

## Marketing and Innovation in Education

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### Abstract

Belk offers an intriguing interpretation of marketing in his book, "We can definitely assume that marketing is always ongoing and evolving and never stops, otherwise why not remove the "ing" part of marketing (Belk, 2008, p. 26)?" There is no denying that marketing is constantly being refined and may never become a universally accepted and fully defined. According to Poole (2017), the concept of marketing extends the purchasing process by incorporating research, engagement, purchase, post-purchase, and advocacy, in which researching customer needs appeared later in the concept of Market Orientation (MO). According to some scholars, MO is a process of creating superior value for the customer, however, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) see MO as an extension of the marketing concept. Specifically speaking, MO is described by Narver and Slater (1990, p. 21) as a business culture, which emphasize the importance of providing customers with long-term superior value and gaining a competitive advantage. In this light, the development of market orientation shed light on making customers centered. Next, the benefits of developing school as market oriented will be discussed in a specific school context.

### Keywords

Marketing; Market Orientation; Value.

### 1. Introduction and Distinguish between Concepts of MO and Marketing

Belk offers an intriguing interpretation of marketing in his book, "We can definitely assume that marketing is always ongoing and evolving and never stops, otherwise why not remove the "ing" part of marketing (Belk, 2008, p. 26)?" There is no denying that marketing is constantly being refined and may never become a universally accepted and fully defined.

"The founder of modern management" Peter Drucker, describes the relationship between an organization and its customers as follows: "an organization is kept afloat not by internal structure, controls, organization, and procedures, but rather by the customer, who pays and decides what is important." According to Poole (2017), the concept of marketing extends the purchasing process by incorporating research, engagement, purchase, post-purchase, and advocacy, in which researching customer needs appeared later in the concept of Market Orientation (MO).

Kosuge (2015) argued that MO is a manifestation of organizational function and that a market-oriented company can accurately target people and grasp the characteristics of its products. According to some scholars, marketing is a set of values and beliefs that always prioritize the customer (Webster, 1994, p. 203), whereas MO is a process of creating superior value for the customer, and thus market orientation is an operationalization of the marketing concept. In contrast, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) see market orientation as an extension of the marketing concept. Specifically speaking, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) see MO as the implementation of a series of behaviors and activities based on the perception of customer needs. On the other hand, MO is described by Narver and Slater (1990, p. 21) in a different light:

as a business culture. They emphasize the importance of culture creation in providing customers with long-term superior value and gaining a competitive advantage.

## **2. MO Needs in a National Context**

When you type "marketing" into Baidu, China's largest search engine, the first result is: "Marketing is the process by which a company identifies or uncovers the needs of prospective consumers, makes them aware of the product, and then generates purchase behavior." In the explanation, the word 'uncover' appears to be misleading in describing marketing as a manipulative tool used to persuade people to buy things they do not need only for profits (Star, 1989). As a result, it is widely assumed that marketing is only rationalized in commercialised for-profit organizations, and other non-profit and service organizations should not prioritize marketing development (Kosuge, 2015). Nonetheless, the challenges that Chinese schools are currently facing necessitate the development of MO in the school setting.

### **2.1. Public Schools Versus Private Schools**

Because of the peculiarities of the national political context, the government, as the sole investor in the Chinese context, has become the primary source of funding in the public education system. However, as access to education has grown and the scope of education has grown, public education has gradually lost its dominance. According to National Education Development Statistics Bulletin (2018), from 1999 to 2018, there were 4,138 private education institutions with over 1.4 million students enrolled nationwide, and non-government investment in education as a proportion of total investment in education increased from 1.63 percent to 12.54 percent, far outpacing public education investment. Thanks to the generous financial support, private schools can afford to hire better teachers and build better campus facilities. Relatively speaking, public schools are becoming less competitive in the face of increasingly discerning parental demand. On the one hand, government investment in education is limited; on the other, public education takes longer to innovate, explore, and change. As a result, using market-orientated practices in public schools can improve student and parent perceptions of the school's image and potentially attract more students.

