

A Spanish International School in Asia: reality or dream?

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Abstract

International education is not a new field, but the number of international schools has increased exponentially in the last two decades. Asia is at the center of this boom, with English being the language of instruction in most of these schools. However, there is still a small but relevant number of schools that have adopted another language of instruction. While other countries like France, Germany or Italy have taken advantage of the favourable situation in Asia, Spain seems to have been left behind in the race. This study explores the feasibility of establishing a Spanish International School in Asia. I use the literature review to study the reasons for its establishment and determine what characteristics would be inherent to this school in Asia, leading to both the curriculum and the language of instruction. Through the analysis of the data I found favorable evidence for this project, which would likely be of a private nature. At the same time, it would also be essential to have the support of Spanish public institutions.

Keywords

International school; curriculum; language of instruction; Asia; Spanish International School

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Author Declaration

I hereby certify that the material included in this presentation has not been submitted wholly or in part for any other academic award. This presentation is wholly the work of the author; where any material has previously been published elsewhere (e.g. quotations from academic papers, textbooks) it is identified and fully referenced.

Biodata

El profesor Javier Silva es diplomado en Magisterio y en Español como Lengua Extranjera y licenciado en Psicopedagogía. A esto se añade el Máster en Educación Internacional (especialidad en Liderazgo y Dirección), de la Universidad de Bath, del que sale el presente trabajo. Desde 2005, ha trabajado como profesor en escuelas secundarias en Londres, China (Shanghái y Shenzhen) y Hong Kong, siendo jefe del departamento de español en dos de ellas. En la actualidad, trabaja como profesor de español en Canggu Community School, en Indonesia.

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Resumen

La educación internacional no es un campo nuevo, pero el número de escuelas internacionales ha aumentado exponencialmente en las últimas dos décadas. Asia representa el centro neurálgico de este auge, siendo el inglés el idioma de instrucción en la mayoría de este tipo de escuelas. Sin embargo, también existe un número pequeño, aunque relevante, de escuelas que han adoptado otro idioma de instrucción. Mientras países como Francia, Alemania o Italia se han aprovechado de este auge en Asia, España parece haberse quedado atrás en la carrera. Este estudio explora la viabilidad de establecer una escuela internacional de español en Asia. A través de la revisión bibliográfica, estudio las razones de su establecimiento y determino qué características serían inherentes a esta escuela en Asia, considerando como partes fundamentales tanto el currículo como la lengua de instrucción. A través del análisis de los datos encontré evidencia favorable a este proyecto que, probablemente, sería de carácter privado. Al mismo tiempo, también sería fundamental contar con el apoyo de las instituciones públicas españolas para que un proyecto de tal calibre pudiera llevarse a cabo exitosamente.

Palabras clave

Escuela internacional; currículo; lengua de instrucción; Asia; Escuela Internacional Española

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: Literature review	6
2.1. International schools	6
2.2. The notion of a Spanish International School (SIS)	6
2.2.1. The curriculum	7
2.2.1.1. The International Baccalaureate programmers	7
2.2.1.2. The Spanish national programmes	8
2.2.2. The medium of instruction	8
2.3. Establishing a Spanish International School in Asia	9
2.3.1. Why a Spanish international school in Asia?	9
2.3.2. What type of school would a SIS be?	11
2.3.2.1. SIS-Type A school	11
2.3.2.2. SIS-Type B school	12
2.3.2.3. SIS-Type C school	12
2.3.3. The key participants in a SIS	13
2.3.4. To whom and how could a SIS bring benefit?	14
Chapter 3: Methodology	15
3.1. Central Research Question	15
3.2. Research strategy	16
3.2.1. Quantitative approach	16
3.2.2. Qualitative approach	17
3.3. Research design	17
3.4. Methods of data collection	17
3.4.1. Interviews	17
3.4.2. Analysis of documents	18
3.5. Methods of data analysis	19
3.5.1. Qualitative data	19
3.5.2. Quantitative data	19
3.6. Validity and reliability	20
3.7. Ethical issues	20

Chapter 4: Data and Analysis	20
4.1. International schools in Asia	20
4.2. Spanish schools abroad	23
4.3. Globalised Non-English Medium of Instruction Schools in Asia	27
4.5. Spanish population in Asia	29
4.6. Asian students in higher education in Spain	30
4.7. Economic relation of Spain with Asia	32
Chapter 5: Conclusions	33
References	35
Appendix	42

Chapter 1: Introduction

First as a student and then as a teacher, I have always felt fortunate to live in a time when the opportunities to live abroad, learn different languages, experience diverse cultures, and interact with people from all around the world, are all so accessible. The determined bid for globalisation and the emergence of the internet have had a great impact on the way many people see and perceive the world, and the educational field is no exception, with many schools around the world recognising the influence and impact of such a process (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). The necessity for an international education in this era of globalisation has sparked the interest of many private organisations and governments, leading to the rapid growth in the number of international schools around the world in the past two decades (Brummit and Keeling, 2013; Clark, 2014; Bailey, 2018).

This growth places Asia at the fore (Bailey, 2018), with the forecast that it will remain so in the coming years (Bunnell, 2019). A considerable number of Asian families are opting for an international education, which has fostered interest in international schools among different Asian governments. Despite the control that some Asian governments want to exercise over these institutions, the Asian market seems to have taken the lead in the field of international schools. English as the language of instruction and delivery of an international curriculum are the two main characteristics of these schools.

However, the field of international schools also encompasses a small but representative number of schools whose language of instruction is different from English. French, Swiss, German, Japanese or Korean schools are found in various parts of the world (Clark, 2014; Hayden and Thompson, 2008). As a teacher in Asia for the past 13 years, I have always had an interest in this type of school. Located in Asian cities like Hong Kong, Singapore, Jakarta or Dubai, I was intrigued about the purpose of these schools, but what most caught my attention was the non-existence of a Spanish international school in Asia, and this is the main reason why I decided to carry out this research.

Through this dissertation I intend to investigate whether a Spanish International School in Asia would be a feasible project. To do this, I will study the different variables related to the establishment of an international school. I will begin by trying to delimit the concept of the Spanish International School and the characteristics that it should have. Variables such as the purpose of this school, its financing and its most suitable location within Asia will also be addressed throughout the study.

After this introduction, I will use the literature review section to explore the notion of a international school to be applied to a Spanish international school (SIS). The existing research will also help me to expose the situation of international education in Asia, the type of school that a SIS could become, as well as who could contribute to and benefit from such a project. In the methodology section I will explain the process that I have carried out in this research, explaining what I have done, how I have done it and why. The next section will focus on the data collected from reliable sources, which will include its subsequent analysis. Finally, the conclusions will be presented just before the list of references used for this research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. International schools

The question about what can truly define a school as international is an ongoing debate that never had an easy answer (Bunnell, 2019). Although the origin can be disputed, a solid number of international schools nowadays are originally based on the model set by the International School of Geneva and the Yokohama international School, both established in 1924 to cater for the expatriate community in these two cities (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Consequently, in their origins, these two schools aimed to offer an education different from that of the host country to those families of foreigners for whom, for various reasons, national education was not an option. From this initial purpose, other reasons have emerged for the establishment of international schools, derived from various educational needs demanded by families or even governments.

2.2. The notion of a Spanish International School (SIS)

Many factors come together when trying to formulate a definition to the concept of international school in our times. Is it related to the language they use as a medium of instruction? Or the number of nationalities among students and teachers? About offering an international curriculum? Or simply related to the school ethos and core values? Regardless of the characteristics involved, a school cannot be defined as international only because of the word international included in their title. In fact, an international school might not necessarily deliver a truly international education (Hayden, 2006), but use the word “international” in their name only to attract parents (Hill, 2015) who might be mistaken by this fact in their quest to provide their children with an international education. At this point, it is worth highlighting the information provided on their website by the Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS, formerly known as the European Council of International Schools), a non-profit global organisation founded in 1965, which considers both independent and public schools to be able to offer an international education, as long as the school is internationally-minded. By contrast, ISC Research, a global organisation providing international school data, only considers international schools that deliver a curriculum in English outside an English-speaking country, which does not seem sufficient to legitimise a school as international (Bunnell, Fertig and James, 2016). Despite the discrepancies and lack of consensus when describing international schools, it would be difficult to continue with this research without framing the concept of a Spanish International School.

International schools have undergone a profound transformation in the last two decades. From three decades of perceiving international schools as educational centres mainly with the purpose of offering a non-local education to mobile families (Leach, 1969; Jonietz and Harris, 1991; Hayden and Thompson, 1995), we now face the difficulty of introducing the variable of the actors (Knight, 2015, cited in Bunnell, 2019) involved when referring to them, due to the ongoing number of local students enrolled in international schools (Bunnell 2014). Even considering that a multicultural student community could be one of the characteristics of an international school nowadays (Clark,

2014), this variable is currently not as essential as it was for the classic international school model (Hill, 2015).

In contrast, there currently seems to be a consensus among researchers that both the curriculum and the language of instruction should be included as the two main characteristics of an international school delivering a genuine international education. Therefore, I believe that it is essential to further develop these two concepts to define what should be considered as a legitimate SIS.

2.2.1. The curriculum

The idea of delivering a non-national curriculum is central to the notion of international schools (Mahfouz, Sausner and Kornhaber, 2019; Bunnell et al., 2017; Hayden and Thompson, 2008). For Bunnell et al. (2017), the provision of an international curriculum is what a school must do in order to claim to be international. Furthermore, these authors pointed out that this provision of an international curriculum must be the institutional primary task of the school, understood as the essential activity of any organisation. Similarly, Hayden and Thompson (2008) indicated that the curriculum offered in an international school should be different from that of the country in which the school is located. Therefore, an international school could choose to deliver an international curriculum or a national one, as long as it is not the curriculum of the host country (Clark, 2014). ECIS decided to extend this notion to include those schools with “an international outlook through programme offerings” (ECIS, 2020).

