clear cooperation policy which creates win-win opportunities
    e. Training personnel

f. Gathering reference lists: developing long list of potential partners can not only increase the possibility of successful partnership but also serve as a back-up when needed.

g. Updating trend in cooperative activities: knowing about the new trends in networking enable the school to bring new breath to the partnership as well as improving the effectiveness of the collaboration.

h. Promoting Wellspring Saigon: promoting activities can firstly improve the reputation of the school and thus leverage the level of trust at the beginning of the relationship. It can also attract the attention of potential partners in case they are also seeking for coordination.

i. Following up and revisiting contacts: similar to marketing activities when replaying the messages is important so that customers can memorise the products, following up and revisiting those contacts even if there is no cooperation is also important to remind them about Wellspring Saigon.

7.6 Managing networks

Since networking has become increasingly important in business operation, reinforcing the relationship between partners in the network and the cooperation in the alliances is one of the top concerns of businesses. A study by Ernst & Bamford in 2005 revealed 15 - 20% of the total revenues, assets or incomes that a typical corporation earns thanks to its alliances; however, the average percentage of successful alliances is not as much as 50%, based on whether the parties achieved their agreed objectives. Since any organisation join in business partnership in order to profit from the collaboration, the more advantageous the collaboration is to all parties, the more stable the relationship becomes.

Many elements are entailed in networks and relationships management. They are "proactive and reactive, initiating and responding, acting and reacting, leading and following, influencing and being influenced, planning and coping, strategizing and improvising, forcing and adapting" (Ritter et al. 2004, p. 175). These elements are mixed and balanced changefully over time when circumstances change across the relationship.

According to Đorđevíc 2009, an alliance stability depends on how successfully they manage to collaborate with the others and how willing they are to renegotiate the agreement when responding and adapting to changing internal and external conditions are needed to be done. The success of the alliance is assured when the parties involved acknowledge that the skills, experiences and contribution each brings to the network is greatly valuable and cooperative arrangement engenders valuable win-win outcomes (Đorđevíc 2009).

When the differences between each party's goals and interests become clearer, which leads to the strain in the relationship between those parties, there are three alternatives to resolve the relationship strains: negotiations, conflict management and power (Greenhalgh 2000).

ARA-models for reducing risks and managing networks

1. Actors:
    a. Low-trust and low-commitment partners
    b. Powerful partners: this problem can be solved by developing reference lists, which enables Wellspring Saigon to select appropriate partners.
    c. Long distances in cooperation – Cultural differences
    d. Variety of partner organisations: at a time when the number of partners reaches the limit that it is not worth bringing new partners to the game, the school should stop adding new partners.

2. Resources:

Unlike other marketing activities, networking process will not end. The whole process is a cyclical effort of building, strengthening, reflecting and repeating the cycle. Because of that, the resources for networking in Wellspring Saigon should be on-going and assured to afford the sudden needs.

    a. Financial resources: budget for networking activities should be well-prepared to ensure the implementation of activities.
    b. Human resources: developing key personnel is always the key solution to many kinds of problems including cultural differences and communication issues, managing variety of partners.

c. Information communication technology resources: emails, online meeting channels, social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and any effective communication methods should be brought to the networking. Emailing for routine information sharing, online meeting for discussion, and social media for informal communication.

d. Added value to the networks: bringing added value in the relationship can motivated the process of networking and accelerate the activities.

3. Activities:

a. Identifying potential risks and threats, preparing problems-solving plans.

b. Clear and fair agreements – clarifying roles and obligations: it is advisory that when the contract is discussed and written, both parties should acknowledge the fairness and clearness of all clauses included. The objectives, administrative procedures, implementation plans, obligations and duties of each parties engaged in should be clarified.

c. Proactive communication with meeting plans: Both formal and informal meetings should be organised when possible as they can deepen relationship. However, the form of meetings should be based on the will of each party as culture affects the ways of networking.

d. Cooperative teacher training programs and teachers managing networks: this means that teachers should acknowledge that they are the key actors of the partnership. Teachers themselves then should be active in engaging in networking activities and all efforts of networking on their own are appreciated. They can initiate their own professional networks within or outside the school's network as far as it does not harm to the school.

e. Cultural exchange programs: there should be a number of events where cultural exchange can occur. They are not only for students or teachers purposes but also for the staffs and managers to understand the cultures, operation methods or communication. Significant advantages can be gained from these kind of activities, for example, broadening the understanding of each other's needs and visions, open information-sharing and leveraging the commitment between parties.

f. Leveraging level of trust and commitment

g. Seeking new partners from existing partners: every partner that Wellspring Saigon might successfully obtained will possess its own networks.

Through a partner, Wellspring Saigon may approach many other potential partners

h. Handling one-to-one relationship

i. Measuring the effectiveness of networking; recognising and finding values of networks, determining whether it is worth keeping the current relationship or seeking and establishing a new one.

Wellspring Saigon can have different goals for different partnerships but it then demands an effective management strategy to handle so many different kinds of relationships. The school can focus on developing relationships with an organisation or group of similar organisations at a time as long as these organisations are able to commit to a long-term partnership. As time goes, the partnership become stronger and beneficial, they can broaden the coordinated activities or raise the resources committed to the network. When managing a large number of different collaborations is inevitable, Wellspring Saigon then need separate development plan for each relationship. It is advisory to have distinct team to handle different cooperative activities as it ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of the relationship management.