### **2.2. Private Schools Versus Private schools**

According to Schleiche (2020), there are four main factors that parents consider when choosing a school: geographical location, school strength, tuition level, and graduate performance; however, after COVID-19, Schleicher (2020) mentioned 56 percent of families reported that they needed to consider more factors when assessing the strength of school. Parents became increasingly concerned about the risks to their children's education as a result of changes in the world situation, and thus a school that develops all-round skills was seen as a safer and better option. This is most prevalent in the international secondary school parent community. This necessitates a shift in how international schools approach student education, one that not only focuses on students' international competence but also assists them in adapting to the domestic learning system. The fluctuating market situation therefore requires schools to develop in a market-oriented manner, which has significant implications for aligning school development with real needs.

## **3. A Brief Introduction of BNTA**

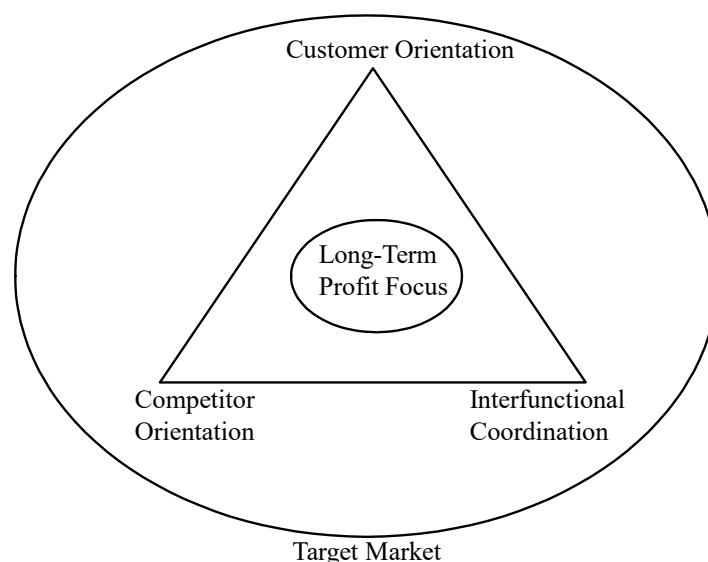
Since 2008, Beijing New Talent Academy (BNTA) has developed into an international private school with a 15-year continuum of development from kindergarten to university. With the spirit of "love and creativity" as the core of its education, BNTA is committed to providing students with a multicultural and thematic curriculum. The concept "international and ethnic" and "multicultural development system" all represent the distinctive features of this school.

At each term's teacher pep rally, BNTA analyzes the educational performance and management practices of other international schools and announces changes in indicators such as international secondary school student progression. Furthermore, the BNTA website includes information areas such as 'Teacher Channel' and 'Management Services' for departmental communication and information sharing, reflecting the school's emphasis on interdepartmental cooperation.

Even though it is only ten years old, BNTA is very demanding in terms of school positioning. At a general meeting of all teachers and students on May 19, 2018, at the start of the second decade, the school's positioning was announced: a century-old Chinese school with a global impact. These practices all reflect BNTA's concern for the market to some extent, but the degree of MO requires further investigation. The following are some models and theories for determining the extent of MO.

#### 4. Appropriate Measure the Degree of MO

Different people have different ideas about how to best measure market orientation. The subsequent evolution was founded on the market-oriented theory proposed by Kohli, Jaworski, Narver, and Slater. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) define MO as a set of concrete market theory implementation activities comprised of three components: market intelligence generation, information dissemination, and organizational-wide responsiveness, and developed the MARKOR scale with 32 items to reflect this. Simultaneously, Narver and Slater (1990) developed the MKTOR scale, a new measurement device based on the understanding of market orientation as a business culture, consisting of 15 fine-grained three-dimensional items composed of three components: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination (Figure 1).