Taking into account the Spanish character of the initiative, the school could choose to adopt the national curriculum of Spain or an international curriculum that matches the characteristics of said school. Considering this, there are two possibilities that I would like to propose for such an initiative in Asia: the International Baccalaureate curricular programs and the national programs of Spain.

At this point it is necessary to clarify that another prestigious curriculum such as that of the system of European Schools, which dates back to 1953 (Gray, Scott and Mehisto, 2018), could not be adopted since both the European Schools and even those simply accredited to provide this curriculum must be within the territory of the European Union (Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, 2020).

2.2.1.1. The International Baccalaureate programmers

Applying the aforementioned to the case at hand, the establishment of a Spanish international school in Asia, the question of the curriculum to be chosen should be raised and analysed. From the point of view of an international curriculum of prestige and relevance, the International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes offer little doubt as to their ability to provide an international education (Hill and Saxton, 2014). Its curriculum content has been intentionally developed to be international, avoiding any specific national affiliation (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Established in 1968, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) has not originated from any one country and it is one of the most rigorous pre-university exams accepted by many organisations in the world (Hill and Saxton, 2014). Unlike other international curriculums that only accept English as their working language, this prestigious curriculum and its exams are also

available in Spanish (and French) since the early 1980's, due to the increasing number of schools in Latin America that decided to adopt it (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). More recently, the emergence of the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) in 1994 and the IB Primary Years Program (PYP) in 1997 has enabled all-through schools to deliver the IB programmes. Adopting such a relevant curriculum for a SIS might be beneficial to Spanish speaking families hoping to offer their children an international education in their own mother tongue, as well as those local families eager for an international education in one of the most spoken languages in the world.

In line with the above, it should be noted that the option of the IB programs as a curriculum for the SIS could arouse the interest of the Hispanic community in general, since it is not the Spanish national curriculum being offered, but an international curriculum in Spanish. In this case, the school would be focused on families from any Spanish-speaking country, which would increase their student enrolment options. Additionally, it would also be a good option in order to explore the support of Hispanic governments and organisations.

2.2.1.2. The Spanish national programmes

Alternatively, a SIS might instead decide to adopt the curriculum offered in the Spanish education system for Primary (Primaria), Secondary (ESO) and/or Baccalaureate (Bachillerato). Then, a national curriculum would be offered but different from the country where the school is located, which complies with the notion of an international school (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). This curriculum is not only the responsibility of the Government of Spain, but also of the different regions and educational institutions (Official Gazette - BOE, 2015), so it is conceivable that a SIS would have the margin to include aspects related to their own environment and that of the international context in their curriculum. This research does not try to examine the suitability of the Spanish national curriculum adopted outside its borders, but it is worth mentioning that currently there are Spanish schools outside the national territory delivering it, an aspect that will be discussed in the data section of this dissertation. In addition, there is also the option of distance learning for Spanish families living abroad, through the Centro para la Innovación y el Desarrollo de la Educación a Distancia (CIDEAD, 2020), with students taking the exams at the relevant embassy or consulate.

Therefore, the provision of Spain's national curriculum in an international context is not a new field, as it is the current case of schools in Europe, Africa and Latin America (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of Spain, 2020).

2.2.2. The medium of instruction

Another fundamental variable to define an international school is the language of instruction that is adopted. Although international schools could use any language of instruction, in practise English is the medium of instruction for a vast majority of international schools (Bunnell, 2019). Despite the fact that in the 1969 classification of international schools Leach already included schools using a language of instruction other than English, it seems that this type of school has now been placed on a secondary level. In fact, as it was pointed out earlier, in the market analysis of international schools

carried out by ISC Research, only those schools with medium of instruction in English are included. Hayden and Thompson (2008) pointed out two main reasons for this situation: the prevalence of English as the main international language and the increasing number of mobile families from English-speaking countries.

Despite this prevalence of English in many international schools, this is not always the case, as there are still international schools where the medium of instruction is not this language. Recalling what ECIS (2020) understands by international schools, this organisation welcomes schools using different languages of instruction, embracing the diversity of the world. It is interesting to indicate that there are schools in Asia that use other languages of instruction such as German, French, Japanese or Korean, which is considered a reputational benefit (Bryant, 2018). Spanish is purposely not added to this list simply because there are many schools around Asia offering this language as a subject, but there are no visible traces of a school in this continent using it as the medium of instruction. However, there are schools in non-Spanish speaking countries that use Spanish as the language of instruction. Morocco, the United States and the United Kingdom (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of Spain, 2020; IB, 2020) are just some examples of this. These non-Spanish speaking countries are located on three different continents where schools that use Spanish as the language of instruction have been established.

Although using Spanish as the language of instruction could be considered as an indispensable characteristic of a Spanish international school, this does not imply that the school is prevented from using more than one language of instruction. Bilingual education is a desirable option for international schools around the world (Carder, 2007). The European Schools and their multilingual approach, with several languages of instruction accepted in each school, or the Yew Chung international schools, with Chinese-English bicultural education, form a good illustration of this (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, perhaps the option of offering a bilingual education is the most appropriate for establishing a Spanish school in Asia.

2.3. Establishing a Spanish International School in Asia

The idea of a SIS in Asia might sound culturally-attractive as well as a bizarre invasion in a continent dominated by English-medium international schools. It does not seem an easy task to picture a SIS in the fast-growing Asian market, filled with families avid for international education in English for their children. Although for some readers a SIS in Asia might be something inconceivable, there are multiple factors for this idea at least to be considered within this globalised world. I will now present some of these variables that must be taken into account when considering the suitability of an Asia SIS.

2.3.1. Why a Spanish international school in Asia?

For those interested in this research, this could be the question that has arisen in their minds from the beginning. The demand for international schools has developed rapidly in Asia (Bailey, 2018) but unlike in the Americas, Europe or Africa, the educational presence of Spain in this continent is not noticeable. In an international education world hegemonized by what Bunnell (2019) called the Globalised English Medium of

Instruction Schools (GEMIS), Asia is the current leading market. As Bunnell (2012) pointed out, this ongoing trend was already anticipated by ISC Research in 2012, focusing particularly on countries such as China, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Qatar and United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the last decade, prestigious English schools such as Dulwich and Harrow or educational institutions like Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) and Nord Anglia Education have established international campuses across Asia, in a move that might be considered as a profitable investment (Brummit and Keeling, 2013). Perhaps the most valuable question would be if the establishing of a SIS in Asia could still be profitable in the coming years, a prediction expected for those countries in the The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in a time described by Bunnell (2019) as a New Era of unprecedented growth lasting at least a decade, from 2017 until 2027. The data and analysis section will shed more light on this.

But to understand this expansion it is necessary to focus on its reasons. Clark (2014) pointed out several reasons as the drivers of this growth: the internationalisation of labour, with increasing numbers of expatriate families; the growth of interest for an overseas education at the higher level of education; and the already mentioned importance of English as the dominant international language. If we transfer this to the case of SIS, the first two reasons would refer to Spanish expatriate families, and although they might differ in numbers with those English-speaking families, the concept could be equally applicable. In the same way, it could be disputed that the predominance of English as a lingua franca implies a complete lack of interest in other languages for families in Asia. A good example are the French lycées, the German gymnasium and the Japanese schools, which are all present in Asia, catering to their own nationals (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Bunnell (2019) refers to this Globalised Non-English Medium of Instruction Schools (GNEMIS) as a “well-established, yet rather slow growing” group of schools, providing a national education beyond their country’s borders. Bunnell also cites other examples such as China, Russia, Pakistan and Philippines schools overseas, highlighting the lack of research in the field of GNEMIS.

Another fundamental variable cited by Clark (2014) is the ability of families in fast-growing economies to pay the high school fees, particularly centred in the Middle East and Southeast and East Asia. This is a valuable point for this research, as the number of “Asian children attending international schools in their own passport country” (Bailey, 2018) has developed extensively across Asia, despite the fact that some Asian countries have restricted the enrolment of local children in international schools (Bailey, 2018; Bunnell, 2019; Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Therefore, International schools in Asia aim to attract not only expatriate families, but especially these local middle-class families, by establishing links with the host nation (Brown and Lauder, 2011) in order to comply with local regulations. Even mixing international and local curricula, as is the case in some schools in China (Bunnell, 2019).

An attractive reason for the preference of international education for these local middle-class families is their aspiration to send their children to prestigious universities in English speaking countries (Hayden and Thompson, 2008; ISC Research, 2017). In a country like China, the largest market for international schools in the world (ISC Research, 2017), this has resulted in a substantial growth in national schools offering

non-national programmes within China's government and private schools, as students believe their chances to attend overseas universities will be increased (Brummit and Keeling, 2013). Although most of these students' preferences are located in the English-speaking countries, there is still a developing interest in Spanish universities by Asian students that should not be underestimated. A SIS project should arouse the interest of this middle class, thus the inclusion of data on Asian students in higher education abroad is essential to this research.

In conclusion, there are several factors to consider when it comes to analysing the establishment of a SIS in Asia: the increasing number of mobile families (Clark, 2014); the fastest growing market for international schools that represents Asia (Bailey, 2018; Clark, 2014); the successful existence of GNEMIS (Bunnell, 2019), with a long history in this continent; and the large increase of middle-class families capable of paying high fees for an international education (Clark, 2014) that might open up the doors for universities overseas (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). All these factors will be discussed further along in the data and analysis section of this work. Nevertheless, I believe there are still important aspects regarding a SIS in Asia that need to be evaluated, such as the type of school, the student population, as well as the benefits that arise from an Asian SIS.