7.7 Creating competitive advantages of international networking

1. Actors:

    a. Highly-recognized partners

    b. Wide international network

2. Resources:

    a. Students attendance in cooperative activities

    b. Human resources: personnel with high networking skills

    c. Information communication technology resources: high level of familiarity with different forms of communication channels

    d. Teachers involvement in cooperative activities

3. Activities:

    a. Constant effective cooperative activities

b. Frequent events to enhance information sharing, cooperation deepening: scheduled meeting plans ensuring the contact between partners even if there is no current project happening.

c. Seeking new forms of cooperation

d. Internal and external marketing for cooperative activities: different forms of marketing should be done to highlight the activities between Wellspring Saigon and its partners.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Main conclusion

To draw the conclusions of how Wellspring Saigon establish international partnerships with education organisations around the world, theories and practices of networking in the two schools are analysed. It is no doubt that international networking brings valuable advantages to the development of the school and level of trust play an important role in the commitment of each party in the relationship. Relationships naturally go through a long process of development in which the parties involved feel more committed, open, honest, and integrate towards the others. The relationship is sustained on the basis of information-sharing, long-term mutual benefit and broad understanding of the other's interests, motivations, problems and objectives.

Cultural differences and international communication are realised as main challenges in international networking besides its natural risks. To overcome these difficulties, Wellspring Saigon should always acknowledge the cultural awareness by bringing the insights into the organisation. In other word, human resources development is essential in the way that recruiting and training personnel properly can avoid and overcome these difficulties. Experience and expertise of Wellspring Hanoi is valuable to Wellspring Saigon regarding to not only the networking policy but also the cultural and communication skills.

Criteria of partner selection is important before engaging in partnership. The motivations to partner will guide the outline of criteria and the criteria will then determine the networking methods. Current existing contacts of Wellspring Saigon

and suggestions for potential partners is the reference for Wellspring Saigon managers to select partners from wide choices and to understand different operation model of those organisations. ARA-model for building and managing networks help in defining actors, resources and activities involved in future partnership and thus guide how Wellspring Saigon should network internationally.

8.2 Managerial Implementation

The final stage of the research requires adapting the theory found and research outcomes into the context of Wellspring International Bilingual School Saigon in order to provide Wellspring Saigon with an overall view of networking phenomenon and managerial applications. As explained in the earlier part of the thesis, there are some preparations that Wellspring Saigon should pay attention to in order to ensure the success of networking. Firstly, the development of the school is important to enhance level of trust and sustainability of the future relationship. Wellspring Saigon is a brand new school and it takes time for the operation to be run smoothly. Current students at the school are at a very young age (6-14-year-old), and Vietnamese teachers are not fluent in English. Therefore, these actors cannot be put in the core of the desired cooperative activities as the wish of the school immediately.

Furthermore, human resources should be improved. Person in charge of partnering should be educated and trained to master necessary skills, for example, negotiation and communication. Currently, there is only one employee responsible for partnering but she is also responsible for admissions tasks. Admissions tasks at Wellspring School are very busy including student admissions, parents consulting and receptionist. Unless Wellspring Saigon underestimate the importance of networks in their operation, they should assign or recruit qualified employees to handle the tasks full time.

8.3 Suggestion for further study

The work in this thesis can serve as the ground theory for many types of further researches, especially for the commissioner. After preparing and implementing the findings of this thesis, Wellspring Saigon can analyse the effectiveness and value of this thesis when it is put into practice. There may be a comparison between the theory

and practice suggestions in this thesis and the real-life practices of networking in Wellspring Saigon. But it will not be ready in the near future as it will takes such a long time to establish contacts and experience cooperative activities and evaluate those activities. Further study can concentrate on school partnership with factors and elements discussed in this thesis. Otherwise, further research can be conducted to give a deeper insight into each stages of networking process or analysis of networking for school.

Moreover, the theory and practices of marketing activities using networking as strategic competitive advantage or the influence of networking on the marketing activities and the whole operation of the party also can be happened following this thesis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Guiding questions for interview

Getting partners:

1. What are the criteria to become a partner of your school?
2. What kind of objectives do you have for the co-operation between your school and the international partner school? (For example: leveraging the school reputation, earn more students, improve the education quality and students' performance, culture diverse etc…)
3. Where do the school normally get partner from? (Direct contact or through a third party) Exactly, how do the two schools know each other?
4. If direct contact, how did the school approach partners or how was the school be approach?
5. If via a third party, which kind of third party is that and what did the third party support the networking? What did the school do in that situation?
6. Is it necessary to contact the people in charge of networking/partnering or it could be anyone in the organisation?
7. What is the typical process of partnering in schools?
8. What are the common expenses in partnering? (e.g. giving gift, visiting each other or something else)
9. Do your school limit the number of partners or expand the network as widespread as possible? Why?

Keeping relationship:

1. How can the school manage international partner relationships? (e.g. frequent meeting, e-communication, or relying on contract/MOU etc.)
2. What are the main challenges in managing relationship? (e.g. communication, culture difference, language, resources, remaining mutual benefits etc.)
3. What were some problems that school has faced in networking/partnering? (e.g. unresponsive partner, misunderstanding, conflicts, breaking the promises etc.) How did the school overcome these problems?
4. Is there a certain person who is responsible in keeping the contacts? How has he/she been selected for the job?
5. Main achievements in the past, current projects?

Communication:

1. Which is the most-used communication way between partners and school?
2. How often do you keep in contact with each other?
3. Do you find it effective to keep using it? In what way it is effective?
4. If it is not effective, what do you think is the better way of communication between partners? Why?