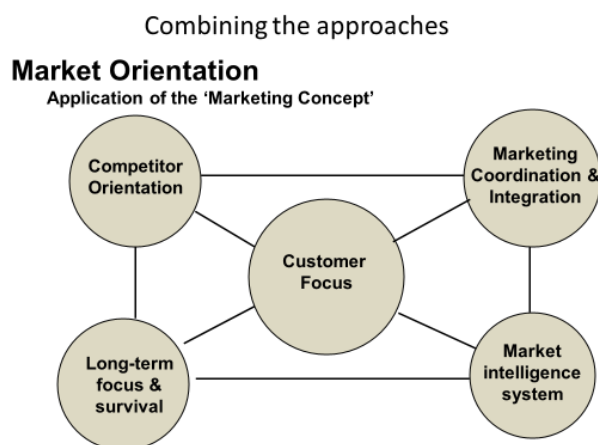


**Figure 1.** MKTOR model (Narver & Slater, 1990)

MKTOR's validity has once been called into question. Some researchers (Siguaw & Diamantopoulos, 1995) have conducted studies that found Narver and Slater's original items were unsuitable for large-scale institutional surveys. Chakrabarty and Roge (2003) and Han, Kim, and Srivastava (1998), on the other hand, supported the MKTOR scale and concluded that it was more valid than the MARKOR. Despite the fact that a large number of studies have compared the validity of the two scales, judging the superiority of one strategy over another without considering the context is meaningless. In the educational setting,

Drysdale (2002) combines the MARKOR and MKTOR models of market orientation to form the new Combined Approaches (Figure 2), emphasizing the core requirement of customer orientation by placing customer focus in the center of the structure, and emphasizing the importance of the market intelligence system as a source of information. Competitor Orientation refers to schools' proclivity to gather information from other institutions at the same level in order to better understand market dynamics, assess their own strengths and gaps, and thus create a more competitive product. Marketing Coordination and Integration concept addresses the fact that interdepartmental understanding and commitment have a significant impact on the effectiveness of MO, which is the same as Inter-functional coordination concept in the MKTOR model. This report will use the Drysdale combined Approaches (2002) as a theoretical foundation, and Daniel's instrument questionnaire (2015) was used to assess the school's level of market orientation.

### What is Market Orientation?



**Figure 2.** Combined Approaches (Drysdale, 2002)

The questionnaire consists of questions from five dimensions: Customer Orientation (Q6, Q10, Q13), Competitor Orientation (Q19, Q20, Q25), Inter-functional Cooperation (Q3, Q21, Q22), Long-term Growth (Q7, Q14, Q17, Q23) and Market Intelligence (Q8, Q18, Q24). Q24 refers to "results and findings from surveys and research to make decisions", which intends to measure the extent to which schools are informed by educational changes in decision-making process, however, fluctuations in Chinese educational context are mainly resulted from education policy. It is therefore suggested that Q24 be changed to "reports and instructions from policies and other official documents to make decisions". Each question in the questionnaire has options from 1 to 6 representing different attitudes, with '1' representing 'Strongly Disagree' and '6' representing 'Strongly Agree'. See appendix 1 for details of the questionnaire.

### 5. Analysis and Discussion of MO Results

The questionnaire was emailed to ten members of the school staff, and six responses were collected from three classroom teachers, one subject coordinator, and two non-teaching staff. The results were entered into Instrument Survey Market Orientation in Schools - V3 - Sheet "export", and a "position" column was added to the far left of the sheet to facilitate data analysis in relation to position characteristics, and a row named "average" was added at the bottom to calculate the average level for each orientation. Figure 3 depicts the results, and these participating colleagues were invited to have a brief discussion based on the questionnaire results.