2.3.2. What type of school would a SIS be?

In a previous section of this work, I highlighted the importance of the curriculum and the language of instruction as key elements of a SIS. Although I think that both factors should be taken into account when defining a SIS, there are other variables that would also shape such a school. The type of school that a SIS could be will be given by the different circumstances that surround it and the ideology that the promoters of this project decide to impose. To better understand the school options that a SIS could represent, I will focus on the taxonomy elaborated by Hayden and Thompson (2013) on the types of schools. Hayden and Thompson divided the schools into three main groups: Type A, Type B and Type C schools. International schools are placed within each of these groups according to their mission and ethos, although they also point out that an international school could fit into more than one type to varying degrees. I will now describe these three types of school from the point of view of a SIS.

2.3.2.1. SIS-Type A school

This type is characteristic of traditional international schools, those which were established to cater to the expatriate families whose children would not benefit from local education. Therefore, their mission is "to provide an education for the children of families living abroad" (Hill, 2016). They could be considered among the first international schools, already represented by the ECIS schools since 1965 and described by Leach in 1969. Although it could be assumed that these type A schools are founded with an ideological motivation, Hayden and Thompson pointed out that they could also be considered market-driven schools, when they are founded to cope with the needs of the expatriate community. Set out in the case at hand, this type A school would represent a SIS founded to cater to the Spanish community that exists in a particular place in Asia. This concept could be extended to include not just expatriate families from the Spanish community abroad but also those Hispanic families interested in offering their children

an international education in their mother tongue. For this reason, it is essential to find out the number of Spanish families and their place of residence in Asia. This will be addressed in the data section, in order to determine the suitability of a SIS-type A school in a particular location in Asia.

2.3.2.2. SIS-Type B school

Page | 12

These schools are ideology-driven, meaning that they aim to put together students from different nationalities to instill in them educational values based on global peace and understanding (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Focusing on international mindedness, including the provision of IB programmes, they also belong to the group of long-established international schools, such as the United World Colleges or the Atlantic College (Bunnell et. al, 2016). The same group includes the schools of the San Estanislao de Kostka (SEK) Educational Institution, a Spanish educational organisation founded in 1892, which has international schools in different countries. However, only one of its schools is located in Asia, specifically in Qatar, offering the IB curriculum in English for the international community in Doha. As I have previously explained, this idea of offering the IB curriculum fits within the concept of SIS, but offering it in English is something that clashes with the notion of a SIS. Therefore, a SIS-Type B school would be delivering the IB curriculum while using Spanish as the medium of instruction, catering to an international community, something that seems difficult in a world dominated by English as the main language of interest for most mobile expatriate families.

2.3.2.3. SIS-Type C school

This category belongs to the ‘non-traditional’ international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Unlike Type A and B schools, this relatively new concept of Type C schools was established to cater to host country national students, which nowadays represent the vast majority of students in international schools (Bailey, 2018). Brummit and Keeling (2013) go further and place this number specifically representing 80% of the places in international schools. This focus on a local population together with the fact that they are for-profit schools contrasts with the conventional notion of an international school (Bunnell et. al., 2017), making them genuinely market-driven schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). However, this does not necessarily mean that they are not genuine international schools. Hill (2015; 2016) supports the idea of increasing the number of host country students in international schools, most of them from middle-class families willing to pay the high fees. He even expresses his doubt about whether this type of school is relatively new or another consequence of “the globalisation of a long-established national phenomenon”, which is the existence of public and private education in national systems (Hill, 2015). This type of school has developed rapidly in Asian countries in spite of some countries forbidding host country students to attend international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). Thailand, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and China represent a good illustration of this. They have opened up to the possibility of their local students enrolling in international schools, a type of school that continues to grow in number (Bunnell, 2014; Brummit and Keeling, 2013; Hayden and Thompson, 2008).

Although it does not seem very feasible in these times where English is the hegemonic international language, for a SIS-Type C school, the interest would be to attract local

middle-class families interested in a school with Spanish as a medium of instruction. The target could be those local families interested, for instance, in sending their children to Spanish universities, an option that could be less competitive and more affordable than that of universities in countries such as the United States, Canada, England or Australia.

I would not like to end this section without mentioning the economic status of a SIS. Although non-profit schools were common in the past, nowadays most international schools are profit-making, and this trend is expected to continue in the coming years (Brummit and Keeling, 2013). These for-profit schools are developing especially fast in Asia (Bunnell, 2014; Bailey, 2018), represented by the emergence of chains of international schools such as Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) Education Ltd. (Bunnell et al., 2016), interested in the opportunities that the Asian market offers. China exemplifies this trend, with the government weakening its regulations in order to facilitate Sino-foreign joint ventures (Brummit and Keeling, 2013) or simply allowing Chinese owned schools to deliver education in English (Bunnell, 2014). Both cases would be compatible for a SIS, as long as Spanish is respected as a medium of instruction, perhaps complemented by a curriculum that also facilitates the acquisition of English and the local language.

2.3.3. The key participants in a SIS

An important part of a SIS is the one that represents its student population. As I previously explained, I decided not to add this variable within the notion of SIS due to the different possibilities it offers. A SIS in Asia could be established to cater to the Spanish community interested in an educational option in Spanish, and even extend this idea to other Hispanic families. This option would be ideal for those families concerned about moving to a new international environment where children might not cope well with adaptability and learning in English might make it even more difficult (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). It could also benefit those families with the idea to return home, “easing the transition back into their home education system” (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). I have given examples of this earlier, but it is interesting to point out how the research I found on this field focuses on German, French, Dutch, Japanese, Indian, Korean and other international schools catering to their nationals overseas, but no mention is given to Spanish. A likely reason for this might be the lack of schools established to cater to Spanish nationals overseas. In fact, no other Hispanic country is mentioned, in spite of Spanish being the mother tongue of 482 million people in over 20 countries around the globe (Instituto Cervantes, 2019).

Additionally, we should not rule out the option offered by the rapid increase in host country nationals in international schools in Asia (Bailey, 2018), as it represents 80% of the international school student population in the world (Bunnell, 2014). A SIS catering to the local middle classes, respecting and valuing the local context, building a strong relationship with its community (Bryant, 2018), while highlighting the advantages that multilingualism (Spanish, English and the local language) can offer them in a globalised world, might attract this student population. Perhaps this option would make more sense as part of a SIS with two streams, one formed by native Spanish learners studying Spain's national curriculum or the IB, the other one to cater to the local students studying a curriculum in two different languages of instruction (Spanish and English or the local

language) that they would master over time. This option could even attract students of different nationalities, forming a more diverse cultural group within the school.

Besides the students and their families, the other fundamental actors in an international school are the faculty and the school management. The notion of an ideal international school represented by its multinational students and faculty (Clark, 2014) is no longer valid (Bunnell, 2019) as it is certainly difficult to apply this concept to the new wave of international schools (Hill, 2016). The same applies to administrators and the governing body of the school, which will depend on variables such as the law of the host country, the reasons why the school was established and the people or organisation backing up this project (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). For instance, for the Chinese-foreign joint ventures in international schools previously mentioned, the regulations of the Chinese Ministry of Education limit the number of members according to their nationality, stating that Chinese members “shall not be less than half of the total number”. Indonesia, another Asian country, goes further and only allows 49% of international schools to be owned by foreign stakeholders (Relocate magazine, 2018). Also, in both countries, in order to obtain a working permit, overseas language teachers must be native teachers, which constrains the options of schools to hire teachers independently of their nationality. That is why in a SIS, the faculty body, the school management and its governance will be determined by the type of project and the place where it is carried out. In any case, it would be reasonable to think that a SIS would have at least some native Spanish teachers among its staff.

2.3.4. To whom and how could a SIS bring benefit?

In a previous section I discussed the reasons why it would be interesting to consider the foundation of a SIS in Asia: the rapid growth in the number of international schools on the continent, the existence of schools offering a language of instruction other than English, the strong interest of families in international education as an easier access point for higher education abroad, or the needs of the Spanish community in Asia. Regardless of the ownership of a SIS, private or state school, I would also like to briefly highlight some benefits that could derive from a SIS project.

Considering that most of the students enrolled in international schools are not “global nomads” but national children (Bunnell, 2014), one of the first benefits that a SIS could bring would be the promotion of the Spanish language and culture in Asia. It seems obvious to think that the most interested in this occurring is the government of Spain (and even those from other Spanish speaking countries). With that purpose, in 1991 the Instituto Cervantes was created, “a public institution to universally promote the teaching, study and use of Spanish and contribute to the dissemination of Hispanic cultures abroad” (Instituto Cervantes, 2020). Similar to Spanish state-owned schools overseas, this institution has centers spread all over the world, with the particularity that 7 of them are located in Asia, in contrast with the lack of state secondary schools on this continent. If we take the case of France as an illustration, in addition to the Alliance Française (AF), an institution similar to the Cervantes Institute, this country also created in 1990 the Agency for French Education Abroad (AEFE). The AEFE is dedicated to ensuring education for French children living outside the country while also extending the influence of the French language and culture by accepting foreign students (AEFE, 2020). AF has 121

centres operating in Asia while AEFÉ has 127 schools in the same region, which reflects the importance that the French government has been giving for decades to promote their language and culture around this continent.

I also mentioned the concerns that the rapid development of international schools has caused in governments (Bunnell, 2019), leading to restrictions imposed by some countries on their nationals attending this type of schools. However, the number of countries restricting this access is diminishing (Brown and Lauder, 2011) as the number of Type C schools is increasing (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Therefore, another argument to consider is the benefits that an alliance with an Asian country might bring from establishing a SIS. Having a mission of promoting not only the Spanish language and Hispanic culture but also forging links with the language and culture of the host nation (Brown and Lauder, 2011), might serve as a valuable starting point for this alliance. Getting the host country involved in this project could greatly facilitate the establishment of a SIS.