Position	Cust Or	Comp Or	Infunct Co	LT Profit V	Mark. Intel	Comb Appr MarOrMe	Job Pos	LoS	Performa
A-level	3.67	4.67	4.67	4.50	5.33	4.57	Category 3	Intermediate	4
Student Teacher	5.33	6.00	4.67	5.25	5.33	5.32	Category 3	Junior	4
Subject Coordina	4.33	5.33	3.67	5.75	5.33	4.88	Category 2	Intermediate	5
Operating Staff	5.33	4.67	5.00	5.50	5.33	5.17	Category 4	Junior	4
Accountant	5.33	5.33	5.00	4.25	5.67	5.12	Category 4	Senior	4
Foreign Teacher	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.25	4.33	4.52	Category 3	Junior	5
Average	4.67	5.17	4.67	4.92	5.22	4.93			

Figure 3. Instrument Survey Market Orientation in Schools - V3 - Sheet "export" Results

Notes: The lowest values of the five orientations are shown in grey cells and the highest values are shown in green cells.

Score Range	Interpretation
5.5 - 6.0	Highly Market Oriented
5.0 - 5.49	Market Oriented
4.0 - 4.99	Somewhat Market Oriented
3.0 - 3.99	Somewhat Not Market Oriented
2.0 - 2.99	Not Market Oriented
Less than 2.0	Extremely Low Market Oriented

Figure 4. Interpretation of Scores

### 5.1. Analysis

Figure 3 shows that the Combined Approach Overall Market Orientation Measure column has a score greater than 4. When combined with Figure 4, this result indicates that the school's overall perceived level of MO is Somewhat Market Oriented. In terms of positions, A-level Teacher and Foreign Teacher had the lowest perceptions of MO, while the other curriculum-related role, that of a subject coordinator, had a value of 4.88, which was also not high. In contrast, both the operating staff (5.17) and the accountant (5.12) demonstrated high levels of MO. Such findings appear to point to a strong relationship between the role of teaching activities and low MO levels. This is in consistent with previous research findings (Algarni & Talib, 2014), that teachers and in-service non-teaching staff have different perceptions of MO, which may be due to differences in daily work activities.

Furthermore, the level of perception of MO did not increase with the number of years worked, with a value of 5.32 for the student teacher as the junior worker, 4.88 for the Intermediate worker, and 5.12 for the Senior worker. In addition, the average row demonstrates that the highest level of perception appears in Market Intelligence. In contrast, despite the fact that Customer Orientation is supposed to be the core component of MO orientation, it does not appear to be perceived by BNTA employees, with an average level of 4.67 in the data.

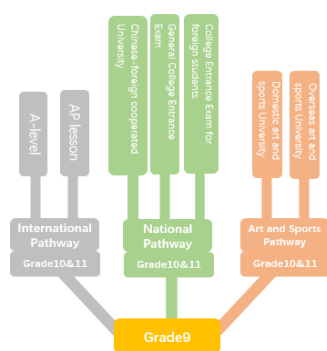
Looking at the individual dimension data next reveals that different roles perceive the most significant orientation differently. Both the A-level Teacher and the Accountant thought Market Intelligence was more prominent than the other orientations, but the Subject Coordinator and Operational Staff thought Long-term Growth was more prominent, while the Student Teacher and Foreign Teacher thought Competitor orientation was the most prominent. This could be related to the various work scenarios. Despite the fact that they are all involved in teaching activities, Student Teachers, A-level Teachers, and Foreign Teachers all have different perspectives on marketing strategies. This could be due to the varying levels of complexity of

their teaching tasks and the number of students they supervise. Further discussion follows in relation to BNTA's curriculum characteristics and the context of the times.

## 5.2. Discussion

Participants in the study all perceived customer-orientation to be the weakest of the five orientations, with A-level Teacher, Foreign Teacher, and Subject Coordinator perceiving it to be significantly weaker than the others. A-level Teacher explains that, since A-level and Foreign Language courses are important subjects for entrance examinations, that examination results have a great influence on students' choice of schools, thus course programs and strategic plans are inextricably linked to course and examination to help students achieve a satisfied level. Qi (2004) mentioned that high-stakes courses appear to be more concerned with developing students' abilities to understand knowledge and use the methods learned to analyze problems, as these are closely linked to examinations, while ignoring other aspects of parental and student development needs. Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011) agreed with this view and points that this is related to the exam-oriented education in Chinese education context.

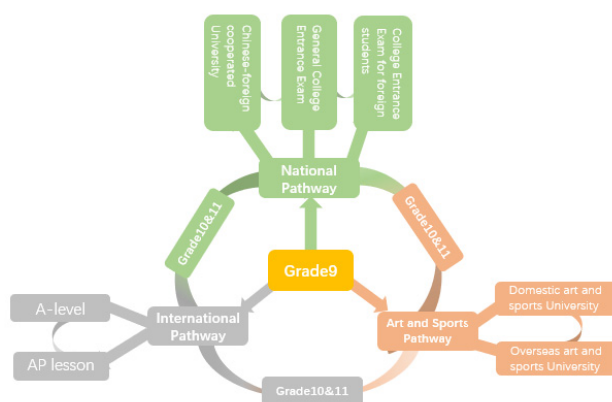
Interestingly, despite his questionnaire results indicating a low level of Customer Orientation perception, Subject Coordinator expressed the importance of parents and students to the school during the discussion. He explains that this bias is due to the fact that the Customer Orientated questions (Q6, Q10, Q13) in the questionnaire appear to describe students' and parents' needs as the only consideration in the design of programs, yet the characters involved in the project process are not unique: not only are parents and students invited to express their views, but it is also the thinking and practice of specialists in the field that brings all ideas to life. According to his statement, most BNTA strategies are oriented toward the needs of parents and students, but the degree of orientation is determined by the complexity of the project and the time required to develop it. The more characters who participate in the program, the less Customer Orientation is perceived by those within the school.



**Figure 5.** Previous Pathway framework

The perception of Market Intelligence is the highest, which strictly related to the current context in China. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the education sector, raising parents' concerns that students are at risk whether they choose the international or domestic study system (Schleicher, 2020). BNTA has quickly responded to this issue by proposing the Multiple Intersection Development (MID) learning framework. Figure 5 represents the previous Grade 9 to Grade 11 pathway framework and Figure 6 represents the Grade 9 to Grade 11 MID framework. It can be identified in Figure 5 that Grade 10 and Grade 11 pathways are separate, whereas Figure 6 shows that the National Pathway, International Pathway, and Art and Sports Pathway are all grouped together under the "Grade 10 & 11" curve. This means that even if

students defined their own pathways in Grade 9, they are able to change it in Grade 10 and Grade 11 based on their interests.



**Figure 6.** Multiple Intersection Development framework

This new pathway framework reduces the risk of making pathway choice and assists students in dealing with the volatile educational landscape with greater confidence (Schleicher, 2020). As the creation of MID concept requires a redesign of the whole curriculum structure and policies, it is currently the most resource-intensive project in BNTA. As is mentioned in Huang (2020), the more departments involved in a school project, the more attention the staff will pay to it, implying that the strategy will have a greater impact internally. This could explain why employees place such a high value on Marketing Intelligence among all the orientations.

The data also shows that, despite the fact that they are both teachers, A-level and Foreign Teachers are less likely to perceive MO than Student Teacher, which could be due to the class volume. Kucirkova and Littleton (2017) claimed, assuming that a classroom teacher is responsible for thirty students, it is impossible to meet the needs of all students in terms of both time and effort. They further argued that, with limited time and resources, classroom teacher's management can only meet the needs of the majority of students while removing impediments to the development of others. In BNTA, however, student teachers each manages a small number of students and able to communicate with parents frequently, making them more prepared to respond to parental needs and achieve personalised teaching. In this regard, if a school can keep to a reasonable size as it grows, the MO strategy is more likely to work well sustainably in the long run.