I also pointed out that the aim of many host-country national families to send their children to English-medium of instruction international schools is to prepare them for higher education in countries such as the USA or Britain (ISC Research, 2017). The presence of a large number of Asian students, especially Chinese and Indian, in universities in Western countries has become a lucrative source of income for universities and local economies (Gu, Michael, Zheng and Trines, 2019). Therefore, it would be reasonable to think that the universities in Spain could benefit greatly from a SIS project in Asia, so their participation in the project should also be studied.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Central Research Question

As may well be induced by the title of this dissertation, the Central Research Question (CRQ) is based on the feasibility of a Spanish International School in Asia, formulated in the following way:

Would the establishment of a Spanish International School in Asia be a feasible project?

The project of a SIS in Asia casts many doubts from the point of view of its suitability and applicability, at a time when schools with the language of instruction in English are the trend. However, this study and its CRQ are based on the possibility of establishing a single SIS in Asia, not in trying to unseat the hegemony of GEMIS schools. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the phenomenon of the growth of international schools in Asia, where they are located, and analyse the GNEMIS schools there, like the French or German schools.

The CRQ also serves as a basis for formulating other issues that are evaluated throughout this study: are there any reasons to support the establishment of a SIS in Asia? Where would it be more appropriate to establish a SIS? Who could finance such a project? What benefits would a SIS bring? These are the questions that serve as a spearhead to try to answer the CRQ.

3.2. Research strategy

The founding of an international school is a large-scale project that requires much evaluation and study to try to ensure its success. It is a long and tedious process that requires a lot of dedication, both from a financial and human point of view. I need to admit that I was initially tempted to focus my research on a quantitative approach, basing my conclusions on the numerical data obtained. Nevertheless, this would have been a simplified way to address the CRQ. A project of such magnitude needs a combination of methodological approaches, taking into account all the available elements. Therefore, I believe that a decision as important as founding a SIS has to be based on research using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, without excluding either of these two. For Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), this methodological pluralism frequently results in superior research when compared to the use of a single methodology. As these authors pointed out, taking a mixed position would allow “researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering” the CRQ. Descombe (2017) also argued that both approaches are not mutually exclusive, serving as a complement to each other in order to respond to the CRQ from two perspectives.

3.2.1. Quantitative approach

To answer the question of whether a SIS would be a feasible project in Asia, it is essential to gather numerical data obtained from reliable sources. Collecting facts and studying the relationship between them would allow me to quantify the data obtained (Bell, 2018). Having quantitative and reliable data about several aspects such as the number of international schools in Asia, their expansion and growth in recent years, the projected growth in the future, the number of GNEMIS schools in Asia, or the fee income obtained by these schools, all form part of the key data necessary to analyse the suitability of a SIS project. Furthermore, by analysing these data I aim to be able to determine what type of project a SIS could be and where it might be located.

3.2.2. Qualitative approach

Analysing the numerical data available needs to be complete by considering the individual's perception (Bell, 2018), all in order to give an answer to the CRQ. Taking into account the opinion of educational leaders who “are able to see the big picture of any initiative” (Mahfouz et al., 2019), governments or private educational institutions, is a step that should not be ignored in this research. The insights given by these educational leaders and representatives about the feasibility of a SIS in Asia might be of high relevance for this dissertation. Information provided by them will be objectively collected and thoroughly analysed, minding the subjective sense that might arise from the researcher, while considering the risk of bias.

3.3. Research design

This dissertation explores the variables related to the establishment of a SIS in Asia, to later determine to what extent this could be a feasible and profitable project. I approached this issue by reviewing the literature available about international schools, focusing particularly on Asia. The rapid growth in the number of international schools in

recent years has led to a large number of data in this field, which form the basis of this dissertation.

Unlike some international schools in Asia whose language of instruction is English, German, Japanese or French, this SIS project lacks a particular example to look at. By carefully reviewing the variables involved in this project and making comparisons based on relevant data, my intention is to demonstrate whether this project would be feasible.

3.4. Methods of data collection

As mentioned above, one of the advantages of the mixed methods approach is the triangulation (Bell and Waters, 2018), which is intended to allow me to cover the topic from different perspectives, using distinctive methods of data collection. Each method has its advantages and limitations and might be valid for a particular purpose. Based on the aim of this research and the literature review, I have chosen to gather evidence through two research methods: interviews and analysis of documents.

3.4.1. Interviews

My decision to interview some key participants in the educational field was to gain some valuable insights from their experience. I opted out of carrying out surveys instead because the adaptability of an interview would allow me to “follow up ideas and investigate motives and feelings” (Bell and Waters, 2018), which I would not be able to do with a survey.

Although I provided the participants with a list of questions to be answered, I decided to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews, in order to allow the interviewees some flexibility on their answer. Answers were open ended, giving the chance to those interviewed to develop their ideas in depth. The interviews were all conducted online by email correspondence with a series of questions to be answered by the respondents. Although I highly esteem the value of real-time visual interaction (Descombe, 2017) as a tool to analyse aspects such as the tone of voice, facial expression or hesitation (Bell and Waters, 2018), the decision to carry on the interviews via email was based on the premise of obtaining as many responses as possible. Respondents were located in different parts of the globe with their corresponding different time zones. They were also busy key members of institutions with scarce free time to schedule face-to-face interviews, and an e-mail interview would allow them not only to respond at their earliest convenience but also to give more consideration to the questions being asked. On the other hand, I am aware that it might have affected the length of the answers, as the interviewees were likely to use fewer words than they would have done in a face-to-face interview (Descombe, 2017).

The questions included in the interviews were designed considering the respondent's role within the organisation and their experience. I emailed the interviews to three school principals, a representative of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of Spain in Asia-Pacific regions, and a Spanish educational institution, SEK, with schools in different countries. I limited the number of questions to 5, emphasizing that the answers could be extended to other issues not covered in the questions but also valuable for this research.

3.4.2. Analysis of documents

The convenience of establishing a SIS in Asia cannot be based exclusively on qualitative data. Factual information also needs to be analysed carefully. The use of documents as a source of data is essential to determine the suitability of such a large and costly project. No company or government would embark on this project without taking into account data from reliable sources. Governments statistics, reports, articles and policy papers can be used as evidence and the information they contain “is of value beyond its literal contents” (Descombe, 2017).

The Internet is a key assistant in locating documents related to this research. From reports about the growth in the number of international schools in Asia to official statistics from a government, all can be accessed online. The problem lies in discerning the information from the immense amount of documents that are available on the internet. The credibility of the source is another aspect that I have carefully evaluated to ensure that I was using up-to-date and quality material. For instance, the official documents and statistics provided by the government of Spain, Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland are up-to-date and could be considered as factual, since it is official data published by the respective governments. The number of French schools operating in Asia or the number of Asian students in higher education in Spain serve as illustrations of “hard facts over which there can be no ambiguity” (Descombe, 2017).

On the other hand, the growth of international schools “in Asia-Pacific is almost entirely in the private sector” (Bailey, 2018). Therefore, data such as the expansion of international schools and their future projection require the use of other sources that, although not governmental, have sufficient credibility to be used for this research. Publications by prestigious researchers and the data provided by institutions such as ISC Research or IB, will aid me to access valuable data about international education, particularly in Asia.

3.5. Methods of data analysis

3.5.1. Qualitative data

This type of data refers to the opinions expressed by the key informants in the interviews carried on. Unlike qualitative data analysis, the data collected here consists of words that I must interpret (Descombe, 2017), which raises the issue of my subjectivity as a researcher when analysing the data.

Interviews sent to respondents consisted of five questions related to their opinions about the establishment of a SIS in Asia and the form such a school could adopt. In my emails to respondents, I also stressed the idea of mentioning any other variable that might not be covered by the questions but that they considered important for the research. Therefore, answers might vary in scope, but I plan to identify recurring items (Bell and Waters, 2018) and different elements in their responses, such as if they believe a SIS is likely to happen or not, or what they would consider a genuine SIS.

3.5.2. Quantitative data

It refers to numerical data, and therefore the objectivity of the researcher is considered less compromised by this type of data. I will present the quantitative data using tables about the following data:

- Table 1: The Historical and Projected Growth of International Schools (ISC Research).
- Table 2: Number of International Schools by Region and Sub-region (ISC Research).
- Table 3: The Historical and Projected Growth of Fee Income and Students (ISC Research).
- Table 4: The Historical Growth of the IB Programs and Diploma Candidates (IB).
- Table 5: Spanish Schools Abroad 2020 (Government of Spain).
- Table 6: Number of French, German, Swiss, Italian and Spanish Schools Abroad 2020 (Governments of France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Spain).
- Table 7: Location of French, German, Swiss and Italian Schools in Asia 2020 (Governments of France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy).
- Table 8: Top 10 Countries by Spanish Population in Asia (Government of Spain).
- Table 9: Asian Students in Higher Education in Spain (Government of Spain).
- Table 10: Foreign Students in Higher Education in France, Germany and Spain 2019 (Governments of France, Germany and Spain).

Page | 19

The aim of these tables is to transform into numbers variables such as the fast growing trend of international schools in Asia, something already described in the literature review of this research; the projected number and fee income of international schools in Asia, essential data to support or reject a SIS project; contrast the support given by the government of Spain and those in France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy to schools abroad, particularly in Asia, in order to cater to their nationals living overseas; income received by universities in Spain from Asian students, with the intention of evaluating the level of interest of the universities in supporting this project. My intention is to use all these tables to discern data both against and in favor of this project, trying to figure out which side would tip the scale.

3.6. Validity and reliability

The interviews carried out for this research comply with the standard of validity because the answers given by the respondents refer to and represent the phenomenon studied. Answers were written by respondents and therefore errors at the data entry stage were avoided (Descombe, 2018). In contrast, this method does not comply with reliability as the results might be affected by the individual opinions of the respondents.

The data collected through the document analysis comply with both standards, validity and reliability. The documents and statistics were not designed by myself but researchers and institutions, which have already contrasted the information published. Therefore, results could lead to generalisations, giving the opportunity to other researchers to

reproduce this study under the same or similar conditions (Bell and Waters, 2018; Descombe, 2017).

3.7. Ethical issues

Ethical issues have been carefully considered when designing this dissertation, following the guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). Voluntary consent of participants was sought after; thorough explanation about the purpose of the research and the involvement of participants was given; a final version of the participant's contribution to this research was provided to the respondents, seeking for their approval and offering them the right to withdraw; all sources have been disclosed throughout the assignment and listed in the bibliography section.

Chapter 4: Data and Analysis

4.1. International schools in Asia

A good number of studies (Bailey, 2018; Brummit and Keeling, 2013; Bryant, 2018; Bunnell, 2019; Hayden and Thompson, 2013) have highlighted a global phenomenon occurring in the past two decades: the rapid growth in the number of international schools. Despite the fact that both researchers and different educational organisations have failed to find a common definition for the concept of an international school, the consensus is broad regarding the prolonged growth of these types of schools. However, it is necessary for this research to quantify this growth, in order to estimate the suitability of a new international school in the Asian market. As described earlier, ISC Research is an organisation that has been collecting data on international schools since 1994. In 2000, this organisation counted 2,584 international schools around the world (Table 1). Two decades later that number had risen by a staggering 343%, reaching 11,451 international schools. This percentage gives an idea of the magnitude of this increase from 2000 to 2020 and also serves as a basis for ISC Research to establish a prediction about the continuity of this phenomenon. ISC Research expects that the number of international schools in 2028 will reach 16,500, confirming the upward trend of international schools.

Table 1. The Historical and Projected Growth of International Schools

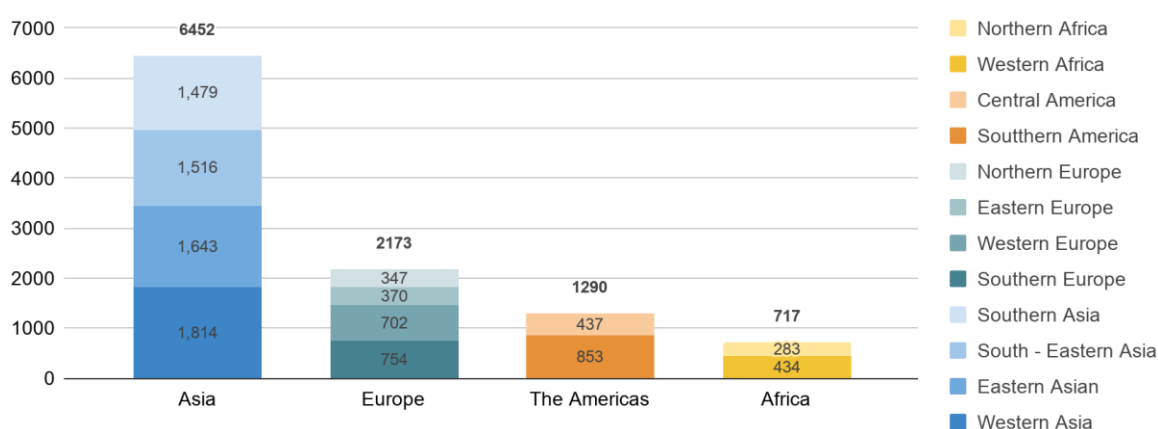
Year	International School
2000	2584
2020	11,451
2028	16,500

Source: ISC Research at [iscresearch.com](https://www.iscresearch.com)

Although these data refer exclusively to schools with a medium of instruction in English, a SIS is a project that falls within the field of the international schools. The interest in international education is something real and globalised, and projections suggest that it will continue to grow in the coming years. Therefore, it seems that we have not yet reached the ceiling of this phenomenon, something that opens the doors to a SIS project.

Despite its global occurrence, the growth in each region and sub-region is something of great value for this research. In this sense, ISC Research data leaves no room for doubt: Asia is the continent with the highest number of international schools: 6,452 (Table 2). But the data throw another even more telling conclusion. Asia currently has more international schools than the other three regions combined: Europe (2,173), The Americas (1,290) and Africa (717). Reasons aside, these data reflect the great interest in Asia in these types of schools, which justifies the interest of organisations such as GEMS and Nord Anglia Education to establish schools in this continent. This number of international schools in Asia is even more significant if we take into account its progression since the year 2000. ISC Research data compiled by Brummitt (2007) revealed that there were only 474 schools in Asia in the year 2000, a figure that in just 7 years experienced a considerable increase of 334%, becoming 2,057 schools worldwide by 2007. In that same period, no other region was able to reach even 90% of growth, which gives an idea of the accelerated growth of these types of schools in Asia. Furthermore, this trend only continued to reach 6,400 schools by 2013 (Brummitt and Keeling, 2013).

Table 2. Number of International Schools by Region and Sub-region 2020



Source: ISC Research at [iscresearch.com](https://www.iscresearch.com)

Nevertheless, the emergence of a large number of for-profit schools in Asia is related to another fundamental variable for a project of this type: the fee income provided by students' enrolment. If the number of international schools in Asia has increased exponentially, the number of students has not done differently, which, in turn, is directly related to the increase in fee income that schools receive. Table 3 displays this progression. In the period between 2000 and 2019, the number of students in international schools increased by 486%. This growth could be explained by the large number of host country students who make up the majority of the student population (Bailey, 2018). The forecast is that this trend will continue to be positive at least until the

year 2028, when the student population will be close to reaching 10 million, which represents an increase of 67% in 9 years.

Table 3. The Historical and Projected Growth of Fee Income and Students

	2000	2019	2027	2028
Students	988,600	5,800,000	-	9,700,000
Fee Income (US\$ billion)	4,9	4,8	8,2	-

Page | 22

Source: ISC Research at iscresearch.com

But if the increase in the number of students is remarkable, even more drastic has been the increase in the income fee related to it. In the same period from 2000 to 2019, the income fee collected by schools grew by 1000%, from 4,9US\$ to 54,8US\$ billion. This figure makes the field of international schools a succulent business. It explains why schools like Dulwich and Harrow or institutions like GEMS and Nord Anglia Education have not missed the opportunity to expand, especially in Asia. And the future for the business looks just as attractive. ISC Research estimates that the income fee will rise to 82US\$ billion by 2027, an increase of 50% in just 8 years. With this projection, it is logical to expect many new schools opening in the coming years.

Although the data provided by ISC Research reliably describes the situation of international schools, it applies exclusively to the field of GEMIS. For this reason, a right complement to this information is the data provided by the IB. IB World Schools are spread around the world and include those with a medium of instruction other than English. This is especially relevant because IB programs in Spanish could be used in a SIS in Asia. According to IB, there were 5,402 IB World Schools in the world by September 2020, up from 2,000 in the year 2007, an increase of 170% in 13 years. Among those, 1,032 schools were located in the Asia-Pacific region. Although the number of schools in Asia-Pacific represents only 20% of the total, it must be taken into account that this region is the one that has grown the fastest in recent years (Bailey, 2018). Another significant fact is that by September 2020 the number of IB World Schools that offer Spanish as the language of instruction is 915, the vast majority spread throughout the Americas region. It should also be mentioned that although the IB data includes one school in Asia (EtonHouse International School Orchard) with a language of instruction in Spanish, this school only offers Spanish as an additional language.

As with the data collected by ISC Research, the number of IB Diploma students has risen sharply in recent years. Table 4 reflects this evolution, showing a steady increase of around 21% in each of the two triennials between 2013 and 2019. Regarding the Asia-Pacific region, the number of IB authorised programs increased by 46% in the same 6-

year period, from 405 to 595. This increase was most prominent in the first three years with 25%, compared to 17% from 2016 to 2019.

Although they rely on their own peculiarities when collecting the data, both the ISC Research and IB data highlight a steady rise in the number of international schools and their students over the past two decades. As I have already pointed out in the literature review, the great interest shown by host national families and the ease of restrictions on the part of governments so that local students can attend these schools seem to be the reasons behind this boom. This interest is especially noticeable in the Asia-Pacific region, where more than half of the schools listed in the ISC Research database are located. But even more interesting for this research is to know that the predictions suggest that demand will continue to grow at an accelerated rate at least until 2028. This circumstance is in line with the idea that founding an international school in Asia will continue to be a profitable investment in the coming years. The dilemma is whether this can be applied to a SIS project, in a field monopolised by the GEMIS.

Table 4. The Historical Growth of the IB Programs and Diploma Candidates

	2013	2016	2019
Number of Diploma candidates worldwide	70,627	85,708	103,248
Number of authorised programs in the Asia-Pacific region	405	508	595

Source: International Baccalaureate at ibo.org

4.2. Spanish schools abroad

Although far in number from the GEMIS, there is a network of Spanish schools abroad, which have the support of the Spanish government. Perhaps not as well recognised as the German or French schools overseas, these schools are spread over three regions: Africa, Europe and the Americas. The reasons behind the choice for the location in particular countries are not entirely clear. However, analysing the information available about these schools, it seems reasonable to think that factors such as geographical proximity, a strong presence of the Spanish community, or bilateral agreements with different countries, are among the fundamental reasons for their existence.

In September 2020, the database of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of Spain registered 208 schools abroad, where the curriculum was fully or partially taught in Spanish. A significant point to note is the diversity in the types of schools included in the list elaborated by the Ministry, which suggests that a SIS project in Asia could take any of these forms. Due to their importance to a SIS project, these types of schools are briefly described below.