## 6. Relative Analysis between MO Degree and School Performance

### 6.1. Market Research and Enrollment Trend

The interpretation of data from principle interview and press reports is used to analyze the relationship between school performance and the degree of market orientation. First indicator of school performance is school enrollment. When compared to the same period last year, BNTA enrollment increased significantly. The increase in this figure was primarily due to an increase in enrollment in the Chinese Academy of Excellence (CAE). In an interview with BNTA's Principal Wanqiong Zhang, she stated:

*"Because of the epidemic, many parents who chose to send their children to international schools very early now want them to return to the domestic education system. Based on our extensive research into the international curriculum and domestic curriculum, we discovered that there was a large percent overlap in content between them. As a result, we quickly developed a*

*bridging subject, known as the CAE curriculum, to assist students in making a smooth transition to the domestic system in Grade 10."*

The CAE curriculum aligns with the previously mentioned Multiple Intersection Development framework, aimed to help students move freely among pathways. In other words, CAE's success was due to a quick response to parents' need for educational pathway transition.

Is this success, however, a result of chance? Principal Zhang responds:

*"At the 2019 International Schools Industry Conference, the concept of developing "Global, Personalised, Diverse, and Intelligent future talents" was introduced, and BNTA has been working on "improving students' overall abilities" since then. We had planned to implement the curriculum innovation over the next year or two, but the epidemic forced us to begin the model sooner."*

It is clear from the conversation that the entire school has been paying close attention to market information and predicting market trends and customer needs ahead of time. In this regard, BNTA is unquestionably a school with a high level of Market Intelligence because of the competency to gain intelligence from external information as well as plan for current and future customer needs, so that it can perform well in changing situations.

## 6.2. Competitor Orientation and School Image

The more information an organisation obtained from competitor's developments, the better it is in understand its own positioning. According to Principle Zhang, the school was not competitive enough in its early years, so she began to actively participate in headmaster's meetings to keep abreast of what other schools were doing, as well as set up an internal research team to study competitor's strategies. A Competitor Orientation, according to Narver and Slater (1990), entails not only understanding the strengths and weaknesses of existing and potential competitors, but also developing better ways to develop from their ideas. After learning that other schools had adopted the slogan "Developing talents for the technological future," BNTA took this thinking and innovated right away.

To increase the impact of technology in the school, BNTA has collaborated with IFLYTEK, a leading Asia-Pacific technology company, creatively established the BNTA AI Innovation Lab and promoted AI education in various grades. On the one hand, BNTA raises IFLYTEK's brand awareness; on the other hand, the school's performance has improved (China International School News, 2020). This win-win partnership between the company and the school has enticed more companies to invest in the school, further expanded the school's image.

The above analysis demonstrates that, while BNTA's Competitor Orientation is low in the early years, as the market develops, BNTA continues to gain inspiration from competitor strategies and innovate further based on competitor ideas. The ability to innovate serves as a constant source of motivation for BNTA's development and improves its performance.

## 7. An Outline of the Barriers to MO in BNTA

As an international school with a complex functional structure, BNTA employs people from various national and cultural backgrounds, and these differences can affect everyone's understanding of market-oriented information, making it difficult to achieve consistent commitment across departments. Furthermore, the MO strategy in the school plan is always developed from the top down. That is, such strategies are not well and effectively integrated into the school culture and with all aspects of teachers' daily practice, which can create a rejection attitude among staff (Harris,1999). According to Narver and Slater (1990), mature teachers may see no need for the school to be market-oriented based on their own judgment, especially if they believe it has been done well in the past. Besides, as a relatively young international school, BNTA's financial foundation is not particularly strong. Responding to market demand usually requires the simultaneous establishment of school facilities and the



holding of ongoing events to meet the wants and needs of customers. Although BNTA is now firmly market oriented, a lack of financial support may limit its ability to implement market strategies, which may affect the maintenance of market orientation's benefits.