- Schools owned by Spain. Located in Africa, Europe and the Americas, these schools aim at both Spaniards and foreigners, adapting to the specific needs of the students and the demands of their location.
- Schools with mixed-ownership. With only two schools in the Americas, these are centers owned by Spain along with other legally recognised institutions in their respective countries. They are run by Spanish officials and are permitted to teach the Spanish curriculum or that of the host country, as long as studies in Spanish language and culture are added.
- Schools with collaboration agreements. All located in the Americas, these are schools with a collaboration agreement with the Ministry of Education of Spain to include additional subjects in Spanish in their curriculum. In addition to the host country certification, students also receive the Spanish certification.
- Spanish sections in schools owned by other governments. Two schools in the Americas and the rest in Europe. Its purpose is to integrate some subjects in Spanish within the host country curriculum. At the end of their studies, students can validate their qualifications to obtain also the Spanish certification, although in some cases (schools in France and Miami) it is directly granted.
- Spanish private schools abroad. Distributed between Africa, Europe and the Americas. Schools privately operated but under the supervision of the Spanish Ministry of Education, since the Spanish certification is granted to its students.
- Spanish sections at European Schools outside Spain. Schools situated within Europe and created by the governments of the European Union in order to offer a multicultural and multilingual education. Students obtain the European Baccalaureate, which has the same status as the corresponding Spanish certification.
- International Spanish Academies. In operation since 1999, these are Spanish sections in Canadian and American schools. Spanish is integrated as a language of instruction in Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary and Baccalaureate, although its use decreases as students go through the educational stages.

Despite the variety of options offered by the types of schools mentioned above, not all of these can be taken into account for the foundation of a SIS in Asia. Table 5 shows the number of Spanish schools abroad by continent and country. 61% of these schools are International Spanish Academies, a project only intended for schools in Canada and the USA. The reason for a project of this significance is the strong Hispanic presence in both countries, a reason not applicable to Asian countries. In fact, 148 of the Spanish schools abroad are located in the Americas, representing 71% of the total. In the same way, the project of a European school in Asia is not feasible since these schools must be situated on the European Union territory.

Table 5. Spanish Schools Abroad 2020

	Africa			Europe										The Americas												Worldwide	
	Equatorial Guinea	Morocco	Western Sahara	Andorra	Belgium	France	Germany	Italy	Ireland	Luxembourg	Netherlands	United Kingdom	Portugal	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Colombia	Chile	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Guatemala	Mexico	Uruguay		USA
Schools owned by Spain	-	10	1	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
School with mixed - ownership	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
School with collaboration agreement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	14
Spanish sections in schools owned by other governments	-	-	-	-	-	13	1	9	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	29
Spanish private schools abroad	2	-	-	4	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Spanish sections at European Schools (outside Spain)	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
International Spanish Academies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	103	128

Source: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, Spain

Among those options that could be considered for a SIS project are the schools owned by the Spanish government. Despite being located in Africa, Europe and the Americas, there are only 18 schools of this type, which represents a mere 8.6% of the Spanish schools abroad. With just two schools located in Argentina and Brazil, even lower is the number of schools with mixed ownership. Although both types are included within the feasible options, the foundation of a SIS in Asia exclusively or partially owned by the government of Spain would require a large economic investment, with its associated high risk. Both the investment and the risk taken would be hard to assume in the coming years for a country that had not yet managed to recover from the economic crisis of 2008 when it suffered the devastating economic effect of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

On the other hand, there are 43 schools in which Spain has collaboration agreements with institutions and governments of other countries. The data analysis shows that the government tends to establish agreements with institutions in the Americas (14 schools), while collaboration with other governments is more focused on Europe (27 schools), with the exception of two schools in the USA. It is not surprising that the number of these schools doubled the schools fully or partially owned by Spain. As a result of the low investment they would represent, it would be a more reasonable option in the future for a SIS in Asia.

On the Ministry of Education's list, there are also 11 private Spanish schools, the majority of which are in Europe. Among these schools, two stand out: SEK- Les Alpes and SEK- Dublin, located in France and Ireland respectively. Both belong to San Estanislao de Kotska (SEK) Education Group, a Spanish educational organisation founded in 1892. This institution has 9 schools in 4 countries and a university in Spain, catering to over 12,000 students from 70 different nationalities. Another of these schools is SEK-Qatar, located in the capital city, Doha. This school was founded in 2013, as a result of an agreement signed

between the Qatari Ministry of Education and the SEK Education Group. The school is accredited by the IB to offer the IBPYP, IBMYP and IBDP. The language of instruction is English, although the students also have the opportunity to develop their proficiency in Spanish and Arabic. In the words of the school's Head, Ms. Verónica Sánchez, "the Spanish curriculum may not be widely known as a curriculum of reference, unlike the British, French, American or IB". Ms. Sánchez also highlighted the extensive offer of international schools in Qatar that deliver a worldwide recognised curriculum, which it would be very difficult to compete with by delivering the Spanish curriculum. However, she would not rule out that a school delivering an "IB curriculum with a Spanish or bilingual (Spanish / English) language of instruction" could be established, something that "would appeal to the Spanish community and other nationalities who would be interested in their children being fluent in Spanish".

Among the Spanish private schools abroad it is also important to mention the SEK International Institution, as a spin off of the SEK Education Group. It currently has 24 schools, 2 universities and a higher education center, located in 16 countries, including South Africa, USA and the UK. Due to its Spanish origin, its proven capacity for expansion and its financial capacity, a SIS in Asia founded by either the SEK Education Group or the SEK International Institution would have a better chance of succeeding.

Finally, although not much information is available and no information was provided on my request, there are two private projects in Asia that might be worth mentioning: the Primary Spanish School (SPIS) and The Spanish School of Abu Dhabi (SSAD), located in Hong Kong and UAE respectively. SPIS follows the British National Curriculum and offers Spanish as an additional language, therefore it might not be considered as a genuine Spanish international school. SSAD is a project that will start operating in September 2020. As indicated on its website, SSAD will offer the official Spanish curriculum, although in September 2020 it did not appear on the lists of the Spanish Ministry of Education.

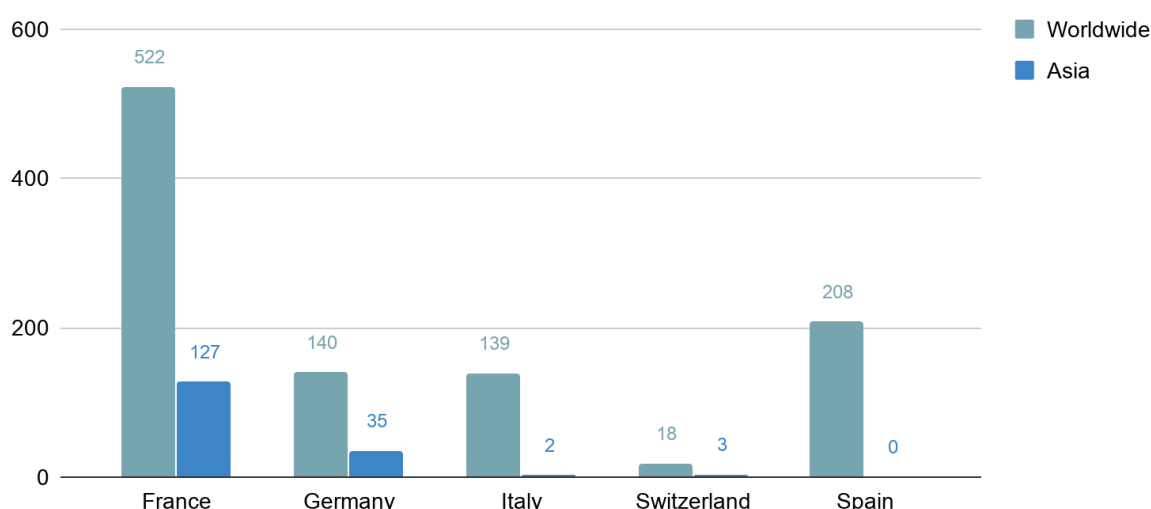
4.3. Globalised Non-English Medium of Instruction Schools in Asia

The demand for international schools in the world and particularly in Asia has grown enormously in the last 20 years, and predictions suggest that this trend will continue in the future. The schools that are taken into account for these predictions have in common that they are GEMIS. However, there are a number of schools in Asia that offer a curriculum in a language other than English. The Globalised Non-English Medium of Instruction Schools (GNEMIS) are of utmost importance for this research as they highlight not only the fact that this type of school exists in Asia, but that they can become a successful and lasting project. These schools should serve as a starting point when evaluating variables such as the location or the type of organisation that a SIS would entail in Asia. Despite having a wide variety of languages of instruction, I will focus on analysing those schools that offer a language of instruction from a European country. Due to both geographical considerations and the greater similarity between European countries, I believe that these projects could be more representative for a SIS.

Gathering official data from the respective countries, Table 6 compares the number of French, German, Swiss, Italian and Spanish schools abroad. France has 522 schools

abroad, a figure that exceeds the sum of the other four nations together (508) and represents almost 2.5 times the number of Spanish schools. *The Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger* (AEFE) is the national institution that coordinates and supports these schools that "educate more than 370,000 students, 40% of whom are French and 60% of other nationalities". In other words, more than half of the students in the French schools abroad are not French, a figure that indicates that this type of school is not only intended for the French community. All these schools are approved by the Ministry of National Education of France, 71 of them (EGD schools) managed directly by the AEFE, 156 as a result of an agreement and 295 considered as partner schools. A total of 127 of these schools are in Asia, a number three times higher than the combined number of the other four European nations analysed. This means that almost 25% of French schools are located in Asia, which gives an idea of the importance that this country gives to this continent.