## 8. A Suggestion for a Course of Action

- Based on BNTA's experience with market-oriented practices, we can see that market orientation has a lot of potential for promoting schools, especially when there are unpredictable changes like the COVID-19. BNTA has a cutting-edge educational philosophy, as well as a professional teaching staff and extensive inter-institutional cooperation. This means that MO strategies must be combined in order to maximize market function.
- Furthermore, BNTA's progress in Customer Orientation and Competitor Orientation stems not only from accurate market information analysis and accurate positioning of its strengths, but more importantly, from responding in an innovative manner. This is consistent with the findings of Algarni and Talib's study, which found that the ability to innovate is used as a mediator to improve school performance based on MO impact (Algarni & Talib, 2014).
- Finally, viewing MO as an aspect of organizational culture aids in the sharing of values within the school. The emphasis on customer service fosters a passionate service orientation, which leads to higher levels of excellence for students.

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## Appendix 1

### Measuring School Performance and Market Orientation

MELBOURNE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Many schools conduct marketing activities, promotion and advertising, but may not be market oriented. Market orientation is defined as an organizational culture that has orientation to the market with focus on the customer.

A market oriented school would be one that:

1. finds out and attends to the needs of its customers
2. finds out about the development of other schools in the area, and therefore, how it can improve itself
3. distributes information (whether student/parent/competitor related or other information) effectively through all levels in the hierarchy of the school, so that staff are well informed
4. is willing to sacrifice short term benefit in favour of long term growth
5. has all the above items embedded in the culture of the school

Past research has proven that there is a positive link between market orientation and organisational performance; and also that adopting market orientation principles will enhance the magnitude and effectiveness of innovation activities.

No	Question	Your Perception (Please fill with 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1)
1	What is your current job position in your school? (Please select a category from the drop-down list). Category 1: Principal Class; Category 2: Middle Leaders, leading teachers, level/subject coordinators; Category 3: Teacher; Category 4: Non-teaching staff;	
2	How long have you worked in your current school?	
No	Question	Your Perception (Please fill with 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1)
1	Teachers regularly share information about other school's practices and programs.	
2	The school programs are mainly driven by students and parents' satisfaction.	
3	The school is quick to respond to the changes in education in the community.	
4	The school gives close attention to following up parents' queries.	

5	The school is able to successfully understand and identify the key marketing issues it faces.	
6	The school constantly monitors the level of commitment towards the students and parents.	
7	The school sacrifices some short term gains for long term growth of the school.	
8	The school keeps student data and uses them for reference.	
9	Information on students, parents, program success and program failures are shared with teachers.	
10	Our programs are designed and created based on our understanding of students' and parents' needs.	
11	School meetings (curriculum, marketing, finance, staffing) are integrated between different sections and are driven by our understanding of possibilities to increase value in students' education.	
12	The school has a set of processes to scan (informal means) the environment and obtain information about current trends and developments. (ex: through newspapers, talking to people, external conferences, etc.)	
13	Our school strategic plan is driven by our understanding of possibilities for creating value for our students and parents.	
14	The school is willing to accept short term losses in order to do what is right for the students and parents.	
15	The school regularly runs a set of formal procedures that attempt to discover the needs of current and prospective students.	
16	The different sections in our school work independently (separately) to meet students' and parents' needs.	
17	The school leaders believe that long-term growth requires some short-term sacrifices.	
18	We measure student and parent satisfaction systemically and frequently.	

19	Our school tries to attract students by offering more value compared to other schools.	
20	The school leaders regularly discuss other school's strengths and strategies.	
21	All sections work collaboratively to increase value to our parents and students' education.	
22	We share programs and resources with other sections in the school.	
23	The school leaders emphasize longer term objectives relative to shorter term ones.	
24	The results and findings from surveys, research, and other information are regularly analysed and used in decision making processes.	
25	A main objective of our school is to provide better educational value relative to other schools.	
26	What is your overall assessment of student performance in your school? (5=very high; 4=high; 3=average; 2=low; 1=very low)	