Table 6. Number of French, German, Swiss, Italian and Spanish Schools Abroad 2020



The Central Agency for Schools Abroad (ZfA) is the institution that oversees the work of the 140 German schools abroad (DAS). Although their number is considerably less than the 208 Spanish schools, it should be noted that the DAS are all founded by the German government, while Spain only owns or co-owns 20 schools. This denotes the strong financial support that the German government provides for this type of school. Similarly to French schools, 25% of German schools are located in Asia, 35 out of 140 schools abroad. In Italy, it is the *Ministero degli Affari Esteri e Cooperazione Internazionale* (MAECI) the institution that supervises the Italian schools abroad. It has a network of 139 schools, divided into 8 state schools, 43 private schools with a collaboration agreement (scuole paritarie), 7 Italian sections at European schools, 79 Italian sections in foreign, bilingual or international schools, and 2 private schools with greater autonomy (scuole non paritarie). Information from the MAECI indicates that about 30,000 pupils attend these schools, where the presence of foreign students is very high. Due to the characteristics of these schools, the example of Italy is the one that most closely resembles that of Spain. However, although there are 50% more Spanish schools than Italian, two of these Italian schools are located in Asia, a low but very significant number if we take into account that there are no Spanish schools on this continent. In

Switzerland, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) offers support to 18 Swiss schools abroad. The FDFA notes that all of these schools are "religiously neutral and non-profit private schools attended by Swiss children, children from the host country and children from third countries". Despite their small number, there are three Swiss schools in Asia. The Department of the Interior is determined to further develop this network and for this reason created in 2016 the "Strategy for the further development of the network of Swiss schools abroad", in a firm commitment to the expansion of Swiss schools abroad.

Another variable to take into account is the location of these schools in Asia. Table 7 shows the French, German, Swiss, and Italian schools by Asian country. The first interesting detail is that China is the only location where all these countries have at least one school. As highlighted in the literature review, China has become the largest market for international international schools in the world, and the data is aligned with this idea. A total of 17 of these schools are located in China: ten French, five German, one Swiss and one Italian. China is by far the second country with the most schools on the list, only behind Lebanon, which ranks first due to the 53 French schools located there, as a result of French being widely spoken in the country. Singapore and Thailand also stand out on this list for having schools from three countries: France, Germany and Switzerland. Singapore only has three schools, one for each country mentioned, while in Thailand there are a total of 8 schools. The UAE and Turkey are among the places with schools from two countries. In the UAE, there are 10 schools, 7 French and 3 German, while in Turkey there are 3 French and 6 German schools.

Table 7. Location of French, German, Swiss and Italian Schools in Asia 2020

	Bahrain	Bangladesh	Cambodia	China	Georgia	India	Indonesia	Iraq	Iran	Israel	Japan	Jerusalem	Jordan	Kazakhstan	Kuwait	Laos	Lebanon	Malaysia	Mongolia	Myanmar	Nepal	Oman	Palestine	Philippines	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Singapore	South Korea	Sri Lanka	Taiwan	Thailand	Turkmenistan	Turkey	Uzbekistan	United Arab Emirates	Vietnam	Asia
France	1	1	2	10	1	4	2	2	1	5	2	1	1	1	1	2	53	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	5	1	3	1	7	4	127
Germany	-	-	-	5	-	2	1	1	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	2	-	6	-	3	1	35
Switzerland	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
Italy	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Next on the list are India and Israel, with 6 schools each. Vietnam and Saudi Arabia both have 5 and Japan has 4 schools. Among the list of places with less than 4 schools, Qatar and Singapore stand out with 3 schools each. Although both are countries, their geographic size and population are very small compared to many of the countries on the list. This highlights the large concentration of international schools that exist in these two locations.

I find the data presented in this section very interesting to reduce the number of convenient locations for a SIS in Asia. Putting aside the particular case of Lebanon with the French schools, China dominates in terms of the presence of GNEMIS in Asia, both in number of schools and languages of instruction. Then there is a group of countries in which the presence of the GNEMIS is also notable: UAE, Turkey, Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Qatar. It should also be pointed out that ISC Research places

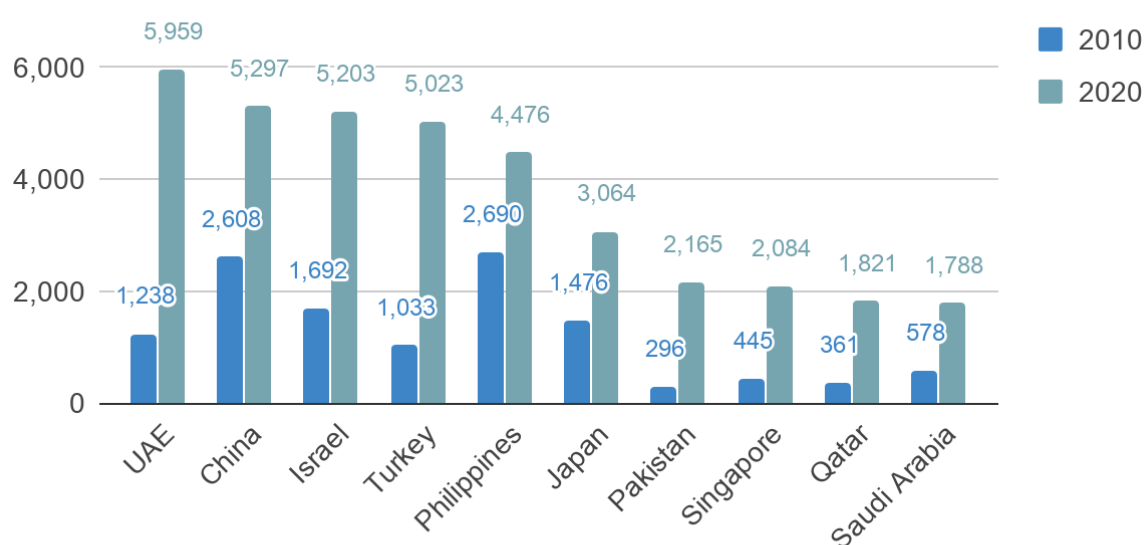
four of these countries (UAE, China, Saudi Arabia and Qatar) among the top ten countries per student enrolment.

4.5. Spanish population in Asia

Another aspect that became clear in the literature review is the reference to the first international schools, established with the intention of catering to the expatriate community in different parts of the world. In the last two decades this concept has undergone an abrupt change. Many of the students are now host country nationals eager for an international education. A SIS would ideally be able to attract these students, but I also believe that such a project cannot be justified on the premise of offering education only to Asian students. For such a school to open and be successful, it should be done in a place where there is a Spanish community that might be interested in an international education in their own language. French and Italian schools in Asia set a good example for this.

Regarding the Spanish population in the world, Europe and the Americas are in the lead, Asia being far behind them with 46,099 Spaniards currently living there. Nevertheless, in the last ten years, the number of Spaniards in Asia has grown by 164%, the highest among all continents. The mobility of Spaniards to Asia has followed a steady growing trend, perhaps fueled by the 2008 economic crisis that deeply affected Spain and the attractiveness offered by the economic growth of Asia. But if it is important to know the number of Spaniards in Asia, it is essential to mention the countries where the presence of the Spanish community is greater.

Table 8 refers to the top ten countries in Asia per Spanish population. Four countries are at the top with more than 5000 registered Spaniards. UAE is the first with almost 6,000, followed by China (5,297), Israel (5,203) and Turkey (5,023). These data are particularly significant in the case of the UAE and Turkey, with a growth rate of 380% between 2010-2020. In fact, 10 years ago UAE did not appear in the top four positions on this same list. Although also remarkable, growth in China (103%) and Israel (208%) is not that high when compared to these countries. The Philippines (4,476) and Japan (3,064) also have a large Spanish community, although their growth rate in the last 10 years is among the lowest. At the bottom of the list are Pakistan, Singapore, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, with a similar Spanish population ranging from 2,165 to 1,788. Although their Spanish population is far from that of the other countries previously mentioned, the growth rate of Pakistan (631%), Singapore (368%) and Qatar (404%) are among the highest.

Table 8. Top Ten Countries by Spanish Population in Asia

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística at ine.es

To analyse these data, it is necessary to combine them with what has been exposed so far in this work. Both UAE and China are the top two countries with the highest number of international students, among the top five with the most GNEMIS schools, and two of the most attractive markets for international schools due to their strong economies. These reasons, together with the presence of a large Spanish community, increase the chances that a SIS would make more sense in one of these two countries. Singapore and Qatar are other places to consider. A high concentration of international schools in such a small geographical space is now joined by the variable of the Spanish population. This population is not only quite significant, but its highly positive growth rate in the last ten years suggests that this trend could continue.

4.6. Asian students in higher education in Spain

Asian middle-class families opting for an international education are driven by an interest in preparing students for higher education abroad. This fact has caused foreign students to become a very lucrative business for universities around the world. According to ICEF Monitor, an organisation focused on the international education market, the economic impact of foreign students in Spain in 2018 was estimated at 2,2 billion euros. Although it is far from that of English-speaking countries like the USA or England, this is a very large figure for Spanish universities, and a reason to attract more foreign students. Thus, I believe that Spanish universities could be interested in supporting a SIS project, through any type of collaboration: financially, logistically, promotionally, etc.

In the 2018-2019 school year, four Asian countries had more than 1,000 students enrolled in Spanish universities (Table 9). These countries were China (11,810), Turkey (1,264), India (1,204) and South Korea (1,056). China appears at the top of another list once again. Furthermore, the number of Chinese students in higher education in Spain is three times higher than that of the other three countries combined. Regarding the growth

rate in the period 2015-2019, only India (55%) surpasses China (41%), while Turkey (24%) and South Korea (17%) grew at a slower pace. Considering that China overwhelmingly leads the number of Asian students in Spain, Spanish universities might be particularly interested in attracting Chinese students. Consequently, a SIS project in China could have a better chance of being supported by private and public universities in Spain, at the same time involving the Spanish government. Another data that demonstrates the potential of Chinese students in higher education abroad is that offered by the Unesco Institute for Statistics (UIS), which indicates that Chinese students represent 17.5% of the total mobile students in the world, with almost one million students. India also stands out in this classification with 6.3% of the total.

Other countries that have also been mentioned throughout this research but have less than 1,000 students in higher education in Spain are Iran (878), Pakistan (504), Japan (455), Philippines (316), Saudi Arabia (153) and Vietnam (178). Although the number of students from these countries is increasing every year, universities and the Spanish government would probably be more interested in supporting a SIS located in any of the first four countries on the list.

Table 9. Asian Students in Higher Education in Spain

	Students enrolled 2018-2019	Growth Rate 2015-2019
China	11,810	41%
Turkey	1,264	24%
India	1,204	55%
South Korea	1,056	17%

Source: Ministerio de Universidades (Spain)

However, despite their great economic impact, Asian students in Spanish universities only represented 10.8% of the total (194,743) in 2019. Table 10 compares these data with those of the two European countries with the most international schools in Asia, France and Germany. Asian students at universities in Germany and France represented 30.4% and 18% respectively, a percentage three and two times bigger than in Spain. Even though there might be other reasons behind this to consider, this could indicate a relationship between two variables: the greater the investment and involvement in international education in Asia, the greater the benefit in higher education enrolment for the country. As for the percentage that the number of Chinese students represent for each

country, the difference between Germany (10,1%), France (7,3%) and Spain (6%) is shortened. Germany gets more benefit out of its 5 schools in China than France from its 10 schools, although both remain ahead of Spain. Further study is needed to find out why Germany and France benefit more or less from their international schools Asia. However, with the figures in table 10 it could be argued that these schools in Asia exert a positive effect on enrollment in higher education in these two countries, from which Spain is not benefiting.

Table 10. Foreign Students in Higher Education in France, Germany and Spain 2019

	Total	Asia-Oceania	China
Germany	394,665	30,4%	10,1%
France	358,000	18%	7,3%
Spain	194,743	10,8%	6%

Source: DZHW-DAAD (Germany), MESRI-SIES (France), Ministerio de Universidades (Spain)

4.7. Economic relation of Spain with Asia

To conclude this section, it is also necessary to make a brief reference to the economic relations that Spain maintains with Asia. ICEX Spain Export and Investments is the official Spanish organisation that promotes economic relations between Spain and other countries. Among the 12 strategically important markets (called PASE countries) for Spain in 2020, ICEX included five Asian countries: China, Japan, South Korea, India and Turkey. China stands out as the first Asian country for trading with Spain, ranking 10th in the general number of exports and 3rd in imports. In addition, in 2020 China also became the market where Spanish exports grew the most compared to the same period in 2019. Less prominently, Turkey and Japan also appeared in the top 20 countries according to imports and exports. However, while the economic relationship with Japan was on an upward trend, the opposite applied to Turkey.

As I mentioned throughout this work, international schools have become a highly profitable business for many companies, and the future of this business is in Asia. With this perspective in mind, a SIS project could attract Spanish companies interested in investing in the Asian market. For many of the Spanish companies already established in Asia, a SIS could also be a profitable business for the promotion and integration of the company within a particular Asian society. The same would happen with Asian companies interested in the economic benefit of a SIS, which could see this as an entry showcase not only for the Spanish market but also for that of Latin America. Whether with the participation of a Spanish or foreign company, for this to happen, the firm

support and involvement of the Spanish government is required. Based on the data, China seems the ideal place for this project. As pointed out by the Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain has made a strong effort to promote the image and presence of the country in China over recent years, through the Chambers of Commerce and the extension of the network of General consulates, Economic and Commercial Offices, Tourism Offices and the Instituto Cervantes. Perhaps the time has come to bring this effort to the field of international education in Asia, as other European countries have been successfully doing for many years.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

International education is not a new field, but it has undergone a profound transformation in the last two decades. The great interest it has generated around the world has led to a rampant increase in the number of international schools. Data from ISC Research and IB corroborate this change and suggest that trend will continue in the coming years. The same statistics yield another significant data: Asia is the epicenter of this sharp increase, with China becoming its greatest representation. Unlike the GEMIS and other schools such as the French, German or Italian, Spain has not been able to take advantage of this phenomenon. Spain has 208 schools spread across the Americas, Africa and Europe, but it still has no presence in Asia. I find little justification in this fact when I compare it with other schools of similar European nations such as the German, Swiss or Italian, much less in number than the Spanish, but all with a presence in Asia. Owning a school in Asia might not be justified, but it is not utopian to think of reaching an agreement with some Asian government or organisation, as Spain already has in other countries.

However, this agreement should involve more than offering Spanish as a foreign language in a school. For the school to be considered genuinely Spanish, Spanish has to be the language of instruction, even though this does not imply that Spanish cannot coexist with other languages of instruction. Furthermore, perhaps this coexistence would make a SIS project in Asia more feasible. I propose a SIS that would have two streams, each with a different language of instruction. A suitable combination would be Spanish and English, while also giving the host country language a strong consideration. By already including English and Spanish as languages of instruction, the IB programs would be a better choice for this school to the detriment of the Spanish curriculum. In addition, the prestige of IB programs are well known internationally, which could attract more families.

In relation to the student population, it is no longer simply a question of international schools catering to the needs of expatriate mobile families. Today, host national students fill the vast majority of international school places. Supported by the purchasing power resulting from the economic boom, many Asian middle-class families have opted for an international education. In many cases, their motivation is to prepare students for higher education abroad. Although most of the Asian students' preference is to study in universities located in English-speaking countries, there is also an important market that other countries are taking advantage of. China is by far the Asian country that provides

Spanish universities with the most students. With almost 12,000 students enrolled, it can be argued that there is a real interest in some Chinese students to pursue higher education in Spain. In addition to this, most degrees in Spain are taught in Spanish and thus Chinese students are required to have a certain level in Spanish for their enrolment. With this information, it would not be unreasonable to think that Spanish universities could take advantage of a SIS in China, just like German or French universities. Not only would it prepare students interested in higher education in Spain, but it would also have the purpose of promoting the university or universities that collaborate with the SIS project.

As I have pointed out so far, the SIS project in Asia should have the support of both the Spanish government and those Spanish universities interested in the Asian market. Nevertheless, a large financial investment is needed to carry out this project. This investment would come from a prestigious organisation interested in promoting it. I believe that due to their proven prestige as educational organisations and their financial capacity, both the SEK Education Group and the SEK International Institution would be able to carry out a project of this magnitude. However, considering the regulatory control that many Asian countries have over the ownership of international schools, a joint venture might have a better chance of succeeding. Once again, China leads this opportunity for school development for foreign partners, with the Chinese government allowing and promoting private education among its population (ISC News, 2017).

One of the central questions of this study is also related to the most suitable place in Asia to establish a SIS. To determine this, I have presented four variables that should be taken into account when choosing the Asian country where a SIS would be most successful: the number of GNEMIS in the country, the Spanish community residing there, the Asian student population enrolled in higher education in Spain, and the economic relations between Spain and the Asian countries. Aligned with the multiple studies that place the present and future of international schools there, China ranks high in each of the variables, making it the most suitable place for a SIS. The Spanish Ministry of Education Culture and Sport also seems aware of China's pivotal center in the international education field, since their only Education Office (*Consejería de Educación*) in Asia is located in Beijing, which would be an advantage for the founding of a SIS in China.

Taking into account the data of the variables, the next most suitable country to host a SIS in Asia is Turkey. Although it does not occupy a predominant place in some of the variables, each of them refers to this country. India and Japan would be the next countries for their number of GNEMIS and their economic relationship with Spain, as well as the Spanish population they host (Japan) and the number of students enrolled in higher education in Spain (India). Two Middle Eastern countries occupy the next positions. UAE and Qatar are placed by ISC Research among the top 10 countries by student enrolment, while they accommodate GNEMIS and a significant Spanish population. Finally, Singapore and South Korea are also worth noting for different reasons. Singapore is home to some of the GNEMIS, as well as an important Spanish population. South Korea provides a good number for students for higher education in Spain, at the same time being considered as a strategically important market for Spain.

Although the data analysed for this research comes from reliable sources, more research is needed to corroborate and complement it. These researches could also include relevant data about other Spanish speaking countries, since attracting students from Hispanic countries would be another of the purposes of a school with a language of instruction in Spanish. Another element that should have more relevance in later research on this topic is that of the qualitative data. Unfortunately, many of the questions that I submitted to several organisations and individuals for this research were left unanswered.

The field of international education is booming, having Asia as the centre point. So far, the great beneficiaries of this trend are the English-speaking countries, led by the United States and England. It would not be reasonable to think that Spain could follow their example. However, I think that this cannot justify the lack of a Spanish international school in Asia, something that other European countries already have, whose example Spain should be following. Only through collaboration between private institutions, universities and governments will a Spanish school in Asia open its doors.

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Page | 38

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Page | 39

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Appendix

Questions for the email interview.

SEK Qatar:

Page | 42

1. In your opinion, what would be the main reasons for a Spanish international school to be founded in Asia, particularly in Qatar?
2. Do you think it is more likely that this school can be created from a private or public initiative or a mixture of both?
3. What would be the two main characteristics when defining a school as a Spanish International School in Asia? (Spanish or International -IB- curriculum in Spanish, language of instruction in Spanish regardless of the curriculum, native Hispanic teachers, Hispanic families and students, agreement with the government of Spain, etc.).
4. Why did SEK-Qatar choose to use English as the language of instruction and not Spanish?
5. Would it be feasible and profitable to open a Spanish international school in Qatar?